

# Proposal for comparative research

## Religiosity influence on attitudes towards abortion

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### Key Question

The central research question is how religion influences values and attitudes, in particular – attitudes towards abortion.

European countries, and especially Russia, are entering the period of demographic crisis. Fertility rates are falling down, ageing of nations occurs. Social politics of many countries is aimed to at least guarantee reproduction of the countries population. As international comparative research results show, one of the factors, influencing fertility, is religiosity. The more important religion (God) is, the higher the average number of children per woman. But there are countries, where religiosity has grown significantly for the last 20 years (Russia and post-communist countries especially), and continues to grow, but fertility rates are still low. Our thesis is that this paradox occurs because there are several religiosity types, at least – the core and the periphery of religion and our goal is to find out, firstly – what these groups are, secondly – which of them are growing, and which remain stable or even decrease, and thirdly – which of them actually have differing from the general population attitudes and values, that in their turn increase fertility and influence other characteristics (moral).

One of the factors, reducing fertility, is abortion. And this is the topic on which religiosity is supposed to have a great influence. So in this research we will concentrate on attitudes towards abortion as a part of a more general attitudes and values set influenced by religion.

### Theoretical Framework

By now what has been done concerning bibliographic search is a review of religiosity measurement approaches in quantitative empirical surveys<sup>1</sup>. The next step should include reviewing literature on values, attitudes, and approaches to studying how religion / religiosity shapes values and attitudes.

Briefly, if we take quantitative religiosity measurement, we can find two main approaches to religious variable construction.

*First is the multidimensional approach* where religiosity is considered a multidimensional phenomenon and several dimensions (although not always orthogonal) are extracted to evaluate this phenomenon using either logical or statistical basis. Classical texts of this approach were published around 1960<sup>th</sup>-1970<sup>th</sup>. Ch. Glock proposed 5 religiosity dimensions: experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, consequential<sup>2</sup>. G. Allport proposed two expressions of religiosity: intrinsic and extrinsic<sup>3</sup>. J. Faulkner and G. de Jong<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> The review is published online as a working paper: Prutskova E. (2010) Religiosity: operationalization and quantitative measurement methods. "Sociology of Religion" Project Working Paper.  
URL:<http://socrel.pstgu.ru/papers>

<sup>2</sup> Glock Ch.Y. On the Study of Religious Commitment // Religious Education, Research Supplement, Vol. 42 (Jul.-Aug., 1962), pp. 98-110.

<sup>3</sup> Allport G.W. Religion and Prejudice // The Nature of Prejudice, Cambridge, Addison-Wesley, 1954, pp. 444-459.

<sup>4</sup> Faulkner J.E., de Jong G.F. Religiosity in 5-D: An Empirical Analysis // Social Forces, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Dec., 1966), pp. 246-254.

Ch. Glock and R. Stark<sup>5</sup> developed methods for empirical evaluation of theoretically derived dimensions. Discussion continued towards finding out the number of dimensions necessary and sufficient for religiosity phenomenon evaluation. But consensus has not been reached on that topic as empirical evidence was contradictory. One of contemporary multidimensional religiosity measures is the Fetzer Institute Multidimensional Measure used in the General Social Survey in USA.

*Second is the hierarchical approach* where religiosity is considered a two-level phenomenon. This approach emerged from the first one and, as it seems, was the result of inability to find consensus on the dimensions number needed for complete religiosity phenomenon evaluation within multidimensional approach. It is best developed in social psychology and the most cited text seems to be the “Measures of Religiosity” by P.C. Hill and R.W. Hood<sup>6</sup>. The levels of religiosity are: *dispositional* – that is general religiosity, showing how religious a person is, and *functional* which refers to specific ways religiosity is expressed.

What we find in major international comparative surveys (World Value Survey, European Values Study, European Social Survey, International Social Survey Program) is the hierarchical approach to religiosity measurement, which usually includes two measures for general religiosity: self-ascribed religiosity and the respondent’s denomination, and two measures for functional religiosity: religious beliefs and practices (each of them may consist of several indicators).

An important question which remains unanswered is which of those religiosity variables should be used as a predictor in empirical models? Most often only general religiosity measures are used (importance of God, self-ascribed religiosity, etc.) which produces an oversimplified picture. But taking into account all the diversity of religiosity measures available, the way they are, is not possible – they should first be transformed into a convenient model. One of the ways of such transformation is the “core-periphery” approach with variations in the number of groups derived from general sample and with diversity of methods. But such studies, known to us, are either limited by one denomination and national sample within one country, or (and) use highly correlated, redundant measures as input data.

