

Young believers or secular citizens? An exploratory study of the influence of religion on political attitudes and participation in Romanian high-school students

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Abstract:

In this paper, I explore the effects of religious denomination and patterns of church-going on the construction of political values for high-school students. I argue that religion plays a role in the formation of political attitudes among teenagers and it influences their political participation. I examine whether this relationship is constructed along denominational lines.

From a theoretical perspective, previous research heralded the compatibility between Western Christianity and the democratic form of government. Samuel Huntington, in his famous *Clash of Civilization*, argued that there is a natural symbiosis between Western Christianity and democratic forms of government, going insofar as to separate the world into religious civilizations.¹ While, this approach essentializes religion as a fixed and immutable entity, Huntington also neglects the importance of dynamic historical, political and social contexts that can, and, in fact, do affect the functioning of religion in different countries, and hence their ability and willingness to accommodate democracy. Much research followed the Clash of Civilizations, either qualifying the central argument, by showing evidence of support for procedural democracy in most of the World, but without its liberal component or even arriving at the opposite conclusion that irrespective of religion, every country is “democratizable”.² While I do not attempt to disconfirm fundamental huntingtonian thinking, I do raise the questions of how context can and does influence the intimate relationship between religion and politics.

The analysis is conducted on survey data collected by the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) at Babes-Bolyai University with subjects of 14-15 years old, and the results show that, while Greek Orthodox students do not seem to differ in their political values from their Catholic and Protestant counterparts, they are more prone to participate

¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

² Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

politically. Nevertheless, their active participatory behavior is only more pronounced in what voting is concerned, an opposite effect being recorder for any other acts of political participation.

Introduction

According to the English version of the *Pravda* newspaper, the Russian Orthodox Church is the largest importer of spirits and cigarettes countrywide. Due to its tax-free status, granted by successive post-Soviet governments, the Orthodox Church became a lucrative "corporation", facilitating the sale of "non-Orthodox" goods. The same newspaper appreciates that the future may also bring a monopoly over wine imports. Across the ocean, American political scientists research the significant potential of churches in creating democratic behavior and civic skills. They report that Christian congregations in the United States are veritable creators of democratic attitudes and civic skills. In this paper, I address the following question: how much do God and Caesar influence the political values of Romanian teenagers? Therefore, I investigate in what ways religion influences the formation of political attitudes and patterns of political participation.

The paper is rather exploratory, and I am concerned with finding out whether Orthodox high-school students in Romania are any different in their political attitudes and participation than other believers their own age. The starting point of this research is a rather essentialist view of religion in democratic societies, according to which only Western Christian religions are accommodating or promoting democratic values. I here test and challenge this view. Consequently, I analyze the importance of religion in predicting political values and patterns of political participation in high-school students.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, I discuss the role that religion and church can and do play in the process of transition to democracy. Second, I present and analyze the relationship between religion and political attitudes and participation, with emphasis on the youth's religious belonging and participation. Third, I analyze survey data on the religious values and patterns of participation for Romanian teenagers, and further explore their connections with political values and behaviors. In this section, I also offer comparing results from similar studies on adults. Fourth, I discuss my findings,

by focusing on potential avenues for further investigating the topic and offer my conclusions.

The relevance of the topic is twofold. First, in the context of European integration, the religious values of Romanian youth are important if we are to understand the place that religion plays in a post-communist society, either as a source of identity or an arena of socialization. Second, from a more theoretical standpoint, this research raises questions regarding the multi-faceted relationship between religion and democracy.

1. Religion and democracy

It is no surprise that, not only in the mass media, but also in the academia, the mainstream discourse is framed around the compatibility between democracy and Western Christianity. Geographically speaking, most of the consolidated democratic world is Western Christian, either Catholic or Protestant. In Edward Said's language, the West *orientalized* religion, and, any denomination that is not part of Western Christianity is doomed to have a harder time accommodating democracy. In this section of the paper I discuss three main points. First, I describe the relationship between religion and democracy, and critically assess the thesis of compatibility between religion and democracy. Second, I briefly analyze the concept of secularization, and its evolution in tandem with the literature on transitions to democracy. Third, I draw the connection between religion, democracy and democratization.

1.1 Religion and democracy

Religion and democracy are in a relationship characterized by ambiguities: "In the 'West' [...] the Christian tradition struggled with a political vision that placed sovereignty in the hands of the people and increasingly treated its institutions as just one amongst a plurality of competing interests".³

Starting off with Max Weber's *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the marriage between Protestantism and capitalism was gradually extended to include liberal democracy and Catholicism, into what became a deterministic argument – the values embedded within Western Christianity create fertile soil for the growing of democracy.

³ Jon Anderson (ed.), *Religion, Democracy and Democratization*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 1.

The Vatican II Council and the Aggiornamento formally recognized religious freedom and pluralism, and formulated a program of reform within the Catholic Church that would make it respond better to the spiritual needs of modern day society – hence including the values of liberal democracy.

