Peter B. Andersen, Peter Gundelach and Peter Lüchau

RELIGION IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

Assumptions, survey evidence, and some suggestions

Abstract

Existing survey evidence shows considerable differences between the United States and countries in Europe. In general terms Americans score higher on religious beliefs and on religious activities, and they are more positive towards mixing religion with politics, there are higher levels of religious belief and church attendance in America, and Americans have a higher level of religious tolerance than Europeans. However, surveys also indicate considerable variation among the European countries. Existing theories do not seem to be able to understand these trans-Atlantic differences. The evidence is based on very few genuine comparative surveys. This article argues that there is a need for more surveys with identical questionnaires comparing the United States and Europe to understand the differences between the two continents. Such work should include theoretical work on what is understood by religion (for instance churched and un-churched religion) and how we should interpret country or continent as independent variables (including a need to understand differences in various regions).

Key words: secularization, spirituality, survey, religion in United States, religion in Europe

Religion in Europe and the United States

There are major differences in individual religiosity between people living in Europe and people living in the United States. Existing survey evidence (Lüchau 2004) can be summarized as follows: Americans score higher on religious beliefs and on religious activities, and they are more positive towards mixing religion with politics, there are higher levels of religious belief and church attendance in America, and Americans have a higher level of religious tolerance than Europeans do.

At first glance, such differences seem surprising. In many ways, America and Europe seem to be quite similar. The general processes of modernization have influenced both continents and accordingly one would expect the same outcome in religious activity and belief. As this is not the case it means that there must be different causal
mechanisms influencing religiosity in Europe and the United States. This article focuses on a comparison between Europe and the United States, because we intend to investigate two very different cases. Also, as we will see below most of theories focus either on the United States experience (rational choice theory) or trends in religiosity in Europe (secularization theory). In passing, it should be noted that Canada seems to be more similar to Europe than to the United States (Bibby 1979) but we will not include Canada in the following analysis.

A careful analysis of differences in individual religiosity would require systematic comparative studies with identical questionnaires that encompass both the United States and Europe. However, very few such data sets exist. We will begin by documenting a few main results of scanty existing surveys. It will become evident that there are major limitations in the data. We go on to discuss how the independent variables (United States/Europe) and the dependent variables (individual religiosity) must be revised and expanded in order to gain a better understanding of the differences between the United States and Europe. Based on such deliberations the article aims at suggesting ways for future research and some relevant hypotheses for comparative studies, inspired by discussions in a trans-Atlantic research network, INORS (vide note 1).

A brief overview of quantitative differences between the United States and Europe

Even though a lot of work on individual religiosity has been done in the United States as well as in Europe, there are relatively few real comparative projects (in the sense of identical questionnaires used at identical times and based on representative samples) between the two continents. This is probably partly due to institutional factors as surveys in many cases are conducted relatively independently of each other in each continent and country. In spite of the fact that we have seen a large number of international surveys emerging during the last decades (for instance Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer, European Social Survey) very few of them may be used for genuine comparative studies between the United States and Europe. The only cross-Atlantic surveys seem to be World Values Survey (WVS), International Social Survey Program (ISSP), and Gallup Millennium Survey, and they have a relatively narrow focus in that they have concentrated on church related religiosity (Lüchau 2004).

There are differences between Americans and Europeans on almost all available items. As we shall see below the differences between Americans and Europeans are generally greater than whatever intra-European differences may exist (for instance on a north-south or an east-west axis) but the scope of differences depends on which variables are used and which regions or countries we compare. Differences are consistent whether one uses the 1999–2001 WVS or the 1998 ISSP.

Table 1 shows the differences between Europe and the United States on three variables based on the 1999–2001 WVS studies. To demonstrate possible variations in Europe this continent is divided into the predominantly Protestant Northern Europe
and the predominantly Catholic Southern Europe. For technical (lack of data) and theoretical (lack of adequate explanations of regional variations) reasons it has not been possible to make a similar differentiation in the United States. In the European countries, country weights were not applied since they do not exist in the data set. However, it seems very unlikely that country weights would have changed the results to a substantial degree. As the European countries are divided into Northern and Southern Europe chances are that the religiosity of Northern Europe is slightly underestimated as the Nordic countries with their very low levels of religiosity lower the mean religiosity. The level of religiosity of the Southern European countries is most likely unaffected. The differences between Northern and Southern Europe would still be there, regardless of whether weights were applied or not.