### **Specific Contribution**

This proposed research is supposed to have two outcomes: methodological and substantial. Firstly, it should contribute to answering the question of which religiosity measure could be used as a predictor for attitudes and values. Secondly, it is supposed to improve understanding the mechanism of how religiosity influences attitudes.

### **Hypotheses**

#### *Main hypothesis*

1. Religiosity (intensity of religious involvement, denomination, religious socialization) influences attitudes towards abortion.

#### *Alternative hypotheses:*

1. Cross-national or cross-country differences cause more differences in attitudes towards abortion than religion/religiosity does (because of secularization?).

2. Social background of an individual causes more differences in attitudes towards abortion than religion/religiosity does.

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<sup>5</sup> Glock Ch.Y., Stark R. American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

<sup>6</sup> Hill P.C., Hood R.W. Jr. Measures of Religiosity. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1999.

## Targeted Data Base

Several comparative international research data bases can be used for our purposes:

- 1) ISSP – International Social Survey Program – Religion III, 2008,
- 2) EVS – European Values Study, 2008.

This two surveys were conducted at the same time period, and partly within the same countries, which makes their results comparable. EVS and ISSP data bases contain similar questions on religiosity so they can be joined together in order to create one religiosity typology. If we succeed in constructing the same independent variable for two data sets, then the results of our analysis would become comparable for the two surveys. The use of two parallel datasets will increase reliability of our results and enrich interpretation of the model.

## Core Variables

### *Independent variables*

#### 1. Religiosity group<sup>7</sup>:

- 1) core,
- 2) periphery,
- 3) non-religious.

This is a constructed variable, which will be created on the basis of religious belief and practice questions.

#### 2. Religious denomination.

#### 3. Religious socialization<sup>8</sup>:

- 1) primary,
- 2) secondary only,
- 3) both,
- 4) no primary or secondary religious socialization.

This is a constructed variable, which will be created on the basis of a question block about the respondent's primary religious socialization and present religiosity.

#### 4. Country or country group.

#### 5. Social background variables:

- 1) gender,
- 2) age,
- 3) income,
- 4) etc.

### *Dependent variables*

1. Approval or disapproval of abortion under specified circumstances (yes or no).
2. Number of situations under which abortion is approved (0, 1, 2).

Survey questions corresponding to dependent variables:

ISSP	EVS
Do you personally think it is wrong or not wrong for a woman to have an abortion... a. If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby b. If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children	Do you approve or disapprove of abortion under the following circumstances? a. Where the woman is not married b. Where a married couple does not want to have any more children

<sup>7</sup> The number of groups as well as their names are preliminary and should be specified by further analysis.

<sup>8</sup> The questions which would serve as the basis for constructing this variable are present only in the International Social Survey Program, and absent in the European Values Study.

## **Roadmap**

The research consists of the following steps:

1. Analysing ISSP and EVS variables for comparability.
2. Constructing independent variables.
  - 2.1. Development of religiosity typology on the basis of religious beliefs and practices. Cross-country and cross-denominational comparison on the basis of the typology.
  - 2.2. Development of religious socialization typology (primary / secondary / both / none...).
3. Testing the model of religion / religiosity effect on attitudes towards abortion.

## **Analyses and Modelling**

1. In order to analyse ISSP and EVS variables for comparability, we will select those countries and those questions (corresponding to our core variables) which are present in both surveys. We will compare frequencies (within each country) for those variables that can logically be compared. Statistical technique: z-test.
2. Constructing independent variables.
  - 2.1 Development of religiosity typology will be done on the basis of religious beliefs and practices using cluster analysis method. All input variables should be recoded into a unified format, where possible. Mostly it will be a “present (1) / absent (0)” format. We will try three models: the first one – based on two merged datasets with input variables present in both ISSP and EVS studies, the other two models – based on each dataset separately with all religious belief and practice variables present in each study respectively. The next step would be to compare obtained groups across countries, groups of countries and denominations and describe their socio-demographic and economic status.
  - 2.2 Development of religious socialization typology (primary / secondary / both / none...) will be done by crossing a question block about the respondent’s primary religious socialization and present general religiosity.
3. Method for testing the model of religion / religiosity effect on attitudes towards abortion is either linear or logistic regression with dummy independent variables.

## **What can be done by April 2011**

1. Bibliographic search and reading the literature on religious socialization, values, attitudes, and approaches to studying how religion / religiosity shapes values and attitudes.
2. Specification of theoretical framework for the model of religiosity influence on attitudes towards abortion.
3. Analysis of ISSP and EVS religiosity variables for comparability.
4. Construction of the independent variables for the model (religiosity typology, religious socialization typology).

## **Statistical techniques to learn or improve**

1. Multilevel Models.
2. Structural Equation Modelling.

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