The preeminence of the western discourse on religion is spelled out in Talal Asad's (1993) collection of essays gathered in the volume *Genealogies of Religion*. The author offers a perspective on the "West" and its religious alterity, in the language of culture, religion and power. It is modernity that initiated anthropological studies, as both a path towards understanding "the others" and of defining itself: "The West defines itself in opposition to all non-Western cultures, by its modern historicity".⁴

In 1996, Samuel P. Huntington wrote the book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Culture became the leading differentiating factor between successful democracies and transitional and third world countries: "the post-Cold War world is a world of seven or eight major civilizations. Cultural commonalties and differences shape the interests, antagonisms, and associations of states".⁵

Religion is an important part of culture that is clearly enmeshed in the political realm. Huntington formulates a rather deterministic and limiting argument according to which particular religions form cultures that resist western modernization

Cultures can change, and the nature of their impact on politics and economics can vary from one period to another. Yet the major differences in political and economic development among civilizations are clearly rooted in their different cultures.[...]Developments in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are shaped by their civilizational identities. Those with Western Christian heritages are making progress toward economic development and democratic politics; the prospects for economic and political development in the Orthodox countries are uncertain; the prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak⁶

However, in the last decade, and especially in the context of the war on terrorism, the mainstream approach changed. Nowadays, the unchallenged victor is democracy, whose desirability for any society is placed beyond doubt. Mostly supported by social

⁴ Asad, Talal, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 18.

⁵ Huntington, 29.

⁶ Huntington, 29.

scientists such as Larry Diamond, these theses persuade the reader that every country has a fair shot at democracy, irrespective of religion, or other pre-existing incompatibilities.

For example, Inglehart and Norris take on the Huntingtonian thesis with a catchy title: *The true clash of civilizations*. They analyze a large cross-national data set and conclude that procedural democracy is something that even citizens in Muslim countries strive for. It is the embracing of liberal values that proves to be more problematic:

Samuel Huntington was only half right. The cultural fault line that divides the West and the Muslim world is not about democracy but gender. According to a new survey, Muslims and their Western counterparts want democracy, yet they are worlds apart when it comes to attitudes toward divorce, abortion, gender equality and gay rights – which may not bode well for democracy's future in the Middle East⁷

The authors draw a distinction between different facets of democracy. While procedural democracy, liberal values, and market economy seem to form the golden triad of western success, they are not inseparable, and there are countries that adopt one, two or all three of these elements. The conflation of the three elements of what democracy means today was one of Huntington's ideas liable to much criticism. Even from a methodological ground:

Huntington argues that “ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, [and] the separation of church and state” often have little resonance outside the West⁸

Nevertheless, the authors are only partially critical of Huntington's approach; they agree with him on the slow and uncertain change of values, towards liberalism in Muslim countries.

In conclusion, the mainstream discourse on the relationship between religion and democracy is reductionist, rooted in essentialist understandings of religion, as univocal and not at all influenced by historical and political context.

1.2 Secularization and democracy

After acute irreversible secularization was proclaimed in the late 1970s, a decade of religious revival followed, and a whole range of hypotheses on inevitable secularization were disconfirmed. According to Jose Casanova, religious revival is not a surprising phenomenon, since secularization - conceptualized as the diminishing role of

⁷ Norris and Inglehart, 62.

⁸ Norris and Inglehart, 65.

religion in the postindustrial world - is limited only to some parts of Western Europe.⁹ Nonetheless, this did not stop international democratizing agents from attributing secularization a normative feature, constructing it as a pre-condition for successful democratization.¹⁰

The most theoretically exciting study of secularization comes from Jose Casanova, and his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*. The author advocates the multifaceted structure of secularization, and formulates a historically grounded definition:

secularization as a concept refers to the actual historical process whereby this dualist system within “this world” and the sacramental structures of mediation between this world and the other world progressively break down until the entire medieval system of classification disappears¹¹

According to Casanova, there are three different understandings of secularization in the literature: secularization as a result of differentiation of society, secularization as religious decline, and, finally, secularization brought about the privatization of religion.

Secularization through differentiation is theoretically rooted in the rivalry between reason and faith, between science and the divine. Secularization through religious decline has an almost mythical aura by predicting the disappearance of religion, at the end of a period of religious decline. Therefore, what needs to be explained is not the high levels of popularity that religion enjoys all over the world, but rather the low levels of religiosity in Western Europe. Casanova argues that the one distinguishing factor in the history of religion and church in Western Europe and America is intimately tied to the relationship between church and state

What America never had was an absolutist state and its ecclesiastical counterpart, a caesaro-papist state church. [...] It was the caesaro-papist embrace of throne and altar under absolutism that perhaps more than anything else determined the decline of church religion in Europe¹²

The privatization of religion thesis claims that as modernity advances, so does differentiation among institutional roles and religion becomes a strictly personal, individual and intimate matter. Modern societies do not need to legitimize themselves

⁹ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Burgess, Adam, *Divided Europe. The New Domination of the East* (London: Pluto Press, 1997).

¹¹ Casanova, 15.

¹² Casanova 29

through the church and, consequently, the religious experience loses most of its social functions¹³

modern societies do not need to be organized as “churches,” in the Durkheimian sense, that is, as moral communities unified by a commonly shared system of practices and beliefs. Individuals are on their own in their private efforts to patch together the fragments into a subjectively meaningful whole¹⁴

The author also warns against a common confusion in the literature, namely collapsing in one category examples of liberal democratic societies that have privatized religion, and normative assertions of privatization. This distinction is particularly important for democratizing societies, which often times are led to believe by international democratizing coalitions that a clear separation between church and state is mandatory in order to democratize successfully.