The first variable concerns the following question: «Please say, for each of the following, how important it is in your life: Religion (Very important, Quite important, Not important, Not at all important). The item does not measure how religious the respondent is but her/his perception of religion as a phenomenon influencing her/his life in general. Traditionally the predominantly Catholic South Europeans tend to be more religious than the more mixed North Europeans do. Looking at Table 1 the tendency is clear. More than four out of five Americans find religion very or rather important in their lives compared to about two thirds of the people in Southern Europe and about half of the Northern Europeans.

The second item is church attendance. Its wording is as follows: «Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (More than once a week, Once a week, Once a month, Christmas/Easter day, Other specific holy days, Once a year, Less often, Never, practically never)».

Table 1 (second column) shows the percentage of the population that attend religious services at least once a month. The pattern is basically the same as before, although the difference between Northern and Southern Europe is smaller. Among Americans three out of five attend church at least once a month. Among Southern Europeans one in three attend services at least once a month compared to a little more than one out of four among the North Europeans. Not only do people in the United States ascribe greater importance to religion than Europeans do, they are also much more religiously active. This makes sense. Generally we would expect that the impor-

### Table 1. Religious indicators in Europe and United States. 1999. Percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Religion very or rather important</th>
<th>Attend religious services at least once a month</th>
<th>Positive towards religious people in public office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 47, 028</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
tance of religion and the level of traditional (Christian) religious activity are related both at the individual and aggregate level.

The third item asks the respondents if they agree with the statement «It would be better for [country] if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (Agree strongly, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Disagree strongly)».

Americans are much more likely than Europeans to say that they strongly agree or just agree with the above statement (Table 1, third column). Among Americans a little less than half either strongly agree or agree with the statement thereby showing a readiness to accept a fusing or intermingling of religion and politics. For Europeans less than one in three strongly agree or agree with the statement. There is no significant difference between Southern and Northern Europeans when it comes to the mixing of religion and politics.

Of course these figures must be taken with a grain of salt. The differences may be due not only to substantial factors but may also be influenced by the methodology (cf. below). However, the differences are so large that it is difficult to see them as a result of methodological bias.

It is interesting that the pattern of the differences between Americans and Europeans are not straightforward. When it comes to religion in the private sphere (importance of religion) and religion as a social phenomenon (church attendance) Americans are at one extreme and people from Northern Europe at the other extreme with the Southern Europeans somewhere in between. When it comes to religion in the political sphere the split between the South and North in Europe disappears. This suggests that it is neither the perception of the importance of religion nor church attendance that explains the attitude to compartmentalization between politics and religion.

The empirical differences lead to different conclusions depending on the theoretical framework. In general two frameworks have been used each relating to the continent in which they have originated. 1) The American rational choice theorists (for instance Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Chaves and Cann 1992) explain the differences with the character of the religious markets in the United States and Europe. In the United States - where the level of competition is high and the legal regulations are low - religiosity is high because high religious supply creates a high religious consumption. This theory, however, is unable to explain the high level of religiosity in Southern Europe compared to Northern Europe since both regions have very restricted markets and high levels of legal regulations. 2) Theories of religious modernization (secularization) are often related to Europe (cf. Dobbelrae 2002). Such theories suggest that societies are moving on a dimension from less to more modern societies and this change is accompanied by a diminishing impact of religion in society. In its crudest form the general level of modernization is measured by the economic level in the respective countries. This theory is unable to explain the marked differences in religiosity in Northern Europe and the United States even though they have quite similar economic levels. As indicated these studies are based on limited data sources and the reasons why they fail to fully explain the difference between the continents may include both theoretical shortcomings as well as lack of relevant comparative data that cover a broad range of
religious variables. We will return to a discussion of the country/continent variables below.

A framework for additional studies

Before embarking into more detailed studies of differences between the two continents a number of obvious methodological problems must be addressed.

