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IN NEED OF RELIGION

Insecurity and religiosity in contemporary Europe

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ABSTRACT

Religious change in Europe continues to be a controversial topic. The main disputes regard if and how Europe is experiencing processes of secularization and how these processes can be explained. On the one hand, there are basically three different theories which strongly compete. *Secularization* theorists declare that religiosity in Europe is declining in all its dimensions. *Individualization* theorists declare that religion is changing instead from institutionalized forms to more individualized and intimate ones. Finally, adherents of the *economic market approach* prompt that religiosity is all about the ability of the churches to stimulate and attract believers. On the other hand, the link between modernization and secularization is often presented as the causal mechanism underneath religious change. Among this literature, Norris and Inglehart's insecurity theory poses that processes of modernization and human development have increased the human security thus reducing the need for religion. This theory is based on the idea that religion can work as reassurance for conditions of insecurity or for life-threatening events. The present work tests this claim. After giving a comprehensive overview of the three main theoretical approaches to religious change (chapter 2), of the use of religion as coping strategy (chapter 3) and of the main methodological issues that need to be faced (chapter 4), I describe European religiosity and analyze possible processes of religious change. To do so, I focus on different dimensions of religiosity and I consider cohort replacement as the main mechanism to assess this change (chapter 5). It emerges that Practice is declining in all European countries, but religious self-definition and especially belief show a U-shaped trend for Orthodox countries. Given this peculiarity, I devote an entire chapter (chapter 6) to its exploration. After doing that, I explicitly deal with insecurity theory. To do so, I propose a multiple response multilevel model (EVS data) on European Christian

countries (chapter 7) which tackles the association between individual as well as contextual insecurity and individual religiosity. Results show that personal religiosity is weakly associated only with widowhood at the individual level but more strongly associated with economic inequalities and welfare spending at the country level. Chapter 8 goes deeper in the investigation of the relation between individual insecurity and religiosity. By mean of two fixed-effect panel models for Germany (SOEP data) and UK (BHPS + Understanding society data) I am able to explicitly test the hypothesis that a worsening of individual condition can foster an increase of religiosity. Results clearly show that such hypothesis applies only and little for widowhood. Hence, the case of Europe suggests that individual insecurity alone does not suit for a comprehensive sociological theory of religious change. It should be better integrated with other theories, e.g. the increase of education and the failure of religious transmission, to “place” countries on a hypothetical path to modernization.

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Some years ago, I quit my full-time contract job to jump into this doctoral program. Like all the best decisions in life, it has been a true act of faith. I had no idea how it would go. Now this part of my life is almost finished and I really want to thank all the people I have found along this road. Thanks to them I have realized that being a researcher is what I want for my future. Of course, my supervisors prof. Ferruccio Biolcati-Rinaldi and Marco Maraffi with whom I also developed a sincere friendship. There is also my old friend Nazareno Panichella and all the "Sopralzo" boys and girls. I want also to thank all the Gesis, Utrecht University and Lausanne University staff for the great opportunity to spend some months in their institutions. Alongside the professionals, being a PhD is also a matter of personal relations. Having shared either good and bad moments, anxiety and hopes is one of the best memories I have of this period. Indeed, I need to mention Valeria, Iraklis, Max, Martina, Cri(s) and Cat for all the steps we did together, both in academic career and in real life. I have of course a lot of friends outside the Academia I want to thank, but I will do this personally in front of a beer. Last but not the least, there is a special person I want to thank. There is in fact something which is far harder than being a PhD…and this is being a PhD girlfriend.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When dealing with the field of religious studies, it appears immediately clear how personal features, institutional contexts, historical facts and individual traits are interrelated. If compared to other fields in the social sciences, the study of religion is further complex also because the supernatural side of religiosity poses a daunting challenge to the main methods used by sociologists. This is of course puzzling but intriguing at the same time, but I am pretty confident that every sociology of religion is more motivated than discouraged by these challenges.

Given this complexity, it is not surprising that religion is studied by sociologist in many different ways. We can find at one side a lot of works and approaches which focus on specific religious groups or on specific faiths or religious phenomena. The main aim of these approaches is to describe and interpret them deeply, putting emphasis on the meanings individuals give to their behaviors and beliefs. On the other side we can find many large-scale works which aim to describe and interpret the religious evolution the world is experiencing. Within this last approach it is also possible to distinguish some works which focus more on the description of religious change (is the world secularizing? Is religious practice declining?) from other which also try to find the causes of such change.

This work is clearly placed in the second category. The main theoretical framework is the well-known secularization theory and the ongoing debate which oppose it to the individualization thesis. Scholars from the side of secularization affirm that religion is declining due to modernization processes whereas individualization theorists assert that religion is rather changing, from a strong social and institutionalized phenomenon to a more individualized and intimate one. I will extensively describe these two main theoretical approaches in the first chapter of this work. In the same chapter I will also present the so called “economic-market model” or “religious economy theory” which I didn’t mention before because it seems less suitable – and it is less used – to interpret European religiosity.

The first empirical part of this work deals exactly with the debate between secularization and individualization theory. Using a multidimensional measurement and relying on the idea that religious change is driven by cohort replacement, the attempt is to understand whether different dimensions of religiosity show common or different patterns moving from the older to the youngest cohort. To put it simpler, if the three dimensions (practice, belief and self-definition) will show a common pattern, secularization theory comes out to be the appropriate framework to interpret European religiosity. On the contrary, if some trends differ – and especially if practice decrease and belief increase – this should reinforce the individualization thesis. Given the denominational heterogeneity within European Christianity, I will also divide the trends among the three main Christian doctrines – Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodoxy. The idea behind is that different doctrines can shape differently the ways of being – or not being – religious.

The literature about European processes of secularization is quite coherent in saying that Orthodox countries represent an oddity in the main discourse about secularization. Main related question is whether this anomaly is caused by the Orthodox theology or by the Communist past of these countries. Given the saliency of this debate I will devote an entire chapter to its analysis.

Until this point, the current work mainly aims to describe the religious change Europe is experiencing. The second part of the work tries instead to explore the causes of these changes. Both the secularization theory and the individualization one link religious change with modernization. This last is a broad-spectrum concept which comprise many different mechanisms ranging from the expanded education, passing through the weakening of social ties and to the improvement of the life conditions leading to more security for individuals. All these mechanisms are supposed to weaken or suppress religiosity. The main focus of this work is on the last one which is barely investigated in sociology. This lack of theoretical and empirical analysis from sociologists is quite problematic also in the light of the extensive interest given by psychologists to the link between insecurity and religiosity. In the field of religious studies, the first attempt to interpret religious differences in the light of security differences is the one by Norris and Inglehart: people who are suffering from situation of insecurity (threatening themselves or their community) tend to be more religious if compared to people who do not. This approach in undoubtedly interesting but it is clear that needs a lot of theoretical improvements. The attempt to expand the theoretical strength of this theory is clearly the main aim of this work.

Given that the situations of insecurity can regard both individuals and their communities, I will firstly try to study whether individuals who are in situation of insecurity or who live in countries with low security are more likely to be religious. I do so by looking at European countries and focusing on some individual situations of insecurity as well as on country ones. In addition, I will not only look at economic insecurities (unemployment, income, economic inequalities) but also at existential insecurities like the health status or the loss of a partner. If the relation between insecurity and religiosity will be confirmed, the insecurity theory is likely to fill a relevant gap in the main secularization theory: its unidirectionality. As a matter of fact, secularization theory works well in interpreting religious decline but has no theoretical ways to explain eventual reverse paths. If so intended, the insecurity theory can help in strengthening its theoretical base.

Results from this study show quite different associations between individual and country insecurity and religiosity. This is quite expected because some country features I analyzed (like low average income or economic inequalities) are exactly the bases of the Norris and Inglehart’s version of insecurity theory. To better expand on the insecurity theory it is however essential a better assessment of the individual relation between insecurity and religiosity. In addition, a simply association between life-threatening situations and individual religiosity could not be enough to support the appropriateness of insecurity theory to interpret religious change. To really expand on the mechanism behind, the main question should be re-framed in a more longitudinal way: does a worsening of individual conditions foster religiosity? In the last analytical part of this work I will do exactly this. Starting from some longitudinal dataset about Germany and Great Britain, I test whether a worsening of economic conditions (loss of the job, income decrease) as well as existential conditions (loss of a partner, health deterioration) can foster individual religiosity.

From this brief introduction it should be clear the theoretical relevance of this work, but its importance does not end here. In the very first rows, I said that the study of religion is methodologically challenging because of the different phenomena lying behind the general idea of “religiosity”. These methodological issues are even more stimulating given the supernatural aspects of the religion itself. It is therefore very important to refine the study of religiosity also from the methodological point of view. Along this work I will develop some strategy to better cope with the measurement issues. First of all, the attempt is to use a strong multidimensional research approach ad design and this is clearly visible in all the analytical parts. In addition, to push further this multidimensionality, I will use a particular kind of multilevel models which permits to deal simultaneously with various dependent variables which, in our case, correspond to different dimensions of religiosity. The multilevel modeling techniques are also used when estimating the impact of individual as well as country insecurity on religiosity. For the last analytical part, I will perform instead an innovative attempt to study the relation between insecurity and religiosity using panel data: in doing so it is possible to switch from a research question like “are insecure people more likely to be religious?” to a question like “does insecurity foster individual religiosity?” with undeniable theoretical and methodological advantages.

Everything considered, the present work will follow this structure. Chapter 2 (RELIGIOUS DECLINE OR RELIGIOUS CHANGE?) is basically the theoretical chapter which tries to summarize the main theories behind religious studies with a particular focus on the differences among the various levels of interpretation. Chapter 3 (INSECURITY AND RELIGIOSITY - WHEN PSYCHOLOGY HELPS SOCIOLOGY) is instead the theoretical exploration of the bases of insecurity theory; the innovative approach of this chapter attempts to link sociological and psychological notions in an overall theory of insecurity which focus more in the individual side. Chapter 4 (ABOUT THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION) tries to shed light on the main methodological issues that need to be faced when studying religion with quantitative methods. More in detail, along this chapter I will deal with the issue of multidimensionality, with the interpretation of the different levels of analysis, with the kind of data which can be used for studying religion and with the age-period-cohort issue, which is very crucial when studying – religious – change. Chapter 5 (EUROPEAN RELIGIOSITY) is the first analytical chapter and basically draws a static as well as dynamic picture of European religiosity; in doing this I will use both the different dimensions and a typology of religiosity. Given some result from this chapter, I will devote Chapter 6 (EASTERN RELIGIOSITY AFTER THE FALL OF BERLIN WALL) to the inspection of religious change in the Former-Communist countries. With Chapter 7

INSECURITY AND RELIGIOSITY IN THE CHRISTIAN EUROPE) I will go deeply in the insecurity theory by empirically testing the relation between some individual and country features related to insecurity and the individual religiosity. Chapter 8 (

DOES INSECURITY FOSTER RELIGIOSITY?) is the last analytical chapter and represents the empirical – longitudinal – test of the individual relation between insecurity and religiosity. At the end of these chapters I will try to draw some conclusions (Chapter 9 - CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION) both from a methodological and a theoretical point of view. Is individualization theory gaining theoretical ground or secularization theory is still the appropriate framework? Is insecurity theory useful to explain religious change in Europe? Does it represent an improvement of secularization theory? These are some questions I will seek to answer with this work.

Chapter 2

RELIGIOUS DECLINE OR RELIGIOUS CHANGE?

An ongoing debate about the past, the present and the future of European religiosity

The debate concerning religiosity in general and European religiosity in particular is a complex one. As a matter of fact, a plenty of points of view, interpretations, theoretical and empirical issues are in the running. There is quite clear consensus that the best way to present and summarize this theoretical mare magnum entails the focus on three different theories: the secularization theory, the individualization theory and the economic market theory. Along this chapter I will follow this distinction with a paragraph for each of them. In addition, I will also present a short paragraph about the insecurity theory. This theory undoubtedly belongs to the broad secularization theory but, given its relevance for this entire work, I have deemed appropriate to devote it an entire paragraph.

2.1 Secularization theory

The secularization theory has a long intellectual tradition and is definitely the most prominent sociological approach in studying religion. “Secularization” is in fact a broad and umbrella term under which many possible processes are present. The core thesis of this theory states that processes of modernization will have a negative effect on stability and vitality of religious communities, practice, and convictions (Pollack 2008b). Secularization can also be viewed as the decline of the degree by which people involved in religious practice express their beliefs and behave in various aspects of life as influenced by such beliefs (Bruce 2002). A third view instead focuses on secularization as the “decline in religious authority”, intended as the decrease in the influence of religious institutions and leaders over individual behaviour, social institutions, public discourse and value systems (Chaves 1994).

Already from these definitions, it appears clear how can be complex to define such broad concept. As we can see from them, secularization can refer at the same time to individuals, communities and religious institutions, can affect both individual behaviours and belief and invade also the public debate.

As with most concepts in the social sciences, there is no a universally accepted definition of secularization. Some definitions emphasize individual beliefs and practices, others the influence of religious norms and elites, and others the differentiation of religious and nonreligious spheres or institutions (Gorski and Altınordu 2008). Despite the complexity of this operation, it is worth to try to "narrow the field" of the potential definitions of secularization or at least to highlight the main theoretical knots that will be better analysed in the next paragraphs. In a hypothetical continuum of definitions, we can see the positions of Stark and Gauchet as its boundaries: on the one side Stark (Stark 1999b; Stark and Iannaccone 1994) oversimplifies the notion of secularization to the decline of individual practice and uses this evidence to raise its "economic market theory" (see next paragraph). On the other hand, the extreme formulation by the French philosopher Gauchet (Ferry and Gauchet 2004; Gauchet 1997, 1998) defines secularization as the loss of world-forming power that religion once had, a process directly resulting from the Enlightenment. If we follow this perspective, we must accept the fact that indicators of individual religiosity do not tell us anything about the degree of secularization (Gorski and Altınordu 2008).

In the space between these extreme views, it is possible to find more complete frameworks which recognize the complexity of the secularization concept and which treat it as a multidimensional and multimechanism process. One of the first to introduce this complexity was the Belgian sociologist Dobbelaere (1999).

He proposed to distinguish among macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis and also between three major processes: the functional differentiation of societal subsystems, the emergence of competitive religious markets, and the individualization and privatization of religious practice and belief. Also Casanova (1994) follows this multi-processes approach and, in its well-known book on Public Religions in the Modern World, identifies three different mechanisms – differentiation, privatization, and decline – that can be defined in terms of different and partially unrelated hypotheses.

These brief preliminary considerations suggest three main theoretical issues that need to be discussed in order to achieve a better comprehension of the phenomena. The analysis of these three points, the multidimensionality of the concept, its multi-level nature and its multi-mechanism character is the core of this paragraph. To better put them into context, it will be preceded by an attempt to summarize some relevant contributions to the topic.

2.1.1 Secularization in the history: what can we learn looking backward?

The use of the term "secularization" dates back ages and its etymology (as well as the related terms secular, secularism, secularist etc.) directly comes from the Latin "Saeculum", meaning a century or an age (Gorski and Altınordu 2008). During the Middle Ages, the term was used to refer to the monks' renunciation to the order's rules and to their exit from the monastery and their return to the world. A third meaning of the word can be found in the period of the Reformation, when Protestant rulers confiscated the Church's properties with the argument that worldly rulers could use them more efficiently. Based on this, the concept of secularization gained two – somehow opposed – different meanings; on one side, it suggests unjust and illegitimate expropriation whereas in the opposite it suggests increased rationality and efficiency. The fourth layer of meaning, which was outlined during the nineteenth century, directly arose with the spread of free thought and the rise of secular societies in the Western Europe (Gorski and Altınordu 2008). The main idea behind these societies was the emancipation of various institutions from clerical and ecclesiastical influence and control. It follows a positive vision of secularism which idea was to enable individuals to shape their own worldviews. The contemporary definition of secularization bears the stamp of all these historical definitions.

2.1.2 Modernization and Secularization: a sociological overview

The differences between the historical and sociological uses of the term secularization are useful to highlight some issues related to the definition of secularization processes. As we can see from the previous paragraph, secularization comprises a variety of meaning and mechanisms ranging from the individual exit from the Church, passing through the expropriation of religious benefits by the worldly rulers and finishing with the separation between the religious sphere and the political and cultural one. This last meaning can also be analysed referring to secularization as the political project of a secularist movement. However it is defined, some sociologists describe secularization as an outcome or an effect whereas others prefer to consider it as a cause or a process. "Should we think of secularization as a working out of the internal logic of religious values or ethics, e.g., as a process of purification? Or should we think of it as the consequence of external forces that undermine religion?" (Gorski and Altınordu 2008:61).

Since the beginning of sociology, some of the "founding fathers" like Max Weber and Emile Durkheim argued that religion had lost its central position in modern societies. Religion was no longer able, like in pre-modern societies, to provide a universally acknowledged worldview. According to Weber, the conflict among different value spheres is intrinsic characteristic of modern societies while Durkheim observed tendencies towards differentiation (Durkheim 1912). In both analyses, religious worldviews and practices were pushed towards the margins of society because they were no longer capable of determining the universal rules of what is socially acceptable. Given that, neither Weber nor Durkheim assumed that religion was heading towards oblivion under the conditions of modernity to be replaced by a scientific worldview. What they argued is that process of modernization, transforming the entire social structure, cannot remain without consequences for religious traditions and institutions (Pollack 2008a).

Brian Wilson (1982) identifies three different processes which are decisive for the decline of religion's role in the society. He speaks of *i) social differentiation* referring to the diminishing influence of religion over the other spheres such the economy, the sciences, politics, arts, medicine and so on which became functionally autonomous. When he speaks about *ii) societalization*, he instead refers to the diminishing strength of the form of communities from which religion drew strength in the past. These very cohesive communities are now replaced by larger and more impersonal ones and this can only decrease the religious relevance. The third dynamic, the *iii) rationalization*, entails that social, political, scientific, economic, medical and educational aims can be accomplished by continually improving means, leaving transcendent sphere outside and detracting religious importance (Pollack 2008a). In addition, there is another process that would decrease the saliency of religion. Its analysis relies on the effect of increasing religious pluralism and elitarianism and basically states that in the face of this growing pluralism, "states that recognize the legal equality of individuals are forced to withdraw their support for specific religious organizations and to secularize their central institutions" (Bruce 2002; Pollack 2008a:3). Under this condition of pluralism, religious societies are deprived of the regular confirmation they receive in culturally homogenous societies. Another way to interpret the link between modernization and secularization in the one by Norris and Inglehart (2004). Their central idea, which will be discussed extensively throughout this work, is that the meaning – and the need – of religion is determined by feelings of insecurity. In societies with greater existential risks, the need for religion is greater than in more secure and affluent societies.

As we can see from these contribution, it is puzzling to define how the modernization processes can be related to the secularization ones. This challenge is even more difficult because both sides of the relation are very complex to define. Concerning modernization, one of the best attempt to define it is the one by Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009) who successfully built a "typology of Modernities" which is completely suitable both for an accurate theoretical specification and for an analytical test. According to them, there are three different processes of modernization leading to secularization, each of which relies on different mechanisms. These three sets of mechanisms, which can be regarded as a summary of the abovementioned contributions, are: *i) Modernization of ideologies,* meaning the mechanism through which the more traditional religious worldview erodes (Weber 1922); *ii) Modernization of social ties*, that is the diminishing strength and multiplexity of social ties leading to less control of religious communities over their members (Durkheim 1912; Kelley and De Graaf 1997); *iii) Modernization of economies*, which leads to more financial, social and political securities for the population, reducing the need for religious reassurance (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Norris and Inglehart 2004).

The process of **modernization of ideologies** basically refers to the increasing schooling and scientific development typical of modernity: higher levels of education and technology stimulate principles like spirit of free inquiry and freedom of thought which lead to a more mechanistic worldview. Because this scientific rationalism erodes the cognitive basis of religious worldviews, modernity would lead to lower levels of religious commitment (Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009). **Modernization of social ties** means that the strength and multiplexity of social ties is diminishing in modern times. This phenomenon would lead to less control of religious communities over their members because religious behaviour is a predominantly social phenomenon, in which people are socialized, controlled, and possibly sanctioned by their parents, family, neighbours, religious community, schoolteachers and other socializing agents

(Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009). Process of **modernization of economies** instead means that the more financial, social and political securities typical of modernity can reduce the need for religious reassurance (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

Simply starting from these contributions, it clearly emerges how it is complex to find a unique definition of secularization. This because process of secularization can involve different processes and mechanisms and operate at different levels. The various levels of interpretation and the different processes underlying the broad concept are important issues to face, especially if we want to find an analytical testable version of the secularization theory. The next two paragraphs will try to assess more in detail these two issues. I will start from the outstanding contribution of José Casanova who, while being at the time one of the fiercer critic of secularization theory, built up an enlightening specification of three different processes underlying the general theory. This contribution will be integrated with the one by Dobbelaere who also proposed a theoretical path which links the different mechanisms in the light of the levels they occur whithin.

2.1.3 One secularization or more mechanisms?

At the very beginning of sociology, the secularization thesis was accepted by all the founding fathers and had gathered the status of a real paradigm. The consensus was so widespread that the theory was neither contested nor empirically verified. The first attempts to reframe the theory as a more systematic and empirically testable one are dated in the sixties. Starting from that period some weaknesses became evident, and two basic issues had to be assessed; first of all, the secularization theory had to be detached from its ideological origins (the “enlightened” critique on religion) and, secondly, the theory had to be distinguished from its potential outcomes and results on religion (declining or disappearing) and religiosity.

It is precisely from these issues that Casanova starts to better specify the secularization theory, avoiding to confuse the historical processes of secularization with the consequences of these processes on religion and religiosity. According to the author there are three different processes underlying the broad concept of secularization. The first one, *"modernization leads to functional differentiation and to emancipation of secular spheres (state, economy, science) from religious sphere"* is the milestone of secularization theory. The other two processes, *"secularization leads to religious decline"* and *"secularization leads to religious privatization"* try instead to grasp the effects of the historical processes of secularization on religion and religiosity.

Interpreting secularization as the **differentiation between Church and State** forces to take an historical perspective. If during the medieval time the reality was constructed along the single axis religious-secular and "secular" took on a meaning only as counterpart of "religious", in modern times the same reality is constructed along multiple axes because of a great distinction and functional differentiation also among secular spheres. In this new configuration the religious sphere assumed a more peripheral role, specializing on the pure "religious functions" and left apart most of the "non-religious functions" gathered in centuries of historical processes. Four fundamental events have had a capital importance for this process of differentiation and reframing: the protestant reformation, the birth of modern states, the development of modern capitalism and the first scientific revolution. The *protestant reformation* worked at different levels: it mined the foundations of unity and universality of the Catholic Church, it gave relevance to the new bourgeois superstructure and boosted the processes of introduction of the new secular ethics already in progress. The *rise of the secular modern state*, instead, undermined the monopolist nature of the Church as organization of salvation and as holder of the – symbolic – violence. The *development of modern capitalism* made evident the irreconcilable conflict between the new economic relations and the old traditional "moral economies". Money became the most impersonal medium of exchange and social interaction. The *scientific revolution* undermined the religious sphere by introducing a new conflict between the old religious way of "searching for the truth" and the new rational way.

Looking instead at secularization as a **decline of religion** basically means considering the effects of modernization on individual and aggregate religiosity. While religious decline was a quite well-accepted fact at the beginning of religious studies, further researches show a more heterogeneous situation, also in the light of the very demanding issues of religious measurement. Regarding this point, Casanova suggests caution in claiming a worldwide decline of religiosity because, starting from the Second World War, most of the religious traditions all over the world have experienced a growth or, at least, have maintained their vitality. The – supposed – constant decline of religiosity in most of the West-European countries should be considered as an exception and not the norm of Worldwide trends of religiosity (Casanova 1994).

If we consider secularization as **privatization of religion,** we basically accept the idea that religion has increasingly shifted from the public space to a more private one. Religions are losing more and more their public role being less and less present in the mass media, in the education institutions and in the public debate in general.

The work of Casanova is the most obvious example of why it is necessary to specify what is intended for secularization. Changing the point of view, focusing on some countries rather than others, looking at some or other mechanisms, choosing what "kind of secularization" is intended, can lead to completely different interpretations. As matter of fact, Casanova's main claim is that, starting from the eighties, religion has re-entered the "public sphere" and has got exposure among mass media, scientific milieu and population in general. Religion, traditionally confined to private sphere, has entered the public arena of political and moral dispute (Casanova 1994). As evidence, Casanova lists a series of historical facts driven by religion, like the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Solidarnosc movement in Poland, the influential role of Catholicism in the Sandinista revolution and in other South-American political conflicts, the grow of importance of the Protestant fundamentalism in the States. What is really interesting in the religiosity from the eighties is not the inception of "new religious movements", of "new religious experiences" or of "new religious conscience", which are social phenomenon well explained and studied by individualization theorists (see next chapters). What instead occurred, is a "public rebirth" of "traditional" (Casanova 1994). The core of Casanova's argumentation is that modern world is characterized by a process of **de-privatization** of religion. The term "de-privatization" means that traditional religions worldwide refuse to accept their marginal and privatized role predicted by secularization theorists. In the last years a plenty of social-religious movements arose in an open challenge to the primary secular spheres: state and market economy. Religious institutions and organizations do not want to be limited to the "individual religious and theological care" and therefore they boost the debate about the links between public and private morality; lots of issues are pushed and the secular system is continuously challenged. These processes, Casanova says, do not dismantle the core thesis of secularization theory (differentiation of secularized sphere from the religious norms and institutions) but they must be taken into account as a possible reverse of what was perceived as an irreversible trend. Worldwide religions are entering the public sphere and the political arena to safeguard their territory and to join the symbolic struggle for defining the borders between public and private, legality and morality, individuals and society and so on.

The three processes here presented represent only one attempt to clarify what there is behind the otherwise vague concept of secularization. I decided to present them because they have two desirable features. They are so genera as to include also different – and more precise – meanings while being at the same time so accurate to be empirically testable. Just to give the idea of the myriad of various attempts made by sociologist to define the mechanisms behind secularization, I here report a list of them presented by Dobbelaere (1999). In compiling this list, he refers to three different levels of analysis, which represent the second issue to clarify and which will be extensively analysed in the next paragraph. According to Dobbelaere, who recalls a similar list made by Tschannen (1992), examples of mechanism interconnected with secularization and located at the societal (macro) level are: institutional differentiation or segmentation (Luckmann 1967), autonomization (Berger 1967; Wilson 1969), rationalization (Berger 1967; Wilson 1982), societalization (Wilson 1976), disenchantment of the world (Berger 1967; Weber 1920), privatization (Berger 1967; Luckmann 1967), and generalization (Bellah 1967; Parsons 1967). At the meso-level we can instead find pluralization (Martin 1978), relativization (Berger 1967) and this-worldliness (Luckmann 1990) and at the individual micro-level we find individualization (Bellah et al. 1985), bricolage (Luckmann 1979), unbelief (Berger 1967) and decline of church religiosity (Martin 1978).

What should be clear after this paragraph is that a good way to clarify the various mechanisms behind the secularization process is to evaluate them as structured at different levels. This is necessary because the mechanisms operating at different levels could not be necessarily related or, if yes, their relations need an accurate analysis. If we do not follow this process it would be virtually impossible to develop clear and testable hypotheses about mechanism, cause and effects of secularization processes.

2.1.4 Levels of interpretation

As already seen, the idea of secularization is a broad one and more theoretical clarity about the level(s) of interpretation is needed to avoid misunderstandings or confused findings. The starting point of this controversial discussion regards the assumption – derived from the functional differentiation approach – that as a consequence of the decline of religion on the macro level, a waning of religious ideas and practices at the individual level is also to be expected. This statement is less straightforward than it looks. Almost every scholar of religious studies tried to give its definition of secularization, putting emphasis on one of the two level or on both of them.

Peter Berger has long been one of the main theorists of secularization and, during his "secularization phase", said that "processes of secularization are taking place on the macro as well on the micro-sociological level" (1967:107). As said before, this is far from being the theoretical standard inasmuch several contemporary proponents of the theory assert that secularization remains confined only to the macro level (Pollack 2008a). Karen Dobbelaere's thought (1999) is one of the best examples of this. According to him, secularization implies that religion ceases to be significant in the societal system, which *per se* proves nothing about the religious consciousness of the individuals. Mark Chaves (1994) goes further and confines secularization to the decline of religious authority. In his words, secularization mechanisms no longer influence belief in God and, instead of dealing with the individual's religiosity, the debate should shift to the capacity of religion to influence institutional spheres, structures and individual's actions.

It is certainly useful to distinguish between the different levels in which secularization processes take place because it allows to grasp and to differentiate simultaneous and possible contradictory processes. By means of such differentiation, it should be possible to define religious change more accurately. Given this, it is less useful to consider only one of these levels of interpretation as relevant because it prevents to give a correct interpretation of a process which is far more complex and articulated. If secularization entails the decline of religion, all dimensions are implicated – not only the societal, but also the individual, not only the behavioural, but also the cognitive, sentimental, and experimental (Pollack 2008a). Even if we assume that societal changes do not have a direct impact on the individual level, it is quite likely that in the long run "the declining social significance of religion causes a decline in the number of religious people and the extent to which people are religious" (Bruce 2002:3). Belief systems, ideas, emotions, attitudes are completely part of religion and are thus affected by religious decline and changing role of religious institutions.

As mentioned before, Dobbelaere (1999) gave a very interesting outline of the processes related to the descriptive concept of secularization. He did so by distinguish three different levels for the interpretations of the concept itself. These levels, the macro-level or societal system, the meso-level and the individual micro-level need to be accurately analysed as well as the relations between them. The Dobbelaere reasoning starts from the consideration that modern societies are differentiated along functional lines and so various subsystems developed different functional domains like the economy, polity, science, family. Each of these subsystems communicate with its own medium (money, power, truth, love) and develop their own values and norms. In respect to religion, these subsystems claim autonomy and reject religious prescribed norms aiming to a kind of *autonomization*. This autonomization takes the form of the "emancipation of education from ecclesiastical authority, the separation of church and state, the rejection of church prescriptions about birth control and abortion, the decline of religious content in literature and arts, and the development of science as an autonomous secular perspective" (Dobbelaere 1999:231). If meant in this way, the term secularization describes the consequences of functional differentiation for the religious subsystem. Secularization is thus situated at the **societal macro-level**, and should be intended as resulting from the processes of functional differentiation and autonomization of the societal subsystems. In this way, secularization "is only the particularization of the general process of functional differentiation in the religious subsystem" (Dobbelaere 1999:231). Even if so intended, the term secularization continues to maintain its central role in the debate because it refers to a specific social conflict linked to the religious resistance to such functional differentiation (Chaves 1997:443). Starting from this point, Chaves confirms the Dobbelaere's reasoning and describes secularization as the declining scope of religious authority at the societal level (Chaves 1994). Consistently with the theoretical model I am here presenting, he distinguishes between the same levels of analysis stating that there is a societal secularization to differentiate from an organizational secularization (meso level) and an individual one (micro level). As consequence of this declining of religious authority at the societal level, Dobbelaere mentions the development of functional rationality. With this functional rationality, politics became rational, economy became rational and also the modern states extended and rationalized their administration, leaving aside the concepts of traditional and charismatic authority. This new structure needed rational and scientific training and education and thus a scientific approach to the world and the teaching of technical knowledge progressively replaced a religious-literary formation. This rational-scientific approach to the world spread out also in the life-world and also domestic and intimate activities became increasingly rationalized and predictable. This new cognition wiped out the pre-logical religious concepts and was objectified as a new language which changed the image of reality. This new language was taken up by the media and thus this change was radicalized and became a social phenomenon (Acquaviva 1979). This new rational-scientific approach, following the functional differentiation undermined the objectivity of religion and de facto relativized its religious contents.

This went hand in hand with a *pluralization of religious claims*: different religions started to compete to keep their followers and to find new ones. This pluralistic situation, which results in a religious market placed by Dobbelaere at the **meso-level**, pushed religion into crisis of credibility (Berger 1967). This pluralism, had undermined the objectivity of religion which started to be perceived as useless and was followed by a loss of status and power. This opened the field to the emergence of new – forms of – religions which started to compete in the religious market. These new religions, call them exotic, exoteric, spiritual, new age, were characterized by a lowered level of transcendence: they became "*this-worldly*" or *mundane* (Luckmann 1990). These new religions work only at the level of "intermediate transcendence" (see next chapter), they bridge time and space, they promote intersubjective communion, but remain at the immanent level of everyday reality. Probably, if employing a functional definition of religion, they would not even be defined as such.

We are moving step by step toward the individual level of religious behaviour and beliefs. We started from the societal functional differentiation which causes an autonomization of the different subsystems from the religious sphere (macro-level); this caused a loss of credibility of religion and the consequent opening of a pluralized religious market (meso-level). All this to say that the focus on individual religious behaviours is not a valid indicator of the process of secularization, which is a societal process (Dobbelaere 1999). This does not imply that people's religious behaviours and attitudes are not influence by societal situation, "but that the explanation of individual behaviour may not be reduced to a simple direct effect of the secularization process on the societal level: the motivational structure at the micro level is more complex" (Dobbelaere 1999:236). This reasoning brings us directly to the **individual micro-level**. What is happening at this level is defined in a plenty of ways, often competing: individualization, unbelief, bricolage, decline in church religiosity, unchurching of individuals, just to name a few. In any way they are defined, these mechanisms happening at the individual level come from the fact that the church is more and more seen as an organizational structure belonging only to the religious subsystem and thus differentiated from the life-world. Churches appear now as kind of service stations (see the notions of vicarious religions in the paragraph about individualization theory) used by people only on certain occasions with a functional and fully utilitarian approach. This directly comes from the functional differentiation presented above, which had a strong impact on the life-world. The entire life-world was de-traditionalized, the social and ascriptive roles become less pressing, the increased availability of transportation allowed people to lessen the control of families and neighbourhoods, traditions were relativized, the television brought new messages and ideas in every house, the level of education rose, women were liberated from their "biological" roles. This period of functional differentiation was followed by an economic boom, people had more freedom, more choices and "church members claimed the same freedom in religious and ethical matters" (Dobbelaere 1999:238). As consequence, people developed the idea that either themselves or specialist could solve their problem and this removed God from their life and stimulate unbelief. Even if some people continue to believe, God is no longer conceived as a personal God, with which to establish a personal relation. This cause the *drop out of Christian rituals*, since they are completely centred on the relationship with "God as a person". This of course causes the number of unchurched people to grow and the members' involvement in the churches to decrease. This loss of church authority and relevance, the more pluralistic religious market and the growing individualization can also lead to a "religious bricolage", intending a lower propensity to accept and follow religious claim *tout court*. Whereas in olden times the churches were able to impose their doctrines, now they loss authority and religious bricolage is substantially accepted, notwithstanding the official opposition of the church.

The idea of unchurching and, in general, of religious decline is the main claim from secularization theories whereas this notion of religious bricolage belongs more to the branch of research under the name of individualization theory. The contact points between the two theories are many, and this is not surprising because they share the same starting point: the functional differentiation. Anyhow, what should be clear here, is that religiosity at individual level cannot be explained exclusively by the secularization of the social system; many other factors like individualization of decisions, mobility, de-traditionalisation and utilitarian individualism are at work.

2.1.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was not to give a fully comprehensive overview of all the contribution concerning secularization. Besides the fact that it is virtually impossible to do so, our choice was to problematize three main issues very relevant to cope with when studying religiosity and its evolution. In doing so I decided to report contribution by preeminent scholars from the field who explicitly have addressed these issues. Through the contribution by José Casanova I have shed some light on the importance to define, especially in the empirical analysis, the processes we are focusing on. The difference among secularization as decline of religiosity, as individualization of religiosity or as differentiation between church and state consists in adopting completely different theoretical frameworks, resulting in completely different analytical strategies. This emphasis on different mechanisms is the starting point of Karel Dobbelaere who expands this issue putting different processes at different levels. In light of this, when speaking about secularization, it should be necessary to distinguish, for example, between societal secularization and individual secularization. According to this approach the secularization of the social system does not lead directly to a decrease of the individual religiosity. Other factors are at work and the relevant consequence is that, if we talk about analytical strategies, the decline of religious beliefs and practices may not be considered as a valid indicator for the secularization of the social system, and vice versa. This poses a very crucial theoretical issue. If we accept the idea of the various levels, every theoretical and analytical framework should therefore include a clear assessment about how the different levels influence each other: in other words, how societal secularization and individual secularization are related? How societal mechanism impact on individual religiosity? This third issue was partially addressed when I presented the different types of modernization and their possible impact on individual religiosity. Despite the excellent typology I presented (Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009), much has still to be done. If the mechanism behind the link between modernization and secularization is clarified, the whole paradigm of secularization will gain much more theoretical power.

The next paragraph makes a step in this direction. The insecurity theory, which is the reference theory of this entire work, is a kind of specification of the whole secularization theory. One of its strengths is precisely the attempt to clarify how religious change can be related to the processes of modernization. I will present it in two different sections. In the next paragraph I will report a kind of overview using mainly the words by Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011). In Chapter 3, I will instead present a wider explanation which goes deeper into its theoretical and practical relevance.

Figure 1: Secularization theory, a brief summary

Main hypothesis: Processes of modernization foster religious decline	
Main aim: Give the theoretical tools to study and interpret religious decline	
Main issues:	- Levels of interpretation, micro, meso or macro? - Different secularizations and different mechanism behind - Define modernization; one modernizations, many modernizations - Identify the real causal mechanisms - Avoid unidirectionality - Territorial focus: is secularization a worldwide process?

2.2 Exploring the causal mechanisms: The Insecurity Theory

As we saw in the previous paragraph, main issue for secularization theorists is the differentiation among different levels and processes. Besides this, secularization scholars need also to assess the important question pertaining to the causal mechanisms: in which way societal processes influence individual's religious behaviour and belief? “In order to explain which processes conceivably cause religious decline”, Pollack says, “it is not sufficient to formulate general facets of modernity such as functional differentiation, rationalization or pluralization. It is essential to also isolate the causal mechanisms via which sociological trends influence people's behaviour and attitudes. These mechanisms that are regarded as decisive for individuals' religious attitudes and behaviours determine not only the explanatory potential of each respective theory, but also their course of argumentation" (2012:9).

The insecurity theory directly arises from the general old-fashioned secularization theory trying to push further its explanatory power. Specifically, it attempts to cope with the main secularization theory weaknesses: its unidirectionality and the absence of a strong causal explanation. The secularization theory has been descripted in several ways, among which very clear – and quite harsh – is the one by Stark and Finke (2000). According to them, this theory can be viewed as a useless elevator going only down. The metaphor works quite well. Secularization approach best fits to describe the supposed religious decline but, given the absence of real causal explanation, fails to explain an eventual reverse path. What if modernization processes stop or reverse? What could happen to religiosity? Secularization theory has no answer. The classic version of secularization theory clearly needs an upgrade. Moreover, what is needed is to update it from a theory of an "inevitable religious decline" to a theory explaining variation (Stark and Finke 2000). There is only one way to do this: a strong focus on the causal mechanisms influencing religiosity.

Starting from the outstanding work by Norris and Inglehart (2004), insecurity theorists have tried to find the mechanisms fostering both the individual and the aggregate religiosity. It is not an easy path. Individual and contextual mechanism, past and present dynamics, socialization processes and various institutional settings coexist. The challenge is puzzling but intriguing, the literature scarce. The insecurity theory is in need of development, both theoretically and empirically. To shed light into this quite brand-new theory, I will now proceed from the general idea behind and then going to the main related issues.

The starting point of this theory appears easy and simplistic but include a lot of different aspects. To come straight to the point, it is possible to say that the main hypothesis behind is that the more insecure people feel, the more religious they will be (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011; Norris and Inglehart 2004). “Feeling of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are key factors driving religiosity” (Norris and Inglehart 2004:4). The idea is the one of reassurance and it is quite well studied also in the psychological literature (Hoelter and Epley 1979; Pargament 1997; Petersen and Roy 1985). People experiencing insecurity feel stressed. The more anxiety one experiences, the less one is capable of controlling and predict what will happen. This enhances the need for the reassurance driven by religious ideologies. “Religious ideologies provide people with predictable rules to help them cope with dangers and immediate problems: a supernatural force or God ensures that in the end everything will turn out well – either presently or in a possible future afterlife” (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011:1). People experiencing insecurity and stress have the need for rigid and clear rules, searching for the maximum predictability. On the contrary, individuals living under conditions of relative security can tolerate more ambiguity and they are less in need of the rigidly predictable rules that religious sanctions provide (Norris and Inglehart 2004). That is, in situation of pervasive risks to life and well-being, “people seek comfort in the idea that their suffering may have meaning and/or that an higher power will ultimately protect them” (Fairbrother 2013:8). Despite being a very interesting approach, the insecurity theory needs however a strong theoretical development. The literature about it is scarce but is possible to glimpse some points to expand on.

2.2.1 Individual Vs contextual

As already mentioned, the need of religious reassurance is less pressing in situations of greater security. The effect of insecurity on religiosity can although operate at both the societal-contextual level and the individual-personal level. This means that “insecurities can arise from both individual and contextual conditions” (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011:2). For instance, using a classic example of economic insecurity, unemployed people are in an insecure personal situation. This can lead to high level of religiosity if compared to people who have a job. Over this individual situation, a situation of insecurity can arise when other people around are unemployed. Therefore, if the unemployment rate of a country is high or whether a particular generation is facing a period of low employment, people are more confronted with unemployed friends or relatives. Confronting with people in an insecurity situation can worry about a possible insecure condition in their own future as well. This twofold nature of insecurity theory arise since the very first postulation by Norris and Inglehart (2004). Starting from the introduction of their book they require to specify this point: "people who experience ego-tropic risks during their formative years (posing direct threats to themselves and their families) or socio-tropic risks (threatening their community) tend to be far more religious than those who grow up under safer, comfortable, and more predictable conditions" (Norris and Inglehart 2004:5).

2.2.2 Past vs present

In the last passage from Norris and Inglehart they mentioned the growing up conditions, implicitly stating that past conditions impact on religiosity. In addition to this, they implicitly acknowledge that also present insecurities might affect religiosity. They report as example major natural disasters which can cause a resurgence of insecurity. So, "does it matter whether people are currently confronted with an insecurity condition or that they have (ever) experienced insecurity in the past?" (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011:2). Stating that only past insecurities matters means stressing that religious values and behaviours are acquired early in life and that socialization processes during childhood are responsible of lifelong religiosity. At the moment only the work by Immerzeel and van Tubergen has tested these hypotheses. They find that both past and present insecurities are related to religiosity (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011). Although some cautions due to methodological issues, they conclude that religiosity is a dynamic personal feature related to both present and past. In other words, this would imply that religiosity is not only the results of socialization process, but are also subject to change later in one' life. Testing this idea in a more coherent and comprehensive way is without doubts one of the main goals of insecurity theorists.

2.2.3 Economic Vs existential

Recalling the abovementioned general idea, insecurity theory states that the importance and the need of religion remains high among vulnerable populations, namely who lives in poor or very unequal nations, facing daily survival-threatening risks. Norris and Inglehart (2004:4) argue that "feeling of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are key factors driving religiosity". But what is intended for risks? It is time to go deep and clarify. The best – and probably the only – attempt to specify this point is another time the one by Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011). They basically define two kinds of insecurities and associated risks: economic and existential. The general idea behind economic insecurities refer to the position of an individual in the market economy (Vail 1999). Informative examples can be one's level of income or employment status (individual) but also unemployment rate or country's social welfare spending (contextual). Existential insecurities are instead concerned with situation that confront people with life-threatening situations like experience of war, death of a friend or parent or bad health.

2.2.4 Linking insecurity theory and secularization: Reversibility

After having presented the main issues related to insecurity theory, it is now time to understand how and whether it can be considered as an upgrade of secularization theory. A good starting point is reasoning about what is meant for security. The very core idea denotes freedom from various risks and dangers. At the beginning the concept was only used referring to military power to defend integrity and security of the nation state. Of course this conception was insufficient and needed to be reformulate in a clearer and inclusive way. The notion of security only linked to military power was supplemented with many other risks contributing to human security ranging from environmental degradation and natural and manmade disasters (floods, earthquakes and so on) to violations of human rights, humanitarian crisis and poverty (Norris and Inglehart 2004). It is clear that economic development is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to create human security, and even if it is, it cannot be considered as deterministic. Of course the various stages of modernization transform the living conditions for many people reducing their risks, but situation-specific factors "make it impossible to predicts exactly what will happen in any given society" (Norris and Inglehart 2004:16). The increase of security due to modernization processes can therefore be momentarily halted or even reversed, also in rich countries, by dramatic events like natural disasters, wars or severe recession. If so, insecurity theory can give the conceptual tools to theorize also a resurgence of religiosity.

Figure 2: Insecurity theory, a brief summary

Main hypothesis: More insecure people feel, the more religious they will be	
Main aim: update the classic secularization theory with stronger causal explanation, giving the tools to theorize also an – eventual – reverse path.	
Main issues:	- Individual and contextual insecurities - Past and present insecurities - Economic and existential insecurities

2.3 Individualization theory

Theoretically speaking, the individualization theory covers a space in-between the secularization theory and the economic market model. Like "secularization", the term "individualization" can be viewed as an umbrella term under which different processes and specifications are present. It shares with the secularization theory the idea that functional differentiation, rationalization and cultural pluralization are driving macro-sociological changes. In contrast to this theory, however, it does not assume that these macro-sociological changes lead to a decline of societal significance of religion. Concerning this, individualization theory shares with the economic market model the assertion that religion and modernity are compatible. Modernization in fact does not lead a decline in the religious significance, but rather a change in its forms. This basically means that, while religion was institutionalized in the form of Church in pre-modern societies, the relationship between Church and religiosity gradually dissolves in modern societies. The relation between individuals and religion has emancipated itself from the strong medium of religious institutions and religious preferences and practice are increasingly subjected to the individual's autonomous choices (Pollack 2008b).

Like secularization theorists, also scholars who refer to individualization theory explore the relation between modernization and religiosity. According to this thesis, modernization leads to a decline in people's religious attachment to the church. However, the decline in institutional religion does not mean that individuals are becoming less religious. Religious beliefs persist, and develop into increasingly individualized and privatized forms of religiosity (Nicolet and Tresch 2009b). Modernization entails a pervasive expansion of instrumental reason in all region of life; nevertheless, individual interest in the spiritual and the religious has not undergone any decline (Hervieu-Léger 2001). More and more people want to believe but without putting this belief into practice (Davie 1990:463). According to the individualization thesis' proponents, modernization contributes to religious change rather than religious decline: while individuals have increasingly taken their distance from religious institutions, religious beliefs tend to persist, and even to come out strengthened (Davie 2002; Hervieu-Léger 1999).