Secularization understood as differentiation remains “the valid core” of the theory, in the sense that “differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms remains a general modern structural trend”.¹⁵ The consequence of this trend, especially in relationship to such institutions as the state and the economy (but also institutions of the society, such as science, education or the arts) is the forced isolation of religion within its own sphere. Correlatively, “established churches are incompatible with modern differentiated states and that the fusion of the religious and the political community is incompatible with the modern principle of citizenship”.¹⁶

Public religion can mobilize resources in defense of traditional values, against the increasing penetration of states and markets. Church mobilization against abortion is such an example. While it is always possible to see a blunt regress into the fundamentalism of pre-modern religion, the fact that churches can be mobilizing agents, is essentially democratic. Churches can “push” issues into the public sphere, make them salient, and thus force societies to contemplate their own understanding of good and bad, their own normative standards. A second type of de-privatization is seen when public religions enter the public sphere to oppose and criticize states and markets. Either opposing

¹³ Modern secular governments limit their intervention in church matters to the regulation of religious competition, and the interaction between church and state.

¹⁴ Casanova, 57

¹⁵ Casanova, 212

¹⁶ Casanova, 213

militarism, or the “economical individualist” paradigm prevalent today, churches constantly remind people of a common good. With the advent of globalization, Casanova notes that transnational churches are also in a privileged position to promote a universal common good that transcends borders. Third, de-privatization of religion can be directly related to critiques of liberal versions of the common good as the mere sum of its parts, portraying churches as the moral conscience of societies. Through the church, morality becomes an essentially inter-subjective concept – a public concern.

The conclusion of this section of the paper is that necessary secularization dominated the mainstream discourse on religion and democracy until recently, although there is growing proof that public religion can play significant roles in a modern democracy.

1.3. Religion, democracy and democratization. Does religion affect political beliefs and action?

The most important question of this study is whether religious beliefs can affect or cause political action? For Bruce, the answer is affirmative. The author offers a nuanced interpretation of the relationship between Protestantism and democracy.¹⁷ The argument is that the Reformation contains within itself the seeds of democracy, because of its revolutionary and oppositional character. However, democracy occurs as an unintended consequence, since the reformation puts in action a whole series of mechanisms of change. Paul Freston continues the argument on democracy as an unintended consequence of Protestantism, but, for him, the underlying logic of this process is the presence of several “Protestantisms”. Therefore, in Protestant societies, the principle of pluralism came to the fore of public attention early in their evolution, and was internalized faster.¹⁸

There is also evidence that the relationship between Protestantism and political activity is direct and strong. Even in non-consolidated democracies,

¹⁷ Bruce, Steve, “Did Protestantism Create Democracy?” In *Religion, Democracy and Democratization*., edited by Jon Anderson (New York, NY: Routledge, 3-20, 2006) 3-20.

¹⁸ Freston, Paul, “Evangelical Protestantism and Democratization in Contemporary latin America and Asia.” In *Religion, Democracy and Democratization*, edited by Jon Anderson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006) 21-41.

Protestants are more politically active. For instance, in Brazil, Pentecostal women are more interested in voting than women of other religions or atheists.

Anthony Gill also analyzes the attitudes of Protestant confidants in Latin America, a predominantly Catholic homogenous region. He assesses the impact of growing Protestant churches on democratic consolidation and predicts that it is reasonable to expect evangelicalism to promote democracy, because it emphasizes thriftiness, trustworthiness and personal responsibility.¹⁹

Although other authors have argued that Protestantism in Latin America is otherworldly, and conducive to political apathy and tacit acceptance of authoritarianism, Gill's findings point to another direction. The author analyzes the relationship between denominational affiliation and political and economic predispositions using data collected from four countries – Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico, in the WVS of 1990. His research design also provides an indirect test for the thesis put forth by the religious economy school – stating that “religiously pluralistic nations tend to exhibit higher amounts of religiosity”.²⁰ The findings show no direct denominational effect: Catholic and Protestant believers look similar in terms of religious effects on political attitudes. It is patterns of church attendance that have stronger influence on the formation of political attitudes “which appears to enhance participation in civil society in more religiously pluralistic societies”.²¹ He also finds support for supply-side theories of religious participation, since Brazil and Chile, the two countries with the highest levels of religious pluralism also exhibit the highest degrees of religiosity.

Moving eastward from Protestantism and Catholicism to the former communist countries, the relationship between religion and democracy becomes more problematic. Enyedi and O'Mahony talk about the double implication of causality between religion and democracy – “The way in which national democracies consolidate has an impact on religious organizations, yet these organizations too can play an important role in shaping

¹⁹ Gill, Anthony, “Weber in Latin America: Is Protestant Growth Enabling the Consolidation of Democratic Capitalism?” In *Religion, Democracy and Democratization*, edited by Jon Anderson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006) 42-65.

²⁰ Gill, 43.

²¹ Gill, 43.

the development of democratic culture”.²² The role that churches can play in democratic transition is conditioned historically and depends on the compatibility of church doctrine with democratic practice, the extent to which the functioning of churches depends on state-guaranteed privileges, and the degree to which new or aspiring political elites demand religious legitimization.”²³

Constitutional changes brought about by democratization influence the ways in which churches can affect democratization and. These ways are to be found in the relationship between church and state and, in particular, in laws detailing the financing and operation of religious organizations, in the behavior and the ideological character of the major political parties, and, finally, in the dominant discourses of the churches themselves ²⁴

Churches contribute to democratization in several ways: they respect the rules of the game, they avoid demagogical or populist speech, critical of non-traditional lifestyles but tolerant. In both countries the churches are part of the civil society, but with limits usually imposed by the state. In Hungary, the Catholic Church is vocal against new-Protestant religious groups, and enjoys quasi immunity from the state, not having to transform into transparent, democratic institution. The relationship between church and state therefore influences a church’s behavior in new democratic societies.

