

**Secular Transition and Religious Transmission in Canada, Australia, the
United States and Europe: A Quantitative Analysis of Migration and Family
Religious Socialization**

by

Jacob Legault-Leclair

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Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner	Dr. Isabella Kasselstrand, Senior Lecturer in Sociology School of Social Science University of Aberdeen
Co-supervisor	Dr. Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, Associate Professor Department of Sociology & Legal Studies University of Waterloo
Co-supervisor	Dr. Jörg Stolz, Full Professor Institut de Sciences Sociales des Religions Université de Lausanne
Internal member	Dr. Carol Ann MacGregor, Associate Professor Department of Sociology & Legal Studies St. Jerome's University
Internal member	Dr. Galen Watts, Assistant Professor Department of Sociology & Legal Studies University of Waterloo
Internal-External	Dr. Scott Kline, Associate Professor Department of Religious Studies St. Jerome's University
Defense Chair	Dr. Mark Oremus, Professor School of Public Health Sciences University of Waterloo

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how intergenerational religious transmission within the family and immigration shape the process of secularization across Western societies. Grounded in secular transition theory, it seeks to identify the mechanisms through which religion is either transmitted or not transmitted across generations, and how these processes contribute to broader patterns of religious decline in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Finland, Germany and Hungary.

The empirical analysis is based on three quantitative studies drawing on original cross-national survey data. The first and second articles use data from the *Transmission of Religion Across Generations* survey (2021), while the third article relies on the *Cultural and Social Values Survey* (2023). Across these studies, the dissertation employs a range of statistical techniques, including ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, ordinal logistic regression, and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), to assess the effects of family socialization and migration-related factors on levels of religiosity.

The first article analyzes intergenerational religious transmission in Canada, focusing on the role of parental socialization and cohort replacement. The findings show a clear intergenerational decline in both religious affiliation and levels of religiosity across all major religious groups. While certain aspects of family socialization, such as talking about religion with certain family members and the presence of religion in the household during childhood, have a positive effect on adult religiosity, these effects remain modest. Overall, family socialization does not appear strong enough to counteract the broader trend of secularization, as younger generations exhibit, in average, lower levels of religiosity than their parents.

The second article adopts a comparative perspective to examine how family religious socialization influences adult religiosity within the context of secular transition across five countries (Canada, Italy, Hungary, Finland, and Germany). It shows that key dimensions of socialization such as religious tradition, childhood religious practices, and family attitudes toward religion significantly predict adult religiosity, but their effects vary across national contexts. In more secularized countries such as Canada, Finland, and Germany, religious socialization more frequently results in intermediate forms of religiosity (“fuzzy fidelity”), rather than strong religious commitment. In contrast, in less secularized contexts such as Italy, socialization remains more effective in sustaining higher levels of religiosity. These findings highlight the importance of national context and family religious socialization in understanding the process of secular transition.

The third article investigates religious change among immigrants across four countries (Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia), focusing on differences between first- and second-generation immigrants and the role of time spent in the host country. The results indicate that first-generation immigrants are generally more religious than second-generation immigrants, although this pattern varies by region. The analysis also shows that the level of secularization in the host society affects religiosity among later generations but has limited impact on first-generation immigrants. Moreover, while time spent in the host country has some effect on religiosity, long-term religious decline among immigrant populations appears to be driven primarily by cohort replacement rather than prolonged exposure to the host society. Importantly, immigrants tend to remain more religious than non-immigrant populations even in highly secular contexts.

Taken together, the findings of this dissertation provide a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying secular transition. They demonstrate that while family religious socialization continues to play a role in shaping individual religiosity, its influence is generally insufficient to offset the broader forces driving secularization. At the same time, immigration introduces higher levels of religiosity into Western societies, but this effect diminishes across generations, ultimately aligning with the same patterns of intergenerational decline observed in the general population.

This dissertation makes key contributions to the sociology of religion, both empirically and theoretically. Empirically, it draws on novel and underutilized cross-national survey data to construct original measures of family religious socialization and immigrant religiosity, including indicators that are typically absent from major international surveys (e.g., intra-family religious communication, the presence of religion in the household during childhood, attitudes towards religion, and the level of religiosity for different generations of immigrants). By doing so, it provides a more thorough assessment of the mechanisms underlying intergenerational religious (non)transmission across a range of understudied national contexts, including Canada, Australia, Hungary and Finland. The dissertation also extends existing research by incorporating a broader set of family actors such as grand-parents and siblings, thereby offering a more comprehensive account of family-based religious socialization dynamics.

Theoretically, this research advances secular transition theory by specifying and empirically testing mechanisms through which religious decline is reproduced, or not, across generations. In particular, it demonstrates how variations in family socialization practices, combined with the effects of cohort replacement, contribute to the gradual erosion of religiosity over time. It also refines existing understandings of the role of immigration by showing that, while immigrants

contribute to the diversification and partial renewal of religious life, their religiosity converges across generations toward the secular trajectories of host societies. More broadly, the findings demonstrate that secularization needs to be understood in light of national context, religious group differences, and migration-related dynamics in shaping its pace and expression.

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Introduction

Today's demographic changes, notably those resulting from new family dynamics and immigration, are reshaping Western religious landscapes. Religious differences between generations and the diversification of migration have resulted in an increase in religious pluralism in Western countries, while at the same time contributing to the process of secularization. The religious landscape of traditionally Christian Western countries is gradually changing under the weight of formerly ultra-minority forms of religiosity, new forms of Christianity and increased nonreligious populations. In Canada, Reimer and Hiemstra (2018: 339) write that "immigration flow is probably the most important factor for the future growth or decline of religious groups. It may not be long until the number of immigrants affiliating with non-Christian religions surpasses the number of Christian immigrants. Of these groups, Muslims show the greatest future growth potential, followed by Hindus." This finding also shares certain similarities with Europe, where Muslims represented 4% of the overall European population in 2010 and 5% in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2017). In particular, the Pew Research Center estimates that "[...] if regular migration continues at recent levels, and some asylum seekers also continue to arrive and receive refugee status [...], then the share of Muslims in Europe's population as of 2050 would be expected to be somewhere between 11.2% and 14%." (Pew Research Center, 2017).

In addition to this increasing religious diversity, there has also been a significant rise in the number of people without any religious affiliation. In Canada, the number of people who say they have no religion (also referred to as religious nones) in Statistics Canada's Census rose from 4% in 1971 to 35% in 2021 (Statistic Canada, 2023). With the arrival of each new generation to adulthood

since the Boomers in the 1960s and 1970s and the decreasing rate of religious transmission, nonreligion has grown in Canada (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023). Forty-three percent of Canadians under the age of 35 had no religious affiliation in the 2021 Census. In Europe, the trend is also moving in the same direction. Kasselstrand et al. (2023) have shown that it is on the European continent that the decline in religious affiliation and other religiosity indicators has been the most significant. This more recent observation corroborates years of research showing that it is in Europe where mass secularization first occurred and continues to this day (Willaime, 2006). In the United States the trend is also towards the decline of religion. Although the process of secularization seemed to have started later, the trend of decline is now well underway. Voas and Chaves write that the “United States is very similar to religious change elsewhere: there is long-term decline produced mainly by generational replacement” (2016: 1548).

These lasting and deeply rooted contemporary transformations of the Western religious landscape are giving rise to a form of historical discontinuity when it comes to more conventional forms of religion, especially since the 1960s (McLeod, 2007). The religious “transmission crisis” (Bertrand, 2008) as well as migratory movements (Drouhot & Nee, 2019) are believed to be responsible. As a result, religion is being transmitted less effectively to younger generations, while at the same time immigration is contributing to the renewal and reshaping of religion in Europe, Canada, Australia, and the United States (Bertrand, 2008; Cadge & Ecklund, 2007).

My dissertation addresses the general question of “what factors contribute to religious (non)transmission?” More specifically, I seek to understand what is the effect of parental religiosity and socialization on religious transmission, and to what degree does religion change across generations? I also seek to answer the question of what is the effect of religious (non)transmission and immigration on the general process of secularization in Canada, Australia, the United States,

and Europe today? My dissertation contributes to the empirical understanding of familial factors in religious socialization. It also quantifies the effects of understudied socialization factors across geographic contexts that have received limited scholarly attention. Additionally, it advances the study of the (non)reproduction of religion among immigrants, the primary group contributing to the diversification of the Western religious landscape. The empirical component of my dissertation also contributes to identifying and assessing the factors that do, or do not, contribute to the secularization paradigm across different countries.

The broader secularization framework posits that key aspects of modernity are driving the decline of religion in the West (Kasselstrand et al., 2023; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Stolz, 2020). However, this intuitively appealing assertion hides the forest behind the trees. This existing theoretical argument often does not account for the many complex phenomena that are causing this decline in religiosity, and the differing patterns this decline often takes between countries. The general theory of secularization identifies a multitude of spheres in the social world and a multitude of mechanisms in which modernization and secularization are at play. My research focuses on two of these mechanisms in detail and uncover how they function precisely: the (non)transmission of religion within the family and immigration. More specifically, I seek to break down and examine specific effects and dynamics within the process of transmission such as family religious socialization. I also analyze the effect of cohort replacement among first- and second-generation immigrants in the West.

My analysis is rooted in the secular transition approach (Voas, 2026). This theory argues that the decline in religiosity occurs mainly through cohort replacement, as younger generations have, on average, lower levels of religiosity compared to generations that preceded them (Pereira Coutinho & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023; Voas & Crockett, 2005; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2020). This

approach is based on two theoretical assumptions: 1) that an individual's (non)religiosity is determined early in life during primary childhood socialization and at the start of secondary socialization (Bengtson et al., 2013), and 2) that their (non)religiosity is then relatively constant throughout their subsequent lifetime (Hayward & Krause, 2013).

This secular transition perspective informs the three quantitative studies that make up this dissertation. The first paper (Chapter 2) examines the effects of different socialization mechanisms, such as talking about religion with your parents and the role religion played in the family during childhood, on the intergenerational transmission of (non)religion within Canadian families. The second paper (Chapter 3) focuses on the effects of religious socialization on the process of secular transition in Canada, Italy, Hungary, Finland and Germany. The third paper (Chapter 4) examines the effects of immigrant generation and the number of years spent in the host country on the level of religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

This dissertation makes both empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of the (non)transmission of religion, migration and, more broadly, to the secularization paradigm. Specifically, I do so by using novel statistical data sources from countries that have often been on the margins of secular transition studies. On an empirical level, these analyses contribute to a deeper understanding of these phenomena by using original survey questions on religious socialization within the family and on respondents' religiosity at the time of migration. Many of these questions are not included in major surveys that have been previously used to examine religious transmission and/or secularization (European Value Survey, World Value Survey, International Social Survey Program, General Social Surveys, German Socio-Economic Panel, etc.). By using new, innovative survey data to deconstruct the socialization process, I will deepen

the understanding of the process of intergenerational (non)transmission and intergenerational religious differences, by measuring the effects of the underlying mechanisms at play. With these data, I will also be able to analyze differences in religiosity between generations of immigrants. This is particularly important given that the countries analyzed rely on immigration to contribute to their demographic renewal. This, in turn, leads to an increasing pluralization of the religious landscape.

Basing my analysis on a comparative approach between countries that are not solely European, this dissertation also contributes to expanding the scope of secularization research beyond Europe. My dissertation contributes to the deepening of secularization theory in general, as I extend the understanding of two of its central dimensions: the family and immigration. By analysing the relative contribution of different family members, my analysis can go beyond a strict intergenerational comparison, showing the relevance of different family dynamics and the religious socialization stemming from them. My dissertation will also contribute to better understanding the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of religion and secularization by comparing different religious groups. In addition, my analyses show that the effects of religious composition generated by immigration within a country or region must also be taken into consideration when studying secularization. The process of secularization is not only transversal to different European and North American countries, but different religious groups nested within these countries also seem to follow a similar pattern of secularization.

Literature Review

The primary objective of this dissertation is to examine how intergenerational religious transmission within the family, as well as immigration, contribute to either accelerating or slowing

the process of secular transition across a range of Western societies. Some of the existing literature in the field of the sociology of religion addresses these research themes, notably the literature on secularization, intergenerational religious transmission, religious socialization, and religious change driven by migration. However, important gaps remain in understanding how these processes interact in Canada and across different national contexts. This dissertation builds on these existing contributions while seeking to address their limitations by offering a comparative and integrative analysis of these mechanisms using comparable and newly developed variables.

Secularization

Classic, Neoclassical, and Contemporary Phases of Secularization Theory

The focus on this first part of the literature review is on the major works that have contributed to the evolution of the secularization framework over the course of its existence. My intention here is not to be exhaustive, nor to present all the positions or arguments that have informed these rich debates, but rather to outline the evolving framework of the secularization paradigm through the scholars who have influenced its key periods and developments.

Classical Theories of Secularization

A number of classical sociologists have addressed the issue of the loss of the social importance of religion. Max Weber is one of the key classic sociological thinkers whose writings shaped the framework that was to become secularization theory. For Weber, the modern era corresponds with a certain form of “demagification (or disenchantment) of the world” characterised by rationalism. Religious explanations become more and more irrelevant in a modern and rationalistic world (Weber, 1946; Weber, 2000). Yet, Weber was not the only one of his time to

argue that modernization was accompanied by the decline of religion. In their own way, Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, and Karl Marx also noted and analyzed these transformations (Stolz & Tanner, 2019; Wilson, 1985a). In 1985, Bryan Wilson revisited the concept of secularization as understood by these 19th and early 20th century authors. In reference to what he described as the “inherited model of secularization,” Wilson stated that it was first and foremost the loss of influence of religion on the social system¹ that was being explored and discussed (Wilson, 1985a; Wilson, 1985b). The classical sociologists examined the social functions of religion, positive in the case of Durkheim and negative in the case of Marx, which took shape through a social system and a set of institutions. With the processes of modernization and secularization, the traditional functions of religion are lost in societies characterised by growing structural differentiation of their social spheres (Wilson, 1985a: 14). For example, social control became increasingly a matter of law and justice, and less and less a matter of religious norms and morals.

Neoclassical Theories of Secularization

One of the key differences between classical and neoclassical theories of secularization is the importance given to the individual. In the classic phase of secularization theories, greater emphasis was placed on meso- and macro-level institutional and societal analyzes, such as the differentiation of social spheres and the decline of religious authority within public institutions. Weber was an exception, however, as he already saw the importance of the meaning that individuals gave to their actions. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, for example, he shows how individual believers attributed religious meaning to disciplined work, viewing it as a moral duty and a sign of salvation, and how this subjective orientation contributed to the development of

¹ Here, Wilson refers to Talcott Parson’s notion of the social system.

a rationalized work ethic (Weber, 2000). In the later neoclassical phase of secularization theories spanning roughly from the 1960s to the 1990s, some sociologists added a greater focus on the individual and religiosity – not as a theory of individualization, but rather as an examination of the causal mechanisms at play when it comes to individual (non)religiosity. This is likely one of the main reasons why Weber’s influence is largest among many later neoclassical scholars. For Wilson, religious institutions and leaders had lost their authority over individuals by the second half of the 20th century in Britain and Western Europe, over an individual’s beliefs, practices and the moral principles that guide their lives (Dobbelaere, 2006). It was also in this neoclassical phase that one of the first major definitions of secularization emerged: “the process whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose social significance” (Wilson & Bruce, 2016: 6). This approach, which is strongly inspired by the first phase of the study of secularization, is considered by some authors to be the orthodox model of secularization (Portier, 2014; Wallis & Bruce, 1995).

During the same period, Peter Berger in his seminal work *The Sacred Canopy* complexified and added flesh to the understanding of the process of secularization. In 1967, he wrote that secularization is “a process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institution and symbols” (Berger, 1967: 125). This stems from modernity, which exposes individuals to a world that is increasingly plural and diverse in terms of beliefs and scientific explanations for the world. The previous world where only one set of beliefs was possible, the sacred canopy, had collapsed and individuals were now able to reconsider their faith. This collapse of the sacred canopy would also call into question the status of the dominant religious order and weaken many people’s own religiosity.

However, Berger would later change his initial arguments in his book on the *Desecularization of the World* (Berger, 1999). He recognised, for example, that the process of

secularization can vary greatly from one place to another, and that secularization on a macro or meso-sociological scale is not directly synonymous with secularization at an individual level. Additionally, Berger pointed to many parts of the world that were not undergoing the same process of secularization as they modernised. Certain forms of religious resurgence, such as Evangelicalism in the U.S., Pentecostalism in South America or Islam elsewhere in the world, are among the phenomena that contradicted in some ways the orthodox theory of secularization at the end of the 20th century (Berger, 1999).

Some sociologists of this neoclassical phase also looked at the national and regional differences that can occur in the secularization process. David Martin (1978; 2005) has shown that the religious configuration of a country has an effect on the type of secularization it experiences. In his general theory of secularization, he argues that different socio-cultural circumstances lead to different (non)religious population configurations over time and between countries. For example, secularization is more rapid and often conflictual in countries where there was previously a religious monopoly, such as in Catholic nations. In divided regimes (the so-called 60:40 model), secularization is by contrast generally more gradual and less conflictual as the coexistence of different religious groups limits the dominance of any single institution and reduces the likelihood of sharp ruptures between religion and society. In pluralistic regimes, such as the United States where not one religious denomination is found among a majority of the population, secularization may only remain partial as institutions tend to be separated from religion.

During this period, Karel Dobbelaere (1981; 1999; 2002) offered a three-level configuration of the theory of secularization. According to Dobbelaere, it is important to reflect on the micro-, meso- and macro-dimensions of secularization. This is a way of distinguishing levels of analysis from their objects. At the micro-sociological level is the analysis of individual religious behaviour,

such as frequency of religious service attendance, of prayer, etc. The meso-sociological level in turn refers to institutional secularization or organisational change, at the church level for example. Finally, the macro-sociological approach brings together analyzes on a societal scale, such as those of differentiation or the disenchantment of the world. For example, different spheres of society (such as economics, politics, education) become detached from religious influence. This means that religious institutions are losing their influence in areas that were once under their direct or indirect control. Dobbelaere's categorization is significant for the secularization framework, as it allows researchers to classify a large number of more limited theories into an overall whole, and to distinguish between their spheres of influence and analysis.

In 1994, Mark Chaves focused on religious authority and its decline, i.e. the “decrease in the extent to which individual actions are subject to religious control” (1994: 757). This makes it possible to think of secularization as a generalised decline in religious authority. Chaves has also helped to categorise different types of differentiation, previously referred to by scholars of secularization as only a general concept. Building on Dobbelaere's work (1981), Chaves also sought to distinguish between the societal, organisational and individual levels of differentiation. This makes it possible to measure the effect of (declining) religious authority at different levels of society and to account, for example, for the influence that this authority can have on the actions of individuals.

At the same time, other sociologists were working to better establish and defend what would become the secularization paradigm, or in other words the orthodox model of secularization (Bruce, 2002; Wallis & Bruce 1995), especially in the face of heavy criticism coming from the US and religious market models denying the existence of secularization (Finke & Stark, 1992; Stark, 1999). The orthodox model of secularization of this period reaffirms the relationship between

modernization and secularization. In this theoretical framework, modernization and its processes of expanding rationalisation, pluralism and existential security lead to a reduction in the social value of religion. Modernity is also accompanied by a “progressive autonomization of societal sectors from the domination of religious meaning and institutions” (Bruce, 2002: 2). This growing loss of influence of religion in the social world is accompanied by a slow and gradual decline in religious practice and individual participation in religious spheres of society.

Although this neoclassical phase was durably shaped by the deepening and refinement of the general theory of secularization, some other theoretical approaches were also put forward as alternatives to secularization during this period. As mentioned earlier, Rodney Stark and his colleagues’ rational-choice theory (Finke & Stark, 1992; Stark, 1999; Stark & Finke, 2000), as well as Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s individualization theory (1999), and Grace Davie “believing without belonging theory (1994) are key examples. For Stark, individuals choose their faiths rationally, weighing up costs and benefits. According to this model, people continue to adopt or reject religious practices based on an assessment of the benefits versus the sacrifices or efforts required in contexts where there is free reign to do so (with limited governmental and institutional controls on the religious market). As for Hervieu-Léger, religion is increasingly becoming a personal affair, with individuals constructing their own spirituality by freely choosing from a variety of beliefs and practices. This process also reflects a change in religious authority from traditional institutions to individual experience, fostering growing pluralism and subjectivity in religious life, rather than religious decline as such. Grace Davie’s “believing without belonging” thesis suggests that individuals continue to hold religious beliefs while increasingly disengaging from institutional forms of religion, such as church attendance and formal affiliation (1994).

Despite these alternative theoretical approaches, which also offer insights into the changing religious landscape and religious behavior of individuals, the theory of secularization has been able to sustain itself due to the data on which it is based. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the share of religious nones grew rapidly in Europe, Canada, Australia and even the United States, providing fuel for contemporary secularization theories.

Contemporary Theories of Secularization

At the turn of the 2000s, the secularization framework had been fleshed out to a greater extent by many key scholars of the neoclassical phase, and was reinforced by the empirical trends of continued growing nonreligion in most Western contexts, including now in the United States as well (Voas & Chaves, 2018). The analysis of religious transformations in Western populations had become a laboratory of sorts for the study of secularization. A number of more recent major studies, often based on quantitative surveys, have helped to deepen the understanding of the evolving empirical phenomenon (Baker & al., 2015; Kasselstrand & al., 2023; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Pollack & Rosta, 2017; Stolz & al., 2016; Voas, 2009; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022). At the core of this progress was the use of large-scale quantitative databases such as national censuses, national general social surveys, and international databases such as the EVS, ESS, ISSP, WVS, etc. These repeated cross-national data made it possible to monitor long lasting trends in the religious affiliation, practices and beliefs of Western populations.

However, this more recent contemporary phase of secularization theories and the many empirical studies it has given rise to do not mean that the secularization paradigm is now exempt from criticism. In 2011, for example, Steve Bruce titled his book *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Opposition from a few key alternative theoretical approaches still weighs

heavily on the secularization paradigm. In addition to criticism coming from the remnants of religious market theories mentioned previously in the neoclassical phase, the individualization thesis has expanded to include a more robust “change not decline”, “religious transformations” “religion to spirituality”, “believing-without-belonging” critique of secularization. For proponents of individualization theory, choice is central to the adoption of religiosity as it becomes less and less of an obligation in the course of socialization. In the context of religious transmission, this can be understood in terms of the progressive shift and broader liberalization of values among younger generations where greater emphasis is placed on individual choices. These younger cohorts are increasingly critical of religious traditionalism, while also being more open to distancing their religiosity from that of their parents in order to construct their own belief systems (Friesen, 2025).

To defend the validity of secularization research against some of its critiques, Bruce (2011) used evidence from Britain to show that the process of secularization had already been underway for several decades in that country, and that despite some attempts at alternative explanations and spiritualization, religious practices and beliefs were indeed being abandoned. In a 2023 article, Bruce and Voas also defend the idea that “contemporary spirituality falls very far short of compensating for the decline of conventional religion.” (Bruce & Voas, 2023: 3). When survey researchers include questions on spirituality, this tends to further divide and segment individuals who were previously grouped within traditional religious categories without increasing their overall number.

A recent similar endeavour can be found in *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society* by Kasselstrand, Zuckerman, and Cragun (2023). In this book, the authors pursue two main objectives. The first is to argue in defense, once again, of secularization theory. Numerous American works contradicting secularization theory, notably those by Stark and his colleagues,

helped create a “reasonable doubt” when it came to secularization among many studying religion in the later half of the twentieth century. Kasselstrand et al. reveal the limits of Stark’s work, and especially his religious market theory, by rejecting one of his key axioms, namely that religion is something imminently natural to humans. Rather than being something innate, Kasselstrand et al. argue instead that, if not socialised into conventional religion, individuals typically stay far away from it. These researchers use extensive statistical data of continued decline in individual-level conventional religious practices, beliefs and identities from across Western countries, and among many non-Western countries as well, to argue for the continued support of secularization theories. They also explore more complex cases, such as in Russia, where secularization is also present despite specific historical and political circumstances, and show how these exceptions typically prove the broader rule of secularization. In this particular case, the decline in religiosity was artificially accelerated under the communist regime of the USSR. Following its collapse, religiosity stabilized and was partially sustained by ethnonationalist movements, although this only maintained a relatively low overall level of religiosity. Through these pivotal periods, secularization nonetheless continued to advance in the country.

Despite its critiques, secularization theories remain alive and well in the field of sociology of religion, as Stolz demonstrated at his presidential address for the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR) in Barcelona in 2019. In this address, Stolz (2020) reviewed the state of research on secularization. Contrary to what his impressions first led him to believe, he writes that the field has evolved greatly since the beginning of the twentieth century. In his view, one of the qualities of this progress is the fact that it has been possible to move beyond the stage of mainly theoretical work to more thoroughly empirically test key hypotheses. In particular, this growth in empirical analysis has made it possible to describe the different stages that the process of

secularization undergoes in various countries. However, certain limitations persist in the study of secularization. In a debate on the evolution of the study of secularization, David Voas (2020) points out that, despite considerable progress, it remains unclear how and why this secularization occurs. It is not sufficient to assume that modernity undermines religiosity and that generational replacement necessarily results in religious decline. What are the mechanisms that contribute to the decline of religion from one generation to the next? As a locus for analyzing the “how,” he specifically highlights religious socialization. In his view, understanding how secularization unfolds requires examining the socialization processes of younger generations. The first article of my dissertation addresses this issue by analyzing empirically the dynamics of religious transmission within the family.

Contemporary Cultural Context, Secularization and the Family

More recently, a growing number of scholars have drawn attention to the effects of the long-term process of secularization on the dominant culture of Western societies. Since the 1960s, the progression of secularization has contributed to transforming the broader cultural environment of most Western countries. The historically Christian majority has gradually declined, while the proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals has steadily increased. This demographic transformation of the religious landscape has been accompanied by a broader cultural shift. Drawing on Peter Berger’s classic concept of the “sacred canopy,” Watts and Wilkins-Laflamme refer to this emerging cultural context as the “secular sacred canopy.” This secular cosmology reflects a dominant cultural ethos in which religion no longer constitutes the default frame of reference shared by the majority of the population. Instead, nonreligion increasingly becomes the cultural default. According to Watts and Wilkins-Laflamme, “this secular cosmology is composed

of three broad cultural models: (1) an empiricist epistemology, which holds that science is the authoritative means of identifying true knowledge; (2) a naturalist ontology, which posits that the natural world exhausts reality; and (3) a romantic liberal imaginary, which conceives of the individual actor as both ontologically prior and ‘sacred’ and prescribes the good life as one of authentic self-realization” (2026:4-5). Although not identical, this conceptualization of the dominant cultural ethos echoes Taylor’s (2007) notion of a *secular age*, Woodhead’s (2016) idea of a *cultural shift*, and Reimer’s (2023) concept of the *modern zeitgeist*.

With the progression of secularization being associated with cultural change at the macrosociological level, it is also necessary to consider how these transformations may affect the family. Understanding the broader sociocultural context in which families are embedded is therefore essential for understanding the conditions under which religious transmission occurs. When examining the family as an institution, as this dissertation does, it is difficult, if not impossible, to overlook the relationship and reciprocal influences between family life and the broader cultural environment in which it is embedded.

Understanding the dominant culture as increasingly secular and progressively shaped by the process of secularization has important implications for how families and parents approach religious socialization and transmission. In this context, religion faces a growing legitimacy deficit relative to scientific explanations. Empirical evidence, scientific research, and knowledge produced through the scientific method increasingly constitute authoritative sources of truth on which a growing share of individuals rely when making choices and important decisions about how to conduct their lives. This way of understanding the world now extends to many areas of social life, including education, governance, and the economy. Family life, parenting, and child-rearing are likewise being reconsidered in the context of advanced secularization and the transformation of the broader cultural cosmology. Parents increasingly draw on approaches informed by research on

child development, for example, while becoming less likely to take religious teachings and prescriptions for granted as authoritative guides to raising their children (Watts and Wilkins-Laflamme 2026:10).

The place and importance given to the individual are also changing within this new secular cultural cosmology. Autonomy, individual freedom, personal choice, self-realization, independence, and self-expression are central to what Watts and Wilkins-Laflamme identify as the “romantic liberal imaginary.” This idea also echoes the concepts of *expressive individualism* (Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme 2020:175; Watts 2022), the *age of authenticity* (Taylor 2007), and the *me-society* (Stolz et al. 2016). At the core of these different concepts is individual agency and the growing importance attributed to individuals’ choices, legitimacy, and authority. As family structures absorb elements of the broader cultural ethos in which they are embedded, the prevailing discourse surrounding individual autonomy is itself transmitted as a cultural belief that shapes people’s representations and understandings of the world (Devaud 2023:83-84).

Within this cultural context, religious authority loses ground to the authority increasingly vested in the individual. Young people are likewise increasingly expected to choose their own life trajectories. This means that younger generations exercise considerably greater autonomy in deciding whether or not to belong to a religion. They are also more likely to determine for themselves which beliefs and practices, if any, accompany their chosen religious or nonreligious identities. In some cases, there may simply be no active choice concerning religion at all.

These conditions make religious transmission more complex, since parents can no longer simply inculcate religion in their children with the expectation that they will subsequently adopt it as their own. Instead, the reception of religion, and what it entails in terms of practices, beliefs, and values, is increasingly negotiated by adolescents and young adults themselves. According to Bruce,

a more individualized, privatized, and compartmentalized form of religiosity is also more difficult to sustain and transmit (2011:48).

The family is not immune to transformations in the dominant cultural model. It contributes to these changes while simultaneously being shaped by this new cultural configuration. The family should therefore not be understood solely as a site of resistance to secularization, but rather as an institution that can contribute either to the transmission of religion or to breaking the continuity of religion across generations. By placing the family at the centre of the analysis, this dissertation seeks to open the black box of family religious socialization and assess its effects, whether they contribute to religious continuity or to religious decline.

Intergenerational Religious Transmission²

Large portions of nonreligious populations in the West have left their parents' religion at some point in their own lives, rather than being raised nonreligious by their parents (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022). This is one of the ways I see much higher rates of nonreligion among younger generations in Western countries, compared with their parents' generation (Bréchon, 2018; Müller & Porada, 2022; Stolz et al., 2024). Consequently, the successful (or unsuccessful) transmission of religion between parent and child becomes a crucial factor in the shape that secularization patterns take in a region and over time.

In the existing literature, religious affiliation and church membership have been used to measure the number of individuals belonging to a certain religion. Recent studies by Wilkins-Laflamme (2020; 2023) also show how relevant this indicator is in assessing the intergenerational

² Parts of this section of the proposal are taken from the article *The Family Transmission of Religion in Canada: An Intergenerational Approach to Religious Socialization* (Legault-Leclair, 2024). Some changes have been made to facilitate the integration of the paper into the dissertation format.

transmission of religion. By comparing the religion of parents and respondents using survey data, Wilkins-Laflamme was able to quantify the decline in religious affiliation among Millennials (from their mostly Boomer parents). Her work puts into perspective the strength of the effect that parents' religious affiliation can have on whether parents are able to pass on their religion to their kids. This effect is weaker when two parents do not share the same religion for example. It is also among Catholic and mainline Protestant couples that the transmission is weakest, whereas rates of nonreligious parents being able to pass on their non-affiliation to their kids are quite high. Other studies have also shown that two parents belonging to the same religion are more likely to successfully transmit their religion to their kids than parents who do not share the same religious affiliation (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Wilson & Sandomirsky, 1991). In Bader and Desmond's work (2006), this constitutes a marker of religious constancy that favors the intergenerational transmission of religion. Parents' religious affiliation is also a useful predictor for quantifying changes in religion over the life course (Caron-Malenfant et al., 2018; Reimer & Hiemstra, 2018).

Behavioural measures such as frequently attending religious services are also used for measuring religious transmission between parent and child (Haskell et al., 2016; Meunier, Laniel & Demers, 2010; Min, Silverstein & Gruenewald, 2018: 581; Smith & Snell, 2009; Vermeer, Janssen & Sheepers, 2012). Parents who are typically more active in their religiosity (attend religious services frequently) are usually more successful in passing their religion onto their children. Frequency of prayer is another indicator of religiosity that can be used in the analysis of religious (non)transmission. Müller and Porada (2022) have used three types of prayer (mealtime, bedtime, and other occasions) to show that it can be a means of religious socialization during childhood, as well as constituting an element of private religious practice.

Examining the transmission of religious and civic values represents another way to assess religious family dynamics. In this regard, different value orientations can be used to better understand what enables religious transmission between parent and child. For instance, Jesse Smith (2021) shows that religious transmission is stronger in religiously conservative family settings. Religious values can also be used as a marker for what is transmitted from one generation to the next (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004).

One of the most significant works in this field of study, which uses many of the variables I have discussed so far, is Bengtson et al.'s *Family and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations* (2013). Using the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG), a survey carried out repeatedly in the United States between the 1970s and 2005, Bengtson et al. find that “the extent to which religious families are successful in passing on their faith to younger generations appears to have remained stable over time” (2013: 185). However, in a 2018 article, Bengtson also argues that the family is an important driving force in the socialization of those without religion and that it contributes to religious decline across generations and to wider secularization processes (2018: 273).

Religious beliefs can also be subject to a degree of quantification (Thiessen & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2017; 2020). It can be done by estimating their prevalence while comparing certain groups to others (Beyer, Cummins & Craig, 2019). One area of the literature highlights the growth of the spiritual but not religious (SBNR) category among younger people. The SBNR are often characterized by an abandonment or blending of traditional religious indicators with less conventional spiritual beliefs or practices. Studying beliefs and their intergenerational transmission, however, can make comparison across religious groups difficult, but beliefs remain another useful indicator for measuring increases, stability or declines across generations.