Process of modernization results in a growing rationalization of the different domains of society; this functional differentiation reduces the sphere of influence of religious institutions so that tasks that were commonly assumed by the church are now taken over by specialized professional and organizations (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Religion thus loses the all-encompassing and overarching role it once had (Halman and Draulans 2006) because modernization leads to a change in the social forms of religion rather than to a decline of its social signification (Pollack and Pickel 2007). This undermined preponderance of institutional religion, "conventionally interpreted as the spread of secularization, should be recognized as the emergence of […] the privatized, social form of religion." (Luckmann 2003:279,280).

To sum up, this "religious modernity" can be described by its two main features. First, as a consequence of the weakening of the authority of religious institutions, people's personal beliefs and their sense of attachment to the church have become two increasingly distinct dimensions of religiosity. Secondly, freed from the authority of the institutionalized churches, individuals have the possibility to develop their own belief system, without any references to an institutionally validated body of beliefs. Thus, as beliefs persist, they are becoming increasingly personal, detached and heterogeneous (Davie 1990, 2002; Hervieu-Léger 1999). This process of religious individualization does not mean that individual religiosity is weakened; instead, it becomes multifaceted, syncretistic, and alienated from church (Pollack and Pickel 2007; Stolz et al. 2016a).

To deeply investigate the theoretical underpinnings of this branch of religious studies, in the next three paragraphs I will present three basic contributions based on the works of the three most outstanding advocates of individual religiosity. I will start from the classic idea of "believing but not belonging" developed by Davie, I will continue with the systems of validation of faith by Hervieu-Léger and conclude with the concept of world-view and transcendences by Luckmann.

2.3.1 Believing without belonging

Starting from the work of Davie (1990), "believing without belonging" has become the catchphrase of much European work on religion in the past decades, aiming at grasping this individual and intimate religiosity which is growing as opposed to classical and institutional form of religiosity. To better explain and to go deeply in the theoretical keystones of this idea, a good starting point are the two versions of “believing without belonging” (from now: BWB) developed by Voas and Crockett (2005) in their attempt to criticize the theory[1].

The **strong version** of “believing without belonging” states that, with the exception of a handful of atheists, Europeans continue to believe in God and to have religious sensibilities: the proportion of believers is high and has changed little in the recent years. This strong version entails a focus on beliefs as something related to a “classic” religious background; what results from religious modernization is the different “fruition” of this religiosity. From a religiosity based on strong practice and church affiliation to a more individual and self-related religiosity based on personal beliefs.

The **weak interpretation** of “believing without belonging” is instead something much more attenuated and less related to classic religiosity. In this interpretation beliefs are allowed to be vague and even non-religious; they can be described as “alternative spirituality” or generic “belief in the supernatural”. This spiritual belief can be described with general feelings, experiences and the more numinous aspects of religious beliefs (Davie 1994).

In the **strong version of BWB** individuals give a religious sense to their spiritual quest or, in other words, they establish a self-referential relationship between their personal belief and a traditional, institutionalized faith. “I feel spiritually Christian, but I don’t belong to any church”; “I feel close to Buddhism”. To cultivate such personal preferences, commonly expressed with ease by free-floating believers, it is not necessary to join a particular religious group. In this

[1] Voas and Crockett are two of the main opponents of the Believing without belonging thesis. It can sound weird to use their words while explaining its basics but this seems a very good example of that “knowing the enemy” is the best way to deal with it.

sense, believing without belonging means one's spiritual experience condensate into an intimate and purely private relationship with what one choose to call "God". Given this, the eminently personal experience does not require action in the world and then membership within a believing community is of secondary importance, if not completely useless.

The **weak interpretation of BWB** instead relates on a more general spirituality or supernatural beliefs which characterize modern societies, overwhelmed by rapid technological, social and cultural changes. These kind of beliefs form what Hervieu-Léger (2001) calls "interior religion", stressing the fact that modern religious scene is not characterized by religious individualism as such; it is rather the absorption of religious individualism within modern individualism. The result of this commingling between modern individualism and religious sensibilities can be described with the simplistic (but certainly evocative) term of "New Age". This kind of religious beliefs is entirely centred upon individuals and their personal accomplishments, and characterized by the primacy of personal experience. The key issue of these religious/spiritual beliefs is that no authority defines and imposes external norms upon the individuals.

This self-perfection is made available through physical and spiritual practices borrowed from the great traditions of mysticism and spirituality. These form of New-age refer to a strictly "this-worldly" salvation; the goal of power over nature, pursued by modern sciences, is linked with the goal of realizing one's physical and psychological capacities. From this arises the importance given by many of these believers to "paranormal phenomena" (out-of-the-body experiences, journey through previous lives, communication with spirits). These New age movements bring to the fore the tendencies generally present in renewal movements which shape historic religions: a search for personal authenticity, the importance given to experience, the rejection of faith systems which offer ready keys to reality, a this-worldly conception of salvation conceived as a form of individual self-perfection, and so forth (Hervieu-Léger 2001). "**Religious modernity**" is, fundamentally, a product of this process. It incorporates the spiritual quest into a psychological modernity characterized by individual concern for the perfection of self.

Despite the strong individual focus of this kind of religion/spiritualism and its refusal of institutional legitimation of faith, individuals must find outside of themselves a confirmation of the validity of these spiritual meanings. This explosion of beliefs is the work of individuals who cobble together, in their systems of signification, trying to give a subjective meaning to their own experience, and who independently choose the communal affiliations which they themselves recognize. It is impossible to speak about religion, even in this spiritual/extra-church meaning, without speaking about the systems of validation of faith. In the next paragraph a brief outline of the basics systems of validation of faith will be presented, putting emphasis on the mutual validation and self-validation, typical of religious modernity.

2.3.2 Systems of validation of faith

In dealing with the various regimes of validation of faith, it can be useful to explain both the historical pattern of religious institutionalization and the different degrees of such institutionalization and de-institutionalization. The most exhaustive typology is the one of Hervieu-Léger (2001), who describe four different regimes (see Figure 3).

The **regime of the institutional validation** concurs with the classical acceptation of institutional religion. In these regimes, an institutional authority holds the legitimate power to fix the rules of adherence and affiliation which delineate the boundaries of religious groups. In Catholicism, for example, the institutional magisterium, for which the bishop is the guardian, assumes this function.

Figure 3: Systems of validation of faith

Regime of Validation: INSTITUTIONAL
Referent for Validation: INSTITUTIONALLY QUALIFIED AUTHORIY
Criterion for Validation: CONFORMITY

Regime of Validation: COMMUNAL
Referent for Validation: THE GROUP AS SUCH
Criterion for Validation: COHERENCE

Regime of Validation: MUTUAL
Referent for Validation: THE OTHER
Criterion for Validation: AUTHENTICITY

Regime of Validation: SELF-VALIDATION
Referent for Validation: THE INDIVIDUAL HIM OR HERSELF
Criterion for Validation: SUBJECTIVE CERTAINTY

In the **regime of communal validation** of faith, it is the group as such which constitutes the validation. The relations within the group are supposed to be governed by egalitarianism and, also in the case when some leaders emerge, they are supposed to express themselves in the name of the whole group.

The **regime of mutual validation** refers to a system in which the illumination of faith's truth is accomplished within intersubjective interaction. No exterior precedent – neither institutions nor community – can prescribe for the individual an assemblage of truths of faith. There is no "true faith" but that which is personally appropriated.

In the **regime of self-validation**, all the instances of validation other than the individual vanish. It is in individuals themselves, in their subjective certitude of possessing the truth, that the confirmation of the truth of faith is found.

How this typology can be useful to describe the abovementioned two versions of BWB? Can they be described as different stages of a sort of evolution across these four different regimes?

The answer could be yes. In the **strong version of BWB**, as already said, there is a shift from a traditional, institutionalized “fruition” of religion to a more individualized and self-referential one. This basically means a progressive distancing from a religiosity strongly based of institutional precepts (like weekly church attendance for roman Catholics) to a religiosity subjectively experienced or, at least, shared with small communities of parishes. This would result in an increasingly shift from a regime of institutional validation where the rules of adherence are fixed by an institutional authority and where these rules delineate the boundaries, to a regime of self-validation. This regime of self-validation can, in turn, take the shape of a regime of mutual validation if groups and networks make use of flexible and unstable forms of social affinity, founded upon the spiritual, social, and cultural proximity of the individuals who are involved.

The **weak version of BWB** relies instead on a reverse path. The starting point is a purely subjective conception of the truth, and the key issue of these religious/spiritual beliefs is that no authority defines and imposes norms and boundaries upon the individuals; we are speaking, of course, of a regime of self-validation. But a regime only based on self-validation is short lived: if more people cobble together a small-scale system of beliefs adjusted to their needs they will, soon or later, aspire to share this experience with others who share the same type of spiritual aspiration. At the very beginning, the bonds between the disciples of this nebulous spirituality are produced by episodic recourse to resource centres: bookstores, educational facilities, convention centres, and so forth. These bonds bear witness to spiritual affinities, but not bind the participants “religiously” together. The validation of faith remains, at the core of these cooperatives of spiritual resources, a truly individual discipline (Hervieu-Léger 2001). After this phase of strong self-validation, individuals must find outside of themselves a confirmation of the validity of these meanings; it is in the mutual exchange that individuals can hope to find a way to establish a personal universe of meaning with which they might equip themselves. If no one ever affirms, “what makes sense to you also makes sense to me”, these individually produced meanings will not make sense in the long term. This phase of mutual exchange, based strongly than before to a common consumption of cultural products, can be easily identified as the regime of mutual validation in the Hervieu-Léger’s typology. This sharing of reading materials and activities can constitutes one of the motivating factors in binding together networks of individual: these fluid, flexible, unstable, and even virtual networks can constitute the “degree zero” of a spiritual communalization. This communalization can evolve, if it allows for the subjective and objective incorporation of these insterested into a faith lineage recognized by them as such, towards a forms of religious communalization.

A good way to complete and to give more clues to the work of Hervieu-Léger is to present Thomas Luckmann’s idea of different trascendences underlying the general world-views; understanding the relations among these various trascendence and among the different “providers” of these trascendence can give more insight to the mechanisms of religious individualization, putting enphasis also on the historical patterns.

2.3.3 World-views and transcendence in Luckmann’s work

The statement that religion has to be considered incompatible with modernity, declared by sociology’s founding fathers and scholars from secularization theory, is stated as false by scholars from individualization theory. As Luckmann (2003) says, religion is not a passing phase in the evolution of mankind but a universal aspect of the *conditio humana*. Religion can appear under different socio-structural conditions in various historical forms, but it remains a constituent element of human life, bonding the individual human being, most particularly its experiences of transcendence, to a collective view of good life.

The basic idea in Luckmann's speech is that of society's **world-view**. These world-views, inherent features of every society, present to every individual born into a particular society a conception of the nature of life and death; they define the relation of everyday reality to an extraordinary, transcendent reality, and they articulate a given view of what is good and what is evil. These world-views, with their core of relation between good life and transcendent realities, are transmitted in long historical chains of communicative processes to successive generations.

A phenomenological description of the subjective experiences of transcendence related to world-views reveals three different levels. The continuous **minor transcendences**, defined by the boundaries of time and space, and the **intermediate transcendences** defined by the otherness of fellow being, are related to the ordinary everyday experience. Managing the minor transcendence is the domain of magic while the intermediate/social transcendence circumscribes the domain of political religion. The **great transcendences** are experienced in dreams, ecstasies, meditation, pain and in the sight of death; in the classic view of religion, all the collective representations trying to cope with this great transcendence are the only conventionally viewed as being properly religious. Actually, world-views in general and their religious core in particular contain all three levels, although their proportion may differ (Luckmann 2003).

The mutual relation between this religious part of the world-view and the rest of collective representations well defines some societal features and permits to draw a sort of historical pattern, focusing on the separation among sacred and profane. In *archaic societies*, marked by a simple division of labour, the transmission and maintenance of the sacred were based on the entire social structure, without strong differentiation of religious functions. A second step of religious development can be identified in the *Pharaonic Egypt and in the old societies of the Near East*. In these societies, although the transcendent realities continue to legitimate the entire social structure, the specifically religious part of the world-view had highly visible ties to the institutions of power, as in divine kingship. In a period more or less corresponding with the *Roman Empire* it was possible to find the pre-modern roots of a functionally specialized institution system. In these societies, the sacred part of reality was sharply segregated from the profane, and religion acquired a visibly separate location in a special set of social institutions. This institutional specialization of religious functions, and the monopolization of these functions by one unique religious institution, resulted in a Church which, during the *Middle Ages*, was capable of contesting the state or entering into profitable alliance with it. This situation persisted until the beginning of *modern era* and the social transformations of the late 18th and the 19th centuries; from that period, the consequences of the general functional specialization of institutions have helped to undermine the preponderance of religion in modern societies. The institutional specialization of religion in modern societies entails that norms embedded in social institutions are no longer perceived as subjectively significant by individuals, and thereby lose their effectiveness as models for the integration of sense. Since social institutions, among them the Church, are no longer embedded within the sacred cosmos of the worldview, they lose their ability to provide a ‘subjectively meaningful system of “ultimate” significance’ for individuals. This process, conventionally interpreted as the spread of secularization, should be recognized as the emergence of a fourth, the privatized, social form of religion (Luckmann 2003).

Starting from the beginning of the modern era, both religion and morals were increasingly individualized and privatized. Religion became faith, morality became conscience. The “privatized” social form of religion did not simply replace the institutionally specialized social form; it redefined the general social-structural and cultural framework within which Churches were to coexist with other, in the main, highly individualized objectivations of religious experience. In modern era, different world-views became available to everyone; the belief in the uniqueness and superiority of one’s own view of transcendence was challenged and their dominance in the conduct of ordinary life was undermined (Berger and Luckmann 1995).

Basically, this de-monopolization of the production and distribution of world-views represents the main feature of the “modern privatized” social form of religion. Religious collective representations are produced in a sort of open market and the canonization of one world-view for the entire society become impossible. In this new religious open-market, Churches remain important in providing products which are clearly labelled as religious. Moreover, they are at the same time in competition with other contemporary constructions of a sacred cosmos which attempt to cope with the subjective experiences of the great transcendence. The “New” religious communities and the “large-scale commercialized enterprises” labelled as “New Age” are present among the new religious suppliers.

2.3.4 From believing without belonging to vicarious religion

In the previous two paragraphs we explored a sort of historical path in the evolution and weakening of institutional religions. The sociological debate about the interpretation of the last stage (the one of “modernized privatized religions”) of this evolution is quite intense. On one hand, scholars like Wilson, Bruce, Gill and Voas, argue that the mismatch between believing and belonging is simply a temporary phenomenon and that it is only a matter of time before belief, not sustained by regular attendance, will diminish to match the more rigorous indicators of religiosity. On the other hand, it is possible to find scholars from individualization theory who state that certain dimensions of belief and belonging may well be inverse rather than direct related.

This theoretical debate about the separation of (individual) belief and belonging (focused also on the institutional dimension) can offer fruitful ways for going further in the analysis of religion in modern Europe. The most interesting contribution in this way is the one by Davie (2000, 2001) who introduce the idea of "**vicarious religion**". By vicarious, she means the "notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing" (Davie 2012:169). To explain her idea of vicarious religion, Davie refers to Lutheran churches in Northern countries. Despite the fact that attendance in these countries is the lowest among European countries, it seems that individuals remain members of their churches; they use them extensively for the occasional offices and regard membership as part of national just as much as religious identity. Davie pushes the debate reversing the formula of believing without belonging and introducing the idea of belonging without believing. Institutional Churches seems to be something inherent to the cultural heritage of a nation, which are "used" only in special occasions (birth, marriage, death) or when catastrophic episodes occur. For this last aspect, she shows the examples of the shipwreck of the Swedish ferry *Estonia* or the death of Princess Diana. Both these episodes were linked to a massive and extensive recourse to Churches in two of the most secular countries in Europe.

These two examples are, according to the author, simply large-scale and media-hyped versions of what goes on all the time in the life-cycles of ordinary people. Individual families and communities regularly pause for thought at critical moments in their existence, frequently marking these with some forms of liturgy. The vicariousness of European Churches can thus be viewed in their continuing role in the life-cycles of European people; European populations continue to see Churches as public utilities maintained for the common good, for maintain the *status quo*. This vicariousness, according to Davie, still resonates in Europe in the early years of the twenty-first century and will do the same for the foreseeable future; this concept seems to be more penetrating and more accurate than believing without belonging but, of course, the longer term is rather more difficult to predict. A whole range of issues needs to be taken into account, including a clear mutation in the religious lives in Europe which entailed a shift from a culture of obligation to one of consumption.

Modern religiosity can be described from the start of the twentieth century with two basic sets of interrelated shifts. First, historic churches are systematically losing their capacity to discipline the religious thinking of large sections of the population, especially amongst the youngest. Second, the range of religious choices is becoming wider as innovative forms of religiosity are growing or are coming from outside Europe. In this sense a genuine religious market is emerging in most parts of the continent. To summarize, what until moderately recently was simply imposed or inherited becomes a matter of personal choice; “I go to church […] because I want to, maybe for a short period or maybe for longer, to fulfil a particular rather than a general need in my life and where I will continue my attachment so long as it provides what I want, but I have no obligation either to attend in the first place or to continue if I don’t want to” (Davie 2012:173). Here the shift from the classical **culture of obligation** to a new, modern and individualized **culture of consumption**.

Figure 4: Individualization theory, a brief summary

Main hypothesis: religion is not declining but rather changing from classic institutionalized forms to more individualized and personal ones.	
Main aim: to oppose the classic secularization theory and its emphasis to irreversible decline. Change the lens with which religion is interpreted.	
Main issues:	- Individual Vs institutionalised religiosity - Vague Spirituality (weak version of BWB) Vs personalized religion (strong version of BWB) - Vicarious religion: from a culture of 0bligation to a culture of consumption

2.4 Religious market theory

There are some contributions which casted doubts about the plausibly of secularization theory and the idea of secularization as an all-embracing theory.

These are the works by Bainbridge, Finke, Iannacone and Stark whose theoretical work basically stresses the importance of the supply of attractive religious options assuming a stable demand by individuals.

While the various scholars within the secularization theory discern a strained relationship between religion and modernity, adherents of the economic market model (also called “supply-side model”) presume compatibility between the two. While speculating about this supposed compatibility between modernity and religiosity, the economic market model assumes that the processes of religious pluralization unfolding in modern societies have a positive effect on the stability of religious communities, convictions or practices.

The more pluralist the religious market, the greater the competition between the various religious providers. Competition prompts each religious community and its representatives to improve their services in order to retain their clients and to attract new ones. In contrast, in cases where one religious community occupies a monopoly position, the clergy tends to become indolent and lazy, and to disregard people’s needs (Pollack 2008b). This model, according to its proponents, well fits also considering the level of individual consumers. If various religious offers exists, individual is more likely to “find the pair of shoes that fits him best” (Pollack 2008a:5). In contrast, under the conditions of religious monopoly, the likelihood of product dissatisfaction rises, as individual needs vary and cannot be satisfied optimally by a single provider.

In the model, religious pluralism can unfold if there is strict separation between church and state, because no religious community holds a privileged position over another. In this situation, the starting costs for smaller religious communities to establish themselves beside the large churches are low enough only if the state does not intervene in religious affairs and does not favour one of the large churches. Once religious pluralism is stablished, the productivity of the entire religious market rises due to growing competition (Pollack 2008a, 2008b).

The theoretical starting point of this theory is the idea of **religious economy**. According to Stark (1966), a religious system, such as the economic system, entails the interaction between supply and demand. In the religious economy the "traded" goods are "supernatural explanations", through which individuals use and build relations with transcendent being and subjects. These relations are used to obtain the access to "scarce rewards" (every kind of good to which the individual attaches value, love, richness, health, job, power) or "not available here-and-now rewards" (available only within supernatural contexts, freedom from illness, eternal happiness). Therefore, according to this theory, religion is a sort of market where people demand for "supernatural explanations" while religious enterprises provide answers. Religious firms are social enterprises which primary purpose is to create, maintain and supply religion to some set of individuals (Stark and Iannaccone 1994).

The idea of religious market and supply side approach triggered a huge amount of empirical research and a stream of book and journal articles. The main criticism moved to the use of the market logic (where assumptions from rational choice approach are involved) is that scholars excel in formal modelling but fail to provide empirical evidence, or when they use data, it is typically to show that their models indeed apply post hoc (De Graaf 2013). As Goldthorpe (2000) noted, scholars using Rational Choice are driven mainly by the intellectual challenge of providing a theoretical model for a theoretical puzzle, caring less about the empirical evidence. This criticism seems to apply less to the study of religion because this Rational Choice approach has not only inspired the theoretical discussions but has also encouraged the gathering of unique data sources, the refining in the use of secondary data and an impressive interplay between theory and empirical research. Despite this amount of empirical research, the literature has still been plagued by the habit of ignoring empirical findings that do not fit the theory, seriously challenging the theoretical progress in this field (De Graaf 2013).

The supply side approach to religion implies individual's cost-benefits analysis. The starting point is that religion can be perceived as an economic exchange between people and imagined supernatural agents for goods that are scarce or impossible to obtain in the real world. As Iannacone demonstrated (1991), the idea of an economic theory of religious institution was already expressed by Adam Smith (1965) who showed the disadvantage of a monopoly and the advantages of competition. According to him, the clergy of established churches might become lazy, and this is an advantage for new religious enthusiastic looking for followers. This can be considered as the theoretical milestone for all the improvements came after. As far as it is possible to foresee from this introduction, the economic market theoretical model can be seen both from the point of view of the individuals and from the point of view of the religious context. In presenting the basic features of this theory, I will therefore start from its micro and macro foundations, moving then to the three most problematic issues.

2.4.1 Religious Market Theory: Micro and Macro Foundations

The **micro foundation** of supply side theory basically resides in what individuals look for in a religious market. These "religious goods", in their classical acceptation, are supernatural and no verifiable compensator and they are "*treated by humans as if they were rewards*" (Stark & Bainbridge, 1996: 36). The supernatural and no verifiable nature of these rewards suggested to Stark (1999a) to replace the label "compensator" with "otherworldly rewards"; the focus on such final goals of religion is similar to the "salvation goals" theorized by Weber (Stolz, 2006:15). The self-evident problem in managing this kind of goods is intrinsic in their nature: how it is possible to evaluate these rewards if they are not transparent, not objective and maybe unreal? According to Wilson (2002), this micro foundation of Stark's theory provide us with goods we cannot have; if these goods cannot be produced by human action, supernatural agents are invented to provide, or promise to provide, these goods in the afterlife, and people pray for such goods.

This conception however might capture only half of the meaning; it totally ignores the kind of goods that can be produced by human actions and the role of religion in achieving this. It ignores basically the social dimension of religious life. Within religious networks people can support each other and may receive positive support, both psychological (comfort, company) and practical (food, economic support). Summarizing, we can speak at least of two kind of religious goods "exchanged in the market": social support and otherworldly support. The first can be found also in other markets, whereas the latter is monopolized by religious market.

The micro foundation of religious market theory mainly focuses on individual and psychological need for religious supply (which are very hard to measure); what instead has inspired most research is the **macro theoretical model** of religious economies explicating what stimulate religious participation. More or less every empirical work concerning supply side theory tries to explain which contextual features can drive religiosity. As starting point to present these macro propositions, I am going to consider three relevant proposition made by Stark and Finke in their "Acts of Faith: Explaining the human Side of Religion" (2000:198-201):

Proposition 71: "To the degree that a religious economy is unregulated, it will tend to be very pluralistic." In this context "unregulated market" means that the state does not support a specific church and does not restrict competition between churches. Pluralism is related to the number of religious firms active in the economy; more firms will hold to more pluralism.

Proposition 72: “The capacity of a single religious firm to monopolize a religious economy depends upon the degree to which the state uses coercive force to regulate the religious economy.”
Proposition 73: “To the degree that religious economies are unregulated and competitive, overall levels of religious participation will be high. Conversely, lacking competition, the dominant firm[s] will be too inefficient to sustain vigorous marketing effort, and the result will be an overall level of religious participation, with the average person minimizing and delaying payment of religious costs”.

Summarizing up these three proposition it is possible to say that, according to religious market theory, countries with a strong religious competition, more pluralism and low level of religious regulation will have more religious suppliers thus producing attractive religious commodities. This can sound interesting in a situation of classical and perfect market but, is religious market a perfect or a classical market? To answer this question, or to give more insight, we have to refer to the three basic issues which still remain unsolved theoretical dilemmas. These three issues refer to the basic (and at the same time problematic) underpinnings of religious market theory, namely the *i)* strong focus on the supply side and on the market competition, the *ii)* implicit assumption that religious market is like any other market and the *iii)* strong assumption of a stable demand of religion over time and place. I will assess these three issues separately.

2.4.2 Market Competition and Religious Competition

One of the main issues concerning religious market as a pure market is the idea of competition. From the general theoretical framework, it seems that both a lack of regulation and a high level of pluralism positively affect competition. In reality, a clear definition of competition and especially of the causal mechanism among pluralism, regulation and competition is missing. This makes it difficult to measure competition, with the results of a possible misunderstanding of the findings. Authors might, for example, agree on the increase of religious pluralism in a society but disagree on whether this should be interpreted as an increase or decrease of competition (Olson 2002). Trying to overcome this theoretical lack of specification, Olson suggests two different definitions of religious competition. The first, which can fit to the claims by Stark and colleague, holds that competition is indicated by the number of potential substitutes to one's own religious group. The second instead takes into consideration the substitutability, suggesting the idea of submarkets (De Graaf 2013). The underlying idea is that there is real competition only when different submarkets can substitute each other. In making religious choices, people try to conserve their religious capital and, for example, Lutheran congregation are unlikely to compete with the nearby mosque, while both try to meet religious needs (Olson 2002:142). Because of religious capital, people would be unlikely to switch to a totally different denomination. What is noticed in Europe, for example, is that typically the only options about what a Catholic decides is whether to stay a Catholic or to become nonreligious (De Graaf 2013); similar findings exist among Orthodox members (Need and Evans 2004). It is very unlikely that people switch to another religion and, if they do so, the switch concerns a new church that is very similar, since it is costly not to conserve one's religious capital (Stark and Finke 2000).

As said before the absence of a clear definition of religious competition is problematic. This issues is usually not addresses and, because of the lack of direct measures of competition, pluralism is often used as a proxy for competitiveness (Stark and Iannaccone 1994, 1996). Causally, one expects that pluralism is required for making competition possible but in reality pluralism is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one. Stark and Finke (2000:218) state that "it must be noted that in some circumstance, pluralism does not results in competition and thus will not be associated with higher levels of religious commitment". This not-causal relation between pluralism, competition and religious commitment can be seen in a situation of conflict because, "even where competition is limited, religious firms can generate high levels of participation to the extent that firms serve as the primary organizational vehicles for social conflicts. Conversely, if religious firms become significantly less important as vehicles for social conflict, they will be correspondingly less able to generate commitment" (Stark and Finke 2000:202).

Starting from this consideration about competition and conflict, Olson (2002) suggests that it is not competition but religious opposition that is the central driving force (De Graaf 2013). Religious competition and religious conflict can be combined in what Olson called "**religious opposition**". He defines religious opposition as "behaviour (or threatened behaviour) that obstructs (or is believed to obstruct) a religious group's attainment of its goals" (Olson 2002:139). Religious competition and religious conflict may increase religious commitment, but they have different causal mechanisms due to different levels of consciousness: religious conflict involves conscious opposition, whereas religious competition can be unconscious. In situation of **conscious religious conflict**, religious adherents may, perceiving themselves as a target and without appeal from religious leaders, start to perceive religious group as a source of organizational strength and as a means to protect their interests. This is therefore more a demand side issue, quite inconsistent with the claims of religious market theory (Olson 2002). Also regarding **unconscious religious competition** some theoretical problems are present. Hamberg and Petterson stress the issue that producers in a religious competitive market may not consciously compete with each other (2002). Since competition is totally conscious in the classical market definition, it is important to investigate whether and to what extent the religious market is special.

2.4.3 Comparing Markets

The approach of considering religious market in the same ways as the other markets clashes immediately with the most controversial issue of this theory. In a classic market, individuals look for buying a certain good, at a certain prize and considering all the dealers at a reasonable distance. A large number of dealers implies more **competition**. Interestingly, scholars from the religious market theory replace indicators measuring competition (i.e. number of Churches) with indicators of **pluralism**. This can be the first theoretical and analytical problem in considering religious market as a classic market. Anyhow, any indicator will be used, it “must be assessed from the point-of-view of the individual and thus is a local phenomenon, limited to an easily travelled area” (Stark and Finke 2002:37). This idea of “reasonable distance” has to be considered if religious market has to be treated as a classical market.

Second sensible issue in comparing religious to classic market is the **state intervention** and the resulting situation of monopoly, oligopoly or real free market. As Stark and Finke hypothesize, “the capacity of a single religious firm to monopolize a religious economy depends upon the degree to which the state uses coercive force to regulate the religious economy” (2002:37). According to this point, it seems that the state in modern societies has an incentive to use coercive force to regulate the market for commercial commodities in order to maximize competition. On the contrary, we see that states, with only a few exceptions, are increasingly reluctant to intervene with the religious market, which anyway maximizes the competition among religions (De Graaf 2013:330). Regarding to state intervention and to comparability between religious and classical markets, it seems that different approaches give the same result, namely more competition. This is undoubtedly a relevant point that needs to be clarified by religious market’s supporters.

Another point of contrast between religious and classic markets regards the nature of the exchanged goods. In classic markets exchanged goods are “**experience goods**” for which the quality can be assessed, with a certain degree of certainty, using them and building their reputation. Religious goods are instead “**inscrutable goods**” and both buyers and sellers have no reliable information on the quality of the product (i.e. salvation). This point contradicts one of the basic assumptions of Rational Choice Theory applied to market strategy, namely that the choice is not only rational but based on well-founded beliefs. In the case of inscrutable goods, religious firms have to rely only to their reputation to avoid the continually proofing of the quality of products. Churches basically use symbols instead of signs to build and demonstrate the validity of their products. "The more a commodity approaches inscrutability, the greater the incentive to invest in symbolic resources, and the fiercer the competition selecting successful symbols" (Gambetta 1994:359).

Of course religious goods have to be considered as inscrutable but it is quite common that religious people might not judge these goods as inscrutable, simply because they are looking for **verifications** only: only positive signals are considered. Nobody questions the role of the saints in the cases in which people do not survive, for example, a serious car accident; more common among religious individuals to thank God, saints or supernatural entities when someone survive to such accident. Every seller working in a classic market should be jealous of such one-sidedness where negative empirical facts are simply ignored.

2.4.4 Religious Demand Stable Over Time and Place?

The third crucial issues that we need to discuss here regards the assumption that people would have a constant demand with respect to religious products. This fact has been debated a lot since the first Stark's postulates. The statement that "in pursuit of rewards, humans will seek to exchange with a God or Gods" (Stark 1999a:270) has been expanded stating that "regardless of power, persons and groups will tend to accept religious compensators for rewards that do not exist in this life. […] in some regards everyone is deprived and everyone has a motive for being religious – that since everyone faces death, doctrines of an afterlife appeal to all. We could call this the universal form of religious commitment" (Stark 1997:8). Religion is the only plausible source of certain rewards for which there is a general and inexhaustible demand (Stark and Finke 2002). A less strictly formulation of this idea is that: “important religious developments derive from change in the incentives and opportunities facing religious producers, not some sudden shift in the material or psychological state of the populace. Of course, religious markets respond to the equilibrating forces of both supply and demand, but, as a matter of historical fact, religious demand proves much more stable than religious supply” (Finke and Iannaccone 1993:28). It can be quite hard to demonstrate or to falsify this statement; here I am presenting two different considerations which can give more insight to assess the issue.

The first consideration is rooted in the work of the evolutionary anthropologist Robin Dunbar (2004). He describes **four important functions** of every religion: “*i)* providing coherence for the world in which we live (a metaphysical scheme that explains why the world is as it is, and thus makes sense of it for us); *ii)* allowing us to feel we have greater control (through prayer and other rituals) over the vagaries of life than we would otherwise do; *iii)* enforcing rules about how we should behave in society (ethics and moral systems); and *iv)* allowing a minority to exert political control over the community” (ibid.:168). This would imply that if something else could replace these functions, or we do not need these functions anymore, the demand for religion could decline (De Graaf 2013). In modern times the problem for contemporary rationalist is how to create this sense of community without resorting to the mechanism of religion, because religion works […] when we abandon rational thought and surrender ourselves to the mysterious and the ineffable” (Dunbar 2004:200). Consequently, according to Dunbar the best prediction for the future is a stable demand.

Second test as to whether the demand is stable or not is provided by the former communist societies in Eastern Europe. In these countries the communist regimes tried, although not always very successfully, to abolish religion. At the end of these regimes the coercive force to destroy religion disappeared and, if religious demand is indeed stable, one would expect an increase in the number of church members. This issue was tested quite extensively, with heterogeneous and interesting results. Need and Evans concluded that "while the communist regimes were indeed rather unsuccessful in destroying private religion, the forces of modernization continued this process regardless" (Need and Evans 2004:206). Greeley (1994) conversely sees a religious revival in Russia while Voas and Doebler (2011) reveals rather mixed results. The most interesting results are the ones by Froese and Pfaff (2001, 2004) who show that religiosity, in former communist countries, has increased in Orthodox countries but not in Catholic countries. These findings suggest that the demand for religion might be stable, at least for particular cases like Orthodox countries. Far from being the definitive evidence for the stability of religious demand, the case of former Communist countries remains an interesting quasi-experiment to scrutinize deeply (I will do so in Chapter 6).

Figure 5: Religious market theory, a brief summary

Main hypothesis: processes of religious pluralization have a positive effect on the stability of religious communities, convictions, or practices	
Main aim: oppose the classic secularization theory and presuming compatibility between modernization and religiosity	
Main issues:	- Demand of belief stable in time and space - Religious market working as the other markets - Market Competition Vs religious competition

Chapter 3

INSECURITY AND RELIGIOSITY - WHEN PSYCHOLOGY HELPS SOCIOLOGY

An overview of the main theories behind the idea of religion as reassurance

The idea that religious behaviour and belief is somehow linked to the situations of insecurity individuals experience has become a kind of common-sense knowledge both in the academia and in the media. What clashes with this is that very little research been conducted on this connection; especially in the field of sociology of religion only few attempts have been made but many academics, columnists and reporters alike continue to claim the individuals facing uncertainty will likely turn to religion. For decades scholar have taken for granted the fact that people experiencing situations of uncertainty are more likely to be religious.

3.1 A few bits of literature

Some attempts to study (American) religion and its relationship with economic circumstances were carried on during the ’70 (Glock and Stark 1965; Stark 1972) but what follows were 30 years of research void. What brought attention back to this topic was the seminal work by Norris and Inglehart (2004) which had the undeniable merit to refocus the attention and to avoid leaving the insecurity theory in the domain of common-sense theories. In their book Sacred and Secular, the two authors re-examine the secularization debate with the idea that religiosity increases when individuals feel a sense of vulnerability. The more affluent nations, they say, will show lower levels of religiosity if compared to the poorer ones. “The process of secularization – […] – has occurred most clearly among the most prosperous social sectors living in affluent and secure post-industrial nations" (Norris and Inglehart 2004:5). And vice-versa "people who experience ego-tropic risks during their formative years (posing direct threats to themselves and their families) or socio-tropic risks (threatening their community) tend to be far more religious than those who grow up under safer, comfortable, and more predictable conditions" (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Although it is rightly considered as the cornerstone of this field of study, their book basically lacks in a fundamental aspect: an attempt to refer to the causal mechanism behind the association is completely missing. There are only few words about how the link between insecurity and religiosity works and about the micro-level factors and their effects on religiosity. In order to better understand what is going on for worldwide religiosity and to correctly place the insecurity theory in the broad framework of secularization theory, the individual experience should be included in the "formula". The main theoretical approach, while linking modernization to secularization best fits to describe a – supposed – religious decline but, given the absence of this causal explanation, fails to explain an eventual reverse path. What could happen to religiosity if modernization processes stop or reverse? Secularization theory, as it is drawn, has no answer. The classic version of secularization theory clearly needs an upgrade; what is needed is to update from a theory of an "inevitable religious decline" to a theory explaining variation (Stark and Finke 2000). One of the way for doing that is absolutely a strong focus on the real causal mechanisms influencing religiosity and insecurity theory could be one of the prime suspects.

Given the importance of developing this approach, since the work by Norris and Inglehart some attempts were made. For example, some following cross-national studies found that socio-economic inequality and social welfare spending were associated with religiosity (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009). From these studies it appears that the role of contextual economic insecurities (e.g. income inequality) basically confirm the insecurity theory but evidences on individual economic insecurities (e.g. unemployment and income) are less consistent. Whereas some studies found that people in more insecure economic conditions tend to be more religious (e.g. Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009), other studies did not (e.g te Grotenhuis, de Graaf, and Peters 1997). Another reason to explore the micro-level of the relation. Moreover, it could be misleading to relegate the idea of insecurity only to economic or financial status: insecurity could also be existential in nature (e.g. loss of a loved one). If possible, even fewer studies have tried to face this issue (e.g. Sosis 2007; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009).

As far as the literature suggests, the only sociological systematic attempt to study religion as reassurance for situations of insecurity is the one by Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011). Despite they tested a lot of variables concerning economic and existential insecurities, past and present insecurities and individual and contextual insecurities, their results, by their own admission, need to be refined and scrutinized also using longitudinal data.

All that has been reported in this brief introduction goes in the direction of depicting the insecurity theory as a very interesting approach. However, to truly become one of the missing links of the wide secularization theory, much light must be shed on the ongoing individual mechanisms that lie behind the generic statement "in situations of insecurity people turn religious". At present, the insecurity theory is in need of development, both theoretically and empirically (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011).

3.1.1 Linking insecurity theory to secularization debate

I have already spoken about the lack of academic research interest in this topic. However, the sociological debate about secularization would have much to gain from a better understanding of the link between insecurity and religiosity. As previously underpinned, what lacks in the secularization theory is a mechanism which could expain also an – eventual – reverse path. Until the mechanisms behind the various patterns of religiosity become clearer, the secularization theory will always be lacking. The insecurity theory could surely help to fill some of these gaps.

The majority of the literature concerning secularization processes have studied them with a macro-institutional perspective through historical comparative analysis and with many different theoretical lenses. All of them put before the understanding of the religious patterns – under what conditions they are strengthened or weakened, under which circumstances they turn upward or downward. As told, only few studies have examined secularization at the individual level.

There is no doubt about the fact that religion is strongly tied to the social institutions of the states, to their economy, to their legal system, to their whole public apparatus. It is therefore even more evident that each change in one or more of these institutions can be related to a shift in religiosity (Asad 2003; Casanova 1994). These shifts clearly depend on the specific contexts of these institutions over time and therefore religious patterns and institutional contexts are likely to be strictly connected. This way of reasoning makes every generalization about secularization and religiosity worldwide very difficult but, above all, completely forget the individual experience. In trying to understand religion only as a social phenomenon, a very important piece of the equation will surely be missing. Of course the strength and the patterns of religiosity depend on the institutions religion is tied to, but these institutional frameworks clearly shape the individual religious behaviour as well as all the situations individuals face and which can promote or suppress their religiosity. Aim of the insecurity theory is basically to reconstruct this link and to explore how and if the institutional context can influence individual situations with a resulting impact on their religiosity. Only looking deeply into this black box the secularization theory can aspire to become fully comprehensive.

Despite the undoubted importance of this way of reasoning for sociology, it is puzzling the almost total absence of explicit attempts to test this theory. It is even more puzzling because, conversely, the psychological literature has extensively dealt with the idea of religion as reassurance and coping strategy. Given the fact that this research aims to focus mainly on the individual mechanism driving religiosity, these contributions must be absolutely taken into account. In the next paragraphs I will firstly present the sociological contributions moving then to the psychological ones. This is this one a clear example on how fruitful collaborations between different science can foster a better understand of a human phenomenon.

3.2 A sociological view: Religion, Theodicy and Existential Insecurity

The postulation of the idea of insecurity and religiosity in the sociological field is only the last step of a long lasting path which involved philosopher, theologians and, only recently, sociologists. It all began with the notion of theodicy which was first proposed by the German philosopher Goffried Wilhelm Leibniz (Leibniz 1710|1951). Theodicy literally means "vindication of the justice of God" and basically refers to the efforts that have to be made to justify the presence of evil in a world dominated by a morally perfect and omnipotent God which although permits this evil. The symbolic load of this notion is so evident that not surprisingly many philosopher and theologians dealt with it.

What is interesting for framing our discourse about insecurity is however the interpretation given by sociology. Theodicy, in the Social Sciences, refers to the ways in which individuals and societies react, reflect and deal with this "unknown" by means of social action. Since the seminal works by Max Weber, the idea of these dealing strategies caught the attention of early sociologists. According to him, the possible reactions to the problem of theodicy can take a variety of forms, corresponding to different patterns of social actions. Whatever the chosen pattern, these mankind behaviours disclose the same human need to deal with the contradiction of “why bad thigs happen to good people” (Weber 1915).

Peter Berger started from this notion of theodicy and expanded it through his theory of social dialectic. This theory basically explore how social reality is constructed in a continuous interplay between macro-level structures and individuals (Berger 1967; Berger and Luckmann 1966). According to the theory, humans aim to create an ordered reality that gives meaning, predictability and security to their existence. They do so using three different dialectic phenomena: **externalization, objectification and internalization**. These three processes represent the way by which mankind creates meaning, symbols and institutions in a general way (externalization), gives them a character of objectivity (objectification) and finally takes them back as a coherent system (internalization) (Berger and Luckmann 1966) . This idea of “order bricolage” serves our purposes for two different reasons. First of all, it declares social reality as an ongoing process coming out from the continuous interaction between different macro-level structures and their expression through the individual actions. Secondly, religion – in Berger’s theory – contributes to the social construction of reality as an ordered and meaningful “social reality” (Berger 1967) . Religion, in this idea, acts as a kind of shield which protects man against the chaos in the form of particularly aspects that endanger the order of the world. This “sacred cosmos”, Berger says, “is confronted by man as an immensely powerful reality other than himself. Yet this reality addresses itself to him and locates his life in an ultimately meaningful order” (Berger 1967:26). Religion is therefore not simply a macro variable – like the economy or politics – which is in relation to other macro variables. It is instead a tool used my men to make sense of the world; it is the “sacred canopy” that keeps men together and gives meaning to various aspects of life, especially in situations of uncertainty.

Norris and Inglehart (2004) start exactly from this point and advance this idea of religion as response to theodicy with their theory of “existential insecurity”. According to them, processes of modernization and human development are boosting the safety and thus reducing the exposure to social and individual risks. This situation diminishes the levels of anxiety within a certain society and besides increases feeling of psychosocial well-being and security. What they state is therefore that any differences in levels of religiosity between societies can be explained through variables which refer to their paths toward modernization, like human development, economic inequalities and so on. As we previously revealed, they completely ignore the mechanisms behind the “existential insecurity”; they restrict themselves basically stating that this notion exists and is linked to feeling of vulnerability, which can be ameliorated by religiosity and its transcendental reassurance.

A more precise focus on the various sociological mechanism which link insecurity and religiosity can be found in Stolz (2009). While reviewing the main approaches to explain religiosity and religious change, the author argues that may be rational to turn to a religion that “offers help in various forms” (Stolz 2009:351). Religion can help by providing a sense of meaning to deprivation by mean of myths and it can embed suffering into rituals and rules of conduct. In addition it can help to render the suffering bearable through specific habitus and promise hope and good outcomes for the future. Apart from this “supernatural” goods, religion and religious groups can also furnish very concrete help in the form of housing, food, comfort and financial assistance.

Starting from these last rows of potential mechanisms at work, I will now present another way of looking at the idea of religious reassurance. I then switch from an approach strongly focused on the social significance of religiosity to an approach strongly focused on individuals and their psychology.

3.3 A psychological view: Stress Coping Strategies

The starting point psychologists use to analyse religion as reassurance deals with the notions of stress coping strategies. Everyone in this world, with more or less extent, suffer from, or has suffered from, some kind of stress. What we – and the majority of the scholar from the field – intend for stress is the mental and physical response and adaptation by our bodies to the real or perceived changes and challenges in our lives. We can also consider a stressor like any real or perceived physical, social, or psychological event or stimulus that causes our bodies to react or respond. What is really useful for our purposes is also to note that stress can take different forms: on the one side, it can be short-lived, meaning a single event with a sharp and defined time span and that acts as a shock for those who experience it. On the other side, it can be long-term, meaning when some circumstances continue to have impact throughout the whole – or part of it – life course. In any case, stress requires solutions unless individuals want it to cause physical, psychological or emotional damages (Wheaton 1997).

This distinction between short-lived and long-term stressors – also referred to as event stressor and chronic stressor – well fits to the distinction between economic and existential insecurity seldom presented in the literature. Whereas events like the death of a loved one or physical accidents fall in the category of event stressors, the economic insecurity is one of the best example of chronic stressor. Also when this insecurity is caused by a single event like the loss of a job, it is characterized by its enduring nature and ability to permeate the entire life course. Coping with this kind of chronic stressors hence requires a great amount of energy without the assurance of an immediate resolution (Gottleib 1997). An event stressor, conversely, usually comes with a traumatic event that occurs unexpectedly, is relatively short-lived and usually is followed by a definite resolution.

In the literature it is possible to find two characteristics which identifies a stressful event: *i)* it has to be perceived as demanding or threatening and *ii)* the individual who is suffering from it has to believe he or she lacks resources to cope with the situation (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). When faced with this kind of stressors, people can use various strategies to cope with them; *i)* they can stay vigilant and ready for rapidly respond to situations affecting well-being: *ii)* they can use problem focused strategies for that kind of stressor events which can be faced with problem-solving mechanisms; *iii)* they can look at the nearly future with positive attitude; *iv)* they can try to work on the causes and the purposes of the stressful situation and, finally *v)* they can simply accept that the stressful situation cannot be altered. The literature in the field of stress coping consistently supports claims that the choice of a coping strategy and its effectiveness depend on personal characteristics like the economic status, gender and race. In addition, other factors such the presence, the quantity and the quality of social support networks can play a role.

In its “Coping with Chronic Stress”, Gottlieb (1997) only mentions a general relation between religious beliefs and practices and the onset of a chronic stress. He generally says that religious – and spiritual – experiences can contribute in a variety of coping strategies, namely the kind of strategies that try to make meaning out of a stressor event or routine or that try to utilize religious communities for material or social support. This “meaning making” coping strategies are therefore the most closely linked with the religious-oriented strategies and has been shown to have positive effects by adjusting individual’s “situational meaning” and the general “global meaning” (Skaggs and Barron 2006). These basic and preliminary considerations about stress coping strategies and religion underline the needs to assess this relation more in detail; what I will present in the next paragraph is an attempt to put together the aforementioned sociological considerations with these notions from the psychological literature, expanding more on the notion of religiosity as coping strategy. It is obviously not an easy path, but in the view of the author, it represents the most appropriate way to build a reliable theoretical ground for the insecurity theory.