We may exaggerate the between-continent differences because one can easily imagine that some regions in the United States and in Europe are fairly similar when it comes to individual religiosity. Silk (2005) has demonstrated major regional differences in religiosity between American states and the European Values Study and the RAMP project have documented considerable intra-European differences. In particular, the development in post-communist Eastern Europe has given rise to discussions as the Eastern European religious development has been very different from that in Western Europe (Kääriäinen 1998; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Tomka 2002). However, as we have indicated in Table 1, the degree of similarity between various parts of Europe and (most likely also various parts of) the United States varies according to the variables that are studied, but to our knowledge there are no comparative studies of Europe and the United States that go into detail with the regional distribution of different types of religiosity.

It does not seem likely that different compositions of the population in relation to socio-demographics in the two continents can explain the variation but it is possible that there are strong similarities across continents if we compare specific socio-economic groups (for instance rural vs. urban respondents). In order to study such questions there is a need for identical data sets in both continents where it is possible to make statistical models that analyze the correlations between individual characteristics and different types of religiosity.

It is also possible that the wording of questions in surveys may be culturally biased or even more problematic that there are differences in what is understood as religiosity in the two continents. This may be illustrated by a few examples from the Danish translation of the EVS/WVS questionnaire. In the original English master-questionnaire the word used is «religious». In the Danish questionnaire the wording was changed to «believing» («troende») instead of «religious» (and in the Dutch version the word used is «gelovig» which again is closer to «believing» than to «religious»).

Another example is the difference between belonging to a religious organization and being a formal member. In most countries the respondents are asked if they «belong» (e.g. «belong» in Britain, «gehören» in Germany) but in Denmark they were asked if they were formal members («medlem»). In both Denmark and Britain there is a large discrepancy between belonging and being member. In the United States it may be problematic to ask people whether they are members of a church since Americans tend to experience their relationship to the church as belonging. These examples show that it is problematic - to say the least - to compare church belonging across the European countries or between Europe and the United States.
All this means that there is a strong need for genuine comparative surveys between the two continents. However, as mentioned, based on the existing scanty evidence there is no reason to believe that the large differences between the continents are simply due to methodological factors. In order to get a better grasp of the differences the following parts of this article will scrutinize interpretations of the dependent variables (various types of religiosity) as well as the independent variables (country and/or continent).

Religiosity
In order to undertake a comparison of countries it is necessary to have a broad and multi-cultural concept of religion. By this we do not mean a definition that is applicable across large cultural/religious boundaries such as Christianity and Buddhism since both Europe and the United States is predominantly Christian. However, even though they formally share the same religion people in each continent may interpret and employ it very differently and it is necessary to make sure that our concept of religion will be applicable in both settings. One of the fallacies of previous research is precisely that it has been assumed that the United States and Europe were culturally alike and one reason why many theoretical concepts (such as secularization and rational choice theory) have been difficult to bring into play in both continents at the same time may be that cultural differences makes this problematic. Only by assuming from the outset that the two continents are culturally different (and making our definition of religion incorporate this) will we have a proper starting point for further research. In order to do so we should initially adopt a broad substantive and not a functional view of religion. This means that we should develop a concept of religion that encompasses many different types of belief systems ranging from church religion to spirituality.

Thomas Luckmann’s definition of religion from The Invisible Religion (1967) is useful even though his description of the development of religion may be questioned. Luckmann defines religion as a system of transcendent meanings – i.e. religion is defined in a way that allows us to see many different types of beliefs and activities as religious. In the present context it is particularly important that Luckmann’s approach allows for an analytical differentiation between religion and church and that he sees religion as a part of every day life. Luckmann argues that there has been a general transformation from church religion to privatized religion. The characterization of non-churched religion as private may be questioned (Besecke 2005) but Luckmann’s analysis has inspired a host of researchers to analyse the religious changes in contemporary societies.