Authors note that churches that fought against authoritarian regimes, were sometimes mostly unhappy with the ensuing arrangements (pluralism, separation between church and state) so that

several writers noted that where religion did make a contribution to democratization it was primarily in its Western, Christian form, and this led to a renewed discussion about the alleged ‘compatibility’ or otherwise of democracy and differing religious traditions²⁵

Increasingly, analyses of non-Christian religions and democratic political regimes have displayed more insight into the features of these religions, and their historical contexts.

²² Enyedi, Zsolt, and Joe O’Mahony, “Churches and the Consolidation of Democratic Culture: Difference and Convergence in the Czech Republic and Hungary.” In, *Religion, Democracy and Democratization* edited by Jon Anderson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006) 171.

²³ Enyedi and O’Mahony, 171.

²⁴ Enyedi and O’Mahony, 172

²⁵ Anderson, 1.

In conclusion, evidence shows that the roles played by different religion in recent democracies can vary from deterrent to promoter of further democracy, social and political contexts playing important parts. Therefore, in this theoretical review of the relationship between religion and democracy, I argued that although mainstream discourse mentions a privileged relationship between western Christianity and liberal democracy, this relationship should be understood in all its complexity by factoring in social cultural and political embeddedness of religion. Consequently, in the following section I discuss the potential relationships between religious variables and political culture measurements, so that in the third section I can explore empirical data.

2. Political attitudes and participation and their religious determinants

Almond and Verba first formulated their *Civic Culture* thesis in 1963. In what became a milestone of the discipline, they defined political culture as “the particular distribution of patterns of orientations toward political objects among the members of a nation”.²⁶ Thus, attitudes form the core of political culture. The authors conceive attitudes as a multi faceted notion, distinguishing between objects and modes of orientations. The modes of orientations are the ways in which the individual can relate to an object, and include three different elements: cognition, affects and evaluations. The political objects differ according to their location within the political system, and consist of input objects, output objects and the self as a political actor.

Identity and loyalty towards one’s country are the most common types of attitudes of diffuse support, although evaluations of a specific type of democracy are also included here. The distinction between diffuse and specific support is helpful in understanding cases of inconsistent attitudes systems, in which most of the population supports democracy, but also heavily criticizes the government. In this paper, I consider political attitudes and patterns of political participation as pertaining to the same class of acts, both employed for the evaluation of support for a particular political regime.

²⁶ Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture; Political Culture and Attitudes in 5 Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 14-15.

The relationship between religious denomination and patterns of church attendance and political attitudes and patterns of participation needs to be understood in all its complexity.

The literature on determinants of political participation emphasizes resources. Citizens with more resources tend to participate more. Socio-economic status (SES) is the primary determinant of political participation: higher income, a better social status, and more education all lead to increased participation. SES, as developed by Verba, Nie and Kim however, does not tell the full story.²⁷ Their base line is indeed the socio-economic status model, and, while they identify the potential of engagement and recruitment, they do not fully specify them. The role of civil society needs to be addressed. The Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM), developed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady allows us to account for the mobilizing role of the civil society. The CVM asserts that tangible resources are not the only predictors of political participation. Political engagement and civic skills also increase political participation. Engagement is constituted by those positive beliefs and attitudes towards democracy coupled with feelings of personal political empowerment and efficacy. Civic skills are practices and experiences that familiarize individuals with the political game, and its rules of play. Writing a petition, organizing a campaign, even voting makes more sense if it is practiced. The authors show that participation in non-political organizations, such as unions, voluntary organizations, churches and the workplace, creates a familiarity with the ways organizations function and give the individual a feeling of efficacy, while routinizing her in the structures of organizational functioning.²⁸

Specifically in the case of churches, Verba, Schlozman and Brady explain that they have the benefit of eliminating resource driven inequalities apparent in the American system. Racial minorities especially, find the church an empowering arena. To be sure, the authors warn that not all churches have the same impact on creating civic skills. Protestant churches, for example, are better at empowering citizens since they are focused

²⁷ Verba, Sidney, Norman H. Nie and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality. A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

²⁸ Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality, Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

on more discussion and participatory practices. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is not such an effective civic skills builder, due to its strictly hierarchical organization. Verba, Schlozman and Brady do not explain in detail the effect of a particular religion/denomination on its political potential.

One problem of the CVM model lies in the authors' inability to deal with the limitations of the model imposed by the internal culture of the church. Richard Wood asserts the causal autonomy of culture and states that the internal political culture of the church is formed from its cultural strategy and its cultural base. He argues that political science and social movement literatures do not address the critical issue of church's internal structure in both limiting and affecting its effect on civic skills building.

The cultural base of a church represents those segments of participants' cultural terrain that the church appeals to, those common unifying traits of the population that offers the legitimizing base for the church's actions. The cultural strategy indicates what part of community life the organization will draw upon. These two factors lead to the formation of an internal political culture, made up of shared assumptions, perceptions and symbols that facilitate the understanding of the surrounding world. The political culture affects the projection of social power and the ability to shape the public realm.

Wood details the challenges that churches face in their formation and preservation of internal political culture. Although his model has the most applicability in the American religiously pluralistic space, it still presents significant value for understanding how different churches act like institutions in different historical and political contexts.²⁹

Youth, church and politics

Most of the literature on youth political values and the influence of religion usually refer to American or Western European countries. These countries share consolidated democratic political regimes and are also fairly secular religious pluralist spaces, mostly dominated by Western Christian denominations. Although Romania is a predominantly Orthodox country, briefly reviewing the literature mentioned above provides a useful starting albeit contrasting point.

²⁹ Wood, Richard, "Religious Culture and Political Action" *Sociological Theory* 17(1999): 307-332.

