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Religious shift between cohorts

A multilevel analysis on the three main religious indicators among European Christian countries

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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, partecipated 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

MODEL 1

MODEL 2

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
  - <1930, '30, '40, '50, '60, '70 and >1980
  - "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

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			

RESULTS - RQ1

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

COUNTRIES	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Self-Definition	1		
Belief	0,658	1	
Practice	0,554	0,774	1

COUNTRY COHORTS	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Self-Definition	1		
Belief	0,725	1	
Practice	0,891	0,751	1

INDIVIDUALS	Self-Definition	Belief	Practice
Self-Definition	1		
Belief	0,307	1	
Practice	0,261	0,336	1

RESULTS - RQ2
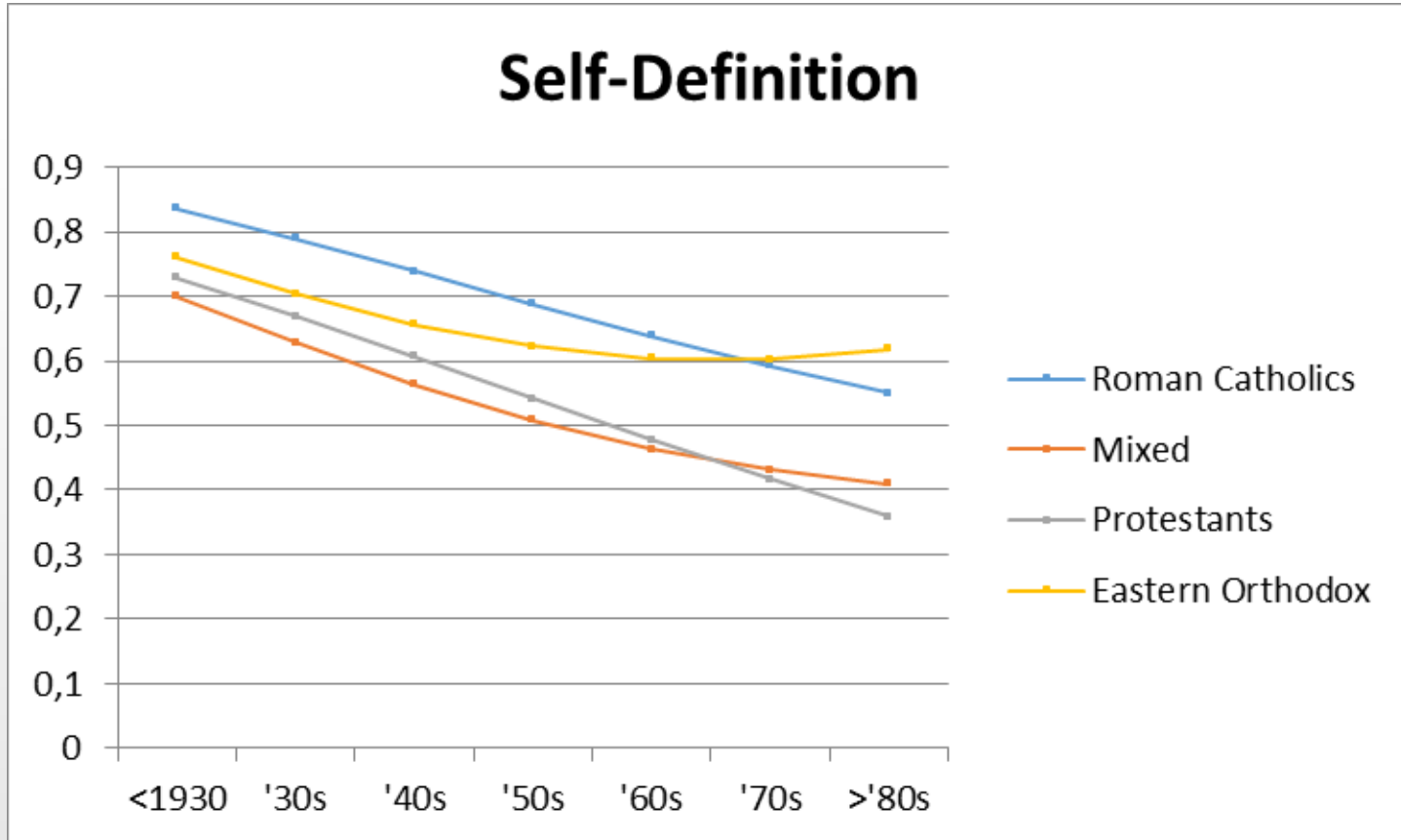**Do the three dimensions of religiosity show different trends?**