The dependent variables in a comparison are aspects of religiosity at the individual level. Based on Luckmann’s definition we need to study several phenomena, for instance church related religion as well as what we will loosely refer to as «spirituality». There is, however, a strong need for conceptual work on these types of religion and especially a need to develop measurement methods that are valid on both sides of the Atlantic.
The dependent variables may be measured by individual items but of course we get a better measurement if we can develop scales that are valid on both continents. In the literature a number of scales are mentioned but to the best of our knowledge none of these have been validated on cross-continental material. For instance Riis has demonstrated a number of scales based on the 1990 European Value Study on the Scandinavian countries e.g. a scale on orthodox beliefs which taps church sponsored religiosity (Gundelach and Riis 1992), and other scales on the authority of the church, and atheistic belief (Riis 1994:105). For the presentation of the 1997–1999 Religious And Moral Pluralism (RAMP) study a scale covering church activities as well as general, mainly Christian, beliefs played an important role in the Nordic Countries (Gustafsson and Pettersson 2000). A slightly different approach has been used for the European reporting of the RAMP study (Billiet et al. 2003). Here a number of distinct scales were constructed 1) Participation in public services, 2) Private religious practice, 3) Importance of rites of passage, 4) Christian orthodoxy, 5) Saliency of religion, and 6) Moral consequences. Regarding non-institutionalised religiosity Riis has constructed a scale named «diffuse religiosity» which intends to tap some general aspects of religiosity (Riis 1994:105), but it has been difficult to create structured approaches to non-church sponsored forms of religion. This has latest been demonstrated by Billiet et al. (2003:141) who «failed» (as they modestly term it), to identify pluralism as a latent variable.

One important problem in creating such scales stems from the fact that non-churched religion is (much) less structured than churched religion. In the psychology of religion there exists a number of scales to assess and measure spirituality (e.g. Moberg 2002) some of which are inspired by sociological approaches such as Yinger’s (1969). The major problem with those scales is, however, that most of them address psychological approaches to religion which assume that religion is one common denominator to each and everyone. As has been demonstrated (Boos-Nünning 1972; Wulf 1997), this is not the case, and even if we may be inspired from some of them they are not easily used in the general population. Therefore, we suggest that new items for measuring different kinds of non-churched religion should be developed.

Some scales of spirituality correlate in various degrees with traditional and recent non-churched religions. For instance, it was possible to develop a scale on «new age» beliefs in a sub-section of the Danish population (teacher training college students) (Andersen et al. 1999). This shows that it is possible to develop scales also for non-church sponsored forms of religion and calls for studies that develop such scales that are valid for specific parts of the population across cultures.

Another approach to spirituality has been forwarded by Barker who has considered whether individuals looked towards a personal god or some concept of diffuse power (e.g. God as spirit or life force) (Barker 2004). In spite of the interesting aspects of this very specific conceptualization of spirituality (Heelas 2007) it may be more promising to approach spirituality less theologically and to test the saliency of this approach to spirituality by correlating the variable with social background factors before one advances with more general analyses.
The mentioned suggestions have been limited to substantive approaches to religion. But as the conceptualization of religion is under reconstruction in the public sphere (e.g. Beckford 1985:1–68, 218–295; Beckford 2003; Asad 1993) one might consider whether it is possible to investigate some topics that might be related to belief systems in general. One approach could be to develop valid cross-cultural measures of non-religious belief systems for instance scientific rationality; alternative health systems or «spiritually informed» types of management. Such areas may have underlying rationalities that include or exclude implicit scientific rationality as opposed to religious rationality (Campbell 1972; McGuire 1988). In a strong wording Launsø (1996) has argued that healing is a completely new paradigm totally different from the logic underlying the official health care system. Whatever that may be, there is ample reason to develop measurements that tap other kinds of generalized rationalities than the ones usually adopted in religious studies and to study their relationships to patterns in religious belief and religious change.

Relationships between dependent variables

Church religion and spirituality are possibly the more important dependent variables, but there is a need for much more theoretical work on both concepts including an analysis of the possible overlap between the two. However, for the present purpose we consider them as separate variables.

When there are several dependent variables the next problem concerns the possible relationships between them. At least two types of relationship between dependent variables may be discussed. First, the correlation between different types of religiosity is interesting. As pointed out by Voas and Crockett (2005) there is no reason to adopt what we would call a functionalistic zero-sum proposition between for instance church religion and spirituality.

Second, we are interested in compartmentalisation i.e. the relationship between religion and other subsystems. Compartmentalisation refers to a situation where there is no relationship between the religious subsystem and other subsystems (Dobbelaere 2002). Compartmentalisation has at least two aspects. One is the individual’s subjective normative perception i.e. whether the individual feels that his or her religion has influence on other parts of his/her life (for instance on morality) (Billiet et al. 2003). The other aspect is what we might term objective, i.e. whether the researcher, based on statistical analyses, can find relationships between the individual’s religious values and values in other subsystems. In both cases we should expect the degree of compartmentalisation to vary between different sub-systems and in different parts of the population in each system.