3.4 Religious coping strategies

The starting point for combining the psychological and sociological notions of religion as reassurance and coping strategy is the basic idea that religious coping strategies are one among many types of strategies from which individuals can choose. We have already said that the appropriateness of religion as coping strategy reside in its ability to help people to “make meaning” out of stressful situations. In the Berger’s theory of social construction of reality, religion can be displayed as part of an ordered and meaningful “social reality” (Berger 1967; Berger and Luckmann 1966). In this sense, individuals use religion as a medium to make sense of their suffering: it is something like a shield against the chaos.

I said in the previous paragraph that the most influent sociological work about insecurity and religiosity – the Norris and Inglehart one – completely ignores the mechanism involved in their notion of existential insecurity. Almost the same do all the other sociological works on this topic. They uniquely state that religiosity prevails in those society with higher level of insecurity and that prosperous societies – like the post-industrial ones – demonstrate lower levels If compared to the poorer ones. The only explanation of the link between insecurity and religiosity they give is based on the idea of “feeling of reassurance” provided by religions (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

If the insecurity theory would gain theoretical strength, this mechanism has absolutely to be deepened. According to one of the most relevant books about religion and coping (Pargament 1997) what individuals seek through coping is what the author calls “grounding”. A “grounded” individual is an individual who feels psychologically balanced and with an overall sense of optimism and positivity. Religion is a system which can provide a framework for this “grounding”. Stressed individuals need a system which can help them to reconstruct a sense of and deal with the world: of course, religion can be one of the available systems (Pargament 1997). The literature which deals with stress coping strategies has shown that religious coping strategies can work at various levels and in different ways. They can provide positive beliefs (Krok 2015), appraisal of stressors through religious attributions (Beagan, Etowa, and Bernard 2012) , coping behaviour like prayer or meditation and social support networks via religious communities (Beagan et al. 2012; Gall et al. 2005). Individual using religious coping strategies are moreover more resilient than who do not (Park 2005).

Whatever their intrinsic nature, religious coping strategies are used by individuals for two main reasons: *i)* because religion is an available part of individual's "orienting systems" and *ii)* because religion is a compelling way to cope (Pargament 1997). In linking psychological approach with the sociological one, it is relevant to recognize that "religion is more likely to be accessed in coping when it is more available to the individual, that is, when it is a larger part of the individual's orienting system for relating with the world" (Pargament 1997:144). Individuals who have greater nonreligious coping resources are therefore less likely to use religion as coping strategy. To put in another way, religious oriented coping strategies are largely determined by an individual's inclination toward religion and this inclination basically arises through religious communities that are contextual in nature (Pargament 2002). Religion, in this sense, is part of everyone cultural toolkit (Swidler 2001) which informs and drives the habits, skills and styles people use to choose among and to build "strategies of action" to manage every-day life and especially stressful events and situations (Swidler 1986). Religion, being part of a culture, supplies with a set of religious-oriented elements among which individuals can choose from when facing a particular situation. Individuals can make meaning out of the world using these "religious tools" to read their environment, to recommend their actions and to influence their decision within the context of their religious environment

(Dahinden and Zittoun 2013). This bring the discourse back to the words of Berger because religion can therefore give meaning only through a sociocultural dialectic which consider that the religious meaning is created in relation with the social, political and cultural institutions that exist within its environment (Duemmler and Nagel 2013). Verter (2013) pushes the discourse further and, influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, claims that religion works as a form of “spiritual capital” and religious knowledge and competencies act as commodities within a symbolic economy. Religious and spiritual dispositions are thus a product of the social relations tied to the realm of the religious. Given this, religious communities are essential to produce – and reproduce – religious beliefs and practices, which influence the mechanisms toward decision-making and actions. These mechanism affecting strategies can include the regulation of individual lifestyles and behaviours, the provision of coping resources as well as community social resources (Verter 2013). To conclude, Brandt and Henry (2012) best summarize all the key-points of the discourse. Religion, in their view, can be considered as a form of psychological protection against insecurities which works by providing a worldview that permeates everyday life with meaning, value and certainty, furnish life-standards and beliefs, provides a sense of identity and moral community, and foster social connections.

Chapter 4

ABOUT THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION

Measurement, techniques and approaches behind the study of religion with survey data

The empirical test of sociological theories is something always complex, the debate about it is huge and will last forever. If we focus on religiosity, its empirical study is puzzling but intriguing at the same time. Far from our purposes to deal with the debate of measurement per se, I will instead tackle four different issues which, in the eyes of the author, need to be carefully considered when studying religion and religious change with survey data. These four issues – the multidimensionality of the concept, the different levels of the relations, the different kind of data we can use and the age-period-cohort issue – are so relevant that I devoted a paragraph to each of them. The attempt here is to scrutinize and to justify some methodological choice I will do along this entire work.

4.1 What is religiosity? A multidimensional approach

In the previous chapter, I gave a brief outline of the various theories concerning religion and religiosity. Starting from there, it is quite straightforward to understand that religion, and religiosity, is something hard to theorize and, even more, hard to measure.

Religion is normally difficult to conceptualize and operationalize because its supernatural, practical, ritual and normative aspects are very interrelated. A good starting point to define religion can be the one of Bruce (2011:1): "beliefs, actions, and institutions based on the existence of supernatural entities with powers of agency (that is, Gods) or impersonal processes possessed of moral purpose […] that set the conditions of, or intervene in, human affairs”. Following instead the working definition by Norris and Inglehart (2004) it is possible to switch from a general definition of “religion” to a more useful definition of “religiosity”. Religion can be seen as the complex system of answers to individual impulses or strategies of life, whereas the concept of religiosity refers to the concrete ways, empirically observable, by which individuals or groups express the various dimensions of their religion (Norris and Inglehart 2004). The plural construct is precisely what best describe the concept of religiosity: a very multidimensional concept.

People think, feel and act differently when it comes to religion and even within a single religious tradition, many variations can be found (Glock 1962). Having a way to measure different commitment to religion it is a prerequisite to answer every question regarding the sources and the consequences of individual religiosity. There is a dangerous tendency in religious field to focus upon one or another of the diverse manifestations of religiosity and to ignore all others (Glock 1962). Besides that, the particular aspect of religion being studied is rarely placed in the context of its relations to other expressions of religiosity. This issue is puzzling; also looking at different religions we see extremely varied religious expressions. Different religions expect quite different things from their adherents.

Following Glock (1962, 1964) and Glock and Stark (1965), it is possible to identify five dimensions that underlie the broader concept of religiosity; within one or another, all of the many manifestations of religiosity prescribed by the different religions can be ordered. Such dimensions shall be called the experiential, the ritualistic, the ideological, the intellectual and the consequential. In the literature there are some quite well accepted equivalent terms which I am going to use in the next chapters. Speaking about the Ideological Dimension means speaking about Religious Belief, the Ritualistic Dimension refers to Religious Practice, the Experiential Dimension to Religious Feeling, the Intellectual Dimension to Religious Knowledge and the Consequential Dimension to Religious Effects. It is scarcely plausible that these dimensions are entirely independent; indeed, there are several studies suggesting that being religious on one dimension does not necessarily imply religiosity on other dimensions (Glock 1962). What Glock suggests is therefore to try to build more adequate measures of religion within and between these dimensions. “We cannot assume a *priori* (…) either that the dimensions are unilateral or that a single indicator will be sufficient to distinguish religious orientations within a dimension. Nor can we assume that religiosity expressed on one dimension automatically assures it is being manifested on other dimensions as well” (Glock 1962).

The five dimensions provide a clear frame for assessing religiosity but, ironically, “there is not a single piece of research in the literature which has looked at all five dimensions simultaneously” (Glock 1962:99). Maybe something has changed from the time of Glock’s masterpieces (Huber and Huber 2012), but it is surely true that most research has taken a unilateral rather than a multidimensional approach. This is clearly a weakness, especially when testing the main theories about religion. Implicitly or explicitly, every theory is built up around the reciprocal connections among these five dimensions and it is therefore crucial to rely on a multidimensional research design. For secularization theorists, i.e., recent history is characterized by a clear decline of each dimension whereas for the individualization theorists by a decline in religious practice but a stability (or even an increase) of religious beliefs. Also religious market scholars, as said before, considered religious belief as something constant (exogenous) and religious practice dependent on the religious environment.

Given these preliminary considerations, an obvious further step is to give some insights to these different dimensions, both from a theoretical and a methodological point of view. After having listed them, another plausible sixth dimension will be discussed. It relies to the individual perception of religiosity or, to widen the definition, to the belonging to some kind of religious institution or to the religious community in its broader sense.

4.1.1 The Ritualistic Dimension: Religious Practice

The ritualistic dimension refers to the religious practices expected from religious adherents. It comprises such activities as worship, prayer, sacraments and fasting. Primary focus is on what people do rather than the meaning of such activities. Glock suggests three different possible approaches to studying religious practice. *i)* Firstly, one may simply give attention to the frequency of individual's engagement in ritualistic activities. *ii)* Secondly, it is possible to look at variations in nature of a particular practice such as prayer. *iii)* Third approach instead may be studying the meanings of ritual acts for the individuals. The first approach is the simplest one and require the researcher to specify which religious practice he wants to focus on. Since different religions have different practices, it is needed to specify whether to focus on practices common to different traditions or to take account of differences as well. From this derive the need to choose a combination of indicators which provide a reliable measure of the practice the researcher wants to focus on. Do not supplementing the study of frequency with an assessment of the differences in nature of a particular practice could lead to jumbled interpretations. If we look, for instance, at the act of praying, qualitative differences may be of such a magnitude as to invalidate the simple act of prayer as an indicator of religiosity. The knowledge of the variations existing for some religious practices is perhaps the first step to understanding their meaning for individuals, which is in turn the first step toward a clear explanation of differential religious participation.

What is usually done in empirical research is to try to simplify focusing on one kind of practice common to all religious traditions under study. In this regard, religious practice – and mainly Church attendance – is the most investigated dimension in sociology because of its social and collective nature and its high degree of availability and comparability. "Religious behaviour - such as prayer or attendance at services – may be an exacting standard, requiring a commitment of time" (McAndrew and Voas 2011:3). "Religion is not simply a matter of believing in a God: those who don't attend mass evidently do not believe in a god who is sufficiently important to merit collective celebration on any regular basis" (Voas and Crockett 2005:14). There are a plenty of reasons for focusing on religious practice. It measures the ritualistic dimension of individuals and it has been often used to detect strong forms of religiosity. Also methodologically, the associated question to tap (church attendance) is relatively simple to formulate and easy to understand for respondents (Biolcati-Rinaldi and Vezzoni 2014), also being present in every international survey.

4.1.2 The Ideological Dimension: Religious Belief

The ideological dimension is constituted by "the expectations that a religious person will hold to certain beliefs" (Glock 1962:99). Every religion assumes some sets of belief to which its followers are expected to adhere. This system of religious beliefs concern a mix of dogma or truth of faith which have to be accepted and recognized to adhere a transcendent value (Pace 2007). These beliefs are a sort of "autonomous knowledge" very different from rational or empirical knowledge. In studying religious belief, scholars may inquire simply into what people believe. Or, one may go on to inquire into the saliency of belief, or going even further, into the functions of belief for the individual. These ways of interpreting and investigating religious belief go together with some peculiarities of the belief structure. *i)* First of all, every religion has a set of belief whose primary role is to assure the existence of the divine and to define its character. If we look at Christianity, such belief would correspond to belief in God, in Christ and his miracles, in Heaven, and so on. People who accept these beliefs are accepting the existence of God, of a personal God. *ii)* Distinguished from these beliefs are the ones explaining divine purpose and defining man's role with regard to that purpose (Glock 1962). Within Christianity, these beliefs would be belief in original sin, in man's redemption, in final judgment, eternal salvation and so on. These purposive beliefs are the foundation for the third kind of beliefs; *iii)* these correspond to the means by which the divine purpose has to be implemented. These implementing beliefs refer to the proper conducts of man towards God and toward other men for the realization of divine purpose. These beliefs thus provide the ground for a religious ethical structure.

It is predictable that different religions give different emphasis to these three components of belief. This directly suggests that, in all probability, the degree or religiosity cannot be measured by the sheer number of beliefs "owned" by a person. Just as different religions stress different beliefs, it is quite realistic to find some individuals whose religion stress primarily a type of belief rather than another. There is therefore the need to develop typologies of religious belief rather than a single scale of religious commitment common to all individuals.

4.1.3 The Experiential Dimension: Religious Feelings

The experiential dimension is tied someway to the religious experience individuals are expected to encounter. All religions have some expectations that their participants will achieve a kind of knowledge of ultimate reality or will experience religious emotion (Glock 1962). As stated before, also the emotions experienced by different individuals may vary widely both between and within different religions. From terror to exaltation, from humility to joyfulness, from peace of soul to passionate union with the divine, the emphasis placed on religious feelings is mixed and miscellaneous.

In the sociological research "there has been a tendency to associate religious feeling with the more extreme forms of religious expression" (Glock 1962:104), which can be conversions, being visited by the Holy Spirit and so on. Of course there are more stable and less visible feeling that need attention by sociologists, even more than the extreme ones. Faith, trust and communion connote this kind of beliefs. The difficulties to study the experiential dimension are, however, evident. The individual's feelings or the sensitivities to the divine are not likely to be openly expressed in everyday life. A serious attempt to study them should therefore rely on some kind of ordering around all the related notions. *i)* Firstly, individuals differ in their concern for a transcendentally based ideology; how an individual is concerned would be one component of his religiosity within this dimensions. *ii)* Second component of the experiential dimension could be the capacity of individuals for cognition or awareness of the divine (Glock 1962). This cognition can range from an intense episode of conversion to a weaker "contemplating God in the beauty of nature"; besides it may be manifested publicly – in a religious service – or privately – in isolation from others. *iii)* Third component bears on the individual's sense that his life is somehow in the divine's hands, in which trust can be reposed. The problem of measure this kind of faith is, as expected, a complex one and indirect approaches should be preferred. *iv)* Fourth and last component is in some way "the other side" of trust: the fear of divine. Giving its nature, also in this case indirect approaches should be referred; a productive approach is, for instance, to see whether and how fear is represented in the other dimensions of religiosity.

4.1.4 The Intellectual Dimension: Religious Knowledge

The intellectual dimension is linked to the expectation that a religious person has to be informed and knowledgeable about the basic creeds of its confession and its sacred scripture. It is clear-cut that knowledge and belief are related since knowledge of a belief is a basic condition for its acceptance. Widening this definition, religious knowledge dimension could also refer to the need of transcendent answers typical of the human being. Religion, in this sense, stands for an internally coherent system of reassuring answers to this basic need. In doing this, religious systems compete with other systems based, for example, on rational thought, science or even paranormal and exoteric knowledges. This expectation that a religious person has to be informed about his faith is common to all religions. There is however a great variation in the kind of knowledge requested by different religions. These great differences between and within religions make it difficult to judge what kind of knowledge has to be considered as indicator of religious commitment (Glock 1962). This knowledge, moreover, can be seen as a system of definitions, notions and norms systematized by a bunch of professionals like priests, theologians and so on. It is a kind of specialist knowledge which is frequently unbounded with a more popular and less rigorous knowledge. It is also for this reason that religious knowledge is very hard to analyse: it is basically impossible to identify a core of dogma, precepts and definitions necessary to identify, at least, a lower threshold of religious knowledge (Pace 2007).

4.1.5 The Consequential Dimension: Religious Effects and Values

The consequential dimension it is different in kind from the other four. It basically includes all the secular effects of religious belief, practice, experience and knowledge. Under this dimension we can find "all of those religious prescriptions which specify what people ought to do and the attitudes they ought to hold as a consequence of their religion" (Glock 1962:99). Religious effects and values, in this sense, means the goals that people prioritize for their society, community, families, and themselves. They basically refer to the translation of religious precepts and beliefs in every-day life. Sacred is something perceived by individuals as a presence in their life, as something which creates a way of think and act which drive the individual and social action (Pace 2007). These implications of religion for practical conduct differ a lot between religions; they are stated very explicitly in some ones whereas they are very abstract in others. This religious-secular link depends on how a religion is integrated in the social structure (Glock 1962); if it is, everyday actions of man are likely to be defined by religious imperatives. Almost every religion sets some kind of rewards for this conduct; these could be immediate rewards like peace of mind, freedom from worry or even material success. These could also be future rewards like salvation, eternal life, reincarnation and so on. Given their strong link with all the other dimensions of religiosity, research on religious effects cannot be done in isolation from research on the other aspects, especially from research on beliefs. This is because it cannot be sure that a certain act is, in fact, a religious effect. To better study this, Glock proposed an interesting dichotomy to categorize the way for researching about religious effects. He suggests to distinguish between rewards and responsibility. The "reward" approach, he says, is most appropriately studied within the framework of religious beliefs but the research on immediate rewards has been relative sparse (Glock 1962). On the contrary, the research done on religious effects has been mainly focused om the "responsibility" side of the dichotomy, namely on what individuals do or do not as consequence of their religion.

4.1.6 Identity and Self-Definition: Religious Belonging

Beyond the five-dimensions typology just mentioned, there is another nuance of religiosity which not well fit in it. This basically try to grasp the identitarian power of religiosity – how a person define himself beyond practice or belief. It relies to self-definition and it is very important to consider it, especially in modern societies, because it could be quite common that an individual defines himself as religious only for national, cultural or heritage motivation. Religious belonging could therefore be intended both as the set of attitudes identifying the belonging to a group or a religious institution and the mechanisms of affiliation, engagement and formal participation to such institutions. Whereas the first connotation is quite easy to detect, the second is obviously more jumbled. These mechanisms of affiliation and participation refer to a mix of personal relations and networks carried out by people sharing concrete ties among them and with the formal institution. In the first meaning, instead, the religious belonging could be quite overlapped with the notion of civil religion, firstly postulated by Rousseau and well investigated by Robert Bellah (1967). In this sense, religion can be strictly linked with the notion of national identity. This well-accepted way of reasoning suggests to consider religious belonging like a permanent or semipermanent characteristic akin to nationality or ethnicity, coming from family, community or cultural heritage (McAndrew and Voas 2011; Voas 2014). In addition to this "civil" meaning of being religious, Davie (2000, 2001) proposed the notion of "vicarious religion", meaning the idea of a religion "performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing" (Davie 2012:169)". In this sense, religions can stand for something used by individuals only for occasional offices like marriages, funerals or baptisms. Also in this case, the church membership has to be determined as part of the national or cultural identity. Relying on these branches of theory is it clear that the cultural identification to a religion is grasped by no-one of the previous dimensions and so it becomes necessary to combine the Glock's ones with a clear assessment of this kind of belonging.

4.2 Macro causes and micro effects? Micro causes and macro effects?

Since the use of statistical methods became widespread in the social sciences nothing has been more debated than which kind of analyses – and thus which kind of data – are better to test and demonstrate sociological relations. It is a huge debate which involves methodological issues as well as epistemological and philosophical ones. The choice of the focus of analysis is what matter most in shaping the research design, the theoretical background and the research itself.

Starting from the community studies of the earlier sociologists, moving to the ecological studies and to the individual studies related to classic quantitative methodologies and finishing with the huge amount of techniques of analytical sociologists, the definition of the object of study is the core point of each research. Starting from the Parsonian attempt to construct a theory of action, moving towards the Mertonian Structural-Functionalism and from the replacement of the word "action" with the word "behaviour" made by the earlier survey methologists, the debate is moving throughout the whole history of sociology. It is absolutely beyond the scope of this paragraph the summarize more than one century of sociological evolution. The attempt here is to sketch a scheme to describe the various kind of relations which can arise when studying a social phenomenon. This scheme can be very useful in framing every research question as well as to avoid the risk of drawing false conclusions.

The starting point is almost naturally Coleman (1986) and his attempt to bring all these aspects together. Its famous and widely known “Coleman boat” is what is taught in the very first classes of sociology and, in the view of the author, represent the best way to frame a sociological problem. The rise of this approach takes root in a precise moment of the history of sociology which himself define as a “Watershed”. This moment, which can be placed around the ‘40s, marks the transition between a period when community studies represented the dominant approach to a period of “survey research” domination. This shift has taken place for three main different reasons: a change of society itself, the need to transform sociology into something more suitable for policy making and the development of a bunch of statistical techniques which can efficiently deal with this new kind of data. Whatever the reasons that led to these changes, only partially caught by these points, the unquestionable major change regards the units or the focus of social research. Indeed, this replacement of community studies by survey research can be basically interpreted as a shift in the units of analysis (the unit about which empirical statements were made): from the community to the individual (Coleman 1986). In the following works the focus thus shifted from the social processes within the communities shaping the system’s behaviour to psychological or demographic processes shaping individual behaviour. Main result of this process was that the effort to make statements about communities or organization was overwhelmed by the greater statistical rigor of characterizing "populations" and analysing behaviour of individuals as "independently drawn" members of the population.

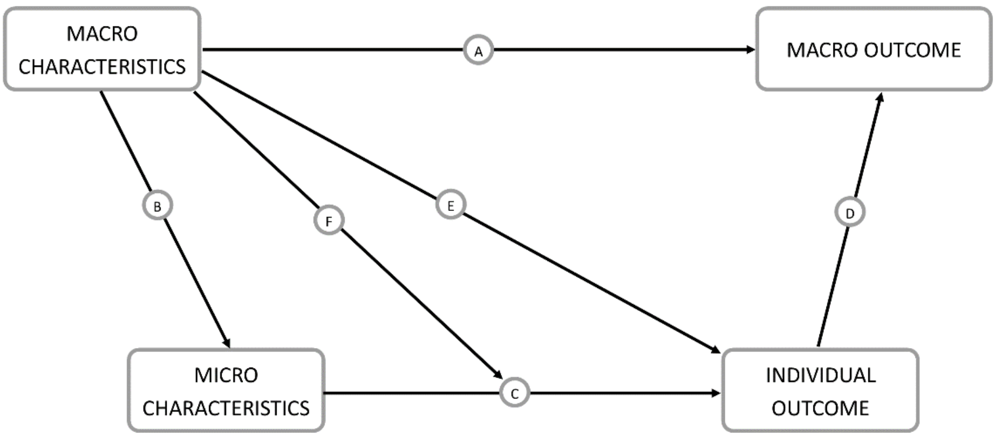
Of course, it is impossible to identify the precise moment when this happened but it is reasonable to speak about a three-step process. *i)* everything started with a change in society, which has become more individualistic with individual paths becoming more and more disconnected from family and communities; *ii)* the mainstream of social research has then shifted from explaining the functioning of social systems (i.e. communities) to accounting for individual behaviour. "Properties of social systems have largely been relegated to the status of factors affecting individual behaviours and are seldom the focus of investigation" (Coleman 1986:1319). *iii)* Simultaneously with this shift in focus from the social system to the individual, the dominant mode of explanation (the one in which purposive action of individuals, taken in combination and subject to various constraints, explained the functioning of social systems) was replaced by a form of behaviourism, in which various factors external to the individual's consciousness are introduced to account for variations in individual behaviour.

This way of reasoning, which is the framework of this research thesis, is also what pushed Coleman to think about a way to systematize this new approach for social research. In doing this it could be possible to bring out and face all the weaknesses – and strength – of this methodological individualism while increasing, at the same time, its explanatory power. Far from being the solution for every sociological problem, I intend the Coleman's diagram as the most complete cognitive tool for sociological thinking (Ylikoski 2016). What follows is an attempt by the author, starting from Coleman's widely renowned "boat" and following also Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009), to describe all the relations which can arise in a sociological research when both individuals and contexts are involved.

Starting from the scheme in Figure 6, every single relation will be discussed. To better clarify the different points, an example of research question and – when possible – of hypothesis will be provided for each relation. These examples are drawn starting from a generic statement like “education decreases religiosity” and reframed according to the kind of relation is going to be explained. It is obvious that the following pages cannot be considered as exhaustive; for each of the relations many books were written and many will and it make no sense to summarize one century of sociological debate into few rows. The approach will thus inevitably be more focused on methodology and on the methods to frame the research questions in the most appropriate way.

As already said, the starting point is the original version of the Coleman boat (1986) which is here supplemented with two more “arrows” to account for more complex kind of relations. This scheme is made by four main objects and six rows connecting them. The four objects represent the units of analysis of every sociological problem. We have so: the macro characteristic of the research object as well as the micro characteristics of the individual who belong to it. These characteristics are supposed to have an impact on certain others – the outcomes – which can also be macro or individual. These four “objects” can be connected in several ways, which will now be analysed.

Figure 6: How to frame a sociological question: Micro Vs Macro



Ⓐ: **MACRO to MACRO**

RQ: Does country’s tertiary enrolment rate is related to country religiosity?

HP: Countries with higher tertiary enrolment rate are less religious. Higher the country's tertiary enrolment rate, lower the religiosity.

This kind of macro-to-macro relation is what is universally named as "ecological analysis". It basically represents the relation between certain macrolevel predictors and macrolevel outcomes. We can find examples of this way of reasoning among many of the sociological masterpieces; firstly, was Durkheim in his research about suicide to infer that it was promoted by the social conditions of Protestantism. In doing so he based his conclusion on the observation that suicide rates were higher in countries that were more heavily Protestant (Durkheim 1966). Remaining in the field of religious studies, and more precisely in the field of studies about insecurity and religiosity, also the masterwork of this literature by Norris and Inglehart (2004) refers to variables defined at country level to demonstrate its thesis. Main weakness of this kind of approach is what is universally known as "ecological fallacy". The ecological fallacy consists in thinking that relationships observed for groups necessarily hold for individuals: if countries with more Protestants tend to have higher suicide rates, then Protestants must be more likely to commit suicide, if we want to refer to Durkheim's work. Since it first postulation (Selvin 1958), this problem was well investigated both from a theoretical and a methodological (i.e. Subramanian et al. 2009) point of view. Researchers are quite unanimous in naming it as a "methodological crime". The point is, only to be clear, that aggregate data can be a very big resource for sociologists but it is wrong to extend relations found at aggregate level to the individual one. These considerations suggested Coleman to develop his famous boat under the consideration that every relation observed between macro variable is not a real relation and thus it becomes essential to "down a level" to investigate such relations.

Ⓑ: **COMPOSITIONAL EFFECT**

RQ: Do countries differ in the share of individuals enrolled in tertiary education?

The idea of compositional effect basically stands for a situation in which there is, in a certain sample/country/dataset an unequal distribution of individual characteristics. When differences in an outcome are attributable to differences in group composition (that is, in the characteristics of the individuals of which the groups are comprised) they are said to result from compositional effects (Diez Roux 2004). When to compare, only as example, two different countries about the impact of education on religiosity, the individual relation can arise – and differ – basically in two different ways. The relation between X and Y can be truly stronger in one country compared to the other (see Ⓒ) or it can be the same but differs in regard to the share of high educated people in the two countries. If the latter, it is not really the relation between X and Y to differ, but we have a composition effect, and that is why it is crucial to "control" for some characteristics of the population we are studying.

Ⓒ: **MICRO to MICRO**

RQ: Does individual educational degree impact on individual religiosity?

HP: Higher the individuals educational level, lower their religiosity.

The micro-to-micro relations represent associations between individual predictors and individual outcomes. This is exactly what I have described at the beginning of this paragraph. In the sociological approach based on survey, the research focus is on individuals and their behaviours. Looking for a micro-to-micro relation basically means investigate whether some individual features can have an impact – or can be related – on other individual features. As macro-to-macro relations are characterized by the perils of ecological fallacy, micro-to-macro one have its counterpart. The so called "atomistic fallacy" manifests itself when drawing inferences regarding variability across groups (or the relation between group level variables) based on individual level data (Diez Roux 2004). To put it in general terms, atomistic fallacy is the fallacy of drawing inferences regarding variability across units defined at a higher level based on data collected for units at a lower level. To give an example, we have atomistic fallacy when we found that tertiary educated individuals are less likely to be religious and we conclude also that countries with higher tertiary education rate present lover level of religiosity.

Ⓔ: **MACRO to MICRO**

RQ: Does the country of residence's tertiary enrolment rate impact on individual religiosity, over and above its degree?

HP: In countries with higher tertiary enrolment rate individuals tend to be less religious, no matter their degree.

Speaking about macro-to-micro relations basically means speaking about contextual characteristics having impact on individual outcomes, over and above individual characteristics. This kind of relations emerge when there is an effect of collective or group characteristics on individual level outcomes. What is necessary to do while speaking about contextual effects is to control for individual level potential confounders and specific statistical models are needed in order to do this in the proper way.

Ⓕ: **CROSS-LEVEL INTERACTION**

RQ: Does some country characteristics – including tertiary enrolment rate – shape the relation between individual education and religiosity?

HP: The higher the tertiary education enrolment rate in a country, the smaller the effect of personal degree on individual religiosity.

We speak about cross-level interaction effects when contextual characteristics condition the relation between individual characteristics and individual outcome. To put in another words, with the term cross-level interaction we refer to modification of the effects of lower level variables by characteristics of the higher level units to which the lower level units belong (Diez Roux 2004). Speaking about our example, the relation between tertiary degree and lower religiosity is likely to be stronger in less secularized countries whereas is likely to be weaker if someone lives in a very secular country where there is little exposure to religious dictates.

Ⓓ: **MACRO to MICRO**. I left this relation for last on purposes because it is the most difficult part about which sociology is struggling since it was born. It can be simple aggregation if – and only if – the macro outcome is aggregational in-nature. Otherwise, its definition can be problematic if the institutional and contextual impact are present. In every case, a lot of attention must be paid to the mechanism transforming some individual outcomes in a collective outcome and this relation cannot absolutely be taken for granted. In fact, "the major theoretical obstacle to social theory built on a theory of action is not the proper refinement of the action theory itself, but the means by which purposive actions of individuals combine to produce a social outcome" (Coleman 1986:1321).

4.3 Considering time. Cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches

The study of social change has always been central for sociological thought. Born in a period of hectic improvement produced by the industrial revolution, the early sociology was forthwith focused on the study of the great transitions. Society needs to be studied when it can no longer be taken for granted (Jedlowski 1998). Every sociological explanation is therefore historical in nature: every social reality is an historical reality. The term "longitudinal" refers exactly to this kind of relation between phenomena: every fact that needs to be studied over time can be considered as **diachronic**. In diachronic sociological research time has hence to be explicitly considered in the design. Data has to be gathered in at least two different points in time and the cases studied have to be comparable – or the same – between different periods. All of this because the scope of diachronic analysis is to compare data gathered in different periods.

There are three main different typologies – that I will deepen in the next paragraphs – of longitudinal data which are inextricably linked with different research designs and analyses: there are *repeated cross-sectional* studies, perspective longitudinal studies (also known as *panel* study) and *retrospective longitudinal studies*.

Longitudinal data include a very high heuristic power; in particular, they permit:

- The study of variables changes between periods
- The analysis of duration of social phenomena
- The identification of the so called "sleeper effects", meaning the connections between events happening far away in time
- The identification of the causes of social phenomena, in particular the direction and the magnitude of causal relation

The issues of causation and causal relation is undoubtedly one of the main – or the main – sociological issue. Given its complexity, the temporal order of the various event is considered one of the best approximation of the cause-effect relation. The basic of the notion of causality resides in the idea that social phenomena should follow one another in a real process of cause-effect, and everything that does not follow this law is due to chance. Of course, in scientific research is impossible to have a deterministic way to assure causality, but there are at least three essential criteria which are well accepted as ways to establish causal relations (see also Goldthorpe (2000a) for a complete discussion about causality):

- The various phenomena (and the related variables) have to covary: a change in an independent variable X (cause) has to be related in a change for the dependent variable Y (effect)
- The relation between X and Y must not be due to other variables (it must not be spurious)
- The change in the cause (X) has to forerun the change in the effect (Y)

Whereas the first two criteria could be tested in principle using cross-sectional data, real diachronic data are needed to test the adherence to the third criteria. In particular, for this last objective also repeated cross-sectional data may be inadequate. It is essentially for this reason that the connections between the hypothesis one want to test and the research design have to be carefully checked and calibrated on the kind of data one want to use.

4.3.1 Repeated Cross-sectional data (Trend studies)

Repeated cross-sectional studies are repeated – and thus comparable – surveys where the main sample changes between each wave. This kind of studies focus on a section of the population – a sample – in a certain point of time and this sample changes between each point in time. These repeated cross-sectional surveys – like the British General Household survey, the Italian Istat Indagine Multiscopo sulle Famiglie Italiane and Banca d'Italia Indagine sui Bilanci delle Famiglie Italiane, the European Eurobarometer, European Value Study, European Social Survey and the worldwide International Social Survey Programmes and World Value Survey, just to name a few – can help the study of social change. Given the different samples between each wave they however only permits to focus on aggregate changes. These kind of studies supply with a series of static pictures of the population in a given point in time and they are thus quite cheap and easy to organize; exactly for these reasons they have represented – and represent even now – the pillar of sociological research. Despite their widespread use, social scientists need to be cautious in doing diachronic inference using this kind of data because they have to implicitly assume that the observed phenomenon is someway "in equilibrium" (Blossfeld and Rohwer 1995; Coleman 1981). Repeated Cross-Sectional data can be organized in two main ways. They can be gathered at individual level and thus the raw-vectors contain the same variable measured for different individuals at different points in time. The datasets from the various wave can then be pooled to obtain a unique dataset which comprises a sort of temporal dimension. The other way to gather and organize these repeated cross-sectional data is to treat them as aggregate data, summarizing the individual information – i.e. between countries – and using time as main independent variable.

Also from this brief description it appears clear what the main strengths and weaknesses of cross-sectional data are. Compared to true longitudinal research designs they are of course cheaper, easier to manage and do not suffer from attrition problems. On the contrary, being the sample different between each wave, they only permit aggregate analyses, preventing moreover the disentanglement between age, period and cohort effects (see next paragraph).

Table 1: Repeated comparative cross-sectional surveys: some examples

NAME	PERIOD	TERRITORIAL COVERAGE	METHODS OF INTERVIEWING
EVS European Value Study	4 waves (1981-1990-1999-2008) (ongoing)	47 European Countries (last wave)	Face-to-face interviews
ESS European Social Survey	7 waves (biennial from 2002 to 2014) (ongoing)	36 European Countries	Face-to-face interviews
ISSP International Social Survey Programme	Several survey for different topics starting from 1985 and carried out yearly (ongoing)	45 Worldwide countries	Face-to-face-interviews, postal survey and self-completion questionnaire
WVS World Value Survey	6 wave starting from 1981 to 2014 (ongoing)	60 Worldwide countries (last wave)	Face-to-face interviews (or phone interviews for remote areas)

4.3.2 Panel Data (Perspective longitudinal studies)

In *panel* studies the same individuals are surveyed across time. In this kind of studies – like the British Household Panel Study which recently became Understanding Society, the German Socio-Economic Panel and the Italian Indagine Longitudinale sulle Famiglie Italiane – the same individuals are interviewed repeatedly and this thus permits the study of individual change. This aspect makes Panel studies the real fundamental for deepen the study of diachronic features of social phenomena. The benefit of this kind of data, if compared to repeated cross-sectional surveys, is obvious: it makes clear whether some observed changes are due to new individual surveyed or to a real change in behaviour. Moreover, this kind of approach is useful to grasp the real dynamics of very irregular behaviours: many results of panel data analysis show that changes in family and individual lives are much larger than it appears in cross-sectional analysis (Dale and Davies 1994). The advantages of panel data can be thus summarized as follows:

- they allow analysis of how individuals and households experience change in their socioeconomic environment and how they respond to such changes;
- they allow an analysis of how conditions, life events, behaviour and values are linked with each other dynamically over time;
- they allow analysts to control for unobserved heterogeneity in cross-sectional models through difference analysis.

Having clarified the main advantages of this kind of data I will now expand on their weaknesses, which basically reside in the complex structure of the data-gathering process and analysis.

- The attrition issue is the peculiar feature of panel data: it appears because wave after wave some individuals will leave the sample. Given this process not-casual – it can be due to refusals, migration, deaths and so on – it may invalidate or distort the inferences built on the remaining sample
- The treatment of missing values is more serious than cross-sectional because their repetition can seriously distort the sample
- Like the missing values, also the methodological error is more serious than cross-sectional because it replicates in time

– The respondents likely suffer from the so called “panel conditioning”, namely the impact of repeated answering procedures which can distort the same phenomena they observe.
– Panel design research can produce only information discrete in time which thus be biased by particular occurrences.
– Given the discrete answer procedure, the time flow between cause and effects (lag) – if short – can be lost because the two events are recorded at the same point in time.
– The time effects could be not linear – but cyclical or even more complex – and thus their measure depends on when data are gathered.
– To conduct a good panel analysis a lot of waves are necessary.

Of course all these puzzling issues do not invalidate the utility of panel data, but they must be kept in mind in planning and analysing these data, also because a lot of useful technique to deal with them have been developed.

Table 2: Perspective longitudinal surveys: some examples

NAME	PERIOD	TERRITORIAL COVERAGE	METHODS OF INTERVIEWING
GSOEP German Socio-Economic Panel	30 yearly wave from 1984 to 2014 (ongoing)	Germany	Face-to-face interviews
BHPS British Household Panel Study	18 yearly wave from 1991 to 2009	U.K.	Face-to-face interviews
UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY UK Household Longitudinal Study	4 yearly wave from 2008 (ongoing). Data could be merged with the 18 waves of BHPS	U.K.	Face-to-face interviews
PSID Panel Study of Income Dynamics	Starting yearly in 1968. Bi-annual since 1997 (ongoing)	U.S.	Face-to-face interviews
ILFI Indagine Longitudinale sulle Famiglie Italiane	5 waves (1997, 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005)	Italy	Face-to-face interviews

4.3.3 Event oriented Data (Retrospective longitudinal studies)

We have *retrospective* longitudinal studies when the individuals surveyed are stimulate to remember and record past events to reconstruct their life-course. This approach permits to reassemble the individuals' – or families' – stories in terms of trajectories, transitions and events conditional on time flow. This kind of data includes a clear time positioning about when a certain event starts or finish. The discrete events are thus placed on a continuous time axis and this permits the study of sequences of events and their time intervals. In doing this it is also possible to study the individual trajectories – or life courses – as embedded in the macro social context. The advantages of these *event oriented* data are manifold:

- It is possible to study the changes between conditions occurrence in time
- Event oriented data permits – unlike the (discrete) panel data – to study individual change on a continuous time axis
- In summary they permit the reconstruction of individual life trajectories along all the life course

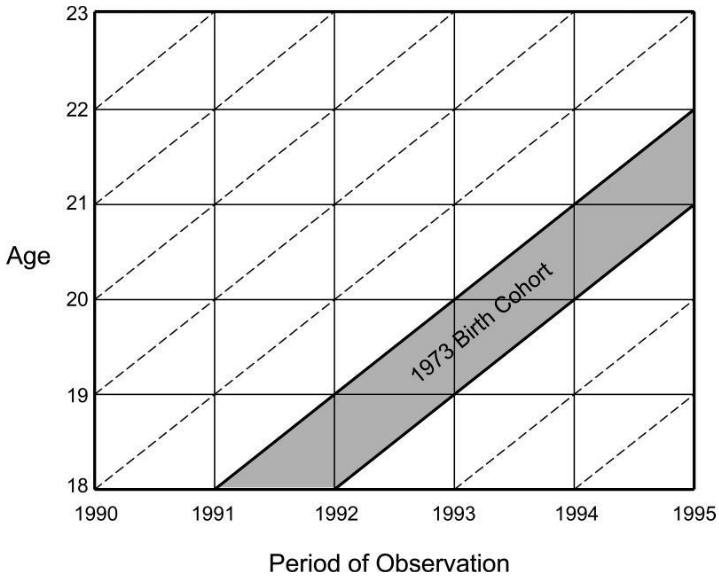
Despite their collection is cheaper than panel data – data are gathered only once – they present many disadvantages which are mainly related to memory and potential distortions. These disadvantages indeed regard the quantity of information an individual can remember, and this issue is particularly severe for questions regarding cognitive states and attitudes. It is really hard for individuals to remember changes in their moods and the length of these changes. Even when the questions relate to more practical issues like income or weight, it is often difficult to retrieve the information. Generally speaking, data quality decreases going back in time and this is due to two different effects. We have "omission effects" when relevant events are forgotten and "telescope effects" – which can be either "forward telescoping" or "backward telescoping" – when the timing of the events is forgotten. Moreover, the way by which individuals remember their past is influenced by subsequent events in a continuous attempt to show coherence. Given the amount of information to gather, the duration of the interview – usually between 1 and 2 hours – could be another relevant problem.

4.4 Age-Period-Cohort. Why it is important to disentangle?

All the main theories concerning religiosity deal with a time dimension. Speaking about religious reawakening or decline, progressive institutional differentiation or religious change means – also – speaking about time. The issue of age, period and cohort effect disentanglement is one of the most puzzling and intriguing sociological facts. This problem basically arises because any two of the factors determine the third. For instance, age is simply the year of observation minus the year of birth and so on. This problem is far for being solved but a lot of possible ways to deal with it are in place. They can be divided in two different approaches: statistical and theoretical. A lot of clever and innovative statistical techniques – decomposition techniques – have been developed but this is not the place to investigate them. This is instead the place to better define how these three different kind of effects arise and why it is important to find a theoretical way to cope with them.

Age effects result from the biological and social processes of aging, such as physiological changes and the build-up of social experience (Segall 2013). Period effects are defined as external variations across time periods that influence all the age groups at the same time. They refer a wide range of historical, social and environmental factors such as wars, technological innovation, economic crises as well as changes in income and relative prices (Reither, Hauser, and Yang 2009). Cohort effects, instead, capture the idea that a group of individuals experiences the same historical, social, and environmental events at the same age. These processes potentially give rise to cohort-specific values, attitudes and preferences. This notion cover in some way the interpretative space in-between age and period, as clearly emerge from this graphical representation (Reither et al. 2009).

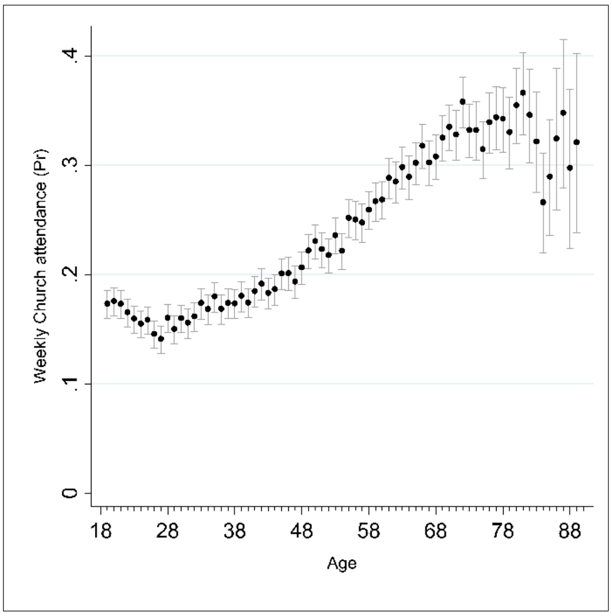
Figure 7: Age, Period and Cohort; a graphical representation



To go deeply, changes in individual behaviours happen because of three different phenomena such as aging, time flow and cohort replacement. These of course correspond to the three sides of the Age-Period-Cohort issues. I will now go through them by using as example an indicator we will deeply scrutinize in the next chapters: weekly Church attendance.

The process of **aging** is usually identified with changes among individual linked to their getting older, to gain experience, to become more mature, to become physical or cognitive impair, to experiment life-events like marriage or parenthood. To put it simpler, aging is the effect of having lived more of life. Figure 8 shows the rates of weekly Church attendance in Europe divided by Age (EVS 2011). Despite some rumour due to the small numerosity of the last age groups, the pattern is clear. 18-years-olds basically replicate the parents' religiosity; the Church attendance rate decrease along the adolescence period while starting to increase around 28-years-old, approximately the family formation and parenthood age.

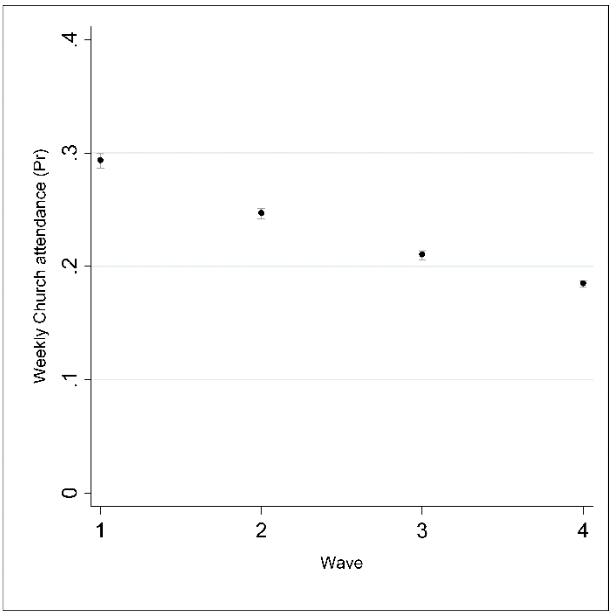
Figure 8: Probability of Weekly Church attendance by Age



This rate continues to increase until the old age, when physical disablement can compromise Church attendance. Youngers are less Church-goers than adults so, given this pattern, interpreting the presumed European secularization in term of Age effects means asserting that Church attendance is decreasing because the population is getting younger. Nothing more wrong, as the basic demographic statistics show.

The second possible source of change is a **period effect**. This comprises people's responses to historical events and processes. We have a period effect when the entire society is affected by a widespread set of historical events, such as wars, economic depression and social revolutions, beyond people's age or year of birth. It is impossible for most members of society to remain unaffected by some changes like, for example, the computer era impact on communication or the period of Civil Rights movement on attitudes about race.

Figure 9: Probability of Weekly Church attendance by Survey Wave

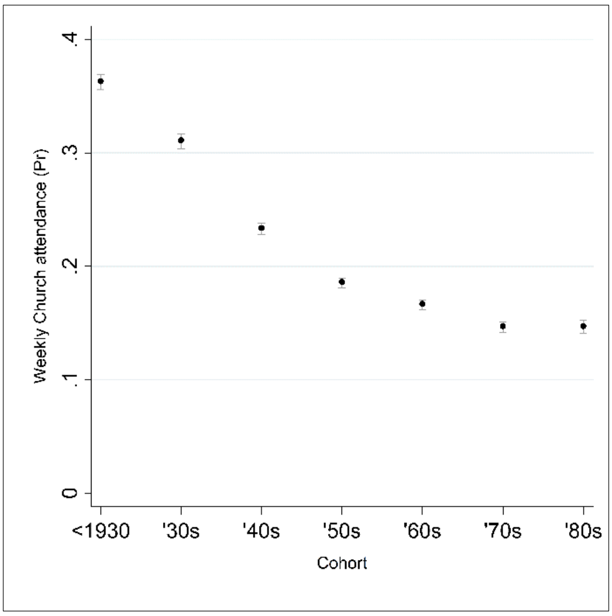


If we look at Church attendance rates (EVS 2011) with the lens of the "period effect" (Figure 9) we see a clear – linear – decrease of religious practice along time. This is in fact one of the main evidences from secularization theorists.

