Religiosity in times of insecurity: an analysis of Irish, Spanish and Portuguese European Social Survey data, 2002–12

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Abstract

Secularisation theory would suggest that with increasing economic development, industrialisation and modernity, the influence of the church should be waning. However, more recent theories regarding religiosity in times of personal and contextual insecurity have suggested that secularisation is not a linear process. Existential security theory predicts that religiosity and religious practice are higher in times of insecurity. Given the economic crisis of 2008, the changes in many governments and subsequent austerity measures, it could be argued that all households in austerity countries are facing more uncertain times than they were before 2008, both personally and contextually. However, analysis of Irish, Spanish and Portuguese data from the European Social Survey (2002–12) using ordinary least squares regression and logistic regression generally does not support this theory in terms of contextual insecurity. There is some support for the link between personal insecurity and religiosity; recent immigrants are significantly and substantially more religious in terms of subjective religiosity, frequency of prayer and frequency of attendance at religious services than earlier immigrants and those who were born in a country.

Keywords: religiosity, secularisation, austerity, existential security theory, European Social Survey

This article analyses changes in religiosity and religious practice in light of the economic crisis of 2008. Specifically, data from the European Social Survey from 2002 to 2012 for three austerity countries: Ireland, Spain and Portugal is analysed to determine if existential security theory is useful for explaining religious change within countries that have experienced dramatic societal change.

For much of the last century, the sociology of religion has tried to explain why religious practices and religious beliefs within Western Europe and much of the developed world, generally, were on the decline. Early secularisation theory linked this decline with modernity. Specifically, it suggested that with increasing economic development, industrialisation, urbanisation and also functional evolution with the concomitant secular provision of necessary services such as health care, education and social services, the influence of the church should be waning (Berger 1973; Cox 1990; Luckmann 1969; Wilson 1982). More recent research into religiosity and religious practice within the UK has supported secularisation theory. Research by Crockett and Voas (2006) and Voas and Crockett (2005) has found continuous decline from generation to generation in religious beliefs, affiliation and attendance. While the decline is in some ways mediated by parents' religiosity, religious affiliation and religious practice, it does not seem to be impacted by age or period effects.

However, many now critique secularisation theory saying that it does not account for the ebbs and flows of religiosity and religious practice, especially in terms of new religions and fundamentalist religions (see discussions in Demerath III 2007 and Malesevic 2010). Certainly, society does not develop in a linear way. One thing that is missing from traditional secularisation theory is an explanation or prediction of what will happen to religious practice and belief when a society has a crisis, i.e. when development halts or, indeed, goes backwards. In light of the recent economic downturns internationally and within Europe specifically, secularisation theory does not explain how this type of dramatic change might impact religiosity and religious practice.

In developing an alternative to secularisation theory, Norris and Inglehart (2004) have questioned the direct linear link between secularisation and development. In looking at the developed and developing world and various measures of religiosity, they have tried to explain why, against a backdrop of general secularisation across the developed world, some countries have high levels of religiosity and religious practice coupled with high levels of development, with the United States and Ireland being two notable examples. Their theory of 'existential security', defined as 'the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted' (2004: 4), links levels of religiosity with insecurity and concludes that religiosity and religious practice are higher in countries where people experience higher levels of personal insecurity. As stated in a later publication by Inglehart, 'one of the key functions of religion is to provide a sense of security in an insecure world' (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 27).

To help explain what is meant by existential security, Norris and Inglehart refer to the United Nation's definition of human security; it has seven domains: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political (United Nations Development Program 1994). 'Economic security' means that a basic income is assured for all, while 'food security' means that everyone has

access to the basic foods necessary for survival. 'Health security' is discussed in terms of absence of illness but also in terms of access to health services. 'Environmental security' means that people have a healthy physical environment in terms of lack of pollution and natural disaster. 'Personal security' means living without the threat of violence, while 'community security' is linked with membership to a group that provides culture, values and support. Finally, 'political security' means living within a society where basic human rights are not violated.

Norris and Inglehart discuss existential security at both the individual and the contextual level. At the individual level, insecurity could be linked to the lack of basic resources such as housing, food and water, but also to personal safety, health, economic security and political security in terms of immigrant/refugee status, for instance. At the contextual level, insecurity could be linked to pollution, inequality, war, natural disaster and economic recession/depression. Norris and Inglehart stress that existential security is not a permanent condition; it can change abruptly. 'We believe that the public generally gains conditions of greater security during the process of modern development, but this process can always be momentarily halted or temporarily reversed, even in rich countries, by particularly dramatic events such as major natural disasters, experience of wars or severe recession' (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 16). In a later publication, Inglehart goes on to say that 'socioeconomic development brings massive and roughly predictable cultural changes, but if economic collapse occurs, cultural changes tend to move in the opposite direction' (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 21). While Norris and Inglehart do not predict how long it might take before existential insecurity leads to changes in religiosity, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) do. They claim that 'catastrophic events' can change feelings of existential security immediately; in those situations (they cite the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe) they predict that values will stagnate or regress toward more traditional values (2005: 38).