Model 1 predicted probabilities
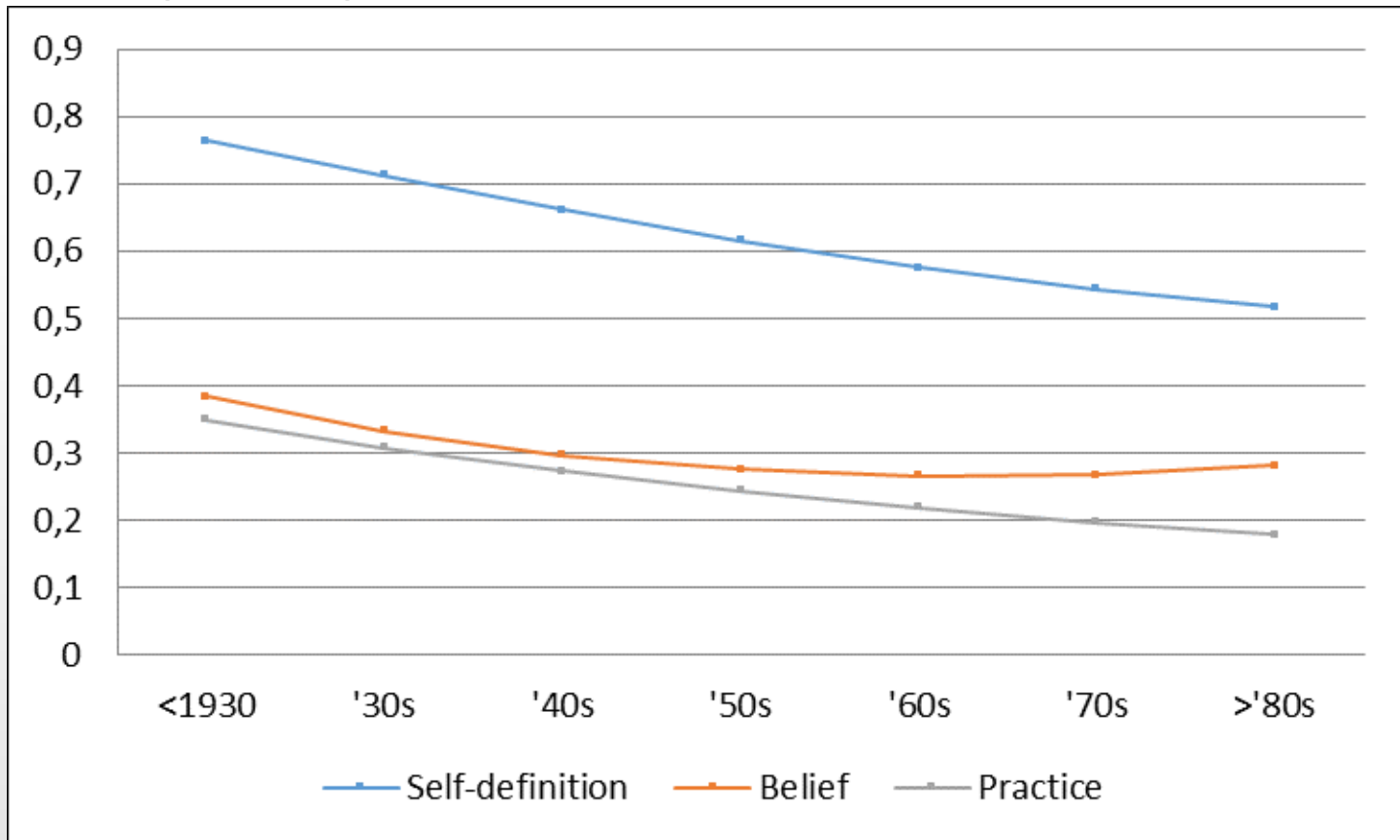
RESULTS - RQ3