The third possible source of change in societies is **cohort succession**. This refers to the replacement of earlier born cohorts by later ones. The term "cohort" quite overlap with the notion of "generation", but the former is usually preferred to avoid misunderstandings with the use of "generation" as a kinship term (relationship between individuals with a common ancestor). Cohort is so intended as a group of people born at about the same time, living in the same period and sharing a kind of identity (Alwin and McCammon 2007). To put it in another way, a cohort is a group of people who have shared a critical experience (birth in the simplest case) at the same time. The term cohort is thus usually used as shorthand for "birth cohort", and refers to the unique historical period in which group's common experiences are embedded. Speaking about time change in term of cohort replacement basically means that earlier-birth cohorts die off and are replaced by those born more recently. When the effects of historical events tied to particular eras mainly affect the youngsters, we have a cohort effect. A clear example of a cohort effect is the one of the "Depression generation", namely individuals born during the Great Depression who became particularly self-consciously thrifty. As this cohort die off, a new less frugal set of cohorts arise, changing the overall attitudes about life-style and money-saving. Cohort analysis seems to be the most useful approach in studying religious trends (see next chapters for details) because most of the assumption behind well fit with religious beliefs and behaviours. If we use cohort replacement as explanation of social change we have to make – implicitly or explicitly – some critical assumption: *i)* childhood is an impressionable period of life in which individuals are largely open to socialization influences; *ii)* people acquire values, attitudes and belief during these years and maintain those views over most of their lives; *iii)* the unique cohort experiences are formed due to the distinctive influences of historical events; and *iv)* that public opinion and social norms change gradually in the direction of the more recent cohorts. If these assumptions can match the theoretical knowledge about the phenomena, cohort replacement can be the best way to study social change. Returning to the example, we can see that the trend of weekly Church attendance (EVS 2011) in the lights of cohort effect (Figure 10) shows a different pattern if compared to Age or Period effects. It is neither fluctuating like age effect nor linearly decreasing like period effect. The trend is steeply decreasing in the older cohorts while starts to flatten in the younger one.

What is important to keep from this brief summary of the Age-Period-Cohort issue is that, beyond technicalities, it is really important what for time-flow is intended. Focusing on religious change with the lens of one of these three aspects can bring to completely different conclusions. Therefore, an essential starting point of every research concerning religious change has to be a clear assessment on how and why time-flow has to be intended.

Figure 10: Probability of Weekly Church attendance by Cohort



Chapter 5

EUROPEAN RELIGIOSITY

A multidimensional study of religious change in Europe

Religious decline in Europe is the main evidence reported by secularization theorists (Crockett and Voas 2006a; Dobbelaere 1987; Halman and Draulans 2006; Pollack 2008b; Voas and Doebler 2011). Generally speaking, religious patterns in Europe seems coherent with those reported for the others post-industrial countries. At the same time, when compared to countries like U.S. or Japan a lot of differences are present (Brenner 2016; Voas and Chaves 2016). Some scholars push this argument further stating that Europe is a real exceptional case and that secularization paradigm has to be restricted to European countries (Davie 2006). If so, a lot of relevant questions arise when trying to predict European future. "Will Europe continue within the trajectory set by its past or will it become more like the patterns found elsewhere? Or (…) will the rest of the world become more like Europe?" (Davie 2006:1). This is not the place to widen the secularization debate to other non-European countries, but is certainly the place to describe the evolution of European religiosity in the last decades. In doing so, we need to take into account some European peculiarities.

First of all, Europe is mainly Christian, but there are at least three main different confessions that can shape the meaning of religion and religiosity. Secondly, but strictly related, in the last decades some European countries have been controlled by Communist regimes which tried to suppress every form of religious behaviour with a kind of state-imposed atheism. As a matter of fact, many scholars report a religious revival in Eastern Europe in the years immediately following the fall of communism in 1989 (Bandeij and Mahutga 2010; Borowik

2006; Greeley 1994; Pickel and Sammet 2012; Titarenko 2008; Tomka 2010). Third issues, which can be extended worldwide, is the way to consider religiosity. Considering religiosity as a whole or focusing only on one dimension (see previous chapter) could be not instructive. Despite some practical advantages, this approach oversimplifies the study of religiosity and could be no longer adequate to grasp the real meanings of religious evolution.

This is even truer if we consider that different Christian doctrines can give totally different meanings to different aspects of religious behaviour and belief. Statements like the following could be extended to all the dimensions “attendance has different meanings in different religious contexts. Roman Catholics are required to attend church weekly, whereas Anglicans are not, and so it is possible to be a religious and compliant Anglican while attending church less often than a Roman Catholic” (McAndrew and Voas 2011:5).

In this chapter I will attempt to give a clear picture of European religiosity. I will start reasoning about the involved dimensions and on the ways to operationalize them. After that, I will move to brief explanation of the different Christian doctrines, trying to understand whether and why different dimensions could have completely different meanings among them. I will then try to link the chosen indicators to the main theories in contemporary religious studies (secularization and individualization); I will do so by building a kind of typology of religiosity that can be useful to grasp some particulars of religious evolution. After these preliminary stages I will present a kind of static picture of European religiosity (reporting data both for the single indicators and the typology). I will conclude with the most relevant part which tries to give a longitudinal picture of religiosity in Europe. Also in this case I will present two different models: in the first I will report cohort trends for the three different indicators whereas in the second the trends for the various category of the typology.

5.1 European religiosity: secularization vs individualization debate

In Chapter 2 I highlighted the main theoretical approach in religious studies. Leaving aside for now the market approach, which relies on completely different assumptions and which is less suitable to study religious evolution in Europe (Chaves and Gorski 2001; Halman and Draulans 2006; Pollack and Pickel 2007; Voas, Olson, and Crockett 2002), religious scholars are struggling to understand how the processes of modernization have impacted the role and significance of religion in Europe. The main controversy, involving secularization and individualization theorists, opposes a religious decline observed for all the dimensions of religiosity to a religious change in which institutional religiosity is giving way to individual forms of religiosity.

Of course secularization theorists state that, however you look at it, religion in Europe is declining. Modernization is progressively fostering this decline and religion is day after day losing its significance. On the other hand, supporters of the religious individualization thesis (Davie 1994; Hervieu-Léger 1999) argue that modernization contributes to religious change rather than religious decline. The influence of religious institutions is weakened in modern times, but the consequence is that Church and religion have become more and more distinct from each other (Nicolet and Tresch 2009a). Individuals are increasingly taking the distances from religious institutions, but religious beliefs tend to persist (Davie 2002; Hervieu-Léger 1999). The decline of institutional religion in the form of religious practice is thus undisputed across the literature. What is heavily contentious is the evolution of religious belief: secularization theorists claim that both institutional religion and individual religious belief are expected to decline due to modernity; on the other hand, supporters or religious individualization thesis argue that religious belief is likely to persist or even to increase. Another point of contact between the proponents of both approach is the idea that processes of modernization results in a growing rationalization of the different domain of society (Nicolet and Tresch 2009a). This functional differentiation reduces the sphere of influence of religious institutions and “tasks that were commonly assumed by the church are now taken over by specialized professionals and organizations” (Norris and Inglehart 2004:9). Religion hence loses the all-encompassing role it once had (Halman and Draulans 2006).

For secularization theorists, the process of secularization fostering the decline of the social significance of religion is multidimensional and visible at the societal, institutional and individual level (Dobbelaere 1985; Wilson 1982). At the societal level, the various domain of society (the economy, the state, the educational system) are becoming more and more emancipated and independent from the Church. At the institutional level religious institutions gradually lose their importance and their social standing and, if looking at the individual level, the extent to which people practice, belief and conform their lives to religious expectances is diminishing (Bruce 2002). What is really important for this debate is that, for secularization theorists, the social significance of religion and the individual religiosity are closely connected (Bruce 2002; Wilson 1982): a decline in the social importance of religion is expected to go hand in hand – or even to cause – a decline in the number of individuals who are religious. There is also something more: according to these scholars, individuals’ relationship to the Church and their religious beliefs are expected to be similarly – and negatively – impacted by the process of secularization (Nicolet and Tresch 2009a).

In contrast, individualization thesis’ theorists, argue that modernization leads to a change in religion rather than to a decline (Pollack and Pickel 2007). Of course, the accepted functional specialization has undermined the preponderance of religious institutions. However, this process “conventionally interpreted as the spread of secularization, should be recognized as the emergence of (…) the privatized social form of religion” (Luckmann 2003:279, 280). This modern – privatized – social form of religion is characterized by the “de-monopolization of the production and distribution of world-views” (Luckmann 2003:281). Following this, a decline in the social significance of institutional religion does not mean that individual, private forms of religion have lost their importance.

Also Hervieu-Léger and Davie, doubtless two of the main supporters of the individualization thesis, stress this point. They identify two main features of religious modernity. First of all, as a consequence of the weakening of the religion institutions' authority, personal belief and people's sense of attachment to the Church have become two increasingly distinct dimensions of religiosity (Davie 1994, 2002; Hervieu-Léger 1999). Given this, indicators of religious attachment such ritual participation "display an undeniable degree of secularization throughout Western Europe" (Davie 2002:5). On the contrary, variables capturing feelings, experience and the more transcendental beliefs "demonstrate considerable persistence" (Davie 2002:5). This situation is well caught in the Davie's most famous quote "Believing without Belonging", which is expected to become more and more widespread throughout Western Europe "since a growing detachment from religious institutions does not imply a parallel loss in personal religious sensitivity" (Nicolet and Tresch 2009b:6). Second point is that, faced with an increased plurality of worldviews and freed from the authority of religious institutions, individuals are free to develop their own belief system, without any reference to an – institutionally – validated body of beliefs (Hervieu-Léger 1999). These two point are well-summarized by Voas and Crockett (2005) when they distinguish between a strong and a weak formulation of "Believing without Belonging". In the strong version, corresponding to the first point, the focus is on belief as something related to a classic religious background whereas in the weak version belief are "allowed to be non-Christian, vague, and even non- religious" (Voas and Crockett 2005:12).

To sum up, according to the religious individualization thesis, religious beliefs are likely to persist and to develop into increasingly individualized and privatized forms of religiosity. To the contrary, according to secularization theorists, the decline in institutionalized religion is expected to lead in a parallel decline in religious beliefs. The contention is still open: some researchers affirm that individualized and privatized forms of religiosity are growing (Davie 1994, 2002; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Hervieu-Léger 1999) whereas others argue that secularization still constitutes the dominant trend across Western Europe (Bruce 2002; Pollack 2008b; Pollack and Pickel 2007; Voas and Crockett 2005).

Toward a religious typology?

In the light of the theoretical debate I have just reported, it is not surprising that there is also confusion – when not disagreement – about the empirical evidences for the evolution of European religiosity. This confusion partly comes from the difficulties of a common understanding of what needs to be examined (Nicolet and Tresch 2009b). Some authors mainly focus on indicators of Church-related behaviours like Church attendance; others are interested in the expression of religious feelings while many others on alterative spirituality and practices. It is precisely for this reason that relying on a religious typology could be a good way to clarify what is going on in Europe. As a way to shed light on these issues, I will now present two examples of religious typologies (Nicolet and Tresch 2009a; Pollack and Pickel 2007) which constitute also the theoretical bases of the typology I will present later.

The first typology I present is the one by Nicolet and Tresch (2009a, 2009b) which relies on two different dimensions, namely the institutional dimension – referring to individual’s relationship to established churches – and the spiritual one – referring to people’s personal beliefs. This typology works perfectly in capturing the basic idea of Believing without Belonging (Davie 2002) because captures the evolution of personal religiosity – the beliefs people hold regarding the transcendent and numinous entities as well as the validity of the sacred truths – and their attachment to religious institutions in the form of Church involvement.

From the side of the institutional dimension they differentiate between three forms of relationship with the Church: the *parishioners* display a strong involvement in the Church in the form of regular churchgoing, the *ambivalents* are not regular churchgoers but they don't overtly reject it and the *distanced* are people taking the distance from the Church and having a negative judgment on it. From the side of the spiritual dimension they instead draw two main distinctions. They examine first whether people express belief in transcendence, irrespective of the type of transcendence (can be also something supernatural, or any kind of superior force) and secondly the beliefs directly related to Christian faith. For this second kind of belief they distinguish between individuals who share the main tenets of Christian faith – i.e. belief in God – and the ones who don't. This results in three different forms of believing: The *Christian type* is characterized by beliefs in the Christian tenets, the second type relies to the *general spirituality* (not of Christian inspiration) and the last type is defined by *atheist* and people who do not express any kind of belief (Nicolet and Tresch 2009a). It is quite glaring that this distinction conceptually overlaps with the Voas and Crockett's (2005) one which distinguish between strong and weak form of Believing without Belonging.

Starting from these two dimensions, the authors depict six different groups. The first one consists of "practicing Christians", corresponding to the parishioner type on institutional dimension and to Christian belief on the spiritual one. Second, the "uncommitted Christians" are characterized by their Christian beliefs but also by their ambivalence on the institutional dimension. The third group is composed by individuals who belong (parishioner) but without believing in the Christian tenets – either because they hold other types of beliefs or because they don't have beliefs at all. These three groups basically refer to traditional ways of being religious. Moving from them to the so-called post-traditional forms of religiosity we can find other three groups. First of all, the “believers without belonging” display Christian beliefs but with a total absence of an institutional relationship. They basically correspond to the strong form of BWB (Voas and Crockett 2005). The second group consists of individuals who are also far from the official Church but who believe in other transcendence than God. They, of course, correspond to the weak formulation of BWB. The last and remaining group is of course the one of “non-religious” people which is characterized by their ambivalence or distance from the Church and their absence of beliefs in transcendence.(Nicolet and Tresch 2009b).

Some cues from the Nicolet and Tresch's (2009b) typology can also be found in the one by Pollack and Pickel (2007). It is right and proper to highlight that both typologies were built to test the ideas of individualization theories. Also Pollack and Pickel define six different groups regarding different ways for being religious. The first two groups, the “*Church religious*” and the “*committed Christians*” are characterized by a high level of Church affiliation and Christian religiosity. Despite the similarities, the religiosity of committed Christians focuses more on participation in Church life whereas the Church-religious group centres more on individual religiosity. The “*average Christian*” instead hardly go to Church but they tend to define themselves as religious and to believe in God somehow more than non-religious people. Moving from traditional to post-traditional forms of religiosity we can find the “s*yncretists*” who evidence a mix of traditional Church affiliation, individual Christian religiosity, and non-Church religiosity; quite related are the “*non-Church religious*” individuals, who focus on non-Church religious forms more than the syncretists (Pollack and Pickel 2007). At the end we can find the “*non-religious*” group, which exhibits a profile made by the rejection of all forms of religiosity – traditional, Christian and non-Church.

As told, these two typologies represent the theoretical base of the one we will use in the next paragraph. The only difference regards their calibration. The Nicolet and Tresch (2009b) and Pollack and Pickel (2007) ones were built to explicitly consider all the various shades of individual religiosity and are thus focused also on the non-traditional forms of religiosity. Our aim for this chapter is slightly different because I want to “narrow the field” only to traditional forms of being religious. The resulting typology will be thus based on the combination of three indicators describing three different dimensions of traditional Christian religiosity.

5.2 European Christian doctrines

When I introduced the issues related to the study of European religiosity, I mentioned the different Christian confessions and the different ways they can shape the meaning of the various religious dimensions. With an over-simplification, we can see European Christianity as made up by three different doctrines, namely Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Far be it from me to present a thorough description of their theological pillars, my intention here is to present some clues about why the various dimensions should have different meanings moving from one Christian doctrine to another.

Roman Catholicism is theologically and historically focused on the figure of the Pope. His positions as Vicar of Christ makes his teaching considered as infallible and binding. At the same pace with Pope’s role, the Holy Scripture can be seen as the other pillar of the Roman Catholic tradition. Main point is that only the Roman Catholic Church has the authority to interpret the Holy Scripture. Jointly considering these two aspects, it is clear the importance of the Church in mediating the religious experience. Church is the foundation of Roman Catholicism both as an institution and as source of religious law. The implications are many, starting from the seven sacraments as fundamental precepts, passing through the vow of celibacy and the existence of the purgatory as place to expiate sins and finishing with Holy Mass as main precept in which the Christ’s sacrifice is celebrated. A rough summary should describe Roman Catholicism as a much-institutionalized religion, with a strong and clearly defined social and ritual dimension in which individual self-exploration is left basically aside.

Main differences between Roman Catholicism and **Eastern Orthodoxy** relate mainly on liturgical and ecclesiastical tradition instead of being substantial in the theological pillars. First, contrarily to Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxies consider the church as a whole as enlightened by Holy Spirit: there is no need for a higher authority and Priests and Patriarchs are basically “primus inter pares”. It derives a quite strong emphasis on Holy Scripture but alongside with the substance designated for the religious tradition. Some differences occur with the sacraments (baptism, holy communion and confirmation are given at the same time), with the celibacy (pre-ordination marriage is allowed) and the purgatory (which is absent and substituted by the idea of eternal damnation). Holy Mass is considered a strong precept as in the Catholicism but it is celebrated with different rituals. To sum up, Orthodoxy shares with Roman Catholicism the strong social and ritual dimension that is however based on community and tradition rather than on institutionalized Church.

Whereas Eastern Orthodoxy is considered as schismatic from Roman Catholicism, **Protestantism** comes from the XVI century’s reform and is considered as heretical. There are many differences concerning the theological, traditional and substantial aspects of the doctrine. First of all, Protestantism is based upon the so call “Priesthood of all believers”. Central role is given to the human experience and only Jesus can be considered as mediator between humans and divine being. It is quite straightforward the absence of unconditional subjection to Pope’s Authority. Strong emphasis is given to the Holy Scripture, which are the foundation of every religious norm and rule. The interpretation of the Scripture is the duty of each believer who has to establish a personal relation with God. Milestone of Protestantism is the individual human experience against the emphasis on sacraments and rituals. Only Baptism and Holy Communion are present, there is no vow of celibacy, no purgatory (the idea of predestination is the hallmark of Protestantism) and Churches are considered as meeting place for community. Strong emphasis is given on the fulfilment of professional and civic duties to attain salvation. Conversely to Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Protestantism should thus be considered as an individual religion, where ritualistic and collective dimension, formal belonging and social dimension, are no longer suitable to grasp the real essence of religious experience.

5.3 Data and operationalization

This chapter is basically made by three analytical sections: a cross-sectional picture of European religiosity, a trend assessment for the different dimensions of religiosity and a trend assessment for the different categories of the religious typology. Given that the involved variables and their operationalization is common among the three, I will present them only once in this paragraph.

This work is built up on the four waves of EVS (European Value Study) data, a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program on basic human values. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens all over Europe (EVS 2011). The European Values Study (EVS) started in 1981 and has repeated every nine years in an increasing number of countries. The fourth wave in 2008 covers no less than 47 European countries/regions. From this huge dataset, I choose a subsample of 32 Christian countries that participated at, at least, two waves of the survey. The countries surveyed are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Ukraine (see Appendix 1). The resulting sample was therefore made by 135,645 individuals.

5.3.1 Variables

Along the entire chapter, I will basically use four different sets of variables and I will now present the way I operationalized them. I will start from the dependent variables referring to the single dimensions moving then to the religious typology dependent variable. After that I will present the main independent variables and the control variables.

Dependent variables – single dimensions

Main aim of this chapter is to analyse the patterns of European religiosity relying on the main debate between secularization theory and individualization theory. These two compelling theories speak about reciprocal connections between religious dimensions. While secularization theorists relate on an overall decline for all the religious dimensions, individualization theorists speak about a decline of institutional forms but a stability – or even an increase – of individual religiosity. In the methodological chapter I gave a comprehensive description of the different dimensions which underlie the broad concept of religiosity. In doing this I relied on the basic contributions by Glock (1962) and Glock and Stark (1965) and I supplemented them with the idea of religious self-definition referring to the ideas of civil religions (Bellah 1967) and vicarious religions (Davie 2012).

Starting from this, I decided to focus on the three dimensions more involved in the European debate. I operationalized these variables – religious practice, belief and self-definition – as follow.

Religious practice: The way to measure religious practice is fairly standardized and it basically refers to church attendance (Biolcati-Rinaldi and Vezzoni 2013, 2014; Fairbrother 2013; te Grotenhuis et al. 2015; Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011; van Ingen and Moor 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009; Voas and Doebler 2011). Starting from the item "Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" I built up a dummy variable recoding "more than once a week" and "once a week" into "Weekly Church attendance" and coding it as 1. The other response categories were coded as 0.

Self-definition: As stated before, "self-definition" represents in some way the individually perceived sense of belonging. Especially in modern context it could be instructive to test how individuals perceive themselves beyond practice. The starting point was the item "Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are ...". I recoded the answer "a religious person" as 1 and the other two possible answers ("not a religious person", "a convinced atheist") as 0.

Religious Belief: The notion of belief is the hardest to conceptualize and operationalize. It could refer to a godly power, supernatural energies or any kind of superior force. It is also allowed to be "non-Christian, vague, and even non-religious" (Voas and Crockett 2005:12). In this research, I want to test the real core of Christian beliefs, trying to disentangle them from a more general and spiritual "I know there is something out there". I have relied to a set of items asking "Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?". I coded as 1 a person answering "Yes" to all the item concerning "God", "Heaven" and "Hell", 0 otherwise. This choice has clear theoretical and methodological reasons. Theoretically speaking, beliefs in God, Heaven and Hell represent the main convictions of Christian theological system. Also methodologically, it is quite reasonable to use these three items. Relying on the work of van Schuur (2003) who built up both a Mokken scale and a Rasch scale using these items, it is possible to see them as ordered and suitable to measure a latent trait, namely religious belief. "Belief in God" and "Belief in Hell" represent the higher and lower bounds of the scale and using them (plus "Belief in Heaven", which is in the middle of rank) therefore permits to focus on Christian belief in the strictest sense, trying to avoid generic spirituality [2].

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[2] : as robustness check also other combinations were tested. Building up the "belief" indicator using both "God and Hell" and "God, Heaven, Life after death and Hell" show pretty much the same results

Dependent variable – typology

Using the typologies from the paragraph 5.1 as an inspiration, I proceed in building our typology based on the abovementioned dimensions: religious Practice, Belief and Self-Definition. It is clearly a simple and sharp typology, but it can give a lot of insights about the European religious evolution. In building it, I have focused on the main theoretical approaches within the sociology of religion field and this resulted in a 5-category typology. All the individuals who do not clearly fall in one of these categories (because of unusual combinations or high number of missing values in the three variables) are jointly considered in the category “other/missing”.

At the extremes of the typology we can find the groups of the “*Fully religious*” and “*Fully atheists*”. The first one is composed by individuals who are regular Churchgoers, who believe in the main Christian tenets and who define themselves as religious. On the contrary, the “Fully atheist” are not regular Churchgoers, do not believe in the main Christian tenets and do not define themselves as religious. By drawing from the idea of religiosity as national and cultural feature and heritage (Bellah 1967; Davie 2000; McAndrew and Voas 2011) we will instead define the third group: the “*Identitarian religious*”. These are basically individual who define themselves as religious, but without believing in the main Christian precepts nor being regular Churchgoers. The last two profiles we need to draw are the ones related to the post-traditional forms of religiosity. They correspond to the much-quoted idea of “*Believers without belong*” and to its exact contrary, the ones who “*Belong without believe*”. The names are quite self-explanatory: the “believing without belonging” group is formed by individuals who believe in the main Christian tenets but without being regular Churchgoers; the opposite is represented by the “belonging without believing” groups, which is characterized by a strong Church attendance but without the belief in the main Christian precepts. It is important to always keep in mind that this typology is completely based on Christianity (namely is not suitable to group individuals from other denominations) and it is intentionally sharp. In the opinion of who is writing, this is the best way, given the theoretical framework and the available data, to describe the European religious evolution. I have operationalized this typology as follows:

Fully Religious: Are the ones who declare weekly religious practice (Religious Practice=1), who believe in the main Christian tenets (Religious Belief=1) and who define themselves as religious (Self-Definition=1).
Fully Atheists: Are the ones who do not declare to attend Church weekly (Religious Practice=0), do not believe in the main Christian tenets (Religious Belief=0) and do not define themselves as religious (Self-Definition=0).
Identitarian Religious: Are the ones who do not declare to attend Church weekly (Religious Practice=0), do not believe in the main Christian tenets (Religious Belief=0) but who define themselves as religious (Self-Definition=1).
Believing without belonging: Are the ones who do not declare to attend Church weekly (Religious Practice=0) but who believe in the main Christian tenets (Religious Belief=1).
Belonging without believing: Are the ones declaring weekly religious practice (Religious Practice=1) but without believing in the main Christian tenets (Religious Belief=0).
Other/missing: Is the residual category. It includes those who are missing in at least two indicators and those who show unusual combinations on the three.

Independent and control variables

For the purposes of this chapter I rely on two substantial independent variables – religious doctrine and cohort – and to two control variables – gender and survey wave.

Religious doctrine: In considering the religious context, I will treat Christian doctrine as a country variable. I built up this variable summarizing the individual information gathered with the question "Which religious denomination?". Countries with an unclear situation (sharing high percentages – at least 25% – on two different denominations) were coded as "mixed" (see Figure 11 and Appendix 2 for details).

Figure 11: Countries by denomination

Roman Catholics	Protestants	Eastern Orthodox	Mixed
Austria	Denmark	Bulgaria	Estonia
Belgium	Finland	Belarus	Germany
Croatia	Great Britain	Greece	Latvia
Czech Republic	Iceland	Romania	Netherlands
France	Norway	Russian Federation	
Hungary	Sweden	Ukraine	
Ireland			
Italy			
Lithuania			
Luxembourg			
Malta			
Poland			
Portugal			
Slovak Republic			
Slovenia			
Spain			

Cohorts: The definition and operationalization of cohorts is quite straightforward. I refer to the year of birth divided into decades, starting from the ones birth before 1930. Due to small numerosity of the last available cohort (born after 1990, n=741), I aggregated it with the one born after 1980. For the purposes of the analysis 458 observations were excluded due to missing values (see Appendix 3).

Control variables: as control variables I rely on "Gender" (Male=0, Female=1, dichotomous) and "Survey wave" ("1981-1984", "1990-1993", "1999-2001", "2008-2010", categorical).

5.4 European religiosity: a cross-sectional picture

This paragraph represents the first of three-analytical paragraph aiming to describe European religiosity. In particular, in the next pages I will try to draw an accurate picture of the religious differences among European countries. I will do so by using either the single indicators and the typology described before.

Table 3 shows the means for the three religious indicators I have chosen for each country of our dataset (EVS 2011). Only as remark, the dataset was built from the EVS longitudinal file and includes all the European Christian countries which are present in at least two waves of the survey. Being the three variables dichotomous, the means can be interpreted as rates; for example, the average of 0.75 for Self-Definition in Austria means that the 75% of Austrian respondents declare themselves as religious.

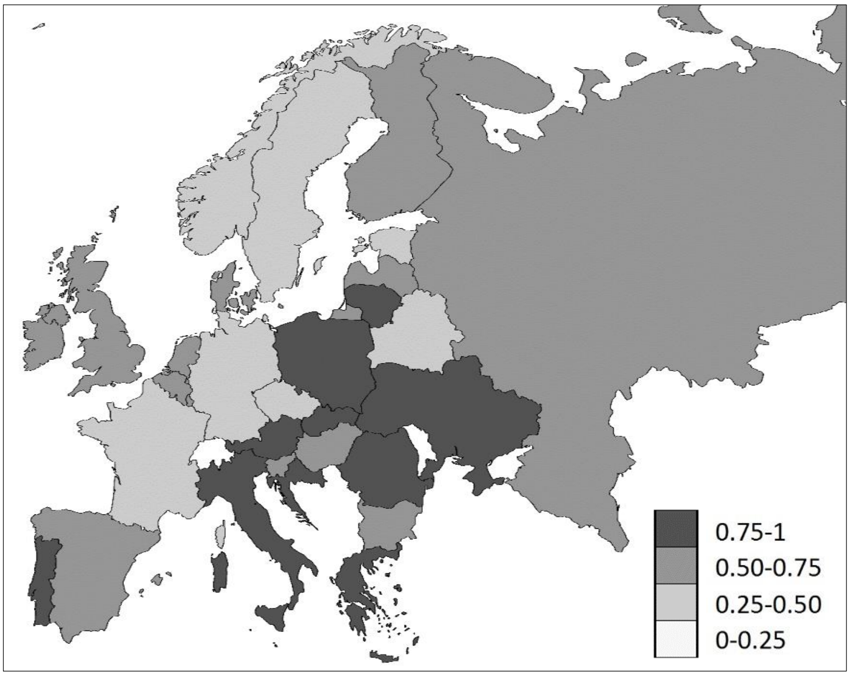
Rates for Self-Definition are the ones showing the highest values, ranging from 30% of Belarus to 92% of Poland. A first attempt to look this data in the lights of a – potential – religious-territorial cleavage is by stating that the lowest rates are found for some former Communist countries (Estonia=37%, Czech Republic=40%) and for some northern countries (Norway=47%, Sweden=25%). The European religious cleavage become more evident if we look at rates of religious Belief. They range from the 9% of Denmark to the 85% of Malta. Widen the observation, we can see the lowest rates for the northern countries (9% Denmark, 10% Sweden, 15% Iceland, 16% The Netherlands, 20% Norway) and the highest ones for some former communist countries and for southern countries plus Ireland (85% Malta, 68% Romania, 60% Lithuania, 57% Ireland, 51% Greece, 50% Croatia, 46% Italy). Patterns of religious Practice are the clearest ones. They basically divide some northern countries (Denmark=3%, Finland=4%, Sweden=5%, Norway=5%) and some former communist countries (Belarus=6%, Latvia=6%, Russian Federation=4%) from some southern countries (Malta=84%, Italy=36%, Portugal=36%, Spain=30%), Central-European ones (Poland=58%, Slovakia=38%%) and Ireland (69%).

Table 3: Average Self-definition, Belief and Practice for European Christian countries

Country	Freq.	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Austria	4,492	0.75	0.24	0.22
Belgium	7,358	0.67	0.18	0.22
Bulgaria	3,534	0.51	0.23	0.07
Belarus	2,500	0.30	0.40	0.06
Croatia	2,528	0.84	0.50	0.28
Czech Republic	5,838	0.40	0.15	0.08
Denmark	4,742	0.73	0.09	0.03
Estonia	3,531	0.37	0.17	0.04
Finland	2,760	0.59	0.30	0.04
France	5,318	0.48	0.17	0.09
Germany	8,853	0.49	0.15	0.13
Great Britain	5,212	0.51	0.33	0.14
Greece	2,642	0.84	0.51	0.18
Hungary	3,512	0.56	0.22	0.11
Iceland	3,405	0.71	0.15	0.03
Ireland	4,242	0.71	0.57	0.69
Italy	6,885	0.85	0.46	0.36
Latvia	3,422	0.73	0.29	0.06
Lithuania	3,518	0.77	0.60	0.13
Luxembourg	2,821	0.57	0.19	0.15
Malta	3,362	0.77	0.85	0.84
Netherlands	4,795	0.64	0.16	0.19
Norway	3,380	0.47	0.20	0.05
Poland	3,587	0.92	0.61	0.58
Portugal	3,738	0.82	0.38	0.36
Romania	3,738	0.81	0.68	0.25
Russian Federation	4,004	0.70	0.40	0.04
Slovakia	3,976	0.82	0.46	0.38
Slovenia	3,407	0.72	0.19	0.19
Spain	7,640	0.62	0.34	0.30
Sweden	4,203	0.35	0.10	0.05
Ukraine	2,702	0.83	0.49	0.11
Total	135,645	0.64	0.32	0.21

If looking at the rates from Table 3 the European situation could appear more jumbled than it really is. A good way to have a clearer picture is to look at the same rates reported as gradient colours in a map.

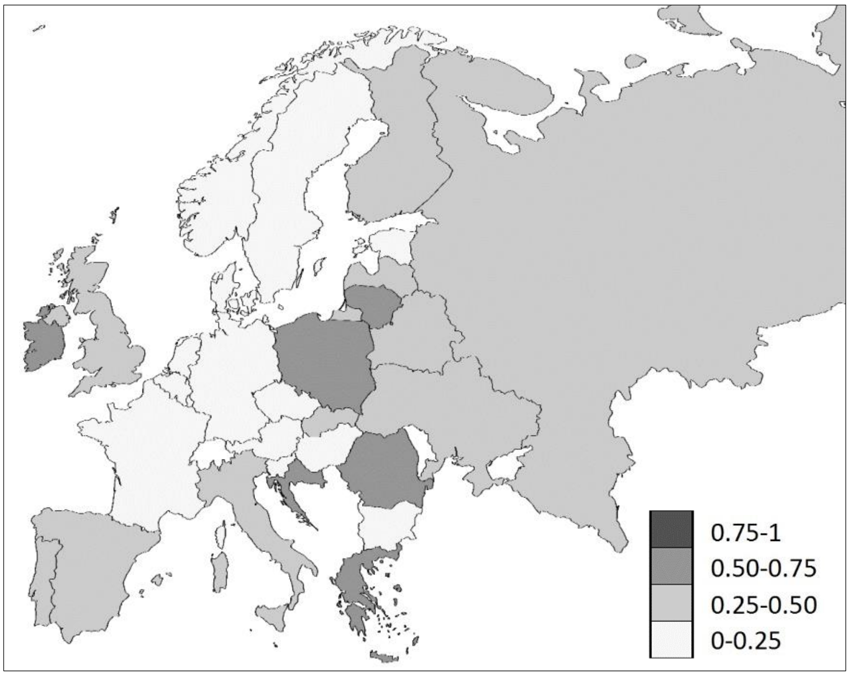
Figure 12: Average Religious Self-Definition



If we look at Self-Definition (Figure 12), despite high values for almost every country (always above 25%), the pattern is clear. The countries showing the highest values are the southern and centre-eastern ones. It seems there is a central block of European countries where the religious self-definition is really relevant.

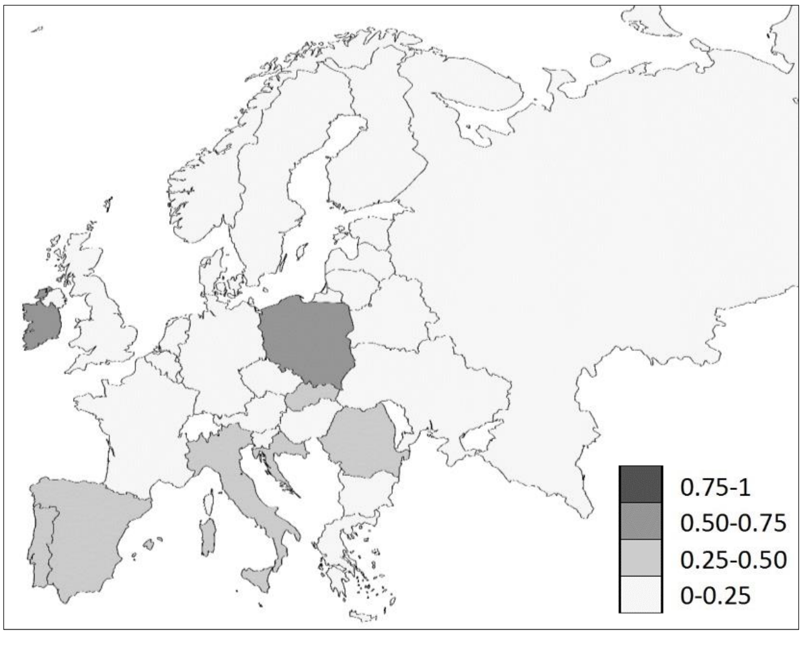
The "central block" we have found for self-definition is widen to former communist countries if we look at religious belief (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Average Religious Belief



Some southern and centre-eastern countries continue to show the highest rates but the entire block of former-communist countries has rates of belief similar to southern European countries. The countries showing the lowest rates are indeed the continental and the Scandinavian ones

Figure 14: Average Religious Practice



Looking at European religious practice (Figure 14) is instead a downward game. Almost every country shows very low rates of weekly Church attendance. The only exceptions are represented by southern Catholic countries plus Poland and Ireland, universally well-known example of strong religious practice (Brenner 2016).

To summarize what we have just seen it is possible to divide European Christian countries in three different groups. On the first side we have the Scandinavian countries and the northern European countries, which basically show low values on all the three indicators. On the second side we have southern European countries plus some Central countries (Poland) and Ireland, which show the highest values for Practice and high values also for Belief. On the third side, former Communist countries show the highest values for Belief but lower values for Practice.

If we look at this rough distinction it is obvious to see the overlapping with the Christian doctrine one. The first group is basically represented by the Protestant countries, the second one by the Catholic countries whereas the third by the Orthodox ones. In the light of this, it is reasonable to continue the reasoning dividing the European countries according to their main denomination. We have already seen (see paragraph Data and operationalization5.3) how this division was made so we can go straight to the point.

Table 4: Average Self-definition, Belief and Practice for European Christian Denominations

	Freq.	Definition	Belief	Practice
Roman Catholic	72,222	0.69	0.36	0.30
Mixed	20,601	0.55	0.18	0.12
Protestants	23,702	0.56	0.19	0.06
Eastern Orthodox	19,120	0.68	0.46	0.12
Total	135,645	0.64	0.32	0.21

The pattern is clear and interesting. Protestant and mixed countries show the lowest score for all the three indicators: the religious self-definition is the lowest (while remaining quite high) within European countries and the same for religious belief and weekly Church attendance. Roman Catholic countries and Orthodox ones are someway complementary: the rates of self-definition are basically the same whereas Roman Catholics show higher values on Practice if compared to Orthodox and lower on Belief. Vice-versa, Orthodox countries show lower values on Practice and higher on Belief. These findings are quite consistent with our previous statements about the characteristics of the Christian theologies. In paragraph 5.2 I have described Protestantism as an individual religion where ritualistic and collective dimension are not likely to be relevant; on the contrary, Roman Catholicism is the much-institutionalized religion with a strong social and ritual dimension whereas Orthodoxy is more based on traditional rituals and belief rather than on an institutionalized Church. These features are clearly grasped in the results I have just presented.

Religious typology in Europe

Looking at the European religiosity with the lens of a typology means not only looking at the indicator's distribution but also at the ways they combine. Given what I described in the previous paragraphs, it is quite relevant to look at four specific groups – fully religious, atheists, believers without belonging and Identitarian religious – to better understand what is going on and to give some cues about the secularization-individualization debate. In Table 5 it is reported the share of the categories for all the European countries in our dataset.

Table 5: Religious Typology for European Christian Countries

Country	Fully Religious	Fully Atheist	Believing without belonging	Belonging without Believing	Identity Religious	*Other/ missing*	Total
Austria	8.44	16.72	9.97	8.21	39.34	*17.32*	100.00
Belgium	7.52	25.46	7.42	10.19	34.98	*14.43*	100.00
Bulgaria	3.00	33.67	13.78	1.90	28.24	*19.41*	100.00
Belarus	4.08	34.48	23.96	0.88	10.68	*25.92*	100.00
Croatia	18.16	11.75	24.01	5.74	29.63	*10.72*	100.00
Czech Rep.	5.09	45.46	6.18	1.71	22.80	*18.76*	100.00
Denmark	1.43	22.71	5.40	0.74	58.01	*11.70*	100.00
Estonia	1.78	29.65	7.50	0.71	18.55	*41.80*	100.00
Finland	3.01	24.09	16.92	0.98	33.77	*21.23*	100.00
France	3.69	41.48	10.61	3.54	28.79	*11.90*	100.00
Germany	5.39	37.13	6.46	5.04	26.26	*19.72*	100.00
Great Britain	7.94	28.43	17.11	3.80	24.44	*18.27*	100.00
Greece	12.34	10.30	28.12	3.29	36.87	*9.08*	100.00
Hungary	5.92	36.28	12.90	3.36	32.03	*9.51*	100.00
Iceland	1.47	21.35	11.01	1.29	57.00	*7.87*	100.00
Ireland	32.67	8.27	8.98	21.03	8.79	*20.25*	100.00
Italy	20.87	9.72	14.54	8.98	32.06	*13.84*	100.00
Latvia	2.83	14.38	13.35	1.26	38.49	*29.69*	100.00
Lithuania	6.31	5.51	16.91	0.71	28.79	*41.76*	100.00
Luxembourg	4.96	32.15	10.28	6.63	30.59	*15.38*	100.00
Malta	60.08	4.13	7.76	7.64	2.74	*17.64*	100.00
Netherlands	7.95	30.47	5.46	8.13	38.10	*9.89*	100.00
Norway	3.76	40.47	12.93	1.12	29.62	*12.10*	100.00
Poland	35.15	4.24	15.67	13.69	17.48	*13.77*	100.00
Portugal	15.94	12.04	13.72	13.38	32.96	*11.96*	100.00
Romania	17.28	7.44	35.31	3.00	24.96	*12.01*	100.00
Russian Fed.	3.02	19.46	22.73	0.55	38.16	*16.08*	100.00
Slovakia	24.72	14.46	9.68	6.04	28.22	*16.88*	100.00
Slovenia	8.34	22.48	7.78	7.46	39.07	*14.88*	100.00
Spain	15.79	24.79	10.98	9.21	22.89	*16.34*	100.00
Sweden	2.50	43.85	4.02	1.31	24.10	*24.22*	100.00
Ukraine	8.14	10.88	25.06	1.67	40.45	*13.80*	100.00
Total	11.07	23.79	12.5	5.52	29.87	*17.24*	100.00

Looking at the European countries, we can find the highest proportion of "Fully religious" in the same Catholic countries (Malta 60.08%, Poland 35.15%, Ireland 32.67%, Slovakia 24.72%, Italy 20.87%) that leaped out in the previous analysis about single indicators. If we look at percentages of "Fully atheist" instead, something unexpected appears. In addition to some – expected – Nordic countries (Sweden 43.85%, Norway 40.47%) we find highest proportions for France (41.48 %), Czech Republic (which 45.46% sounds like an antagonism to religious Slovakia) and Germany (37.13%). There is no trace in the highest positions of the other Nordic countries – Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the Netherlands. On the contrary, we find the lowest values for the countries scoring higher on “Fully Religious” – Malta, Italy, Poland and Ireland. Given these consideration, it is right to define Italy, Ireland, Poland and Malta as the most religious countries in Europe, in which both the institutional and the spiritual dimension of religiosity coexist. On the contrary we need caution to define all the northern countries as main examples of widespread atheism.

Going further in this reasoning, next step is to look at the “Religious identity” group, namely individual who neither attend Church regularly nor believe in the main Christian tenets, but who define themselves as religious. As expected, we find the highest proportions for the countries which were missed when looking at atheism. Denmark (58.01%), Iceland (57.00%) and the Netherlands (38.10%) are some countries standing at the top, followed by Austria (39.34%), Belgium (34.98%), Slovenia (39.07%) and by a block of former Communist countries – Ukraine (40.45%), Russian Federation (38.16%) and Latvia (38.49%). Moving from these traditional forms of religiosity to the “Believing without belonging”, it appears clear that this category catches mostly the ex-Sovietic way of being religious. In fact, the countries scoring higher are entirely from the block of former communist countries – Belarus (23.96%), Romania (35.31%), Russian federation (22.73%) and Ukraine (25.06%). In addition to them we can find Greece (28.12%), another Orthodox country, and Croatia (24.01%).

Given this result some doubts appears regarding the use of this typology. At first quick glance it seems suitable to measure inherent features of the different theologies instead of transversal European religious features. We will come back to this point when looking at the temporal evolution of these groups. What is clear, however, is that different religious confessions among Christianity show different ways of being religious. In order to summarize and clarify what we have just seen, next step is obviously to look at the different categories and at how they are shaped by the different confessions.

Table 6: Religious Typology for European Christian Denominations

Country	Fully Religious	Fully Atheist	Believing without belonging	Belonging without Believing	Identity Religious	*Other/ missing*	Total
Catholic	16.10	20.98	11.18	8.08	27.26	*16.40*	100.00
Mixed	4.94	30.52	7.55	4.39	29.73	*22.87*	100.00
Protestants	3.57	30.22	10.95	1.67	37.60	*15.98*	100.00
Orthodox	7.96	19.22	24.77	1.86	30.30	*15.90*	100.00
Total	11.07	23.79	12.50	5.52	29.87	*17.24*	100.00

Table 6 reports the proportion for the different categories divided by the various Christian doctrines. *Roman Catholics* countries show the highest proportion of fully religious and almost the lowest of fully atheist. In addition, they show a low rate of believers without belonging, the highest of belonging without believing and the lowest of religious Identitarian. Every sign goes in the direction of highlight the institutional dimension of Roman Catholicism: the emphasis is on religious practice as pre-requisite of every form of religiosity. *Eastern Orthodoxies* countries show instead low rate of both fully religious and fully atheist but the higher rate of believers without belonging. Also in this case the expectations are confirmed: Eastern Orthodoxy is characterized by the emphasis on beliefs as the driver-dimension of religiosity; Church attendance is not a strong determinant as for Catholics. *Protestants* are the missing piece of the puzzle; they show the lowest rate of fully religious, a high rate of fully atheist but low rates for believers without belonging and belongs without believing. In addition, they show the highest proportion of Identitarian religious. Everything goes in the direction of a disaffection from religious engagement, both in the form of Church attendance and belief in the main tenets. It is quite interesting that, despite this decline of religiosity, Protestants continue to define themselves as religious, and this peculiarity reinforce both the idea of "civil religion" (Bellah 1967) and "vicarious religion" by grace Davie (2000, 2001). The latter is the most interesting, being developed explicitly referring to Lutheran Churches in northern countries. Despite the low attendance rates in these countries, it seems that individuals remain members of their churches. The mechanism behind is the one of "vicarious religion", meaning the "notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing" (Davie 2012:169). According to this, individuals use Churches extensively only for the occasional offices and regard membership as part of national just as much as religious identity.

5.5 Religious shift among cohorts in Europe

In the previous paragraph, I drew a static picture of the European religious landscape. This is a good starting point but obviously a good assessment of what is happening in Europe needs a longitudinal approach. This is even truer because of the debate involving different theories which speaks about different trends for different dimensions of religiosity. In this paragraph I will go into this longitudinal assessment by modelling cohort trends for the three – practice, belief and self-definition – dimensions of religiosity. Given the peculiarities which every Christian doctrine give to these dimensions, I will also model the trends dividing them among these doctrines.