Within North-American literature, there is a consensus according to which socialization within church plays a part in the civic and political involvement of the youth “religious participation [...] in one’s youth are significant predictors of greater political and civic involvement in young adulthood”.³⁰ Religious institutions are an agent of childhood socialization with consequences for political learning.

Not surprisingly, a large portion of the literature analyzes the relationship between religious involvement and voluntary work. Authors agree that participation in church has a positive effect on youth’s civic engagement and voluntary involvement.³¹ More precisely, “social milieus other than the family, such as schools and religious institutions, also appear to be important in initiating youth into volunteer activity and in sustaining these activities once they begin.”³² Moreover, individual feelings of religiosity also render adolescents more prone to volunteering.

Contextualizing this brief literature review to the Romanian case is a difficult task. This is in part why this research is exploratory. First, Orthodoxy in Romania is not centered on high religious participation, and it ignores most of the extracurricular activities, such as clubs and religious organizations. Second, the Orthodox Church does not have a tradition of voluntary work, and it does not constitute a natural arena for civil society development, especially because of its close relationship with the state throughout history.

Gabriel Badescu, Ellen Quintelier and Marc Hooghe wrote on the youth’s political values and civic engagement, and contrasted them with comparative data from Belgium and Canada. They found that in Romania there are the lowest levels of political interest and trust, when compared to the same age cohort in the two consolidated

³⁰ Smith, Elizabeth S, “The Effects of Investment in the Social Capital of Youth on Political and Civic Behavior in Young Adulthood: A Longitudinal Analysis” *Political Psychology* 20(1999): 553.;

³¹ Youniss, James and Miranda Yates, M, “Youth Service and Moral-Civic Identity: A Case for Everyday Morality” *Educational Psychology Review* vol. 11 (1999): 361-376.

³² Pancer, S. Mark and Michael W. Pratt, “Social and Family Determinants of Community Service Involvement in Canadian Youth.” In *Roots of Civic Identity: International Perspectives on Community Service and Activism in Youth*, edited by Miranda Yates and James Youniss (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 32.

democracies also part of the study.³³ In another research, Hooghe and Badescu also found that the lack of political trust and interest is a legacy of the authoritarian political regime.³⁴

While there is growing literature on the political attitudes and behaviors of young people, there are less studies on the relationship between religion and political attitudes in youth, and, even when that literature exists, it is mostly based on the North-American case (with a heavily Western Christian and liberal democratic setting). Therefore, exploring the situation in Romania is both challenging and innovative.

3. Data analysis and discussion

In this section I explore how religion influences attitudes and political participation in high-school students in Romania. Based on previous research, one would expect Orthodox students to believe and act differently than believers of other denominations.

Two of my previous studies are informative in this respect. In my Ph.D. dissertation I analyzed how religious denomination and patterns of church attendance influence the formation of political attitudes in 14 Central and Eastern European countries. According to essentialist readings of the relationship between religion and politics one would expect to find Catholic and Protestant believers to act more democratically than their Orthodox or even Muslim counterparts. Interestingly, I did not find any cross national such pattern. Moreover, Islamic believers in Albania and Orthodox believers in Belarus seem to be at the forefront of democratization, as measured by support for democracy. These results suggest that the way in which religion influences the formation of political attitudes is a highly contextualized matter, for which the dynamic and historically constructed relationship between church and state is critical. Nonetheless, the data on Romania showed that Orthodox believers tend to be overall

³³ Badescu, Gabriel, Ellen Quintelier and Marc Hooghe, *Parental influence on adolescents' political participation. A comparison between Belgian, Canadian and Romanian survey data* (Orebro Universitet: 8-10 October 2007, Orebro, Sweden, 2007)

³⁴ Hooghe, Marc and Gabriel Badescu, "Youth and Social Capital: A three Country Comparison of Social Capital Measurements Among 16 years Olds," Presented at the annual meeting of the *American Political Science Association*, Hyatt regency Chicago and the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, Chicago, IL, August 30th 2007.

more conservative and less supportive of democracy. Potential explanations for these results revolve around issues such as the opening up of the religious space brought about by democratization, and the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church constructs itself as the true and only carrier of Romanian national identity, defined dialectically by opposition to the cosmopolitan identity of Western Europe.

Second, in a study on the effects of religious denomination and patterns of church attendance in Romania (BOP late 1990s), I found that being a devout Orthodox believer makes one more prone to vote with formed communist parties (PSD), an effect which is much stronger in Eastern and Southern part of Romania (areas of religious and ethnic homogeneity), than in Transylvania (a region formerly part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, characterized by religious and ethnic heterogeneity).

Therefore, in this study, I try to find out whether religion does affect the political attitudes and participation of high-school students in Romania, by contrasting it with previous results on adults. Church is in many societies one arena for socialization, and understanding its role in the formation of young citizens is in fact critical. If Orthodox high-school students hold dramatically different political attitudes, then essentialist revolving around the compatibility story will be validated.

The data set used in this research (Romanian Youth Study) was collected in May of 2006. Consequently, 1876 9th grade students were selected, sampled in 6 localities. These localities included one major city (300000 plus people), two medium sized towns (50000-70000) and three villages (around 10000 each). There were 40 schools randomly selected, and, within each school, a total of 91 9th grade classes were selected. Overall, the sample is representative for the Romanian population of 9th grade students.