Praying with one's children, bringing them to church, involving other family members in their religious upbringing, sharing values, keeping coherence between what is transmitted and the way the family lives, closeness between family members, and the nature of family relationships are all factors associated with successful religious transmission (Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Yet, some studies suggest that parents talking about religion with their children is one of the most effective means for a successful transmission of religion from parent to child (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004: 85). Smith and Adamczyk (2021) argue that talking about religion with children is especially important in social environments where "religious language" is no longer dominant, such as contexts with larger nonreligious populations and in more advanced stages of secularization. Since children may not be picking up religion from their surrounding social environment in such contexts, such as at school or from other members of the community, parents become especially important actors in their child's adoption or not of a faith tradition. This is the case in many parts of Canada where religiosity indicators are very low among the majority of the general population (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022). Even more than in the United States, the absence of a religious ethos can act as a headwind against religious transmission in Canada. The ability to master some form of religious culture, which would be transmitted within the family through regular, warm, positive, sensitive, and child-centered communication, would increase the chances that a viable long-term religious transmission takes place. Studies in this body of literature put family socialization at the center of their analyzes. They advocate for the importance of parents and grandparents in the transfer of values, especially at an early age during primary socialization (Copen & Silverstein, 2007; Min, Silverstein, & Gruenewald, 2018: 582).

Family Religious Socialization and Patterns of Secularization

In the late 2000s, David Voas (2008; 2009) developed the first version of what was to become his theory of secular transition. Drawing on the process of demographic transition, he described the general decline of religiosity (i.e. secular transition) as a process of “permanent large-scale change” that is intergenerational, not cyclical, and very difficult to undo (Voas, 2008: 25). He argues that the main cause of this phenomenon is modernization, which is said to have a negative impact on religion. Whereas understanding modernization as the cause of religious decline was not new, being characteristic of the previous works in the classical and neo-classical phases of secularization theories, what was new about Voas’ theory was the focus on how the process of secular transition unfolded once it had started. For Voas, cohort replacement is key. Younger generations are almost always less religious than older ones across the West. This intergenerational decline of religion usually happens gradually over multiple generations, with a first generation of decline slowing their frequency of religious practice, but often keeping their religious affiliation, certain key beliefs and some forms of occasional religious activities (what Voas calls fuzzy fidelity). However, this weaker religiosity also means weaker religious socialization among the next generation, who are even less likely to hold onto religious practices, beliefs and identities.

The theoretical model of secular transition Voas puts forward thus consists of three categories at the population level: the “religious”, the “fuzzy” and the “secular”. Voas defines a religious person as someone who values religion and who attends religious services at least once a month. Conversely, he characterizes the “secular” or “irreligious” part of the population as people who do not practice or only practice on holidays, and who attach little or no importance to religion. Finally, between these two categories, he classifies the “fuzzy” group of individuals as people who are moderately or slightly religious. In short, Voas argues that the decline in the proportion of

“religious” people goes through an initial increase in the proportion of “fuzzy” people before the share of “secular” people becomes dominant. Figure 1 shows the fitted model described here.

Figure 1: Graph from the article “The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe”, *European Sociological Review* (2009) by David Voas.

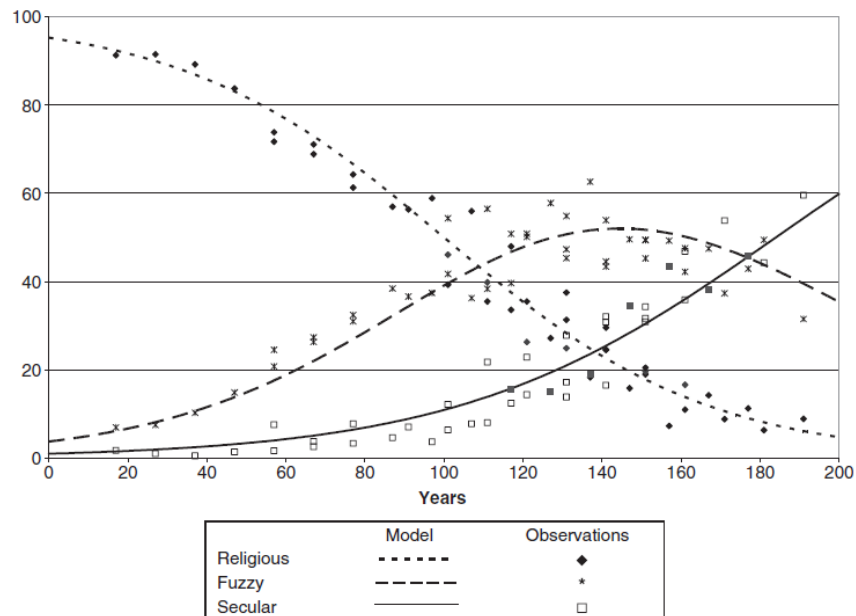


Figure 3 The trajectory of fuzzy Christianity: model and observations
 Note: The observed values are those shown in Figure 2, where each country occupies a 60-year interval providing the best overall fit with the model.

Many aspects of this secular transition model remain to be empirically tested and developed further. Some studies have begun to do so. A body of more recent research is working to specify the exact nature, shape and timing that characterise this process across different national and regional contexts. Whereas Voas empirically tests his model only with European data, Simon Brauer’s (2018) research applies Voas’ theory to the US. Brauer compares the pace of religious decline in the United States with that in European countries. He finds that “the U.S. data align surprisingly well with Voas’ model of religious decline” (Brauer, 2018: 670). These results are in direct contradiction to a body of late twentieth-century literature that suggested the US was an exception in terms of secularization, and confirms what Voas and Chaves wrote in 2016: “First,

American religiosity has in fact been declining for decades, and second, that decline has been produced by the same generational patterns that lie behind religious decline elsewhere in the West” (Voas & Chaves, 2016: 1520).

Ingrid Storm (2009) examines in turn the fuzzy fidelity group in more detail. Since the category “fuzzy” represents the halfway stage between “religious” and “secular”, Storm uses cluster analysis to identify four subcategories among the broader “fuzzy”. She found that it included individuals who are “moderately religious”, “passively religious”, “belonging without believing” and “believing without belonging”.

One of the most common ways of assessing the progress of secularization and the effect of family socialization on respondents’ religiosity is to measure their religious practice through service attendance. Voas and Storm (2012) carried out this examination for England and Australia. They were able to show that the choice to religiously socialize one’s children has a strong effect on children’s religious practices later in life. The authors also show that it can have an indirect effect, i.e., through family osmosis. Voas and Storm also note that the influence of grandparents is not only important via the religious socialization they offer their children (the respondents’ parents), but also to their grandchildren directly (the respondents). According to the authors, grandparents will play an increasingly important role in religious socialization as parents become less and less religious.

The theoretical model of secular transition proposed by Voas is rather recent and so is still in its early stages of being developed. This said, by measuring the effects of religious transmission within the family and its effects on patterns of secularization, this model offers an important set of concepts and arguments that will support my analyzes in this dissertation. By analyzing religious socialization and the intergenerational (non)reproduction of religiosity, I aim to further the

understanding of the process of secular transition and how it occurs, by focusing on the mechanisms of intergenerational (non)transmission of religion and religiosity within the family and through migration.

Religious Change among Immigrants

It has been shown that migration can be a disruptive event for migrants' religiosity (Breton, 2012; Simon & Tiberj, 2015; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). Changing social and national contexts can alter people's own personal relationship with their religiosity. Moving from a very religious country to a secular one can contribute to this, for example. Moving from a country where the migrant belongs to the majority religion to one where they are now a minority is also a factor that can influence their religiosity. Through these potential changes and dynamics, the question of religious transmission is presented in a new light. What may have seemed obvious before migration may now be called into question. Some may push against the secular contexts in the West, whereas others might stop trying to transmit religion to their offspring. As such, the role of religion in the lives of migrants and subsequent generations needs to be considered in light of the host environment and what it means for migrants in their new society.

The works of Kasseltrand and Mahmoudi (2020), Simon and Tiberj (2015), Drouhot (2021) and Connor (2008) all examine the evolution of immigrants' religiosity when they arrive in a new environment. This set of studies argues that the religious landscape of the host country must be taken into account when studying immigrant religiosity, since it seems to influence the religiosity of newcomers. For example, Drouhot suggests that "Muslim families may emphasize religious transmission more strongly than Christian immigrant groups since they may perceive Catholicism and *laïcité*—two dominant forces in French culture and institutions—as threatening" (802: 2021).

Kasselstrand (2020) specifically focuses on the difference in religiosity between immigrants and populations born in Scandinavian countries. She analyzes changes in immigrant religiosity over time in these countries, which are among the most secularised in the world. Using data from the European Social Survey, Kasselstrand shows that immigrants gradually become more secularised after their arrival. First-generation immigrants are more religious than second-generation immigrants, and second-generation immigrants are more religious than third generation or more Scandinavians. However, she also finds that “generation 2.5 [respondents with only one parent born outside the country] is more secular than natives on self-rated religiosity and belonging” (2020: 633). Kasselstrand argues that this may be due to intermarriage between individuals of different religions or between people born in the country and people from an immigrant background.

Kasselstrand’s Scandinavian results seem to differ in part from those found in France. Simon and Tiberj (2015) analyzed changes in the religiosity of immigrants coming to live in France and showed that their higher than average levels of religiosity did not decline after their arrival. Simon and Tiberj focused specifically on Muslim immigrants, and showed that there was a relatively strong retention of Muslim religiosity among immigrants and their children. Islam in France seems to be a special case in that it is also a strong marker of identity and culture. However, some research done in Québec has also established a relationship between the desire to preserve cultural identity and religion among Muslim immigrants (Eid, 2003). Peter Beyer found similar results regarding non-Christian immigrants in Canada. Using data from the Canadian Census from 1971 to 2001, he shows: “judging by past patterns, [that] new immigrants and Canada-born populations will pass on their patterns of religious identity to their children, meaning that the trend away from Christian identity among them will likely perpetuate itself” (2005: 192)

The survey used by Simon and Tiberj (2015) in their *Trajectoires et origines*, was also used by Drouhot (2021) in an article published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. In this paper, Drouhot shows that Muslims in France are more religious than their non-Muslim counterparts, in addition to highlighting the transmission capacity present within this group. Drouhot sheds light on the strength of the transnational links between Muslim communities that encourage the retention and transmission of Islam in France. To explain this persistence of religion among French Muslims across generations of immigration, despite France being in an advanced stage of secularization overall, Drouhot points to the reactive religiosity of some French Muslims. He found that Muslims who perceive discrimination have, on average, a higher self reported level of religiosity (2021: 822).

A longitudinal study from Québec carried out in the 1990s also looks at the religiosity of immigrants. In a 2008 article, Connor shows that the migration process had a negative effect on the religious participation of immigrants overall (not just Muslims) who settled in Québec. The more time individuals spent in Québec, the lower the proportion of individuals who attended religious services at least once a month. One of the interesting findings in this article is the apparent similar rate of decline between Catholics and individuals from other religions. The secular social environment of Québec seems to affect Catholic immigrants and immigrants of other religions in a similar way.

The impact of the religious environment on intergenerational transmission has been the subject of academic debate between Kelley and de Graaf (1997) and Voas and Storm (2021). Kelley and de Graaf argue that the effect of parental religious socialization is stronger in a highly secularised environment than in a more religious one. In religious environments, families would not have to protect their children from the influences of a more secular social context, and children

would be exposed to religion outside the home as well as within. By contrast, in more secularised environments, religious families would be the only source of religious socialization, and feel the need to protect their children from surrounding secular values. Consequently, religious transmission would become more the responsibility of parents in contexts of more advanced secularization. In support of this bold proposition, the authors went so far as to write that “In relatively secular nations, national context matters little or not at all, while family background matters a lot” (Kelley & de Graaf, 1997: 653). This argument was reiterated and defended by Kelley (2015) eighteen years later in an article updating these data: “In relatively secular nations, the religious views of secular families are reinforced. However, devout families in these societies are usually able to insulate their children from secular pressures. Hence in relatively secular nations, the effect of family religiosity on children’s religiosity is strong, and the effect of national religious context is small” (Kelley, 2015: 310).

This argument was later challenged by Voas and Storm (2021). They criticized Kelley and de Graaf for misinterpreting the indicators they use to measure religion. According to Voas and Storm, belief in God and participation in religious service are not equivalent and do not vary at the same rate and according to the same logic. For them, you could believe in God and not attend religious services in a highly secularised society, whereas in a more religious society you could have a large proportion of the population believing in God as well as a large proportion of the population attending weekly religious services. The mistake made by Kelley and de Graaf is to assert that transmission is effective in a society where younger generations have high levels of belief when, overall, the rate of participation in religious services is low. Voas and Storm thus reject the explanation put forward by Kelley and de Graaf, pointing out that there is a positive correlation between the level of religiosity of a certain milieu and the effectiveness of religious

transmission, but that belief could not be interpreted in the same way as practice as they are different and inequivalent measures of religiosity (Voas & Storm, 2021: 195).

This body of literature indicates overall then that immigrants' capacity to transmit their faith to their children would be impacted by their move from one country to another; impacted by their new social environment and its overall levels of religiosity. This could have very real implications for secular transition trends in the host countries. A growing proportion of Western immigrants originally come from world regions much more religious than Western countries, and typically have much higher birth rates on average than those born in Western nations. This has long been seen as a countervailing force to secularization trends in the West. However, if the more secular social environment of Western nations is impacting immigrant religiosity and religious transmission to the second and third generations of immigration, then the effects on the secular transition process could be mitigated. One of the limitations of this area of study remains the effect produced by the event of migration itself. Does the process of migration decrease, increase or have no effect on the level of religiosity of the migrant? One of my research goals is to examine not only the impact of the host society, but also how levels of religiosity vary across immigrant generations depending on the context of settlement.

Theoretical Framework for the Dissertation

The theoretical framework of this dissertation is fundamentally rooted in the paradigm of secularization, more specifically in contemporary secular transition theory and the emphasis it places on intergenerational religious (non)socialization and (non)transmission. Since these concepts will be used in slightly different ways in the various dissertation chapters (written as independent scientific articles), I will offer here only a few introductory definitions, which I will then return to in each chapter, adapting them to each specific research goal.

Secularization

In 2002, Steve Bruce famously wrote that “modernization creates problem for religion” (2002: 2). In other words, the various factors of modernization have a negative effect on ‘religion’ in general. The expansion of higher education, democratisation and technical rationalisation, growing secular competition from other spheres, growing existential security and a decline in fertility are just a few examples of societal changes that are theorised to have an adverse effect on religious vitality in national contexts (Voas & Chaves, 2016). Stolz and Novak succinctly define secularization as “the decline of the importance of religion on a societal, organisational and individual level” (Stolz & Novak, 2023: 2). This brief definition is useful because it provides a more complex understanding of the different levels of analysis involved with the empirical process of secularization.

In my dissertation, my analyzes will be primarily at the individual and societal/national levels. Although it is possible to offer several other definitions of secularization (see for example Kasselstrand et al., 2023; Stolz and Tanner, 2019; Tschannen, 1991), I find Berger’s and Chaves’ to be especially helpful in tying the macro to the micro. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger wrote that secularization is “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols” (1967: 125). For Chaves, secularization is characterised notably by a loss of authority from religious spheres within society (1994: 750). This loss of influence by religious authorities is especially important for individual-level secularization, since in such a context individuals are increasingly left to their own devices when it comes to matters of religious beliefs, practices and identities. With the fall of the sacred canopy, religion becomes a choice, a choice placed more and more on the individual that many may not value in a context where religion has lost much of its social prestige, importance and authority. Varying

according to national, regional and time period context, recent processes of modernization seem to create an environment of individualisation that has a negative influence on the pursuit of a religious lifestyle among large segments of populations.

Secular Transition

The secular transition is a more specific contemporary theory within the larger paradigm of secularization that addresses the shape and patterns that the decline of religion takes demographically and historically.³ As mentioned previously, populations would first go through a phase of decline in their share of religious individuals and of growth in their share of ‘fuzzy’ individuals. Later with following generations, the share of ‘fuzzy’ individuals declines, accelerating the growth of the share of ‘secular’ individuals. Secular transition theory understands religious decline as most notably an intergenerational process, and so the concept of religious (non)transmission between generations is key. The broader context of modernity is characterized by processes such as the liberalization of values, increasing individualization, and the transformation of family structures, all of which tend to hinder the effective socialization and intergenerational transmission of religion from parents to their children over time.

Cohort Replacement

The process of cohort replacement refers to the idea that social change occurs as newer cohorts grow in size and their social behaviors become predominant, eventually surpassing those of earlier generations. In the context of secularization, cohort replacement takes place when

³ To take into account these changes, researchers using the secular transition approach generally define religiosity on the basis of three main indicators: religious affiliation, i.e. belonging to a religious group or not; religious participation, i.e. taking part in religious services such as mass, and belief, i.e. the level of orthodoxy of belief in God or some form of higher being or transcendence (Crockett & Voas, 2006).

younger cohorts, which are on average less religious, gradually replace older cohorts, which are on average more religious (Coutinho & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2024). This process contributes to religious decline, as average levels of religiosity within cohorts tend to remain relatively stable over the life course⁴ (Stolz et al., 2021). As less religious cohorts progressively replace more religious ones, the overall average level of religiosity in society declines. Cohort replacement is also referred to as the cohort effect or the generational effect, thereby emphasizing the population-level and macrosociological dynamics of secularization (Crockett & Voas, 2006).

Religious Transmission

Consequently, according to secular transition theory, one of the most important mechanisms contributing to secularization is the weakening of the intergenerational transmission of religion. By transmission, I mean the reproduction of religious affiliation and levels of religiosity from one generation to the next; from parent to child. Stolz and his team recently defined this type of transmission ‘as a process by which religiosity (religious identity, practices, beliefs, values, or norms) is passed on from parents to their offspring, either intentionally or unintentionally’ (Stolz et al., 2024: 2). The social environment can have an important impact on the level of success of religious transmission, as well as many other factors tied to family and parental characteristics. So can the migration event and the arrival of more religious immigrant populations to the West.

Research Goals and Questions

This dissertation will focus on three main research themes: the intergenerational transmission of religion in Canada (article 1); the effect of religious socialization on patterns of

⁴ However, some studies suggest that variations may occur at key life-course transitions, such as the transition to adulthood or in later life, despite an overall stability throughout adulthood (Hayward & Krause, 2013).

secular transition across five countries (Canada, Italy, Hungary, Finland and Germany) (article 2); and religious change across cohorts and over time among immigrants in four countries (Canada, United Kingdom, United States, and Australia) (article 3).

Intergenerational Religious Transmission in Canada

My first research goal is to measure the influence of different aspects of family socialization on individual levels of religiosity, against a backdrop of intergenerational decline of religiosity in Canada since the Boomer generation. These aspects of family socialization include their religious tradition, parental levels of religiosity, and frequency of talking about religion in the home. Which of these aspects of family socialization play the largest role in (un)successful religious transmission, within a wider context of more advanced secularization in Canada? While cohort replacement is the mechanism at the heart of secular transition, research carried out in this field has only partially explored the operationalisation of intergenerational (non)transmission. By identifying and measuring the most important mechanisms of religious socialization during childhood, I will show which factors of religious socialization within the family contribute, or not, to religious (non)transmission. Some important works in this field have shown intergenerational differences in levels of religiosity (Crockett & Voas, 2006; Voas, 2009; Voas & Chaves, 2016). However, they do not address family socialization behaviors and characteristics. By measuring the importance of socialization with indicators such as talking about religion with one's parents during childhood, or the frequency of different religious practices in the family during childhood, it is possible to identify the effects of these family dynamics on the respondent's adult levels of religiosity.

I also examine the exact nature of the intergenerational decline of religiosity across Canada, a nation to date understudied by secular transition works, to see how closely (or not) it fits with the secular transition model. Ultimately, the first article of this dissertation sheds light on the Canadian reality of the intergenerational transmission of religion, while highlighting its distinctive features across a range of religious affiliations, practices and types of family socialization. In the course of this analysis, I demonstrate that, by itself, family does not provide a sufficiently strong religious socialization to enable stable or upward intergenerational religious reproduction between generations. Instead, the family transmits a weaker level of religiosity as the decline of religion is generally not total within one generation, but rather gradual from one generation to the next.

Family Religious Socialization and Cross-National Patterns of Secular Transition

Since secular transition theory has become central in the secularization paradigm during its contemporary phase, sociologists have showed that the process of religious decline developed in different environments, at different times, yet followed certain shared logics. The main goal of the second article is to build on this theory by identifying some of the key family socialization features that contribute to either an accelerated or delayed process of secular transition across five Western countries, and how these factors play out and unfold. These key family socialization features include the majority or minority nature of the religious tradition an individual is raised in, the types of religious practices experienced during childhood, and the home attitude towards religion during childhood. Effect size is compared between these variables to determine which ones influence the secular transition process the most, and how this varies between national contexts.

The central question of this article is: What are the effects of the religious tradition an individual is raised in, types of religious practices experienced during childhood, as well as the home attitude towards religion on the secular transition process?

Religious Change among Immigrants

The third chapter examines the religiosity of immigrants across four Western countries: Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. Because the migratory event can be disruptive to the religious lives of immigrants and their descendants, this chapter analyzes changes in their levels of religiosity over time and across generations. This analysis also allows for comparisons between immigrant populations and the third generation or higher of the host society. The objective is thus to assess changes in the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants, relative to the rest of the population.

To evaluate changes in immigrant religiosity, I take into account both the proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals living in the host country and the number of years spent in the country of settlement. By emphasizing the context of settlement, it is crucial to assess the effect of the religious composition of the regions. Accordingly, the analysis incorporates regional variation in the proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals across the four countries. This approach allows for a more nuanced analysis and makes it possible to identify differences between contexts characterized by high or low levels of religious non-affiliation.

Previous research on the religious integration of immigrants has also shown that the first years following migration are particularly important for understanding subsequent changes in immigrants' levels of religiosity. I therefore estimate the effect of time spent in the host country for first-generation immigrants in order to assess whether duration of residence influences their

religiosity. I also examine the effect of parents' length of residence on the religiosity of second-generation individuals. This analysis is grounded in the idea that prolonged exposure to the host society may influence parents' religiosity, which in turn affects whether religion is transmitted to their children.

This article situates the impact of immigrant religiosity within the host society and assesses the effect of migration on the level of religiosity of subsequent generations on immigration. It also highlights broader trends in the religious trajectories of immigrants in relation to secular transition. The data show that although immigrants exhibit higher levels of religiosity than the non-immigrant population, religiosity tends to decline from one generation to the next, following a pattern of cohort replacement similar to that observed among third-generation or higher individuals.

Data

In order to answer my research questions, each of my three articles will be based on quantitative statistical analyses with general population survey data. In the following sections, I briefly describe the data and statistical analyses used for each of my three articles.

The Transmission of Religion Across Generations Survey⁵

The first and second article of this dissertation use new survey data collected in 2021 as part of the larger international research project *The Transmission of Religion Across Generations: A Comparative International Study of Continuities and Discontinuities in Family Socialization*, led by Christel Gärtner and Olaf Müller at the University of Munster. This Religious Transmission

⁵ This section is taken from the article *The Family Transmission of Religion in Canada: An Intergenerational Approach to Religious Socialization* (Legault-Leclair, 2024). Some changes have been made to facilitate the integration of the paper into the dissertation format.

survey took respondents an average of 25 minutes to complete, and was run by the panel firm Ipsos. It was administered by computer-assisted telephone interviews to individuals 18 years of age and older in five countries (Germany, Finland, Italy, Hungary and Canada). Telephone interviews were conducted on either a landline or cell phone, depending on which device the respondent answered the call.

A total of 8,408 respondents were surveyed across the five countries in the survey (1,501 from Canada; 1,502 from Italy; 1,500 from Finland; 1,500 from Hungary; 1,504 from West Germany; and 901 from East Germany) during the months of January, February and March 2021 as part of this research project. Respondents were given the option of answering the survey in the official national language of their choice. Respondents for the survey were selected under systematic and controlled conditions in a multi-stage stratified random selection procedure. Using a dual-frame procedure, two separate samples were generated in each of the survey countries. Respondents were aged 18 and over. Only institutionalized individuals (in prisons and psychiatric hospitals, for example) were excluded from the sample. Once collected, the data were then weighted according to age, gender, and region of residence of the respondent, to be even more representative of the general adult population. Weighting for Canada was calculated using the 2016 Canadian Census as a reference. For European countries, weights were calculated to correspond to Eurostat 2020 data. It should also be noted that all questions regarding other family members (parents and grandparents especially) were answered by the respondent only.

As the survey was administered during the Covid-19 pandemic, the questionnaire was tailored to reflect people's religious habits in normal times, rather than in times of lockdown that affected places of worship and gatherings of most kinds. I initially gained access to the data as a research assistant for the Torag research group. I also received permission to publish with the data

as part of my RA mandate. Approval was granted from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics to conduct secondary analyzes for my dissertation using the Religious Transmission survey data.

Drawing on these data, I first develop a descriptive account of religious transmission in Canada, and then estimate a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models. This approach enables me to evaluate the impact of religious socialization on respondents' religiosity, while disentangling the relative contribution of parental influences using interaction effects. In the second article, I estimate a series of ordinal logistic regression models to examine the factors influencing the religiosity profiles associated with the secular transition. This approach enables a comparative assessment of family socialization effects across countries situated at different stages of the secular transition.

The Cultural and Social Values Survey

The data for my third article comes from a new survey from a different international research group: the Nonreligion in a Complex Future (NCF) project led by Lori Beaman at the University of Ottawa. The online survey was conducted between September 15-30, 2023 in eight countries. To ensure internal coherence in the analysis, I selected four of them: Australia (1,010 respondents), Canada (1,009 respondents), the UK (1,010 respondents), and the US (1,009 respondents). It was administered in the national language chosen by the respondents, all of whom were aged 18 or over. The survey was carried out by Dynata using a quota sample drawn from their online panel of registered members. Quotas were based on age, gender and region of residence within the eight different countries. Although the sample closely reflects the demographic profile of the countries surveyed, it is not probabilistic.

Being part of the NCF project, I also gained access to the data as a research assistant and permission from the research team to publish with these data. I was granted the approval from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics to conduct secondary analyses for my dissertation with the NCF survey data.

In the third article, I draw on this dataset to estimate hierarchical linear models (HLM) that capture intergenerational differences in religiosity among first- and second-generation immigrants. I further estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) models to evaluate how immigrants' level of religiosity evolves over time in the host country.

Chapter One

The Family Transmission of Religion in Canada: An Intergenerational Approach to Religious Socialization⁶

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Introduction

Demographic changes resulting from modern family dynamics are reshaping today's religious landscapes. Although it is a well-known phenomenon in Canada, very few studies seek to explain it (Stolz, 2020: 291). That is what I will attempt to do in this article. Studying religious (non)transmission from the family perspective in a context strongly influenced by secularization requires rethinking of traditional indicators of religiosity because belonging to a religion no longer comes as a default identity (Kasselstrand et al., 2023: 130). This is even more important when one is interested in Canada, as its religious landscape is largely shaped by recent immigration and the decline of traditional religions (Beyer, 2005; Breton, 2012; Reimer & Hiemstra, 2018). The new representative survey I am using, done in 2021, reflects this changing reality.⁷ Some provinces,

⁶ The research reported in this chapter was made possible through the support of a grant from the Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Templeton Foundation.

⁷ The sample is composed of 26% Catholic, 13% mainline Protestant, 5% Evangelical/Pentecostal, 2% Muslim, 14% other religions and 40% religiously unaffiliated.

such as British Columbia or the Prairies now have a much higher proportion of their population who score low on all religiosity indicators or who have less conventional spiritualities (Bramadat, O'Connell Killen & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022), whereas in other provinces, like in Ontario, the religious landscape has never been more diverse (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023).

Growing religious diversity and secularization are two key factors disrupting the traditional understanding of religious transmission within the family – especially among Christians (Clarke & Macdonald, 2017). In recent years, although some scholars have examined the transmission of religious affiliation within families (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2020), only a handful of studies have used an in-depth approach to studying the intergenerational transmission of the level of religiosity in Canadian families. I address this gap by analyzing the effect of religious socialization mechanisms found in families during childhood. Moreover, there is no recent study of the Canadian case that measures the inter-generational transmission of religion by comparing the level of religiosity of the parents with the level of religiosity of the respondents. I will also carry out this analysis.

The first objective is to quantify the decline of religious affiliation across generations in Canada. The second objective is to measure the influence of family socialization on the respondents' level of religiosity. The third objective seeks to analyze the nature of the intergenerational decline by looking at various indicators of religiosity. Ultimately, this paper contributes to shed light on the Canadian reality of the intergenerational transmission of religion, while highlighting its distinctive features across a range of religious affiliations and practices. The results show that parental religious socialization has a limited effect, rarely reproducing a level of religiosity equal to or greater than that of the parents. This is true for all the religious groups I have studied, including Muslims and Evangelical Christians, albeit to varying degrees. Finally, I also

show that talking about religion or faith with one's parents during adolescence has a similar, weakly positive effect across all the religious groups tested.

Intergenerational Decline and Cohort Replacement

The analysis of the evolution of religiosity over time can take various forms depending on its underlying factors. The cohort effect, like the age effect and the period effect, makes it possible to account for the secularization process. However, unlike the age effect, the cohort effect seems to explain a more significant proportion of the decline in religiosity. According to Crockett and Voas, changes in religiosity over the life course are minor or non-existent because “age differences reflect generational shifts rather than the consequences of aging” (2006: 568). Nevertheless, Bengtson and his team note that age can have a modest effect on religiosity in the American context. The level of religiosity tends to increase slightly, particularly during retirement (the retirement surge), despite the stability of service attendance (Bengtson et al., 2015).

Regarding the period effect, research has demonstrated that certain historical moments, such as the 1960s, or specific historical events such as the fall of the Soviet regime and of the Berlin Wall can significantly influence individuals, yet accurately predicting their exact outcomes remains challenging (Crockett & Voas, 2006).

When looking at the effect of socialization on intergenerational transmission, the cohort effect becomes the most suitable approach to measure differences. Focusing on the disparities between two successive generations allows me to measure what is passed on versus what is omitted or not retained. The period of socialization thus becomes the stage of childhood and adolescence where differentiation occurs between the religiosity of the parents and the religiosity adopted by

their children. There are several reasons why the family is important in the religious socialization of children. Bengtson and his team have identified three key elements:

“The first is status inheritance. Parents situate children in a socioeconomic context of family wealth and education which, over time, facilitates parent-child similarity across a range of value orientations and behaviors. The second theory concerns social learning and role modeling. A third involves the moderating influence of parental affection and affirmation.” (Bengtson et al., 2009: 326).

However, this early period of socialization can also be a time of resistance on the part of the younger generation to the teachings of the parental generation. This intergenerational tension can either diminish the effect of socialization or act as a deterrent (Stolz, 2020; Thiessen & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2017: 76). A snowball effect then seems to operate from one generation to the next. As socialization is often less effective or less present, it can lead to a younger generation that is likely to be less religious than the previous one.

External societal influences outside the family environment also play a role in this decline in religious socialization. “It seems that religious parents transmit their faith more effectively in religious than in secular environments” (Voas & Storm, 2021: 195). Several factors related to modernity allow me to explain this phenomenon. Advancements in science and technology, the developments of medicine, growing individualization, democracy, the welfare state, education levels, and rationalism are factors that reduce the need for religion (Wallis and Bruce, 1995; Stolz et al. 2016). These different developments disrupt aspects of life where religion played a privileged role in the structure it offered or in the explanations it provided for questions such as the nature of life, meaning, etc. (Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

The transmission and enduring adoption of one form or another of religiosity is also being put to the test due to the increasing number of alternative opportunities available to individuals.

This competition occurs notably between the supply of religious and secular goods. For instance, “the need for social contacts can be satisfied by the religious good ‘active membership in a religious community’ – but there are also many secular competitors available, such as sports clubs, associations of all kinds, neighbourhood networks, etc. Depending on the need, other competitors to religious suppliers come into view” (Stolz et al. 2016:23). In the context of transmission, a parent might be tempted to send their child to Sunday school for socialization and enjoyable gospel learning, etc. Alternatively, they could choose to enroll their child in a sports team for physical activity and socialization, or in a science club to open their mind to scientific questions, etc. Consequently, the reproduction of religiosity becomes less of an automatic process devoid of reflection. Transmitting or not transmitting religion becomes a socially legitimate question that every parent must answer and continually reconsider during their children’s upbringing and more broadly in daily family life. Nevertheless, religious transmission remains a complex process that can take various forms and manifestations. It may result in the transmission of practices, values, beliefs, or initiatory rites, for example. These are some of the dimensions that could be transmitted through socialization. I will then attempt to shed light on what is retained through the socialization process and the mechanisms that enable the reproduction of religiosity.

Measuring Religiosity and Secularization

Works such as those of Bibby and Brinkerhoff (1973; 1983; 1994) and Grand’Maison and Lefebvre (1992; 1993) are important milestones for the study of religious transmission in Canada today. They marked a shift from a sociology of religion that was “interested” in the perpetuation of Christianity, to a sociology of religion that was less focused on growing Church membership (Milot

1991). Nowadays, the subfield of religious transmission is informed by a few more recent indicators.

Traditionally, religious affiliation and church membership have been used to measure the number of individuals belonging to a certain religion. Recent studies by Wilkins-Laflamme showed how relevant this indicator is in assessing the intergenerational transmission of religion (2020; 2023). By comparing the religion of parents and respondents using survey data, Wilkins-Laflamme was able to quantify the decline in religious affiliation among millennials. She puts into perspective the positive effect that parents' religious affiliation can have on transmission. This effect is weaker when the two parents do not share the same religion for example. It is also among Catholics or mainline Protestant couples that the transmission is the weakest, whereas, in the case of parents with no religion, the non-affiliation transmission is quite high. Other studies have also shown that two parents belonging to the same religion were more likely to transmit their religion than those who do not share the same religious affiliation (Wilson and Sandomirsky 1991; Bader and Desmond 2006). In Bader and Desmond's work (2006), this constitutes a marker of religious constancy that favors intergenerational transmission of religion. Parents' religious affiliation is also a useful predictor for quantifying changes in religion over the life course (Caron-Malenfant and al 2018; Reimer and Hiemstra 2018). Despite that, however, religious affiliation is not synonymous with a devout or fulfilled religious life. Meunier and Wilkins-Laflamme (2011) have shown that religious affiliation does not necessarily come with any level of religious practice. Rather, affiliation may be a mere marker of cultural identity. Mass or religious service attendance is also a frequently used indicator for measuring religious transmission. As an indicator of religiosity, it has been used since the beginning of work on religious transmission and many continue to use it today (Smith and Snell 2009; Meunier, Laniel and Demers 2010; Vermeer, Janssen and Sheepers 2012;

Haskell and al. 2016; Min, Silverstein and Gruenewald 2018:581). However, it remains challenging to apply in some circumstances, as it is generally used to measure the transformations of Christianity. Prayer is also an indicator of religiosity, making it possible to take into account individual practice. Müller and Porada have used three types of prayer (mealtime, bedtime, and other occasions) to show that it can be a means of socialization during childhood, as well as constituting an element of private religious practice (2022). Looking at the transmission of religious and civic values represents another way to assess religious dynamics. In this regard, different value orientations can be used to better understand what enables religious transmission. For instance, Jesse Smith (2021) showed that religious transmission is stronger in religiously conservative family settings. Religious values can also be used as a marker for what is transmitted from one generation to the next (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004).