5.5.1 Research questions

As already said, religion has to be seen as a multidimensional concept where at least five different dimensions are interrelated. The emphasis on these dimensions is the key point to better understand, test and interpret the main theoretical approaches on religiosity. Considering religiosity as a whole (i.e. building a scale) or focusing only on one dimension could be not instructive.

Despite some practical advantages, this approach oversimplifies the study of religiosity and could be no longer adequate to grasp the real meanings of religious trends (Voas 2015).

Aim of this part of research is to give a clear assessment about how these dimensions are related and how and if their trends show a common pattern or differ. I do so focusing on European Christian countries and considering the cohorts starting from the '30. I also take into account the different Christian denominations to better investigate the trends and to underline possible peculiarity.

First step is to understand how these three dimensions are correlated. Having the comparative framework considered, these correlations have to be evaluated at both the individual and the country level trying to avoid both the ecologic fallacy and the atomistic one. Assessing the correlations in this way permits to better understand whether the three indicators measure or not the same underlying dimension of religiosity. Starting from this, the first research question is:

RQ1: *How correlated are the three dimensions (at the country and individual level)? Are they measuring the same underlying dimension of religion?*

As previously said, this research consists in building the trends for three different dimensions. The decision to use cohorts to account for time has clear theoretical foundations and this issue is so relevant that I will devote the entire next paragraph to it. This leads directly to the second research question, namely if the abovementioned dimensions show different or similar patterns:

RQ2: *Do the three dimensions of religiosity show different trends moving from the older to the youngest cohort?*

In the paragraph 5.2, I went through the three main European Christian doctrines, trying to underline some theological pillars that could condition the meaning and the interpretation they give to the different dimensions. The third research question basically assesses this point:

RQ3*: Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?*

5.5.2 Why cohorts?

As stated in the methodological chapter, the Age-Period-Cohort issue has to be one of the focal points in assessing religious change. Luckily, we have at this point a kind of state of the art concerning it. First of all, we have to exclude age effect as main cause of long-term trends. Age effects on religiosity arise because of life-course events like setting up home independently, marrying, having children, or retiring (see also Figure 8). These effects are therefore unlikely to be linear over an adult lifespan, excluding them for the explanation of long-term trends (Voas and Chaves 2016). The youngers tend to be less religious not because they represent permanent long-term social change but because they are young (Greeley 2003). The debate about the appropriate lens to study religious change thus narrows to Period or Cohort effects. Keeping in mind the blurred boundaries between the two and the consequent identification problem, cohort replacement seems to be the most appropriate interpretation for religious change.

Starting from the works of Voas (Voas 2009; Voas and Chaves 2016), cohort replacement has started to be considered as the main mechanism behind religious decline. “The religious changes we observe in Europe occur largely across rather than within generations” (Voas 2009:161). The time differences should therefore be explained because of cohort and not age or period effects. Voas and Crockett (2005), among others, state that the level of religious affiliation falls for each successive generation and that the gap between these cohorts has been increased. In their estimation of trends for each cohort they report an essentially flat lines; this thus suggest the absence of any period effects over and above the generational differences. In another research concerning England, (Crockett and Voas 2006b) clearly state that the religious decline occurred in the last century was overwhelmingly generational in nature: they report that decade by decade each birth cohort was less religious than the one before. In addition to these, many previous studies (Firebaugh and Harley 1991; Schwadel 2010; Voas and Doebler 2011) suggest that the major changes observed in religiosity arise from difference between cohorts (Müller, De Graaf, and Schmidt 2014). This cohort effect it is likely to be considered as a mix of different mechanisms: these comprise a pure environmental and contextual effect during childhood as well as the impact of this context on the parental effort for religious education.

A good way to clarify some of these possible mechanisms is to distinguish between compositional change and contextual change. There is a compositional change when there has been little change in people with similar characteristics whereas there is a change in the frequency of these attributes (e.g. higher education, women employment, childbearing) (Voas and Doebler 2011). A contextual change instead occurs if people have not changed, but the environment in which they behave has changed (e.g. religious diversity, security). It remains clear that the boundaries between these factors are blurred but the need to clarify them remains theoretically and practically relevant. For example, increased access to higher education (contextual feature) may have a compositional effect (if more educated individuals are less religious if compared to others), which could in turn create a new contextual effect (the widespread of a non-religious worldview) (Voas and Doebler 2011). Focusing on religion, contextual effect on religiosity can be incentive to believe and belong (like material insecurity), available education (religious Vs secular instruction), prohibition on Sunday working, availability of competing secular activities, media-promoted worldviews, social norms about women working, family formation and so on. From this derive the relevance of the context in which individuals grew up and been socialized.

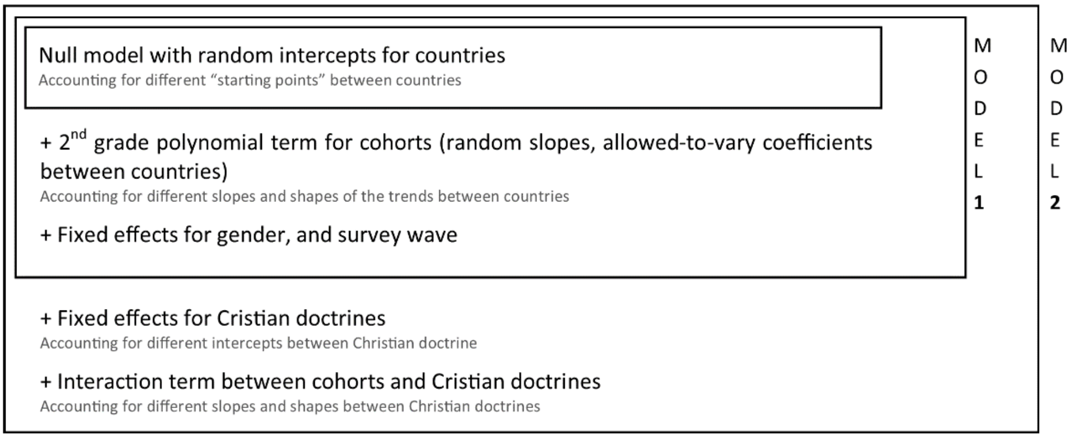
Concluding, it seems fair to say that "society is changing religiously not because individuals are changing, but rather because old people are gradually replaced by younger people with different characteristics" (Voas and Doebler 2011:1). If we accept this, the mechanism that produces cohort effects is straightforward: "we are socialized by the religious environment of our upbringing, and members of each successive cohort (…) are less likely to have been raised in religious households and are therefore less likely to be religious as adults" (Voas and Chaves 2016:19).

5.5.3 Methods and modelling strategy

To analyse the relations between variables defined at different levels and to take into account the heterogeneity of religious trajectories between different countries, multilevel modelling is the most suitable approach. It provides with a set of articulated and flexible models that reassemble the disconnection between two independent traditions of research: ecological analysis and the individual variables analysis (Subramanian et al. 2009). For this research, a particular kind of multilevel models was used; this kind, called multivariate multilevel model or multiple response variables models, basically represent contemporary measurements of distinctive but not unrelated outcome variables. The three outcomes (practice, belief and self-definition) are thus modelled simultaneously. I do this through a multivariate multilevel model whereby the three outcomes at level 0 are conceptualized as nesting within the individuals at level 1 which are nested within countries at level 2. Given the three outcomes binary, I used a multilevel model in which the dependent variables are related to the predictor variables through a logit link. The unexplained differences between individuals are treated as a Binomial distribution and a covariance structure is specified to allow correlations between the outcomes. This kind of technique deals efficiently with missing observations (this facility is based on the rather undemanding "missing at random" assumption (Little and Rubin 2002)): as long as at least one of the three outcome responses is observed it is possible to include that case in the analysis (Deeming and Jones 2015). In short, this multilevel approach handles multiple outcomes in an overall model, permits imbalance and missingness, allows for the assessment of correlations between outcomes at each level, corrects standard errors for mis-estimated precision and analyses micro and macro models simultaneously (Deeming and Jones 2015).

As a workflow, I drew upon a step-by-step modelling. I built up three different models of increasing complexity in order to answer to the three research questions (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Modelling strategy



In order to answer to the first (RQ1: How correlated are the three dimensions? Are they measuring the same underlying dimension of religion?) we basically refer to the so called null model, meaning a model with no predictors where the constant term is allowed to vary between countries. In doing so we can obtain the correlation coefficients between the three dependent variables reported for the two different levels (individuals and countries) (see Appendix 4). Model 1 is the null model supplemented by the 2nd order polynomial term for cohorts and survey wave and gender as control variables. With this model, we are able to answer to the second research question (RQ2: Do the three dimensions of religiosity show different trends?). In this model the coefficients for the two polynomial terms are allowed to vary between countries in order to take into account the different slopes and shapes of the trends (see Appendix 5). Finally, with model 2, we are able to answer the third research question (RQ3: Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?). This model is basically model 1 supplemented by fixed effects for the different Christian doctrines (Protestants as reference category in contrast coding) and an interaction term between cohorts and Christian doctrines (see Appendix 6)[3].

5.5.4 Results

First step in multilevel modelling is to assess whether there is enough country variance to justify its use. There are two different steps to assess the appropriateness of this approach. Firstly, country-level variance has to be statistically significant. If yes, it is possible to calculate the VPC, alias the variance partition coefficient, which points the proportion of total variance explained by higher level units (countries in this case).

Table 7: Model 0 (null) estimation. Coefficients in odds scale

	Definition	Belief	Practice
Fixed Part			
Cons	0.607***	-0.706***	-1.387 ***
Random Part			
Cons 2 var	0.526***	0.701***	1.505***
VPC	0.137	0.175	0.314
Units: Countries	32	32	32
Units: Individuals	134,997	134,997	134,997
Units: Responses	363,839	363,839	363,839

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

[3]: Model estimated within MLWiN (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmm/software/mlwin/) via runmlwin (Leckie and Charlton 2012), RIGLS (restricted maximum likelihood) estimation procedure.

Table 7 shows everything is needed for this prior stage. As we can see level 2 variance is statistically significant for all the three outcomes and this justify the choice of multilevel modelling. Starting from these level 2 variances it is possible to look at VPC coefficients, calculated as [4]:

$$VPC_{ij} = \frac{\sigma_u^2}{\sigma_u^2 + \pi^2/3}$$

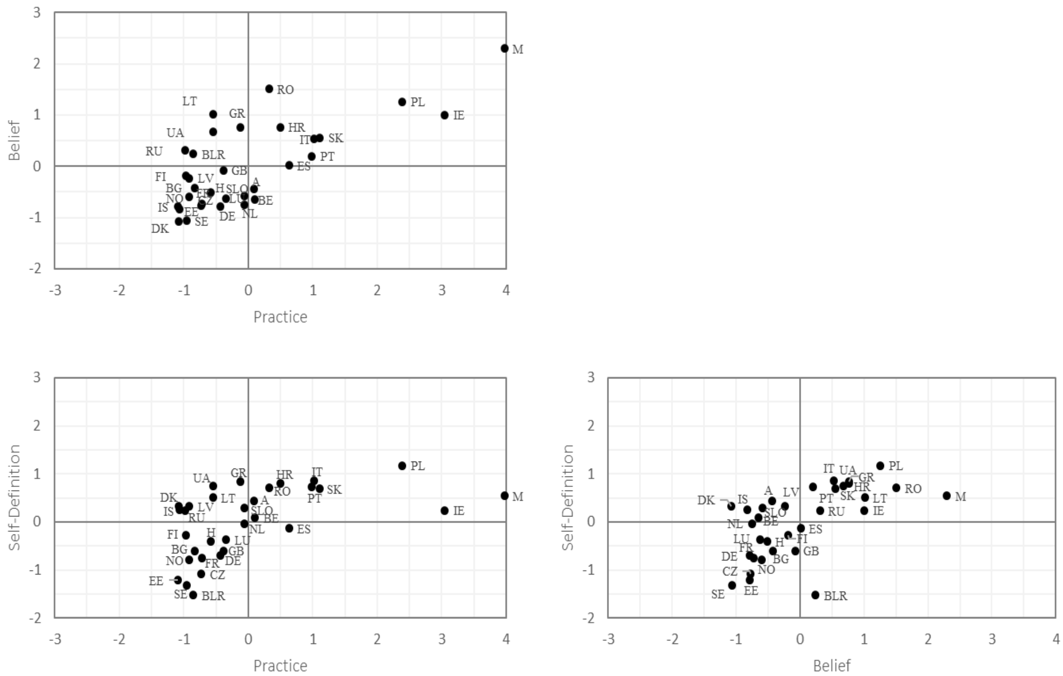
VPC coefficients have to be interpreted as proportion of total variance explained by higher level and show some insights about how the different outcomes differ in this regard. The outcome showing the higher VPC is religious practice, with 31.4% or variance explained by country differences. These coefficients for the other two items are lower (13.7% for self-definition and 17.5% for belief) and this mean a lower level of country differences in respect to the within countries ones.

RQ1: How correlated are the three dimensions? Are they measuring the same underlying dimension of religion?

All these preliminary considerations justify the modelling strategy but say almost nothing about how the different outcomes are related and whether they work together or not. To move toward this issues a good starting point is to plot the residuals pairwise. Figure 16 shows the country residuals obtained from the null model. There are clearly large differences between countries but the residuals show quite a common pattern. It seems that the clearest linear pattern is when comparing Practice and Belief, meaning that countries with higher levels of Belief also show higher level of Practice, and vice versa. The other two comparisons seem to be less clear-cut, even though the patterns are still present.

[4] : VPC Calculated under the assumption of Latent Variable Distribution

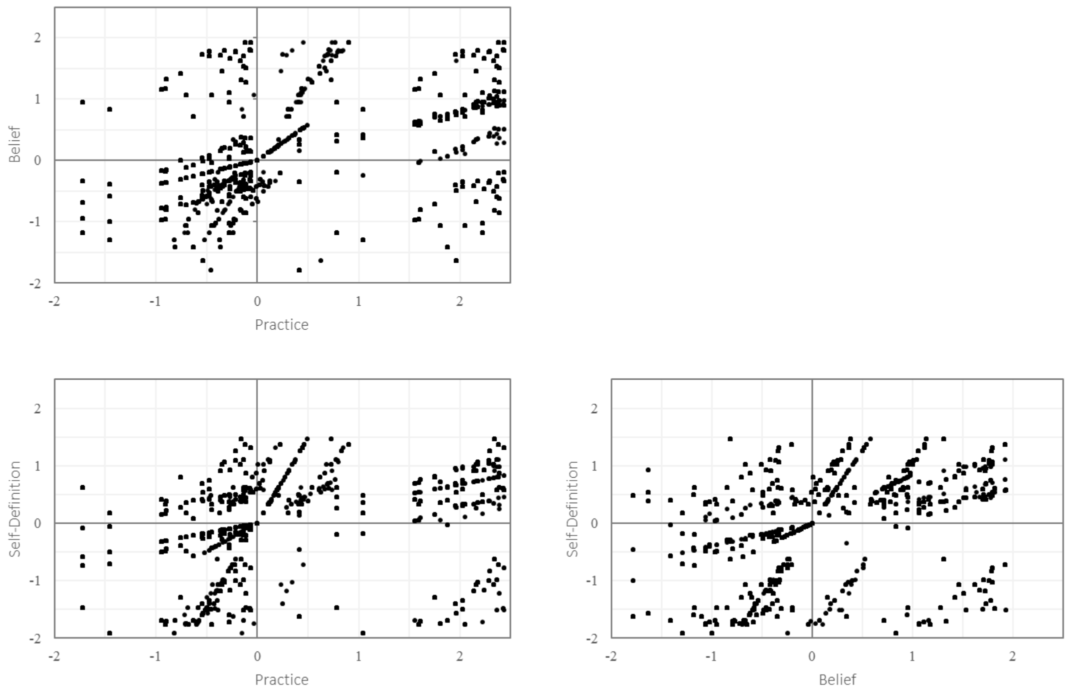
Figure 16: Country residuals (log-odds scale)



If we look instead at individual residuals (Figure 17), two main things can be noticed. First of all, the residuals patterns are more jumbled, meaning a not so clear relation between each couple of item. Secondly, the residuals are in some way clustered. This reinforce the idea of using multilevel modelling and cast doubts about the suitability of these items to measure an overall concept of religiosity.

We can better describe this situation by looking at Table 8. It displays the correlations between the three outcomes at each level, net from the effect of the other level. It is not surprisingly that all correlations are positive such there is a general tendency for all the three religious indicators to go together.

Figure 17: Individual residuals (log-odds scale)



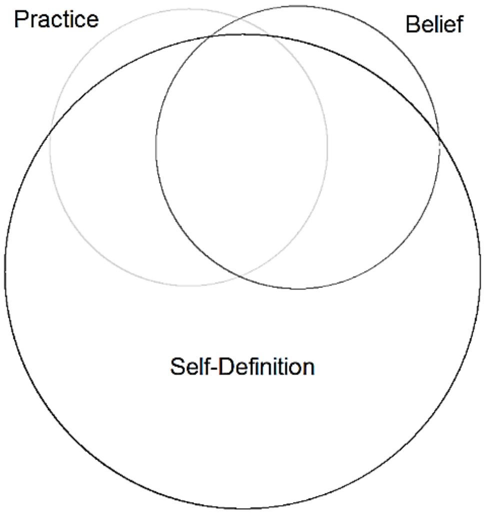
As previously foreseen, the highest correlations are the country level ones, which are all between 0.564 and 0.718. At the individual level there is also a tendency for the three outcomes to go together, but the coefficients are weaker and between 0.284 (Practice and Self-Definition) and 0.336 (Practice and Belief).

Table 8: Correlation between outcomes for Countries and Individuals

	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
COUNTRIES			
Self-Definition	1		
Belief	0.612	1	
Practice	0.564	0.718	1
INDIVIDUALS			
Self-Definition	1		
Belief	0.344	1	
Practice	0.284	0.336	1

To give a brief summary, there is general tendency of the three dimensions of religiosity to go together and this is particularly marked at country level. At the individual level, the three outcomes represent somewhat different and unrelated dimensions, as the correlation coefficients are not high. A good way to give a graphical representation of these individual results is by Figure 18 which reports the Venn diagram for the three variables. The picture cannot be clearer: it shows that the three dimensions overlap only for few individual over the entire EVS sample.

Figure 18: Venn diagram for the three dependent variables



RQ2: Different trends for different dimensions

In answering the second research question, we primarily have a look at the Model 1 coefficients for both terms related to cohorts (Table 9). Having in mind that these coefficients are conditional on gender and survey wave (to control for period effects), it is quite clear that all of them are negative and statistically significant for the 1st grade of the polynomial term. This means that there is a general decrease on the three outcomes. The steep of the decrease does not vary so much between the three outcomes. Looking instead at the 2nd grade of the polynomial some differences are present. This term is significant for all the three outcomes (even thought for Practice is critical), with a bigger coefficient for belief (being quadratic also small differences can have a strong impact). Looking at the constant instead, it is possible to see that the indicator measuring self-definition is the bigger one, meaning a higher "starting point", whereas the other two show lower values.

Table 9: Model 1 estimation. Coefficients in log-odds scale

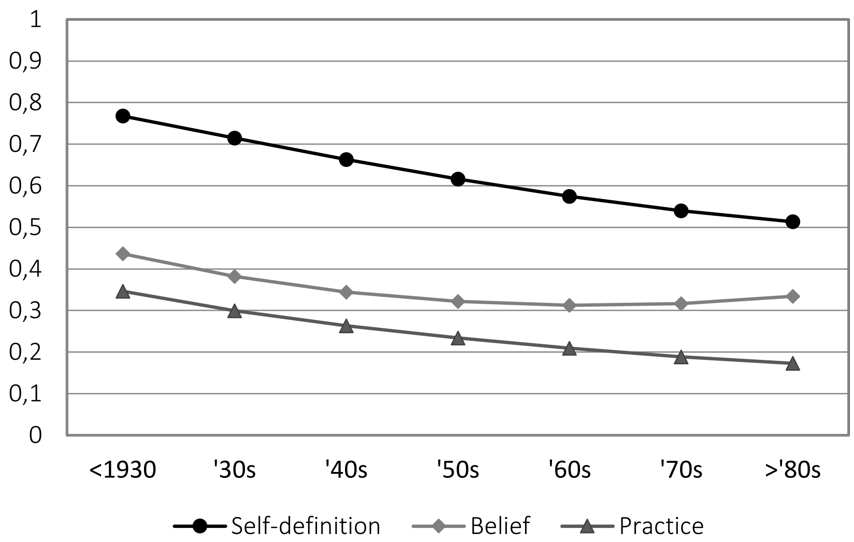
	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Fixed Part			
Cons	1.384***	-0,332*	-0.786***
Cohort	-0.399***	-0.435***	-0.429***
Cohort^2	0.020***	0.041***	0.020***
Female *(ref: male)*	0.713***	0.457***	0.574***
1990-1993 *(ref:1981-1984)*	-0.032	-0.180***	-0.048*
1999-2001 *(ref:1981-1984)*	0.222***	0,233***	-0.039
2008-2010 *(ref:1981-1984)*	0.249***	0.347***	-0.104***
Random Part			
Cons var	0.844***	1.008***	2.291***
Cohort var	0.038***	0.032***	0.120***
Cohort^2 var	0.001***	0.000	0.002***
Units: Countries	32	32	32
Units: Individuals	134,997	134,997	134,997
Units: Responses	363,839	363,839	363,839

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The common story behind this is a general decrease but with some substantial differences. Self-Definition starts higher if compared to the other two, which start almost at the same point. Religious practice decrease almost at the same rate between every cohort, meaning a basic linear decrease and the same for Self-definition. Quite different is the trend for religious belief which, having a quite strong quadratic component, can also become positive in the youngest cohorts.

These results can be better seen plotting the predicted probabilities. This basically means to compute the probability to be believer, church-goer and to define themselves as religious associated to each cohort, setting the other variables to their mean. The results are graphically shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Predicted probabilities by cohort



RQ3: Dividing Christian confessions

In order to answer the third research question, we supplemented model 1 with fixed effects for Christian doctrines (Protestants as reference category in contrast coding) and with interaction effects between doctrines and cohorts. As before, we start looking at the coefficients then going to the graphical representation of the predicted probabilities. The first three coefficients (constant, cohort and cohort^2) partially confirm what we found in model 1. There is a general decrease in the three outcomes but with different starting points, higher for self-definition and lower for belief and practice. Moreover, the overall quadratic term is significant for belief and practice while non-significant for self-definition. The inspection of the fixed effects coefficients for Christian traditions reveals similar starting point for self-definition among the four, common - and significantly different from Protestants and Mixed countries - starting points for Roman

Catholics and Eastern Orthodox if we look at belief and different starting points among all the different traditions if we look at practice (although the coefficients for mixed and Orthodox are quite similar).

Table 10: Model 2 estimation. Coefficients in log-odds scale

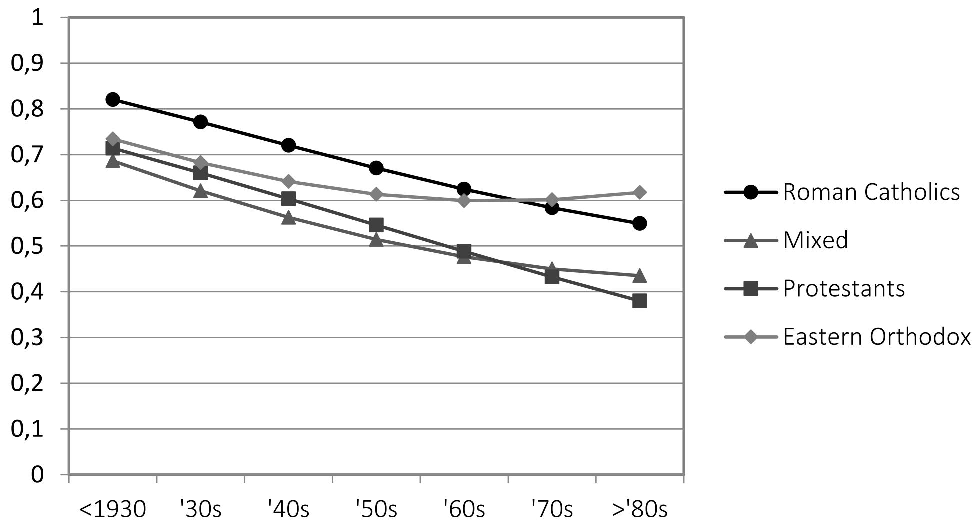
	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Fixed Part			
Constant	0.970***	-1.320***	-2.516***
Cohort	-0.340***	-0.289***	-0.361***
Cohort^2	0.004	0.024***	0.029***
Roman Catholics *(ref: Protestants)*	0.741*	1.424*	2.682***
Mixed *(ref: Protestants)*	-0.025	0.082	1.449**
Eastern Orthodox *(ref: Protestants)*	0.370	1.359*	1.236**
Roman Catholics*cohort	-0.055	-0.198***	-0.084
Mixed*cohort	-0.149*	-0.129	-0.350***
Eastern Orthodox*cohort	-0.161*	-0.171**	-0.011
Roman Catholics*cohort^2	0.011**	0.018***	-0.015
Mixed*cohort^2	0.028***	0.019**	0.025*
Eastern Orthodox*cohort^2	0.041***	0.030***	-0.011
Female *(ref: male)*	0.725***	0.460***	0.575***
1990-1993 *(ref:1981-1984)*	-0.030	-0.181***	-0.053*
1999-2001 *(ref:1981-1984)*	0.233***	0.236***	-0.047
2008-2010 *(ref:1981-1984)*	0.259***	0.349***	-0.112***
Random Part			
Cons var	0.684***	0.699***	1.043***
Cohort var	-0.031**	-0.025**	-0.050**
Cohort^2 var	0.001***	0.000	0.001***
Units: Countries	32	32	32
Units: Individuals	134,997	134,997	134,997
Units: Responses	363,839	363,839	363,839

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The coefficients for the interaction terms (revealing somehow the differences in slope and shape with the general coefficient) show instead the most interesting results, especially if we look at the quadratic component. They are almost not significant for practice, meaning weak differences in the shape of the trends between the different traditions. They are instead significant if we look at self-definition and belief, meaning marked differences for these latter.

As before, the situation can be better described by looking at the plots for the predicted probabilities. We set the coefficients for wave and gender to their means and computed the probabilities for each cohort and each doctrine.

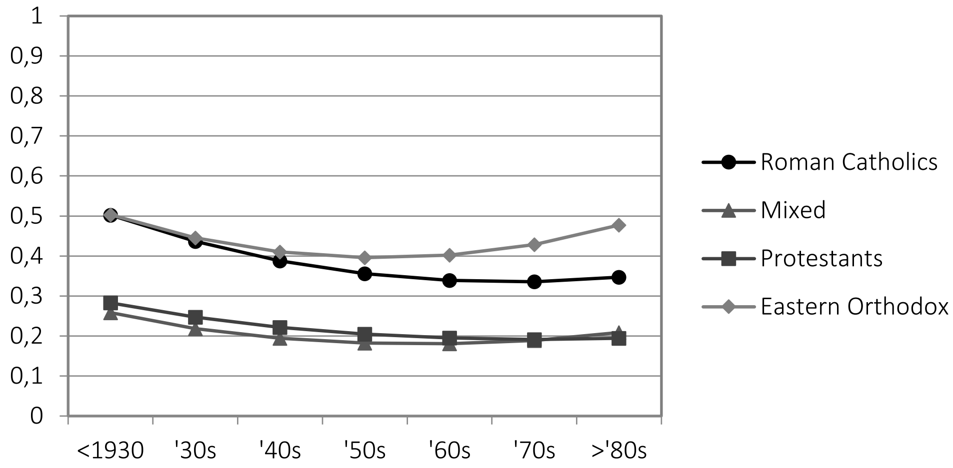
Figure 20: Predicted probabilities for Self-Definition by cohorts and denominations



Starting from self-definition (Figure 20) it is possible to see that the four traditions almost share the same very high starting point (somewhere between 0.7 and 0.85) and start to decrease at the same rate. Starting from the ’50s cohorts, something changed for mixed countries and especially for Orthodox countries. The slope of the trend starts to decrease and the trend itself becomes slightly positive for Orthodox from the ’60s cohorts.

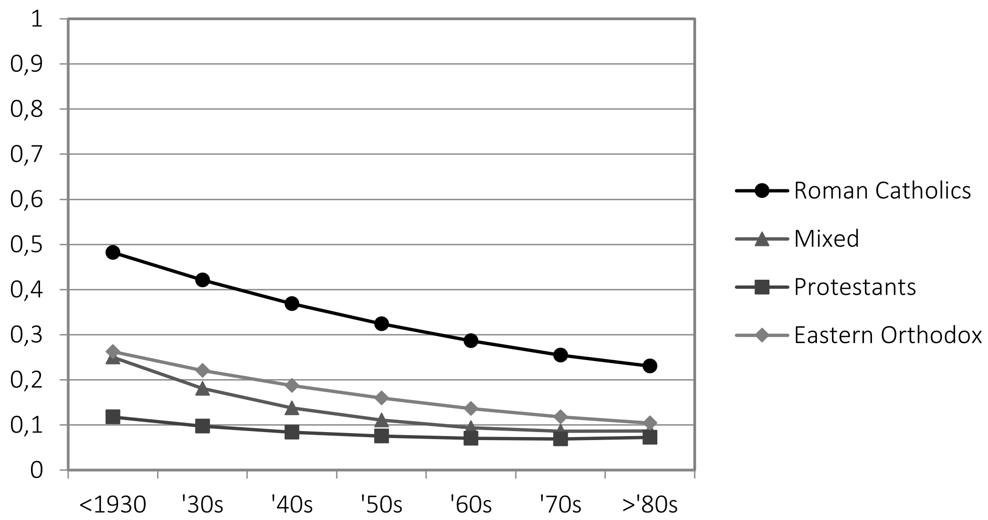
Regarding belief (Figure 21), Roman Catholics and Orthodox share an almost common starting point (around 0.5) whereas Protestant and Mixed country show basically the same, almost flat and very low, trend.

Figure 21: Predicted probabilities for Belief by cohorts and denominations



Also in this case something changed from the ’50s cohorts. The slope starts to decrease for Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox until it becomes positive for Orthodox and almost flat for Roman Catholics.

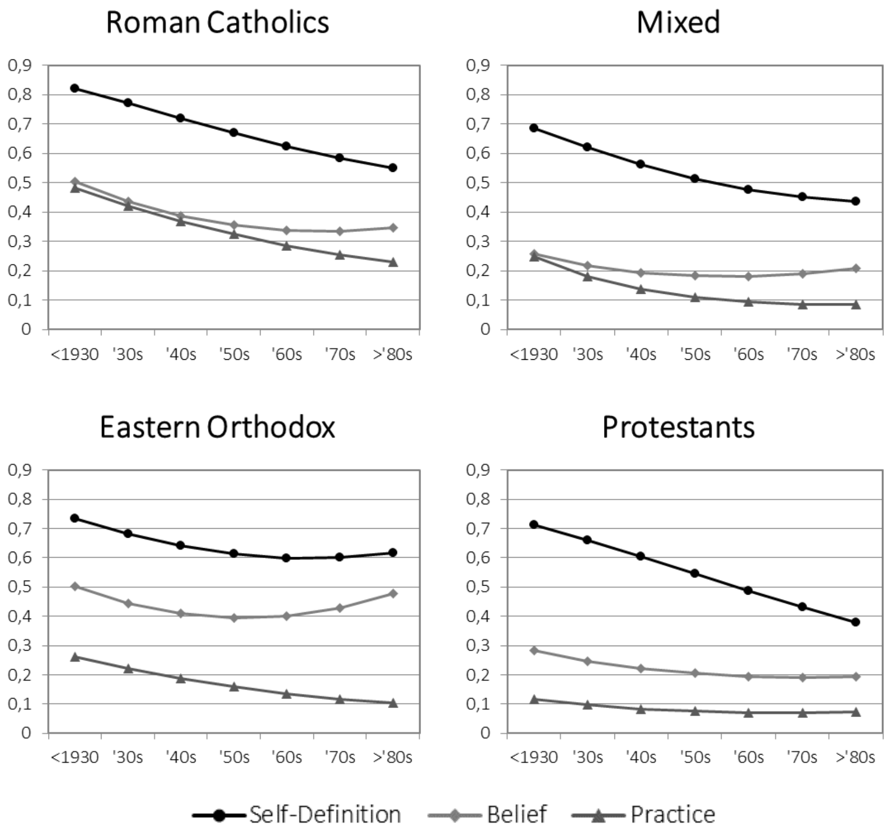
Figure 22: Predicted probabilities for Practice by cohorts and denominations



Practice (Figure 22) is the output showing the clearest trend for each tradition. Starting from different points (around 0.5 for Roman Catholics, 0.25 for Orthodox and mixed countries and 0.1 for Protestants), each tradition shows a clear decrease toward a quite common point around 0.1 (0.2 for Roman Catholics).

The same story can be told looking at the plots reporting the trends for the three outcomes grouped by Christian doctrines. Roman Catholics show an almost parallel decrease for Self-Definition and Practice and a kind of slightly U-shaped trend for Belief. Also mixed countries show a kind of parallel decrease for Self-Denomination and Practice whereas the trend for belief is almost flat. Trends for Orthodox countries show quite singular patterns. Whereas Practice shows an almost linear decrease, the other two outcomes (Self-Definition and Belief) started to increase (at different rates) from the ’50 and ’60 cohorts. Trends for Protestant countries differ a lot. Self-Definition shows a steep decreasing trend whereas the other two outcomes are almost flat, probably suffering from a kind of “pavement effect”.

Figure 23: Predicted probabilities for Denominations by cohorts and indicators



5.5.5 Discussion

This part of research is basically descriptive but some insight, some theoretical implications and some notes of caution can still be given.

Starting from the first research question, what we found are different associations between the three outcomes if evaluated at different levels. The correlation between each couple of them is quite strong at country level, meaning that, ecologically speaking, they could someway measure the same concept of religiosity. What indeed needs caution is assuming, on the other hand, that the three indicators are coherent within individuals. What we found are positive coefficients but very weak. This could mean that the three indicators are really measuring somewhat different dimensions of religiosity and considering religiosity as a single approximation (i.e. building a scale) or focusing only on one dimension could be misleading.

What I did in answering the second research question is to compute time-trends for the three items. As said, cohorts were chosen to consider time. Briefly summing up the main theoretical approaches about religious studies, secularization theory speaks about a general decrease in each dimension of religiosity whereas individualization theory speaks about a decrease in religious practice and self-definition but a stability or even an increase of individual beliefs. What we found with model 1 is a substantial and constant decline in Practice and Self-Definition but something different for belief. It shows the same declining pattern for the older cohorts (up to the ’50 cohort) whereas the slope decreases and become flat – or slightly positive – in the younger ones. Theoretically speaking, secularization theory still seems to be the appropriate framework, but our data show that, at least in the youngest cohorts, the share of people holding religious belief breaks the descending trend. Decomposing these trends between the different Christian traditions can surely help in scrutinizing them thoroughly.

Research questions three precisely aims to do this. It is deserved to remember that the grouping of European countries according to their dominant doctrine can also reflect something more. For example, the Orthodox countries are almost the former Communist countries whereas the Protestant countries are basically the North-European countries. Looking from the side of the three outcomes, the patterns for Self-Definition show a common decrease starting from a very high rate. For Orthodox countries, something changed from the ’50 cohort, when the trend starts to flatten (or slightly increase). The trends for belief confirm what we found in model 1. Starting from the ’60 cohorts something changed; the trends for Mixed and Protestant countries starts flatten (it could be interpreted as a sort of “pavement” or “bottom” effect) whereas the trends for Roman Catholics and Orthodox starts to flatten (Catholics) or to increase (Orthodox). This basically confirm the idea of a stability or even a reawakening of individual religious belief, at least for Orthodox countries. From the side of Practice, our results confirm the theoretical expectation of secularization theorists. For each Christian denomination, we observe a general decline of religious practice. The only trend appearing almost flat is the one for Protestants, but is clearly due to the very low level (below 0,1) of religious practice for these countries.

Looking at the results from the side of denominations, we can also find some of the insight described before. Roman Catholics show, despite the general decrease, high levels of Self-Definition, Practice and Belief, which is very coherent with their social, institutionalized and dogmatic characterization. Eastern Orthodox countries share with Roman Catholic ones the high levels of Self-Definition and Belief, but it is possible to find some cues about the different meaning of Church attendance in the lower probability to practice (which lies between the probability for Catholics and the probability for Protestants). What is interesting to see for Orthodox is a kind of religious revival in the younger cohorts, both for Self-Definition and Belief. The situation for Protestant is the clearest one; Practice and Belief suffer from a kind of “bottom” effect resulting in almost flat trends whereas the Self-Denomination starts to decrease from a very high probability (almost the same with the other Denominations).

Before concluding, some notes of caution should be given. Firstly, the operationalization of the three items is only one of those possible. Although well thought-out and well tested, this choice is only one option among many but represent an appropriate way to embed this work in the debate concerning European religiosity. Secondly, the use of Christian doctrines as a country variable may reflect something more than the real theological pillars. For example, the Orthodox countries are almost the former Communist countries, whereas the Protestant countries are basically the North-European ones. When using these high-level variables, especially if they "cluster" the countries, it is not easy to disentangle the real mechanisms behind. In addition, when we focus on the differences between clusters of countries, it becomes impossible to explain the heterogeneity and the peculiarities within the clusters, losing inevitably important details.

Having these notes said, what results from this research can be briefly summarized in three points:

- The three outcomes we analysed need to be evaluated separately in the analyses based on individual data. Considering only one of them or summarizing in some kind of indexes or scale could be no longer adequate to grasp the real meaning of religious change in Europe.
- Results for Protestant and Catholic countries confirm the expectations of secularization theorists with an overall decrease of religiosity on the three dimensions.
- We can observe a kind of stability (or even a reawakening) of the strong Christian belief in the younger cohorts if we look at Orthodox countries (I will devote the entire next chapter to this issue).

5.6 Analysing the Typology

In the previous paragraph I modelled cohort trends for three different indicators of religiosity. The results show how different these trends could be and confirm the need of a multidimensional approach while studying religiosity. Next step toward an integrate comprehension of the phenomena is to look at a typology made up starting from the three dimension. We already looked at it from a static point of view in paragraph 5.4 and it is now time to move to a longitudinal analysis of this typology. I have already spoken about the variables involved in this analysis and their operationalization at the beginning of this chapter.

5.6.1 Religious typology over time: a descriptive approach

Looking at the trends for the different categories of a religious typology between cohorts permits to collect more clues about the evolution of European religiosity. The main approaches – secularization and individualization theory – are based on the reciprocal connection between different dimensions of religiosity; secularization theory speaks about a general decrease for all the religious dimensions whereas individualization theory – and especially the BWB thesis in its strong meaning (Voas and Crockett 2005) – refers to a decrease of the institutional dimension of religiosity – i.e. Church attendance – but to a stability or even an increase of religious belief. It is precisely for this reason that – despite the great benefit of studying different indicators at the same time – also a careful study of their reciprocal connections is needed. Table 11 shows the evolution of the different categories between cohorts referring to the whole sample of European Christian countries. Two indications emerge loudly: the share of fully religious individuals is declining inasmuch as the share of fully atheist is increasing. This is of course a clear sign of secularization. But, what about the other – less conventional – categories of religiosity?

Table 11: Religious typology by cohort (entire sample), row percentages

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious	Other/ missing	**Total**
<1930	18.30	14.03	11.17	9.52	30.56	16.41	**100.00**
'30s	16.41	16.91	11.22	8.04	30.99	16.44	**100.00**
'40s	11.86	21.99	10.52	5.94	32.93	16.75	**100.00**
'50s	9.06	26.41	11.19	4.66	30.86	17.81	**100.00**
'60s	7.85	27.85	12.37	4.41	28.97	18.55	**100.00**
'70s	7.42	27.98	16.12	3.32	27.45	17.72	**100.00**
>'80s	6.85	32.59	19.2	2.1	24.32	14.94	**100.00**
Total	**11.04**	**23.81**	**12.51**	**5.52**	**29.91**	**17.21**	**100.00**

The Identitarian religious are very slowly losing ground; moving from the oldest to the youngest cohort only 6 percentage points were missed. Also the share of individuals who belong without believing almost reaches 0 for the youngest cohort, meaning that they are basically disappearing. Those who are gaining ground are the believers without belonging: their share moves from 11% in the older cohort to 19% in the youngest. From this preliminary analysis what emerges clearly is that secularization theory is still the leading paradigm but there are also unmistakable signs that something like an emergence of individualized religiosity is happening. In searching more clues for this statement it is right and proper to divide the analysis for the different Christian confessions. We have already seen how they matter in shaping the way of being – or not being – religious. Here I will present a summary table of the trends divided by Christian doctrine while reporting the whole tables in Appendix 7.

Table 12: Categories of typology by cohort (summary)

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious
TOTAL SAMPLE	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Catholics	↓	↑	↑	↓	=
Mixed	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Protestants	=*	↑	=	↓*	↓
Orthodox	↓	↑	↑	↓*	↓

*: Very low percentages and differences

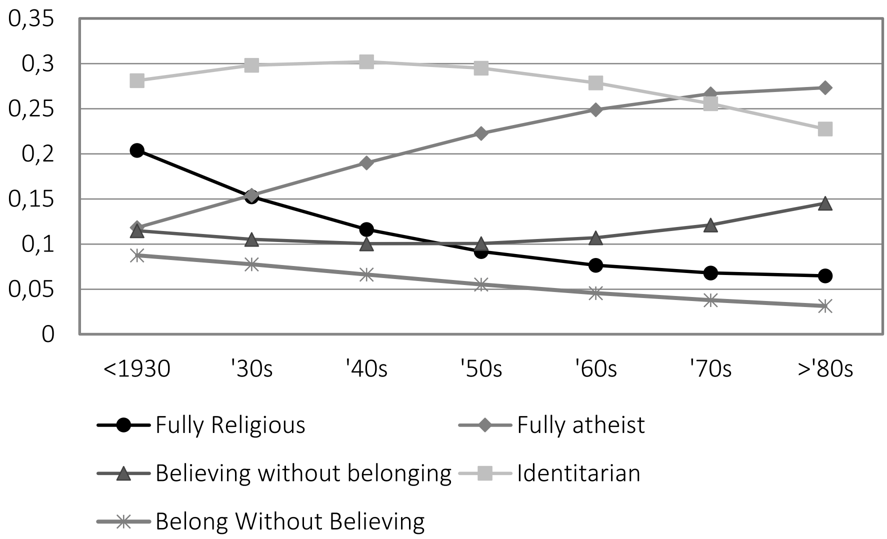
Looking at trends divided by doctrines partially confirm what emerged before but also some peculiar differences arise. The general picture replies the general one: a clear decrease in full religiousness and a clear increase of atheism counterbalanced by an increase of believing without belonging. Some differences arise for Roman Catholics and Protestant. For Roman Catholicism, the share of the Identitarian religious is fairly stable so the loss of fully religious individuals is balanced by the increase of atheist and believers without belonging. The picture for Protestantism differs a lot from the general one; the share of fully religious is quite stable but very low (from 5% to 3%) meaning a clear pavement effect. Also the share of believers without belonging remains stable. The counterpart of the increase of fully atheist is a decrease of the Identitarian religious. This gives value to the idea of vicarious religions (Davie 2012) and its suitability to interpret religiosity in Protestant countries, even if is strongly declining in the younger cohorts.

5.6.2 Religious typology over time: The model

To go deeply in the abovementioned data and to figure them in a clearest way, I built a categorical multilevel model (two levels: individual and countries). The general idea behind replicates the one from the previous paragraph but with a single – categorical – dependent variable instead of three different dichotomous variables. Like the previous, I follow a step-by-step procedure: the first model is used to obtain the general trends for the three categories whereas the second to distinguish these trends between different confessions. Model 1 include a constant term (to account for random coefficients), a polynomial (2nd order) term for cohorts (random slopes to account for different slopes and shape between trends) and gender and survey wave as control variable. Model 2 is basically model 1 supplemented with fixed effects for Christian denominations and interaction effects between cohort and denominations (to account for different shapes between denomination trends). To simplified the result's description, only the graphs for predicted probabilities will be reported. They basically show the different probabilities for each response category for each cohort (model 1) and also for each denomination (model 2), setting the control variables at their mean.

Figure 24 shows the predicted probabilities for the different cohort on the whole sample and the results confirm what we found in the descriptive analysis. Fully religiousness is clearly declining and approaching the “pavement” whereas fully atheism is constantly increasing. Also the trends for Identitarian religious and believers without belonging are in some way complementary: the proportion of believers without belong is increasing and the proportion of Identitarian religious is declining. The steep of these trends is growing in the youngest cohorts and this open interesting scenario for the future. Also the trend for belonging without believing is slightly declining but, given the fact that is approaching the pavement, it deserves less attention.

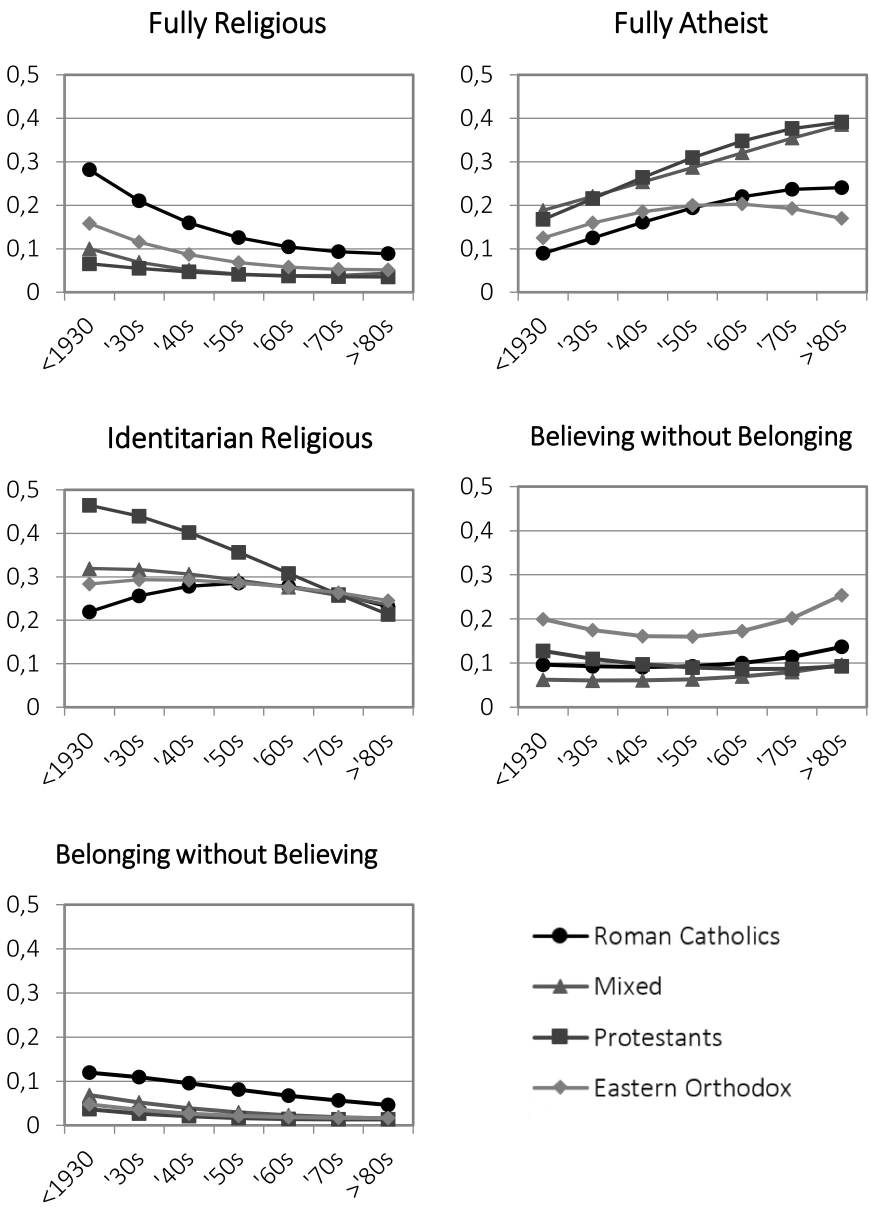
Figure 24: Predicted probabilities for different categories by cohorts



After having commented the general trends, we can move to the discussion of the differences between denominations. As before, it is possible to look at them both from the point of view of the categories and the denominations.