Table 1 shows the denominational distribution in the surveyed sample. The percentage of Orthodox believers is smaller in this sample than in national surveys (83%) because of overrepresentation of Transylvanians in the sample. The most interesting finding in this table is the very small percentage of atheists. Table 2 depicts the frequency of church attendance split by the main denominations extant in Romania. Romanian Orthodox high-school students have the lowest rates of participation, while neo-Protestants and Catholic believers are the most participatory. This finding is in agreement with the traditional patterns of religious participation, with Orthodox believers being

mostly nominal believers and not active members in their churches. In fact, Orthodox churches are what are usually called other worldly, and so they do not involve their believers in the range of civic and voluntary activities that for instance Catholic churches do. Table 3 depicts the importance of praying by denomination, and here the results are more surprising, with Orthodox believers being more in tune with their spiritual selves, when compared with Catholic believers.

The data so far suggests that religion is a fairly private and individual matter in Romania, with this being especially true for Orthodox Believers. In comparison to non-Orthodox Christian believers, the Orthodox youth is, at least nominally, very religious, but not involved in collective participatory acts.

The next step in the analysis was to recode the believers according to being Orthodox or non-Orthodox. Conflating all non-Orthodox believers in one category is justified by the need to be able to contrast the values and behaviors of Orthodox believers with all other believers (atheists being excluded from the analysis because of the small number involved). A battery of items measuring political values was used in order to see whether Orthodox believers score any differently than the rest of the sample. Overwhelmingly I found no such difference for the next set of questions, to which the answers were categorical (disagree strongly, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat, agree strongly).

Question
Democracy is a good system but it needs a strong leader.
We are all better off if everybody is allowed to speak their minds.
It is not necessary to obey a law you consider unjust.
In a democracy, some people simply know more.
In a democracy, governments should firstly protect people's freedom.
Tolerance towards the Roma minority.
It should be illegal to say hateful things in public.
Political interest
Volunteer activity

Although constrained by the availability of data, these 9 questions measure a wide range of political values. The first question is indicative of a person's preference for more authoritarian types of regime. The expectation was for Orthodox believers to prefer more authoritarian regimes, at least along the lines of Huntington's views. The levels of political interest and volunteering for the community are indicative of political and civic skills formation. The tolerance levels towards ethnic minorities are illustrative of the perception that different denomination believers have of minorities in general. The rest of questions measure liberal values. The fact that there is no difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers in respect with all these values can be explained in different ways. One potential explanation is the fact that religion is just a nominal label, and most high school students are not in fact at all involved in religious and church matters. Or, even if they are religious, their religiosity is a highly individual and private matter, without them seeing the religious and the secular milieus being intertwined.

Out of all political values that exist in the dataset, there are two questions for which there are major differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers. The first question reads "It is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs". Most Orthodox confidants believe that value homogeneity is indeed important in country, while Catholic and Protestant believers believe that this is not such an important matter. This result is consistent with what I found in previous research. The Romanian Orthodox Church constructs itself as a true symbol of national identity, and so Orthodox believers believe in an indigenous image of Romanian nationhood, while Catholic and Protestant believers in Romania believe in a more cosmopolitan view of nationhood that constructs Romanian nationhood as one nation within Europe. This result may also hide the ethnic cleavage between Romanian and Hungarians, although the importance of the results is not diminished, given that the partial result for Orthodox believers still holds true.

The second question for which there are major differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers is the attitude that students have towards the displaying of religious symbols in schools. Recently in Romania there was a heated debate over the acceptability of displaying religious symbols in school. According to the Orthodox Church, those symbols should be displayed in schools, because of the central role that

Orthodoxy plays in Romanian life. According to the international discourse on the separation between church and state and on secularization (promoted inter alia by the European Union too), religious symbols should not be displayed in schools. Table 5 shows that Orthodox students are more prone to accepting religious symbols to be displayed in schools.

The last part of the analysis consists of a series of regressions, through which I evaluate whether religious denomination and patterns of church attendance influence in any way political participation (both conventional and unconventional) and political values. I thus constructed several regression models, having as dependent values the following: conventional political participation (measured by intention to vote of the student in both local and national elections) and unconventional participation (measured by an index variable that includes boycotting, rioting, or a signing a petition. .

Four interaction terms were constructed in order to combine the effect of religious denomination and church attendance. Those four variables (Orthodox church-goers, Orthodox non-church goers, Non-Orthodox church-goers, non-Orthodox non-church-goers) allow for the comparison between both denominations and church attendance. The contrast category in all three regression models is the non-Orthodox non-church goers. The ability to draw this distinction is important because, in this way the effect of the church, as an institutionalization of religion, can be assessed separately from the broader effect of religion. The variable measuring individual religiosity (frequency of prayer) has also been introduced.

Socio-economic status is an important predictor for political participation (Verba, et al), and therefore, I included both parents' education levels, the household's income and the number of books (in order to measure higher intellectual status) in the analysis. Additionally, I also included the subject's educational aspiration. In addition, knowledge of parents' voting was also included, especially since Hooghe and Badescu found out that parents' political activity seems to influence their children's propensity to get involved.

Other variables introduced in the model include political discussion, which is usually understood as a useful predictor of political; two measures were included – political discussion in the house, and political discussion between the subject and her peers. I also included the following of news in the mass-media, since this seems to be true

source of information for youth in their decision to participate politically. Indeed, authors found that obtaining information about political events from the mass media is positively correlated with higher propensity to participate.³⁵ Political interest was also included, again because research found that higher manifested such interest may predict higher anticipated involvement in politics.³⁶ Fortunately, after running the models both with and without the control political variables, the effects of the religious determinants stay the same.