One of the most significant works in this field of study, which uses many of the variables I have discussed, is by Bengtson and his team: *Family and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations* (2013). Using the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG), a survey carried out repeatedly between the 1970s and 2005, Bengtson et al. find that “the extent to which religious families are successful in passing on their faith to younger generations appears to have remained stable over time” (2013:185). However, in a 2018 article, he argues that the family is an important driving force in the socialization of those without religion and that it contributes to religious decline across generations (2018:273).

Several European scholars have also contributed to this field of study using the European Value Survey (EVS) and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Generally closer to research on secularization, their conclusions often point in that direction. Voas and Storm, for example, write that a secular social context has a negative effect on family transmission of religion

(2021). Molteni and Biolcati are also of this opinion when they write that the “religious landscape did not change because people changed, but because of a change of people” (2023:2049). Bréchon even goes so far as to claim that the future of Christian Europe is set to change in a few decades (2018:25).

Beliefs can also be subject to a degree of quantification (Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme 2017; 2020). It can be done by estimating their prevalence while comparing certain groups to others (Beyer, Cummins and Craig 2019). This body of literature highlights the growth of the spiritual but not religious (SBNR) category among young people. These are often characterized by an abandonment or blending of traditional religious indicators with perhaps some level of spiritual beliefs or practices. Studying beliefs, however, can make comparison across religious groups difficult, but it remains a useful indicator for measuring changes during the general decline.

Religious Transmission and Family Socialization

Praying with one’s children, bringing them to church, involving other family members, sharing values, coherence between what is transmitted and the way the family lives, closeness between family members, and the nature of their relationships are all factors associated with religious transmission (Smith and Adamczyk 2021). Yet, some studies suggest that parents talking about religion with their children is one of the most effective means of socialization for a successful transmission of religion (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004:85). Smith and Adamczyk are unequivocal on this point:

... parents regularly talking to their children about religious matters during the week has a very powerful association with the children growing up to be religiously committed and involved— sometimes stronger than even parent religiousness variables. (2021:71)

These authors argue that talking about religion with children is especially important in social environments where “religious language” is no longer dominant. This would include many parts of Canada where religiosity indicators are very low among the majority of the population (Wilkins-Laflamme 2022). Even more than in the United States, the absence of a religious ethos can act as a headwind for religious transmission in Canada. The ability to master some form of religious culture, which would be transmitted within the family through regular, warm, positive, sensitive, and child-centered communication would increase the chances that a viable long-term religious transmission takes place. This approach stems from a current of study that puts family socialization at the center of its analysis. It advocates the importance of parents and grandparents in the transfer of values, especially at an early age (Copen and Silverstein 2007; Min, Silverstein, and Gruenewald 2018: 582).

The implicit but important effect of the more secular Canadian context acts as a groundswell that has a lasting effect on the socialization of young Canadians. Going against this powerful trend is a challenge. The work of Voas and Storm points to the importance of context in shaping the religious futures of younger generations (2021; 2022). In the case of more religious families in such contexts, there is a form of perpetual tension between the family milieu and the dominant social environment. Other work on European countries tends to attribute a dominant effect to context and “ambient religion” (Bruce 2011:70; Voas 2009)⁸, while many American authors place the family at the heart of religious transmission (Bengtson et al, 2013; Smith and Adamczyk 2021). It suggests that the context is changing profoundly and that there is a historical and lasting decline of religion at the level of the family unit as well as in society (Stolz 2020; Voas 2009; Wilkins-

⁸ An exception is the different conclusion between Kelley and de Graaf (1997) and Voas and Storm (2021; 2022). The former argue that the family is of crucial importance for religious transmission within secular national contexts, while the latter assert the opposite: the secular national context is of greater importance than the family.

Laflamme 2016). In this sense, the transmission of religion within the family is strongly tied to this larger context, as these same families would be influenced by it.

The goal here is not to decide between an approach that favors socialization or one that emphasizes secularization, but rather to attempt to reflect on transmission as it occurs in a more secular and diverse Canada. By analyzing the family as an institution of Canadian society, I will be able to address this ongoing tension that exists across the country while showing that the effect of socialization differs only slightly between different religions. Ultimately, this article will contribute to the study of religious transmission by showing that religious socialization has not been able to systematically prevent intergenerational decline, regardless of religious tradition.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Central to this research is the question of religious transmission within the family, what is the effect of parental religiosity and socialization, and to what degree does religion change across generations. As discussed in the previous sections, there are numerous ways to measure how religiosity is transmitted (affiliation, practices, beliefs, etc.). On the one hand, many of these indicators of religiosity are useful to assess what is being transmitted and to what degree. On the other hand, a vast set of family socialization indicators can be mobilized to test their influence on the variables used to measure transmission. I will therefore investigate the effect of a set of parental and family variables on the respondents' religiosity. To guide my analysis, I have formulated five hypotheses. The first three hypotheses deal with parental differences in religious affiliations and religiosity and their effects on transmission in Canada.

H1: The share of religiously affiliated individuals declines from one generation to the next, irrespective of the religion (Catholics, mainline Protestants, Muslims, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, and other religions).

H2: The religious affiliation of the parents has no effect on the level of religiosity of the respondents, irrespective of the parents' religion (Catholics, mainline Protestants, Muslims, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, and other religions).

H3: The level of religiosity of parents has a positive effect on the level of religiosity of respondents.

The fourth hypothesis deals with parental socialization, measured by the question on whether parents talk about religion and/or faith with their children during adolescence.

H4: Talking about religion during adolescence has a positive effect on the respondent's level of religiosity.

The fifth hypothesis deals with the religion the respondent has been raised in, irrespective of the religion of one or both parents.

H5: Being raised as Catholic, Muslim, Evangelical or Pentecostal has a positive effect on respondents' level of religiosity, as compared to being raised in a mainline Protestant family.

In the course of this analysis, I will demonstrate that, by itself, the family institution does not provide a sufficiently strong religious socialization to enable stable or upward intergenerational religious reproduction between generations. However, it does transmit a weaker level of religiosity as the decline is generally not total but rather gradual from one generation to the next. This process of decline is particularly pronounced in families with a high level of religiosity, as the gap between

their level of religiosity and the ambient one is more significant. No tradition is immune to this decline. The mechanisms of socialization used to transmit religion are unable to halt the decline, at best slowing it down.

Methodology

Data and Procedures

This study uses a novel source of survey data that was collected as part of the broader research project: *The transmission of religion across generations: A comparative international study of continuities and discontinuities in family socialization*, led by Christel Gärtner and Olaf Müller from the University of Münster, Germany. The survey was approximately 25 minutes long and was done by Ipsos. It was administered by computer-assisted telephone interviews to individuals 18 years of age and older in five countries (Germany, Finland, Italy, Hungary and Canada). A total of 1,501 respondents were surveyed in Canada during the months of January, February and March of 2021. In this paper, I only use the Canadian subsample of this survey. To reflect Canada's linguistic composition, participants were given the option of answering in English or French. This was done under systematic and controlled conditions in a multi-stage stratified random selection procedure based on random sampling together with random selection of respondents. Using a dual-frame procedure, two separate samples were generated in each of the survey countries. The interview was conducted in the mode by which the respondent was reached. Thus, respondents who have a mobile phone connection but were reached via landline were interviewed in landline mode. The data was then weighted according to age, gender, and region of the respondents. It should also be noted that all questions regarding other family members (parents and grandparents among others) were answered by the respondent only. As the survey was

administered during the Covid-19 crisis, the questionnaire was tailored to reflect people's religious habits in normal times, rather than in times of crisis when the various closures affected places of worship and gatherings of all kinds.

The analysis will first consist of descriptive data on the reproduction of religious affiliation between parents and respondents and among religious groups. Then, I will elaborate a series of linear regression models using the respondent's level of religiosity as the dependent variable.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The dependent variable used in the linear regression model represents the respondent's level of religiosity. It is based on the question: *How religious would you say you are? Please rate your religiousness on a scale from 1 to 5.* Respondents were given a choice of five responses ranging from "Not religious at all" (1), to "Very religious" (5). The categories 2, 3, and 4 were designated only by their number on the scale.

To measure the intergenerational difference in levels of religiosity in the descriptive analysis, I will use the religious gap. It is composed of the level of religiosity of the parents (during the respondent's childhood) as reported by the respondent subtracted from the level of religiosity of the respondent. Parents' level of religiosity was asked as: *Thinking about your parents when you were a child, how religious would you say your parents were at the time?* Like with respondent's level of religiosity, this question was answered on a five-point scale where 5 was "Very religious" and 1 was "Not religious at all" for each parent separately. Parents' level of religiosity was then averaged by adding scores from these two items together and dividing by two. This does not consider the household composition and it is possible that the parents were separated, divorced,

etc. The religiosity gap thus reflects the difference in the level of religiosity between parents and the respondent, from one generation to the other. The religious gap scale ranges from -4 (intergenerational decrease of religiosity levels between parents and the respondent) to 4 (intergenerational increase in religiosity levels between parents and the respondent). The closer the religiosity gap scale is to 0, the closer it is to a reproduction of the parents' level of religiosity for the respondent. This measure does not take into account the religious affiliation of either the parents or the respondent.⁹

While it has been shown at length in the literature that high parental religiosity is an important factor in the transmission of religion, the religious gap indicator allows me to account for change – increase or decline in the level of religiosity – along with reproduction in family environments with varying levels of religiosity. This indicator will provide greater precision when examining low levels of religiosity but with small intergenerational increases in levels of religiosity, as well as cases with high levels of religiosity but with small intergenerational decreases in levels of religiosity.

Independent Variables

In the linear regression model, a set of sociodemographic items will serve as control variables. These are age, gender, childhood social class evaluation on a scale of one (low) to five (high), childhood region of residence (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia, Outside Canada), and childhood rural/urban setting.

⁹ In a hypothetical scenario where the mother's level of religiosity is 3, and the father's level of religiosity is 5, the average of the parents' religiosity would be 4, calculated as $(3 + 5)/2$. If the respondent's religiosity is 2, it would result in a religious gap of -2, calculated as $2 - 4$. Thus, there would be an intergenerational decline in the level of religiosity.

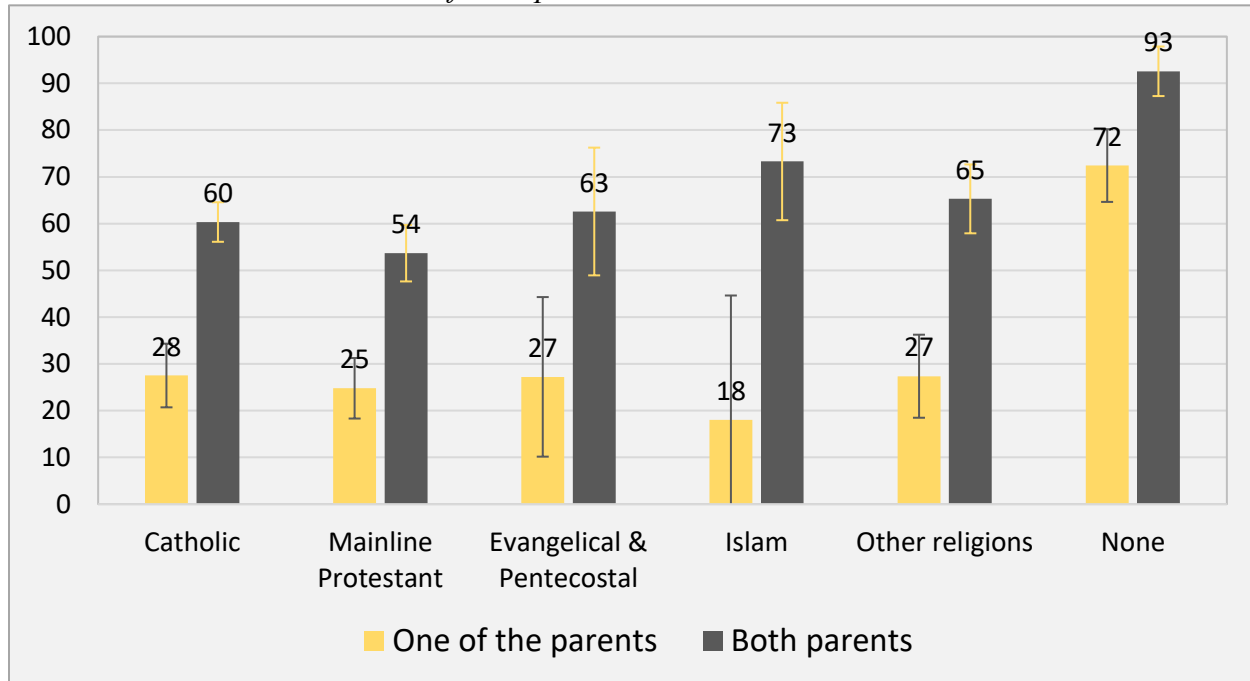
Five variables measure parental religiosity and religious socialization during childhood. *Religious affiliation of parents* corresponds to the religion to which respondents say their parents belonged when the respondent was a child. The declared *level of religiosity* of their mother and father, measured on a scale from one to five, will also be independent variables predicting the respondent's level of religiosity. As with all variables where it is required to remember a given fact or event, this may be subject to a recollection bias. The *talking about religion as a teenager* variable was derived from the following survey question: *When you were a teenager, how often did you talk about faith or religious issues with the following people?* The respondent was then given four options, "1=never," "2=seldom," "3=occasionally" and "4=regularly," and asked to rank various members of their extended family (mother, father, grandparents, and siblings). Each family member was included in the model with their own scale in order to assess their relative importance. This question has been used by Smith and Adamczyk (2021: 40), as well as by Dollahite and Thatcher (2008), who have shown its importance in the transmission process within families with different levels of religiosity in the United States. In terms of the *presence of religion in the home*, respondents were asked: *Now think of the role religion played in your family during your childhood. To what extent was religion present in your family during childhood?* They were given a choice of five answers ranging from "1=not at all", to "5=a lot". The last question I used was *What religion, if any, were you raised in?* I have sorted the answers into six categories: mainline Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal, Muslim, Other religions, and nones. By using two questions on parental religiosity and three questions on religious childhood socialization, I can assess the relative importance of the parents' religion and religiosity, but also of the role that the parents had in transmission. In other words, these two orders of variables will allow me to control for the effect of parental religious profile and the effect of parental socialization.

Results and Discussion

The Erosion of Religious Affiliation

In examining the transmission of religious affiliation among millennials in Canada and the United States, Wilkins-Laflamme (2020) found that no religious group is immune to intergenerational decline. Leading the way in this intergenerational weakening of transmission among millennials are Catholics and mainline Protestants, who had the largest losses in affiliation between parents and respondents. Even having two parents who share the same religion while religiously raising their child is not a guarantee for transmission. According to Wilkins-Laflamme (2020), it is actually non-religious parents who are the most successful in transmission when it comes to transmitting no religious affiliation to their adult millennial children. If I consider the American population as a whole, the religious reproduction rate is comparable to the Canadian case: “if one parent was a Protestant Christian and the other identified with no religion (“none”), then only 56 percent identify as Protestant Christian, with 34 % being religiously unaffiliated.” (Kasselstrand et al., 2023:110). As for “people who were raised by two Catholic parents, 62 % are Catholic today, but of those who had one parent who was Catholic and one parent who was not, only 32 percent are Catholic today.” (Kasselstrand et al., 2023:110). In 2011, Steve Bruce reported that a similar phenomenon was at work in Britain, where transmission was around 50% among Christians (Bruce 2011: 110). It was possible to replicate similar findings for the entire Canadian adult population by calculating the percentage of respondents who had the same religion as both or only one of their parents.

Figure 1.1: *Percentage (%) of respondents who have the same religious affiliation as one or both of their parents, Canada, 2021*



Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey, Canada, 2021. n=920.

Figure 1.1 shows that the rate of reproduction of religious affiliation among individuals with two Catholic or mainline Protestant parents is respectively 60% and 54% in Canada. In other words, 40% and 46% of respondents who had either two Catholic or two mainline Protestant parents did not share the same religious affiliation as adults. Although intergenerational decline is less among Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Muslims, as well as for the “other religions¹⁰” category, it remains relatively high between 27%-37%. Retention (of non-affiliation) is strongest among those with no religion (93%), even if only one parent is a religious none (72%). Thus, parental religious homogeneity is not a guarantee of religious reproduction. However, these statistics do not account for the effect of parents’ level of religiosity. What is most notable about this figure is that all religious groups seem to follow the same pattern. The intergenerational retention of religious

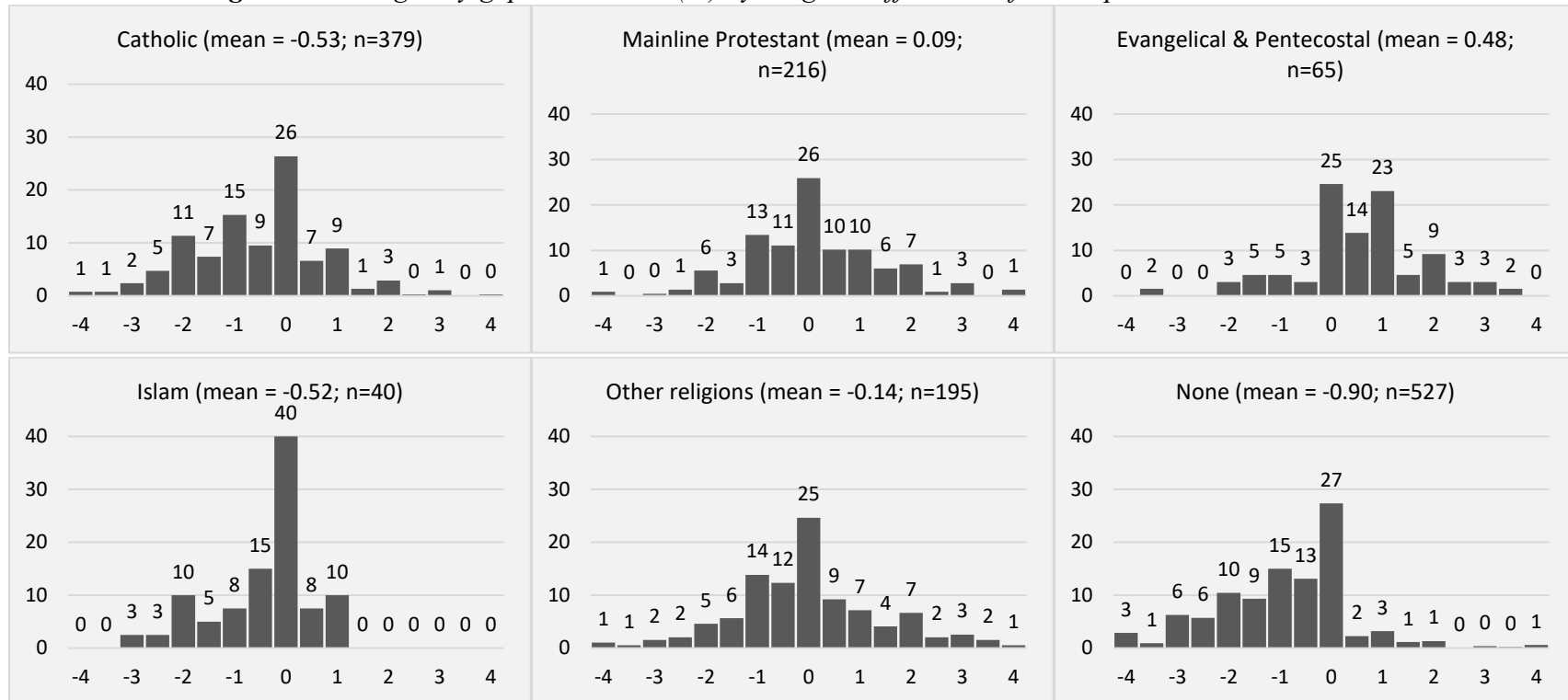
¹⁰ This category includes the following religions: Eastern Orthodox, Other Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, and Other non-Christian.

affiliation among religions with the highest average level of religiosity, such as Evangelicals and Pentecostals as well as Muslims (see Appendix Table 1), is not significantly higher than among other groups. This reveals the sweeping effect of cohort replacement across religions in Canada.

Intergenerational Decline and Transmission of Level of Religiosity

Figure 1.2 shows the distribution of the religiosity gap for each of the six religious groups identified.

Figure 1.2: Religiosity gap distribution (%) by religious affiliation of the respondent, Canada, 2021



Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey, Canada, 2021.

These graphs show that despite maintaining a religious affiliation, a decline in religiosity may occur. In other words, the intergenerational decline in the level of religiosity is not only due to disaffiliation, it also occurs among affiliates. This is particularly the case for Catholic respondents who have a negative mean religiosity gap (-0.53). Conversely, among mainline Protestants, the average religiosity gap is very close to zero (0.09), meaning that there is little to no overall difference between the religiosity of parents and respondents who identify with a mainline Protestant denomination. However, each of these two religious groups is nevertheless losing a significant number of its members to the nones (Wilkins-Laflamme 2020). This may partly explain why the largest negative religiosity gap is present among the religiously unaffiliated (-0.90). As for Evangelical and Pentecostal respondents, they show the greatest average gain in religiosity from parents to respondents (0.48), while Muslims show a marked decline (-0.52). For all groups, it should be noted that the mode is 0, meaning that reproduction of the average religiosity level of both parents is the most common outcome, notably among respondents who are religiously affiliated.

To understand the true meaning of this indicator, however, one must consider the initial level of religiosity of parents and respondents. Although intergenerational declines in religiosity are comparable between Catholics (-0.53) and Muslims (-0.52), the average religiosity of Catholics (2.91) remains lower than for Muslims (3.32) (see Appendix Table 1 for levels of religiosity). This similar decline seems to point to a more contextual effect such as the secularization process observed in Canada. Yet, Catholics have larger intergenerational declines of religiosity compared with mainline Protestants, the average respondent religiosity of these two groups remains similar (Catholic = 2.91, mainline Protestant = 3.06). This could be explained by the fact that mainline Protestants began their decline in affiliation earlier, leaving behind, in the 1960s and 1970s, a

significant proportion of those whose level of religiosity was somewhat lower. This lower average level of religiosity among Catholics might also suggest that Catholics have a higher proportion of cultural affiliations than mainline Protestants.

Effect of Family Socialization and Parental Religiosity on Transmission

Considering the different indicators that measure the intergenerational transmission of religion, I opted for a multi-step approach. I compare the use of five independent variables in a set of regression models. To do this, I am using an approach that captures the level of religiosity of all the groups present in this study. These independent variables are intimately related to previous work on religious transmission but allow me to incorporate the Canadian case into that international discussion and body of literature on religious transmission.

Predicting the level of religiosity of the respondents using sociodemographic variables, religious socialization variables, and parental religiosity variables is quite effective in accounting for what leads to religious transmission as well as to high religiosity. The model 7 in Table 1.1 is representative of that strength with an adjusted R^2 of 0.38¹¹.

¹¹ The seven models presented here meet the validation criteria. The dependent variable is continuous; cases and variables are independent of each other; residuals are normally distributed; no case is overly influential. However, a higher-than-average level of multicollinearity is present in one category of the variable “Mother’s/Father’s religion” and “Respondent’s religion raised in”. There is a mild overlap with Islam. However, this category is not significant and does not unduly influence the full model. Due to the high theoretical importance of these variables, its other categories, and their validity in models 2 and 6, they were both kept in model 7.

Table 1.1: Unstandardized coefficients from linear regression models predicting level of religiosity (5 points scale), Canada, 2021

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Age	0.015***	0.002	0.014***	0.002	0.011***	0.002	0.010***	0.002	0.015***	0.002	0.015***	0.002	0.011***	0.002
Gender (Male)														
Female	0.448***	0.017	0.474***	0.073	0.361***	0.068	0.297***	0.067	0.313***	0.068	0.417***	0.073	0.265***	0.065
Social class as a child (1/5)	0.064	0.043	0.052	0.042	0.006	0.039	0.004	0.038	0.015	0.039	0.070 [†]	0.042	-0.016	0.037
Region lived in a child (Ontario)														
Atlantic	-0.106	0.152	-0.135	0.147	-0.110	0.136	-0.135	0.132	-0.126	0.134	-0.126	0.146	-0.143	0.127
Quebec	-0.413***	0.107	-0.485***	0.111	-0.274**	0.096	-0.235*	0.094	-0.241*	0.096	-0.429***	0.108	-0.148	0.099
Prairies	-0.014	0.119	-0.042	0.115	0.015	0.107	0.079	0.104	-0.153	0.106	-0.035	0.115	-0.072	0.101
British Columbia	-0.496***	0.139	-0.185	0.140	-0.152	0.126	-0.074	0.123	-0.398***	0.123	-0.240 [†]	0.138	-0.131	0.122
Territories	0.307	1.022	0.169	0.979	-0.231	0.915	-0.362	0.891	-0.358	0.903	0.139	0.977	-0.602	0.848
Outside of Canada	0.462***	0.120	0.443***	0.118	0.288*	0.107	0.285*	0.104	0.213*	0.107	0.393***	0.117	0.173 [†]	0.104
Rural/Urban as a child (Small town/city or rural)														
Suburbs or large city	-0.002	0.078	-0.004	0.076	0.047	0.070	-0.044*	0.068	-0.057**	0.069	0.037	0.075	-0.059	0.066
Mother's religion (Mainline Protestant)														
Catholic			-0.003	0.138									-0.078	0.155
Evangelical or Pentecostal			0.642*	0.299									-0.241	0.345
Muslim			0.402	0.614									-0.557	0.615
Other religions			0.400*	0.178									-0.021	0.184
None			-0.433*	0.171									0.135	0.166
Father's religion (Mainline Protestant)														
Catholic			-0.153	0.144									0.134	0.145
Evangelical or Pentecostal			0.418	0.338									0.084	0.322
Muslim			-0.153	0.603									-0.399	0.658
Other religions			-0.160	0.186									-0.216	0.180
None			-0.552***	0.156									-0.085	0.155
Mother's level of religiosity (1/5)					0.311***	0.032							0.081*	0.040
Father's level of religiosity (1/5)					0.147***	0.031							0.023	0.035
Presence/role of religion during childhood (1/5)							0.467***	0.024					0.269***	0.040
Talking religion with mother as a teenager (1/4)									0.275***	0.048			0.082 [†]	0.050
Talking religion with father as a teenager (1/4)									-0.066	0.048			-0.001	0.049
Talking religion with grandparents as a teenager (1/4)									0.222***	0.042			0.216***	0.040
Talking religion with siblings as a teenager (1/4)									0.219***	0.045			0.188***	0.042
Respondent's religion raised in (Mainline Protestant)														
Catholic											0.119	0.104	-0.235	0.180
Evangelical or Pentecostal											1.076***	0.196	0.323	0.394
Muslim											0.364	0.227	0.863	0.738
Other religions											0.340**	0.129	0.165	0.201
None											-0.783***	0.135	0.067	0.168
Adjusted R²	0.10		0.19		0.28		0.32		0.30		0.18		0.38	

Notes: [†] = p ≤ 0.1; * = p ≤ 0.05; ** = p ≤ 0.01; *** = p ≤ 0.001. Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey. Canada, 2021. Valid sample size is 1147 for every model. This subset was generated using all the valid cases in model 7. For comparison purposes, I removed the cases with missing answers on any of the independent variables.

Overall, several variables confirm what has been reported in the literature on this topic¹² (Bengtson et al, 2013; Smith and Adamczyk 2021; Wilkins-Laflamme 2020, 2022). In the first model, one can see that age is a factor having a positive effect on level of religiosity, as is being a woman. The place of residence during childhood is also important in influencing the level of religiosity since there are significant differences between individuals who lived outside Canada, in Quebec or in British Columbia. People who have lived in Quebec and British Columbia are less religious than those from Ontario. However, people who grew up outside Canada, most of them immigrants, are more religious on average than Canadians who grew up in Ontario. The lower average level of religiosity in British Columbia has been there since the beginning of settlement and has maintained its difference from the rest of the country ever since (Marks 2017). The province's religious fabric doesn't seem to have developed at the same pace as the rest of Canada. As far as Quebec is concerned, recent work on this issue seems to point more toward the exculturation of traditional Catholicism. As a result, the general practice of religion is declining (service attendance and prayer), and so is the level of religiosity (Wilkins-Laflamme et al., 2025). In this regard, the results seem to be in line with the literature analyzing religious differences between Canadian regions (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023).

With the second model, when the parents' religious affiliation is taken into consideration, it has a moderate effect on the level of religiosity. Compared with mainline Protestant parents, it is only in the presence of an Evangelical or Pentecostal mother and a mother from an "other religion" that one finds a higher average level of religiosity. As one would anticipate, when the parents have no religion, the effect on the level of religiosity is expected to be negative. What is surprising here

¹² Here, I refer to model 1 (Table 1.1), as it is strictly devoted to the use of sociodemographic variables.

is that it is impossible to distinguish any paternal religious affiliation that would have a significant and positive influence on the level of religiosity. This is perhaps an indicator of the greater importance of the mother in transmitting the level of religiosity.

Model three reveals that the parents' level of religiosity significantly influences the respondents' level of religiosity. When comparing model two with model three, it is clear that the third one has a higher R^2 (0.19) than the second one (0.10). The results of this model show that the impact of the mother's level of religiosity is stronger than that of the father, signifying the greater importance of the mother in the transmission process. Furthermore, when comparing the effect of the mother's level of religiosity with that of the father, it is clear that the mother's effect is twice as strong as the father's, again suggesting a greater impact of the mother. These results relativize some American data suggesting that the father's level of religiosity can sometimes be greater than that of the mother (Baker-Sperry 2001).

As for the fourth model, it indicates that the presence and the role of religion in the family environment is an important factor in predicting the level of religiosity. This variable is quite important, as it produces the strongest model ($R^2 = 0.32$), with the exception of the complete model. This underlines the importance of immersion in a religious milieu in furthering the transmission of religiosity. It also testifies to the importance of having a "religious family life" (Smith 2021). Beyond the parents' religiosity and consistent socialization, the role played by religion in the family environment enables religiosity to emerge in many facets of life. This allows religion to operate in the form of an ambient ethos that enables the child to learn the "religious language", as Smith and Adamczyk write (2021:71).

The fifth model ($R^2 = 0.30$) focuses on the action of talking about religion or faith with relatives during the teenage years. Once again, the mother's effect is positive and significant, while

the father's effect is not. It is also interesting to note that talking about these topics with grandparents or siblings also has a positive effect on the level of religiosity. To my surprise, these data show the positive effect of the grandparents and siblings. This variable, which serves as a proxy for socialization by the family members, shows that there is a clear distinction to be made between the two parents. The father's non-significant effect is in line with models two and three, where the father's religious affiliation had no effect, and where the effect of the father's level of religiosity was weak and lower than that of the mother. In this case, the difference may be a reflection of the fact that respondents generally spoke less frequently with their fathers than with their mothers. These findings lead me to put into perspective, or even minimize, the effect of fathers on transmission of religiosity. This contradicts what Smith and Adamczyk found in the American context, which is that the father's role is especially important in the child's religious formation (Smith & Adamczyk, 2021:5). In fact, they argue that "parents talking [about religion] is *even more strongly* associated with religious importance than either increased parents' importance of faith or more frequent religious service attendance" (Smith & Adamczyk, 2021:53). The data go against what they consider to be one of their most important findings, since the father's level of religiosity significantly and positively influences the respondents' level of religiosity, but talking about religion or faith with the father does not. With this third variable showing a weaker or no effect from the father, it becomes increasingly clear that the emphasis on the father found in the American literature cannot be equally applied to the Canadian context.

However, the positive and significant effect of grandparents corroborated what is found elsewhere in the American literature (Bengtson et al., 2013: 102; Copen & Silverstein, 2008). In a context of gradual secularization such as Canada's, the fact that an older generation influences the level of religiosity is not completely unreasonable. If I remain consistent with the cohort

replacement theory, it is understandable that grandparents have a higher general religiosity than the next-generation parents and that they could still carry a desire to transmit religion. As secularization has accelerated over the last few decades in Canada, a generation gap has opened up, sometimes creating significant religious differences within families. Therefore, it is not surprising that I found evidence of grandparents trying to influence parents on certain aspects of religious socialization or perhaps taking matters into their own hands. While the effect of grandparents seems to reflect a desire for religious continuity over several generations, the positive effect of siblings seems to point more toward the integration of religion within the family sphere¹³. When siblings talk to each other about religion or faith, it shifts the focus of religious socialization away from a hierarchical relationship and may contribute to the normalization of religion in everyday life.

The sixth model addresses the religion in which the respondent was raised; its inclusion brings the R^2 to 0.18. It shows that the religion in which an individual was raised was less influential in determining the respondent's level of religiosity than the parents' level of religiosity (model 3), the presence of religion in childhood (model 4) and the fact of talking about religion with one's parents during the teenage years (model 5). The effect of the religion in which one is raised was, however comparable to model 2, which measured the effect of the religions of the parents.¹⁴ I also find a correspondence between the effects produced by this variable and the effect caused by the mother's religious affiliation (model 2). The effects of Evangelical/Pentecostal and "other religions" are both positive, while the effect of non-affiliation is negative. Although the effect sizes are larger in model 6, there still seems to be a similarity of effect between the mother's religion and

¹³ However, the model does not control for the number of children in the household, and it is known that religious families have more children on average. A more numerous household could produce an opportunity effect where talking about religion with one's siblings is easier and more accessible.