Two subsystems are especially important elements in compartmentalisation: the political and the moral subsystems. We need to know to what extent the individual believes that politics and morality respectively is or should be influenced by religion and we need to study the correlations between religiosity and political and moral values. Based on results from the RAMP project we expect political and moral values
to be associated with institutionalized religions but there is a need to know whether
non-institutionalized religion or non-believing is also correlated with political and
moral values.

The independent variables

General societal development

Religion may be influenced by at least four general processes that are parts of the stan-
dard repertory among sociologists: Individualisation: the individual respects authority
(including the authority of churches) to a smaller degree and feels a greater responsi-


bility for themselves (Beck et al. 1994). Increased affluence: This leads to increased
security (partly because of the establishment of state welfare systems). Thus, in rich
countries there is no longer a need for the kind of security that is provided by religion
whereas religiosity persists in poorer nations (Norris & Inglehart 2004). Gill and
Lundsgarte have argued that the welfare systems themselves (and not just affluence)
threaten religion as religious organisations lose their social significance as providers of
social services (Gill and Lundsgarte 2004). In this connection Norris and Inglehart
have argued that it may not be affluence as such, but the level of security and economic
inequality that is the decisive factor for religion (Norris and Inglehart 2004:106–110),
but Norris and Inglehart also note that it is difficult to understand the differences and
similarities between the various parts of Europe and the United States. Functional dif-
ferentiation means that subsystems are becoming separated and that religion has lost
its influence over other subsystems (Dobbelaeere 2002). Finally as argued by Max
Weber rationalisation leads to a general disenchantment and creates a means for scien-
tific explanations to exclude religious explanations on factors outside the narrow reli-
gious field.

As mentioned these processes have characterized Europe as well as the United
States. Since religion is so different on the two continents one may argue that there is
no causal link between these general processes and religion or perhaps that the general
processes have different impacts and are construed differently in Europe and the
United States.

A number of theories have been advanced to account for such differences. The first
explanation is historical and claims that the religious differences between Europe and
the United States are the products of different historical experiences. For instance it is
argued that the United States (at least partly) was founded by Europeans fleeing reli-
gious persecution, and Americans appreciate their religiosity more than the Europeans
because they had to fight for it.

Another explanation – and one that often has been overlooked - is that the relation
between church and state may also have influenced the differences between religious
attitudes in relation to the rationalities in natural science and health systems in the
United States and Europe. In most of Europe the emerging democratic regimes were
created in opposition to the churches which had supported the Ancient Regime. In the
The church was never part of an old system and churches were simply not seen as against modern science and health systems.

A third popular explanation addresses the structure of religious organisation at the national level. It claims that competition in what has been termed the religious market will force denominations to adapt themselves to a niche thus providing an optimal religion for all «religious consumers» regardless of their religious preferences (e.g. Stark and Finke 2000). In Europe many religious consumers cannot find a denomination that fits their religious preferences and hence they become less religious if not downright non-religious.

Numerous other explanations are possible. The differences could be the product of differences in political or cultural values or a product of more widespread individualism in the United States. Perhaps the Europeans have more authoritarian personalities? Maybe the Americans are more post-materialistic? Maybe the process of secularization has been delayed in the United States because the Americans are more politically conservative and hence more inclined to support the churches (Berger 1967)?

The general conclusion, however, is that general societal explanations seem to lack explanatory power in relation to differences between Europe and the United States. It is possible of course that these macro explanations may be more valuable if we develop ideas about differences in impact of the various societal processes and differences in time sequences between countries and/or regions. The apparent lack of explanatory power of macro explanations may also lead to the inclusion of other types of explanations, especially at the meso level.

**Meso explanations**

One important difference between Europe and the United States is the difference in organisation of churches and the whole character of civil society. The churches are important mediators between the state and individuals on both sides of the Atlantic, but they are embedded in different ways.

In general the countries in Europe are characterized by one large majority church which often has special legal privileges. Sometimes the churches are national subsidiaries of the Catholic Church as in most of Southern Europe and sometimes they are some form of Protestant churches as in the Nordic countries and Great Britain. Only few countries have more than one large church. In Germany there is a more or less Protestant North and a more or less Catholic South while in the Netherlands society is to a large extent, pillarized into a Catholic, a Protestant, and a secular segment. In the United States there is fierce denominational competition even though some major organizations are trying to tie together different church bodies. In a sense Europe is centralised (into large national church bodies) while the United States is decentralised (into many different denominations).