Figure 25 shows the trends for different denominations grouped by the category of the typology.

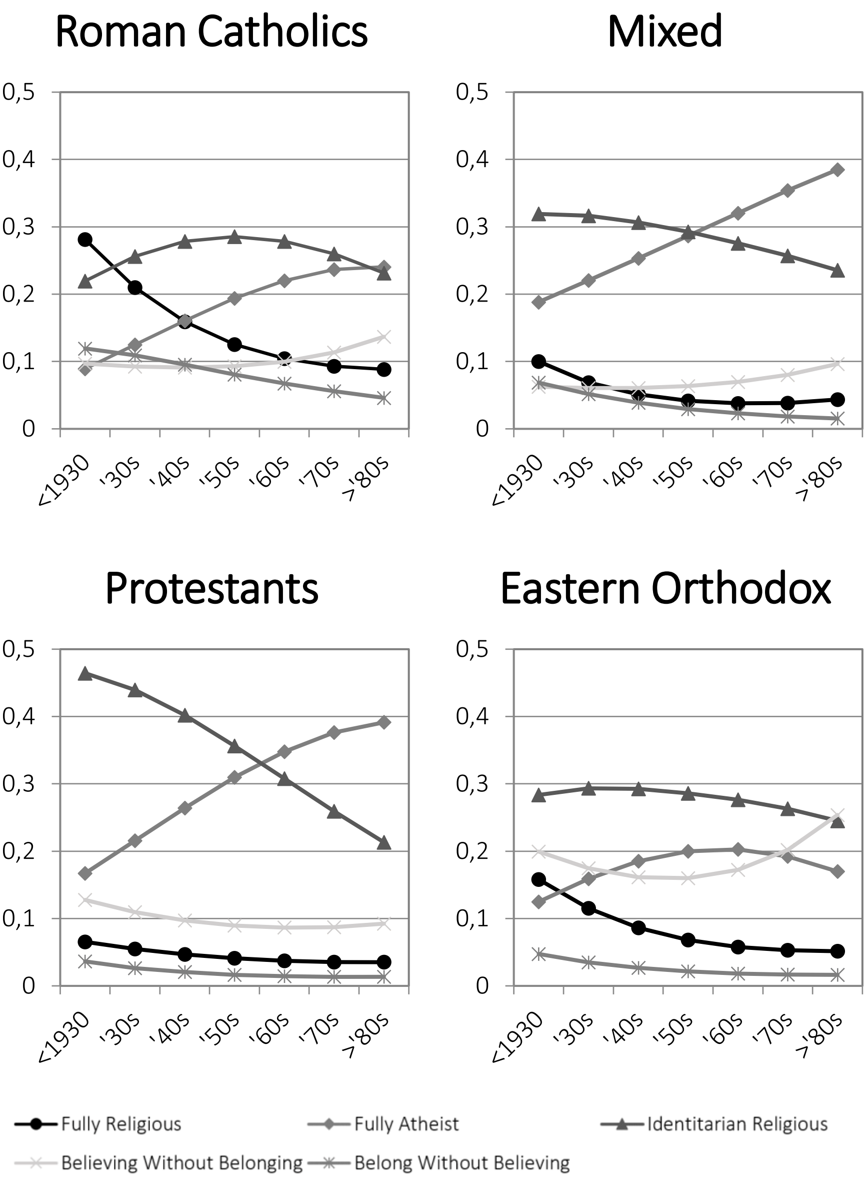
Figure 25: Predicted probabilities by cohorts (divided for different categories)



Fully religiousness is clearly declining and reaching its minimum for each Christian Denominations; as expected the higher started point is for Roman Catholics. The share of fully atheist increased constantly for each denomination except for Orthodox for which the proportion of fully atheist reaches the top for the ’50 cohorts and then started to decline. Also the trends for Identitarian religious are clearly declining moving from the older to the youngest cohort and the – expected – higher starting point is the one of Protestants. Looking at the trend for believing without belonging the situation is quite disorienting because all the trends appears quite close to the minimum. The trend for Protestants is slightly declining – or its almost flat – whereas the other three are increasing, very slightly for Roman Catholics and Mixed countries and quite consistently for Orthodox countries. Trends for belonging without believing clearly suffers from a pavement effect, since they are all almost close to 0.

Staring from the same data it is possible to tell the story from the point of view of the different Christian doctrines (Figure 26). Looking at Roman Catholics it is evident the decreasing trend for fully religious and the increasing trend for fully atheist. Trend for Identitarian religious reaches the top for the ’50 cohorts and then starts to decrease. The trend for believers without belonging is slightly increasing starting from the ’50 cohorts while the trend for belonging without believers is declining. Mixed countries show an increase of fully atheist which counterbalances the decrease of Identitarian religious. The trends for fully religious and belonging without believing are almost flat and close to 0 whereas the trend for believing without belonging is slightly increasing. Protestant countries show almost the same situation of mixed countries but taken to extremes: trends for fully religious, believers without belonging and belonging without believe are flat or slightly declining and proximal to the bottom. The real trade-off is between Identitarian religious – which start very high and decline steeply – and fully atheist which counterbalance this loss. Eastern Orthodox countries are the ones showing more peculiarities: the proportion of fully religious is constantly declining whereas the one of fully atheist increases until the ’60 cohorts and then starts to flatten or decrease.

Figure 26: Predicted probabilities by cohorts (divided for different Christian denominations)



The trend for Identitarian religious is flat or slightly decreasing and the one for belong without believing is almost flat and close to 0. In this case the trade-off seems to appear between fully atheist and believers without belong. Their trends cross two times: in the youngest cohorts the trend for BWB decreases and the one for fully religious increases but this situation reverses starting from the '50 cohorts. Final result is a higher proportion of believers without belonging if compared to fully atheist.

Chapter 6

EASTERN RELIGIOSITY AFTER THE FALL OF BERLIN WALL

The evolution of religious practice and belief in the former communist countries

As we saw in the previous chapter, the sociological discourse about European religiosity is undoubtedly focused on secularization (Bruce 2002; Gorski and Altınordu 2008; Voas and Doebler 2011). The core of secularization theory links process of secularization to religious decline basically stating that processes of modernization will have a negative effect on the stability and vitality of religious communities, practice, and convictions (Pollack 2008a). Given this unambiguous agreement about the strong European secularization, it is undoubted that what is happening in the former Communist countries needs further investigation, as results from the previous chapter also confirm. Whether we speak about religious stability or whether we hypothesize a religious reawakening, it is clear that Eastern countries represent an oddity in the main discourse about European Secularization. Many scholars have no doubt about this point: “One can say with considerable confidence that religion is reviving in the former socialist countries (Greeley 2002:76)”, “The resurgence of Orthodoxy in Russia provides a robust exception to secularization trends in Western Europe” (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012:795), “The religious revival observed in this region and time period can hardly be harmonized with the hypotheses of secularization theory” (Tomka 2010:14), just to quote a few.

6.1 Theory and main contributions

When speaking about Eastern European religion and religiosity, it is crystal clear that the period of Communist regime represented a divide between what was before and what came after. Before WWII religion had been one of the cornerstones of the societal order and the state itself, but under the Communist era it was persecuted and pushed to the private sphere (Tomka 2010). The regime imposed a “political forced secularization” (Meulemann 2004; Müller and Neundord 2012) as mean to undermine religion’s tradition and transmission of belief in the name of “scientific materialism”. This religion suppression treated believers as second-class citizens, excluding them from membership in the party, from the officer corps, from upper-level positions in the government, from industrial management, organizations and media (Ramet 1987).

Under these conditions of severe repression, the religious landscape thus consisted of two competitors: a severely repressed Church and the officially-promoted atheistic alternative under the name of “scientific atheism” (Froese 2004b). Churches were no longer able to play a role in public education, religious organizations were monitored or prohibited (Froese 2004b), the traditional family structures were eroded by policies of state supplied childcare and increased female labour participation (Myers 1996) and this results in the strong weakening of the main religious socialization agencies. Moreover, rebellious pastors were imprisoned (Gautiert 1997; Ramet 1987), Church properties were confiscated and some places of worship were transformed into warehouse and restaurants (Michel 1992; Müller and Neundord 2012; Ramet 1987; Stan 2009). Instead of the differentiation the rest of the Europe was experiencing, the Communist system intended to centralize the social life under the power of the party. In this situation of dramatic – imposed – change, the Churches remained the only institution representing the traditions and the continuity with the previous system, thus becoming the source of opposition (Tomka 2010).

What happened after the end of Communist regime?

Despite any sociologist would have no problem in defining Eastern religiosity as an exception of European patterns of secularization, there is no total consensus about what happened after the fall of Berlin's wall. What was the impact of this state-imposed secularization? Has its effect continued after its collapse or a situation similar to what was before has been recovered? The answer is not an easy one and the various contributions are not always coherent.

If we look at religious practice (Church attendance), Gautiert (1997) reports higher rates among the youngest cohort (those socialized after the Communism ended) in each of the Eastern countries and the same do Reistma et al. (2012). Pollack (2003) and Greeley (1994) instead state that Church attendance has either remained low or declined in former communist countries and Brenner (2016) quite supports them. From the general to the particular, Pollack (2003) identifies Russia and Albania as exceptions of the declining trend, Reistma et al. (2012) and Greeley (2003) specify a declining attendance in Poland and Borowik (2002) claims that Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian religiosity is as low as in the most secularized Western countries. Kaariainen (1999) asserts that Russians go to church less that the other Europeans but Burkimsher (2014) also reports increasing rates of attendance in this latter, and to lesser extent in Romania and Bulgaria. It is not easy to draw a unique picture of Eastern Church attendance trends but it seems that most of them resemble the Western European ones (low and stable or declining). Others, such Poland, have rates similar to the high-attendance European countries while showing the same negative trends. Only in three countries, Romania, Russia and Bulgaria, we can observe some evidence of increasing attendance (Brenner 2016).

Moving to the side of religious belief, Gautiert (1997) reports a vitality among the youngest cohort and the same do Kaariainen (1999) while reporting important changes at the beginning of the 1990 when the number of believers increased significantly. Fox and Tabory (2008) similarly claim that religious monopolies have reduced participation but not belief and Greeley (1994) recounts for something between one-half and three-quarters of Russians believing in God, being also supported by Pollack (2003). Speaking more generally, Tomka (2010) claims for a changing opinion regarding religion and a growing interest.

Roughly speaking, all the cues go in the direction of two different mechanisms at work after the fall of Communism. A reawakening of religious belief seems to counterbalance a stability or even a decrease of religious practice. Of course this is a general picture and we can pinpoint the main possible exceptions mentioning Russia, Romania and Bulgaria (Brenner 2016; Burkimsher 2014). This idea of diverging trends can be glimpsed in the literature, especially when Tomka (2010) mentions an interpretation of religion which deviate from tradition to become more diverse and individualistic. Also Kaariainen (1999) reports that, since 1991, the number of Churches and clergy has notably increased but none of these seems to have had any influence on the attendance at services. This new religiosity, Borowik (2002) says, could be characterised by the avoidance of any duties towards religious institutions.

This hypothesized different trends for regular practice and individual belief need different explanations. Concerning practice and formal religiosity, it is impossible to forgot about the severe impact the Communist regime had on institutional Churches. As a matter of fact, in pre-communist times the personnel of denominational institutions consisted mainly of priests, religious and deacons. The party completely banned these positions and in post-communist era the remaining clergy was not enough even for normal Church activities. As time passes, the personnel of ecclesiastic institutions increasingly consists by well-trained laic Christians (Tomka 2010) and the eventual reawakening of Church attendance we can observe in some Eastern countries concerns precisely the ability of institutional Churches to re-organize themselves after the Communist tabula-rasa.

If institutional religiosity was something strongly undermined by the Communist regimes, the eradication of personal belief was something harder as it seems that "systems of belief require more than simply the power of promotion and coercion to become accepted" (Froese 2004b:35). Stating that practice was strongly undermined by Communist regime while belief was not, is however too simplistic. We can summarize at least three different explanations for an eventual revival of religious belief. *i)* This revival can be a real revival of Christian belief similar to what Voas and Crockett (2005) define when speaking about the strong version of "believing without belonging". Greeley (2002:77) agrees with this idea by stating that "those born after 1970 found themselves more likely than their immediate predecessor to believe in God. Far from being a phenomenon of "New Age" religion, it would appear to be a rebirth of age-old religion". Also Pollack (2003) reports the new form of religiousness outside the Church that are emerging in Eastern and Central Europe. *ii)* The second possible explanation concert exactly what Greeley mentioned as "New Age" religion. This interpretation is similar to the weak version of "believing without belonging" (Voas and Crockett 2005) which considers God also in a non-Christian manner, not as a personal God, but as some kind of spirit or life forces (Kaariainen 1999). So intended, it is that in post-communist countries beliefs can "accumulate". People declaring to believe in God also believe in other phenomena like reincarnation, astrology, magic, occultism and elements of eastern religions (Borowik 2002; Kaariainen 1999; Tomka 2010). *iii)* The third interpretation concerns the use of religion as a mean to reconstruct a national identity and to "burn the bridges" with the communist past (Borowik 2002; Mitrokhin 1994). As matter of fact, until 1981 it was necessary to belong to the Communist party to make a career or to be well-accepted, so at the present time "being a Christian" basically means being an honourable person. Having been the only force of opposition, religion has practically become synonymous of anti-communism in the new democratic view of political life (Borowik 2002). Politicians know this and have increasingly used religion as a way to legitimize political power (Meulemann 2004). It seems therefore that this supposed revival is above all a return to tradition, a test to reconstruct the memory and a way to reconnect to what was there before the regime (Borowik 2002).

At the time when Communist regime set up, religion was strongly rooted in the Eastern European society. So, is not surprisingly that the most receptive to the imposed atheism were young people (Borowik 2002) and that these individuals should be less religious also later in life because of the socialization process during socialism. On the contrary, the older generation already developed their system of belief before the beginning of regime and they were less prone to change (Müller and Neundord 2012). If the idea of religious reawakening is correct, signs of this revival should thus be seen in the generation who came to maturity after the communism ended (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012). All signals should be supporting the idea of a U-shaped curve of religiosity with the highest levels for the old generations born before the regime and the youngest ones grown after its fall. Previous research seems to support this view. Greeley (2002) reports the highest score on a belief scale for the younger cohorts (born in the seventies and eighties) and the older ones. Zrinscak (2004) observes different generational responses to communism and Pollack (2003) also looks at birth cohorts when reporting evidence for declining attendance, as younger cohorts are less likely to attend. Despite the analysis of religious practice partially confound, it really seems that children share with the grandparental generation in their religiosity, which the parental generation seem to have rejected (Greeley 1994, 2002).

The Catholic/Orthodox cleavage

Until now we treated the Former-Communist European countries as religious homogeneous countries and we did not focus on possible differences between their religious traditions. As a matter of fact, Eastern countries' Christian religion comprises two different doctrines, namely Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Need and Evans (2001) clearly underline the importance of considering this religious denomination to better understand the patterns of religiosity in the Former-Communist countries. Halman and Petterson (2003) go further stating that European religiosity is mainly related to religious tradition (rather than to the East/West dichotomy) with the more secular protestants and orthodox countries and the more religious catholic ones. This catholic/orthodox cleavage can be clearly seen in many empirical works. Bruce (2000) and Need and Evans (2001) report that predominantly catholic eastern countries have higher rates of attendance than traditionally orthodox and pluralistic ones. In addition, Pollack (2003) found that predominantly catholic eastern countries show – high – attendance rates which are comparable to the western European catholic peers. This high rates of mass attendance where found also by Titarenko (2008) in catholic countries rather than in predominantly orthodox countries and she interpreted this as the ability and the willingness of catholic churches to educate adherent's belief system. Everything together, it seems that Catholic church resisted more strongly to the political and ideological pressure made by the regime (Pollack 2003). As mean of a brief summary, it is likely to think that catholic countries remained on a relatively high level, but did not observe any increase in religiosity. Conversely, Orthodox countries suffer from a strong religious decline during the regime but they observed an important revival in its aftermath (Müller and Neundord 2012).

As far as these contributions show, there are many issues to face when speaking about a possible reawakening of religiosity in Easter European countries after the fall of Communism. Firstly, it seems necessary to distinguish between a possible increase of regular churchgoing and a possible increase of a more individualized and intimate belief. Secondly, it is not clear whether we can observe a possible religious reawakening across all the eastern countries or whether there are some peculiarities. Thirdly, it seems likely that the prevailing religious denomination represents an important feature for distinguishing the possible religious trajectories among these countries. All these three issues are really central to draw a comprehensive picture of Eastern religiosity after the fall of communism and this article will tackle them.

6.2 Research questions

As we have seen in the theoretical paragraph, to better describe the trends for eastern religiosity it is necessary to focus on two different aspects of religiosity. These aspects, religious practice and belief, can be seen as different dimensions underlining the broad and complex concept of religiosity. These dimensions are part of the well-known typology made by Glock (1962, 1964) and Glock and Stark (1965) under the names of ritualistic dimension (practice) and ideological dimension (belief). *Religious practice* is the dimension most investigate in sociology because its social and collective nature and its widespread availability. Given that it measures the ritualistic dimension of religiosity, it is suitable to detect strong form of religiosity because requires a commitment of time (McAndrew and Voas 2011). The dimension of *religious belief* regards instead to the supernatural aspects of religion and concerns a mix of dogma which must be accepted and recognized to comply with a transcendent value (Pace 2007).

In the theoretical paragraph we observed how the religious change in Eastern countries is likely to be interpreted as generational change. Starting from a generation socialized before the settlement of communist regime, moving to a generation socialized by the communist imposed-atheism and finishing with a generation which reached maturity when the Communism was ended. This peculiar situation reinforces the idea of using cohorts to account for time when studying religious trends. This way of doing has clear theoretical foundations and cohort replacement should now be considered as the main mechanism behind religious change (Voas 2009; Voas and Chaves 2016; Voas and Doebler 2011) because of the socialization effect by the religious environment of the upbringing. Putting together the multidimensional approach and the need to use cohort replacement to account for time, the first research question can be thus exposed:

RQ1: Are the trends for practice and belief coherent (both declining or increasing) or diverging?

With the first research question we aim to draw the general trends for the two abovementioned dimensions. These trends can however subtend some peculiarities and some particular cases. Many contributions speak, for example, about a revival of religious practice only for Russia, Romania and Bulgaria whereas other pinpoint Poland as a country where religiosity was strengthened by the attempt to impose atheism. All considered,

RQ2: Are there some country peculiarities in the trends for practice and belief?

Besides particular country situations, it is likely that the religious tradition can shape the religious evolution in Eastern countries. Many contributions speak about a high resilience of Catholic countries to forced-atheism pressures and about a decrease of religiosity during the regime and a resulting reawakening after its end for Orthodox countries. Religious tradition is thus something to take seriously into account when trying to draw a clear picture of Eastern religiosity;

RQ3: Are the trends for practice and belief different or the same according to the prevailing Christian denomination?

6.3 Data, variables and methods

This research is based on EVS (European Value Study) data, a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values (EVS 2011). From this dataset, I chose a subsample of 12 Eastern Former Communist countries (Bulgaria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) that participated in at least two waves of the survey. The resulting sample therefore comprised 43,862 individuals (see Appendix 8).

Dependent variables

As previously told, in this analysis we are focusing on two different dimensions of religiosity, namely religious practice and belief. The way to measure *religious practice* is almost standardized and basically refers to Church Attendance (Biolcati-Rinaldi and Vezzoni 2013, 2014; te Grotenhuis et al. 2015; Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011; van Ingen and Moor 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2011; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009; Voas and Doebler 2011). I decided to measure the religious practice as the monthly Church attendance and I started from the item "Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" to build a dummy variable recoding "more than once a week", "once a week" and "once a month" into "Monthly Church attendance" and coding it as 1. The other response categories were coded as 0. The measure of *religious belief* is less standardized and more complex also because it is needed to disentangle the real core of Christian belief from a more general and syncretic spirituality "I know there is something out there". In trying to do this, I rely on a set of items asking 'Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?' and I coded as 1 a person answering 'Yes' to all the items concerning

‘God’, ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’, the essential convictions of the Christian theological system, 0 otherwise[5].

Independent variables

For this analysis I rely on two main different independent variables: cohorts and religious tradition. The operationalization of *cohorts* is straightforward: I rely on the year of birth divided into decades, starting from those born before 1930. Due to the small numerosity of the last available cohort (born after 1990) I aggregated them with those born after 1980. The distribution of this variable is shown in Appendix 9.

To answer RQ3, we need to distinguish the trends for practice and belief according to the prevailing Christian doctrine in a country. This variable refers to the *Christian tradition* and is defined for each country; it is built by summarizing the individual information gathered with the question “Which religious denomination?”. Countries with an unclear situation (sharing high percentages – 25% or more – on two different denominations) were coded as ‘mixed’ (see Table 13).

Control variables

In addition to the main independent variables, I use *Survey wave* (“1990-1993”, “1999-2001”, “2008-2010”, categorical) and *age* (numerical) as control variables.

[5] Over and above the theoretical reasons, the choice of these three items has also methodological reasons. Relying on the work of van Schuur (2003), it is possible to see them as ordered and suitable for measuring a latent trait, i.e. religious belief, because ‘Belief in God’ and ‘belief in Hell’ represent the higher and lower bounds of a scale while ‘belief in Heaven’ is located in the middle of rank. Using them makes it possible to focus on Christian belief in the strictest sense and avoid generic spirituality.

Table 13: Individual religious denomination and country religious tradition (row percentages).

	Religious denomination				
	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Orthodox	Other not Christian	**Total**
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Roman Catholics					
Czech Republic	**86.21**	9.35	0.54	3.89	**100.00**
Hungary	**72.19**	24.08	0.15	3.57	**100.00**
Lithuania	**93.04**	0.81	4.44	1.70	**100.00**
Poland	**98.03**	0.24	0.38	1.35	**100.00**
Slovak Republic	**84.90**	11.93	1.85	1.32	**100.00**
Orthodox					
Bulgaria	0.33	0.61	**82.40**	16.66	**100.00**
Belarus	12.48	0.88	**85.76**	0.88	**100.00**
Romania	5.16	1.92	**89.77**	3.15	**100.00**
Russian Federation	0.49	0.49	**91.69**	7.33	**100.00**
Ukraine	8.24	3.19	**70.14**	18.43	**100.00**
Mixed					
Estonia	3.17	**45.01**	**45.92**	5.90	**100.00**
Latvia	**33.04**	**30.89**	**30.94**	5.13	**100.00**
Total	**53.89**	**6.97**	**34.22**	**4.92**	**100.00**

Modelling strategy

In answer the three research questions I rely on a set of three different logistic regression models. Each of these models is repeated two times for the two different dependent variables. To answer RQ1 (*"Do the trends for practice and belief are coherent (both declining or increasing) or diverge?")* we computed a logistic regression model with the 2nd order polynomial term for cohort as main independent variable and age and survey wave as control variables (Model 1). Despite the use of multilevel modelling is the best way to analyse data and variables defined at different levels, for this work we had to avoid them due to the small number of higher level units (countries). Instead, to consider the potential observations' (and their standard errors) correlation within countries, I use the clustering option[6] for estimating Model 1 and Model 3. To answer RQ2 (*"Are there some country peculiarities in the trends for practice and belief?")* we needed to explicitly model the trend differences between the various countries. I did so by mean of country dummy variables and their interactions with the two polynomial term for cohorts; as before, age and survey wave were used as control variables (Model 2). In order to answer RQ3 (*"Are the trends for practice and belief different or the same according to the prevailing Christian denomination?")* we used dummy variables for religious tradition and their interactions with the two polynomial term for cohorts; also in this case I use the clustering option and age and survey wave as control variables.

6.4 Results

For the presentation of the results I will follow a two-steps procedure. Firstly, I will present the tables for the model estimations for both religious practice and belief. After that, I will discuss the results more in detail by mean of graphs reporting the predicted probabilities. This basically means to calculate the dependent variables' probabilities for any combination of the independent variables setting the control variables to their mean.

From Table 14 we can see that monthly church attendance in the Former-communist countries show basically a linear decrease, with only small signals of a reversing trend. From model 1 we can in fact notice that the only significant coefficient is the one related to the 1st grade of the polynomial term for cohorts. From model 2 we see that this coefficient is no longer significative because its effect is absorbed into the country dummies and their interaction (not shown in Table 14 for clarity reasons[7]). This means relevant country-differences in the slope and shape of the trends. In Model 3, the coefficient related to the 1st grade of the polynomial term for cohorts is again significative whereas the dummy variables for religious tradition and their interaction terms are not (except for

[6] See http://www.stata.com/manuals13/xtvce_options.pdf for details
[7] This material is available on request to the author

mixed countries). This basically means small differences in the slope and shape on the trends among the three religious traditions.

Table 14: Models estimation for religious practice. Coefficients in log-odds scale

	Practice					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	*(se)*	B	*(se)*	B	*(se)*
Cohort	-0.174***	*(0.044)*	-0.123	*(0.124)*	-0.194***	*(0.0491)*
Cohort Squared	0.014*	*(0.007)*	0.026*	*(0.015)*	0.013	*(0.00929)*
Country dummies			[...]	*[...]*		
Country dummies * cohort			[...]	*[...]*		
Country dummies * cohort squared			[...]	*[...]*		
Wave 3 *(ref: Wave 2)*	-0.152	*(0.267)*	0.234***	*(0.048)*	0.054	*(0.169)*
Wave 4 *(ref: Wave 2)*	-0.038	*(0.188)*	0.285***	*(0.072)*	0.180*	*(0.098)*
Age	0.011	*(0.010)*	0.016***	*(0.004)*	0.012	*(0.008)*
Mixed *(ref: Catholics)*					-1.145***	*(0.326)*
Orthodox *(ref: Catholics)*					-0.877	*(0.576)*
Mixed*cohort *(Ref: Catholics*cohort)*					-0.049	*(0.103)*
Orthodox*cohort *(Ref: Catholics*cohort)*					0.052	*(0.105)*
Mixed*cohort squared *(Ref: Catholics*cohort^2)*					0.002	*(0.010)*
Orthodox*cohort squared *(Ref: Catholics*cohort^2)*					0.002	*(0.010)*
Constant	-1.055	*(1.083)*	-2.652***	*(0.370)*	-0.793	*(1.031)*
Observations	40,831		40,831		40,831	

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
For clarity reasons we did not include all the country-dummy coefficients nor their interactions with cohort and cohort squared

Table 15 shows instead the results for the three models for religious belief. The coefficients for the two grade of the polynomial term for cohorts are significative for all of them and this means a general U-shaped curve. Also in this case, many of the dummy variables for countries and their interactions with cohorts are significative, meaning some country peculiarities. Like for practice, also the coefficients for the dummy variables for religious tradition and their interactions are almost not significative (except for mixed countries) meaning small differences in the slope and shape of the trends between Orthodox and Catholic countries.

Table 15: Models estimation for religious belief. Coefficients in log-odds scale

	Belief					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	*(se)*	B	*(se)*	B	*(se)*
Cohort	-0.288***	*(0.085)*	-0.589***	*(0.124)*	-0.378***	*(0.101)*
Cohort Squared	0.043***	*(0.008)*	0.085***	*(0.0144)*	0.045***	*(0.010)*
Country dummies			[...]	*[...]*		
Country dummies * cohort			[...]	*[...]*		
Country dummies * cohort squared			[...]	*[...]*		
Wave 3 *(ref: Wave 2)*	0.552***	*(0.138)*	0.728***	*(0.0517)*	0.623***	*(0.173)*
Wave 4 *(ref: Wave 2)*	0.722***	*(0.172)*	0.954***	*(0.0761)*	0.864***	*(0.145)*
Age	0.013**	*(0.006)*	0.010***	*(0.00402)*	0.011*	*(0.006)*
Mixed *(ref: Catholics)*					-1.441***	*(0.399)*
Orthodox *(ref: Catholics)*					-0.077	*(0.451)*
Mixed*cohort *(Ref: Catholics*cohort)*					0.254**	*(0.119)*
Orthodox*cohort *(Ref: Catholics*cohort)*					0.084	*(0.133)*
Mixed*cohort sq. *(Ref: Catholics*cohort^2)*					-0.021	*(0.014)*
Orthodox*cohort sq. *(Ref: Catholics*cohort^2)*					0.000	*(0.016)*
Constant	-1.343**	*(0.611)*	-1.620***	*(0.377)*	-1.016*	
Observations	30,595		30,595		30,595	

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
For clarity reasons we did not include all the country-dummy coefficients nor their interactions with cohort and cohort squared

As said, all these results can be better viewed looking at the graphs for the predicted probabilities. From Figure 27 we can see that the monthly church attendance decreases almost linearly moving from the older to the youngest cohort; only for the last cohorts the trend starts to flatten. Religious belief shows instead a pronounced U-shaped trend with the younger cohorts (those born after the sixties) that are more religious even than the older ones.

In answering the second research question we computed the cohort trends divided for all the countries.

Figure 27: Predicted probabilities for religious practice and belief by cohorts

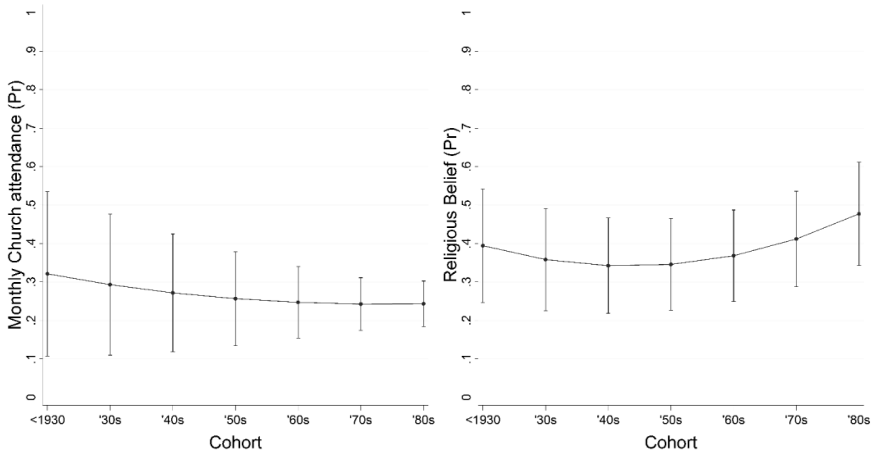
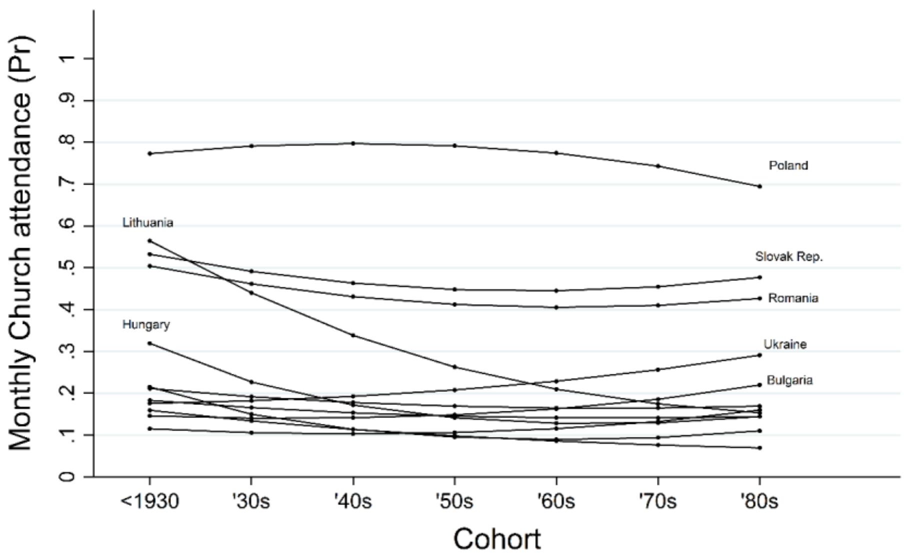


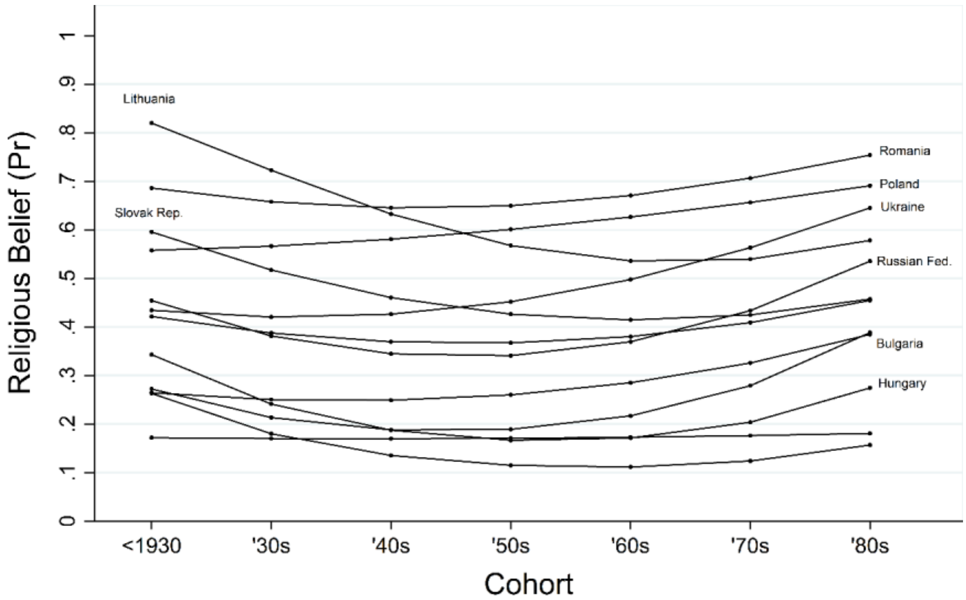
Figure 28 shows the trends for religious practice. Looking at it we can see a group of countries (Russian Federation, Czech Republic, Belarus, Estonia and Latvia) which trends are very low and almost flat. Trends for Ukraine and Bulgaria show instead a clear increase starting from a very low level and trends for Romania and Slovak Republic are almost flat (or slightly U-shaped), starting from a level around 0.5. Poland shows the most singular trend, which starts at a very high level (around 0.8) and is reversely U-shaped, with the cohorts socialized during Communist era to be more regularly church-goers. The only strongly decreasing trends are the ones for Lithuania and Hungary which dramatically fall as cohorts go by.

Figure 28: Predicted probabilities for religious practice by countries and cohorts



The graph for the country trends for religious belief (Figure 29) is somehow harder to read. Generally speaking, for each of them we can see a kind of U-shaped curve. There are 4 countries (Czech Republic, Belarus, Estonia and Latvia) whose bending is not pronounced such as to be considered almost flat. Other countries (Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine) show instead an increasing trend which can be considered almost linear, meaning that the younger cohorts are far more religious than the older ones. Religious belief in Lithuania and Slovak Republic is indeed dramatically decreased and only in the last available cohort it is possible to see some small signals of a reawakening. Russian Federation shows the most pronounced U-shaped trend, with a huge difference between those socialized under the regime and those socialized before and after (with the youngest generation being more religious than the oldest).

Figure 29: Predicted probabilities for religious belief by countries and cohorts



With Table 16 I will try to summarize all the results coming from model 2. We can see that, among Former Communist countries, there is a group of countries (Czech Republic, Belarus, Estonia and Latvia) whose religiosity is basically low and stable among all the cohorts. Hungary shows instead a decreasing religious practice but an increasing belief and Poland, Romania and Russian Federation show an almost stable practice but an increasing religious belief.

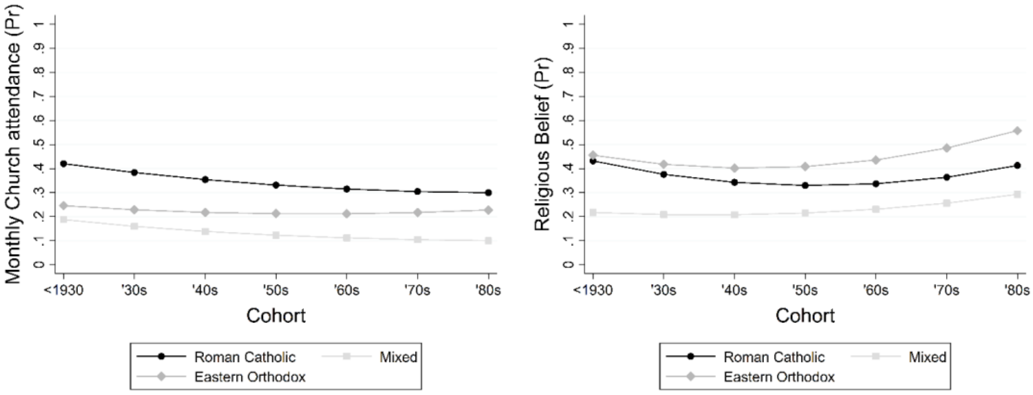
Table 16: Model 2 results' summary

	Practice		Belief		
	Starting level	SHAPE	Starting level	SHAPE	SUMMARY
Czech Republic	LOW	Flat	LOW	Flat (slightly U)	Low and stable religiosity
Belarus	LOW	Flat	LOW	Flat (slightly U)	Low and stable religiosity
Estonia	LOW	Flat	LOW	Flat (slightly U)	Low and stable religiosity
Latvia	LOW	Flat	LOW	Flat (slightly U)	Low and stable religiosity
Hungary	MEDIUM	Decreasing	LOW	Increasing	Decreasing practice and increasing belief
Poland	HIGH	Reversed U	HIGH	Increasing	Slightly decreasing practice and increasing belief
Romania	MEDIUM	Flat (slightly U)	HIGH	Increasing	Stable practice and increasing belief
Russian Federation	LOW	Flat	MEDIUM	Strongly U	Stable practice and increasing belief
Bulgaria	LOW	Increasing	LOW	Increasing	Increasing religiosity
Ukraine	LOW	Increasing	HIGH	Increasing	Increasing religiosity
Lithuania	MEDIUM	Decreasing	HIGH	Decreasing	Decreasing religiosity
Slovak Republic	MEDIUM	Flat (slightly U)	HIGH	Decreasing	Stable practice and decreasing belief

The only countries where we can observe a religious increase concerning both practice and belief are Bulgaria and Ukraine whereas Lithuania is the only country showing a strong religious decrease across both dimensions. Slovak Republic represents somehow an anomaly in this discourse about Eastern European religiosity because shows a stable level of practice but a decreasing level of belief.

As workflow, along this chapter we started from a very general assessment about the trends for practice and belief and then we moved to a very particular analysis of the single countries. The last step is to focus on an intermediate level of generality concerning the prevailing Christian denomination. In doing this I computed the cohort trends for religious practice and belief divided by the prevailing Christian tradition in the countries. The results are quite clear: practice is declining almost linearly in Catholic and Mixed countries whereas is almost stable in Orthodox ones. Belief, on the contrary, is reawakening for all the three tradition but with a more marked U-shaped trend for Orthodox countries.

Figure 30: Predicted probabilities for religious practice and belief by religious tradition and cohorts



The common story behind suggests that the Eastern religious reawakening concerns basically the belief dimension and it is stronger for Orthodox countries (for which also the practice is stable and not declining). The new generations seem to believe more in the Christian dogmas both than their parents (the ones socialized during the Communist regime) and their grandparents (the ones socialized before the Communist regime) but they are not attending Church more often.

6.5 Discussion and conclusions

Main result of this work is that in the Former-Communist countries we are observing a kind of reawakening of religiosity in progress but that this latter concerns only religious beliefs. Religious practice is fairly stable (for Orthodox countries) or declining (for Catholic and Mixed countries) whereas the trends for belief are markedly U-shaped and this is more evident for Orthodox countries. Does this mean that the Eastern European countries are the breeding ground for individual form or religiosity (Davie 2000; Luhmann 1982)? Even more, are we observing the so called “believing without belonging” (Davie 1990, 1994) religiosity in these latter? We are far from giving an exhaustive answer to this. With the available data it is impossible to disentangle between a system of belief based only on Christian tenets from a syncretic system where beliefs “accumulate”. In addition, it is impossible to exclude that this declaring is only a way to take the distance from the Communist past and to reaffirm a national identity. At the moment, the most plausible interpretation is therefore that new generations are experiencing a kind of religious reawakening which is more individualized and less institutionalized than their grandparents. Whether this is truly Christian or somehow “spiritual” is not known.

Moving from the general to the particular, many contributions speak about of revival of Church attendance especially for Romania, Bulgaria and Russia Federation (Brenner 2016; Burkimsher 2014; Pollack 2003) and many others (Borowik 2002; Bruce 2003; Greeley 1994; Müller and Neundord 2012) depict Poland as exceptional case given that Polish Catholicism played a relevant role during Communist regime and in its overthrow. We found only partial confirmations to this. Concerning Poland, we can see the importance of being Catholic Christian during the regime in the higher propensity to attend Church for the intermediate cohorts – those socialized during the regime – compared to the older and the younger. What we did not find is indeed the supposed strong revival in Church attendance for Romania – which trend is only slightly U-shaped – and Russian Federation – which trend continues to be very low and almost flat. What we found instead is a confirmation for an increasing trend in Bulgaria. Possible explanation is that the supposed Romanian and Russian revival concerns only a small and temporary period effect (Froese 2001; Pollack 2003) which is not grasped if we analyses religious change with the lens of cohort transmission. By mean of a brief summary, we found a group of countries – Czech Republic, Belarus, Estonia and Latvia – which low and flat trends resemble those of the western European secularized countries. Another group of countries – Hungary, Poland, Romania and Russia Federation – are indeed coherent with a scenario made of decreasing or stable practice but increasing belief. A better understand of what this revival of belief means is undoubtedly the next challenge for a better comprehension of the Eastern religiosity. Among our sample, only two countries – Bulgaria and Ukraine – show a clear revival of religiosity concerning both religious practice and belief whereas Lithuania is the only one experiencing a clear decrease across all the dimensions. Slovak Republic, on the contrary, represents quite an exception to the main interpretations about religious change having a stable practice but a decreasing belief, which is uncoherent with both the secularization and the individualization theory.

Looking at these results, it stands out that all the Orthodox countries except Belarus are experiencing a religious revival concerning both belief and practice or only belief. On the other side, many Catholic countries are experiencing an overall decrease or religiosity (Lithuania), some kind of partial revival (Hungary and Poland) or a flat stability (Czech Republic). The question which directly arise was whether the shapes of religious changes are results of some peculiarity of the dominant religious tradition. To put in another way: the presumed religious revival we can observe in European Eastern Countries is because their Communist past or because their Orthodox – or Catholic – tradition? Also in this case it is impossible to give a clear answer. The supposed religious revival – which concern basically only the system of belief – is observable across the three denomination, but the strong pattern is undoubtedly associated to the Orthodox countries. These latter show a stable practice and a strong revival of religious belief, which correspond to a higher religiosity of the younger cohorts if compared both to the intermediate and the older ones. Catholic countries show instead a declining religious practice and a less-marked revival of religious belief, with the level corresponding to the younger generations only conforming that of the older ones. The interpretation of the trends for mixed countries is something in-between the previous two: practice is declining like Catholic countries (but starting from a lower level) whereas the trend for belief partially resemble the one of Orthodox countries, with the younger generations being more religious than the older ones.

The picture of Eastern European religiosity we drawn is a complex one: the period after the fall of Communist regime seems to be characterized by a revival of religious belief but a stability or a decrease of religious practice. This potential reawakening of religiosity is stronger for Orthodox countries but all the results may be sullied by some noise or, at least, by some country peculiarities related to their unique historical paths. Everything considered, the most plausible picture speaks about the “grandparent’s generation” characterized by a strong institutional religiosity focused mostly on religious practice, the “parents’ generation” socialized during the Communism and characterized by low overall religiosity (or by the avoidance of declaring it) and the “children’s generation” which is experiencing a revival of religion based mainly on individual belief and less and less on institutional membership.

The prediction of what could happen in the future is, at this stage, only a guess. What seems plausible is however that Communist regime, with its functional centralization, has forced a “fake secularization” which simply postponed the real mechanisms behind based on functional differentiation, which the rest of Europe is experiencing. Maybe is only a matter of time before the “noise” introduced by the regime will end and the Eastern European trends resemble the rest of Europe.

Chapter 7

INSECURITY AND RELIGIOSITY IN THE CHRISTIAN EUROPE

A multilevel and multidimensional analysis based on European Values Study data

In paragraph 2.2 and in Chapter 3 I presented the main theoretical bases of insecurity theory. In particular, I have highlighted that sociology has given little attention to the theoretical development and analytical test of this theory. In fact, we also needed to draw from psychological literature to shed light on – some – possible mechanisms behind.

Starting from these weaknesses, this chapter represents a first step to test the insecurity theory. This test could integrate and expand on the seminal work by Norris and Inglehart (2004) as well as on the following by Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009) and Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011). Relying on the main points analysed in the previous chapters, the aim is to focus on three relevant issues behind the theory. Relying on the work of Norris and Inglehart, I will test whether some country features are linked to individual religiosity. In addition, I will also test the impact of some individual situations on religiosity and I will test the notion gained from psychological literature that religion is more likely to be used as coping strategy when an individual grew in a very religious environment. The hypotheses I will present here follow this way of reasoning and are based on the same multidimensional framework as in the previous analytical chapters.