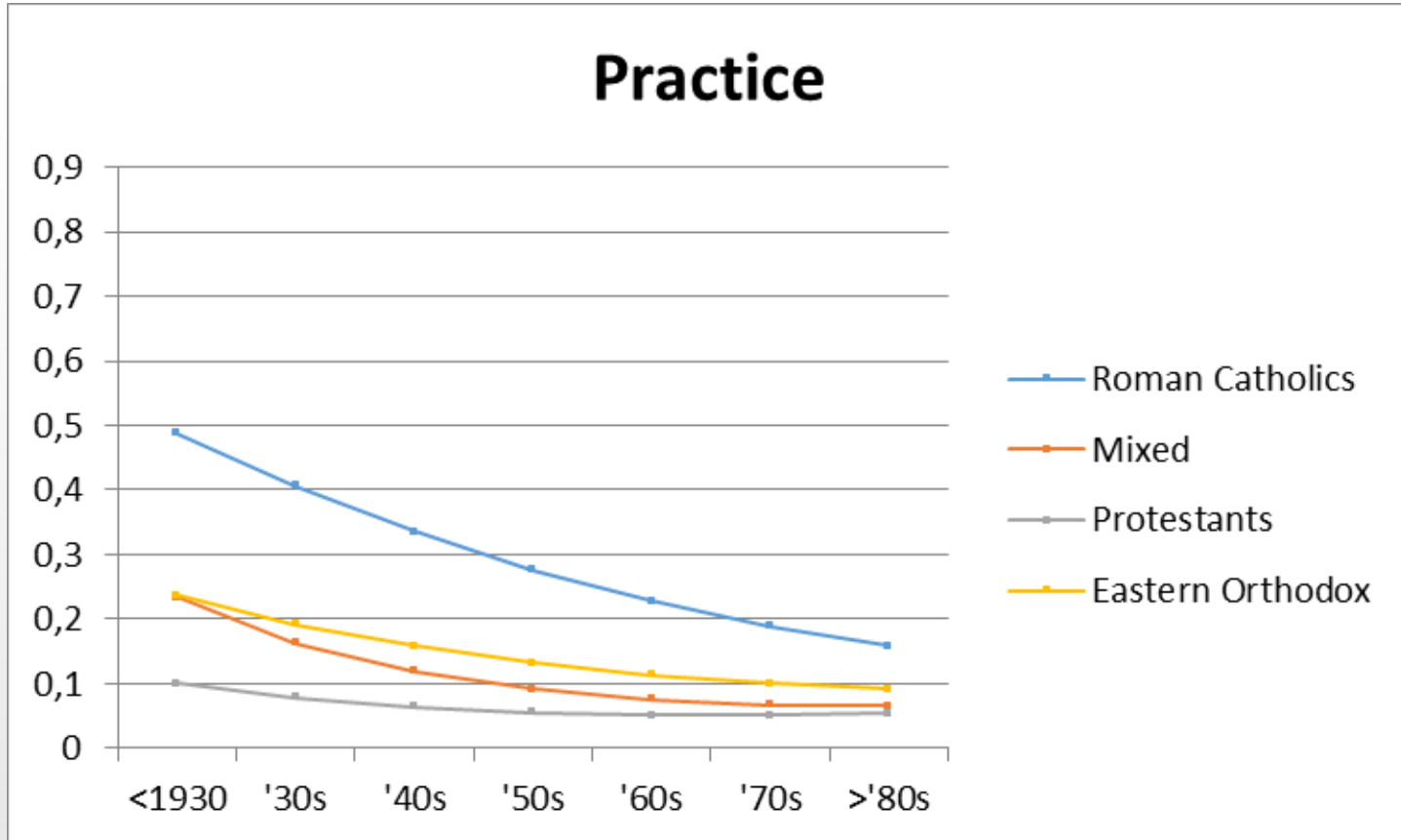**Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?**