¹⁴ It should be noted, however, that there is a high internal correlation between having parents of Muslim faith and having been raised Muslim. This is the only religion to show a high degree of collinearity.

the religion in which respondents report having been raised. When looking at the effect generated by the father's religious affiliation during childhood, it is impossible to conclude that any denomination would be more influential, with the exception of non-affiliation.

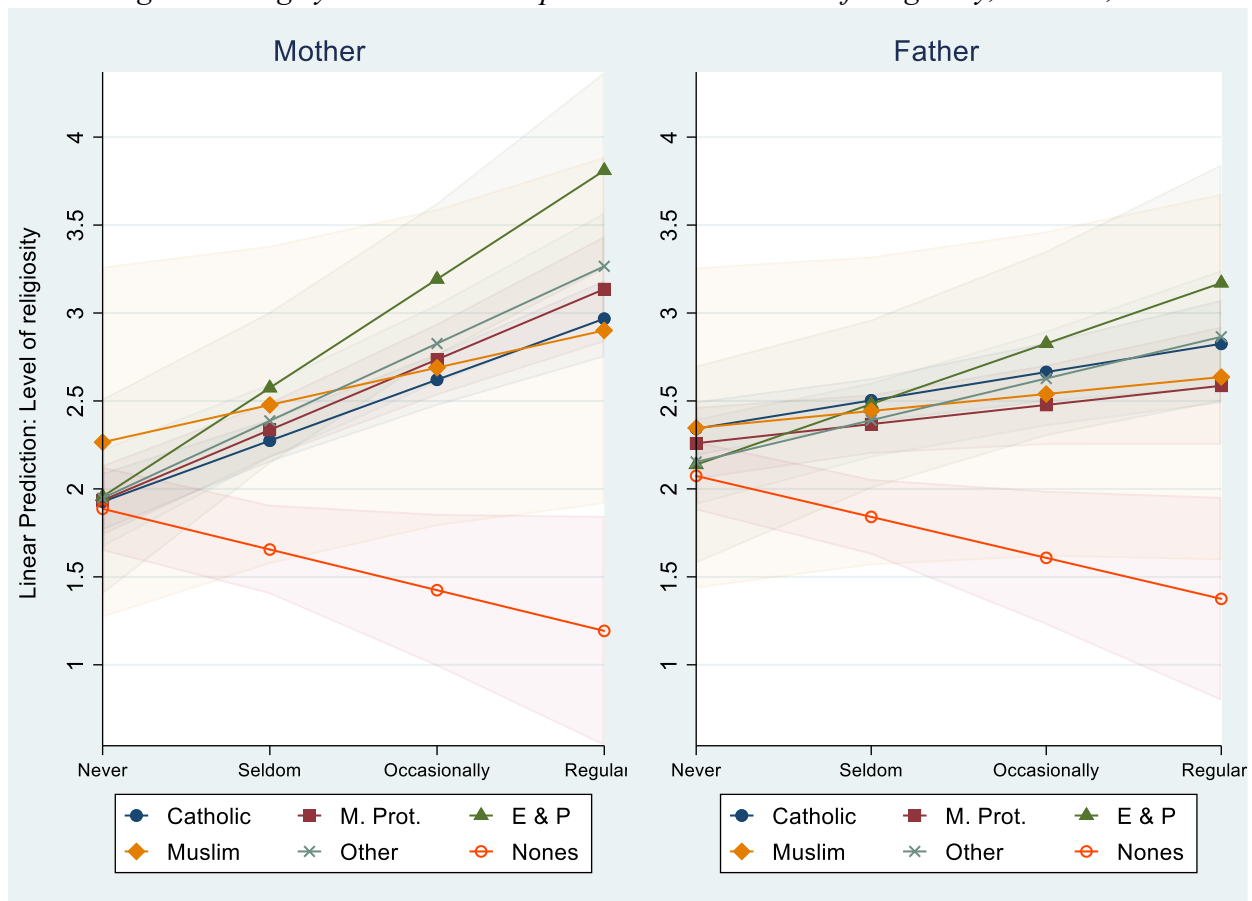
What's most striking about Model 6 is the largely positive effect on the level of religiosity (1.076) of having grown up in Evangelicalism or Pentecostalism. This also corroborates the results in Figure 1.2 and Appendix Table 1.1, since the average level of religiosity is highest among Evangelical and Pentecostal respondents. Therefore, it would seem that it is with these denominations, as with "other religions" – but to a lesser extent – that the level of religiosity is highest. This is not surprising in itself, given the abundant and convincing literature on the fact that Evangelicals and Pentecostals are more religious than average Canadians, and that a greater emphasis is placed on transmission of religion in these communities (Reimer and Wilkinson 2015).

One of the factors that could explain this is the community dimension of these groups, because "evangelicalism remains a congregational-centred faith" (Reimer 2023:169). The community dimension is far weaker in traditional Canadian religions such as mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In fact, these two groups have acquired a cultural dimension that has had the effect of reducing levels of religious practice, despite the relative stability of religious affiliation until recently (Meunier and Wilkins-Laflamme 2011). This in turn has the effect of lowering the average level of religiosity among these affiliates, and by extension, among those who have grown up within these traditions. The question remains, however. Is it affiliation that produces this effect, or is it the parents' level of religiosity and desire for socialization that has the greater influence? The cumulative model and subsequent analysis allow me to answer this question by controlling for all variables.

Looking at the full model (model 7), it is noticeable that age, being a woman, or being born in a different country continue to have a positive and significant effect on the respondent's level of religiosity. As in the second model, the parents' religious affiliation remains non-significant. Parental non-religious affiliation, however, loses its significance. In other words, having a religious 'none' parent no longer has a statistically significant negative effect on the level of religiosity of the respondent. Yet, the mother's level of religiosity still has a positive effect (0.081) on the respondent's level of religiosity, albeit much weaker. As for the effect of the father's level of religiosity, it goes from being weak in the second model to being non-significant in the full model. When it comes to the role played by religion in the family during childhood, this remains significant, and the effect is relatively strong (0.269). Regarding religious socialization, expressed by the act of talking about religion or faith during adolescence with the mother (0.082), grandparents (0.216) and siblings (0.188), this also remains a factor that positively influences respondents' level of religiosity. Although the positive effect of talking about religion with one's mother during childhood is very weak, it is still significant and enables me to corroborate again the American studies that show the importance of this variable (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004; Smith and Adamczyk 2021). Surprising, perhaps, is that the variable of the religion in which the respondent was raised no longer has significance in this model: variables indicating belonging, such as the parents' religious affiliation and the religion in which the respondent grew up, lose significance but those reflecting concrete socialization effort (such as talking about religion with family members and the role religion played in the family during childhood) and religiosity (such as the mother's level of religiosity) remain significant. Considering these results, it is important to put into perspective the importance of parental religious affiliation during socialization. At this stage of the analysis, one cannot conclude that, by itself, it has a positive and significant effect on respondents' level of religiosity.

The results from this series of models prompted me to conduct further tests to determine if the effect of socialization on the level of religiosity remained consistent when it originated from parents of different religious traditions. I then proceeded with an interaction analysis between the variable “talking about religion/faith during teenage years with one’s mother or father” and “mother’s or father’s religious affiliation when the respondent was a children”. Figure 1.3 shows the interaction model for each parent. In both cases, I controlled for all socio-demographic variables, as well as for variables associated with the other parent.

Figure 1.3: *Effect of the interaction between parents’ religion and talking about religion/faith during the teenage years with the respondent on their level of religiosity, Canada, 2021*



Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey, Canada, 2021 n=1147. $\dagger = p \leq 0.1$; $* = p \leq 0.05$; $** = p \leq 0.01$; $*** = p \leq 0.001$. Level of significance (90 % CI) when compared with a “none” mother (left): Catholic (***), mainline Protestant (***), Evangelical or Pentecostal (***), Muslim ($\dagger$), Other (***). Level of significance when compared with a “none” father (right): Catholic (**), mainline Protestant (*), Evangelical or Pentecostal (**), Muslim (n.s.), Other (*). For both parents, when I compare religious affiliations between them, no comparison is significant at a 95% CI.

The model presenting the interaction of variables relating to the mother confirms the generally positive effect of talking about religion or faith with a mother who has a religious affiliation. However, the effect is hardly discernible for the father, as I showed with the second model in Table 1.1. More interestingly, the analysis of the interaction between parental socialization and the parent's religion revealed no significant differences across the various religious groups. In other words, the effect of talking about religion or faith with one's mother or father did not vary depending on the religious affiliation of the parents. As one would expect, the results do confirm that the influence of religious parents is greater than that of parents without affiliation. It would, however, be incorrect to state that this type of socialization has a greater effect in any of the five measured religious groups, both for mothers and fathers.

In a rapidly secularizing society, where religious authority has already lost most of its influence, and where the symbolic value of religion is decreasing, these figures do not come as much of a surprise. It would have been even more surprising to find out that family socialization had been largely abandoned in a tradition that still provided some sort of "symbolic goods" to its members, for example, or that religious socialization had been maintained in a place where religion no longer had any social function. In the Canadian context, however, the effect of religious socialization is weak and hardly distinguishable between religious groups. Consequently, intergenerational decline is observed, albeit to varying degrees, in all measured religious groups.

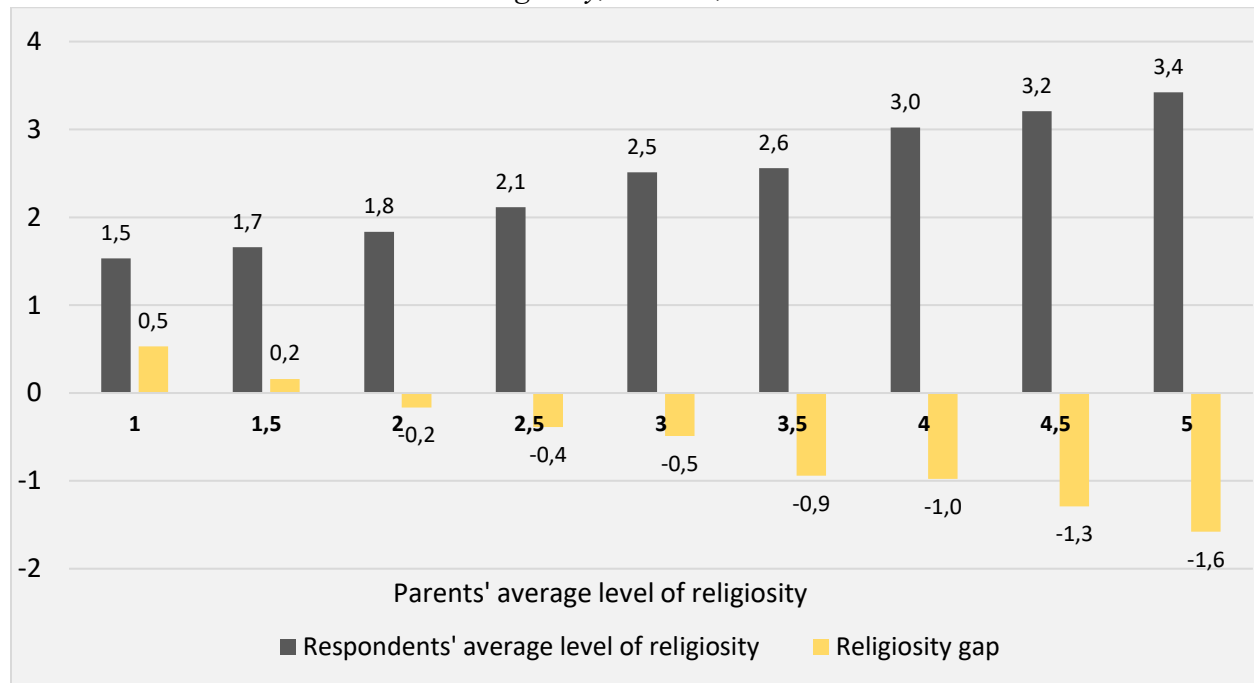
One exception, however, seems to emerge from the data. Evangelicals and Pentecostals "lose" a significant proportion of their followers from one generation to the other (Figure 1.1), but the average level of religiosity of those who remain affiliated is higher than the generation that preceded them (Figure 1.2). This counter-example should not cause one to lose sight of the overall

picture of religious transmission in Canada: the youngest generations are systematically less religious than their predecessors, their proportion of affiliates is still declining, and the effect of socialization is moderate and circumscribed, making it unlikely that the general trend of a secular transition will be reversed any time soon.

Religiosity Gap between Parents and Respondents

Focusing on religious intensity allows one to identify factors favorable for a substantial level of religiosity in adulthood. This, however, raises the question of the relevance of the level of religiosity as the only indicator of religious transmission. What about family scenarios where transmission starts from a low level of parental religiosity and stays low for the respondent? Since the Canadian religious context is changing, and more and more individuals are transmitting lower levels of religiosity, it is also important to look at the whole range of (non)transmission, not just from the higher levels of religiosity. To address this limitation, I turn to a different analytical strategy that identifies the tipping point, that is, the level of religiosity where the overall decline seems to end and where intergenerational gain in religiosity begins.

Figure 1.4: Average level of religiosity and religiosity gap, relative to parents' average level of religiosity, Canada, 2021



Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey, Canada, 2021. n=1455.

Figure 1.4 displays the average religiosity level of respondents (gray) as well as the parent-respondent gap (yellow) as a function of the average religiosity level of parents (x-axis). One notes that the average religiosity level of respondents is closest to that of their parents when the latter have a religiosity level ranging between 1.5 and 2 in this case a gap of only ± 0.2 on the five-point scale. It is also noticeable that as the religiosity level of parents increases, the intergenerational gap widens. In other words, the loss is more significant the more religious the parents because there is more to lose (ceiling effect). The most religious parents struggle to transmit their level of religiosity. By contrast, parents with very low religiosity experience minimal intergenerational gain (floor effect). The tipping point, which falls between 1.5 and 2 on average parental religiosity is below the average religiosity level of respondents (2.4) and that of their parents (2.9). Since

intergenerational gain only occurs below these averages, the overall intergenerational trend is still in decline, thereby failing to reverse the secular transition. This snowball effect progressively and steadily contributes to the intergenerational decline.

Model 3 (table 1.1) showed that religious parents have a more significant impact on religious transmission compared to parents with a low level of religiosity. However, the more religious parents are, the more their lifestyle contradicts that of the secular world around them. In a context of generalized secularization, several scholars claim that it is primarily the macro-sociological context that influences the decline of religion (Voas and Storm 2021; Friesen 2023). Without strong socialization, this distance between the outside world and the family acts as a deterrent between the individual and their piety. For religious parents who wish to pass on their religiosity to their children, the family is often the only environment where this can occur, as the vast majority of other socialization institutions (schools, sports teams, peer groups, etc.) are no longer predominantly religious. Gone are the days of Catholic scouting. Gone are the times when the parish priest also coached the hockey team. The secularization of Canadian society has contributed to the marginalization of religious groups, associations, and institutions, making their access even more challenging. Extending religious socialization outside the home becomes a difficult, but not impossible, task that can entail social and financial costs. It can mean moving to a larger city or choosing a private school for one's children. Families who wish to increase the chances of successful transmission must then deliberately create their own religious milieu, as the social environment becomes increasingly secular.

I reject the idea of a single cause to explain the intergenerational decline in religiosity. While it is now primarily the responsibility of the family to transmit religion – more so than the school, group of friends, or the parish, for example –, the family is also an actor in the social world that

participates in its transformation while being influenced by it at the same time. As an institution, the family is not external to the social world; it is constitutive of it. Therefore, it must adapt to its time in order to position itself as favorably as possible within its environment.

Conclusion

The objective of this article was to identify to what extent and how (non)religion was, or was not, transmitted from one generation to the next in Canada. To do so, I measured the intergenerational transmission of religiosity within the family based on the religious profile of parents and some of the religious socialization mechanisms at their disposal. I have shown that the effect of religious socialization was moderate, and, on average, it did not reproduce the parents' average level of religiosity. Although some of the most religious parents discuss religion with their children and incorporate religion into their homes, it is among these individuals that the average gap in religiosity from one generation to the next is the largest. However, this does not represent the norm. It is parents with a moderate or low level of religiosity who transmit religion to varying degrees that are the primary figures behind the transformations I have presented.

Among the five religious groups that I analyzed (Catholicism, mainline Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal, Islam and "other religions"), none are exempt from the intergenerational decline in affiliation, and they all seem to follow a similar pattern of decline. Contrary to common beliefs about minority religions, these too experience this loss. *This allows me to confirm the first hypothesis.* However, the database at my disposal does not allow me to compare religious traditions in great detail. This opens the door to more work that could compare systematically religious groups that are demographically smaller.

The in-depth analysis of the effect of parents' religion on the level of religiosity of respondents allows me to affirm that its influence is limited or even non-existent. When I controlled for the effect of parents' religiosity and different mechanisms of religious socialization, I showed that the religious affiliation of parents, by itself, was not significant. *I thus confirm the second hypothesis.*

It is indeed the level of religiosity of parents, particularly that of the mother, that exerts an influence on the level of religiosity of respondents. Although this influence is moderate, I can still expect that the children of religious parents will have a higher average religiosity than a respondent whose parents have a lower level of religiosity. *I can thus confirm the third hypothesis.*

The level of religiosity of parents is sometimes accompanied by religious socialization in the form of discussions or exchanges about religion and faith. Such discussions, when with the mother, can have a positive effect on transmission, even if the effect size decreases dramatically in the seventh model when all the variables are controlled for. As for the father, the influence of socialization, measured by the fact of talking about religion or faith during the teenage years, did not have a significant effect on the level of religiosity of the respondent. I have also shown that talking about religion with grandparents and siblings had a positive effect on the level of religiosity. *Based on these results, I could not confidently confirm hypothesis 4.*

When looking at the effect of the religion in which respondents grew up, I first found that the most religious groups (Evangelical and Pentecostal, and "other religions") had a positive effect on the level of religiosity, while the effect was negative for those who grew up in a non-religious environment (model 6). These seemingly intuitive results, however, conceal a more complex reality. When I control for this effect with parental religiosity and religious socialization variables, I find that the effect of the religion in which the respondent was raised in completely disappears

(model 7). Instead, it is these variables – mother’s level of religiosity and religious socialization – that stand out as the main explanatory variables. *Although I cannot confirm hypothesis 5, I consider that this variable remains important in understanding respondents’ religiosity as the historical timing of the decline for the mainline Protestants and the Catholics could be at play here.*

By analyzing the results from an intergenerational approach to religious transmission, I have shed light on some of the mechanisms contributing to the observed decline from one cohort to another. By examining the effect of parents’ religious profiles and the religious socialization they provide, I have demonstrated that a significant portion of intergenerational differences is attributable to the moderate or weak effect of this socialization, even among the most religious parents. In summary, the results do not allow me to assert that transmission efforts will have a strong and positive impact on the average level of religiosity among individuals. However, I do not exclude the possibility that meaningful transmission may occur in many cases. Canada is an increasingly secular country, and parents desiring to transmit their religiosity will need to work even harder just to hope for any substantial results.

Chapter Two

The Effect of Family Religious Socialization on Adult Religiosity in the Context of Secular Transition in Five Western Countries

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Introduction

Since 2009, the theory of secular transition developed by David Voas (2009) has become an important part of field of sociology of religion, and many researchers have sought to empirically test the framework put forward by Voas. A growing body of work on Western countries has shown that secularization occurs in different phases at the national and regional levels, with each successive cohort of individuals being less religious than the previous one. The intergenerational gap in levels of religiosity is central to this paradigm. However, this approach has been limited so far when it comes to explaining the exact mechanisms through which religious decline occurs in families (Stolz & Tanner, 2019). In this article I will use family religious socialization characteristics in order to complexify and better understand the intergenerational secular transition process. I will do so by comparing five Western countries (Canada, Germany, Italy, Finland, and Hungary) that are at different stages of their secular transition process. I will use new cross-national data that provide a more extensive set of survey measures on family socialization, offering new

opportunities to systematically examine how intergenerational religious transmission operates across diverse national contexts and under different secularization conditions.

I will analyze how different family religious characteristics during childhood socialization are associated with the secular transition process of each country. This will shed light on some of the current blind spots in the study of secular transition, particularly regarding how this process unfolds and how it takes shape. According to Voas, seeking to understand “how” secularization happens allows the research program to move beyond the simple assertion that “modernization creates problems for religion” (2020:325). As it remains unclear what impact family socialization has had on the broader process of secularization, this study will focus on the family as an institution and socialization milieu in order to examine the specific mechanisms that shape the (non)transmission and (non)reproduction of religion. This research will also address a gap in the current secular transition and cohort replacement framework, by determining “what do children and adolescents experience that makes them less religious than the preceding generation” (Stolz, 2020:289).

In this article, I will seek to answer the question of *what is the effect of family religious socialization during childhood on the likelihood of belonging to one of the secular transition categories as an adult?* The main goal is to measure the effects of the following socialization factors and compare these effects between five countries: these factors include the religion in which the respondent grew up, religious practices during childhood (types of prayer and service attendance), and the general attitude towards religion within the family environment during childhood. Using these three independent socialization variables, I will examine their relative influence on the three categories that make up patterns of secularization, as outlined by Voas (2009): being actively religious as an adult at the time of the survey; fuzzy fidelity, which refers to

a distant or ambivalent attachment to religion; and a secular identity, characterized by a detachment from religious identity, beliefs and practices. By analysing new cross-national survey data (the Torag dataset¹⁵) containing many family socialization variables, I will show that family socialization has a limited, yet varying influence on individuals' likelihood of belonging to one of the three categories associated with stages of the secular transition, and that this influence differs from one country to another. I will also demonstrate that the stage of secular transition itself can shape the impact of family socialization.

Secular Transition

In 2008, David Voas developed the first version of what was to become the secular transition framework (Voas, 2008). Drawing on the process of demographic transition, he described the general decline of religiosity (i.e. secular transition) as a process of “permanent large-scale change” that is not cyclical and very difficult to undo (Voas 2008:25). He claims that the main cause of the intergenerational decline of religion is rooted in material, institutional and ideological modernization, which he argues has a negative impact on religion. Voas goes on to argue that the full process of secularization, starting with initial declines of religious activity among a highly religious general population and ending with a mostly secular general population that has no ties to religion nor spirituality, takes about 200 years to unfold. Different countries may begin this process at different times in their modern histories, depending on their socio-historical characteristics, but the general process of intergenerational religious decline is the same.

¹⁵ The Transmission of religion across generations (Torag) is an international survey conducted in 2021 across five countries: Canada, Germany, Finland, Italy and Hungary. It was led by Christel Gärtner and Olaf Müller from the University of Münster and financed by the John Templeton Foundation (Grand number: #61361).

In 2009, in an article that is now one of the most cited in the field, Voas empirically defended his framework using European Social Survey (ESS) data, highlighting that secularization occurs mainly through cohort replacement. Younger generations are, on average, less religious than older ones in almost every European country. To explain this process, Voas classifies individuals into three categories: “religious”, “fuzzy fidelity” and “secular”. Once the secular transition process is triggered, overtime the proportion of a country’s population that is religious gradually declines, while the proportion that is religiously fuzzy increases. As a later stage of the secular transition process, the share of the population with a fuzzy fidelity then declines, giving way to an even greater proportion of secular individuals (2009). Since the intergenerational decline of religion is central to this approach, it is essential to consider the contribution of the family and how it is helping drive this large-scale social change. Wilkins-Laflamme argues that:

“This [cohort replacement] process achieves fruition when parents with weakened religiosity from their now more secular social environment have children of their own and raise their children without explicit religious socialization in markedly more secular surroundings.” (2021:518)

This cohort replacement process in the decline of religion has been shown to be present in the vast majority of Western countries, including in Europe (Coutinho & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023; Crockett & Voas, 2006; Molteni, 2017; Molteni & Biolcati, 2018; Molteni & Biolcati, 2023; Stolz et al., 2024), North America (Brauer, 2018; Hout & Fischer, 2014; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022), and Australia (Stevenson et al., 2010). In their 2022 article, Puga-Gonzalez et al. have also shown that generational membership (cohort effect) best predicts which category individuals fall into: being “religious”, “fuzzy” or “secular”. They also demonstrate that the best statistical model to explain cohort decline was not linear, but logistic. This implies that the size of the effects of variables

influencing intergenerational religious (non)transmission can change at different stages of the secularization process.

Despite the possible generalizations that one could make from this secular transition model, it is important to bear in mind the differences between national contexts and their specific characteristics. In measuring the effects of childhood family socialization on where individuals find themselves as adults among the religious, fuzzy and secular categories, one should expect that there will be differences in these effects between countries tied to their specific socio-historical characteristics and where they find themselves in the secular transition process (Martin, 1978; Molteni & Biolcati, 2018; Olson et al., 2020; Voas & Chaves, 2016).

The accelerated decline of religion in Eastern European countries has been extensively documented and will be an important factor when comparing East Germany to other countries in the dataset (Pollack & Rosta, 2017; Stolz et al., 2020). In the aftermath of WWII, Soviet state policies aimed at repressing religion significantly weakened institutional religious life and intergenerational transmission across the region. As a result, religiosity never fully recovered, even after the fall of the Soviet Union. In Hungary, for instance, where such repression was widespread, average religiosity declined steadily, and the country was already “quite secularized at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall” (Rosta et al., 2025:198).

Lower levels of religiosity combined with relatively high levels of belonging, like in the case of Finland and the Canadian province of Québec, are also to be considered. In such cases, it can be explained by the lasting effect of cultural religiosity (Kasselstrand et al., 2023; Meunier & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2011). Despite the low level of religiosity in these regions, their socio-religious configurations and what led to them remain complex and vary significantly across countries. Therefore, it will be crucial to analyze whether these differences are echoed within the family

institution. On the other hand, I expect that countries with higher average levels of religiosity will also bear their own family dynamics. In Italy, for example, the continued presence of a Catholic social fabric (religious leaders, family and friends) remains influential, despite the erosion of its strong positive influence on levels of religiosity (Ricucci et al., 2025:115).

One of the goals of my study here is to measure if the effects of family religious socialization impact individual's adult (non)religiosity in similar or different ways between five countries with different social, political and religious histories and contexts. In other words, will the likelihood of individuals being religious, fuzzy or secular as adults be influenced by childhood family socialization dynamics in the same way from one country to another?

Family and Religion

In a context of increasing secularization, many of the social institutions that once played a role in religious socialization have lost their influence and authority (Chaves 1994). This general decline puts the burden of religious socialization more and more on the shoulders of parents and the extended family. According to Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, the family is the last bastion of religious transmission, which is why it is so important to focus on it in the context of secular transition (2009:286). Yet the family as an institution is inextricably linked to the type of society in which it exists and its broader religious and secular landscape. As such, the family can be seen as both the cause and the answer to the failure of religious transmission, hence the importance of understanding the role it plays as mediator of religiosity.

Researchers studying religious socialization have identified several family dimensions that can favour the intergenerational transmission of religiosity. Parenting styles, family structures, parent-child religious discussions, parent-child closeness, family's religious composition (religious

homogamy or mixed religious family), parents' role modeling, and shared beliefs and religious ideology all have a role to play (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Beider, 2023; Bengtson et al., 2013; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2013; Myers, 1996; Smith, 2021; Smith, 2025; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021; Smith & Snell, 2009; Stearns & McKinney, 2020). From this list, I identify three critical dimensions related to family religious socialization in order to investigate how it can influence patterns of secularization: 1) the religion in which the child is raised in, 2) the frequency of religious practice during childhood, and 3) the attitude towards religion in the household while growing up. I explore the existing research on each of these three dimensions in more detail in the following sections.

National Religious Landscape and Religion Raised In

Being socialized in a given religious tradition can have varying effects on the chances of successful intergenerational transmission. This can be tied to the intrinsic characteristics of the religion itself, but also to the place this religious tradition holds in wider society (being the dominant religious denomination or not for example; Kelley, 2015; Kelley & de Graaf, 1997; Lazerwitz & Tabory, 2002; Müller et al., 2014; Ruiter & van Tubergen, 2009; Voas & Storm, 2021). Given that the secularization process occurs at different periods and at different speeds depending on the country and its religious makeup (Martin 1978; Voas 2009), I need to take into account the religion in which an individual is brought up in, in conjunction with the majority religion of the country, as it may influence successful religious transmission to adulthood

Being socialized into the majority religion of a country may provide cultural reinforcement from wider society, through public holidays, education, and media representation, etc. This may contribute to the reproduction of religious identity even in the absence of intense familial religiosity (Kelley & De Graaf, 1997). Conversely, being raised in a minority religion may sometimes lead to

lower transmission due to marginality or lack of institutional support. However, the relationship between minority religious identity and transmission is not unidirectional. The “reactive religiosity” theory argues that being part of a religious minority can strengthen group boundaries and foster higher transmission rates, especially when the minority perceives itself as culturally or politically threatened (Drouhot, 2021). Thus, the effect of being raised in minority religion is context-dependent and shaped by the relative position of the group in national society.

Other theories debate the influential protective effect attributed to the family in contexts of advanced secularization (Voas & Storm, 2021). As ambient religiosity – i.e. the share of individuals belonging to, believing in, and practicing a religion at the population level – decreases in Western nations, they argue it becomes instead harder to sustain and transmit religiosity within the family. Voas and Fleischmann wrote that “ambient religiosity is much lower and so being religious requires more effort, like staying warm in a cold climate” (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012:531). Not only does it require more effort to sustain the same level of religiosity, but it also requires more effort to transmit such religiosity to the next generation. This argument was also made by Steve Bruce, who adds that in contexts where “there is less consensually shared” religion, it becomes proportionally harder to transmit religion or “to pass on intact to the next generation” (2011:48).

In this article, I align with the latter group of theorists who argue that ambient secularization has a compounding negative effect on transmission. While some religious families may indeed resist secularizing pressures, especially when strongly engaged or within tight-knit minority communities, the broader societal decline in belief and practice makes religious continuity more difficult overall even for traditionally majority religious groups. Thus, I expect to find weaker transmission in contexts of advanced secularization, even among those raised in the majority religion.

H1a: Being brought up in a minority religious tradition will have a negative effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “religious” and “fuzzy fidelity” category as an adult.

H1b: Being brought up in the majority religious tradition of the country will be positively associated with the probability of belonging to the “fuzzy fidelity” category as an adult.

Religious Practice

Religious practice during childhood has been identified as one of the leading causal explanations for successful religious transmission to adulthood (Bengtson et al., 2013). Numerous studies have shown that attending religious services during childhood has a positive effect on the level of religiosity in adulthood, even with younger generations being less likely to attend than their parents (Smith & Snell, 2009; Stolz et al., 2024; Voas & Storm, 2012). Praying regularly during childhood is also a factor that positively influences religiosity in adulthood (Monnot & Wernli, 2023). When these two practices are an integral part of the child’s life, their effect is reinforced, and they enhance the potential for successful religious transmission to adulthood (Wittberg, 2021).

Despite the many studies that have shown the positive effects of these practices during childhood on religious transmission, the secularization process in Western countries nevertheless continues to unfold, indicating that these childhood practices are not guarantees of continued adult religiosity (Brauer, 2018; Silverstein et al., 2024). It then becomes important to question what specific effect these socialization practices have on the religious landscape more generally, and on the different forms of religiosity that are adopted in adulthood.

Teaching children how to practice their faith shows a genuine desire for transmission from their parents, as it is becoming increasingly challenging to undertake the required efforts to do so

in contexts of advanced secularization. However, the most frequent result is not a strong and lasting religious transmission later in life (Legault-Leclair 2024). Rather, an erosion of adult religiosity continues to take place, with some habits being maintained into adulthood while others are abandoned. In many cases, when intergenerational religiosity declines, group religious practice is the first to be abandoned, followed by the subjective importance given to one's religion, while belonging is preserved for a longer period of time (Meunier & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2011; Stolz et al., 2025). The weakening effectiveness of practice as a socialization mechanism and this pattern of decline leads me to believe that practicing collectively during childhood does not have the same effect on religiosity as prayer (Legault-Leclair 2024).

H2a: Regular service attendance during childhood will have a positive effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “fuzzy fidelity” category as an adult.

H2b: Praying regularly during childhood will have a positive effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “religious” and “fuzzy fidelity” categories as an adult.

Attitude towards religion growing up

General attitudes towards religion in the family environment during childhood can have a decisive influence on whether a child adopts or rejects any type of religiosity as an adult. Yet, the impact of this variable has not been examined in much detail in the existing empirical research on family religious transmission. One exception is the work of Bader and Desmond (2006), which shows that a positive attitude towards religion in childhood has a positive effect on the transmission of religiosity. This paper is particularly interested in family environments where attitudes toward religion are not necessarily positive, but rather indifferent or even negative, as such contexts could diminish the importance placed on religious socialization. In a context of general religious decline,

it is crucial to know what the effect of a mixed, indifferent or negative family environment towards religion is.

Several studies have shown that there is a progressive detachment between historical religions of Western countries and their dominant national culture (Hervieu-Léger 2003; Meunier 2015). This distancing from the dominant historical religious culture can take different forms and can be reflected in the general attitude expressed by the family towards religion. Some have described this new relationship towards religion as a “love-hate” relationship (Meunier & Legault-Leclair 2020), while others have described it as a rise in the number of individuals showing a “pronounced distance” from religion, or even an “irrelevance” of religion (Müller & Porada 2022:11).

This transformation in attitudes towards religion in Western societies, and within families, can also manifest itself as a growing indifference towards religion. Several studies have shown that this type of stance towards religion shapes religious socialization (Bruce 2002; Gärtner, 2022; Quack & Schuh, 2017). Supporting what other sociologists have found, Kasselstrand writes that indifference towards religion is one of the important markers of deeply secular societies (2019:629).