As a (questionable) measure of personal insecurity, Norris and Inglehart have chosen the Gini coefficient, a statistic which summarises the degree of economic inequality within a country. They found that countries with higher levels of economic inequality had higher levels of religiosity.[1] They use this correlation to explain why countries like the United States and Ireland have high levels of religiosity while the Scandinavian countries, for instance, do not. To justify how the Gini coefficient proxies as an indicator for personal insecurity, they state that development is a necessary precursor for secularisation in a society, but that development does not happen equally. In some countries, development is felt to some extent by all through improved infrastructure, for instance. In other countries (they name Nigeria, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia), development only increases inequality by benefiting the affluent (2005: 16). They claim that it is this inequality which measures personal insecurity for both the rich and the poor in unequal societies. However, given that the WVS/EVS collects data at

the individual level regarding issues of security such as safety and employment status, for instance, they never explain why they do not use some of these individual-level variables in addition to societal-level variables to predict religiosity as was subsequently done by Halman and Draulans (2006), van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011), Solt *et al.* (2011) and Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2013). It is an obvious omission which would have strengthened their argument.[2]

Other researchers have explored existential security theory and religiosity, and have generally concluded that their findings support the link between personal insecurity and religiosity (Chen 2010; Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2013; Rees 2009; Solt *et al.* 2011). Rees (2009) used much the same methodology as Norris and Inglehart (2004) and had similar findings. Again, there was no real discussion as to why individual-level variables were not used as well to predict religiosity and religious practice.

Van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011), Solt *et al.* (2011) and Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2013) extended existential security theory to include contextual as well as personal security, thus including both societal- (macro-) and individual- (micro-) level variables. Solt *et al.* (2011) strongly confirmed existential security theory. A combined data set from the WVS/EVS from 1981 to 2007 was analysed. They used all twelve measures of religiosity from the WVS/EVS as dependent variables with demographic variables at the individual level that are associated with religiosity (age, marital status, number of children, gender and household income) but not insecurity and the Gini coefficient, again, to capture societal inequality. Higher Gini coefficients were consistently related to higher level of religiosity across all twelve indicators.

Immerzeel and van Tubergen (2013) analysed European Social Survey data from 2002 to 2008 and used variables at both the country level (unemployment rates and social welfare spending) and the individual level (employment status, war experiences and health status, for instance) that were specifically linked to insecurity. While they conclude that their analysis generally supported existential security theory, their variables at the societal level were not significant when predicting religiosity. However, unemployment rates at the national level were significantly and positively associated with religious attendance, though unemployment status at the individual level had a negative association with both attendance and religiosity. The aspect of change in light of the economic downturn of 2008 was not explicitly integrated into their study.

A similar study by van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011) also looked at existential security theory and religiosity using ESS data, but this time only immigrants were included in the analysis. While they found that individual-level insecurity variables of unemployment and education were related to higher levels of religiosity, they found no link between contextual insecurity, in this instance measured using national unemployment rates as a proxy, and religiosity in immigrants. Religiosity was higher in those immigrants who had recently arrived in a country relative to those who had immigrated earlier. While

this finding was seen to support social integration theory, it could also be seen to support existential security theory in that over time, as length of residence increases, immigrants would become more socially integrated and thus have an increasing sense of community security.

A few studies have tried to integrate change and crisis into the analysis of existential security and religiosity/religious practice. Chen (2010) found that certain types of religious practice, in this instance measured through increased time spent reading the Koran and increased enrolment in Islamic schools post-crisis, increased directly after an economic downturn in Indonesia between 1997 and 1998. Chen concluded that religious intensity is caused by economic distress. Sibley and Bulbulia (2012) also concluded that crisis impacts religiosity when analysing religious faith in Christchurch, New Zealand after the earthquake of 2011. Amidst declining levels of faith in the rest of New Zealand, inhabitants of Christchurch showed an increase in faith directly after the earthquake.

The austerity countries have all experienced economic and political crisis. As such, they provide another opportunity to test existential security theory and change. The following sections provide the contexts, both religious and political, in the three austerity countries included in this research.

Context: religion

Within Ireland, Portugal and Spain, the main religion is and has been Catholicism throughout modern times. Recent data from Ireland and Portugal show Catholics at 84 per cent and 81 per cent of the population, respectively (Central Statistics Office 2012; Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2012). Rates in Spain come in somewhat lower at around 70 per cent (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2014). While this may be a case of religion as a marker of culture as opposed to a belief system (just the opposite of Davie's 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1994) and more in line with 'belonging without believing' as suggested by Halman and Draulans (2006)), religion is still a part of identity for the majority of people in these countries.

However, the status of the church within these countries has been somewhat problematic. For approximately forty years, both Spain and Portugal were ruled by dictators who had strong ties to the Catholic Church. Franco made Catholicism the official religion of Spain and provided legislation to bring the laws on divorce, marriage, education and abortion in line with Catholic teachings. Initially seen as positive, Franco's support waned with many Spaniards questioning the role of the Catholic Church and its seeming support of the government through silence on issues of equality and justice that had arisen during Franco's regime (Vincent 1996). After Franco's death in 1975 secularisation happened very quickly with the transition from dictatorship to democracy (Requena and Stanek 2013).

Similarly within Portugal, while official separation of church and state continued throughout Salazar's rule of power, he had strong ties with the church and was seen to be implementing Catholic doctrine through his policies. By the mid-1960s, the church was viewed more as a relatively weak friend of the government than of the poor (Gallagher 1996). After the transition from a dictatorship to a democracy, Portugal saw an influx of immigrants in the 1970s with diverse religious affiliations. However, the vast majority of Portuguese still affiliate themselves with the Catholic Church with the heaviest concentrations of the Catholic population in rural Portugal and in the northern part of the country (Dix 2009).