Table 5 and 6 present the effects of religious indicators on the intention to vote in national elections and local election. The outcomes are largely predicted by the parents' intention to vote, suggesting the family as the main arena for learning civic skills. The subject's education aspiration also makes her more prone to participate, thus confirming SES theses. Interestingly, praying makes one more prone to vote, while Orthodox believers are more inclined to participate than confidants of other religions. This finding is in agreement with previous research, in which a recruitment effect has been found from the part of the Orthodox Church.

Tables 7 and 8 run the same models but within the group of Orthodox believers, attempting to find out whether church going has any effect on political participation. The effects of educational aspirations and of the parents' political participation are similar to those described in tables 5 and 6. Church going within the Orthodox Church seems to also play a positive part in the decision to vote.

Finally, in table 9 and 10, I applied the same model trying to explain participation in unconventional acts of political participation. Interestingly, Orthodox believers are much less prone to participate in such acts, but, within the group of Orthodox confidants, church going is positively associated with unconventional participation. This finding may be indicative of the fact that church going may cause one to participate more in politics.

Further discussion is also in order, regarding the difference between political recruitment and mobilization. People's participation in the political arena can be a result

³⁵ Garramone, Gina and Charles Atkin, "Mass communication and political socialization: Specifying the effects" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50(1986): 76-86. Comstock, George and Haejung Paik, *Television and the American Child* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1991).

³⁶ Franklin, Mark N., *Voter turnout and the dynamics of electoral competition in established democracies since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

of mere recruitment or mobilization. The difference between the two is then following. Political recruitment refers to those situations when political agents simply convince people to go vote or participate, most of the time because of the agent's preference towards a particular candidate. Political mobilization is different in the sense that recruitment occurs but associated with political empowerment of people that feel more capable to participate. In my previous research this finding surfaced in the study on the effects of denomination on electoral choice in Romania. Orthodox believers tended to have higher electoral participation levels (measured by intention to vote) while being completely opposed to more unconventional acts of political participation.

The conclusion to this chapter is manifold. First, it is interesting to note that Orthodox teenagers are not different in the way they perceive politics than other confidants. High-school students in Romania seem to hold the same values, irrespective of what denomination they belong to. This finding suggest that religion is a private matter in Romania, and the low rates of church attendance for Orthodox believers, suggest a potentially secularizing younger generation, following the religious revival of after 1989. Second, when there are differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox high-school students, those differences seem to be centered around issues having to do with the role of religion in contemporary Romania and the importance of common values within a given territory. For instance, Orthodox high-school students believe that religious symbols should be displayed in public schools, and that value homogeneity in Romania is of utmost importance. This finding concurs with previous results suggesting that Orthodoxy in Romania is a source of national identity, and plays a historical role that should not be diminished by cosmopolitan views of identity as promoted by the European Union. Third, from the perspective of political participation, while the Orthodox Church seems to be an efficient recruiter, the other churches play a more profound role in mobilizing their confidants to participate in politics.

4. Conclusion

In this paper I explored the relationship between religious determinants of political attitudes and participation in high-school students in Romania. In the literature review I analyzed the multi faceted relationship between religion and democracy, in the context of democratizing countries. I argued that mainstream discourse implies that

secularization and privatization of religion is a structural trend and that Western Christianity is the only religion that accommodates liberal democracy. In contrast, I also mentioned that there is growing research directed at challenging these two broad arguments. In the data analysis part of the paper I explored the relationship between Orthodox denomination and political attitudes and beliefs in high-school students in Romania. The results suggest that the Orthodox faith in Romania plays a more nuanced role in the formation of attitudes than Huntingtonian arguments would predict. First, Orthodox students are more prone to be recruited by the Orthodox Church and hence their predicted rates of electoral participation are higher than their non-Orthodox counterparts. Second, in terms of unconventional political participation, Orthodox confidants are definitely less inclined to perform those acts, sometimes considered the trademark of a consolidated democracy. Third, in terms of values, Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers are fairly similar in their support of liberal values, except those situation referring to the role of church in contemporary Romanian polity and the importance of shared values within a given territory (homogeneity of traditions and customs could in fact be considered as a proxy measure of national identity).

This research is exploratory, and hence needs further elaboration. Due to the limited availability of data, I suggest 3 potential avenues for research in this field. First, the quantitative analysis could be better specified by performing multi-level analysis. Middle level variables, such as type of high-school and cultural area of origin of the respondent would be interesting to include in the analysis. Second, comparative analyses could also yield interesting results, especially in the context of Eastern European countries with Orthodox believers that are at different levels of democratic transition and consolidation. Third and finally, qualitative research would complement these findings, and in-depth interviews with teenagers of different religious backgrounds may offer a better understanding of the processes at stake.

In conclusion, this research showed the importance of considering religion as a contextual variable, whose impact on the formation of political attitudes and participatory acts needs to be understood by granting heightened attention to intervening factors such as the historical role of religion and church in a country's development or current events affecting the relationship between church and state throughout the democratization

process. Ultimately, one needs to accept the fact that public religion could be a source of deepening democratization, but whether this ends up being the case seems to be directed not along denominational lines, but through a more intricate process.