Based on these writings, I will be investigating the effect these attitudes towards religion can have on the transmission process as well as on the secular transition.

H3a: A positive attitude towards religion in the family during childhood will have a positive effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “religious” category as an adult.

H3b: A mixed or indifferent attitude towards religion within the family during childhood will have a positive effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “secular” category as an adult.

H3c: A negative attitude towards religion in the family during childhood will have a positive effect on the probabilities of belonging to the “secular” category as an adult.

Methodology

Data

In order to test these hypotheses, this article draws on cross-national survey data collected between January and March 2021 as part of the *Transmission of Religion Across Generations* research project.¹⁶ The survey was conducted by Ipsos in five countries—Germany, Canada, Finland, Hungary, and Italy¹⁷— among individuals 18 years of age and older. The survey was administered in the official languages of each country, chosen by the respondent. This survey employed a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure. A dual-frame sampling approach was used: landline numbers were selected through a random digit dialing (RDD) procedure, ensuring the inclusion of both listed and unlisted households, while mobile samples were drawn from existing registries. To ensure regional representativeness, landline numbers were stratified according to regional cells. Respondents within households were randomly selected using the most recent birthday method. To maximize response rates, multiple contact attempts were made at

¹⁶ This project was funded by the John Temple Foundation from 2019 to 2024 (grant #61361). It was based at the University of Münster’s Center for Religion and Modernity.

¹⁷ 8,408 individuals were surveyed across all countries. To provide a better representation of Germany and its historical division between West and East Germany, more individuals were surveyed in this country. West Germany: 1,504 cases, East Germany: 901 cases, Canada: 1,501 cases, Finland: 1,500 cases, Hungary: 1,500 cases, Italy: 1,502 cases.

different times of the day and week. Respondents were interviewed via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), ensuring standardized question delivery and efficient data collection.

The survey data then underwent a two-stage weighting process to correct for sampling biases. First, a “design weighting” step adjusted for unequal selection probabilities, particularly in landline samples where household size affects inclusion likelihood. Second, a “redressment” step ensured that the sample structure aligned with official demographic statistics by compensating for differential non-response. Finally, once the sampling process was completed, a weighting variable was created for each country using socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, region, and level of education. Weighting specifications were based on Eurostat 2020 data and the 2016 Canada Census.

Dependent variable

Following how Voas (2009) constructed his secular transition categories, I was able to replicate the categories of religious, fuzzy and secular individuals using the Torag dataset. For Voas, a religious person must find religion important, i.e. have a level of religiosity of at least 6 on a scale ranging from 0-10, and/or attend religious services at least once a month (2009:163). Conversely, he characterizes as ‘secular’ individuals those who do not practice religion or only do so on holidays, and those who give little or no importance to religion (from 0 to 2 on a scale of 10). Lastly, between these two categories, he classifies as ‘fuzzy’, those individuals who are moderately or not very religious. In order to replicate this categorization as best as possible, I used the following two Torag survey questions: “How religious would you say you are?” where respondents could choose from a scale of “1 not religious at all” to “5 very religious”; and “Thinking of the time

before the corona crisis, apart from special occasions like weddings and funerals, how often did you attend religious services?” with the possible answers of “never”, “less than once a year”, “about one or twice a year”, “several times a year”, “about once a month” and, “about every week of more often”.

To create the “religious” category, I grouped together respondents who attended religious services once a month or more often, as well as those who had a level of religiosity greater than or equal to 3 on the 5-point scale. To create the “secular” category, I grouped together respondents who practiced less frequently than once a month, and those who had a level of religiosity less than or equal to 2 on the 5-point scale. All other respondents were categorized in the “fuzzy” category, i.e. respondents who have a religiosity level above 3 on the 5-point scale but attend religious services less than once a month, as well as those who attend at least once a month but do not have a religiosity level of 3 or higher on the 5-point scale. The categories in the final variable are: 1 = secular, 2 = fuzzy fidelity, and 3 = religious. A positive effect on this variable therefore indicates a higher level of adult religiosity at the time of the survey, and a negative effect indicates less religiosity.

Independent variables

Four independent variables of interest will be used to measure the impact of family socialization on an individual falling into one of the three previous categories of religious, fuzzy and secular as an adult. To measure religious affiliation, I will use the question “What religion, if any, were you brought up in?” Respondents could choose between eleven religious traditions and “no religion”. To ensure large enough subsamples for analyses, responses were recoded into four

categories: “Catholic”, “mainline Protestant¹⁸”, “other religions” and “no religion”. The second question, measuring service attendance, is “To what extent did you engage in any of the following practices with one or more of your parents or grandparents when you were a child – we attended religious services?” Respondents could answer either “never”, “seldom”, “occasionally” or “regularly”. Thirdly, to measure the frequency of prayer during childhood, I created a scale using the following three survey items: “We prayed at mealtime”, “We prayed at bedtime prayer/nighttime prayer” and “We prayed together on other occasions”. Like with service attendance, respondents could answer either “never”, “seldom”, “occasionally” or “regularly”. It ranges from 3 to 12; subtracting 2 gives a range from 1 (never prayed) to 10 (regularly prayed at mealtimes, bedtimes and other times). The fourth independent variable, measuring the family’s attitude towards religion during childhood, was derived from the following survey question: “On the whole, as you remember it, what was the general attitude towards religion [in your childhood home]?” Respondents could choose between “positive”, “negative”, “mixed” and “indifferent”.

Models

I first present descriptive statistics measuring the proportion of individuals in each of the three secular transition categories. I also look at respondents’ intentions to pass on their religion to the next generation. I then present the results from a series of ordinal logistic regression models, with the three secular transition categories as the dependent variable, the four main independent variables, and a series of socio-demographic controls including gender (two categories), birth cohort (four categories), generation of immigration (three categories), social class during childhood

¹⁸ The mainline Protestant category includes United, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran churches, as well as Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and the Evangelical Church (Germany). It excludes Evangelical, Pentecostal, Free Church, Orthodox, and “Other Christian” groups.

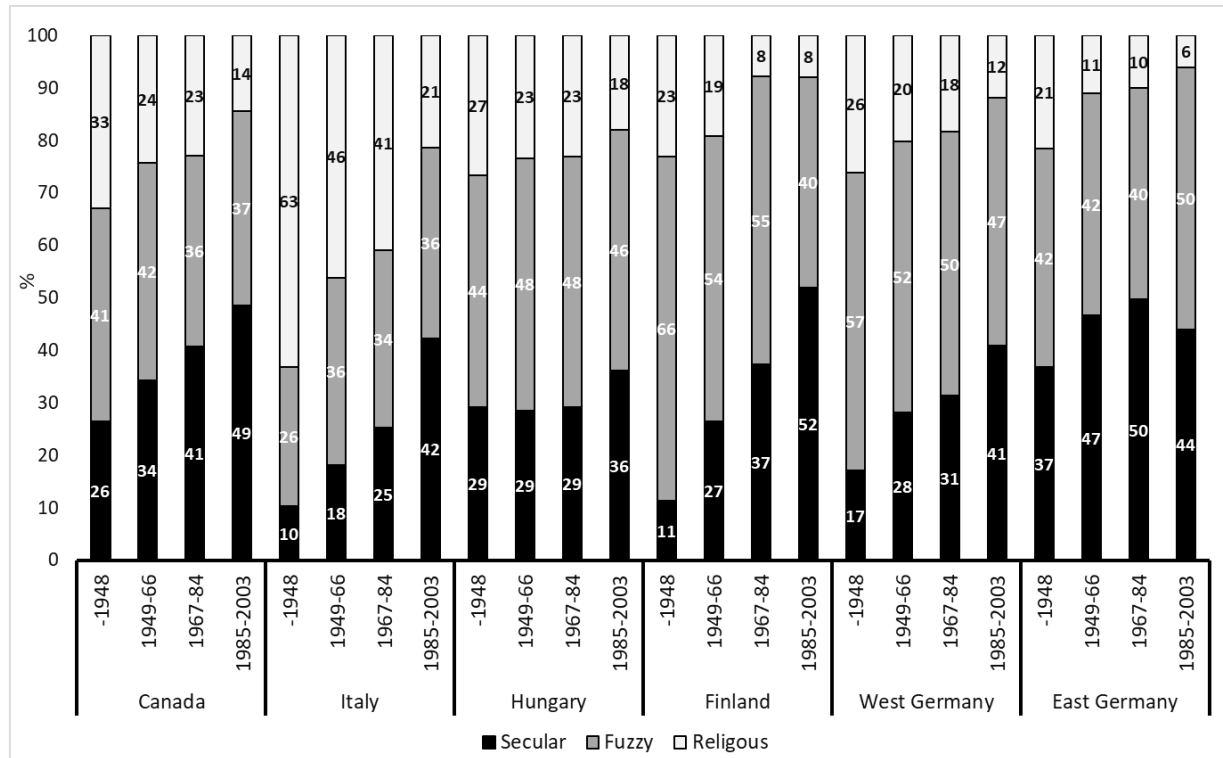
(six categories) and region of residence during childhood (two categories)¹⁹. The ordinal logistic regression models were run with all five country samples combined, and country of residence also controlled for in the models. In order to better understand how the effects of the four main independent variables of interest vary by country, I interacted each of these four independent variables with country dummy variables in later models.

Results

Figure 2.1 shows the proportion of individuals in each of the secular transition categories by birth cohort and country. In general, there is an increase in the proportion of secular individuals among younger cohorts in all countries. Only in East Germany, where the proportion of secular individuals was already higher among older cohorts from State imposed secularism under the Soviet Union, is the proportion of seculars among the youngest generation not the highest in the region. By contrast, in all five countries the oldest generation has the highest share of religious members, while the youngest generation has the lowest, even in East Germany. Among the countries studied, Canada and Finland show progress in the secular transition, marked by high levels of seculars and fewer fuzzies among the youngest cohorts. Italy, by contrast, appears to be at an earlier stage of the secular transition, with a trend towards secularization firmly established.

¹⁹ Descriptive data for all the variables discussed here are provided in the appendix.

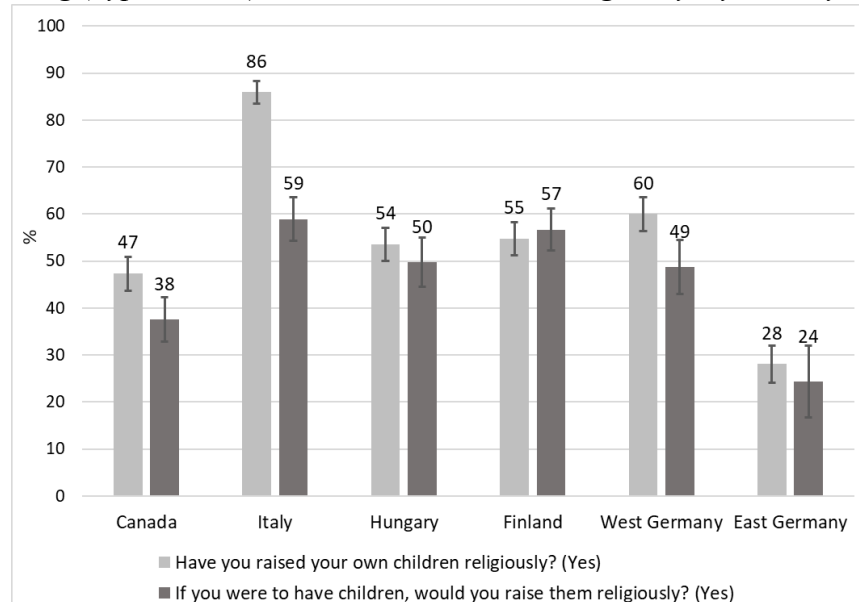
Figure 2.1: Proportion of religious, fuzzy and secular individuals by birth cohort and country, 2021



Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

The general appetite for intergenerational religious transmission among families in the five countries surveyed seems to be relatively low. For instance, only 47% of Canadians, 54% of Hungarians, 55% of Finns, 86% of Italians, 60% of West Germans and 28% of East Germans say they have raised their children religiously. It was only in Italy and Finland that the majority of respondents surveyed expressed intentions of eventually raising their children religiously in the future.

Figure 2.2: *Share of individuals having raised their children religiously, and share of individuals planning (hypothetical) to raise their children religiously, by country, 2021*



Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

Table 2.1 in turn presents a series of six ordinal logistic regression models, measuring the impact of a number of childhood religious transmission variables on respondents' likelihood to be secular, fuzzy or religious as adults at the time of the survey. The first model includes only the socio-demographic controls. Models two to five successively include the childhood religious transmission independent variables of interest, interacting with each country. Model 6 brings together all the variables treated, with no interaction between them, and includes country dummies as control variables.

Model 1 (Table 2.1) shows that a number of socio-demographic variables are associated with the likelihood of being religious, fuzzy or secular. Taking all countries into account, being older, being female, being from an immigrant background and having lived in a rural area during childhood all increase the likelihood of being religious. Among the countries analyzed, Italians and

Hungarians are more likely than Canadians to belong to the “religious” category. Conversely, people living in East Germany are the least likely to belong to this category.

Table 2.1: Ordinal logistic regression models predicting the effect of family religious socialization on secular transition, 2021

	M1 OR (SE)	M2 OR (SE)	M3 OR (SE)	M4 OR (SE)	M5 OR (SE)	M6 OR (SE)
Sex (ref. male)						
Female	1.69*** (.084)	1.699*** (.086)	1.547*** (.079)	1.435*** (.075)	1.641*** (.084)	1.44*** (.076)
Birth cohort (ref. -1948)						
1949-66	.66*** (.058)	.705*** (.064)	.741*** (.069)	.779** (.078)	.716*** (.065)	.816** (.081)
1967-84	.517*** (.046)	.559*** (.052)	.626*** (.06)	.691*** (.07)	.594*** (.056)	.737*** (.075)
1985-2003	.31*** (.029)	.337*** (.034)	.389*** (.039)	.442*** (.047)	.377*** (.037)	.483*** (.052)
Immigrant generation (ref. non-immigrant)						
First generation immigrant	1.666*** (.212)	1.669*** (.221)	1.707*** (.211)	1.558*** (.194)	1.533*** (.195)	1.504*** (.195)
Second generation immigrant	2.047*** (.205)	1.796*** (.19)	2.075*** (.211)	1.65*** (.174)	1.92*** (.194)	1.648*** (.178)
Childhood social class (ref. 1-low)						
2	.931 (.124)	.901 (.127)	.884 (.136)	.871 (.125)	.832 (.116)	.818 (.127)
3	1.17 (.149)	1.136 (.154)	1.015 (.15)	.987 (.135)	.973 (.129)	.902 (.135)
4	1.232 (.165)	1.224 (.173)	1.044 (.161)	1.004 (.145)	1.029 (.143)	.932 (.145)
5-high	1.594*** (.252)	1.492** (.246)	1.234 (.224)	.979 (.168)	1.181 (.194)	.906 (.165)
Don't know/no answer	1.602** (.364)	1.616** (.369)	1.414 (.345)	1.198 (.279)	1.343 (.322)	1.18 (.283)
Childhood residence location (ref. small town/rural)						
Suburbs or large city	.77*** (.043)	.822*** (.048)	.903* (.052)	.888** (.051)	.834*** (.047)	.955 (.057)
Country (ref. Canada)						
Italy	2.676*** (.245)	3.011*** (.325)	2.081*** (.588)	3.06*** (.509)	2.261*** (.4)	3.339*** (.333)
Hungary	1.478*** (.127)	1.562*** (.178)	1.847*** (.434)	1.808*** (.271)	1.822*** (.255)	2.071*** (.191)
Finland	1.006 (.08)	2.106** (.765)	2.096*** (.495)	1.611*** (.238)	1.195 (.17)	1.245** (.125)
West Germany	1.132 (.094)	1.395*** (.168)	2.16*** (.529)	1.704*** (.262)	1.23 (.184)	1.168* (.106)
East Germany	.634*** (.065)	1.347 (.278)	.974 (.255)	.965 (.162)	1.124 (.186)	1.382*** (.153)
Religion raised in (ref. Catholic)						
Mainline Protestant		1.009 (.159)				1.222*** (.094)
Other		2.284*** (.4)				1.333*** (.147)
None		.149*** (.035)				.493*** (.064)
Country (ref. Canada) × Religion raised in (ref. Catholic)						
Italy × Other		.292*** (.118)				

Italy × None	.163*** (.086)		
Hungary × Mainline Protestant	1.153 (.235)		
Hungary × Other	1.298 (.421)		
Hungary × None	1.171 (.366)		
Finland × Mainline Protestant (ref. None)	.46** (.179)		
Finland × Other (ref. None)	.397** (.185)		
West Germany × Mainline Protestant	.744 (.149)		
West Germany × Other	.389*** (.1)		
West Germany × None	1.241 (.427)		
East Germany × Mainline Protestant	.806 (.216)		
East Germany × Other	.394** (.154)		
East Germany × None	.687 (.245)		
Childhood religious service attendance frequency (4 pts scale)	2.274*** (.135)	1.348*** (.045)	
Country (ref. Canada) × Childhood religious service attendance frequency (4 pts scale)			
Italy × Childhood religious service attendance frequency	1.057 (.092)		
Hungary × Childhood religious service attendance frequency	1.016 (.078)		
Finland × Childhood religious service attendance frequency	.91 (.075)		
West Germany × Childhood religious service attendance frequency	.858* (.069)		
East Germany × Childhood religious service attendance frequency	1.106 (.107)		
Childhood prayer frequency (10pts scale)	1.442*** (.031)	1.246*** (.015)	
Country (ref. Canada) × Childhood prayer frequency (10pts scale)			
Italy × Childhood prayer frequency	1.067* (.037)		
Hungary × Childhood prayer frequency	.996 (.029)		
Finland × Childhood prayer frequency	.942** (.027)		
West Germany × Childhood prayer frequency	.913*** (.025)		
East Germany × Childhood prayer frequency	1.037 (.035)		
Family attitude towards religion during childhood (ref. mixed)			
Positive		3.33*** (.453)	1.758*** (.112)
Negative		.997 (.288)	.92 (.134)
Indifferent		.402*** (.139)	.711*** (.077)
Country (ref. Canada) × Family attitude towards religion during childhood (ref. mixed)			
Italy × Positive		1.228 (.256)	

Italy × Negative	.412*
	(.212)
Italy × Indifferent	.52
	(.235)
Hungary × Positive	1.144
	(.207)
Hungary × Negative	.447*
	(.19)
Hungary × Indifferent	.773
	(.318)
Finland × Positive	.785
	(.139)
Finland × Negative	.566
	(.257)
Finland × Indifferent	1.472
	(.572)
West Germany × Positive	.853
	(.16)
West Germany × Negative	.635
	(.278)
West Germany × Indifferent	1.553
	(.645)
East Germany × Positive	.589**
	(.135)
East Germany × Negative	.392**
	(.171)
East Germany × Indifferent	.638
	(.296)
/cut1	-.765
/cut2	1.363
Observations	8067
Pseudo R ²	.051
AIC	16254.66
BIC	16387.57
	-.782
	1.459
	8067
	.09
	15620.24
	14470.96
	14981.64
	.517
	3.101
	8067
	.133
	.158
	14870.73
	15129.56
	15228.8
	15487.63
	1.277
	.897
	8067
	.187
	13961.7
	14150.58

Standard errors are in parentheses

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Notes:

Omitted interactions due to low counts: Italy × Mainline Protestant; Finland × Catholic.

Omitted interactions due to collinearity: Finland × None.

Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

Childhood Religious Affiliation and National Religious Landscape

The religious tradition in which respondents were raised in has some influence on their likelihood of being religious as adults, across all five countries at study. When the respondent is raised in a religion that is majority or traditionally established in their country, it influences the likelihood of intergenerational transmission. When respondents were raised Catholic or mainline Protestant, they were more likely to have a fuzzy fidelity to their religion in adulthood. It is only when respondents report having been raised with no religion that they are significantly less likely to be religious.

Being raised in the country's dominant religious tradition is most commonly associated with fuzzy fidelity, rather than with strong religiosity. In this sense, the effect of a family religious tradition identical to that of the country majority does not appear to produce a substantial number of individuals with strong religiosity. In Canada, a predicted probability of 48% of individuals raised Catholic fall into the fuzzy category, while only 16% are classified as religious. The same proportions apply to those raised in mainline Protestantism, with 48% being fuzzy and 16% religious. In Italy, a predicted probability of 48% of respondents raised Catholic are also fuzzy, but a comparatively higher 37% identify as religious. In Hungary, a predicted probability of 51% of those raised either Catholic or mainline Protestant fall into the fuzzy category, while a smaller proportion identify as religious. It is 23% among those raised Catholic and 26% among mainline Protestants. In Finland, a predicted probability of 48% of respondents raised in mainline Protestantism are fuzzy, while 16% are religious. In West Germany, a predicted probability of 50% of those raised Catholic and 49% of those raised mainline Protestant are classified as fuzzy, compared to 21% of Catholics and 17% of Protestants who are religious. A nearly identical pattern is observed in East Germany, where 50% of those raised Catholic and 49% of those raised mainline Protestant are fuzzy, while only 21% of Catholics and 17% of mainline Protestants are religious. These figures collectively illustrate that across diverse national and religious contexts, fuzzy fidelity has become the most common outcome of religious upbringing, while strong religiosity remains a less frequent trajectory when people are raised in the historically dominant religious tradition of their country.

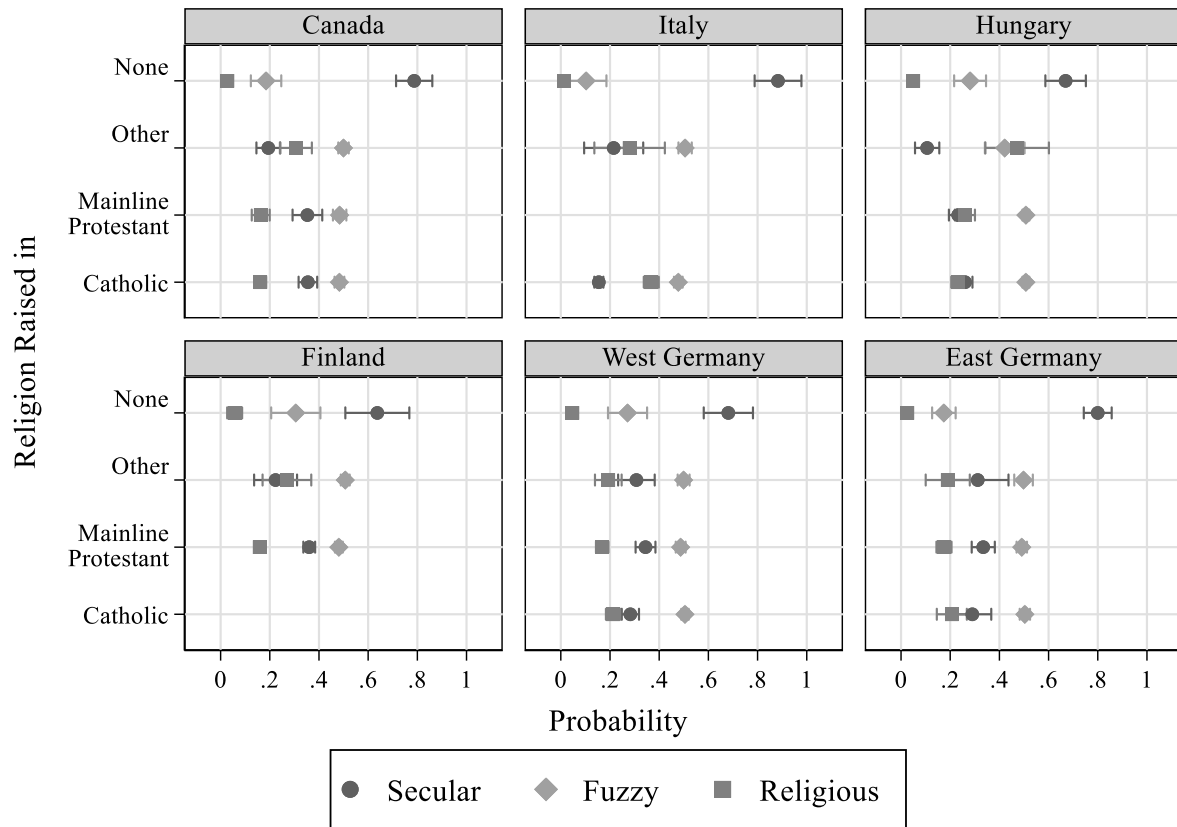
Moreover, the data reveal that the second most important category among individuals raised in the majority religious tradition is not the 'religious' category, but rather the 'secular' category. The only exceptions are Italy, where the second most prevalent category among respondents raised

Catholic is ‘religious’, and Hungary, where it is statistically impossible to differentiate the second most important category. What is most striking in Figure 2.3 is the prevalence of the ‘secular’ category as the second most important category among those raised within mainline Protestantism in Canada, Finland, and Germany, and within Catholicism in Canada.

Conversely, in Canada, Finland and Hungary, the highest proportions of religious respondents were found among those raised in other religions. In other words, people raised in traditions not historically dominant in their country were more likely to be religious when compared to respondents from mainline Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. Although fuzzy fidelity still dominates, it is among respondents from other traditions that I find the highest proportions of the religious.

Consequently, the data obtained here do not support the hypotheses H1a. Based on models two and six in Table 2.1, I find that growing up in a minority religion has a positive effect on religiosity. It is possible that this is due to religious socialization in a foreign country where the average level of religiosity is higher, followed by migration to the countries at study. It is also possible that it is caused by growing up in a highly religious community that is religiously different from mainstream society, such as among evangelical Christian or Orthodox Jewish communities. It is also possible that this stems from reactive religiosity, a strengthened religious identification triggered by perceived exclusion or threat. However, there is support for hypothesis H1b, as the dominant category among individuals raised in the country’s traditional religion is fuzzy fidelity. Indeed, growing up in one of the country’s traditional religions increases the probability of being more religious and most frequently leads to fuzzy religious affiliation.

Figure 2.3: Predicted probabilities of belonging to one of the three secular transition categories according to the religion in which respondents were raised in, by country, 2021



Notes: Omitted interactions due to low counts: Italy × Mainline Protestant; Finland × Catholic. Omitted interactions due to collinearity: Finland × None.
Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

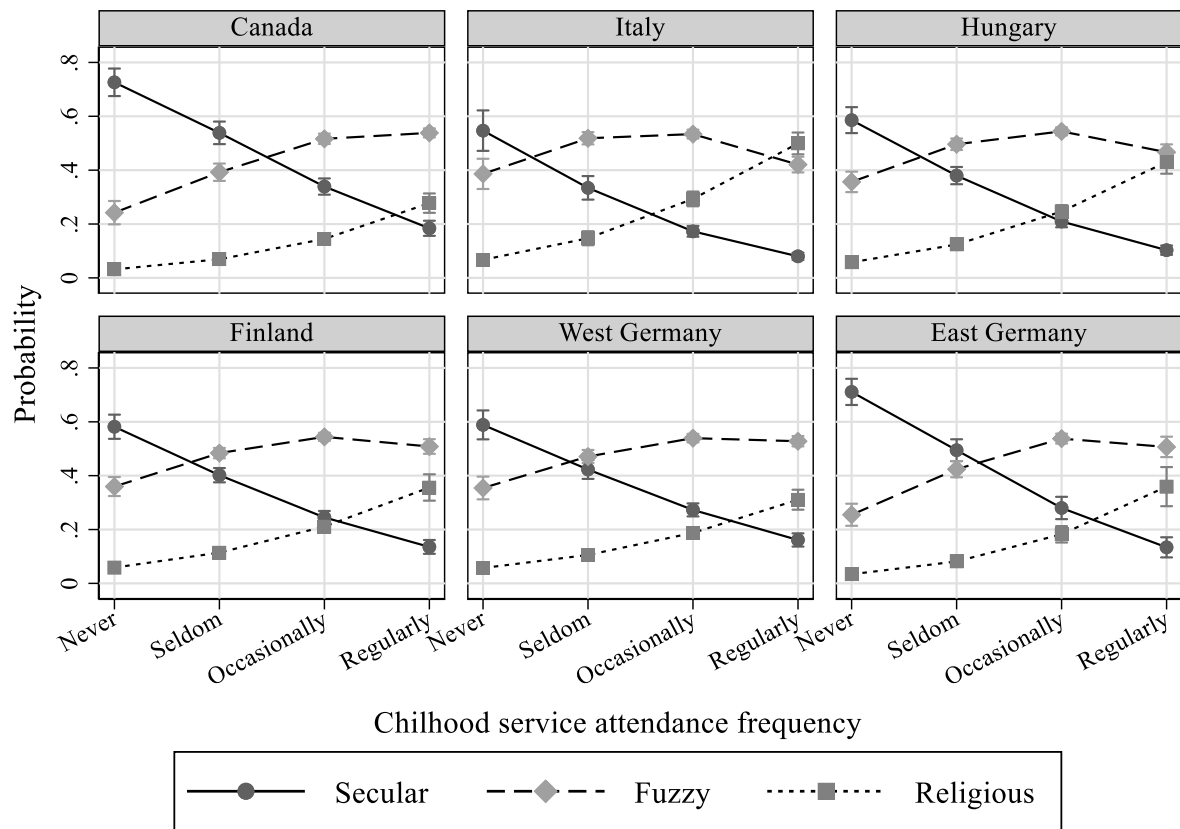
Childhood Religious Practice

In models three and six, frequency of religious services attendance during childhood is positively associated with being religious as an adult. However, when I look more closely at the interactions between this variable and the country in which the effect occurs, the interaction is only significant for West Germany when compared with Canada, although the main effect remains significant. In West Germany, the effect of attending religious services is weaker than in Canada, the reference country. In other words, the association between childhood religious service

attendance and adult religiosity is weakest in West Germany compared to the other countries and regions under study.

In three out of five countries (Canada, Finland and Germany), regular attendance at religious services during childhood results in a higher proportion of fuzzy fidelity than religious adults. In both Italy and Hungary, the proportion of fuzzy fidelity remains high despite higher proportions of religious individuals. Indeed, the model's predicted probability of being religious, given regular attendance at religious services during childhood, was respectively 50 % and 43 %. In general, the proportion of people with fuzzy fidelity increases with the frequency of childhood religious practice, reaching a plateau at the level of occasional practice. At this level of practice, the predicted probability of being fuzzy is 52 % in Canada, 53 % in Italy, and 54 % in Hungary, Finland and Germany. It should be noted, however, that the main predicted category for both occasional and regular childhood religious practice is fuzzy fidelity in Finland, Canada and Germany. Figure 2.4 is rather surprising in that it does not show any level of childhood religious services attendance that is high enough to lead to a higher proportion of religious than fuzzy individuals in adulthood apart from in Italy. In this sense, I can confirm the hypothesis H2a, where childhood religious service attendance is positively associated with fuzzy fidelity as an adult for four of the five countries. Even if frequent service attendance does increase the likelihood of being religious, the proportion of individuals who identify as fuzzy surpasses the share of religious individuals. Italy, where the secular transition is least advanced, is the exception to this finding. In light of these results, I must emphasize that frequency of religious service attendance during childhood predicts an increase in both fuzzy fidelity as well as religious identity.

Figure 2.4: Predicted probabilities of belonging to one of the three secular transition categories according to frequency of service attendance during childhood, by country, 2021



Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

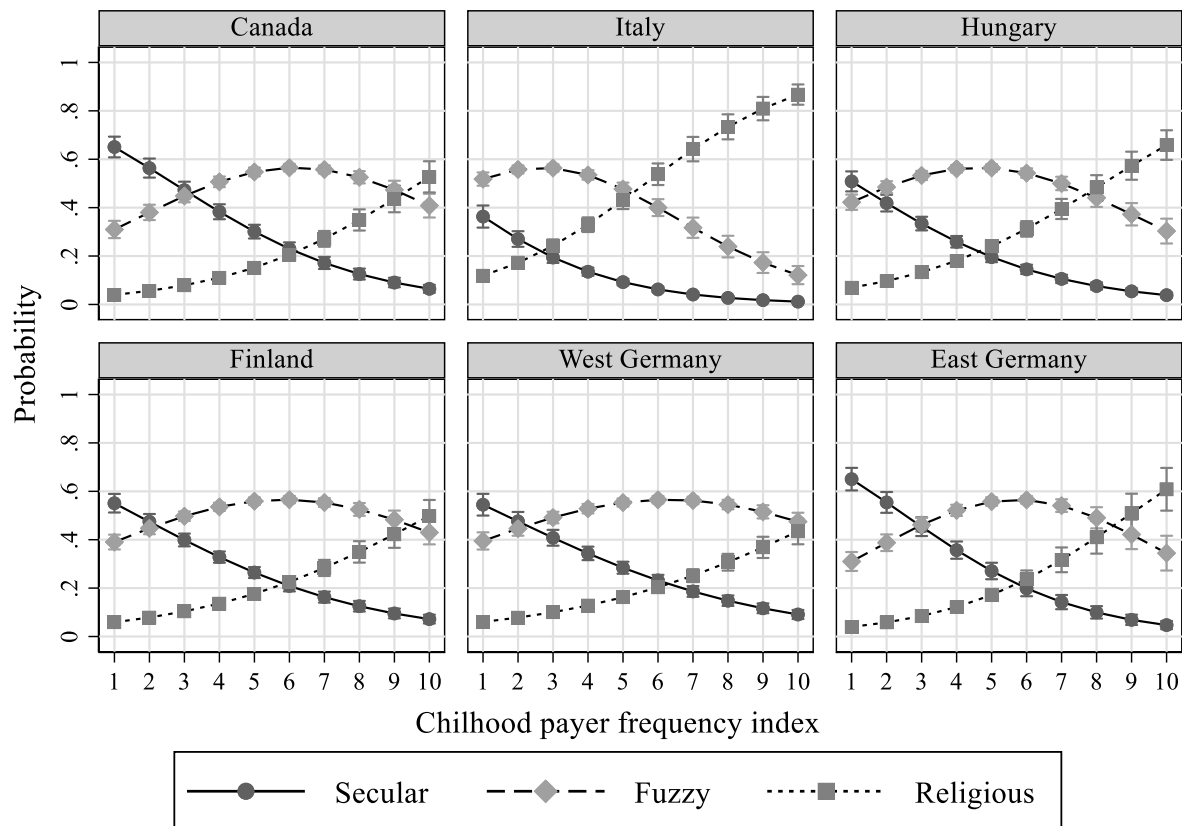
As shown in Model four, the effect of childhood frequency of prayer is positive on being religious as an adult. The effect also remains high in the final model, especially when compared to service attendance. This effect takes the form of a continuous decrease in the proportion of secular individuals, a continuous increase in the proportion of religious individuals and a curvilinear relationship with the proportion of individuals with fuzzy fidelity, i.e. an increase of adult fuzzy fidelity with lower frequencies of childhood prayer, followed by a decrease in their proportion with higher frequencies of childhood prayer. However, the effect was not the same in all countries: in

Finland and West Germany, the frequency of childhood prayer had a weaker effect than in Canada. Conversely, the strongest effect was found in Italy.