In Ireland, the newly founded Irish Free State was seen as the embodiment of Irish nationalist aspirations with Irish nationalism closely identified with Catholicism (McDonagh 2003: 43). The influence of the Catholic Church on legislation and governance has been immense (Inglis 2007; Keogh and O'Driscoll 1996). Legislation within Ireland has historically been aligned with Catholic Church teachings; divorce was only legalised at the very end of the twentieth century, and abortion recently became a legal option only for those cases where the procedure will save a woman's life. Attitudes towards the church have changed profoundly since independence, most especially in the wake of recent reports into sexual abuse by clergy and in church-run institutions. In a recent poll, only 24 per cent of participants had a favourable impression of the Catholic Church even though 69 per cent claimed to be Catholic and 30 per cent had attended mass in the last week (Iona Institute 2011). Some 56 per cent of respondents indicated 'child abuse' as the primary reason for an unfavourable opinion of the church, 23 per cent 'history and structure of the church', 18 per cent 'cover-ups' and 6 per cent 'loss of trust' (2011: 5). Even so, 46 per cent felt that Catholic Church teachings were still relevant today, but these findings were greatly differentiated by age, with 66 per cent of over-55 year-olds agreeing versus only 33 per cent of 15–24 year-olds (2011: 6).

Therefore, while there is a strong Catholic tradition within all of these countries, the relationship between the church and the people is not unproblematic. Attendance at church within both Portugal and Spain has historically been strongly associated with class, gender and region. Within Spain, the working class would not have attended church regularly even during the early 1900s. Church attendance would have been similarly differentiated in Portugal (Gallagher 1996; Vincent 1996). And while Ireland is often considered an outlier in relation to other countries, with high levels of religiosity and of attendance nationally, attendance and belief have also traditionally been differentiated by age, gender, education and domicile with the old, the less educated, women and rural dwellers being more religious and more likely to attend religious service (Breen and Healy 2014; Hornsby-Smith and Whelan 1994). However, majority religions impact all in a society, even those of minority faiths and those who claim no religion (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglis 1998; Norris and Inglehart 2004). 'Religious traditions have shaped the cultures of each nation in an enduring fashion;

today, these distinctive values are transmitted to citizens even though they never set foot in a church, temple or mosque' (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 17).

Important to an analysis of changing religiosity within each country is the fact that all three countries have substantial immigrant populations. Table 1 presents a summary per country of religious affiliations by immigrant status.[3] While the differences are generally most noticeable when comparing recent immigrants to those born in each country, there are obvious and notable differences in religion even when comparing the distribution of religions of those born in a country with those who have resided in a country for twenty years or more.

Table 1: Religious affiliation per country by immigrant status, ESS Round 1–6

				Religious denomination				
	Immigrant status	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Other Christian	Islam	Other non-Christian	Not applicable	Total
IE	Born in country	79.50%	2.20%	0.58%	0.01%	0.16%	17.55%	11,444
	Immigrated in last 5 years	40.60%	4.97%	9.50%	5.18%	4.54%	35.21%	463
	Immigrated in last 6–10 years	42.37%	8.42%	11.84%	6.32%	3.42%	27.63%	380
	Immigrated in last 11–20 years	33.33%	6.74%	8.61%	4.12%	4.87%	42.32%	267
	Immigrated over 20 years ago	60.81%	7.43%	1.58%	0.23%	0.90%	29.05%	444
ES	Born in country	69.18%	0.23%	0.65%	0.17%	0.18%	29.59%	10,618
	Immigrated in last 5 years	36.36%	2.42%	16.97%	18.79%	1.82%	23.64%	330
	Immigrated in last 6–10 years	41.10%	2.05%	16.10%	18.49%	3.08%	19.18%	292
	Immigrated in last 11–20 years	38.29%	5.14%	6.29%	18.29%	2.85%	29.14%	175
	Immigrated over 20 years ago	49.15%	3.39%	4.51%	9.04%	3.95%	29.94%	177
PT	Born in country	82.90%	0.49%	1.81%	0.07%	0.16%	14.57%	11,675
	Immigrated in last 5 years	54.19%	5.16%	19.36%	2.58%	1.94%	16.77%	155
	Immigrated in last 6–10 years	44.54%	8.40%	19.32%	3.36%	3.36%	27.63%	119
	Immigrated in last 11–20 years	62.90%	7.26%	8.88%	2.42%	2.42%	16.13%	124
	Immigrated over 20 years ago	69.87%	1.28%	4.81%	0.64%	2.88%	20.51%	312

Context: austerity

The economic crisis of 2008 had repercussions that impacted people globally, particularly so in the Eurozone for Ireland, followed by Spain and Portugal. For all three countries, economic uncertainty was coupled with political change.

In Ireland, the country went from having a 40 per cent debt to GDP ratio to 100 per cent in 2008 when the government agreed to take on the liabilities of the banks within the country. In an effort to stabilise the Irish economy, Ireland entered into austerity budgetary measures in return for an 85 billion euro 'bailout' through the EC-IMF-ECB loan programme. These measures severely restricted the economic autonomy of the country. Fiscal adjustments of nearly 24 billion euro were required between 2008 and 2012 (Hardiman and Regan 2013). Given the Irish government's continued commitment to its low corporate tax (the lowest in the EU15), the repercussions were felt the most by average Irish households faced with rising taxes, lower social welfare payments, less job security, rising unemployment, and a devalued property market which left many with negative equity. By 2013, the national debt ratio had risen to almost 120 per cent of GDP. Unsurprisingly, the standing Fianna Fail/Green Party coalition government lost the national election to a Fine Gael/Labour coalition government in 2011. Ireland left the 'bailout' programme in 2013, but the residents of Ireland are still feeling the impact of the economic crisis. Ireland still has higher unemployment (nearly 15 per cent at its high as compared to 4 per cent previously), mounting debt and lower property valuations than existed pre-2008 (Hardiman and Regan 2013). Emigration figures continue to rise with nearly 200,000 Irish people leaving the country since the beginning of the crisis; these figures double if all of the non-Irish who have left the country are included (Central Statistics Office 2013).