Appendix

Table 1 Religious denomination in percentages

Religion	Atheist	Orthodox	Roman Catholic	Reformed	Greek Catholic	Pentecostal	Other
Percentage (N=1806)	2.1%	74.3%	3.8%	9.3%	3.4%	4.2%	2.9%

Table 2 Church attendance per denomination

Denomination/ Attendance (N=1736)	Never	A few times a year	A few times a month	Once a week	More than once a week
Orthodox	71.1%	23.7%	2.6%	.01%	2.6%
Roman Catholic	3.6%	45.4%	29.0%	16.5%	5.5%
Reformed	2.9%	19.4%	22.9%	33.5%	4.3%
Greek Catholic	11.3%	35.5%	12.9%	25.8%	14.5%
Pentecostal	1.3%	3.9%	10.5%	22.4%	61.8%

Table 3 Pray by denomination

Denomination/ Pray (N=1735)	Never	Once a month	Once a week	Several times a week	everyday
Orthodox	5.2%	9.5%	7.7%	27.7%	50.0%
Roman Catholic	13.0%	20.3%	13.0%	21.7%	31.9%
Reformed	5.2%	7.6%	8.1%	20.3%	58.7%
Greek Catholic	12.9%	12.9%	6.5%	27.4%	40.3%
Pentecostal	2.6%	2.6%	3.9%	11.7%	79.2%

Table 5
Religious symbols should be forbidden in our schools

Religion (N=1801)	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
Orthodox	31.2%	33.9%	20.8%	14.1%
Other religion	26.4%	34.5%	22.4%	17.2%

Table 4

It is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs

Religion (N=1801)	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
Orthodox	10.1%	19.0%	41.3%	29.6%
Other religion	17.9%	31.3%	37.5%	13.4%

Table 5 Effects of religion on intention to vote at the national level (N=1402)

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
pray	.171	.101	2.900	1	.089	1.187
income	-.006	.066	.008	1	.927	.994
education mother	-.021	.091	.055	1	.814	.979
education father	.001	.091	.000	1	.993	1.001
intention to vote mother	.996	.361	7.614	1	.006	2.709
intention to vote father	.750	.359	4.368	1	.037	2.118
number of books	-.026	.063	.162	1	.687	.975
Educational goal	.139	.063	4.861	1	.027	1.149
Orthodox	.619	.170	13.215	1	.000	1.857
Constant	-.991	.465	4.544	1	.033	.371

Table 6 Effects of religion on intention to vote at the local level (N=1408)

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
pray	.220	.108	4.185	1	.041	1.246
income	-.027	.073	.140	1	.708	.973
education mother	-.127	.100	1.604	1	.205	.881
education father	.083	.100	.694	1	.405	1.087
intention to vote mother	1.084	.374	8.414	1	.004	2.957
intention to vote father	.922	.373	6.097	1	.014	2.514
number of books	-.095	.070	1.870	1	.171	.909
Educational goal	.195	.069	8.096	1	.004	1.216
Orthodox	.473	.188	6.299	1	.012	1.605
Constant	-.680	.494	1.892	1	.169	.507

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: pray, INCOME, edu_mama, edu_tata, v75_m_v, v75_t_v, books, educgoal, religion.

Table 7 Effects of church attendance on intention to vote at the national level within the group of Orthodox believers (N=1075)

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
pray	.234	.121	3.714	1	.054	1.264
income	-.062	.080	.591	1	.442	.940
education mother	-.058	.112	.264	1	.608	.944
education father	-.018	.113	.024	1	.877	.983
intention to vote mother	.797	.458	3.034	1	.082	2.220
intention to vote father	.792	.459	2.970	1	.085	2.207
number of books	-.015	.076	.038	1	.846	.985
Educational goal	.195	.083	5.587	1	.018	1.215
Orthodox church goer	.328	.199	2.726	1	.099	1.389
Constant	-.434	.576	.569	1	.451	.648

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: pray, INCOME, edu_mama, edu_tata, v75_m_v, v75_t_v, books, educgoal, orthogoer.

Table 8 Effects of church attendance on intention to vote at the local level within the group of Orthodox believers (N=1077)

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
pray	.208	.132	2.481	1	.115	1.232
income	-.044	.088	.245	1	.621	.957
education mother	-.164	.122	1.800	1	.180	.849
education father	.036	.124	.085	1	.771	1.037
intention to vote mother	.838	.483	3.011	1	.083	2.311
intention to vote father	.889	.485	3.358	1	.067	2.434
number of books	-.069	.083	.693	1	.405	.933
Educational goal	.167	.090	3.439	1	.064	1.182
Orthodox church goer	.357	.219	2.664	1	.103	1.429
Constant	.184	.621	.088	1	.766	1.202

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: pray, INCOME, edu_mama, edu_tata, v75_m_v, v75_t_v, books, educgoal, orthogoer.

Table 9 Effects of religion on unconventional participation (N=1347)

Variable	B	Std. error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	11.778	.363		32.484	.000
pray	.002	.073	.001	.029	.977
income	.031	.045	.021	.686	.493
education mother	.054	.062	.032	.873	.383
education father	-.013	.063	-.008	-.205	.837
intention to vote mother	.154	.317	.019	.486	.627
intention to vote father	-.124	.311	-.015	-.400	.689
number of books	.017	.045	.011	.373	.710
Educational goal	.051	.043	.037	1.193	.233
Orthodox	-.330	.127	-.073	-2.608	.009

Table 10 Effects of church attendance on unconventional participation within the group of Orthodox (N=1030)

Variable	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	11.525	.412		27.946	.000
pray	-.061	.080	-.025	-.757	.449
income	.030	.047	.022	.645	.519
education mother	.046	.068	.029	.679	.497
education father	.017	.068	.010	.244	.807
intention to vote mother	.114	.350	.013	.327	.744
intention to vote father	-.368	.350	-.042	-1.051	.293
number of books	.017	.051	.011	.328	.743
Educational goal	.071	.045	.056	1.590	.112
Orthodox church goer	.191	.072	.086	2.665	.008

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