The direction of the effect is similar in four of the five countries though. In Canada, Hungary, Finland and Germany, an increase in the frequency of childhood prayer is associated with an increase in the chances of belonging to the fuzzy fidelity and religious categories. It is only when the practice is sufficiently frequent (7 or higher on the 10-point scale) that the proportion of fuzzy individuals begins to fall as the share of religious individuals continues to rise. Italy is an exception to this trend, as it exhibits a particularly pronounced effect of childhood prayer on the likelihood of identifying as religious as an adult.

These findings lead me to moderate hypothesis H2b, since it is only in Italy that frequent prayer in childhood significantly increases the likelihood of being religious as an adult, whereas in the other countries I can expect fuzzy fidelity as the main outcome. This effect indicates that as societies advance further along the secular transition – especially Canada, Finland and Germany in comparison to Italy –, it becomes progressively harder to transmit high levels of religiosity. This challenge persists even when childhood prayer is moderately frequent.

Figure 2.5: Predicted probabilities of belonging to one of the three secular transition categories according to frequency of prayer during childhood, by country, 2021



Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

Attitude Towards Religion

As shown in Figure 2.6, the predicted probabilities of belonging to one of the three categories of secular transition depend on the general attitude towards religion in the family environment during childhood. The first notable observation from these results is the similarity between the effect produced by an indifferent or negative family attitude towards religion. Both of these attitudes predict a comparable probability of being secular as an adult across the five countries. It is important to note that an indifferent attitude might not be of the same nature as a

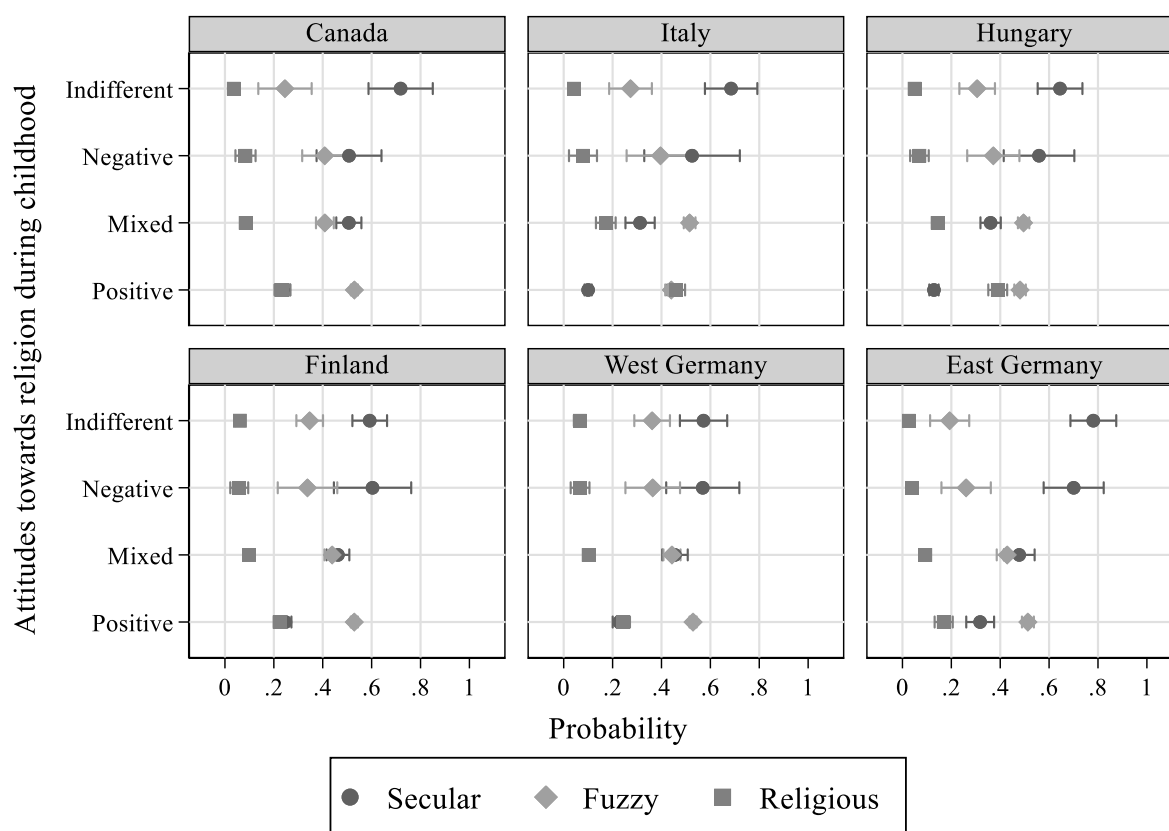
negative attitude. It might be distinct from a negative attitude, in that it does not stem from a value judgement, but rather from a complete absence of any form of relationship to religion (Quack & Schuh, 2017). A notable proportion of individuals who reported being indifferent to religion during childhood also came from non-religious families. Yet, the effects of these two distinct types of family attitudes towards religion, on becoming a secular adult, seem to be very similar.

With regard to a mixed family attitude towards religion during childhood, it has more of a positive influence on the chances of being a fuzzy as an adult in at least some of the countries at study. In Italy and Hungary, individuals who were raised in a family environment where this mixed attitude was prevalent are more likely to be secular or to have a fuzzy fidelity as an adult, than to be religious. In Canada, Finland and Germany, this family attitude generates a comparable proportion of individuals who are both fuzzy and secular.

In Canada, Finland and Germany, even when the family's attitude towards religion was positive during childhood, the probability of being a religious adult does not surpass the probability of being a fuzzy or a secular one. Only in Italy and Hungary does this positive family attitude towards religion during childhood predict a significantly higher probability of being religious as an adult.

With two exceptions, these results corroborate three hypotheses (H3a, H3b and H3c). A positive family attitude towards religion during childhood is associated with a higher probability of fuzzy fidelity in three of the five countries (Canada, Finland and Germany), rather than a higher probability of being religious as an adult. In line with my expectations, an indifferent family attitude toward religion during childhood has an effect comparable to that of mixed or negative attitudes, predicting a higher likelihood of being secular as an adult.

Figure 2.6: Predicted probabilities of belonging to one of the three secular transition categories according to the different attitudes towards religion in the family during childhood, by country, 2021



Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

Discussion

The findings presented here shed light on the association between family religious socialization during childhood, the secular transition context in which it takes place, and where individuals find themselves in the secular transition process when they reach adulthood. More specifically, the data show that the effect of religious socialization on the level of religiosity of respondents was generally moderate. In countries with mid- to advanced-levels of secular transition overall, such as in Canada, Finland and Germany, childhood religious socialization is more likely

to lead to fuzzy adults, rather than religious ones. By contrast, in Italy which is still in an earlier stage of secular transition, childhood religious socialization was still more likely to produce religious adults. So not only is there less religious socialization of children going on in countries in a more advanced stage of secular transition, but also the impact of what religious socialization is going on is weaker in such contexts, leading less often to producing religious adults. This socialization dynamic operates as a progressively self-reinforcing process leading to weaker religious transmission and adults who are less and less religious.

The decline in the proportion of religious individuals at the expense of an increase in the proportion of fuzzy fidelity is particularly noticeable among respondents who said they had been raised in a Christian religion (Catholic or mainline Protestant). The demographic importance of fuzzy fidelity in traditionally Christian countries testifies to the social normalisation of a religious culture in which regular practice is not essential anymore. In other words, it is no longer expected, even among older generations, to live according to the traditional high-practicing norms of Christianity in these historically Catholic or Protestant countries. Religious affiliation and some occasional holiday practices are sufficient in many individuals' minds to ensure that cultural and religious ties are maintained. At the societal level, this decline in practice and in the general level of religiosity confirms the progress of secularization.

This series of findings on the relationship between individual religiosity and the secular transition process leads me to reflect on the role of the family in this dynamic. Some researchers claim that the family fulfils the function of transmitting religion from one generation to the next, and that “parents are in fact hugely important”, and more specifically, that the “religious lives of their parents – how often they attend religious services, how important religious faith was in their own lives, and so on” is critical to intergeneration religious continuity (Smith & Snell, 2009: 285;

see also Bengtson et al., 2013; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Other researchers argue that the family is often unsuccessful in its ability to pass on a strong level of religiosity to the next generation. Stolz and his team, for example, write that “contrary to the expectations in the literature, [secularization] is not influenced in any substantively significant way by attributes of the parents, by family structure, or by parental residential context. Secularization happens independently of attributes of the parents and their immediate surroundings (Stolz et al., 2024:18).”

The results I have obtained in this study allow me to moderate the apparent contradiction between these two positions. Growing up in a particular religious tradition, attending religious services, praying and having a positive attitude towards religion in the childhood home are all tied to a higher likelihood of becoming a religious adult, even in countries in more advanced stages of secularization. What I observe here is a diminishing effectiveness of religious socialization, which increasingly results in fuzzy fidelity rather than robust religious identity. The ongoing secular transition reflects the diminishing impact of religious socialization on intergenerational transmission. Even when parents moderately engage their children in religious practices, these efforts no longer fundamentally counteract broader secularizing trends. In societies further along the secular transition, the influence of religious socialization not only declines overall but also shifts increasingly toward cultivating fuzzy fidelity rather than firm religious identity.

The limited success of religious socialization at a national level does not come as a surprise. Since the 1960s, and earlier in countries that lived under communist regimes (East Germany and Hungary for example), an actively religious way of life has ceased to be the norm, and raising a child in a religious tradition means going against the prevailing (non)religious social environment. As a result, it seems increasingly unlikely that families can be the only answer to secularization, since families themselves are becoming less and less religious, and religious socialization is

becoming less effective. A recent study has shown that families can benefit from a religious ecosystem that includes the school or parish to facilitate transmission in secular context (Thiessen, 2025).

By conducting this analysis in five Western countries of Christian tradition, it was reasonable to expect that the process of secular transition underway in these countries would be comparable, if not similar. However, certain distinctions became evident. Italy's more religious character manifested itself in the higher proportion of religious people, as well as in the greater effectiveness of some socialization mechanisms. The findings of this study indicate that being raised in a Catholic family and praying regularly have a positive effect on religiosity and have the potential to slow down the secular transition in Italy. In contrast, the secular transition in East Germany appears to be approaching a point of no return. While religion will not disappear in the short or medium term, it has already ceased to be a sufficiently important social structure to be passed on from one generation to the next. Canada, West Germany and Finland appear to fall between these two country extremes in terms of the success of religious transmission. In these three countries, the efforts made by families to promote religion have not resulted in the maintenance of a significant religious population. Instead, fuzzy and secular individuals now constitute the dominant categories. Even when the conditions for improved religious transmission seem to be in place in families, fuzzy fidelity is usually the outcome in adulthood, not active religiosity. Hungary appears to occupy a position intermediate between these three countries and Italy. Despite the religious repression during the communist period, and with subsequent church rehabilitation, the proportion of religious individuals in Hungary has declined less rapidly than in East Germany, and transmission, especially towards fuzzy fidelity, remains prevalent when socialization mechanisms are favourable.

Conclusion

Combining the secular transition approach with that of intergenerational family transmission of religion has enabled a more complex and nuanced understanding of the secular transition paradigm. This has been achieved by introducing several meaningful family-related variables that have been under-utilised in the field, including the religion children are raised in, the different types of religious practices during childhood, and the general family attitude towards religion growing up. The analysis of these results has enabled me to highlight the moderate impact of these types of religious socialization on the intergenerational transmission of religion. The family, often presented as the ultimate guardian of religious transmission, has been shown to be mostly unsuccessful to counterbalance the effects of secular transition.

The objective of this article was to assess the impact of key factors of religious transmission in the context of secular transition. The findings indicate that even in situations where religious socialization is strong, high levels of religiosity in adulthood seldom emerge. In the five countries analysed, the decline in the proportion of religious individuals and the growth in the proportion of individuals with a fuzzy fidelity occurred even though a significant proportion of the population still received a religious socialization.

In a (Western) world that is becoming increasingly secular, where liberal values are developing at different rates, parents and faith groups must reconsider the significance of religious transmission. Conversely, children, particularly adolescents, often find themselves in a state of internal conflict, torn between upholding their religious heritage and adopting lifestyles that are at odds with traditional religious values (Smith & Snell, 2009). This tension can manifest as a partial abandonment of past religious practices and traditions. The increasing number of individuals who are less committed to their childhood religion is indicative of this gradual shift. While religion is

usually not being abandoned altogether over the course of one lifetime, there is a softening of religious sentiment and practices from one generation to the next. At the national level, this shift could be seen as a decompression chamber for traditional religious identity, with the growth of cultural religious identities (i.e. a type of religiosity where religious belonging and practice during holidays remain important, but where the religious vitality of everyday life gradually weakens), and eventually of secular identities as well.

Chapter Three

The Generation Effect. How Religiosity

Differs Over Time and Generations

Among Immigrants in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia

Submitted to journal Ethnic and Racial Studies

Introduction

Since the 1960s, the process of secularization has been one of the most significant forces reshaping the religious landscape of Western countries. In contexts such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, both the proportion of individuals reporting a religious affiliation and the overall level of religiosity have declined markedly (Kasselstrand et al., 2023). Alongside this national decline in religiosity, another major source of transformation has been immigration. Over recent decades, the religious composition of these countries has gradually shifted under the influence of the religiosity of newcomers (Connor, 2014). Previous research has shown that immigration contributes to diversifying the religious makeup of predominantly Christian host societies (Breton, 2012), to slow the overall decline in religiosity observed in some countries (Reimer & Hiemstra, 2018), and to sustain the reproduction and transmission of minority religious groups (de Hoon & van Tubergen, 2014).

Yet, religiosity levels are not fixed among newcomers once they undergo their migration event and settle in their host country. New immigrants have an impact on the religious landscape of their host country, but their new home and social environment may in turn have an impact on their own faith experience; and that of their kids who grow up and are socialized in this new environment. In light of these realities, my analysis in this article focuses on how the host context shapes the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. Do first- and second-generation immigrants exhibit comparable levels of religiosity between themselves, and how do these levels relate to those among populations who have been in the host country for more than two generations? To what extent does the (larger) proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals in the host environment influence immigrants' religiosity? And is there an association between the amount of time spent in the host country and the religiosity of immigrants and their descendants?

Despite the growing body of research on immigrant religiosity, much of this work has focused on comparisons between immigrants and the non-immigrant populations, whereas studies comparing immigrant (first- and second-) generations with one another remain relatively scarce (Garcia-Muñoz & Neuman, 2013). Accordingly, one of my aims is to consider cohort replacement among first- and second-generation immigrants. While cohort replacement at the population level generally points to an intergenerational decline in religiosity in many Western contexts (Molteni & Biolcati, 2018), the extent to which this pattern applies within first- and second-generation immigrant populations remains unclear.

While adopting an intergenerational perspective specific to these populations, it is equally important to consider the religious context into which they settle. Several authors have shown that the level of secularization in a host society can have a negative effect on the religiosity of newcomers (van Tubergen, 2007). For example, prolonged exposure to a highly secular

environment may contribute to a weakening of immigrants' religiosity. In other words, understanding religious change among immigrants requires not only examining intergenerational differences but also accounting for the number of years spent within a given religious context (Connor, 2008; van Tubergen, 2013).

Our study contributes to the empirical analysis of immigrant religiosity and its change across generations by examining twenty regions within four traditionally Christian countries undergoing secularization. It focuses on three main dimensions: (1) the effect of immigration generations on individual religiosity levels; (2) the influence of the proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals in the host country/region on immigrant religiosity; and (3) the effect of time spent in the host country on the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. This analysis also enables a comparison of four countries across three continents (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States) using a new dataset: the Cultural and Social Values Survey.

Theory and Hypotheses

Research on secularization has shown that the mechanism of cohort replacement contributes to the intergenerational decline of religiosity (Crockett & Voas, 2006). By cohort replacement, I refer to the process through which younger generations, which are on average less religious, gradually replace older cohorts, who tend to report higher levels of religiosity (Coutinho & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2023; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022). This demographic phenomenon is currently contributing to the overall decline of religiosity at the population level in most Western nations. One of the key factors driving this cohort replacement effect is the absence of religious transmission from parent to child, the presence of only partial or incomplete transmission, or the transmission of secular orientations instead (Bengtson et al., 2018; Stolz et al., 2016). This failure of religious

socialization and transmission has been identified as one of the most important drivers of the progressive decline in levels of religiosity (Silverstein et al., 2024). In other words, the secularization process is shaped by the weakening of religious socialization and incomplete intergenerational religious transmission.

This erosion of socialization is primarily attributable to the family environment, where fewer and fewer efforts by parents and by other family members are devoted to religious upbringing (Gärtner et al., 2025). This phenomenon has been unfolding for several decades in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and even the United States (Chaves, 2011; Legault-Leclair, 2024; Voas & Storm, 2012; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2016). Voas and Chaves (2016) trace this intergenerational decline back to the early twentieth century in the US, while other authors identify the 1960s as a pivotal turning point in the development of secularization (McLeod, 2007).

However, with the growing presence of immigration from the Global South, it becomes necessary to reconsider the cohort replacement mechanism, as the composition of populations in the countries at study are not only driven by new births, but also by migration. As Stolz and Novak note, “migration may lead to religious revival through composition effects when there is immigration from more religious countries or when there is emigration of particularly secular individuals” (2023: 142). This composition effect has also been identified in Canada as early as 2005 by Peter Beyer, who observed that “if present [immigration] trends continue (...) the religious landscape of Canada will continue to become more pluralistic” (2005: 193). Analyzing religious change or continuity across generations among first- and second-generation immigrants therefore becomes essential for understanding the evolution of the host society’s religious landscape.

Generation of Immigration

Measuring religious decline among immigrants through the lens of cohort replacement entails examining differences in religiosity between the first and second immigrant generations²⁰. Although intergenerational decline can account for an important part of the transformation of the religious landscape in the countries I study, several authors have shown that this decline does not affect all populations uniformly, particularly when it comes to religious minorities or populations of immigrant origin.

In some European countries such as France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, religious transmission is stronger among Muslims, many of whom are first- or second-generation immigrants, which reduces the intergenerational decline in their levels of religiosity (de Hoon & van Tubergen, 2014; Simon & Tiberj, 2015; Soehl, 2017). As Drouhot and Nee write, “parental socialization and control among Muslim families play a key role in the transmission of subjective religiosity to the second generation” (2019: 187). This dynamic is one of the factors contributing to the higher levels of religiosity observed among immigrants and their children, a pattern that has been documented in other national contexts as well (Drouhot, 2021; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012).

However, in many countries, there is intergenerational decline in religiosity among at least some immigrants and their children, which appears to follow the broader trend of the host society. In the Scandinavian context, Kasselstrand and Mahmoudi (2020) show that intergenerational decline in religiosity occurs even among recently arrived immigrants. Regardless of religious affiliation, these authors found that from one generation to the next the children of immigrants are less religious than their preceding generation. In Europe, second-generation immigrants from

²⁰ In this article, first-generation immigrants are defined as individuals who were born outside their current country of residence. Second-generation immigrants are defined as individuals with at least one parent who was born abroad. Individuals born in Canada who are of the third generation or higher will be referred to in the text as the non-immigrant population.

mixed unions, meaning individuals with one immigrant parent and one parent born in the country, have likewise been identified as less religious than both first- and second-generation immigrants with two immigrant parents, reflecting the weaker influence of familial religious socialization when one parent is not foreign-born (Molteni & van Tubergen, 2022). Analyzing the United States, Canada, and Europe, Connor (2014: 96) similarly demonstrates that intergenerational decline shapes the religiosity of immigrant populations: “children of immigrants [the second generation] are more like their peers with no migration background than like their parents’ generation. [...] later generations typically become more and more like the mainstream culture surrounding them.”

Although some studies point to cohort replacement among immigrants, comparisons between immigrant generations and non-immigrant populations remain limited. It is still unclear whether patterns of religious decline among immigrants follow the same dynamics as those observed among those who have been in Canada for a number of generations, and whether intergenerational decline across immigrant generations is of a similar magnitude to that observed between the second generation and the non-immigrant population. I consequently hypothesize that: *Irrespective of the time spent in the host country, first-generation immigrants are more religious than second-generation immigrants, and that second-generation immigrants are more religious than individuals of third or more generation (H1).*

The Impact of the Share of Religiously Unaffiliated Individuals in the Host Country

The religious composition of the host society has long been invoked to explain changes in, or the persistence of, immigrants’ religiosity (Stolz & Novak, 2023). Contextual effects are generally examined alongside individual-level factors in analyses seeking to disentangle the relative importance of macro- and micro-sociological influences. In a 2006 study of eight

industrialized countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Frank van Tubergen (2006) assessed the impact of religious pluralism and the average level of religiosity in the host society on immigrants' religiosity. His results show that in national contexts characterized by higher levels of religious pluralism, immigrants exhibit higher levels of religious practice than in countries with lower levels of pluralism. He also shows that the religiosity of the host population was positively associated with immigrants' levels of religiosity: the more religious the host society, the more religious immigrants tended to be as well.

Voas and Storm (2021) also examine how the national religious context shapes religious transmission among first-generation immigrants, in comparison to the influence of the family environment. Their results suggest that the effect of the broader religious context and that of the family operate largely independently. In other words, parents would not transmit religiosity more in a secular context in order to counteract the influence of the secular environment. They further argue that a more religious societal environment slightly amplifies the impact of parental religious socialization.

Based on this literature, it would seem the average level of religiosity within a nation exerts a positive, though modest, influence on the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. The dominant trend, however, remains one of secularization in Western societies, consistent with the broader religious climate of the four secularizing countries analyzed in this study. This said, I do not rule out the possibility that differences in levels of religiosity persist between immigrants, their descendants, and the population without immigrant background in the years following migration (Molteni & van Tubergen, 2022), despite an overall secularizing effect. Norris and Inglehart also show that immigrants' levels of religiosity are strongly shaped by those of their country of origin, and that this influence can persist even after migration (2012: 244).

Influenced by the pull between a potentially more religious country of origin and a more secular host society, it is expected that the average level of religiosity among first- and second-generation immigrants will decline, but that a gap in religiosity could remain between the different generations, reflecting the gradual effect of cohort replacement. Following this reasoning, I propose the hypothesis that *the regional share of the religiously unaffiliated has a negative effect on the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants (H2)*.

Duration of Stay in Host Country

For the social and religious context of the host society to influence their own religiosity, immigrants must reside there for a sufficient period of time. This is the assumption underlying much of the research drawing on the concept of integration, particularly in studies examining how secularizing environments, such as those of Western Europe or Canada, shape immigrants' levels of religiosity. Using longitudinal data from Quebec, Connor (2008) shows that the number of years immigrants spend in the province has a negative effect on their religiosity (the more years spent in the province, the less religious on average immigrants are). A similar pattern has been observed among immigrants settling in the Netherlands: time spent in the country negatively affects immigrants' subjective religiosity (Fleischmann & Khoudja, 2023). The Netherlands, one of the most secular societies in Europe, thus appears to provide a context conducive to the gradual decline of religious commitment among first-generation immigrants. This phenomenon has also been documented in other highly secular nations, including the Scandinavian countries (Kasselstrand & Mahmoudi, 2020: 631). It is important to note, however, that some groups maintain higher levels of religiosity despite secular host environments. For instance, Muslims in France and the United Kingdom exhibit relatively stable religious commitment, illustrating exceptions where a secular

national context does not necessarily lead to religious decline among certain immigrant populations (Drouhot, 2021; Lewis & Kashyap, 2013; Simon & Tiberj, 2015). In the United States, which has the highest average level of religiosity among the four countries included in the present study, evidence points in another direction. Using data from the New Immigrant Survey, Massey and Higgins (2011) find that time spent in the country does not influence immigrants' frequency of religious attendance.

However, the effect described by most researchers does not appear to be linear; that is, religious change does not necessarily follow a steadily declining trajectory. The migration event itself, representing a major disruption of life course, may prompt a (temporary) reactivation of religious commitment as immigrants draw on religion for orientation during an initial period of profound change (Massey & Higgins, 2011). Religious involvement may also serve as a resource, providing an initial support network upon arrival. It may further function as a form of identity marker in response to stigma or perceived stigma in the host society (Rumbaut, 2008). For many reasons, arrival in the host country may lead to either the maintenance or the reinforcement of religiosity. Khoudja (2022) conceptualizes this dynamic by modelling immigrants' religious change in a curvilinear fashion. Using the Netherlands as an example, he shows that immigrants tend to increase their religious attendance shortly after arrival, before stabilizing their religious practice and then declining it over time. This pattern suggests not only the need to examine the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants separately, but also to distinguish between the years immediately following migration and the later years after settlement among first-generation immigrants themselves.

The two trends identified in the literature might lead me to expect that a resurgence of religiosity is as plausible as a decline. However, the ongoing secularization in the countries

examined here leads me to formulate two hypotheses predicting a decline in religiosity among immigrants as their length of residence in the host country increases, particularly beyond the initial five-year adaptation period identified by Khoudja (2022). First, *in the first five years after arrival, immigrants are more religious than non-immigrant individuals (H3)*. Second, *after five years in the host country, immigrants are as religious as the non-immigrant individuals (H4)*

For second-generation immigrants, research grounded in integration theory suggests that a child born many years after their parents' arrival will be more integrated into the host society, in part because their parents have themselves lived in that society for a longer period of time (van Tubergen, 2007:763). This remains, however, a theoretical consideration for which empirical evidence is still limited. I thus hypothesize that *the number of years immigrant parents have spent in the host country negatively affects the religiosity of their children (the second generation) (H5)*.

Methodology

Data

The data used in this study come from the new Cultural and Social Values Survey²¹. This survey was administered between 15-30 September 2023 across eight countries as part of the *Nonreligion in a Complex Future* research project, led by Lori Beaman at the University of Ottawa. The data were collected by the polling firm Dynata through its online panel of individuals registered in its database. The survey was administered in the national language selected by respondents. The minimum age required to participate was 18 years old. Sampling quotas were applied to ensure

²¹ I would like to thank the Nonreligion in a Complex Future Project team and its principal investigator, Lori Beaman, for providing access to this database.

representativeness with respect to age, gender, and region of residence. This cross-sectional public opinion survey constitutes a new dataset for the international study of religion.

For the purposes of this study, I focus on the data from four countries: Australia (1,010 respondents), Canada (1,009 respondents), the United Kingdom (1,010 respondents), and the United States (1,009 respondents), for a combined sample of 4,038 respondents. By selecting these countries, I intentionally draw on traditionally Christian countries with substantial immigration, while ensuring coverage across different world regions.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable used to measure respondents' level of religiosity is a one-factor scale constructed from three survey items using principal-factor analysis (range: -0.985 = least religious, to 2.189 = most religious). The first original item used to construct this scale is "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not religious at all and 5 means very religious, how religious would you say you [currently] are?" The second item is: "Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often nowadays do you attend religious services or meetings?" The third item is: "How often did you pray in the last year?"

These three measures capture distinct yet related dimensions of personal religiosity while maintaining strong internal coherence. Table 3.1 presents all response categories for the original three items and the results of the one-factor solution model. The Cronbach's alpha for the resulting religiosity index is 0.83, indicating strong internal reliability and that the items measure a common underlying construct. The total variance explained by this one-factor solution is also high at 77%.

Table 3.1: Principal-Factor Analysis Results, Religiosity Scale, 2023

Original questions used in the PFA	Factor loadings	Communalities
<i>On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not religious at all and 5 means very religious, how religious would you say you are?</i> Not religious at all; A little religious; Somewhat religious; Moderate religious; Very religious	0.906	0.820
<i>Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often nowadays do you attend religious services or meetings?</i> Not at all in the past year; Once or twice in the past year; Less often than once a month, but several times in the past year; Less often than once a week, but at least once a month; At least once a week	0.838	0.702
<i>How often did you pray in the last year?</i> Not at all in the past year; Once or twice in the past year; Less often than once a month, but several times in the past year; Less often than once a week, but at least once a month; At least once a week; Every day or almost every day	0.893	0.797
Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey 2023, by the Nonreligion in a Complex Future project. Note: Valid $N = 4,038$; Eigenvalue = 2.319; Cronbach's alpha = 0.830; Total explained variance of model = 77 %; Range = -0.985 (least religious) to 2.189 (most religious).		

Models

To assess differences in religiosity across immigrant generations, I first present a set of descriptive statistics to determine the prevalence of immigrant-origin populations and their levels of religiosity within each region. Then, to examine the factors that influence immigrants' level of religiosity, I estimate a series of multilevel models (HLMs) in which individual respondents form the first level of analysis, and country subregion of residence form the second (group) level.

The first set of models (Table 3.3) assesses the fixed and random effects of immigrant generation on religiosity. Immigrant generation is divided into two categories: first-generation immigrants, referring to individuals born abroad, and second-generation immigrants, referring to individuals with at least one foreign-born parent. This variable was constructed using the survey question: "Are you or at least one of your parents an immigrant to [country of residence]?" Respondents could indicate that they themselves were immigrants, that one of their parents was an

immigrant, or that neither they nor their parents were immigrants. I also incorporate the regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated population and examine its cross-level interaction with immigrant generation. In addition, a set of sociodemographic controls are also included in the models: age, gender, type of region (rural/urban), level of education, household income, marital status, and religious affiliation. With regard to missing values, all cases were retained in the models. To facilitate the inclusion of the largest possible number of observations, response categories such as “other” or “don’t know or refused to answer” were included in the models where necessary.

A set of OLS models for each country was developed to measure the effects of the number of years immigrants have spent in the host country on their level of religiosity (Figure 3.3, Table A1). The dependent variable remains the religiosity factor scale, while the independent variable of interest is now the immigrants’ year of arrival. It includes the following categories: non-immigrant, second-generation immigrant, first-generation immigrant who arrived within the past five years, between 5 and 9 years ago, between 10 and 19 years ago, between 20 and 29 years ago, and more than 30 years ago. All control variables remain the same as in the previous models.

I then produce a third set of OLS models for each country, this time focusing specifically on second-generation immigrants, in order to assess whether the number of years the first generation spent in the host country prior to the birth of their children influences the latter’s levels of religiosity (Figure 3.4, Table A2). To measure the length of time spent in the host country by first-generation immigrants before the birth of their children, I subtracted the birth year of second-generation respondents from the migration year of their first-generation parents. The resulting independent variable includes the following categories: non-immigrant, first-generation immigrant, and for second-generation immigrants, less than 5 years lived in the host country by the parent(s), 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, and 20 years or more.

Results and Discussion

Regional Distribution of Religiosity and Immigration

Table 3.2 presents the average level of religiosity across the countries and regions included in the analysis, along with their proportions of religiously unaffiliated individuals and first- and second-generation immigrants. It also contains the average number of years immigrants have spent in the host country, as well as the average number of years immigrant parents lived in the host country before the birth of their second-generation children.

Across the four countries included in the study, levels of religiosity vary both between and within countries. The United States records the highest average level of religiosity, with a mean score of 0.418 on the religiosity index. Within the United States, the South is the most religious region, with an average score of 0.586. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the United Kingdom exhibits the lowest average level of religiosity, with a mean score of -0.257. This country also contains the least religious region in the dataset, England – no Greater London, which has an average score of -0.324. The United Kingdom likewise has the highest proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals, representing 51% of its population.

Australia and Canada have the highest proportions of first-generation immigrants, representing an estimated 24% and 23% of their populations, respectively. In Canada, the provinces of Ontario (31%) and British Columbia (31%) have the largest shares of first-generation immigrants. With respect to second-generation immigrants, Australia again records the highest proportion, with 22% of its population belonging to this category. Within Australia, the region of South Australia has the largest share of second-generation immigrants, at 31%.

Table 3.2: Religiosity and Immigration Descriptive Statistics, by Region and Country, 2023

Regions/Countries	Sample size	Mean religiosity	% of religiously unaffiliated	% of 1 st gen	% of 2 nd gen	Mean years spent in the country for 1 st gen	Mean years before 2 nd gen birth
Atlantic (Can)	71	0.099	30.9%	14.1%	8.5%	17.2	9.3
Quebec (Can)	236	-0.198	45.3%	12.3%	10.2%	21.5	9.2
Ontario (Can)	389	0.102	41.9%	30.6%	26%	23.8	11.3
Prairies and Territories (Can)	212	0.102	49.1%	21.2%	19.3%	18.1	13.8
British Columbia (Can)	101	-0.175	50.5%	30.7%	31.7%	27.1	14.4
Canada	1009	0.004	44.3%	23.2%	20.2%	22.6	12
Greater London (UK)	145	-0.053	44.8%	24.1%	18.6%	17.2	12.9
England – No Greater London (UK)	709	-0.324	53%	8.6%	7.5%	17.9	14.2
Scotland (UK)	82	-0.131	46.3%	9.8%	-	8.5	-
Wales (UK)	50	-0.291	52%	-	-	-	-
Northern Ireland (UK)	24	0.122	41.7%	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	1010	-0.257	51%	10.9%	8.6%	16.5	13.7
New South Wales & Capital (Aus)	310	-0.078	45.5%	27.4%	21.3%	23.3	13.2
Victoria (Aus)	249	-0.207	48.1%	24.9%	23.7%	29	14.6
Queensland (Aus)	204	-0.214	49.5%	19.6%	21.6%	24.2	13.3
South Australia (Aus)	110	-0.194	53.6%	15.5%	30.9%	17	11.7
Western Aus. and Northern Ter. (Aus)	106	-0.202	48.1%	27.4%	16%	34	11.9
Tasmania (Aus)	31	-0.134	58%	-	-	-	-
Australia	1010	-0.165	48.5%	23.6%	22.1%	25.9	13.3
Northeast (US)	182	0.359	25.8%	9.3%	16.5%	24.7	16.6
Midwest (US)	218	0.411	38.1%	5.1%	10.6%	26.7	12.3
South (US)	377	0.586	29.7%	11.4%	10.3%	21.8	16
West (US)	232	0.198	43.5%	9.9%	19.9%	27.9	16.9
United States	1009	0.418	34%	9.3%	13.7%	24.4	15.8
Full sample	4,038	-0.000	44.5%	16.7%	16.2%	23	13.5

Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey, 2023; Cells with cases below 5 were omitted.