Spain and Portugal had to make fiscal adjustments comparable to Ireland post-2008. Most of the problems within Spain had to do with the collapse of the construction sector, a sector that employed large numbers of young and temporary workers. Unemployment rates in Spain by the end of 2013 were at 26 per cent (an improvement!); for the young, the rate stood at 57% (Conde-Ruiz and Marín 2013). Spain has the worst unemployment rates in Europe. This is coupled with declining government revenues (mainly from lack of tax revenues from the collapsed housing market). Spain negotiated relief from the EC-IMF-ECB loan programme. By 2012, 39.5 billion of the 100 billion euro credit for banks that had been agreed had been drawn down (Conde-Ruiz and Marín 2013). With these monies came austerity restrictions which have seen large cuts in public services including health and social services. The Spanish measures instituted many reforms in tax and spending which ultimately saw the tax burden for the average Spanish household increase while pay (at least for public employees) was decreasing (Conde-Ruiz and Marín 2013). As with Ireland, the government that had been in power during the economic crisis,

Partido Socialista Obrero Español (the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) were soundly defeated in 2011 and replaced by the Partido Popular who remain in power today.

Within Portugal, it could be argued that financial difficulties started long before the economic crisis of 2008. According to Cabral (2013), in its over 200-year history, Portugal has only had a trade surplus for a total of 7 years. However, the Portuguese economy has gone through the same level of crisis as Spain and Ireland with a 78 million euro 'bailout' in 2011 from the EC-IMF-ECB loan programme as a means to stabilise the economy. As with Spain and Ireland, loan monies came with austerity measures. While the Irish quietly accepted many of the fiscal changes, Portugal erupted in strikes and protests which saw the resignation of ministers in key areas and the coalition government of Partido Social Democrata and Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular come into power in June 2011 over the incumbent Socialist Party. Unemployment rates are still high at around 15.3 per cent, and the public still has to deal with higher taxes, public hiring freezes, and reduced monies for schools and essential services, such as healthcare (Cabral 2013). Many blame Portugal's problems on the existing government and the broader governmental links with the EU and the euro. While commentators like Cabral (2013) call for major policy changes to rectify the situation in Portugal, protestors are demanding another change in government.

Given the economic crisis of 2008, the changes in governments and enforced austerity measures, it could be argued that all households in austerity countries are facing more uncertain times than they were before 2008, both personally and contextually. Chen (2010) and Sibley and Bulbulia (2012) found increased religiosity and religious practice immediately after economic recession and natural disaster. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) have suggested that with catastrophic change, belief systems could regress towards more traditional values. If austerity could be classified as 'catastrophic', existential security theory would predict that levels of religiosity and religious practice should be rising in austerity countries. This leads to Hypothesis 1a.

Hypothesis 1a (H1a)

Levels of religiosity and religious practice should be higher in austerity countries after the economic crisis of 2008 than they were before.[4]

However, other research (Voas and Crockett 2005; Crockett and Voas 2006) has indicated that secular trends in religiosity and religious practice are generational. Accordingly, austerity may not impact religious views or religious attendance, at least not in the short term. If it does, it may simply be to slow down or stop secular trends instead of reversing them. Similarly, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) suggest that in times of catastrophic change, while values may reverse, they may also stagnate. This leads to Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b)

Levels of religiosity and religious practice in austerity countries may not change in the short term; they may be similar after the economic crisis of 2008 to what they were before.

Given existential security theory, we would also expect that personal insecurity in terms of food, environmental, personal, community, political, and economic resources would have a positive relationship with religious beliefs and religious practice. This leads to Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

People with higher levels of personal insecurity will have higher levels of religiosity and religious practice.

Data and methods

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a multinational survey that has been collecting data bi-annually from nationally representative samples on changing attitudes, beliefs and values as well as socio-demographic information across Europe since 2002. As of the last round of the ESS (Round 6 in 2012), more than thirty countries had taken part. Ireland, Spain and Portugal have complete data sets from all six rounds of the ESS and have been included in this analysis as representatives of the European austerity countries. The other austerity countries, Greece and Italy, have missed rounds of the ESS and, therefore, have not been included.

The variables that have been included in this analysis from the ESS are listed in Appendix A. To conceptualise religiosity and religious practice, three variables are being used: religiosity, frequency of prayer and frequency of church attendance. They were not combined into one 'religiosity' factor, as such, because they represent different facets of religiosity including personal beliefs, personal practice and public practice, respectively.[5]

Figure 1 tracks average religiosity for each country in relation to the European average for all six rounds of data. Ireland's average religiosity is converging with the European average over time; Portugal's average religiosity fluctuates around an average that is very near to Ireland's. Spain's average religiosity has stayed much the same over the six rounds of survey data and is, at times, somewhat lower than the European average.