In Europe churches either do not generally try to influence the political decision process or public debate on non-religious issues (this applies to the Nordic countries) or they do so as large organisations (e.g. the Catholic Church) or assemblies of church bodies (e.g. the Protestant church organization in *Evangelische Kirche in Deutsch-
They generally negotiate directly with the government through state organs. In the United States, churches try to influence the political process to a much higher degree and they generally do it at the grass roots level. They do not confine themselves to strictly religious matters and often seek to influence politics based on their general (religious) views of the world. They try to change society in a direction that fits their religious worldview through legitimate political channels. The grass roots nature of religious activities in the United States seems to be somewhat contingent upon the available room for religious activities in the public space. Due to the minimal welfare system of the United States there is ample room for the churches to do work to the benefit of the general public. Such grass root level activity is made more difficult in Europe due to the welfare systems. Especially in Nordic countries with their comprehensive, universalistic welfare systems there is little room for churches to do charity work - the prestige of which could be used as leverage for political influence.

Another problem is the relationship between the individual and society. This is often mediated by civil society. Traditionally voluntary associations and thus church related activities in the broadest sense are seen as important links between the individual and society. However, Besecke (2005) has argued that there is a conceptual (and empirical) gap between the formalised religious structures and the beliefs of the individual. Between them there is a type of civil society – i.e. fora, media etc. where religious matters are discussed. This latter form of religious activity is less well studied, but following Besecke (2005) we should also include activities that are related to uninstitutionalized conversation, i.e. meetings where people discuss religious matters or perhaps even whether they surf for religious ideas on the Internet or read religious books. The character and structure of such a religious Öffentlichkeit may vary from country to country and different parts of the population. In order to analyze such a hypothesis we need to develop dimensions that can tap such kinds of informal and media related religious activity.

Steps forward

Seen from both sides of the Atlantic the differences in religiosity are intriguing and it is somewhat surprising that there are so few systematic (i.e. based on careful, systematic comparative studies) attempts to describe and explain these differences. A conceptual and theoretical framework needs to be developed but it is also essential to develop valid data that can illustrate the differences. This calls for cross-Atlantic cooperation. The INORS network is organized as an attempt to create valid cross-Atlantic measurements of religion through a number of workshops. These workshops have shown that the sociology of religion is a strongly expanding field (Davie 2007) where there are many new ideas and theories but a lack of comparative data.

A first step is to develop the dependent variables, i.e. culturally robust ways of measuring different aspects of religiosity. On secularization we need questions that can measure compartementalization (i.e the relationship between different aspects of religiosity and religiosity and morality). Spirituality (religion outside the traditional religi-
gion) is hardly covered in existing surveys. Including variables on spirituality would most likely show differences between Europe and the United States. This would happen regardless of whether one use a rational choice or a modernization/secularization approach as both approaches, due to lack of data, have been unable to take this aspect of religiosity into account.

Comparative analyses may be conducted in surveys of the general population on both continents. These surveys should be so large that they make it possible to study regional differences. Another possibility is to study specific parts of the population. Studies have shown that non-churched religious forms are more widespread in certain segments of the population. For instance Roof (1993) identified a segment of the baby boomers in the United States as «highly active seekers», Zinnbauer et al. (1997) showed that mental health workers, also in the United States, rated themselves as spiritual rather than religious and Ecklund and Long (2007) have studied religiosity among professional groups in the United States.

The ultimate aim should be to develop theories that are able to explain the substantial differences in religiosity in both the United States and Europe. For this purpose we need to develop satisfactory and valid measurements of the dependent variables and to collect genuinely comparative data across the Atlantic. This is a prerequisite for a future theoretical work including developing both macro and meso explanations.

Notes

1 Parts of this article is based on discussions in two conferences in INORS (The International Network On Religious Studies) workshop held in Copenhagen 2006 and in Leipzig 2007. http://www.staff.hum.ku.dk/pluchau/inors/). We thank all the participants for fruitful discussions. INORS is founded by a grant from the national Danish Research Council for the Social Sciences. An article from the first workshop by Karel Dobbelaere (2007) was published in NJRS No 2, 2007.

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