Model 2 predicted probabilities (Christian denominations)

RESULTS – RQ3

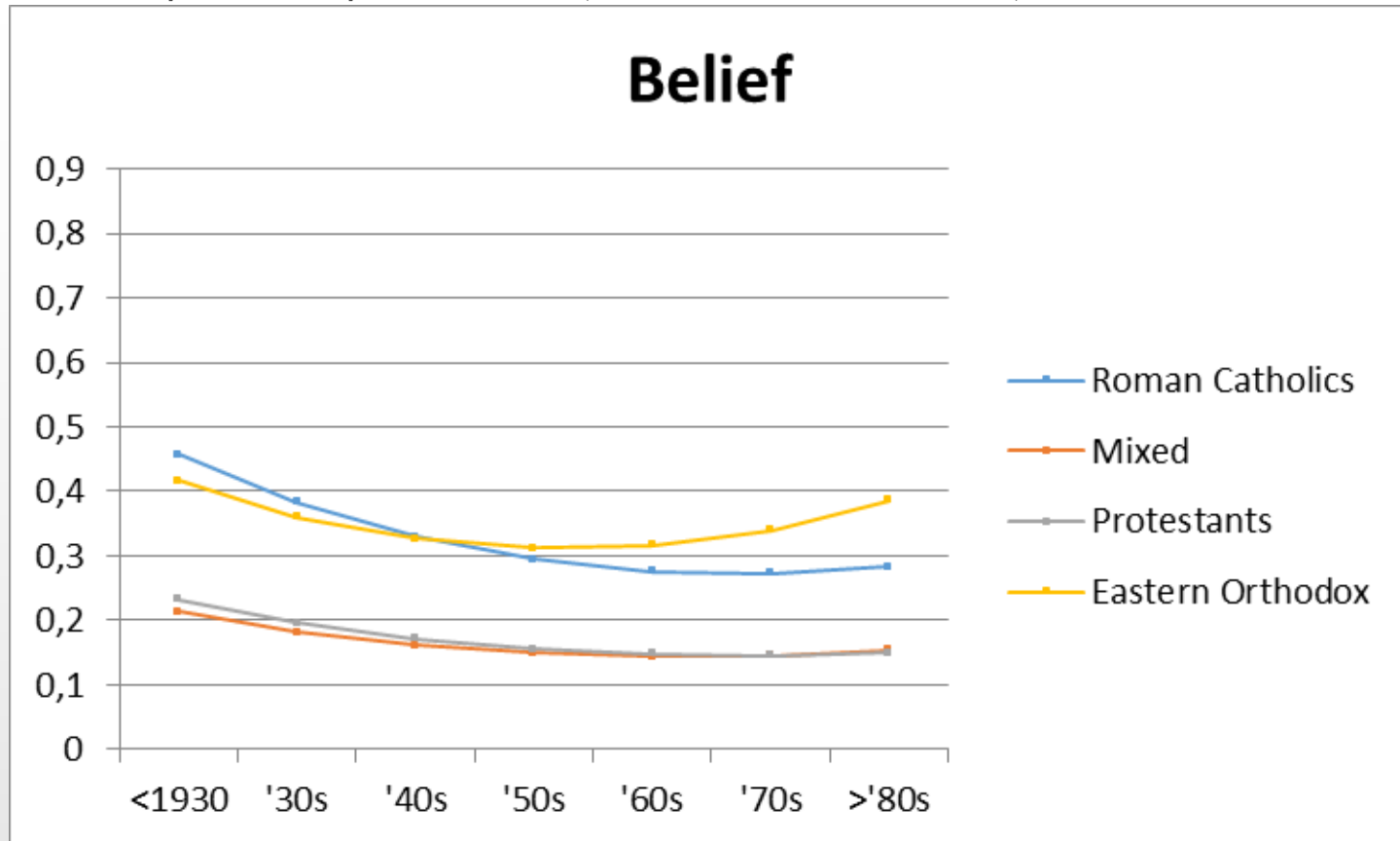**Are the trends different or the same for each of the Christian doctrines?**