For religious practice, two variables are being used: frequency of prayer (outside of religious services) and frequency of church attendance. For this analysis, people who pray weekly or more will be compared to those who pray less than that or never. Similarly, those who attend religious service weekly or more will be compared to those who attend less or never.[6] Table 2 compares percentages for each country for an average of the six rounds of data. As can be
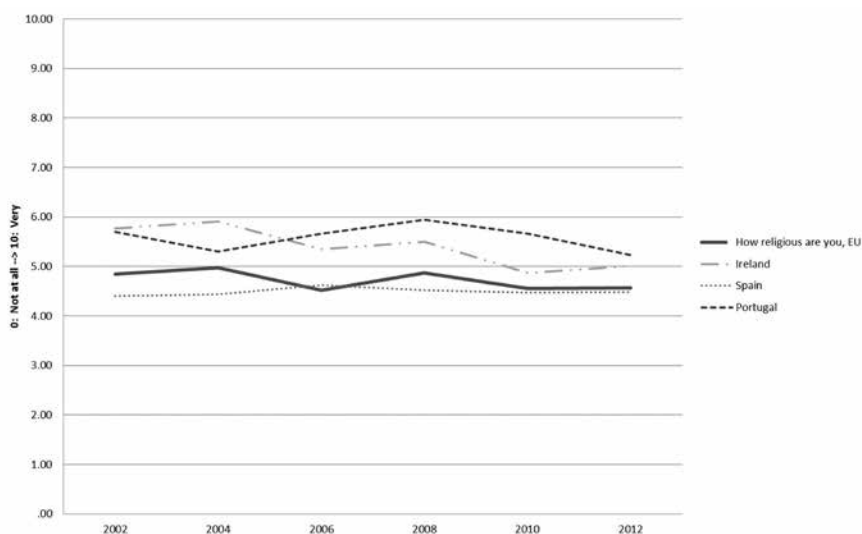
Figure 1: Average religiosity Ireland, Spain and Portugal 2002–2012, ESS data Round 1–6

seen from Table 2, the Irish pray and attend religious service substantially more than the Spanish with the Portuguese falling between the two other countries on both measures.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for frequency of prayer and frequency of religious service attendance (merged data from ESS Rounds 1–6)

Frequency of prayer	Ireland	Portugal	Spain	Total
Weekly or more	67.75%	58.34%	36.71%	
Less frequently or never	32.25%	41.66%	63.29%	
Total (n)	13,016	11,954	11,484	36,454
Attendance at religious service:				
Weekly or more	46.66%	29.37%	17.60%	
Less frequently or never	53.34%	70.63%	82.40%	
Total (n)	13,062	12,251	11,557	36,870

Some standard demographic variables have been included in the analysis to isolate compositional impacts from those related to nationality and time (see Halman and Draulans 2006 and van Tubergen 2006, for instance). Specifically, gender, age, education and domicile have been included in the analysis.[7]

To conceptualise personal insecurity (see Appendix A), the following variables have been included in the analysis to represent different domains of human (in)security: subjective feelings of safety (personal), subjective feelings of health (health), experience of criminal victimisation (personal), whether or not the respondent has experienced three months of unemployment or more (economic), subjective feelings of economic security (economic) and immigrant status (community). The variable for immigrant status differentiates based on length of residence within a country. The reference category is those who were born in the country. In terms of community security, it is hypothesised that those who have been in a country longer are more secure (discussed as 'social integration theory' in van Tubergen and Sindradóttir 2011). It was not possible to include variables that represent food or environmental security.

In terms of contextual security, the crisis has impacted all residents both economically and politically. To conceptualise the contextual dimension of security, a variable was constructed to indicate whether the data had been gathered before the economic crisis (pre-2008) or during and afterward (2008 and on), similar to the analyses done by Chen (2010) and Sibley and Bulbulia (2012). Rounds one to three (2002, 2004 and 2006) are pre-crisis. Round four to six (2008, 2010 and 2012) are crisis and beyond. An interaction term was then included in the regression equations to determine whether or not there was an association between country and crisis in terms of the three dependent variables.

Regression analysis has been used to determine how self-assessed religiosity, frequency of prayer and frequency of church attendance differ across Ireland, Portugal and Spain and how these measures have changed over time. Initially, country and basic demographic variables were included in the model to predict religiosity and religious practice (Model 1). Then, to measure the impact of contextual and personal insecurity, time and the interaction of country and time were included in addition to individual-level insecurity variables (Model 2). Ordinary least squares regression (OLS) was used to first predict religiosity because it is scaled from 0–10; while not a continuous variable as such, other research using ESS data has used similar analysis (Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2013, for instance). Given the binary coding of the two variables associated with religious practice, logistic regression was used to estimate the odds ratios of weekly or more prayer outside of religious service and weekly or more attendance at religious service relative to less than weekly or never.[8] Analysis was weighted using design weights and population weights included with the ESS data sets. Given the limited number of countries and years of data, multi-level modelling was not possible for this analysis.

Findings: religiosity

The results of OLS regression predicting religiosity are presented in Table 3. As was apparent in Figure 1, Model 1 indicates that Ireland has the highest average religiosity at almost 1 unit higher than Spain; Portugal is slightly lower than Ireland but still higher than Spain at .75. Women are more religious than men (.92). Older people are more religious than younger people; a 60-year old would be 1.6 units more religious than a 20-year old, all else equal. Education works in the opposite direction to age. For every year of education, religiosity decreases by .05. Domicile is related to religiosity only very slightly with the only significant result found when comparing people who live on farms or in country homes to those living in the big city at .24 more.

