Cross-Cultural Analysis of Religiosity: A Latent Variable Approach

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Research Aims

- To develop a cross-culturally applicable measure of religiosity

- To find universal patterns of religiosity and secularization

- To look for possible effects of religious and cultural heritage

Data

- World Values Survey

- Waves 3 to 5

- Expect wave 6

- 200,000 respondents

- 81 countries

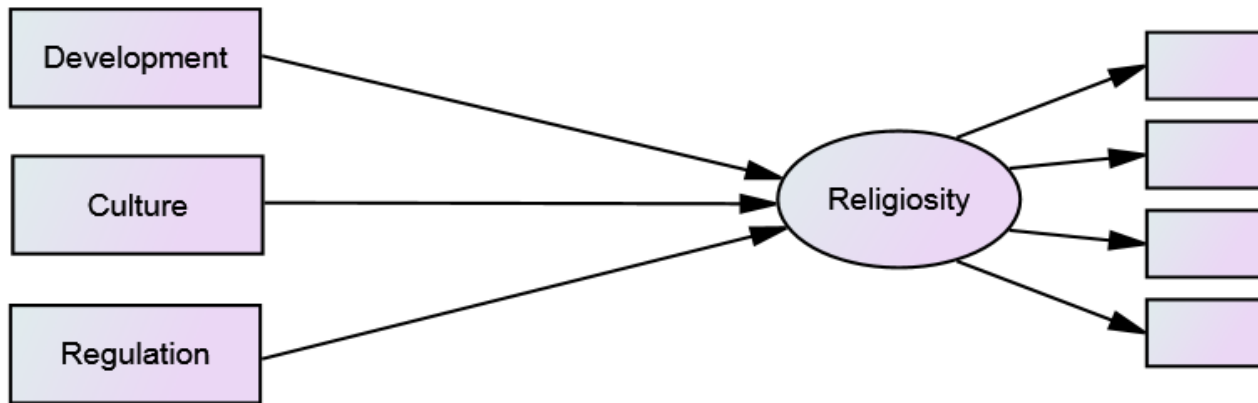- Country-level data from various sources
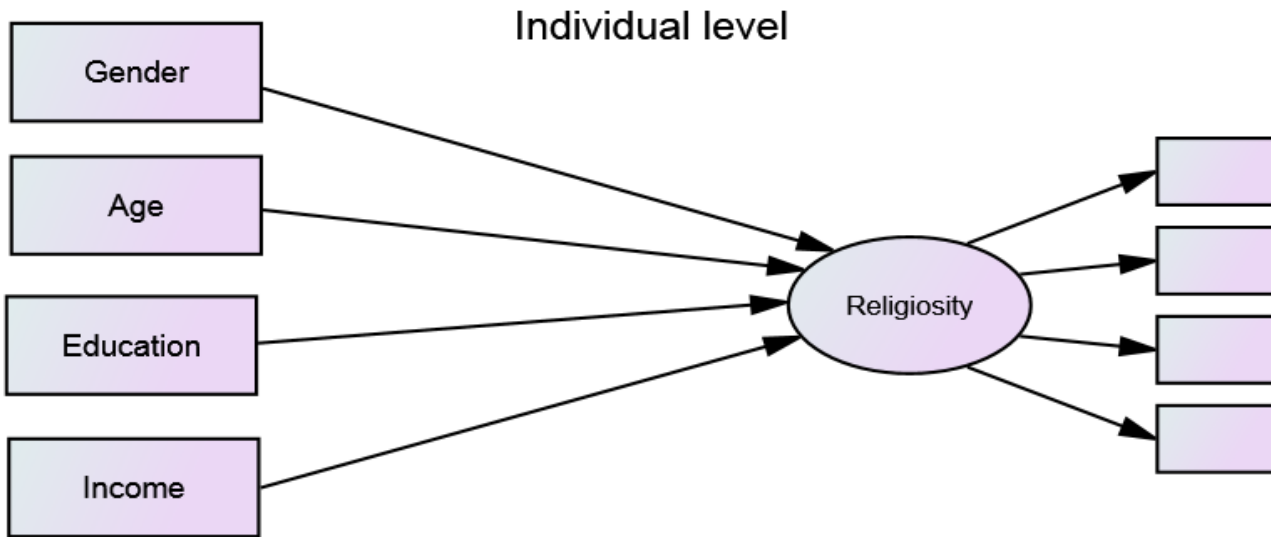
Theories and Hypotheses

- Universality hypothesis
  - Religiosity has similar indicators across religious zones

- Development hypothesis
  - Prosperity, urbanization, and education reduce religiosity

- Security hypothesis
  - Existential and economic security reduce religiosity

- Market hypothesis
  - Low regulation and diversity increase religiosity

Religiosity Measures

- Religious values
  - Importance of God
  - Importance of religion

- Religious attendance
  - Participation in religious services

- Religious identity
  - Are you religious?

Method

- Multilevel SEM

- Latent construct of religiosity with four indicators

- Five cultural zones as groups

- Countries as the second level

- Two-level CFA

- Predictors on two levels

Individual level

Gender
Age
Education
Income

Religiosity

Country level

Development
Culture
Regulation

Religiosity

Measurement Results

Indicator	Individual	Country
Importance of God	1.000	1.000
Importance of religion	0.968***	0.986***
Religious attendance	0.852***	0.839***
Religious identity	0.816***	0.443***
Variance	0.043***	0.043***

Model fit: χ^2 (61) = 473. CFI = .994. RMSEA = .014
SRMR = .032 (1st level), .080 (2nd level)

Country-Level Results

Predictor	Effect
Human Development Index	-0.369***
GDP per capita (log)	-0.390***
Urbanization (%)	-0.231***
Literacy (logit)	-0.447***
Infant mortality (log)	0.514***
Gini index	0.606***
Correlations with religiosity All effects univariate	

Individual-Level Results

Zone	Gender	Age	Education	Income
Catholic	0.080***	0.223***	-0.053***	-0.011
Protestant	0.085***	0.204***	0.015*	-0.039**
Orthodox	0.092***	0.032	-0.076***	-0.031
Muslim	0.012**	0.050**	-0.038	-0.025
Eastern	0.057***	0.106*	-0.033*	0.026

Conclusions – Measurement

- A universal measure of [social side of] religiosity does exist

- At least half of variance of religiosity is on the country level – societal characteristics matter a lot!

Conclusions – Countries

- Insecurity seems to be the most important predictor of religiosity on the country level

- Economic prosperity and urbanization are less important

- Still to do – effect of religious regulation

Conclusions – Individual

- Females are more religious everywhere

- Older people are more religious – Orthodox countries are an exception

- Effect of education is not stable across zones

- No substantial effect of income – security is a societal level predictor

Future Steps

- Overcome cross-sectional limitation?

- Try model with cross-lagged effects

- Possibility to make conclusions about causal relationships

- Need 6th wave of WVS

The End

Thank you
for your attention