Model 2 predicted probabilities (Christian denominations)
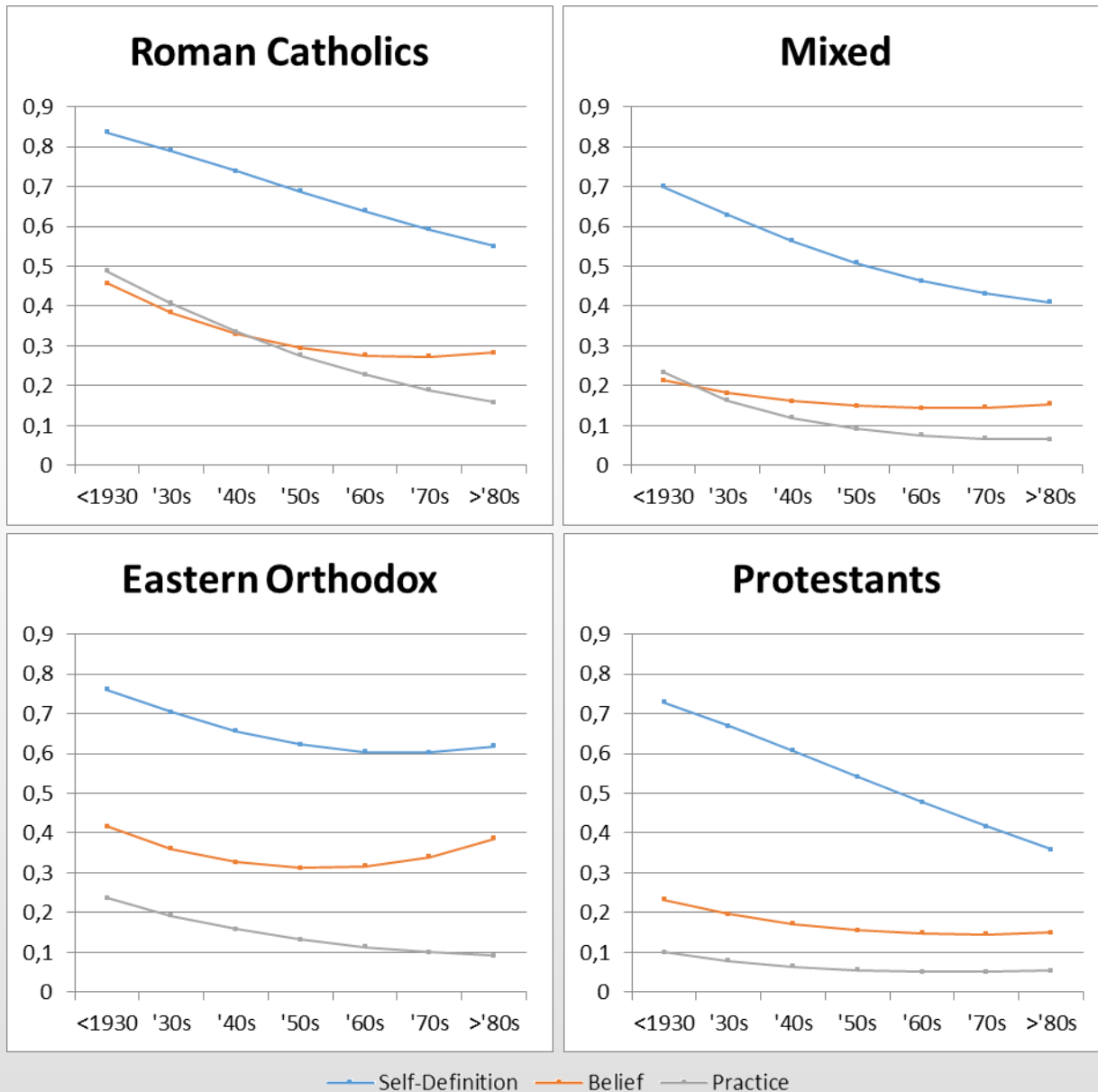
RESULTS – RQ3

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

Model 2 predicted probabilities (Christian denominations)

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.

THANK YOU