These coefficients change only slightly when insecurity variables are added to the equation as shown in Model 2, Table 3. Ireland and Portugal before 2008 are significantly more religious than Spain at 1.20 and .81, respectively. While data from 2008 onward shows no significant change in Portugal or Spain, religiosity decreases by .51 in Ireland. This is moving in the opposite direction to what would be expected from existential security theory and does not support H1a or H1b for Ireland. It may show some support for H1b for Portugal and Spain in that there is no significant change.

Of all of the individual-level variables associated with insecurity, only two support existential security theory: immigrant status and subjective feelings of safety. Those who feel unsafe are just slightly more religious than those who do not (.23). However, there is a large, significant difference between immigrants who have moved to a country within the last twenty years and those who were born in the country, all else equal. Religiosity is 1.80 higher for immigrants who arrived in a country in the last five years versus those who were born there. It decreases progressively for each grouping as length of residency increases. By the time an immigrant has lived in a country for over twenty years, there is no significant difference between their religiosity and the majority of the population who were born in the country. Therefore, the data provides some support for H2.

There is no significant association between religiosity and financial security, criminal victimisation, or health, all else equal. Unemployment has the opposite relationship with religiosity than predicted from existential security theory: those who have not been unemployed for three months or more are slightly more religious (.31) than those who have.

Prayer

Logistic regression was used to predict the odds of praying weekly or more outside of religious services versus praying less or not at all. The results are shown in Table 4. The basic demographic variables of gender, age, education

Table 3: Ordinary least squares regression of religiosity in Ireland, Spain and Portugal (ESS Rounds 1–6)

Subjective religiosity	Model 1: without insecurity variables			Model 2: with insecurity variables			
	Coeffficient		*Standard Error*	*Coeffficient*		*Standard Error*	*Hypothesis*
Spain before crisis (reference)							
post-economic crisis				−0.03		0.05	y/n
Ireland	0.99	**	0.05	1.20	**	0.06	
Portugal	0.75	**	0.04	0.81	**	0.06	
Ireland post-crisis				−0.51	**	0.07	no
Portugal post-crisis				−0.05		0.07	y/n
male							
female	0.92	**	0.04	0.89	**	0.04	
age	0.04	**	0.00	0.04	**	0.00	
education in years	−0.05	**	0.00	−0.04	**	0.00	
big city (reference)							
suburbs	−0.15		0.08	−0.10		0.08	
small city	−0.06		0.06	0.02		0.06	
country village	0.04		0.06	0.14	*	0.06	
farm or country home	0.24	**	0.10	0.35	**	0.10	
crime victim							
not a victim				0.05		0.05	no
financially secure (reference)							
not financially secure				0.03		0.05	no
healthy (reference)							
not healthy				0.02		0.05	no
safe (reference)							
not safe				0.23	**	0.05	yes
unemployed for 3 months+							
not unemployed for 3 months+				0.31	**	0.05	no
born in country (reference)							
immigrated in last 5 years				1.80	**	0.14	yes

	Model 1: without insecurity variables			Model 2: with insecurity variables		
Subjective religiosity (cont.)	*Coeffficient*		*Standard Error*	*Coeffficient*		*Standard Error*	*Hypothesis*
immigrated in last 6–10 years				1.65	**	0.16	yes
immigrated in last 11–20 years				1.15	**	0.21	yes
immigrated over 20 years				–0.15		0.17	
cons	2.73	**	0.12	2.14	**	0.13	
N	35,975			34,826			
R²	.16			.18			

**significant at .01 level
*significant at .05 level Listwise deletion for missing cases

and domicile are significant when predicting frequency of prayer in Model 1 and remain significant in Model 2 when insecurity variables are added to the model, though domicile becomes less distinguishing in Model 2. In Model 2, the Irish were over 5½ times more likely to pray weekly or more relative to the Spanish before 2008. The Portuguese prayed much less than the Irish prior to 2008, but were still nearly 2½ times as likely to pray weekly or more than the Spanish. From 2008, the likelihood of weekly or more prayer in both countries decreases with the odds ratio at 28 per cent less likely and 19 per cent less likely in Ireland and Portugal, respectively. Again, these findings do not support H1a or H1b. Spain shows no significant change which may support H1b.

In assessing the relationship between personal insecurity and religious practice, again immigrant status and safety are statistically significant in predicting frequency of prayer. However, while feelings of being unsafe only increases the likelihood of weekly or more prayer by 20 per cent relative to those who feel safe, immigrant status within the last five years increases likelihood of weekly or more prayer by over four times relative to those who were born in a country. As had been seen with religiosity, likelihood of praying weekly or more is still significantly higher for those who immigrated within the last six to ten years and within the last eleven to twenty years but at a decreasing rate as length of residency in a country increases. Those who immigrated to a country more than twenty years ago are not significantly different from the segment of the population who were born in a country.

Subjective health is also statistically significant in predicting frequency of prayer. Those who do not feel healthy are 14 per cent more likely to pray weekly or more than those who do, all else equal. These findings provide support for H2.