The Religiosity of Immigrants from Different Generations

Table 3.3 presents the results of five hierarchical linear models (HLMs) estimating respondents' level of religiosity within regional context, as a function of immigrant generation, the regional proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals, and sociodemographics.

To begin, it is important to note that levels of religiosity vary across the different regions included in my study. The intraclass correlation in Model 0 indicates that 6% of the total variance in individual religiosity lies between regions, before accounting for any individual-level predictors. In Model 4, once all covariates are included, including religious affiliation and the regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated, the proportion of variance attributable to differences between regions decreases to 4%. This suggests that while regional context does contribute to variation in religiosity, its influence is relatively modest.

We now turn to the effects of being a first- or second-generation immigrant on individuals' religiosity. In Model 1, I observe that first-generation immigrants are substantially more religious across the four countries overall than individuals whose families have been in the country for three generations or more. First-generation immigrants' average religiosity score is 0.537 points higher. A similar pattern emerges for second-generation immigrants, who score on average 0.19 points higher than individuals whose families have been in the country for three generations or more. These differences across immigrant generations remain when sociodemographic controls are introduced (Model 2) and when the regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated is added to the model (Model 3). However, the gap between individuals of third generation or more and those of immigrant background narrows slightly once these covariates are controlled for. Taken together, these results indicate a clear distinction in religiosity across immigrant generations when the four countries are analyzed together. This initial evidence supports my first hypothesis.

However, certain regional and national differences allow me to nuance and detail this overall pattern. The host context is important to consider when examining differences in religiosity between immigrants and individuals born and settled in the country for three or more generations. Although the four countries analyzed share a Christian heritage, it is essential to consider how the proportion of individuals who continue to belong to a religion has evolved. The decline in religious affiliation affects all four countries under study, including the United States (Brauer, 2018). As can be expected, the data show that higher regional proportions of individuals who do not belong to a religion are linked with overall lower levels of religiosity among respondents. When I examine the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants in relation to the (non)religious context of the host society, I can estimate the extent to which this context impact their levels of religiosity more specifically.

Table 3.3: Fixed and random effects on level of religiosity, HLMs, 2023

	M0 β (SE)	M1 β (SE)	M2 β (SE)	M3 β (SE)	M4 β (SE)
Immigrant generation; <i>ref. third-gen. immigrant or older</i>					
Second-generation immigrant		.19*** (.042)	.089** (.034)	.09* (.042)	-.373† (.208)
First-generation immigrant		.537*** (.042)	.276*** (.035)	.241*** (.059)	-.833** (.250)
Age			-.011** (.004)	-.011** (.004)	-.011* (.001)
Age ²			.000† (.000)	.000† (.000)	.000† (.000)
Gender; <i>ref. female</i>					
Male			-.054* (.024)	-.052* (.024)	-.049* (.024)
Other gender identity			-.445* (.209)	-.46* (.208)	-.452* (.208)
Type of living area; <i>ref. Town, small/large city</i>					
Rural area or small village			-.024 (.036)	-.021 (.036)	-.026 (.036)

Level of education; <i>ref. Secondary school/High school</i>			
Primary school	.135 [†]	.128	.137 [†]
	(.082)	(.082)	(.082)
Vocational or practical school	.023	.025	.025
	(.035)	(.035)	(.035)
Bachelor's degree	-.019	-.02	-.019
	(.03)	(.029)	(.029)
Graduate degree	.01	.013	.016
	(.043)	(.043)	(.043)
Yearly income; <i>ref. 1st quartile</i>			
4 th quartile	-.109	-.113 [†]	-.106
	(.067)	(.067)	(.067)
3 rd quartile	-.145*	-.148*	-.140*
	(.065)	(.065)	(.065)
2 nd quartile	-.122 [†]	-.129*	-.122 [†]
	(.065)	(.065)	(.065)
Don't know or N/A	.016	.01	.017
	(.081)	(.08)	(.08)
Marital status; <i>ref. Single (never married)</i>			
Cohabiting	-.063	-.06	-.058
	(.039)	(.039)	(.039)
Married	-.032	-.029	-.031
	(.028)	(.028)	(.028)
Separated or divorced	.014	.013	.015
	(.043)	(.043)	(.043)
Widowed	-.046	-.046	-.049
	(.079)	(.079)	(.079)
Dating, partner, engaged	-.041	-.036	-.03
	(.151)	(.151)	(.151)
Other	.462 [†]	.469 [†]	.423
	(.266)	(.266)	(.265)
Religious affiliation; <i>ref Christian</i>			
Buddhist	-.593***	-.57***	-.58***
	(.088)	(.088)	(.088)
Jewish	-.541***	-.55***	-.551***
	(.095)	(.095)	(.095)
Hindu	.050	.055	.069
	(.093)	(.093)	(.093)
Muslim	.449***	.438***	.439***
	(.067)	(.067)	(.067)
Sikh	.061	.044	.024
	(.159)	(.159)	(.159)
Another religious tradition	-.697***	-.677***	-.677***
	(.106)	(.106)	(.106)
No religion/None	-1.149***	-1.141***	-1.136***
	(.026)	(.026)	(.026)

Regional proportion of people without religious affiliation				-1.714*** (.461)	-2.057*** (.446)
Regional proportion of people without religious affiliation*Second-generation immigrant					1.05* (.462)
Regional proportion of people without religious affiliation*First-generation immigrant					2.444*** (.551)
Constant	-.007 (.057)	-.129* (.063)	.972*** (.125)	1.581*** (.221)	1.876*** (.231)
Between-region variance					
Second-generation immigrants				.008 (.008)	.001 (.006)
First-generation immigrants				.034 (.019)	.007 (.007)
Region intercept variance	.057 (.020)	.068 (.023)	.037 (.013)	.022 (.009)	.019 (.008)
Region interclass correlation	5.9%	7.2%	6.3%	3.9%	3.5%
Residual variance	.922 (.020)	.885 (.020)	.555 (.012)	.550 (.012)	.550 (.012)
AIC	11186.48	11028.28	9194.725	9176.905	9164.071
BIC	11205.39	11059.79	9390.134	9391.224	9390.997
N	4,038	4,038	4,038	4,038	4,038

Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey, 2023. Note: $N = 4,038$. N regions = 20. Standard errors are in parentheses. *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .1$

Despite the modest overall contribution of regional context to individuals' religiosity, there remains a non-negligible degree of variation in this effect across regions. The estimated standard deviation of the regional random intercepts is 0.24, indicating that average religiosity varies by approximately 0.24 points (on a -0.985 to 2.189 scale) across regions when no individual-level predictors are included (Model 0). This estimate decreases to 0.14 once all individual-level variables are added to the fixed portion of the model (Model 4). The difference in religiosity between immigrant generations and third-generation individuals also varies across regions. Figure 3.1 presents the religiosity coefficients for each of the twenty regions. To visualize how the effect of immigrant generation differs across regions, I computed region-specific predicted

coefficients by combining the fixed effect with each region's random deviation from the mean. These coefficients make it possible to observe meaningful cross-regional variation in the religiosity gap between immigrant and non-immigrant individuals.

Two regions stand out in particular from all others: England – No Greater London and Ontario. These regions show the highest religiosity scores among immigrants compared with third-generation individuals, with respective values of 0.524 and 0.425 on the religiosity scale. In both regions, religiosity also differs significantly between first- and second-generation immigrants, with first-generation immigrants displaying higher levels of religiosity than the second generation. In addition, second-generation immigrants remain more religious than non-immigrant individuals: the differences amount to 0.206 in England – No Greater London and 0.144 in Ontario. In these two regions, the religiosity gap follows a clear generational pattern: the more recent the immigrant generation, the higher the level of religiosity. However, this pattern is not as clearly observed in the remaining regions.

In six other regions (South Australia, Greater London, Prairies and Territories, Quebec, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory, and Victoria), only first-generation immigrants display significantly higher levels of religiosity compared with third-generation individuals. In these regions, the religiosity gap between second-generation immigrants and those in the third generation or higher is also diminished, and I cannot reject the null hypothesis. In other words, in these regions, second-generation immigrants do not differ statistically in their level of religiosity from either of the other two generations, whereas the most distant generations (first generation and third generation or more) show distinct levels of religiosity.

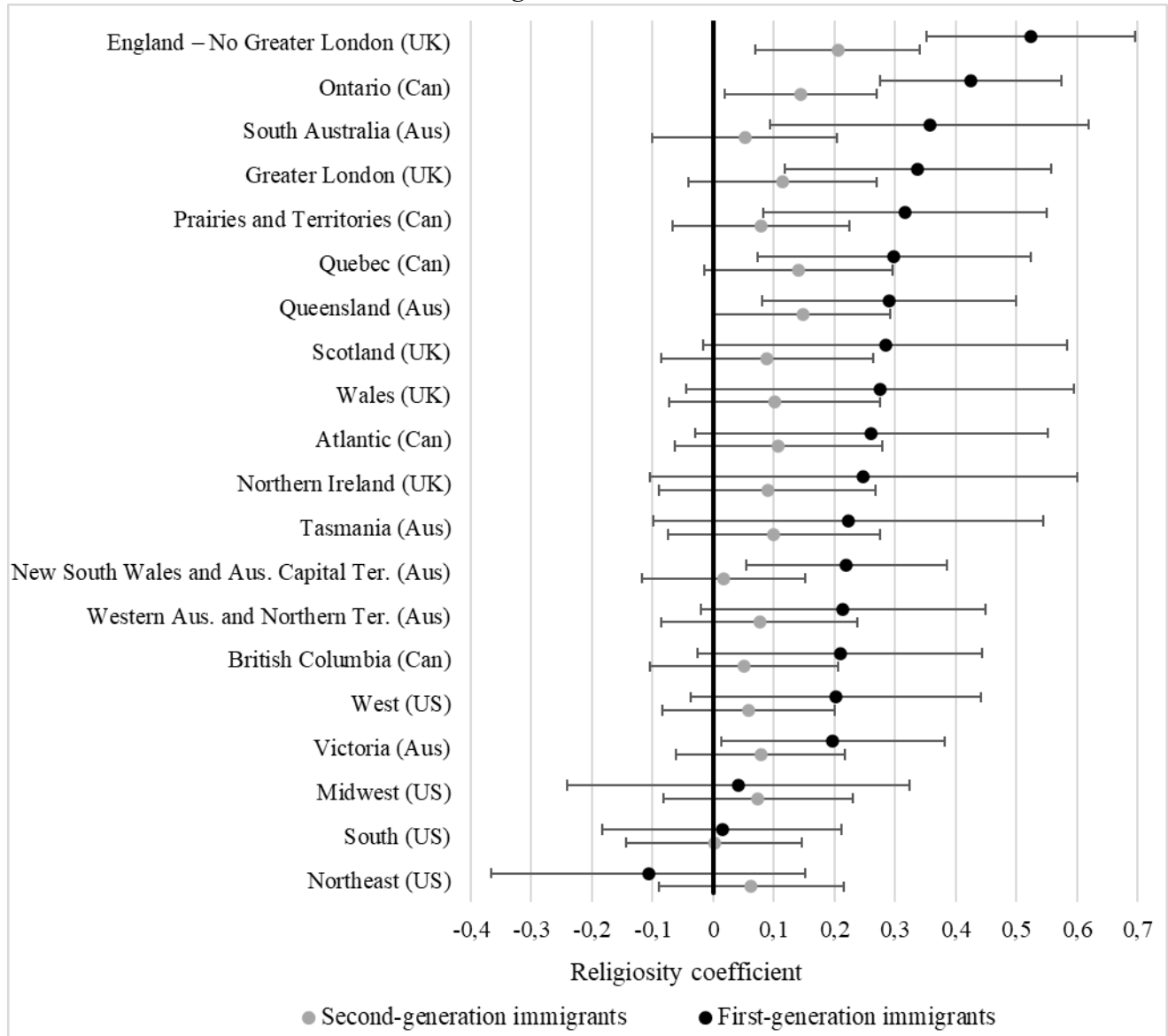
To this I can add the case of Queensland, which represents an exception, as both first- and second-generation immigrants display higher levels of religiosity than third-generation individuals, yet without any statistically significant difference between the two immigrant generations.

Across the remaining eleven regions (Scotland, Wales, Atlantic, Northern Ireland, Tasmania, Western Australia and Northern Territory, British Columbia, West, Midwest, South, and Northeast), no significant differences in religiosity were found across immigrant generations. In these regions, the religiosity of third-generation individuals is not significantly lower than that of first- or second-generation immigrants. Notably, this group includes all four U.S. regions. In this respect, the United States is the only country in its entirety in which, when examined at the regional level, no differences emerge between the religiosity of newcomers and that of individuals who have been settled in the country for multiple generations.²²

Across the twenty regions analyzed, three dominant configurations emerge regarding the religiosity gap between immigrant generations, ranging from clear differentiation across all three generations, to a difference between the first- and the third-generation, to a complete absence of differences in religiosity. These distinctions prompted me to examine more closely the effect of the religious composition of the host country in order to assess how the share of religiously unaffiliated may influence respondents' levels of religiosity.

²² It is important to note that some regions contain a relatively small number of cases (e.g., Northern Ireland and Tasmania), which may contribute to increased imprecision in the estimates and, consequently, wider confidence intervals that can lead to a Type II error, that is, the inability to reject the null hypothesis.

Figure 3.1: Fixed and random effects of immigration generation on the level of religiosity by region, 2023



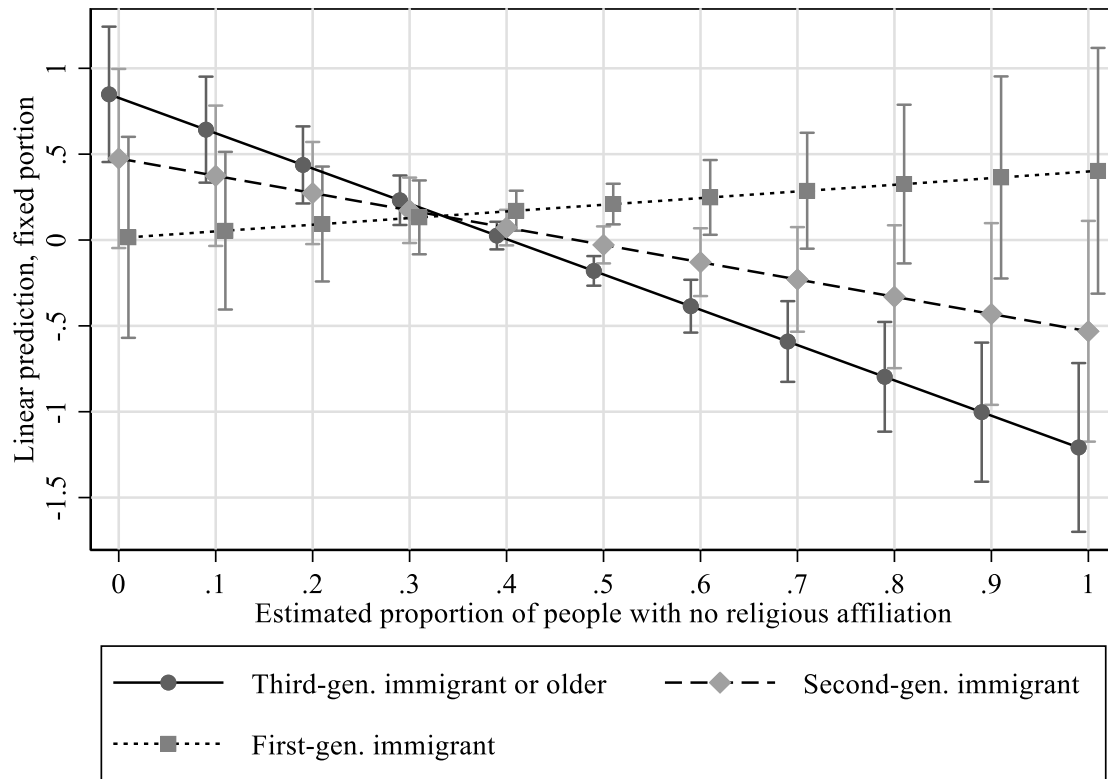
Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey 2023.

The cross-level interactions between the regional proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals and immigrant generation show that an increase in the regional share of the religiously unaffiliated also increases the differences in religiosity levels between first- and third-generation

or higher immigrants, as well as between second- and third-generation or higher immigrants (Figure 3.2). For example, a hypothetical increase of one point (from 0% to 100%) of religiously unaffiliated individuals in a region increases the estimated religiosity gap between first-generation immigrants and third-generation-or-more individuals by 2.437 points. The general trend is thus a widening gap between first-generation immigrants and the non-immigrant population as the proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals increases across regions. This widening gap is not the result of increasing religiosity among first-generation immigrants; rather, it reflects the stability of their religiosity levels combined with declining levels among those in the third generation or more. What is particularly notable is the stability of religiosity among first-generation immigrants despite varying proportions of religiously unaffiliated individuals in a given region. In other words, in contexts of more advanced secularization, marked by higher proportions of religiously unaffiliated individuals, the decline in religiosity is particularly pronounced among third-generation and more individuals. This pattern results in a widening gap in levels of religiosity between remaining religious immigrants and those in the third generation or more, and, to a lesser extent, a modestly larger gap between second-generation individuals and those in the third generation or more.

Similar to third-generation individuals, the religiosity of second-generation immigrants is negatively correlated with the regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated. These results lead me to confirm my second hypothesis: the regional proportion of religiously unaffiliated individuals has a negative effect on levels of religiosity among the non-immigrant population, and to a lesser extent among second generation immigrants, and has little to no influence on the religiosity of immigrants.

Figure 3.2: *Cross-level interaction between generations of immigration and the share of religiously unaffiliated at the regional level, with 95% CI, 2023*



Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey, 2023. Interaction graph from Model 4, Table 3.1.

Years Spent in the Host Country

Beyond the effect of the regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated, I hypothesized that the amount of time spent in the host country would negatively influence the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. Estimating OLS models enabled me to assess the effect of time spent in the host country on the religiosity of both first- and second-generation immigrants, in comparison with non-immigrants, while controlling for a full set of sociodemographic variables. This approach also facilitates cross-national comparison across the four countries. By examining the potential impact of duration of residence, I aim to capture the effect of exposure to the host context. However, this strategy does not allow me to account for compositional effects in

immigration or for the push factors underlying migration, as the available information on countries of origin is limited.

Figure 3.3 presents the coefficients from four OLS regression models estimating the effect of immigrants' duration of residence in the host country on their level of religiosity. (see Supplementary Table A.1)²³. This figure also allows for comparisons across different time periods spent in the host country, as well as with second-generation immigrants and third-generation individuals. At first glance, the pattern does not seem uniform across countries, despite their shared Christian heritage and histories in which immigration has played a central role.

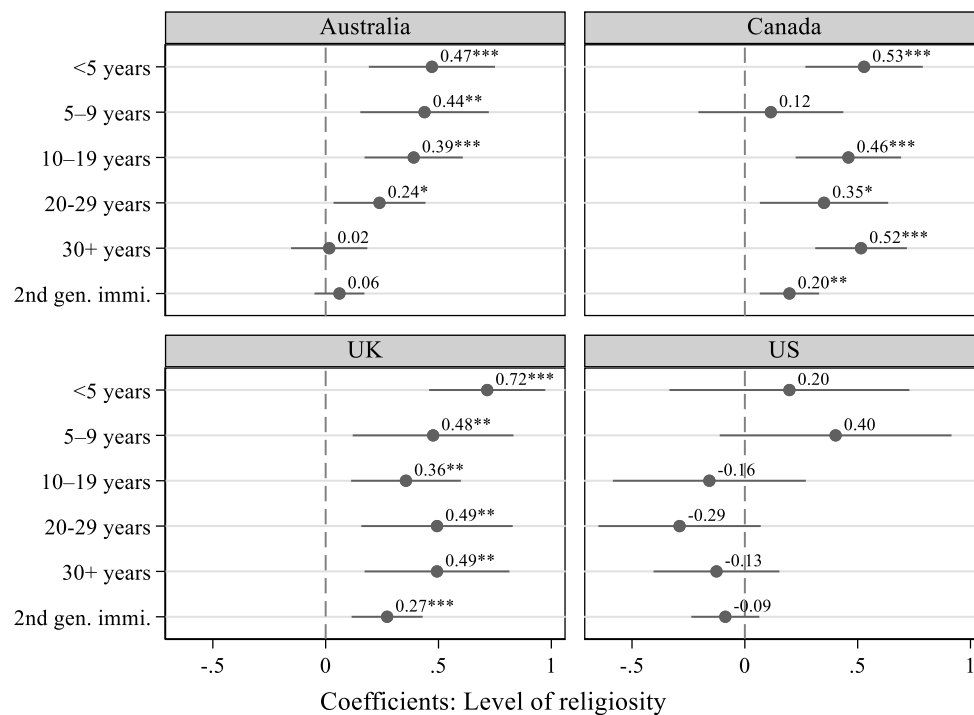
In Australia, for instance, the effect of time spent in the country does not vary significantly in its influence on religiosity. However, those who arrived within the twenty-nine years preceding the survey display higher levels of religiosity than non-immigrant individuals. In Canada, the pattern is more complex: immigrants who arrived less than five years ago, and between 10 and 30+ years ago, are on average, more religious than the non-immigrant population. Thus, it is impossible to conclude that the number of years spent in Canada exerts strictly a negative effect on the religiosity of first-generation immigrants: recent immigrants, like those who have lived in Canada for more than thirty years, are more religious than non-immigrant Canadians. In the United Kingdom, however, immigrants are more religious than the non-immigrant population, regardless of the length of time they have spent in the country since their arrival. It is also where the difference in religiosity between recently arrived immigrants (less than five years) and the non-immigrant population is the largest: they score 0.72 points higher on the religiosity scale. In the United States, the pattern is different: US-born individuals are not the least religious; rather, the data suggest an

²³ The number of immigrants per period of immigration was not large enough to conduct the analysis based on the twenty regions discussed above. I therefore opted for an analysis at the country level.

overall similarity in religiosity across immigrant generations and migration periods, even among the most recently arrived. This finding aligns with Khoudja's (2022) argument that migrating into a secularizing context does not directly translate into a gradual decline in religiosity over time for the individual.

Although I cannot conclude that the number of years spent in the host country has a negative effect on immigrants' religiosity, I can state that having arrived within the past five years has a positive effect on religiosity in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. These results therefore allow me to confirm the third hypothesis for these three countries, as recently arrived immigrants are indeed on average more religious than their non-immigrant counterparts. However, it is not possible to confirm the fourth hypothesis, given the substantial variation in the effect of time spent in the country on immigrants' religiosity. Because the effect varies by duration of residence in the host country, I suspect that additional confounding factors, such as the religious composition of immigrant cohorts or the religious context of the country of origin, are also likely to be at play. In other words, it is not possible to confirm that the number of years spent in the host country leads to a unilateral and gradual decline in levels of religiosity.

Figure 3.3: Unstandardized coefficients from OLS models predicting the effect of period of time spent in the host country on the level of religiosity among first-generation immigrants, 95% CI, 2023



Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey 2023.

I also hypothesized a negative effect of the amount of time first-generation immigrant parents spent in the host country prior to the birth of their second-generation children. In other words, does a longer period spent in the host country before having a child reduce that child's (second generation's) level of religiosity?

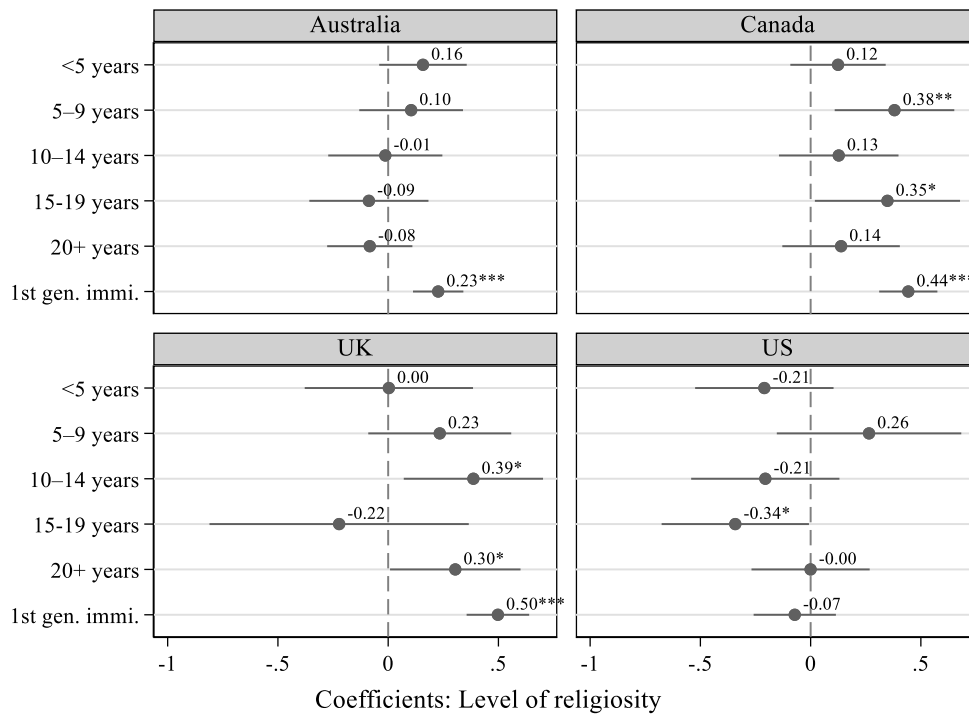
Across the four countries, the data do not yield a clear pattern that would allow me to confirm this hypothesis. In Australia, regardless of how long immigrant parents have resided in the country, second-generation individuals do not differ significantly in their level of religiosity from

the non-immigrant population. In Canada, the data indicate that second-generation individuals whose parents spent between 5-9 years and 15-19 years in the country are, on average, more religious than non-immigrants. In the UK, higher levels of religiosity are observed among second-generation individuals whose parents had resided in the country for 10-14 years or more than 20 years prior to their birth. The United States presents a different pattern: second-generation individuals whose parents (first-generation immigrants) spent between 15-19 years in the country are, on average, less religious than non-immigrants.

When examining this effect within each country (Figure 3.4), the findings are mixed. For certain specific durations in Canada and the UK, longer residence in the host country among immigrant parents is associated with higher levels of religiosity among the second generation. In contrast, in Australia and the United States, no clear pattern emerges regarding the influence of first-generation immigrants' length of residence on second-generation religiosity. Overall, differences across duration-of-residence categories are not statistically significant.

In light of this, I must reject Hypothesis 5, which proposed that a substantial period spent in the host country by first-generation immigrants would negatively influence the religiosity of the second generation.

Figure 3.4: Unstandardized coefficients from OLS models predicting the effect of the period of time spent in the host country by first-generation immigrant before the birth of the second-generation immigrant on the level of religiosity of second-generation immigrants, 95% CI, 2023



Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey 2023.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to examine the effect of immigrant generation and the amount of time spent in the host country on the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. To do so, I analyzed national and regional patterns in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States in order to compare immigrant generations and assess whether time spent in the host society shapes religious outcomes. My analysis revealed clear generational differences in religiosity among immigrants, though these differences vary across regions, highlighting the

importance of both national and regional contexts. Somewhat unexpectedly, intergenerational differences vary to a non-negligible extent across regions. In certain cases, such as Ontario and England – No Greater London, there is a significant gap between the first and second generations. In other regions, such as in the United States, this gap is absent altogether. Taken together, the findings speak to three interrelated dynamics: generational change, the religious/secular environment, and the number of years lived in the host country.

Consistent with cohort-replacement theory, with the exception of the United-States, first-generation immigrants display the highest levels of religiosity, followed by second-generation immigrants, with the non-immigrant population being the least religious. This pattern reflects broader intergenerational declines in religiosity observed in highly secular contexts, while also underscoring the persistence of religious commitment among immigrant populations in some regions. The regional proportion of the religiously unaffiliated is also associated with the religiosity of third-generation individuals, yet exerts little to no influence on first-generation immigrants, whose levels of religiosity appear to reflect durable pre-migration socialization. This finding is particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that secular contexts exert a stronger negative effect on religiosity among individuals who have lived in these settings for three generations or more than among first-generation immigrants. Second-generation immigrants occupy an intermediate position, showing modest signs of sensitivity to the secular context but not to the same extent as the non-immigrants.

Religiosity among immigrants is also only weakly influenced by time spent in the host country. A positive effect of recent arrival is found among those who migrated within the five years preceding the survey, and only in the three countries with the lowest overall religiosity: Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Beyond this early period of settlement, I find little evidence of

a systematic decline in religiosity with longer residence, suggesting that the secularizing force of host-country contexts operates primarily through generational replacement, while also unfolding unevenly across immigrant cohorts and regional/national contexts.

These findings should be interpreted in light of two main limitations. Due to the design of the survey, I was unable to distinguish mixed-origin families (one immigrant parent and one non-immigrant parent), which would have allowed me to further refine my analyses and more precisely capture intergenerational religious dynamics. Moreover, although I have shown that first-generation immigrants are, on average, more religious and tend to remain this way, it would be important to further differentiate these effects according to immigrants' country of origin. Beyond the primary objective of this study, which was to examine the effects of contexts of reception and length of residence, future research should seek to incorporate countries, and even regions, of origin in a more systematic manner in order to assess their relative importance on the religiosity of international migrants.

Conclusion

This dissertation has brought together three scientific articles examining the transmission of religion within families and the religiosity of first- and second-generation immigrants. These studies are situated within Western contexts, and focused more specifically on Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Finland, Hungary and Australia. Taken together, the three articles contribute to a deeper understanding of the process of secular transition by empirically examining the factors that contribute to cohort replacement within families and among migrant populations. The overarching objective of this dissertation is to clarify how social mechanisms, primarily those related to family socialization and migration, operate within the broader process of secularization, and more specifically within different nations and regions. In other words, the analyses presented here show how religious decline unfolds across successive generations by taking into account both patterns of family upbringing and the religious profiles of different generations within specific environmental contexts. To do so, the dissertation focuses on two phenomena that lie at the heart of debates on the intergenerational reproduction of religion: family religious socialization and intergenerational change among immigrants.

Investigating the lack of family religious socialization means examining one of the principal factors most often invoked in explanations of religious decline. It also involves looking closely at a setting where strong religious socialization may occur and where a potential renewal of religiosity might emerge. While the family can create the conditions necessary for the transmission of religion and foster a form of intergenerational religious momentum, it can also become the environment where religion is gradually abandoned and lost. The findings presented in this dissertation tend to

support this latter dynamic. In general, when parents attempt to socialize their children religiously, the efforts they invest, even when substantial, rarely succeed in transmitting a level of religiosity that is at least equivalent to that of the parents themselves.

This declining effectiveness of family religious socialization raises an important question about the groups within the population that remain the most religious, such as immigrants from outside the West. Does this pattern unfold in the same way across these smaller populations as well? And does this decline occur uniformly within countries? In the third article of this dissertation, I examined the (non)reproduction of religion among immigrants. Although immigrants are, on average, more religious than individuals of the third generation or higher in the countries studied (Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia), and although their religiosity contributes to diversifying and revitalizing the religious landscape of these societies, I asked whether this religiosity persists once immigrants settle in these countries. In other words, does immigration (first and second generation), constitute a demographic countertrend that might slow the decline of religion?

The results indicate that despite their higher overall levels of religiosity, the same intergenerational pattern emerges among immigrants: religious commitment typically declines from one generation to the next in much the same way as it does among individuals of the third generation or more. This dynamic is part of a broader process of secularization affecting all the countries examined. In this sense, although the transmission of religion among immigrants displays certain distinctive features, the observed pattern does not represent an exception; rather, it reflects the broader trend present within the population as a whole, and the impact of the social environment immigrants find themselves in.

Summary of Findings

Intergenerational Transmission of Religion in Canada

The results of the first article show that the intergenerational transmission of religion in Canada is declining and that the traditional mechanisms of religious socialization are becoming less effective. Both the overall level of religiosity among Canadians and the proportion of individuals who report belonging to a religion are decreasing. This broader trend is closely tied to the presence and effectiveness of religious socialization within families. Fewer and fewer Canadians place importance on the religious socialization of their children, and even when they do, this socialization tends to be less effective than in the past.

Among Catholics and mainline Protestants, only 60% and 54%, respectively, of respondents with two parents of the same religion report belonging to that religion themselves. This intergenerational loss in the proportion of affiliates is also observed among minority religions, and even more so when parents do not share the same religious affiliation. Alongside the decline in affiliation, there is also a decline in levels of religiosity. In general, even when individuals maintain a religious affiliation, their level of religiosity tends to be either similar to or lower than that of the preceding generation. For example, among Canadian Catholics, there is an average intergenerational decline of 0.53 points on a five-point scale of religiosity.