7.1 Theory and Hypotheses

Aim of this work is to study the relation between individual and country insecurity and religiosity for European Christian countries. Both sides of this relation represent very demanding methodological challenges. We already dealt with the ways to interpret and measure religiosity in the previous chapters (see 4.1 and 5.3) and we here follow the same strategy. Religiosity will be thus considered as a multidimensional concept (Glock 1964) in which at least five dimensions are interrelated. Along all this work we are considering three of them – religious practice, religious belief and self-definition – because they represent the main theoretical battlegrounds to explain European processes of religious change.

When looking instead at the side of insecurity, I decided to follow the path by Norris and Inglehart – who rely mainly on contextual features – but I also supplement it with individual insecurities linked to life-threatening episodes. In addition, I will also test how the religious background shape the individual recourse to religion as coping strategy.

To better explain the analytical design, I rely on a scheme reported by Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009) and clearly inspired by the famous Coleman Boat (1986). I extensively presented it in paragraph 4.2 so no need to report it here again. When speaking about the impact of individual insecurities we are basically referring to "micro to micro relations" whereas we refer to "macro to micro relations" when looking at contextual insecurities. The idea that the religious environment of the upbringing can shape the use of religion when individuals feel insecure is indeed caught by "cross-level interaction effects". The presentation of the hypotheses will follow this structure; for clarity reasons we consider all the hypotheses as referred to all the three – practice, belief and self-definition – involved dimensions of religiosity; if not I will explicitly report.

7.1.1 Individual insecurities – Micro to micro relations

The classic interpretation of the insecurity theory refers to the economic conditions individuals are facing. This situation is best caught by the employment condition because unemployed individuals are undoubtedly in worse economic conditions than employed ones. This considered,

Hp1: The worse one's employment status, the higher one's religiosity

Moving from the economic insecurities to the existential ones, it is firstly necessary to look at the individuals' health status. When an individual is sick or – more general – in a situation of bad health, he could be confronted with anxiety or fear of death, thus being a situation of stress or concern;

Hp2: The worse one's health situation, the higher one's religiosity

Given this general situation, it is however true that a bad health can also negatively influence the ability to reach the worship's places like Churches; given this, it is deserved to specify that

Hp2a: The worse one's health situation, the lower one's religious practice

The feeling of existential insecurity can also arise when individuals are confronted with episodes of death, like the loss of a loved one or – even worse – of the partner (McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman 1993). The loss of the partner can lead to a situation of desperation and insecurity individuals can cope with using religion:

Hp3: People who lost their partner are more religious than people who never did

It is likely to think that this individual episodes of insecurity are linked together and potentially overlapped. Situations like widowhood and bad health can be strictly linked to old age as well as a situation of bad health can be due to unemployment, and vice versa. This suggests us to consider also the combination of these situations:

Hp4: The worse one's insecurity condition (two or more of the previous), the higher one's religiosity.

7.1.2 Contextual Insecurities – Macro to micro relations

In the classical version of the insecurity theory, the individual's religious behaviour is linked to some contextual features which can shape the feeling of insecurity. This approach directly comes from the Norris and Inglehart's seminal work (2004) and suggests to test also the country features that condition the individuals' feeling of insecurity.

As previously seen, the employment status is the most investigated source of economic insecurity. Over and above the individual situation of unemployment, also the widespread unemployment can effect individual religiosity (Chen 2010). During recession periods or in countries where job market is poor, a lot of people can lose their job or fail to find one. This can lead to insecurity feelings also among employed people. We can thus hypothesize that:

Hp5: The higher the country unemployment rate, the higher individual religiosity

Economic insecurity in a given country can also refers to socio-economic inequalities. The link between inequalities and religiosity can be discussed starting from two different approaches. According to Norris and Inglehart (2004) and Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009) the link between inequality and religiosity is simply due to the higher number of poor persons in the more unequal societies. Solt, Habel and Grant (2011) conversely suggest that religiosity is higher in more unequal societies because it works to maintain the élite's privileges, which are bigger in more unequal societies (Fairbrother 2013). Whatever the possible explanation:

Hp6: The higher the country economic inequality, the higher individual religiosity

The threatening effects of unemployment and inequalities could be – partially – neutralized by an efficient welfare state system. In situation of high unemployment or economic diseases, individuals can feel less insecure if helped by state intervention to cope with such situations (Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009). This increase the feeling of security also within employed people or people in a good economic situation. Having this considered:

Hp7: The higher the country welfare spending, the lower individual religiosity

7.1.3 Religious background hypothesis

Relying on the psychological literature presented in a previous chapter (paragraph 3.3) it comes that the likely to use religion as coping strategy depends on the religious education one received (Pargament 2002). It is almost universally recognized in the sociological literature (Kelley and De Graaf 1997; Voas and Chaves 2016) that the main religious socialization's agency is the family and that the availability of religious' resources largely depends on the religious education received about (Storm and Voas 2012). Given this, all the individual hypotheses presented in paragraph 7.1.1 are now evaluated also considering the individual religious background:

Hp8: The effect of employment status, health status and widowhood (or of their combination) on religiosity is higher for individuals grew up in religious families

7.2 Data and Methods

Data

This chapter is built up on the cumulated dataset of European Value Study (EVS 2011), a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program on basic human values. From this huge dataset I choose a subset of countries which permit us to pursue three different objectives: theological consistency, availability of all the contextual variables and sufficient numerosity for any given country. Theological consistency was pursued by focusing only on Christian majority countries and this is methodologically and theoretically needed because the three dependent variables are explicitly calibrated to the main Christian tenets and dogmas. This considered, the dataset refers to the last two waves (1999-2001 and 2008-2010) and comprises 27 Christian countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The resulting sample was therefore made by 70,837 individuals.

Dependent variables

Concerning dependent variables, I follow the same strategy used in Chapter 5. The choice is to use three different dependent variables to grasp the relations between the independent variables and various dimensions of the broad concept of religiosity.

Religious practice: The way to measure religious practice is fairly standardized and it basically refers to church attendance (Biolcati-Rinaldi and Vezzoni 2013, 2014; Fairbrother 2013; te Grotenhuis et al. 2015; Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011; van Ingen and Moor 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009; Voas and Doebler 2011). Starting from the item "Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" I built up a dummy variable recoding "more than once a week" and "once a week" into "Weekly Church attendance" and coding it as 1. The other response categories were coded as 0.

Self-definition: The idea of "self-definition" represents in some way the individual perceived sense of belonging. Especially in modern context it could be instructive to test how individuals perceive themselves beyond practice. The starting point was the item “Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are ...”. I recoded the answer “a religious person” as 1 and the other two possible answers (“not a religious person”, “a convinced atheist”) as 0.

Religious Belief: The notion of belief is the hardest to conceptualize and operationalize. It could refer to a godly power, supernatural energies or any kind of superior force. In this research, I want to test the impact of insecurity on the real core of Christian belief. In doing so, I have relied on a set of items asking “Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?”. I coded as 1 a person answering “Yes” to all the item concerning “God”, “Heaven” and “Hell”, 0 otherwise.

Individual independent variables

Concerning independent variables, we can distinguish between two different sets. We have some variables (Marital Status, Health Status, Job Status) which contain the categories corresponding to the situations of insecurity; I will explicitly state which they are after the description. In addition, we have some variables we use as control (Wave, Gender, Age, Education) and a variable (Church attendance when respondent was 12 years old) which I interact with the others.

Marital Status: I built this variable starting from the question “Current legal marital status respondent” and I recode it in 4 categories: “Married” (Married/Living together as Married), “Divorced” (Divorced/Separated), Widowed and Single. For the scopes of this work, the category “Widowed” is the most interesting. I treated this variable as categorical.

Health Status: I built this variables starting from the question “All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? Would you say it is ...” and I recoded it in 3 categories: “Good” (Very Good/Good), “Fair” and “Poor” (Poor/Very Poor). The category corresponding to a situation of insecurity is “Poor”. I treated this variable as categorical.

Job Status: I built this variables starting from the question “Are you yourself gainfully employed at the moment or not? Please select from the card the employment status that applies to you” and I recoded it in 5 categories: “Employed, unlimited contract”, “Employed, limited contract” (Part Time/Self-Employed), “Unemployed”, “Student”, “Inactive” (Retired/Housewife/Other). I am interested in the category “Unemployed”. I treated this variable as categorical.

Given that the individual situations of insecurity grasped by the categories “Widowed”, “Poor health status” and “Unemployed” can partially overlap and cumulate I decided to synthesize them in a typology which defines clear individual profiles (Table 17). Given the low numerosity of the first four combinations, I aggregated them in the category “High insecurity” which is therefore composed by individual with two or more conditions of insecurity.

Table 17: Typology of individual insecurities

	Original			Aggregated	
	Freq.	%		Freq.	%
Complete insecurity	23	0.03		/	/
Widowed + Poor health	1,150	1.68		/	/
Widowed + Unemployed	86	0.13		/	/
Poor health + Unemployed	212	0.31	High insecurity	1,471	2.15
Widowed	5,620	8.22	Widowed	5,620	8.22
Poor health	2,377	3.48	Poor health	2,377	3.48
Unemployment	4,024	5.89	Unemployment	4,024	5.89
No insecurities	54,842	80.26	No insecurities	54,842	80.26
Total	68,334	100.00		68,334	100.00

In addition to these main independent variables, I use other variables as control. They are *education level* ("age completed education respondent", recoded in ten categories and treated as continuous variable), *Church attendance at 12 years old* ("how often attended religious services at 12 years old" recoded as dummy variable "weekly"), *Survey Wave* ("1999-2001 and "2008-2010", categorical), *gender* (categorical) and *age* (continuous).

Table 18: Summary of Individual Independent Variables

	N	mean	sd	min	max
Gender (female)	70,820	0.45	0.49	0	1
Age	70,570	47.12	17.62	15	108
Education	67,937	6.88	2.81	0	10
Weekly C. Attendance (12 y.o.)	70,837	0.43	0.49	0	1

Country independent variables

The multilevel framework permits us to supplement the individual-level dataset with contextual variables gathered from other sources and by other organizations. This is undoubtedly one of the main advantage of multilevel approaches and it is therefore the one I followed in this analysis.

Gini index is the fairly standardized way to measure income inequalities (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009). In its classic version it ranges from a theoretical minimum of 0 (no inequalities) to 100 (perfect inequalities). For this analysis I used the figures obtained from the Human Development Report (United Nations Development Program 2001) and computed their mean for the period 1998-2010.

Data for *Unemployment Rate* measures the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force in a country (people in a country aged between 15 and 64 years who are able and willing to work) (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011). They are taken from the International Labour Organization (ILO 2009) and calculated as the mean level of unemployment rates over the whole period 1998-2010.

Data for *Welfare Spending* as percentage of Gdp are used to evaluate goodness of welfare systems. Here I used the mean of Eurostat data (Eurostat 2013) for the period 1998-2010.

Table 19: Summary of Country-level dependent Variables

	N	mean	sd	min	max
Gini	27	30.90	3.30	24.46	36.44
Unemployment Rate	27	8.09	3.45	2.7	15.81
Welfare Spending	27	24.69	5.05	17.2	32.8

As far as the country-level variables widely differ in their range (see Table 19 and Table 20), I used their standardized version to make the results more comparable.

Methods

To test the whole set of hypotheses I rely on the same multiple responses multilevel model as in paragraph 5.5.3. This kind of models basically permits to model simultaneously more than one dependent variable and to explicitly consider their correlation. In addition, as every multilevel model, it permits to use independent variables defined at different levels – individual and country in this case.

Table 20: Country Variables Summary

	Welfare Spending	Gini	Unemployment rate
Austria	29.8	30.5	4.23
Belgium	29.4	28.82	7.77
Bulgaria	17.3	33.38	12.47
Croatia	20.8	31.40	13.01
Czech Republic	20.1	26.36	7.37
Denmark	32.8	28.14	4.71
Estonia	17.6	32.78	9.24
Finland	29.2	27.88	8.51
France	32.7	32.35	8.47
Germany	29.8	31.82	9.14
Great Britain	28.8	34.92	5.18
Greece	28.6	34.50	9.73
Hungary	22.7	28.43	6.66
Iceland	23.3	29.38	2.70
Ireland	24.5	32.14	4.65
Italy	28.8	33.86	8.44
Latvia	18.1	35.52	10.38
Lithuania	18.9	34.82	11.00
Netherlands	29.7	29.64	3.66
Norway	25.1	26.96	3.61
Poland	19.6	33.45	15.49
Portugal	25.8	36.44	6.13
Romania	17.2	31.98	7.06
Slovakia	18.3	27.18	15.81
Slovenia	24.4	24.46	6.01
Spain	24.7	34.52	11.14
Sweden	28.8	26.78	5.24

To properly test all the hypotheses, I used two different models. I used Model 1 to test the Micro-Micro hypotheses (Hp. 1, 2, 3 and 4) and the Macro-Micro ones (Hp. 5, 6 and 7). This model comprises the individual insecurities typology, the set of country variables and the control variables (Weekly Church attendance at 12 years old included). In model 2, instead, the religious background is incorporated in the individual typology which is thus made by 10 categories leaving the other variables the same as Model 2.

7.3 Results

Given the complex structure of this work, with different sets of hypotheses and different models, the presentation of the results will follow a two-steps procedure. First of all, I will present the results from Model 1 concerning the hypotheses Micro-Micro and Macro-Micro. Besides the estimated coefficients I will also report the predicted probabilities for the different categories of the individual independent variable and for the country variables. After that, I will present Model 2 and the results for the interaction hypothesis; also in this case I will present both the coefficients and the predicted probabilities.

In Table 21 I reported the coefficients and the confidence intervals obtained from Model 1. Starting from the results concerning self-definition, what clearly emerges is the total absence of effects (high insecurity excluded) for both individual and country insecurities. In fact, we cannot see statistically significant results neither for individual insecurities (if compared to their absence) nor for the increase or decrease of 1 SD in country variables. If we look instead at religious belief, we can see how conditions of high insecurity and widowhood correspond to higher religiosity if compared to their absence. Also the country variables coefficients show statistically significant effects: an increase of 1 SD of Gini index correspond to an increase of religious belief, and the same for 1 SD decrease of Welfare spending. Concerning religious practice, results basically follow the ones for self-definition: the only – small – differences we have is for the situation of poor health, which results linked to lower practice, and for widowhood which results in higher practice. Given the coefficient for poor health, it comes hard to interpret the coefficient for the situation of high insecurity. In fact, it is likely that the effects of widowhood and poor health – which have opposite signs – almost cancel each other out.

Table 21: Model 1 results. Log-odds coefficients and confidence intervals

	Practice			Belief			Self-Definition		
	B	[95% C. I.]		B	[95% C. I.]		B	[95% C. I.]	
Constant	-4,207	-4,474	-3,940	-1,231	-1,474	-0,989	-0,392	-0,702	-0,081
Individual insecurity									
Ref: NO insecurity									
High insecurity[a]	-0,116	-0,265	0,033	0,437	0,300	0,575	0,199	0,039	0,358
Widowed	0,128	0,047	0,209	0,193	0,114	0,271	0,048	-0,037	0,132
Poor health	-0,170	-0,298	-0,042	0,002	-0,111	0,114	0,013	-0,097	0,124
Unemployed	-0,035	-0,141	0,070	0,004	-0,082	0,090	-0,190	-0,270	-0,11
Gini (Z)	0,243	-0,201	0,686	0,569	0,150	0,988	0,277	-0,290	0,844
Unemp. rate (Z)	0,159	-0,094	0,412	0,114	-0,125	0,353	0,050	-0,274	0,374
Welfare Spending (Z)	-0,188	-0,451	0,075	-0,392	-0,641	-0,144	-0,274	-0,609	0,061
Age	0,022	0,020	0,023	-0,003	-0,004	-0,001	0,013	0,012	0,014
Female *- Ref: male*	0,407	0,359	0,455	0,333	0,291	0,374	0,657	0,618	0,697
Education	-0,002	-0,011	0,008	-0,060	-0,068	-0,051	-0,060	-0,068	-0,052
Wave *- Ref: 1999-2001*	-0,212	-0,260	-0,163	0,113	0,070	0,156	-0,115	-0,155	-0,074
Weekly att. (12 y.o.) *Ref: less/never*	1,996	1,930	2,062	1,097	1,047	1,147	1,643	1,592	1,694
Var (country)	0,352			0,317			0,582		
n Countries	27								
n Individuals	65.240								
n Responses	179.882								

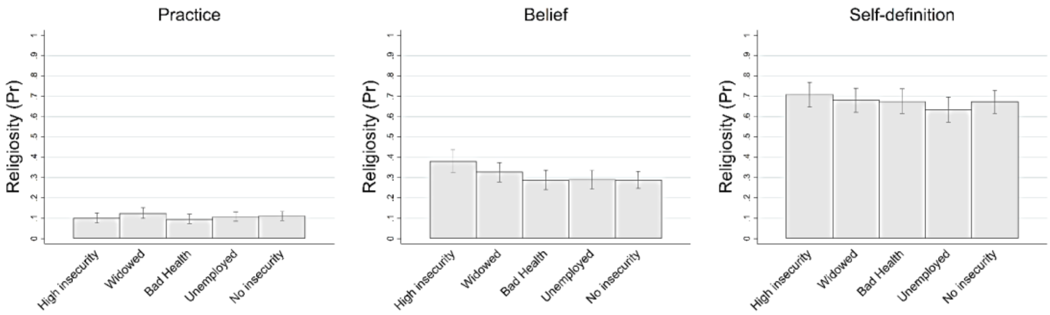
[a] two or more individual insecurities

Despite the inspection of model coefficient gives rough indications about the relations between insecurity and religiosity, it is less useful to investigate the size of those effects. It is for this reason that we will move to the analysis of the predicted probabilities for a deeper interpretation of the results. Computing the predicted probabilities basically means to compute the probabilities for the three outcomes for each levels – or category – of the independent variables, letting the control variables to their means.

The situation shown by

Figure 31 does not differ from what just said. Concerning self-definition, we cannot see relevant difference between the various category of the insecurity typology and the absence of insecurity. If we look at belief instead, we can see a higher probability to be religious for widowed individuals and for individuals in situation of high insecurity, but this difference is rather small ($P_{\text{high insecurity}} - P_{\text{NO insecurity}}$ = 0.09). Also for practice, we can see a higher probability for widowed people ($P_{\text{widowed}} - P_{\text{NO insecurity}}$ = 0,012) but this difference is as small as to be almost negligible.

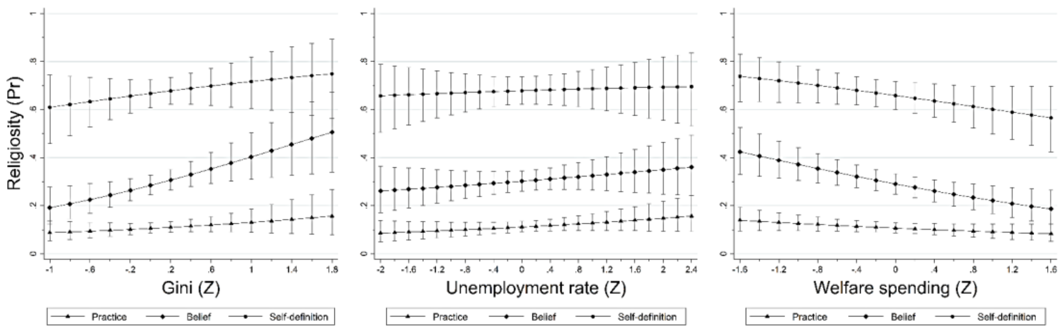
Figure 31: Predicted probabilities for model 1 – individual insecurities



In summarizing these results for Model 1, it is legit to say that the impact of individual insecurity on religiosity is almost null; the only effect we found concern basically widowhood and its impact on belief and practice, but these effecst have absolutely low magnitude.

Moving from individual conditions to country variables we can observe how the various indicators of insecurity impact differently on the different religious dimensions.

Figure 32: Predicted probabilities for model 1 - Country level insecurities



What Figure 32 clearly shows is that an increase of Gini index of economic inequalities is linked to an increase of all the three dimensions of religiosity but, at the same time, the only relevant increase concerns religious belief. The unemployment rate also seems to have a positive relation with the three dimensions of religiosity but the differences are so risible as to be almost insignificant. Concerning welfare spending, the picture is basically reflecting the one for Gini index: there is in fact an increase of religiosity on the three dimensions corresponding to a decrease of welfare spending, but this relation is relevant only regarding religious belief. Everything considered, it is possible to summarize this by saying that a relation between some country feature and the individual religiosity is present, but only the dimension of religious belief is associated to insecurity whereas practice and self-definition are more resilient to external factors. I will discuss this thoroughly in the next paragraph.

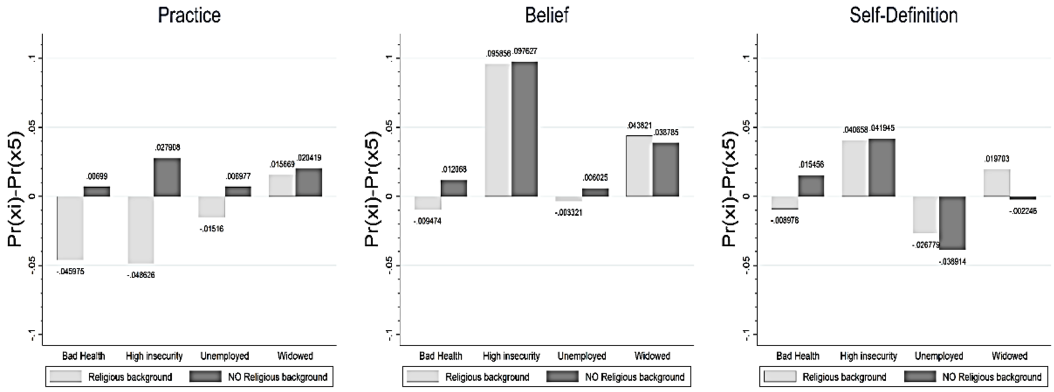
Moving now to the second step on this results' presentation, we will consider the effect of religious socialization on the use of religion as coping strategy. To test this hypothesis, I have built model 2 by interacting the individual insecurities' typology with the variable measuring weekly Church attendance at 12 years old, here used as proxy for religious socialization. The idea behind is to evaluate whether there is also an interaction effect which sums to the additive effects of insecurity and religious socialization; results are shown in Table 22. Being the typology referred to the category less associated to religiosity (No insecurity and no religious background as reference category) the resulting coefficients are de facto positive and statistically significant. This is obviously expected, but nothing says about the hypothesis behind, namely whether there is a higher likely to choose religion as coping strategy for individual grew in a religious environment. The positive coefficients only confirm the additive effect between insecurity and background. Like in the previous step, the best way to look at the results for the interaction hypothesis is to report the predicted probabilities.

Table 22: Model 2 results. Log-odds coefficients and confidence intervals

	Practice			Belief			Self-definition		
	B	[95% C. I.]		B	[95% C. I.]		B	[95% C. I.]	
Constant	-4,271	-4,539	-4,002	-1,240	-1,483	-0,997	-0,393	-0,703	-0,08
Individual insecurity *Ref: NO insecurity No Rel.Back.*									
Rel.Back. – High insecurity	1,807	1,630	1,984	1,525	1,339	1,710	1,991	1,684	2,298
Rel.Back. – Widow	2,162	2,054	2,271	1,303	1,202	1,405	1,799	1,667	1,932
Rel.Back. – Poor health	1,827	1,672	1,982	1,072	0,923	1,222	1,570	1,387	1,753
Rel.Back. – Unemployed	1,997	1,862	2,132	1,097	0,971	1,222	1,442	1,299	1,584
Rel.Back. – No insecurity	2,080	2,006	2,155	1,112	1,058	1,167	1,636	1,581	1,690
NO R.B. – High insecurity	0,478	0,205	0,751	0,537	0,338	0,736	0,195	0,006	0,383
NO R.B. – Widow	0,368	0,201	0,535	0,229	0,102	0,356	-0,010	-0,116	0,097
NO R.B. – Poor health	0,136	-0,127	0,398	0,072	-0,098	0,243	0,073	-0,063	0,208
NO R.B. – Unemployed	0,138	-0,077	0,353	0,036	-0,086	0,158	-0,179	-0,276	-0,08
Gini (Z)	0,233	-0,211	0,677	0,567	0,148	0,987	0,278	-0,289	0,844
Unemp. rate (Z)	0,159	-0,095	0,412	0,114	-0,126	0,353	0,050	-0,274	0,373
Welfare Spending (Z)	-0,186	-0,450	0,077	-0,392	-0,641	-0,144	-0,274	-0,608	0,061
Age	0,022	0,020	0,023	-0,003	-0,004	-0,001	0,013	0,012	0,014
Female - *Ref: male*	0,408	0,359	0,456	0,333	0,291	0,374	0,656	0,617	0,696
Education	-0,002	-0,011	0,007	-0,060	-0,068	-0,051	-0,060	-0,068	-0,050
Wave - *Ref: 1999-2001*	-0,209	-0,258	-0,160	0,114	0,071	0,157	-0,114	-0,155	-0,070
Var (country)	0,353			0,317			0,581		
n Countries	27								
n Individuals	65.240								
n Responses	179.882								

Figure 33 reports the differences between the predicted probabilities for the various categories of insecurity ($Pr(x_i)$) and the probability associated to individual with no insecurity ($Pr(x_5)$), everything divided between those with religious background and those without. If the interaction hypothesis is confirmed, the differences will be expected to be higher – and positive – for individuals with religious background.

Figure 33: Difference between predicted probabilities for the various categories of insecurity and the category "NO insecurity" divided for religious background



Results shown in Figure 33 are incontroversial: there are no differences in the use of religion as coping strategy between individual religiously socialized and individuals without a strong religious background. The effects for insecurity and religious socialization are thus only additive. The religiosity for individuals who attended mass weekly at 12 years old is higher, but this not affect the use of religion in situation of insecurity.

7.4 Conclusions and Discussion

Aim of this work was to empirically test the Norris and Inglehart's (2004) insecurity theory to understand whether it could be used to interpret religious differences in Europe. Conversely to their approach, which used a worldwide framework characterized by extreme heterogeneity, I decided to look at a more homogeneous context like the European one. The multidimensional approach I used permits to build hypotheses upon different dimensions also considering their potential overlapping. This approach is justified a priori if we observe the different ways by which religion can work as coping strategy: these ways range from networks and support groups' creation (mainly linked to religious practice and self-definition) to mechanisms of individual support – mainly linked to the belief dimension. This multidimensional approach is also justified ex-post given the different results we found for the different dimensions. In the light of these results, we can discuss them using two different focuses: firstly, we will debate the different results obtained for the different dimensions of religiosity and secondly we will discuss the results we obtained for the different kinds of insecurities. In this second step we will explicitly focus on the differences between individual and contextual insecurities and we will try to expand the discussion within the debate about European secularization.

If we look at the results we obtained for the different dimensions of religiosity, what comes out immediately is that insecurity has no impact on religious self-definition. The resilience of this dimension to external factors does not surprise. In fact, being it strictly linked to a kind of group identification, it can partially overlap with nationality or national identity (Bellah 1967). In addition to the Bellah's idea of *civil religion*, we can find this link between religion and nationality also in the concept of *vicarious religions* proposed by Davie (2000, 2001). The main idea behind is a shift from a religious culture made by obligations, practice and strong dogmas to a religious culture based on consumption. Individuals, Davie says, continue to perceive themselves as members of a religious institutions also without practice or belief because they "use" it only for rituals and special occasions. Given this, the resilience of self-definition to external factors like insecurity is clearly expected.

The interpretation of the results concerning practice is something in-between self-definition and belief. In fact, despite it results resilient to the effects of the macro variables, we found a small significant effect for widowhood on practice. Given these results we can say that, in addition to the more intimate and individual belief, also the attendance to the Church can work as coping strategy. Fundamentals are the mechanisms of social support related to practice which can be used by individuals to cope with very threatening events like the loss of the partner.

Among the three dimensions considered, religious belief is the one showing the stronger association with insecurity. In effect, there is a significant effect both of individual insecurities – in the form of widowhood and high insecurity – and contextual insecurities – in the form of economic inequalities and welfare spending. The individual religiosity is in fact higher in more unequal countries and lower in countries with higher welfare spending. A comprehensive explanation of these mechanism is impossible if we rely only on the results of this analysis: what clearly emerge is however how the system of supernatural belief is likely to be considered as a stress-coping mechanism which individuals tend to use.

Moving the focus from the different dimensions to the different kind of insecurities, some clear and interesting conclusions emerge. Concerning individual insecurities, only widowhood is associated to higher religiosity, both in terms of higher practice and especially belief. This condition, being strictly liked to a unique traumatic episode, is the emblematic situation to cope with using religion. For what concerns the contextual insecurity, what we can say without fear of contradiction is that unemployment rate has no impact on religiosity, whatever the dimension considered. On the contrary, economic inequality and welfare spending results respectively positively and negatively associated to religiosity, with the bigger impact on belief. This result is coherent with both the general insecurity theory and the theories underlining the single mechanisms. In fact, higher inequalities are linked to religiosity because of the higher poverty in high unequal societies (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009) or because religion is functioning to protect élite's privileges, which are higher in high unequal societies (Solt et al. 2011). At the same time, a higher welfare spending can protect individuals from the negative effects of poverty (Ruiter and van Tubergen 2009) and this can impact religiosity in two different ways. On the first hand, it will diminish the economic insecurity and, on the other hand, it will de-legitimise religious institutions as agencies of economic and social support (Scheve and Stasavage 2006).

Everything considered, it is possible to refer to insecurity as to the main mechanism linking modernization and secularization? Is it a relevant component of secularization debate? The answer is not easy. If we focus on the individual level, despite in this work we found an association between widowhood and religiosity, this result is not useful to argue that an increase or a decrease of individual insecurities can have relevant impact on the national trends of religiosity. On the contrary, if we look at the contextual level, it is fundamental to say that country insecurities, despite being associated to various dimensions of religiosity, are also strongly linked to other processes of modernization in its broad sense. We can thus argue that these macro features are useful to place the different countries on a hypothetical path to modernization which lead to secularization. The study of these country characteristics such inequalities or welfare spending cannot however be disentangled from other characteristics like socio-economic wealth, education and the mechanisms of religious transmission which together define the country's "levels of modernization".

Despite it seems useful, especially in a global perspective, to interpret religious differences among countries (Norris and Inglehart 2004), the insecurity theory applied to the European context shows a scarcer theoretical relevance. The theory applied to Europe appear thus insufficient – if used in isolation – to interpret the religious differences we observe in Europe.

Chapter 8

DOES INSECURITY FOSTER RELIGIOSITY?

A longitudinal panel study for Germany and Great Britain

As stated in chapters 2, 3 and 7, there are basically two different ways to deal with the insecurity theory. On the one hand, the relation can be viewed looking at contexts or high-level units: religiosity is lower in more secure societies and higher in poorer or more insecure societies. On the other hand, the relation between feeling of insecurity and religiosity can refer to the individual behaviours; in this interpretation, individuals can use religion as coping strategy even in very affluent societies when threatened by particular life events. This chapter explores explicitly this second interpretation.

In the sociological literature about the use of religion as stress coping strategy, only the work by Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011) represents a systematic attempt to study this mechanism focusing also on the individual behaviour. In fact, they tested a lot of variables concerning economic and existential insecurities, past and present insecurities and individual and contextual insecurities. Despite the high relevance of their work, the results, by the authors' own admission, need to be refined and scrutinized maybe with the use of longitudinal data. At present, the insecurity theory is in need of development, both theoretically and empirically (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2011) and a clear assessment of the individual mechanisms behind goes undoubtedly in this direction. If it is possible to demonstrate that a worsening of individual conditions can foster an increase of religiosity, this could represent a strong leap forward in the relevance of the insecurity theory.

Of course when dealing with these individual-level relations, psychology can help a lot to shed light on the mechanisms at work. As I told in the devoted chapter, the absence of sociological analysis on this topic is puzzling also because the psychological literature has extensively dealt with this idea. Psychologists dealing with these arguments place religion within the framework of stress coping strategies. What they intend for stress is the human mental and physical response and adaptation to some real or perceived changes and challenges. It is noteworthy to say that stress can take different forms: It can be either short-lived, a single event with a sharp and defined time span and that acts as a shock or it can be long-term, meaning when some circumstances continue to have impact throughout the whole – or part of it – life course. Using the distinction from Chapter 3 between economic and existential insecurities, we can say that events like the death of a loved one or a physical accidents fall in the category of event stressors whereas the economic insecurity is one of the best example of chronic stressor. In both case, when trying to test the relation between the emergence of some life-threatening stressful events and the use of religion to cope with them, it is plausible to hypothesize a time-lag between the stressor and the – eventual – change in the religious behaviour.

In chapter 3 we have also seen how religious coping strategies can work in different ways. They can provide positive beliefs (Krok 2015), appraisal of stressors through religious attributions (Beagan et al. 2012), coping behaviour like prayer or meditation and social support networks via religious communities (Beagan et al. 2012; Gall et al. 2005). Given this variety of – possible – mechanisms at work, religion and religiosity need thus to be considered in the more comprehensive way possible. Focusing only on practice or looking instead on how individuals perceive themselves is not enough to investigate all the possible mechanisms behind.

This multidimensionality of religiosity and the idea of time-lags between causes – the stressors – and effect – the increase of personal religiosity – will be deeply scrutinize along this entire chapter. For the inherent nature of this kind of analysis, which focuses on events' timing, a particular kind of data are needed. These dataset – panel data – are powerful tools in the social scientists' toolbox but they are quite scarce and do not permit a wide comparison like the cross-sectional data I used in the previous chapters. This imposes some choices in the units of analysis. For this work I decided to test the insecurity theory in two of the biggest and most influent European countries: Germany and Great Britain. In addition to their political, economic and cultural relevance, these two countries have two desirable features. On the first hand, they both fall in the cluster of the Northern European countries (which comprises also the Netherlands, Belgium and France) in the typology made by Halsey (1985). This cluster is somehow opposed both to the Scandinavian countries and to Latin Europe ones for which, for opposite reasons, a relevant change in individual's religious behaviour along the life course is not likely to occur. On the second hand, these two countries are relatively denominationally heterogeneous and this absence of a monopolistic religious tradition can open the field to more individualized patterns which partially distance themselves from a strong cultural influence.

In going deeply into the heterogeneous religious landscape of these two countries, a good way is to briefly underline their commonalities as well as their differences with the majority of Europeans. Concerning Great Britain, Halsey (1985:12) clearly asserts that "British are to be seen and see themselves as a relatively unchurched, nationalistic, optimistic, satisfied, conservative, and moralistic people". Given this co presence of a high morality (whose boundaries with religiosity are blurred) and a low propensity to attend Churches, it is not surprisingly that Great Britain is one of the main battlefield of the debate concerning "believing without belonging" (Davie 1994; Voas and Crockett 2005). The main question Davie has about this is easy to pose but hard to answer: why the majority of British people persist in believing but see no need to participate regularly in their religious institutions? And why only few people have opted out of religion altogether? Atheists are rare. Having this in mind, it seems that Britain – as well as most of Western Europe – has to be defined as unchurched rather than simply secular (Davie 1994) This phenomena is transversal to every denominational allegiance and to every regional variance in the puzzling British religious landscape (Davie 1994). To put this in context, it is needed to spend some words about the denominations present in Britain, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In fact, it is crystal clear that individual countries that composed the United Kingdom are far from homogeneous, "both with regard to their religious histories and to the manner in which their religious sentiments are expressed" (Davie 1994:14). Northern Ireland, for example, seems resembling the Irish patterns more than the mainland ones – and this results in high level of religious practice, almost comparable to the other – southern – European countries. Scotland and Wales also differ in their denominational distribution, and these different denominations strongly carry cultural identities. Scotland is the glaring example: with the strong presence of the Calvinist Church, its position is somehow problematic for the national Church in England, being more close to some European countries (Davie 1994). In addition to the regional differences themselves, this denominational heterogeneity has a strong consequence impacting the United Kingdom as a whole. Contrary to other European countries like France – which historical path basically forced a sharp cleavage between religious and non-religious, between the Catholic and the Jacobin tradition – England is characterized by a high degree of religious pluralism. This abundance of religious options excludes the obligation – common in many other countries – to accept Catholicism or nothing at all. We can see the signs of this in the low presence of atheist and of course in the combination of indicators concerning practice, belief and self-definition. This pluralist situation where at least five main denominations – Anglicanism, Quakerism, Congregationalism, Presbyterianism and Methodism – interact is the frame in which we need to interpret the results of this work and everything which concerns British religiosity.

Somehow similarly to Great Britain, also German religiosity can be described starting from a two-axes cleavage. On the one side there are the differences between the two main Christian confessions – Roman Catholics and Protestants – and on the other side there are regional differences. These latter regard both territorial difference such Bavaria and Germany's far western region which are predominantly Catholic and the north, central and southeast regions which are mostly Protestant and the strong historical and political cleavage which divide Eastern and Western Germany. In this regard, Pollack and Pickel (2007) clearly focus on this territorial and historical cleavage when speaking about the possible processes of religious individualization Europe is experiencing. West Germany is a clear example of modern society where individualization is likely to occur whereas East Germany, being divided from West Germany for 40 years, is still in the process of catching up to the western German modernization level. Generally speaking, German religious landscape is almost equally divided among Roman Catholics, Protestants Evangelical and atheist. The Protestant Evangelic Church (EKD) comprises in turn a set of United Protestant, Lutheran and Reformed Churches. Everything consider, we can describe the German religious landscape as made by three different areas: The Catholic south-western regions, the protestant north-central regions and the east regions where, after the Communist domination, most of the population tend to refuse religion. Two key points are relevant when trying to draw a sociologically useful picture of German religion. Firstly, it is deserved to remember that Germany was the heartbeat of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century; this results in centuries where German succeeded to build a pacific and respectful cohabitation. Secondly, when investigating patterns of religious membership, is important to know that the avoidance of religion can also be a financial decision. In fact, the German government collects a church tax, the so-called Kirchensteuer, that supports the

Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as some Jewish communities. This tax is so high (about 8% of a person's total income) that many Germans avoid to pay it by legally declaring to the state that they are not a member of any church.

8.1 Hypotheses

In the previous chapters I presented and tested the theory and the – possible – mechanisms behind the link between insecurity and religiosity. This relation can be viewed focusing both on the contextual insecurities and on the individual ones. I tested both of them cross-sectionally in chapter 7 and the results show some effects of contextual insecurities but only very small effects of individual situations mainly in the form of widowhood. Within this chapter the attempt is to refine the investigation of the relation between insecurity and religiosity at the individual level, trying to understand whether a worsening of personal situations will increase individual's religiosity. We do so using the same multidimensional approach as before and thus testing the relation between the worsening of personal situations and the increase of religious practice and values and the switch in the religious denomination (see paragraph 4.1 for the related explanation). Concerning the working hypotheses, the attempt is to replicate those from the previous chapter, so testing the employment status, the marital status, the health status and the perceived financial situation. Also in this case, all the hypotheses are referred to all the three dimensions of religiosity here considered.

Hp1: A worsening of individual's job status (unemployment) will increase individual's religiosity.

Hp2: A worsening of individual's health status will increase individual's religiosity

Hp3: The loss of the partner will increase individual's religiosity

Hp4: The worsening of financial situation will increase individual's religiosity

8.2 Data, variables and methods

8.2.1 Data

Given the purposes of this work, which aims to assess the impact of some change in insecurity to religious change for two different countries, I have relied on two different panel dataset.

SOEP dataset for Germany

The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a longitudinal survey of approximately 11,000 private households and about 30,000 individuals in the Federal Republic of Germany. As early as June 1990—even before the Economic, Social and Monetary Union—SOEP dataset was expanded to include the states of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), thus seizing the rare opportunity to observe the transformation of an entire society. An immigrant sample was also added as well to account for the changes that took place in Germany society in 1994/95. Further new samples were added to include special sub-populations or to stabilize sample size. The database is produced by the Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW) and includes variables concerning household composition, employment, occupations, earnings, health and satisfaction indicators.

BHPS and Understanding Society dataset for Great Britain

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) was carried out by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex from 1991 to 2009 (Waves 1-18). The main objective of the survey was the further understanding of social and economic change at the individual and household level in Great Britain. From Wave 19, the BHPS became part of a new longitudinal study called Understanding Society, or the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), conducted by ISER. The BHPS sample is part of Understanding Society from Wave 2 onwards and BHPS sample members have an identifier within the Understanding Society datasets, allowing users to match BHPS Wave 1-18 data to Understanding Society Wave 2 data and onwards. The wave 1 of BHPS panel consists of some 5,500 households and 10,300 individuals drawn from 250 areas of Great Britain. Additional samples of 1,500 households in each of Scotland and Wales were added to the main sample in 1999, and in 2001 a sample of 2,000 households was added in Northern Ireland, making the panel suitable for UK-wide research.

Starting from the entire sample, I performed some cleaning in order to have a more reliable sample. I drop all the individuals with missing values on id, all the individuals who were not in the original sample, all the individuals with some wave gaps and all the individuals who participate in less than three waves (see Appendix 10).

8.2.2 Variables

When dealing with two different datasets and when trying to make the same analysis between them, keeping the coherence of the different variables is not an easy task. Despite I tried to operationalize the same dimensions of religion, some differences between the two countries are present.

Dependent variables

Concerning Germany, I operationalize the dimension of religious practice starting from the question "*Attend Church or other religious events*". The different categories were coded as the "average propensity of weekly Church attendance" (Weekly=0.99, Monthly=0.23, Only in special occasions=0.03, Never=0) (Pisati 2000). The possible interpretation of this variables is twofold: it can be interpreted as the "average propensity of weekly Church attendance" or as the "individual propensity to attend Church in any given week" (Hout and Greeley 1998). It is evident that the two interpretation are essentially complementary: if we recode the various categories of a certain question regarding Church attendance as the probability of weekly Church attendance, what results are comparable and linear measures. This way of standardize works fine especially when dealing with different datasets with different answer formats and I thus decide to follow the same approach also regarding Great Britain. For this latter, I started from the question asking about the "*attendance at religious services*" and I recode it in this way: Once a week or more=0.99, at least once a month=0.23, at least once a year=0.03, only at weddings, funerals etc.=0.03, never=0. Coded in this way, the religious practice variables were treated as linear in both the analyses.

Concerning *religious denomination* in Germany, I started from the item "which religious denomination" and I coded as "1" an individual declaring the membership to one of the various proposed denominations (grouped by catholic denominations, protestant denominations, other Christian denominations, Other Not-Christian denominations), "0" elsewhere. The resulting variable is thus a dummy one. Concerning Great Britain, the procedure was almost the same, with the only difference that the question does not divide among the main Christian doctrines.

In both datasets there is not the possibility to measure religious belief as I did in the cross-sectional chapters (see chapters Chapter 5,Chapter 6 and 7). In its stead, I opted to focus on something more concerned to religious values. Regarding Germany, I relied on the question asking about the "*importance of religious in your life*" and ranging from "very unimportant" to "very important". Regarding Great Britain, I similarly relied on the question asking if "*religion makes difference to life*" and ranging from "no difference" to "a great difference". Both these variables where treated as scalar.

Independent variables

The independent variables I used for this work basically regard economic and existential insecurity. For what concerns Germany I used *marital status*

(“Married/living together”, “Divorced/separated”, “Single”, “Widowed”, categorical), *employment status* (“Full-time employed”, “part-time employed”, “Unemployed”, “Other”, categorical), *health satisfaction* (10 points scale, scalar) and *income satisfaction* (10 points scale, scalar). Regarding the first two we are mainly interested in the categories “Widowed” and “Unemployed”. For what concerns Great Britain, I used instead *marital status* (“Married/living together”, “Divorced/separated”, “Never married”, “Widowed”, categorical), *health status* (5 categories from “Very good” to “very poor”, categorical), *employment status* (“Employed”, “Retired”, “Maternity leave/family care”, “Student”, “Other”, categorical), *partner unemployment* (dichotomous), *financial stress* (5 categories from “Living comfortably” to “Finding it very difficult”, categorical). For the reasons I will mention in the next paragraph – in fixed effects models subjects serve “as their own control” – we do not need time-invariant control variables.

Not all the variables of interest were asked in each wave. In order to increase the number of observations I approximated all the missing values with the last available measure on that variable. To put in another way, I assumed that the score on a variable did not change until a new valid score is found.

8.2.3 Methods

When dealing with panel data and when trying to estimate the effects of some time-varying variables (the “insecurity variables”) on other time-varying variables (the “religiosity variables”) there are two main kind of models to use: fixed-effect model and random-effects model. The main difference between the two is that fixed-effects models control somehow for the unobserved heterogeneity between individuals whereas random-effects models do not. If there are omitted variables, and these variables are correlated with the variables in the model, then fixed effects models provide a means for controlling for them: basically, in a fixed-effects model, subjects serve as their own controls. The main shortcoming for this is that we do not estimate the effects of these time-invariant variables. Random-effects models are somehow the opposite: they permit to estimate also the effects of time-invariant variables but the model estimates may be biased because we are not controlling for some of them. Over and above the theoretical reasons, there is also a statistical test to investigate whether a random-effect model is preferred compared to a fixed-effect model. In the Hausman test (1978), the null hypothesis is that the preferred model is random effects vs the alternative fixed effects. It basically tests whether the unique errors are correlated with the regressors; the null hypothesis is that they are not. This test was performed for all the dependent variables we use and it resulted significant, and thus I opted for fixed-effects models. The general form of this model is reported in the equation below.

$$y_{it} - \bar{y}_i = b_i(x_{it} - \bar{x}_i) + \epsilon_{it} - \bar{\epsilon}_i$$

In the equation, y_{it} is the score on the dependent variables y of respondent i at time t and $\bar{y}_i$ is the respondent's average score on the dependent variable over time. It follows that the first part of the equation indicates the deviance from the individual's mean for the dependent variable. The same holds for the independent variables and the error terms. It results that the deviance from the individual's mean on the dependent variable is a function (b_i) of the deviance from the individual's mean on the independent variable ($x_{it} - \bar{x}_i$) plus the deviance from the individual's mean error ($\epsilon_{it} - \bar{\epsilon}_i$). Given the different nature of our dependent variables, I used both linear fixed-effect models (for "religious practice", "religious make difference" and "importance of religion") and logistic ones (for "religious belonging").

For all the three dependent variables and for both countries I performed three different kind of models in order to take into account some peculiarities of the longitudinal analysis. *Model a* corresponds to the classic fixed-effects model. *Model b* instead is *Model a* supplemented with time fixed effects dummy variables to control for time-flow. *Model c* is basically *Model b* with all the independent time-varying variables considered at *t-1* to take into account a supposed time-latency between cause and effect.