Table 4: Odds ratios from logistic regression of weekly (or more frequent) prayer in Ireland, Spain and Portugal (ESS Rounds 1–6)

	Model 1: without insecurity variables			*Model 2: with insecurity variables*			
Prayer	*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Hypothesis*
Spain before crisis (reference)							
post- economic crisis				0.94	0.04		y/n
Ireland	4.62	0.20	**	5.55	0.33	**	
Portugal	2.13	0.08	**	2.46	0.14	**	
Ireland post-crisis				0.72	0.05	**	no
Portugal post-crisis				0.81	0.06	**	no
male							
female	3.07	0.11	**	3.04	0.12	**	
age	1.04	0.00	**	1.04	0.00	**	
education in years	0.98	0.00	**	0.99	0.00	**	
big city (reference)							
suburbs	0.85	0.06	*	0.86	0.06	*	
small city	0.88	0.05	*	0.93	0.05		
country village	0.90	0.05	*	0.98	0.05		
farm or country home	1.05	0.09		1.14	0.10		
crime victim							
not a victim				0.94	0.04		no
financially secure (reference)							
not financially secure				1.06	0.05		no
healthy (reference)							
not healthy				1.14	0.05	**	yes
safe (reference)							
not safe				1.20	0.05	**	yes
Unemployed for 3 months+							
not unemployed for 3 months+				1.27	0.05	**	no
born in country (reference)							

	Model 1: without insecurity variables			Model 2: with insecurity variables			
Prayer (cont.)	*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Hypothesis*
immigrated within 5 years				4.10	0.50	**	yes
immigrated 6–10 years				3.67	0.48	**	yes
immigrated 11–20 years				2.62	0.43	**	yes
immigrated over 20 years				0.96	0.12		
cons	0.05	0.00	**	0.05	0.00	**	
N	35422			34455			
Pseudo R²	0.16			0.17			
Wald chi-sq	3146			3263			

**significant at .01 level
*significant at .05 level Listwise deletion for missing cases

As with the previous analysis of religiosity, financial security and criminal victimisation are not significant in predicting likelihood of praying weekly or more. Employment status is, but as before, it is in the opposite direction predicted by H2. Those who have not been unemployed for three months or more are 27 per cent more likely to pray weekly or more than are those who have been unemployed for that time period.

Religious service attendance

Logistic regression was also used to predict the odds of attending religious service weekly or more versus attending less or not at all. The results are shown in Table 5. Education is no longer a significant predictor when assessing frequency of church attendance in either Model 1 or Model 2, though all of the other demographic variables remain significant. As can be seen in Table 5, they do not change dramatically with the inclusion of insecurity variables. In terms of national differences, they are very similar to those found for prayer. As shown in Model 2, the Irish were almost 5½ times as likely to attend religious service weekly or more than the Spanish before 2008. The Portuguese were 1.79 times as likely to attend religious service weekly or more than the Spanish before 2008. While there was no significant change for the Portuguese from 2008 on, again, the Irish are less likely to attend church from 2008 on by 24 per cent than they were before. Interestingly, for the first time, there is also a statistically significant result in Spain that mirrors Ireland. These findings do not generally support H1a or H1b for Ireland or Spain, though they might show some support for H1b in Portugal in that there was no significant change.

Table 5: Odds ratios from logistic regression of weekly (or more frequent) religious attendance in Ireland, Spain and Portugal (ESS Rounds 1–6)

	Model 1: without insecurity variables			*Model 2: with insecurity variables*			
Weekly attendance	*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Hypothesis*
Spain before crisis (reference)							
after crisis				0.77	0.04	**	no
Ireland	4.93	0.24	**	5.43	0.34	**	
Portugal	1.82	0.08	**	1.79	0.11	**	
Ireland after crisis				0.76	0.06	**	no
Portugal after crisis				1.07	0.08		y/n
male							
female	1.85	0.08	**	1.90	0.08	**	
age	1.04	0.00	**	1.04	0.00	**	
education in years	0.99	.00		1.00	0.01		
big city							
suburbs	0.75	0.06	**	0.76	0.06	**	
small city	0.94	0.06		0.97	0.06		
country village	1.13	0.06	*	1.16	0.07	*	
farm or country home	1.36	0.12	**	1.40	0.13	**	
crime victim (reference)							
not a victim				1.02	0.06		no
financial coping (reference)							
not coping financially				0.89	0.04	*	no
healthy (reference)							
not healthy				0.92	0.04		no
feel safe (reference)							
not safe				0.99	0.05		no
unemployed for 3 months+							
not unemployed for 3 months+				1.49	0.07	**	no
Born in country (reference)							

	Model 1: without insecurity variables			Model 2: with insecurity variables			
Weekly attendance (cont.)	*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Odds Ratio*	*Standard Error*		*Hypothesis*
immigrated in last 5 years				2.73	0.36	**	yes
immigrated in last 6–10 years				2.48	0.36	**	yes
immigrated in last 11–20 yrs.				1.69	0.31	**	yes
immigrated in 20 years				0.93	0.14		
cons	0.02	0.00	**	0.02	0.00	**	
N	35,810			34,835			
Pseudo R²	0.13			0.14			
Wald chi-sq	2605			2801			

**significant at .01 level
*significant at .05 level Listwise deletion for missing values

   In terms of personal insecurity, the only variable that supports existential security theory has to do with immigrant status; those who immigrated to a country within the last ten years are over two times as likely to attend religious service weekly or more than those who were born in a country. Those who immigrated within the last eleven to twenty years are 1.69 as likely to attend religious service weekly or more than those who were born in a country. As with religiosity and prayer, those who immigrated to a country over twenty years ago are not statistically significantly different than those who were born in a country.
   As with the other religiosity variables, subjective feelings of safety and criminal victimisation are not significant in predicting religious attendance. In assessing the relationship between the other variables associated with personal insecurity and religious attendance, they are significant in predicting attendance, but the impact of the relationship is in the opposite direction to what would be predicted from H2. Those who are healthy and coping financially without a history of unemployment are all more likely to attend religious service than those who are unwell, financially insecure or who have experienced three months or more of unemployment. In the case of those who are unwell, it seems likely that their health status may be one of the reasons they do not or are less likely to attend.

