Religious shift between cohorts
A multilevel analysis on the three main religious indicators among European Christian countries

PRIMA CONFERENZA ITALIANA EUROPEAN VALUES STUDY (EVS)
Italia e Europa: Valori, Generazioni e Territorio dagli anni ottanta ad oggi
Analisi e riflessioni a partire dallo studio EVS

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OUTLINE

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2. RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS
3. CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS
4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
5. DATA, METHODS AND MODELLING STRATEGY
6. VARIABLES AND OPERATIONALIZATION
7. RESULTS
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

• SECULARIZATION THEORY: Generalized decrease in religiosity due to modernization (each indicator should decrease).

• INDIVIDUALIZATION THEORY (and BWB): Religiosity is not declining but is rather changing. Decrease in practice and belonging but stability (or even increase) of individual belief.

• RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY: The degree of openness of the religious market (religious freedom Vs monopholy) stimulate or suppress religiosity. «Demand» of belief as something constant, exogenous.
WHICH DIMENSIONS?

- **PRACTICE**: Ritualistic dimension. Often used to detect strong forms of religiosity.

- **BELIEF**: Mix of dogma or truth of faith which have to be accepted and recognized to adhere a transcendent value. Supernatural aspects of religion (i.e. Belief in God, in afterlife or in a transcendent order).

- **BELONGING**: The set of attitudes identifying the belonging to a group or a religious institution.

- **VALUES**: The translation of religious precepts and beliefs in every-day life.

- **KNOWLEDGE**: Need of transcendent answers typical of the human being.
CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

- **ROMAN CATHOLICS**: Much-institutionalized, strong and clearly defined social and ritual dimension, individuals self-exploration is basically left aside.

- **EASTERN ORTHODOX**: Strong social and ritual dimension based on community and tradition, less institutionalization if compared to Catholics, Priests and Patriarchs as “primus inter paris”, Church as community

- **PROTESTANTS**: Focus on individual human experience, “Priesthood of all believers”, low ritualistic and collective dimension, Churches as a meeting place for the community, emphasis on predestination.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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

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

• **RQ3**: Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?
DATA & METHODS

**DATA**
- Four waves of EVS (European Value Study)
- Subsample of 32 countries
  - CRITERIA: Christian majority, participated at, at least, two waves
  - 3 responses for 135,187 individuals

**METHODS**
- Multivariate multilevel model
- 3 (+1) LEVELS: responses, individuals, country-cohorts, countries
  - Measurements of distinctive but not unrelated outcome variables
  - Logit link, binomial distribution, covariance structure allows correlations between the outcomes
  - Assessment of correlation between outcomes at each level
  - Efficiently deals with missing observations
MODELLING STRATEGY

- Three different models of increasing complexity in order to answer the three research questions.

**Null model**
Accounting for different “starting points” between countries and between cohorts within the same country

+ 2nd grade polynomial term for cohorts (random slopes, allowed-to-vary coefficients between countries)
  Accounting for different slopes and shapes of the trends between countries

+ Fixed effects for gender, and survey wave

+ Fixed effects for Cristian doctrines
  Accounting for different intercepts between Christian doctrine

+ Interaction term between cohorts and Cristian doctrines
  Accounting for different slopes and shapes between Christian doctrines
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- RELIGIOUS PRACTICE: Weekly Church attendance.
  - “Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”
    - 1 “More than once a week” and “Once a week”
    - 0 “Other responses”

- SELF-DEFINITION:
  - “Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are …”
    - 1 “A religious person”
    - 0 “Not a religious person” and “A convinced atheist”

- BELIEF: Core of Christian Belief
  - “Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?”
    - 1, YES to “God”, “Heaven”, “Hell” and “Life after death”
    - 0, only some of them or nothing
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- **COHORT**: Year of birth divided in decades
  - “The religious changes we observe in Europe occur largely across rather than within generations” (Voas 2009:161)

- **CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION**: Country-level variable summarizing the information from: “Which religious denomination?”
  - Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Protestants, Mixed countries

- **GENDER** as control variable
- **SURVEY WAVE** as control variable
### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES - COUNTRIES

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<th>Protestants</th>
<th>Eastern Orthodox</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
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RESULTS - RQ1
How correlated are the three dimensions? Are they measuring the same underlying dimension of religion?

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<th>Belief</th>
<th>Practice</th>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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RESULTS - RQ2
Do the three dimensions of religiosity show different trends?
RESULTS - RQ3
Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?

Model 2 predicted probabilities (Christian denominations)
RESULTS - RQ3

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RESULTS - RQ3
Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?

Model 2 predicted probabilities (Christian denominations)

Belief

Roman Catholics
Mixed
Protestants
Eastern Orthodox

<1930  '30s  '40s  '50s  '60s  '70s  >'80s
RESULTS - RQ3
Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?
CONCLUSIONS

• The three outcomes need to be evaluated separately in the analysis 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.

• We can observe a kind of reawakening (or, at least, a stability) of the strong Christian belief in the youngest cohorts, no matter the denomination (antagonism versus secularization processes? Higher pavement effect for belief?).

• The secularization framework continues to be appropriate, but these results could support some fundamentals of “individualization theory” and “believing but not belonging” approach.

• Orthodox countries show a basic reawakening of religiosity starting from the ’60 cohort.
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