8.3 Results

In presenting the results I here follow a two-steps reasoning. For each of the two countries, I firstly present the tables concerning the changes in the various dependent variables and then I move the presentation of the results coming from the models' estimation.

8.3.1 Great Britain

Concerning Great Britain, the focus is on three different dependent variables, namely religious practice, religious belonging or "self-definition" and "religion makes difference". Before moving to the analysis of the impact of changes in insecurity, it is needed to see whether we observe some changes in the dependent variables or not. This is a necessary step because, if there is no change in the dependent variables, there could be no effect for a change in the independent. As Table 23, Table 24 and Table 25 show, there is only a small change in the answers along the waves..

For what regards this analysis, the item performing better is the one related to religious practice. In fact, we can observe an 80% stability and 20% change (a change occurs when the answer at time t is different from the one at time t-1) among the observations. In addition, we can see also a nice linear pattern for change which marks out a little probability of big changes between two consecutive observations. The item concerning religious self-definition is instead the most problematic one because there is only a little change (4%). This almost complete stability has some relevant implications, both from the theoretical and the methodological point of view.

Table 23: Great Britain - Change in religious participation over all the waves

Wave t → / Wave t-1 ↓	once a week or more	at least once a month	at least once a year	never	only at weddings, funerals	Total
once a week or more	**11,461**	616	214	117	121	12,529
at least once a month	475	**5,474**	881	205	266	7,301
at least once a year	191	751	**14,399**	1,395	2,898	19,634
never	107	166	1,020	**20,079**	5,678	27,050
only at weddings, funerals	124	230	1,734	3,829	**33,754**	39,671
Total	12,358	7,237	18,248	25,625	42,717	106,185

I will discuss the theoretical considerations in the last paragraph. Concerning methodology, what goes with it is the impossibility to run the models for all the individuals with no changes occurring in the dependent variable; this can of course lead to a loss of sample size and to some biased results.

Table 24: Great Britain - Change in religious belonging over all the waves

Wave t → / Wave t-1 ↓	0	1	Total
0	**38,466**	2,086	40,552
1	1,846	**64,464**	66,310
Total	40,312	66,550	106,862

Also looking at the item asking whether "religion makes difference" we can see an almost 90% of stability and 10% change among the observations. Also in this case there is a nice pattern marking out a little probability of big changes between two consecutive observations.

Table 25: Great Britain - Change in "religion makes difference" over all the waves

Wave t → / Wave t-1 ↓	no difference	a little difference	some difference	a great difference	Total
no difference	**42,668**	1,606	694	351	45,319
a little difference	1,831	**19,938**	1,162	409	23,340
some difference	759	1,100	**18,179**	693	20,731
a great difference	204	493	711	**16,009**	17,417
Total	45,462	23,137	20,746	17,462	106,807

Moving from the evaluation of the dependent variables' variability to the models' estimation I want to recap that we are interested in the changes for those variables measuring to some changes in the independent variables. Concerning these latter, we are particularly interested in the category "Widowed" of marital status, "Poor health" and "Very poor health" of health status, "Unemployed" of employment status, "Partner unemployed" and "Finding it quite difficult" and "Finding it very difficult" of the variable about financial stress.

The results coming from the models' estimation (Table 26) are quite clear. The only variable showing some impact on the change in religiosity is the one concerning widowhood. Given the results we can confidently say that losing the partner increase religious practice and sense of belonging but not the feeling that religion can make some difference in life. The other variables or categories we are interested in do not show statistically significant relations with religiosity.

Table 26: Fixed-effect models results for Great Britain

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)
	Practice	Practice [b]	Practice [a b]	Belonging	Belonging [b]	Belonging [a b]	Difference	Difference [b]	Difference [a b]
Separated/divorced *(Ref: Married)*	-0.002	0.001	0.002	0.085	-0.022	0.111	0.042***	0.037**	0.042**
Widowed *(Ref: Married)*	0.014***	0.021***	0.020***	0.432***	0.290**	0.472***	-0.024	-0.026	-0.023
Never married *(Ref: Married)*	-0.003	-0.006	-0.002	-0.157	-0.189	-0.135	0.052***	0.031	0.017
Good *(Ref: Very Good Health)*	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001	-0.007	-0.022	-0.025	-0.001	0.000	-0.001
Fair *(Ref: Very Good Health)*	-0.005**	-0.003	-0.002	0.030	-0.010	0.004	-0.007	-0.007	0.001
Poor *(Ref: Very Good Health)*	-0.010***	-0.008***	-0.009***	0.025	-0.060	-0.054	-0.015	-0.019	0.002
Very Poor *(Ref: Very Good Health)*	-0.006	-0.003	-0.004	0.225*	0.081	0.027	0.029	0.021	0.020
Unemployed *(Ref: Employed)*	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.127	0.129	0.096	0.029	0.024	0.008
Retired *(Ref: Employed)*	0.007**	0.012***	0.014***	0.233***	0.175**	0.155*	-0.036***	-0.027**	-0.022*
Maternity leave/family care *(Ref: Employed)*	0.008***	0.007**	0.010***	0.127	0.142	0.148	0.016	0.012	0.001
Student *(Ref: Employed)*	-0.013	-0.015*	-0.017**	0.186	0.194	0.040	0.033	0.024	-0.038
Other *(Ref: Employed)*	0.005	0.007*	0.013***	0.141	0.146	0.204*	0.024	0.0297*	0.015
Financial Stress: doing alright *(Ref: Living Confortably)*	0.002	0.002	-0.003*	0.099**	0.099**	0.012	0.017***	0.016**	0.008
Financial Stress: Just about getting by *(Ref: Living Confortably)*	0.005***	0.004**	-0.001	0.114**	0.115**	0.047	0.025***	0.019**	0.012
Financial Stress: Finding it quite difficult *(Ref: Living Confortably)*	0.000	-0.001	-0.004	-0.136	-0.135	-0.087	0.015	0.007	0.005
Financial Stress: Finding it very difficult *(Ref: Living Confortably)*	0.000	-0.001	-0.003	-0.216*	-0.208*	0.002	-0.010	-0.018	-0.023
Constant	0.143***	0.148***	0.141***				2.030***	2.093***	2.062***
Observations	70,961	70,961	66,701	26,985	26,985	20,652	71,270	71,270	67,124
Number of id	6,588	6,588	6,527	2,323	2,323	1,753	6,587	6,587	6,529

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

[a] Job Status, Partner Emplyment Status and Financial Stress are considered at t-1

[b] Coefficients for time dummies are not reported

(a): FE model

(b): FE model + Time FE

(c): FE model + Time FE + x_i t-1

8.3.2 Germany

In presenting the results for Germany I will follow the same structure as Great Britain. I will firstly present the patterns of change of the dependent variables moving then to the models' estimation results. As for Great Britain, Table 27, Table 28 and Table 29 point out only small volatility in the dependent variables. Also for Germany, the item performing better is the one for religious practice for which we can observe a 20% change and 80% stability. Also in this case we see the linear pattern which suggests only little probability of big changes between two consecutive observations.

Table 27: Germany - change in religious participation over all the waves

Wave t → Wave t-1 ↓	Weekly	Monthly	Only special occasions	Never	Total
Weekly	**5,214**	495	210	140	6,059
Monthly	540	**3,360**	951	228	5,079
Only special occasions	233	991	**11,373**	2,172	14,769
Never	113	222	2,184	**13,588**	16,107
Total	6,100	5,068	14,718	16,128	42,014

The indicator for religious belonging present the same problems as for Great Britain; in fact, we can observe only a minimal share – 1% – of answers changing between two contiguous observations.

Table 28: Germany - change in religious belonging over all the waves

Wave t → Wave t-1 ↓	0	1	Total
0	**5,667**	245	5,912
1	235	**35,883**	36,118
Total	5,902	36,128	42,030

For the variable concerning the importance of religion we found higher variability that religious belonging but still very low – 5%.

Table 29: Germany - change in "importance of religion" over all the waves

Wave t → Wave t-1 ↓	Very unimportant	Less Important	Important	Very important	Total
Very unimportant	**4,231**	235	34	4	4,504
Less Important	207	**11,679**	348	28	12,262
Important	39	398	**10,705**	193	11,335
Very important	6	27	174	**4,362**	4,569
Total	4,483	12,339	11,261	4,587	32,670

Moving from the inspection of the dependent variables to the reading of the results coming from the models and reported in table 30, we see some result coherent with what we found for Great Britain. In fact, widowhood has a statistically significant impact on religiosity also in Germany. The only difference is that this impact regard religious practice and the variable asking whether "religion makes difference" and not religious belonging as for Great Britain. In addition, we found also a statistically significant effect for unemployment on religious practice and belonging but its size is so small as to be almost irrelevant.

8.4 Conclusions and discussion

Main aim of this chapter is to test the hypothesis that a worsening of individual's conditions can foster their religiosity. The idea behind is that when people suffer from some life-threatening episodes they likely turn religious as a way to cope with these situations. Following the main typology suggest by the – scarce – sociological literature, I tested episodes concerning both economic and existential insecurities. I did so by focusing on three different dependent variables aiming to measure the effects on various dimensions of the broad concept of religiosity. This is coherent also with the idea that religion can work as coping strategy in many different ways ranging from the social support by religious communities to the values individuals internalize.

Table 30: Fixed-effect models results for Germany

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)
	Practice	Practice [b]	Practice [a b]	Belonging	Belonging [b]	Belonging [a b]	Difference	Difference [b]	Difference [a b]
Separated/divorced *(Ref: Married)*	-0,004	-0,001	-0,002	-0.397**	-0.280*	-0,258	-0,011	-0,009	-0,010
Never married *(Ref: Married)*	-0,002	-0,009	-0,009	0.960***	0.517**	0.522**	-0.059***	-0.063***	-0.067***
Widowed *(Ref: Married)*	0.028***	0.034***	0.033***	-0,209	0,238	0,241	0.063***	0.068***	0.068***
Part-time employed *(Ref: Employed)*	0.014***	0.017***	0.014***	0,068	0,228	0,224	0,012	0,014	0.029***
Unemployed *(Ref: Employed)*	0.010***	0.016***	0.017***	0.261**	0.612***	0.665***	0,011	0.015*	0,004
Other *(Ref: Employed)*	0,006	0,004	0,009	0,326	0.429*	0.606***	0,009	0,007	0,008
Health satisfaction	0.003***	0.002***	0.002***	0.067***	0.039*	0,033	0.004***	0.003**	0.003**
Income satisfaction	-0,001	-0,001	-0.001*	-0,024	-0,020	-0,001	-0,002	-0,002	-0,002
Constant	0.160***	0.178***	0.181***				2.463***	2.464***	2.468***
Observations	38171	38171	38126	5984	5984	5978	34104	34104	34056
Number of id	2335	2335	2335	378	378	378	2335	2335	2335

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

[a] Job Status and income satisfaction are considered at t-1

[b] Coefficients for time dummies are not reported

(a): FE model

(b): FE model + Time FE

(c): FE model + Time FE + x_i t-1

To perform this empirical test, I worked on two different countries, Germany and Great Britain, which panel datasets present the longest observation windows across European countries.

While inspecting the volatility of the dependent variables across individuals across time we found the first problematic issue. In fact, the variables measuring the three dimension we want to investigate are not likely to change between waves. To put it in another way: individuals are not likely to change their religiosity. The only dimension showing some kind of volatility is the one measuring Church Attendance, for which almost 20% of the answers at time *t* are different from those at time *t-1*. The same percentage for the variables measuring religious values is 5% whereas it is only 1% for religious self-definition. This last 1% is quite expected if we rely on the idea of religious belonging as the cultural identity mentioned before and, concerning Germany, it is even more expected if we think at the taxation issue connected to religious belonging. Undoubtedly these results represent the first clue about the inconsistency of insecurity theory if evaluated at the individual level.

This interpretation is confirmed by the results of the models, which represent the core of this work. Despite we control both for the time-flow itself and for a possible time-lag between the appearance of life-threatening episodes and the change in religiosity, the results are quite clear: individuals in Germany and Great Britain are not likely to turn more religious when some episodes causing insecurity occur. The only exceptions are represented by the loss of the partner, which increase practice and values in Germany and practice and belonging in Great Britain and the unemployment status, which increase practice and belonging in Germany. The results concerning widowhood are quite coherent with want we found in the previous chapter and this make us quite confident about the strength of these findings. In any case, the effect sizes for both unemployment and widowhood are very small and this basically means that the insecurity theory evaluated at individual level is almost useless as theory aiming to explain religious differences across European countries. Of course the results have to be circumscribed to the two countries we analyzed, but at the same time they make us not optimistic about the relevance of insecurity theory for the debate about European religiosity.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The present work represented a long path across many issues related to the study of European religiosity. These issues regard theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects. I started with the state of the art for what concern the various theories behind the study of worldwide religiosity. This group of theories includes the basic secularization theory, the individualization theory and the economic market theory. According to the first, the world is experiencing a decrease of religiosity due to processes of modernization. Scholars from individualization theory hypothesize instead that religion is changing and not declining due to such processes of modernization: religion in modern time is becoming more and more individualized and intimate thus losing its institutional traits. The approach by adherents of the economic market theory is rather different: they interpret the religious field as a classic market, in which the levels of religiosity depend on the competition between the various religious agencies in attracting more followers. If so, religiosity should be higher when there is an open and pluralistic religious market.

Regarding Europe, scholars from the field almost agree that the main dispute is between secularization and individualization theory. For what concern this work, it is noteworthy to say that these two approaches focus on different dimensions of religiosity: for adherent of the secularization theory, religiosity is declining across all the dimensions whereas for followers of the individualization theory only the practice and the institutional belonging are declining while personal beliefs are quite stable or increasing. Given this multi-dimensional feature of religiosity, I gave a detailed overview of the various dimensions behind the broad concept of religiosity. In the same chapter I dealt with other relevant issues for the study of religiosity with quantitative methods; I gave a lot of attention to the age-period-cohort issue and I come out with the idea that the best way to study religious change is by looking at cohort replacement.

After these preliminary considerations, I estimated the trends for three dimensions of religiosity – practice, belief and self-definition – dividing them among the different European Christian confessions (Catholic, Protestants and Orthodox). What results is that practice is declining cohort after cohort across all the denominations; religious belief and – partially – self-definition shows instead a kind of reawakening in the youngest cohort for orthodox countries. At a first glance, these findings seem to support the individualization theory's claim for those countries. To better investigate this point and to clarify whether these results have to be interpreted in the light of their Communist past, I devoted an entire chapter to the inspection of the trends for the Former-Communist countries. This analysis showed that this resurgence of belief is mainly a matter of Orthodoxy (and its political use to burn the bridges with the Communist past), given that the U-shaped trend for religious belief is stronger for Orthodox Former-Communist countries and less pronounced for Catholic ones.

In the theoretical chapter, I described secularization theory as a broad-spectrum theory comprising many mechanisms that link processes of modernization with the decline of religiosity. Among these, we are particularly interested in the so called "insecurity theory" which states that modernization leads to secularization because of the augmented security individuals feel in modern and wealthy countries. Despite its interest, this theory is scarcely investigated in sociology and its empirical test is limited to the works by Norris and Inglehart (2004) and Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2011). Also theoretically, the insecurity theory is in need of development. One of the most problematic aspects mainly regards the level of analysis: does the relation between insecurity and religiosity works only when looking at country differences or does it hold also for individuals? To put in another way: is insecurity linked to religiosity also in wealthy countries and societies? Does individual situations of insecurity foster religiosity over and above country effects? The core of this work tackles explicitly this issue.

In doing this, I firstly presented the main contributions by sociology; in addition to the Norris and Inglehart's one, all the theoretical works are basically based on the idea of Sacred Canopy by Peter Berger (1967). According to him, religion works as a shield to protect humankind against chaos and insecurity. The scarce theoretical development of a sociological theory of insecurity is quite surprising given that psychology has instead dealt consistently with the use of religion as stress copying mechanism. Scholars from the field assume that religion can furnish a plenty of mechanisms to cope with situations of insecurity: these mechanisms range from the social support given by religious communities and reinforced by regular practice to the individual and intimate prayer and beliefs.

After this attempt to put together elements from both sociology and psychology to build a coherent theoretical framework, I devoted two analytical chapters to test the main hypotheses of the theory. In the first one, I used a comparative cross-sectional approach to test the effects of both individual and contextual situations of insecurity on the three dimensions of religiosity. Results show that the main effects regard country features whereas only widowhood seems to have a – very small – effect on religiosity among individual level variables. All these effects are more noticeable on religious belief whereas religious practice and self-definition seem to be more resilient to external variables. To go deeper into the analysis of the individual link between episodes of insecurity and religiosity, in the second analytical chapter I used instead panel-data to test the relation for Germany and Great Britain. Also in this case we found no significant effects except for widowhood (but also in this case the effect is rather negligible).

Given this summary, it is evident that many questions arose. These questions regard both methodological issues (is a multidimensional framework needed to study patterns of religiosity? Does multilevel approach permit a proper study of the relations between macro variables and micro outcomes? Do longitudinal panel-studies represent a better test for individual-level relations?) and theoretical ones. Concerning these latter, the main question behind is whether insecurity theory represents a relevant contribution to explain the causes of the religious differences Europe is experiencing. Given the saliency of both aspects, I will devote two different paragraphs to their investigation. After these two paragraphs, I will try to conclude opening the field to some further steps that are needed to expand more the theoretical comprehension of this theory.

9.1 Theoretical conclusions

What we have discovered so far is that some country-features related to insecurity (welfare spending and inequalities) show some effects on religiosity – especially on belief – whereas only widowhood shows some impact among individual situations of insecurity.

From both the theoretical and methodological chapters, it should be clear that the link between insecurity and religiosity needs two requisites to work. On the one side, a quite high level of insecurity is expected. On the other side, religion is likely to be used as coping strategy only when it represents a common choice within the living context. To put in another way, a quite big amount of "religious capital" is needed for making religion the first available strategy to cope with adverse situations.

These two requisites are strongly interrelated because they are both linked to modernization processes. Regarding the first, we should bear in mind that along this work we explicitly focused on Europe and that even the most insecure European country shows quite high levels of security if compared to many worldwide countries. This consideration has clear theoretical relevance because means that, regarding insecurity, almost every European country has reached high levels of modernization. Regarding the second instead, it is noteworthy to say that the "religious capital" is getting weaker and weaker as secularization processes unfold. The main result for this is that individuals are not likely to use religion as coping strategy anymore.

In light of these considerations, the research agenda on the field should be reappraised: **instead of wondering if the insecurity theory is a relevant part of the secularization theory, it might be better to investigate when and where the insecurity theory applies**.

Starting from the period around the sixties, the dichotomy "religious versus not religious" seemed not to be the appropriate way to look at religious phenomena in Europe. The deep societal changes we observed in the '60 completely re-framed religions and their position within society. Religion was the central and collective source of identity and Christianity was undoubtedly the main feature that unified European society. After the sixties, this scenario changed dramatically: religion started to be only an option among many and Christianity itself became an option among many other religions. (Stolz and Könemann 2016).

This of course causes a weakening of religious transmission and religion itself. When raising their children, parents place individual autonomy above conformity to tradition. This causes a "snow ball" trend toward the collapse of the "sacred canopy". Religion is no longer perceived as the defense mechanism against chaos (Berger 1967) and thus a weakening of its role as coping strategy is likely to be expected. The general idea behind is that as far as modernization proceed, its impact on religion unfolds (weakening religion) and thus even the mechanisms behind lose strength having already “done their job”.

When Norris and Inglehart (2004) wrote their book, they explicitly test the theory by comparing worldwide countries. In the light of what said before, these countries widely differ regarding their placing on the path toward modernization. When comparing modern and secularized countries with pre-modern and less secularized ones, results are likely to be found. In countries where the modernization process has not fully unfolded yet, religion is still strong and the same its coping function. On the contrary, in the secularized European countries religious relevance is weaker and the same its role as coping strategy.

Given this, it is appropriate to describe the path toward European religious modernity as follows. In past times religion’s social relevance was stronger, it was the “sacred canopy” which protect men against chaos and insecurity. At the same time, the insecurity itself was higher and thus a strong link between the two was expected. This mechanism is however exhausted in modern time because while insecurity was decreasing, religiosity was doing the same. Being weaker its social relevance, religion in modern time is less and less considered as the preferred way to cope with threatening situations. Many other ways of threating insecurities (biomedicine, insurance, psychology etc.) have progressively replaced religion for almost all members of the European society, regardless their individual insecurity: the sacred canopy has collapsed.

From this derives that insecurity theory has a higher explanatory power when comparing some third-world countries and western wealthy societies, but within Europe its theoretical power is weaker. The differences we have in present time between European countries and less modern ones can be similar with those we have between modern-day Europe and past Europe. When modernization processes were at their first steps, both religiosity and insecurity were higher and therefore a stronger relation between the two was plausible.

9.2 Methodological conclusions

Over and above the theoretical relevance of the topic, this work explicitly dealt with many methodological issues. The attempt is to find the best techniques and designs to consider many relevant aspects suggested by the literature. A good assessment of the link between theory and analysis represent an undeniable added value for every empirical work. In particular, I used innovative strategies to deal with the multidimensionality of the broad concept of religiosity and with the best possible assessment of the causality between micro variables.

The idea of considering religiosity as a strongly multidimensional concept represents one of the main analytical cornerstones of this work. In linking this theoretical consideration to an analytical strategy there are a plenty of suitable techniques. I decided to use a special kind of multilevel models called "multivariate multilevel models" which have a very desirable feature. In fact, they can estimate more than one dependent variable within a single model: in doing so, it is possible to consider simultaneously their potential overlap as well as their differences. With a three-level model like the one we used in Chapters 5 and 7, it is also possible to estimate the correlation coefficients between the different outcomes at different levels. In this regard, results show that the correlation between dimensions is quite high if evaluated at country-level but much lower between individuals. This confirm the idea that, when testing theories involving more than one dimension, this approach is more suitable that the unidimensional one (or the use of some scales) because it clearly reveals the difference between the effects on the various dependent variables.

The core of this work was the assessment of the relation between individual and country insecurity and religiosity. In doing so we particularly focused on the individual link because we wanted to explicitly test the idea that individuals are likely to use religion when facing life threatening-situations. I started with a cross-sectional model based on European data, which estimated only small effects for widowhood on religiosity. It is obvious that a cross-sectional model is suitable to test only associations between variables and that, in models of such complexity, it is not easy to speak about causality. To reinforce our findings, I used panel data to test similar hypotheses in a longitudinal way. The available data suggested us to focus only on two countries (but the approach can be extended to all the countries with suitable datasets) but the results we had were completely coherent with the cross sectional ones. This gave more strength to our findings and casted many doubts about the appropriateness of insecurity theory at individual level.

9.3 Further developments and final remarks

When we drew the theoretical conclusions of this work, we said that future research would be better pursued by investigating when and where the insecurity applies, rather than wondering if it is a component of the secularization theory. This because in the secularized Europe, religion is no longer considered as the sacred canopy which protect humankind against chaos and insecurity. Religion is likely to be used as coping strategy when religious capital is strong in the societal context but, as the literature about secularization as well as our results show, this is not the case for modern Europe.

Institutional religiosity in Europe is disappearing but scholars from individualization theory affirm that it is being replaced with more individualized forms of religiosity. These individualized forms can take the shape of an individual Christian religiosity but also of “alternative” religiosity. What if the “institutional” religious capital is getting weaker year after year whereas some forms of “alternative” religious capital are getting stronger? It is likely that individuals should start to use this alternative religiosity as coping strategy? This idea is certainly a leap of faith but probably needs some consideration.

In their recent book, Stolz et al. (2016) define four different profiles of religiosity. Their typology comprises the three classic types (the "institutional", the "secular" and the "distanced") which have been explicitly or implicitly considered in this work. In addition, they propose a fourth one: the "alternative". The alternative type comprises individuals who speak more of "spirituality" than of "religion"; they believe in Karma, angels, spirits, energies, crystals, stones, spiritual, healing, breathing and movement techniques and rituals. Their spirituality is holistic (everything is connected), syncretic (it mixes elements from different cultural backgrounds) and strongly focuses on nature as vital and sacred. This type is increasing both in number and in symbolic relevance (Stolz et al. 2016b). This "alternative spirituality" is, in modern time, tumultuous, kaleidoscopic, various and somehow more accepted than institutional religiosity (especially among the youngest). Considering also its emphasis on physical and mental health and well-being, it should be the perfect "coping strategy" for a modern and individualized world.

To sum up the entire path we ran, it is deserved to say that we found a decline cohort after cohort of the institutional religiosity in the form of religious practice and self-definition. Concerning belief, some cautions are instead needed because Orthodox countries are experiencing a kind of revival in the aftermath of Communist regimes. Whether this revival concerns exactly Christian belief or whether it regards the alternative forms or religiosity is hard to say. What is plausible indeed is that the new democratic political forces are using religion to "burn the bridges" with the Communist past. Maybe it is only a matter of time before the Former-Communist countries' religious trends resemble those of the rest of Europe.

This weakening of institutional religiosity in Europe is going hand by hand with the weakening of its functioning as coping strategy. In a situation characterized by low insecurity and low social relevance of religion, the "sacred canopy" has almost collapsed and its protective function is almost exhausted. Whereas this is the plausible scenario for modern countries, situations in which modernization processes are at their first stages could show different relations. In addition, a possible substitute for institutional religiosity as coping strategy could be the use of alternative religiosity or spirituality in its place. This last approach is potentially interesting but now represents only an educated guess.

Before concluding, I want to briefly present a summary of the possible developments of the insecurity theory for what concerns Europe:

- The relation between macro-variables and individual religiosity has to be clarified. In situation like this, when many processes contribute to the same phenomena – modernization – it is not easy to disentangle the contribution given by each of them.
- Concerning the individual-level relationship, it should be tested longitudinally in many other countries, focusing explicitly on the different levels of average religiosity. If the cues from psychological literature are confirmed, religion should be a possible coping strategy only in very religious countries.
- The same individual relation should also be tested looking backward. The idea is the same as before: in a period when European insecurity was higher and when religious capital was stronger, maybe the relation between them was also stronger.
- It should be interested to test the individual relation between insecurity and religiosity for small and cohesive (and thus with a strong religious capital) religious minorities.
- The first four points of this list are based on an “institutional” definition of religion. As we discussed in this paragraph, an interesting and innovative development should be to consider also alternative forms of religiosity and spirituality. Does insecurity can foster the recourse to such alternative practice and belief? The question sounds interesting.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: individuals surveyed by Wave

Country	1981-1984	1990-1993	1999-2001	2008-2010	Total
Austria	X	1.460	1.522	1.510	4.492
Belgium	1.145	2.792	1.912	1.509	7.358
Bulgaria	X	1.034	1.000	1.500	3.534
Belarus	X	X	1.000	1.500	2.500
Croatia	X	X	1.003	1.525	2.528
Czech Republic	X	2.109	1.908	1.821	5.838
Denmark	1.182	1.030	1.023	1.507	4.742
Estonia	X	1.008	1.005	1.518	3.531
Finland	X	588	1.038	1.134	2.760
France	1.200	1.002	1.615	1.501	5.318
Germany	1.305	3.437	2.036	2.075	8.853
Great Britain	1.167	1.484	1.000	1.561	5.212
Greece	X	X	1.142	1.500	2.642
Hungary	X	999	1.000	1.513	3.512
Iceland	927	702	968	808	3.405
Ireland	1.217	1.000	1.012	1.013	4.242
Italy	1.348	2.018	2.000	1.519	6.885
Latvia	X	903	1.013	1.506	3.422
Lithuania	X	1.000	1.018	1.500	3.518
*Luxembourg	X	X	1.211	1.610	2.821
Malta	467	393	1.002	1.500	3.362
Netherlands	1.221	1.017	1.003	1.554	4.795
Norway	1.051	1.239	X	1.090	3.380
Poland	X	982	1.095	1.510	3.587
Portugal	X	1.185	1.000	1.553	3.738
Romania	X	1.103	1.146	1.489	3.738
Russian Fed.	X	X	2.500	1.504	4.004
Slovak Republic	X	1.136	1.331	1.509	3.976
Slovenia	X	1.035	1.006	1.366	3.407
Spain	2.303	2.637	1.200	1.500	7.640
Sweden	954	1.047	1.015	1.187	4.203
Ukraine	X	X	1.195	1.507	2.702
Total	15.487	34.340	38.919	46.899	135.645

Appendix 2: Individual Religious denomination by Country (row percentages). Country denomination (in bold).

	Roman Catholics	Protestants	Eastern Orthodox	Other not Christian	Total
Austria	**90,33**	6,65	0,74	2,28	100
Belgium	**92,33**	1,48	0,29	5,91	100
Bulgaria	0,33	0,61	**82,4**	16,66	100
Belarus	12,48	0,88	**85,76**	0,88	100
Croatia	**96,82**	0,09	0,05	3,04	100
Czech Republic	**86,21**	9,35	0,54	3,89	100
Denmark	0,91	**97,18**	0,00	1,91	100
Estonia [a]	3,17	**45,01**	**45,92**	5,90	100
Finland	0,18	**74,08**	1,23	24,52	100
France	**92,14**	2,06	0,76	5,04	100
Germany [a]	**44,5**	**52,16**	0,33	3,02	100
Great Britain	16,01	**68,55**	0,06	15,38	100
Greece	1,06	0,00	**97,56**	1,38	100
Hungary	**72,19**	24,08	0,15	3,57	100
Iceland	0,92	**94,48**	0,00	4,60	100
Ireland	**95,78**	2,39	0,1	1,73	100
Italy	**98,95**	0,38	0,05	0,62	100
Latvia [a]	**33,04**	**30,89**	**30,94**	5,13	100
Lithuania	**93,04**	0,81	4,44	1,70	100
Luxembourg	**90,56**	2,21	0,82	6,41	100
Malta	**98,79**	0,79	0,03	0,39	100
Netherlands [a]	**52,41**	**25,63**	0,00	21,97	100
Norway	1,28	**93,12**	0,23	5,37	100
Poland	**98,03**	0,24	0,38	1,35	100
Portugal	**96,58**	0,85	0,00	2,56	100
Romania	5,16	1,92	**89,77**	3,15	100
Russian Fed.	0,49	0,49	**91,69**	7,33	100
Slovak Republic	**84,9**	11,93	1,85	1,32	100
Slovenia	**94,06**	0,37	1,69	3,88	100
Spain	**94,76**	0,40	0,29	4,55	100
Sweden	1,60	**93,22**	0,52	4,66	100
Ukraine	8,24	3,19	**70,14**	18,43	100
Total	**57,05**	**24,05**	**13,70**	**5,20**	**100**

[a]: countries coded as "mixed"

Appendix 3: Cohorts by Wave

Wave	<1930	'30s	'40s	'50s	'60s	'70s	>'80s	*Missing*	Total
1981-1984	4.555	2.235	2.662	3.730	2.266	0	0	*39*	15.487
1990-1993	6.337	5.196	6.077	7.027	7.216	2.386	0	*101*	34.340
1999-2001	4.008	5.336	5.821	7.411	7.610	7.186	1.420	*127*	38.919
2008-2010	2.095	5.106	6.998	8.230	8.443	7.502	8.334	*191*	46.899
Total	16.995	17.873	21.558	26.398	25.535	17.074	9.754	*458*	135.645

Appendix 4: Model 0 (null model)

$$resp_{1jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{1jk}\ \pi_{1jk})$$
$$resp_{2jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{2jk}\ \pi_{2jk})$$
$$resp_{3jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{3jk}\ \pi_{3jk})$$

$$logit(\pi_{1jk}) = \beta_{0k} Cons.D_{ijk}$$
$$\beta_{0kl} = \beta_0 + v_{0k}$$

$$logit(\pi_{2jk}) = \beta_{1k} Cons.B_{ijk}$$
$$\beta_{1k} = \beta_1 + v_{1k}$$

$$logit(\pi_{3jk}) = \beta_{2k} Cons.P_{ijk}$$
$$\beta_{2k} = \beta_2 + v_{2k}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} v_{0k} \\ v_{1k} \\ v_{2k} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(0, \Omega_v) : \Omega = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_{v0}^2 & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,1} & \sigma_{v1}^2 & \\ \sigma_{v0\,2} & \sigma_{v1\,2} & \sigma_{v2}^2 \end{bmatrix}$$
$$\mathrm{cov}\begin{bmatrix} resp_{1jk}|\pi_{1jk} \\ resp_{2jk}|\pi_{2jk} \\ resp_{3jk}|\pi_{3jk} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} g(\pi_{1jk}) & & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{2jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{2jk}) & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & \rho[g(\pi_{2jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{3jk}) \end{bmatrix}$$
$$g(\pi) = \pi(1-\pi)/n$$

Appendix 5: Model 1

$$resp_{1jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{1jk}\ \pi_{1jk})$$
$$resp_{2jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{2jk}\ \pi_{2jk})$$
$$resp_{3jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{3jk}\ \pi_{3jk})$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{1jk}) = {} & \beta_{0k}Cons.D_{ijk} + \beta_{3k}cohort\text{^}1.D_{ijk} + \beta_{4k}cohort\text{^}2.D_{ijk} + \beta_{9}female.D_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{12}Wave2.D_{ijk} + \beta_{13}Wave3.D_{ijk} + \beta_{14}Wave4.D_{ijk} \end{aligned}$$
$$\beta_{0k} = \beta_0 + v_{0k}$$
$$\beta_{3k} = \beta_3 + v_{3k}$$
$$\beta_{4k} = \beta_4 + v_{4k}$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{2jk}) = {} & \beta_{1k}Cons.B_{ijk} + \beta_{5k}cohort\text{^}1.B_{ijk} + \beta_{6k}cohort\text{^}2.B_{ijk} + \beta_{10}female.B_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{15}Wave2.B_{ijk} + \beta_{16}Wave3.B_{ijk} + \beta_{17}Wave4.B_{ijk} \end{aligned}$$
$$\beta_{1k} = \beta_1 + v_{1k}$$
$$\beta_{5k} = \beta_5 + v_{5k}$$
$$\beta_{6k} = \beta_6 + v_{6k}$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{3jk}) = {} & \beta_{2k}Cons.P_{ijk} + \beta_{7k}cohort\text{^}1.P_{ijk} + \beta_{8k}cohort\text{^}2.P_{ijk} + \beta_{11}female.P_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{18}Wave2.P_{ijk} + \beta_{19}Wave3.P_{ijk} + \beta_{20}Wave4.P_{ijk} \end{aligned}$$
$$\beta_{2k} = \beta_2 + v_{2k}$$
$$\beta_{7k} = \beta_7 + v_{7k}$$
$$\beta_{8k} = \beta_8 + v_{8k}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} v_{0k} \\ v_{1k} \\ v_{2k} \\ v_{3k} \\ v_{4k} \\ v_{5k} \\ v_{6k} \\ v_{7k} \\ v_{8k} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(0, \Omega_v) : \Omega = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma^2_{v0} & & & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,1} & \sigma^2_{v1} & & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,2} & \sigma_{v1\,2} & \sigma^2_{v2} & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,3} & \sigma_{v1\,3} & \sigma_{v2\,3} & \sigma^2_{v3} & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,4} & \sigma_{v1\,4} & \sigma_{v2\,4} & \sigma_{v3\,4} & \sigma^2_{v4} & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,5} & \sigma_{v1\,5} & \sigma_{v2\,5} & \sigma_{v3\,5} & \sigma_{v4\,5} & \sigma^2_{v5} & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,6} & \sigma_{v1\,6} & \sigma_{v2\,6} & \sigma_{v3\,6} & \sigma_{v4\,6} & \sigma_{v5\,6} & \sigma^2_{v6} & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,7} & \sigma_{v1\,7} & \sigma_{v2\,7} & \sigma_{v3\,7} & \sigma_{v4\,7} & \sigma_{v5\,7} & \sigma_{v6\,7} & \sigma^2_{v7} & \\ \sigma_{v0\,8} & \sigma_{v1\,8} & \sigma_{v2\,8} & \sigma_{v3\,8} & \sigma_{v4\,8} & \sigma_{v5\,8} & \sigma_{v6\,8} & \sigma_{v7\,8} & \sigma^2_{v8} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathrm{cov}\begin{bmatrix} resp_{1jk}|\pi_{1jk} \\ resp_{2jk}|\pi_{2jk} \\ resp_{3jk}|\pi_{3jk} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} g(\pi_{1jk}) & & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{2jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{2jk}) & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & \rho[g(\pi_{2jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{3jk}) \end{bmatrix}$$
$$g(\pi) = \pi(1-\pi)/n$$

Appendix 6: Model 2

$$resp_{1jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{1jk}\ \pi_{1jk})$$
$$resp_{2jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{2jk}\ \pi_{2jk})$$
$$resp_{3jk} \sim Binomial(Cons_{3jk}\ \pi_{3jk})$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{1jk}) = {} & \beta_{0k}Cons.D_{ijk} + \beta_{3k}cohort\hat{\ }1.D_{ijk} + \beta_{4k}cohort\hat{\ }2.D_{ijk} + \beta_{9}female.D_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{12}Wave2.D_{ijk} + \beta_{13}Wave3.D_{ijk} + \beta_{14}Wave4.D_{ijk} + \beta_{21}mixed.D_{k} \\ & + \beta_{22}protestant.D_{k} + \beta_{23}orthodox.D_{k} + \beta_{30}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }1.D_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{31}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }1.D_{ijk} + \beta_{32}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }1.D_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{33}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }2.D_{ijk} + \beta_{34}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }2.D_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{35}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }2.D_{ijk} \end{aligned}$$

$$\beta_{0k} = \beta_0 + v_{0k}$$
$$\beta_{3k} = \beta_3 + v_{3k}$$
$$\beta_{4k} = \beta_4 + v_{4k}$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{2jk}) = {} & \beta_{1k}Cons.B_{ijk} + \beta_{5k}cohort\hat{\ }1.B_{ijk} + \beta_{6k}cohort\hat{\ }2.B_{ijk} + \beta_{10}female.B_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{15}Wave2.B_{ijk} + \beta_{16}Wave3.B_{ijk} + \beta_{17}Wave4.B_{ijk} + \beta_{24}mixed.B_{k} \\ & + \beta_{25}protestant.B_{k} + \beta_{26}orthodox.B_{k} + \beta_{36}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }1.B_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{37}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }1.B_{ijkl} + \beta_{38}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }1.B_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{39}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }2.B_{ijkl} + \beta_{40}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }2.B_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{41}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }2.B_{ijkl} \end{aligned}$$

$$\beta_{1k} = \beta_1 + v_{1k}$$
$$\beta_{5k} = \beta_5 + v_{5k}$$
$$\beta_{6k} = \beta_6 + v_{6k}$$

$$\begin{aligned} logit(\pi_{3jk}) = {} & \beta_{2k}Cons.P_{ijk} + \beta_{7k}cohort\hat{\ }1.P_{ijk} + \beta_{8k}cohort\hat{\ }2.P_{ijk} + \beta_{11}female.P_{ijk} \\ & + \beta_{18}Wave2.P_{ijk} + \beta_{19}Wave3.P_{ijk} + \beta_{20}Wave4.P_{ijk} + \beta_{27}mixed.P_{k} \\ & + \beta_{28}protestant.P_{k} + \beta_{29}orthodox.P_{k} + \beta_{42}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }1.P_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{43}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }1.P_{ijkl} + \beta_{44}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }1.P_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{45}mixed.cohort\hat{\ }2.P_{ijkl} + \beta_{46}protestant.cohort\hat{\ }2.P_{ijkl} \\ & + \beta_{47}orthodox.cohort\hat{\ }2.P_{ijkl} \end{aligned}$$

$$\beta_{2k} = \beta_2 + v_{2k}$$
$$\beta_{7k} = \beta_7 + v_{7k}$$
$$\beta_{8k} = \beta_8 + v_{8k}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} v_{0k} \\ v_{1k} \\ v_{2k} \\ v_{3k} \\ v_{4k} \\ v_{5k} \\ v_{6k} \\ v_{7k} \\ v_{8k} \end{bmatrix} \sim N(0, \Omega_v) : \Omega = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma^2_{v0} & & & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,1} & \sigma^2_{v1} & & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,2} & \sigma_{v1\,2} & \sigma^2_{v2} & & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,3} & \sigma_{v1\,3} & \sigma_{v2\,3} & \sigma^2_{v3} & & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,4} & \sigma_{v1\,4} & \sigma_{v2\,4} & \sigma_{v3\,4} & \sigma^2_{v4} & & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,5} & \sigma_{v1\,5} & \sigma_{v2\,5} & \sigma_{v3\,5} & \sigma_{v4\,5} & \sigma^2_{v5} & & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,6} & \sigma_{v1\,6} & \sigma_{v2\,6} & \sigma_{v3\,6} & \sigma_{v4\,6} & \sigma_{v5\,6} & \sigma^2_{v6} & & \\ \sigma_{v0\,7} & \sigma_{v1\,7} & \sigma_{v2\,7} & \sigma_{v3\,7} & \sigma_{v4\,7} & \sigma_{v5\,7} & \sigma_{v6\,7} & \sigma^2_{v7} & \\ \sigma_{v0\,8} & \sigma_{v1\,8} & \sigma_{v2\,8} & \sigma_{v3\,8} & \sigma_{v4\,8} & \sigma_{v5\,8} & \sigma_{v6\,8} & \sigma_{v7\,8} & \sigma^2_{v8} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathrm{cov}\begin{bmatrix} resp_{1jk}|\pi_{1jk} \\ resp_{2jk}|\pi_{2jk} \\ resp_{3jk}|\pi_{3jk} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} g(\pi_{1jk}) & & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{2jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{2jk}) & \\ \rho[g(\pi_{1jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & \rho[g(\pi_{2jk})g(\pi_{3jk})]^{0.5} & g(\pi_{3jk}) \end{bmatrix}$$

$$g(\pi) = \pi(1 - \pi)/n$$

Appendix 7: Typology categories by cohort (divided by Christian doctrines)

Roman Catholics

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious	Other/missing	Total
<1930	26.40	11.32	9.74	12.43	23.82	16.29	100.00
'30s	23.47	12.92	9.50	11.14	26.89	16.08	100.00
'40s	17.69	18.62	9.58	9.10	29.19	15.80	100.00
'50s	13.17	23.63	10.19	7.23	29.12	16.67	100.00
'60s	11.55	24.74	11.20	6.93	28.22	17.35	100.00
'70s	10.49	26.51	14.34	4.98	26.69	16.99	100.00
>'80s	9.39	32.04	17.12	3.19	24.16	14.09	100.00
Total	16.05	21.01	11.18	8.08	27.30	16.38	100.00

Mixed

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious	Other/missing	Total
<1930	10.39	18.12	6.60	10.39	33.32	21.17	100.00
'30s	6.88	23.10	7.32	7.26	32.72	22.72	100.00
'40s	4.54	28.23	6.57	3.99	34.42	22.24	100.00
'50s	3.35	33.86	6.68	2.72	28.26	25.12	100.00
'60s	3.27	35.88	7.23	2.54	25.93	25.16	100.00
'70s	2.95	37.99	10.16	1.59	25.48	21.83	100.00
>'80s	2.75	43.49	13.12	0.55	25.32	14.77	100.00
Total	4.94	30.53	7.55	4.38	29.73	22.86	100.00

Protestants

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious	Other/missing	Total
<1930	5.44	18.00	12.70	3.69	46.06	14.11	100.00
'30s	4.21	23.89	11.85	1.99	43.87	14.18	100.00
'40s	3.38	27.50	9.71	1.57	42.30	15.55	100.00
'50s	3.34	32.00	9.93	1.30	37.15	16.28	100.00
'60s	2.79	35.92	10.67	1.06	33.04	16.51	100.00
'70s	2.85	37.00	12.28	0.96	29.49	17.42	100.00
>'80s	3.00	44.29	11.04	0.83	22.52	18.32	100.00
Total	3.57	30.24	10.97	1.66	37.68	15.88	100.00

Eastern Orthodox

Cohort	Fully religious	Fully atheist	Believe without belonging	Belong without believing	Identitarian religious	Other/missing	Total
<1930	12.82	14.01	25.17	3.19	31.47	13.35	100.00
'30s	12.96	17.82	22.14	3.17	31.03	12.88	100.00
'40s	9.96	19.81	20.54	2.01	32.11	15.58	100.00
'50s	7.53	21.24	21.59	1.68	31.88	16.09	100.00
'60s	5.64	19.91	24.93	1.34	29.91	18.26	100.00
'70s	5.03	18.47	28.31	1.48	29.34	17.37	100.00
>'80s	4.88	20.40	33.43	0.90	25.37	15.02	100.00
Total	7.94	19.23	24.77	1.86	30.30	15.89	100.00

Appendix 8: Individuals surveyed by countries and waves

	EVS-wave			
	1990-1993	1999-2001	2008-2010	**Total**
	(n)	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*
Bulgaria	1,034	1,000	1,500	3,534
Belarus	0	1,000	1,500	2,500
Czech Republic	2,109	1,908	1,821	5,838
Estonia	1,008	1,005	1,518	3,531
Hungary	999	1,000	1,513	3,512
Latvia	903	1,013	1,506	3,422
Lithuania	1,000	1,018	1,500	3,518
Poland	982	1,095	1,510	3,587
Romania	1,103	1,146	1,489	3,738
Russian Federation	0	2,500	1,504	4,004
Slovak Republic	1,136	1,331	1,509	3,976
Ukraine	0	1,195	1,507	2,702
Total	**10,274**	**15,211**	**18,377**	**43,862**

Appendix 9: Individuals surveyed by countries and cohorts

	Cohort							
	<1930	'30s	'40s	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	**Total**
	(n)	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*	*(n)*
Bulgaria	377	554	618	699	633	405	247	3,533
Belarus	116	211	315	428	483	468	479	2,500
Czech Republic	706	831	1,065	1,115	959	745	382	5,803
Estonia	306	504	582	641	685	509	303	3,530
Hungary	408	427	517	683	601	509	365	3,510
Latvia	242	475	571	657	656	465	356	3,422
Lithuania	279	483	503	652	689	548	363	3,517
Poland	336	493	500	776	632	439	378	3,554
Romania	353	532	583	743	676	536	315	3,738
Russian Federation	367	530	492	837	726	644	394	3,990
Slovak Republic	406	545	642	905	781	493	193	3,965
Ukraine	187	338	406	531	491	432	317	2,702
Total	**4,083**	**5,923**	**6,794**	**8,667**	**8,012**	**6,193**	**4,092**	**43,764**

Appendix 10: Sample selection procedure BHPS-Understanding Society panel dataset

	id	observations
Original sample	33,540	293,104
…after dropping missing values on id	33,540	290,927
…after dropping non-original sample	14,578	181,400
…after dropping individuals with some gaps	7,387	116,286
…after dropping individuals with less than three waves	6,947	115,679