This decline generates a cumulative effect: from one generation to the next, many Canadians become progressively less religious. Some parents attempt to counter this trend by actively socializing their children into religion. Various practices are mobilized, such as praying with children, encouraging their participation in religious services, speaking with them about religion, or simply maintaining a visible religious presence within the household. These childhood practices are positively associated with levels of religiosity in adulthood. This is particularly the

case when they are carried out by a mother with a high level of religiosity. For example, an evangelical or Pentecostal mother who is herself highly religious and who regularly discusses religion with her child during childhood increases the likelihood that the child will also be religious in adulthood. However, this example, presented here as an ideal-typical case, represents the exception rather than the norm. In most cases, only some of the mechanisms of religious socialization are mobilized by parents who themselves vary in their degree of religiosity. Under these imperfect circumstances, the process rarely succeeds, on average, in reproducing a level of religiosity equal to or greater than that of the parents.

The results also show that the intergenerational religious gap is greatest within families whose parents are the most religious. In other words, the strongest intergenerational decline in religiosity occurs among the children of the most religious parents, although these children still tend to remain more religious than their peers whose parents are less religious. In a sense, the families that have the most to lose religiously are also those that experience the largest losses. These families are also those for whom the contrast in religiosity between the household and the surrounding society is the most pronounced.

Relative to the limited effectiveness of religious socialization, this finding invites further reflection on the conditions required for the reproduction of religion. In this sense, the family does not appear to be the panacea for religious transmission that some authors have suggested. While Smith and Adamczyk (2021), in *Handing Down the Faith*, emphasize the central role of the family, and Bengtson et al. (2013) highlight the strength of intergenerational religious momentum in *Families and Faith*, the results presented here suggest that such optimism reflects, above all, the American context. Family religious socialization is successful in many regions in the US precisely because religion is more prevalent in the surrounding social environment. The Canadian case

indicates that the effectiveness of family religious socialization weakens when religion is less prevalent in surrounding environments.

While I acknowledge, along with Smith and Adamczyk (2021) and Bengtson et al. (2013), the importance of family religious socialization, where I differ concerns its effectiveness across contexts. It is difficult to speak of intergenerational religious momentum when parental religiosity itself is lacking. Although parents may wish to embody the religious way of life they hope their children will adopt, doing so becomes increasingly difficult, particularly in the Canadian context, since fewer and fewer parents are themselves religious and religion is hard to pick up elsewhere in society.

When I turn to the intergenerational reproduction of nonreligion, a different pattern emerges: one of strong transmission. In Canada, 93% of respondents with two nonreligious parents were also nonreligious themselves, compared with 73% among those with only one nonreligious parent. In this sense, intergenerational momentum appears to operate in favor of nonreligion and of religious decline. From this perspective, it is more accurate to speak of cohort replacement, a replacement of the religious by the nonreligious, or at least by a transformed or attenuated form of religiosity. The declining religiosity observed at the societal level in Canada is thus reflected in the intergenerational transmission of religion. As parents themselves become less religious, both their interest in and their capacity to transmit religiosity are weakened. Gradually emptied of its religious resources, the family increasingly loses the means to sustain and reproduce religion.

This strong transmission of nonreligion can be explained in part by the broader cultural environment in which individuals are socialized. In many contemporary Western contexts, “nonreligion has become the default option of sorts among their generation’s social milieu” (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2020: 139), meaning that children raised without religion are not only

reproducing parental orientations, but also aligning with dominant social and cultural norms. Even in the absence of intentional transmission, nonreligious parents tend to pass on values associated with expressive individualism, such as autonomy and personal choice, which are in average less conducive to the adoption or maintenance of traditional religious commitments. As a result, nonreligion benefits from both passive familial transmission and active reinforcement from the surrounding social context, making its intergenerational reproduction particularly robust.

Paradoxically, the family is becoming less and less effective at transmitting religion at the very moment when it has become one of the last remaining social institutions, outside of religious institutions themselves, for religious transmission. The progressive secularization of Canadian society and its institutions, such as the health, education, economic and political sectors, have weakened opportunities for religious transmission in these institutions that were once more prevalent in the past.

Drawing on elements of Bengtson et al.'s (2013) theory of intergenerational religious momentum, it is precisely the broader ecosystem of influences that now appears to be lacking: the role of contemporary culture, peer religious influence, churches (and other places of worship), clergy (and other religious leaders), schools and colleges, as well as forms of religious community integration. Rather than supporting family-based transmission, these milieus' increasingly fail to sustain it, and in some cases may even work against it. In Bengtson's framework, these factors are meant to accumulate and reinforce one another, thereby complementing family socialization. Here, however, their erosion in the Canadian context, contributes instead to isolating the family in its role as transmitter of religion, making it the ultimate – if not the only – site of transmission. In other words, the absence of institutional completeness shifts the burden of transmission onto the family

while simultaneously reducing the social space in which such transmission can occur. The result is a growing marginalization of religious transmission itself.

Religious Socialization and Secular Transition

The difficulty of transmitting religion described in the previous section is not unique to Canada. Other Western countries, such as Germany, Hungary, Finland, and, though to a lesser extent, Italy, display similar patterns. This can largely be explained by the stage of the secular transition in these countries. It affects not only parents' willingness to transmit religion, but also the effectiveness of religious socialization and the receptivity of children and adolescents to it.

In Canada, for example, only 47% of respondents with children reported having raised them religiously. Among respondents without children, only 38% indicated that they intended to raise their future children religiously. These figures reflect a broader social context in which secular transition is well underway. At the same time, countries are not all at the same stage of this process. Italy, for instance, still shows a relatively higher proportion of religious individuals within the youngest cohort (21% among those born between 1985 and 2003), whereas in Eastern Germany the picture is markedly different, with only 6% identifying as religious in the same cohort.

Despite these differences, the transmission of religion remains difficult and often incomplete across all countries examined. The data show, in particular, that being raised within the dominant religious tradition of a given country is more often associated with a fuzzy religious identity rather than a more actively religious one. This points to the declining social influence of majority religions in these contexts: religious practice gradually diminishes and affiliation weakens. This pattern is especially striking given that even relatively strong forms of religious socialization tend to result in fuzzy religiosity. With the exception of Italy, regularly attending

religious services with one's parents during childhood or praying frequently rarely leads to being actively religious in adulthood.

In an increasing secular social context, even individuals who appear to have received sufficient religious socialization do not maintain high levels of religiosity. The conditions that once supported the successful transmission of religion are thus no longer fully viable. More broadly, the findings show that even when individuals are socialized in a family environment with a positive attitude toward religion, this rarely leads to the adoption of a high level of religiosity in adulthood. When family attitudes toward religion are mixed, indifferent, or negative, the likelihood of developing strong religiosity is even lower.

Of course, the “ideal conditions” for religious transmission can still be brought together; however, the conditions that make such transmission possible are becoming increasingly unfavorable, particularly in the Western countries examined here. The argument advanced in the second article on secular transition does not seek to challenge the persistence of certain forms of religious socialization that still exist in these contexts, but rather to show that, on average, family-based socialization emerging from a context of secular transition is not sufficiently effective to reverse the broader trend of decline.

The results presented in this dissertation support the idea that the decline of religion reduces the likelihood of its intergenerational reproduction, as the resources necessary for its transmission, such as religious cultural and social capital, are becoming increasingly scarce. In a context of advanced modernization – where material, institutional, and ideological conditions are increasingly unfavorable to religion – religious socialization is confronted with new social norms that conflict with many religious prescriptions and proscriptions, thereby making religion progressively less attractive to younger generations. This process unfolds within a broader context of value

liberalization, characterized by increasing emphasis on individual autonomy, greater openness toward sexual and gender minorities, and a growing acceptance of religious pluralism and relativism. Such transformations encourage more selective and individualized approaches to belief and practice, while also normalizing the legitimacy of nonreligion. As a result, younger generations are more likely to question inherited religious frameworks and to reinterpret, attenuate, or abandon them altogether.

This decline in the religious resources necessary for reproduction is most evident when less religious parents, lacking the cultural and social resources required for effective transmission, attempt in vain to socialize their children into religion. As a result, those children do not maintain comparable levels of religiosity. In such cases, it is the family, as an institution, that either fails, or no longer seeks, to fulfill the religious dimension of its role in transmission. Confronted with an increasingly secularized social environment, the proportion of fuzzy individuals grows, as does that of the secular, generating a compounding effect. This snowball dynamic of secularization not only undermines the process of transmission but also progressively reduces the pool of individuals capable of sustaining religious transmission across generations.

This also points to a decline in the influence of the family in matters of religion. While some authors, such as Smith and Snell (2009), argue that the family remains the last significant site of transmission, the critical mass necessary to sustain such transmission is decreasing steadily. This is evident, in part, in the rise of exogamous unions, as well as unions between individuals with no religious affiliation, both of which contribute to the absence, or ineffectiveness, of religious transmission. Moreover, among these increasingly nonreligious parents, it becomes more difficult to model religious commitment in ways that can be transmitted to children, and key mechanisms of socialization, such as regular religious practice during childhood, are less frequently

emphasized. As a result, the family no longer operates as a socializing force capable of counteracting the process of secular transition; rather, it is itself becoming a more secular institution, thereby contributing to the broader decline of religion.

Immigration and Religiosity Over Generations

After analyzing religious transmission within families and assessing its potential for reproduction, I turned to differences in religiosity among immigrants in four Anglo-Saxon and traditionally Christian countries (Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia). By focusing specifically on immigrants, the goal was to extend the analysis of religious transmission to a segment of the population that is both demographically growing and, on average, more religious than the non-immigrant population. In other words, do immigrants follow the same trajectory of secularization and nonreligious transmission as the broader population in their host societies?

The results confirm that first- and second-generation immigrants are, on average, more religious than individuals of the third generation or higher. However, despite this difference, intergenerational variation remains: first-generation immigrants tend to be more religious than those of the second generation. This pattern also varies across regions and countries. In the United States, for example, I did not identify any significant difference between the level of religiosity of immigrants and that of individuals of the third generation or more.

The regional analysis also highlights the importance of the host context. The religiosity of immigrants appears high or low only in relation to that of the receiving society. The results further show a relative independence between the level of religiosity in the host society and that of first-generation immigrants who settle there. While the level of religiosity among the non-immigrant

population is declining, that of the first-generation immigrant population remains stable. Across the four countries examined, the more secular the region of analysis, the greater the difference between its level of religiosity and that of newly arrived populations. In other words, as the host society advances further along the path of secular transition, the gap in religiosity between populations born in the country and immigrants tends to widen.

This gap between the immigrant population and the rest of society generally persists over the life course. The results show that differences in religiosity tend to narrow across generations, between the first and second generations, and between the second and third generations or more, rather than over the course of an individual's life. This cohort effect is further supported by the finding that the length of time first-generation immigrants spend in the host country has no significant impact on the level of religiosity of their children, that is, second-generation immigrants. In other words, the evidence points more strongly to a generational effect than to an effect of time spent in the host society. This finding suggests that approaches focusing on early-life socialization are particularly relevant for understanding the levels of religiosity observed among immigrant populations.

Limitations

This dissertation has examined the factors that contribute to the transformation of religion, with a particular focus on family-based mechanisms of transmission and on immigrant generations. At the same time, several important dimensions could not be explored in depth despite their relevance, due to data limitations and limitations in scope. Because the analysis primarily focused on Western countries, Christian traditions constituted the core of the empirical investigation. As a result, it proved difficult to adequately capture the dynamics of many minority religions. In the first

article, I nevertheless show that certain minority religions in Canada, such as Islam, Evangelicalism, and Pentecostalism, exhibit rates of religious reproduction comparable to those of the major Christian traditions, albeit slightly higher. However, some of these non-Christian traditions differ from dominant Christian frameworks, making it problematic to understand and explain them within the same analytical patterns. The study of minority religions, such as Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, or Buddhism, is of growing importance, particularly as these groups occupy an increasingly significant place in migration flows and, consequently, in the demographics of Western societies. Understanding the future of secularization in Europe, North America, and Australia therefore requires future examinations of how these religious groups are reshaping the religious landscape of historically Christian societies and beyond.

The role of country of origin among migrant populations also deserves further attention. Given that early socialization contexts are central to shaping religiosity in adulthood, accounting more precisely for migrants' origins could yield important insights. However, due to the wide diversity of origins reported by respondents and small sample sizes for minorities, it was not possible to isolate the specific effect of country of origin, even though this aspect was controlled for in the analyses.

The nature of the data used for this dissertation also calls for caution in terms of causal interpretation. Relying on cross-sectional survey data makes it difficult, if not impossible, to establish a causal relationship between the (non)transmission of religion and the broader process of secularization. In this respect, longitudinal research would be particularly valuable for clarifying the temporal and causal links between these two phenomena. Longitudinal data would enable me to assess changes in specific cases by following the same individuals over an extended period. This

design would make it possible to more directly link independent effects, such as those associated with socialization or country of origin, to the individuals whose trajectories I observe over time.

Finally, it is important to consider the potential for the recollection bias in respondents' answers. Since individuals were asked to report on their childhood experiences and on their parents' religiosity, some degree of inaccuracy in these retrospective accounts cannot be ruled out. By asking respondents to report on the religiosity of their relatives many years in the past, the data may be subject to recall bias. For instance, older respondents may have difficulty accurately assessing the religiosity of family members who were not very present during their childhood, leading to potential imprecision in the information reported. This limitation is mitigated by the fact that, respondents were given the option to answer "I don't know," which likely mitigates this limitation to some extent.

Despite some of the limitations inherent to the study of religious transmission, several avenues for future research emerge from these findings and warrant further investigation. Beyond the abandonment of religion, the findings suggest that the religiosity of younger generations is also undergoing transformation. Although this dimension could not be explored in depth in this dissertation, future research should examine the transmission potential of non-traditional forms of religiosity and spirituality. Do forms of religiosity that are themselves transformed through the process of transmission retain the same potential for (non)transmission to next generations? Will forms of religiosity that have become detached from the frameworks of traditional religious institutions be successfully transmitted, or will they decline in much the same way as traditional forms of religion? Finally, will religious traditions introduced or strengthened through recent immigration follow similar trajectories to those of the historically dominant religious traditions (mainly Christianity) in Western societies?

Religion is not the only thing undergoing transformation. Families, particularly in Western societies, are also changing rapidly. On the one hand, traditional family structures are becoming less common; on the other, the number of immigrant families bringing different family practices and traditions is increasing. In the face of these simultaneous transformations, greater attention should be paid to the conditions and dynamics of religious socialization within these emerging family contexts. Will these changes create additional barriers to the intergenerational transmission of religion, or, on the contrary, will they contribute to maintaining or renewing forms of religious socialization that enable religion to be effectively transmitted from one generation to the next?

Contributions

The main contribution of these three articles relies on presenting how two important aspects of religious social change – family transmission of religion and immigration – contribute (or not) to secularization. In the first article, the contribution is first and foremost empirical. Using a new database with original survey questions, I analyzed what influences religious transmission based on the family's religious characteristics in Canada. This analysis makes it possible to combine the understanding of family religious socialization and secularization. By bringing theory and empirical findings on these two phenomena together, the first article helps shed light on the family dynamics that either reinforce or undermine the process of secularization.

This article also contributes to advancing the discussion by incorporating grandparents as well as siblings into our analysis. By moving beyond parents, I can capture the influence of the wider family. This is particularly important in contexts of secularization, as grandparents, who are often more religious, may play a significant role in religious socialization when parents, who are younger and often less religious, contribute less to this process. Beyond broader demographic

trends which highlight that transmission appears increasingly ineffective on the one hand, and secularization continues to advance on the other, this article identifies which specific dimensions of family religious socialization exert the strongest influence on transmission outcomes. It does so within Christian traditions, but also within other religions, such as among Muslim, Evangelical and Pentecostal families. In doing so, the first article provides an empirical contribution that grounds secularization theory more firmly in specific family mechanisms.

This greater understanding of the family mechanisms underlying intergenerational religious transmission is crucial at a time when the family as an institution is itself undergoing significant transformations. In a social context marked by increasing liberalization of family forms and growing autonomy among younger generations, both the role of the family and the effectiveness of its transmission mechanisms are increasingly subject to questioning. This process closely resembles the intergenerational secular drift described by Stolz et al. (2016), whereby younger generations are no longer compelled to practice religion by their parents and instead encounter a wide array of religious, spiritual, and secular alternatives. In such contexts, individuals are increasingly able to satisfy their needs outside of traditional religious frameworks. As a result, each successive generation grows up in an environment where adherence to inherited religious traditions is less likely, contributing to a gradual drift away from religion. The first article contributes to this discussion by clarifying these emerging dynamics and by quantifying intergenerational differences associated with (non)transmission of religion within a context shaped by advancing secularization and growing pluralism.

The second article makes an empirical contribution with cross-national comparisons of the effects of family religiosity on the process of secularization. It also helps extend the secular transition paradigm by placing the family at its core. While existing research on secular transition

has convincingly demonstrated its intergenerational dimension, particularly the differences between cohorts, the role of the family has not been central to analyses in previous secular transition studies. The second article therefore contributes to rethinking secular transition with the family as a key anchoring point, which is especially important given that it is within the family that the mechanisms shaping intergenerational differences can be most directly observed.

The second article also advances international comparison. By examining the factors that influence secular transition across countries, it becomes possible to compare national contexts and to address, at least in part, the question of whether similar family characteristics produce comparable effects across societies at different stages of secular transition. In addition, the article offers a direct comparison between Canada and four European countries. Drawing on a new international dataset, it becomes possible to situate the Canadian case alongside European contexts in a way that would not be feasible using datasets limited to Europe alone.

The second article also introduces new measures into the analysis of secular transition, particularly with regard to attitudes toward religion within families. Beyond the more conventional indicators of affiliation and practice at the time of the survey, the analysis incorporates more indicators measuring the general family environment and its relationship to religion that the respondent found themselves in as children. This makes it possible to capture how individuals relate to religion independently of their formal affiliation or participation. Such an approach is especially relevant in a context where secularization is ongoing and where fewer individuals identify with or actively practice a religion.

Finally, the third article analyzes the effect of migration on religiosity in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and examines how the migration event shapes immigrant religiosity in relation to the level of secularization in the host society. It contributes to a

more refined understanding of how the religious context of receiving countries influences immigrant populations, and the importance of generational differences within these populations. By focusing specifically on immigration and the intergenerational reproduction of religion among immigrants and their children, this article offers an empirical contribution to the study of how religion evolves within these groups. As the religious landscapes of Western countries such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia are increasingly shaped by the religiosity of immigrant populations, since religiosity is now in many of these countries more concentrated among these populations and found less among non-immigrant groups than in the past, the need to study this phenomenon becomes all the more important.

Immigration, often invoked as a potential factor capable of slowing the process of secularization, must therefore be examined more closely in order to assess the scope, direction and size of its influence. More precisely, this article evaluates the extent to which immigrants reproduce their religiosity within the host society. This analysis also extends to the second generation, thereby establishing an intergenerational bridge between newcomers and the receiving context.

The article further introduces a comparative and regional dimension. By relying on a new dataset of sufficient scale to distinguish subnational regions, the analysis moves beyond national averages to consider provinces and states, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of variation within countries and a clearer assessment of contextual effects. This approach enhances precision in a field that has often relied on national-level interpretations. Findings also show that the United States is more of an exception among Western nations when it comes to its similarities of religiosity levels between immigrants and the second and third or more generations. This indicates that other studies on this topic that only focus on the US context are not necessarily representative of trends and effects elsewhere.

Finally, this article also examines the effect of time spent in the host country on both immigrant religiosity and its intergenerational transmission. Given that the receiving context can exert a significant influence on immigrants' religious trajectories, analyzing how this exposure translates into patterns of transmission provides new empirical insight into a theoretical framework that has often been built on more aggregated and less differentiated population analyses.

Taken together, these articles also contribute to refining and nuancing secular transition theory. One way in which this dissertation does so is by providing a deeper understanding of the processes underlying intergenerational differences in religiosity. By examining mechanisms of religious socialization within the family, it becomes possible to identify and measure processes operating at the micro-sociological level and, in turn, to better understand the broader macro-sociological pattern of cohort replacement. Treating the family as a site of sociological analysis therefore enriches and add complexity to our understanding of cohort replacement by identifying which dimensions of family socialization contribute most, and which contribute least, to the reproduction or decline of religion across generations. In this respect, the dissertation bridges the macro-sociological framework of secular transition theory with the micro-sociological processes occurring within families.

One of the central claims of current secular transition theory is that the process of religious decline through cohort replacement is universal. Although the findings of this dissertation cannot confirm or falsify this claim, they nevertheless suggest that secular transition is not uniform. Different factors may contribute to the process to varying degrees across social and national contexts. While the general pattern of religious decline associated with secular transition is observed across all three articles, factors such as family religious socialization and the religious composition of the surrounding context appear to shape the pace at which this decline unfolds.

Paying closer attention to the factors identified in this dissertation can therefore provide a more detailed understanding of how secular transition unfolds across different contexts. It may also help identify the potential limits of secular transition and the conditions under which these limits might emerge.

By using secular transition theory as a framework for empirical analyses of the family, the findings of this dissertation help bridge two strands of research on religious transmission and secularization. In doing so, this dissertation brings together an approach that places greater emphasis on the family as a key site of religious transmission, generally associated with American scholarship, with an approach that emphasizes the enduring progression of secularization, more commonly associated with European scholarship, though not exclusively. Bringing these two perspectives into dialogue makes it possible to assess the importance of the family within the process of secular transition, as well as its limited capacity to counteract the broader trend of religious decline.

Ultimately, these three articles have produced a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms shaping secularization. They also provide a cross-national empirical examination based on new high-quality survey data that goes beyond the strict description of intergenerational differences by focusing on a number of variables that structure family religious transmission and intergenerational religious reproduction.

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Appendix

Chapter 1

Appendix Table 1: Average level of religiosity (five points scale) for each sociodemographic groups, and for their parents, Canada, 2021

	Respondent	Respondent's mother	Respondent's father	Respondent's parents
Gender				
Male	2.18	3.02	2.62	2.82
Female	2.60	3.18	2.72	2.95
Generations				
Millennials	2.06	2.85	2.43	2.63
Xers	2.38	3.25	2.72	2.98
Babyboomers	2.63	3.19	2.79	2.99
Pre-boomers	2.79	3.23	3.02	3.12
Regions				
Atlantic	2.48	3.24	2.58	2.90
Quebec	2.27	3.01	2.65	2.82
Ontario	2.56	3.26	2.84	3.05
Prairies	2.43	3.10	2.62	2.86
British Columbia	2.04	2.74	2.32	2.53
Immigrant status				
From immigrant background	2.60	3.32	2.86	3.08
Not from an immigrant background	2.26	2.98	2.57	2.77
Religions				
Catholic	2.91	3.62	3.24	3.42
Mainline Protestant	3.06	3.20	2.73	2.95
Evangelical & Pentecostal	4.21	4.10	3.30	3.71
Islam	3.32	3.99	3.70	3.84
Other religions	3.12	3.54	3.03	3.29
None	1.32	2.43	2.02	2.22
All religious groups (no none)	3.08	3.54	3.09	3.31
Total population	2.39	3.10	2.67	2.88

Source: Transmission of religion across generations survey, Canada, 2021.

Chapter 2

Appendix table 1: Descriptive statistics from the Transmission of religion across generations (Torag) survey for each country, 2021

	Canada	Italy	Hungary	Finland	West Germany	East Germany
Sex						
Male	48.9%	48.1%	47.1%	48.9%	50.0%	44.4%
Female	51.1%	51.9%	52.9%	51.1%	50.0%	55.6%
Cohort						
1985-2003	31.9%	23.2%	28.1%	27.8%	29.6%	18.9%
1967-84	30.2%	33.2%	31.8%	30.6%	29.9%	25.6%
1949-66	29.3%	31.9%	35.4%	34.3%	31.7%	40.4%
-1948	8.6%	11.6%	4.6%	7.4%	8.8%	15.1%
Immigrant generation						
Non-immigrant	62.3%	95.7%	94.8%	96.7%	74.9%	86.6%
Second generation	19.9%	2.8%	3.0%	2.3%	14.3%	5.8%
First generation	17.8%	1.6%	2.3%	1.0%	10.8%	7.7%
Childhood social class						
1	4.5%	3.6%	4.5%	2.2%	4.7%	4.5%
2	23.1%	21.5%	17.9%	20.3%	16.9%	18.7%
3	46.8%	46.1%	55.9%	51.8%	50.3%	51.5%
4	19.1%	17.2%	16.1%	20.3%	19.7%	15.7%
5	4.0%	8.8%	4.0%	3.5%	5.5%	5.7%
Don't know/no answer	2.5%	2.8%	1.6%	1.9%	2.8%	3.9%
Childhood residence location						
Small town/city or rural area	53.1%	77.8%	70.3%	77.3%	72.6%	68.7%
Suburbs or large city	46.9%	22.2%	29.8%	22.7%	27.4%	31.3%
Childhood religious service attendance frequency						
Never	17.9%	11.4%	23.8%	21.1%	19.9%	41.7%
Seldom	19.6%	13.9%	22.2%	37.1%	26.5%	23.5%
Occasionally	19.2%	19%	20.1%	28.9%	19.4%	17.1%
Regularly	43.3%	55.7%	33.8%	12.8%	34.1%	17.7%
Family attitude towards religion during childhood						
Positive	55.2%	68.9%	43.6%	54.7%	59.1%	43.0%
Mixed	35.4%	22.4%	38.4%	27.0%	27.5%	34.2%
Negative	4.2%	2.3%	5.8%	3.2%	4.3%	9.9%
Indifferent	5.1%	6.4%	12.3%	15.2%	9.1%	12.9%
Religion raised in						
Catholic	41.2%	94.1%	57.1%	0.0%	41.5%	11.8%
mainline Protestant	22.1%	0.0%	24.4%	89.1%	34.7%	43.8%
Other religions	22.4%	2.3%	6.0%	6.1%	16.3%	7.9%
None	14.3%	3.6%	12.5%	4.8%	7.6%	36.5%
Praying frequency during childhood (mean of 1-10 index)	4.49	3.94	4.01	3.76	4.68	2.99

Source: The Transmission of Religion across Generations survey, 2021.

Chapter 3

Appendix table 1: Unstandardized coefficients predicting the level of religiosity (including the time spent by the first generation of immigrants in the host country), OLS, 2023

	Australia	Canada	UK	US
Age	-.013 (.008)	-.024** (.009)	-.024** (.009)	.01 (.009)
Age²	0.000 (.000)	0.000* (.000)	0.000* (.000)	0.000 (.000)
Gender; ref. female				
Male	-.006 (.045)	-.033 (.051)	-.033 (.051)	-.111* (.053)
Other gender identity	-.216 (.497)	-.48 (.465)	-.48 (.465)	-.55 (.344)
Type of living area; ref. Town, small/large city				
Rural area or small village	-.128 (.081)	-.055 (.082)	-.055 (.082)	-.027 (.075)
Level of education; ref. Secondary school/High school				
Primary school	.257 (.166)	.116 (.183)	.116 (.183)	.076 (.168)
Vocational or practical school	.112 (.067)	-.022 (.075)	-.022 (.075)	-.002 (.078)
Bachelor's degree	.003 (.055)	-.091 (.063)	-.091 (.063)	.009 (.065)
Graduate degree	.093 (.078)	-.162 (.096)	-.162 (.096)	.104 (.094)
Yearly income; ref. 1st quartile				
4 th quartile	-.187 (.119)	-.133 (.147)	-.133 (.147)	.109 (.128)
3 rd quartile	-.196 (.112)	-.163 (.14)	-.163 (.14)	.017 (.122)
2 nd quartile	-.216* (.109)	-.198 (.137)	-.198 (.137)	.102 (.12)
D'ont know or N/A	-.043 (.136)	-.092 (.173)	-.092 (.173)	.116 (.182)
Marital status; ref. Single (never married)				
Cohabiting	-.057 (.075)	-.057 (.082)	-.057 (.082)	.003 (.087)
Married	-.071 (.052)	-.002 (.06)	-.002 (.06)	.039 (.061)
Separated or divorced	.029 (.079)	.047 (.088)	.047 (.088)	-.046 (.097)
Widowed	.038 (.155)	-.026 (.163)	-.026 (.163)	-.077 (.167)

Dating, partner, engaged	-.191 (.413)	-.224 (.399)	-.224 (.399)	.073 (.317)
Other	1.205 (.712)	.822 (.465)	.822 (.465)	.356 (.587)
Religious affiliation; ref <i>Christian</i>				
Buddhist	-.375** (.132)	-.718*** (.185)	-.718*** (.185)	-.755*** (.201)
Jewish	-.159 (.297)	-.41* (.194)	-.41* (.194)	-.856*** (.152)
Hindu	.017 (.147)	.082 (.176)	.082 (.176)	-.207 (.31)
Muslim	.379** (.121)	.242 (.154)	.242 (.154)	-.02 (.201)
Sikh	.277 (.291)	-.048 (.234)	-.048 (.234)	
Another religious tradition	-.796*** (.185)	-.289 (.246)	-.289 (.246)	-.834*** (.221)
No religion/None	-1.122*** (.049)	-1.134*** (.056)	-1.134*** (.056)	-1.329*** (.057)
Proportion of people without religious affiliation in the region				
	.884 (.761)	.027 (.529)	.027 (.529)	-.125 (.404)
Years since immigration and generation of immigration; ref <i>non-immigrants</i>				
<5 years	.471*** (.142)	.528*** (.133)	.528*** (.133)	.198 (.271)
5–9 years	.438** (.145)	.115 (.164)	.115 (.164)	.402 (.262)
10–19 years	.39*** (.111)	.459*** (.119)	.459*** (.119)	-.157 (.218)
20–29 years	.238* (.104)	.351* (.145)	.351* (.145)	-.289 (.183)
30+ years	.016 (.086)	.515*** (.103)	.515*** (.103)	-.126 (.142)
Second-generation immigrants				
	.061 (.056)	.198** (.067)	.198** (.067)	-.087 (.077)
Constant				
	.414 (.408)	1.265*** (.36)	1.265*** (.36)	.782** (.284)
Observations	1010	1009	1009	1009
R-squared	.459	.393	.393	.386

Standard errors are in parentheses; *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05
Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey, 2023. N = 4,037.

Appendix table 2: Unstandardized coefficients predicting the level of religiosity (including the time spent by the first generation of immigrants in the host country before the birth of the second-generation), OLS, 2023

	Australia	Canada	UK	US
Age	-.014 (.008)	-.026** (.009)	-.019* (.008)	.007 (.009)
Age²	0.000 (.000)	0.000* (.000)	0.000 (.000)	0.000 (.000)
Gender; ref. female				
Male	-.007 (.046)	-.039 (.052)	-.049 (.044)	-.105* (.053)
Other gender identity	-.252 (.496)	-.488 (.466)	-.568 (.485)	-.533 (.344)
Type of living area; ref. Town, small/large city				
Rural area or small village	-.112 (.082)	-.054 (.083)	.064 (.057)	-.023 (.075)
Level of education; ref. Secondary school/High school				
Primary school	.231 (.166)	.117 (.184)	-.031 (.143)	.1 (.17)
Vocational or practical school	.083 (.067)	-.016 (.075)	-.002 (.062)	.003 (.079)
Bachelor's degree	-.021 (.056)	-.092 (.064)	.006 (.053)	.019 (.066)
Graduate degree	.097 (.078)	-.154 (.098)	-.027 (.076)	.099 (.095)
Yearly income; ref. 1st quartile				
4 th quartile	-.211 (.12)	-.115 (.148)	-.581** (.22)	.152 (.13)
3 rd quartile	-.207 (.113)	-.156 (.14)	-.61** (.22)	.052 (.124)
2 nd quartile	-.231* (.111)	-.182 (.138)	-.595** (.225)	.147 (.122)
D'ont know or N/A	-.043 (.137)	-.088 (.174)	-.414 (.234)	.164 (.182)
Marital status; ref. Single (never married)				
Cohabiting	-.062 (.075)	-.067 (.083)	-.087 (.07)	.002 (.088)
Married	-.08 (.053)	-.013 (.061)	-.094 (.049)	.039 (.062)
Separated or divorced	.033 (.079)	.041 (.089)	-.011 (.085)	-.051 (.097)
Widowed	.05 (.158)	-.047 (.164)	-.088 (.15)	-.089 (.166)
Dating, partner, engaged	-.127	-.227	-.011	.027

	(.41)	(.4)	(.214)	(.315)
Other	.906	.809	-.089	.333
	(.706)	(.466)	(.475)	(.587)
Religious affiliation; ref <i>Christian</i>				
Buddhist	-.332*	-.742***	-.707**	-.791***
	(.136)	(.185)	(.256)	(.206)
Jewish	-.173	-.421*	-.16	-.855***
	(.297)	(.193)	(.228)	(.154)
Hindu	.129	.101	.046	-.24
	(.14)	(.172)	(.23)	(.302)
Muslim	.44***	.167	.751***	.003
	(.123)	(.158)	(.102)	(.201)
Sikh	.351	-.132	.177	
	(.289)	(.231)	(.341)	
Another religious tradition	-.751***	-.282	-.633**	-.88***
	(.186)	(.246)	(.206)	(.228)
No religion/None	-1.12***	-1.133***	-.973***	-1.339***
	(.049)	(.056)	(.046)	(.057)
Proportion of people without religious affiliation in the region				
	.883	-.011	-1.239*	-.017
	(.768)	(.533)	(.619)	(.406)
Years since immigration and generation of immigration; ref <i>non-immigrants</i>				
<5 years	.158	.124	.003	-.21
	(.101)	(.11)	(.194)	(.16)
5–9 years	.104	.38**	.234	.265
	(.12)	(.138)	(.165)	(.213)
10–14 years	-.013	.128	.387*	-.206
	(.132)	(.138)	(.161)	(.171)
15–19 years	-.087	.348*	-.222	-.342*
	(.138)	(.168)	(.3)	(.17)
20+ years	-.083	.138	.304*	0.000
	(.099)	(.136)	(.151)	(.137)
First-generation immigrants	.227***	.443***	.498***	-.072
	(.058)	(.067)	(.072)	(.095)
Constant				
	.493	1.303***	1.968***	.758**
	(.413)	(.363)	(.433)	(.285)
Observations	991	999	997	999
R-squared	.455	.392	.495	.392

Standard errors are in parentheses; *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

Source: Cultural and Social Values Survey, 2023. N = 3,986