Conclusion

In assessing the impact of austerity on religiosity and religious practice, the findings do not provide strong support for existential security theory as applied

to national crisis and economic/political change within a country. For all three religiosity variables, there is either no significant change from 2008 on or there is a significant decrease. This was especially notable in Ireland. There are many possible explanations. One explanation is that religious change takes place over a long time period and that the time investigated here is too short to notice significant changes in religiosity or religious practice, especially a reversal of trends brought on by the economic crisis, as proposed by H1b. Further research is required and may be realised using a much longer span of time series data, integrating future datasets. However, Chen (2010) was able to notice increased religiosity directly after economic crisis and Sibley and Bulbulia (2012) found increased religiosity directly after natural disaster. No lag time was necessary to see significant change.

Another, rather simplistic, explanation specific to Ireland relates to the fact that Ireland would be classified as a 'late industrialising society' (Share *et al*. 2012: 47). The obvious trends now in secularisation in Ireland may simply be Ireland 'catching up' with its more developed European neighbours.

A more plausible explanation has to do with the rather complex relation-ships between religion and government within all three countries. Within Ireland, concurrent with the economic crisis there were four extremely public reports detailing incidences of church-related sexual abuse. Therefore, while the economic and political environment was becoming more uncertain and insecure, so too was the Irish religious environment, at least for the majority of Irish people who still classify themselves officially as Catholic. For those living in Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, the Catholic Church was long associated with dictatorships and abuses of power and privilege. Given the class distinctions historically related to religious attendance in those countries, the church may never have been the place those on the margin (e.g. those with high levels of personal insecurity) turned to in times of insecurity, at least not for those with living memory of the 1920s/1930s to the 1960s/1970s.

However, at the individual level, there is some support for existential security theory, especially when analysing religiosity and religious practice of immigrants who have recently arrived in a country, arguably some of the most vulnerable people within a country. As found in van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011), new immigrants had higher levels of religiosity and religious practice than those who have been in a country longer. Research into religion and migration has found that migrants use religious service attendance as a means of maintaining ethnic identity, for socialising, for transnational networking and for social capital as well as for spirituality (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Gallagher 2014; Min 2005; Sandoval 2002; Stepick 2005). It does not explain why self-assessed religiosity and frequency of prayer is much higher amongst recent immigrants, though Sibley and Bulbulia (2012) and Chen's (2010) findings have linked religious intensity with personal insecurity**.** It is possible that these

relatively new immigrants are reliant on religion given the inherent insecurity in their status as found in van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011).

As length of residence increases to twenty years or more, religiosity and religious practice are not significantly different in immigrants than they are for those born in a country, even though, as shown in Table 1, distributions of religious denominations between the two groups are distinctively different in all three countries. This would suggest that long-term immigrant residents do not use religious practice to the same extent as newer immigrants to find community security.

In assessing the significance of the other personal (in)security measures, while at times feelings of being unsafe and of ill health were associated with increased religious practice and belief, the other personal insecurity variables had no significant association. In the case of attendance at religious services, where significance was indicated, it was generally in the opposite direction to what had been predicted by existential security theory.

Religion, religious faith and religiosity are not simple variables, representing something deeply complex within the human experience whose domain of meaning is difficult to capture in simple empirical measures. It may be possible to develop a wider range of dimensions for religion-related measures as well as the use of well-theorised proxy measures but these lie outside the scope of this article.

As summarised by Requena and Stanek, 'any analysis of historical changes in religiousness should take into consideration the historical, political and sociocultural particularities of each country' (Requena and Stanek 2013: 97). Given the historical contexts of all three countries, especially in terms of religion, it could be argued that one 'grand theory' that attempts to predict religiosity based on insecurity ignores relevant differences within countries that have significant impacts on religious belief and practice, now and in the future. It also may be too soon to assess change. The impact of austerity on religiosity and religious practice may become noticeable in the future when comparing the cohort that experienced the economic crisis in their formative years with those who grew up in more prosperous times. Repeating this analysis in future years will indicate whether or not existential security theory can be linked with religious revivals in austerity countries in the future based on insecurities experienced today or, indeed, whether secularisation theory still has the best explanatory power when analysing trends in religious practices and beliefs in Ireland, Portugal and Spain.

Appendix A

Dependent, control and independent variables from the European Social Survey to measure religiosity and insecurity

Variables:	Coding	
Dependent:		
Subjective religiosity	0-10	'0' means not all '10' means extremely
Religious attendance: weekly or more frequently	Yes/no	
Prayer outside of religious service: weekly or more frequently	Yes/no	
Control:		
Country	Spain, Ireland, or Portugal	Spain is reference category
Gender	Male or female	Male is reference category
Age (in years)		
Education (in years)		
Domicile	Big city, suburbs, small city, country village or farm/country home	Big city is reference category
Independent:		
Immigrant status	Born in country; moved to country within last 5 years; lived in country 6-10 years; lived in country 11-20 years; and lived in country more than 20 years	Born in country is reference category
Crime victim in last 5 years	Yes/no	
Coping financially	Yes/no	
Healthy	Yes/no	
Feel safe	Yes/no	
Ever unemployed for 3 months or more	Yes/no	
Crisis	Pre- or post-	'pre-' is 2002, 2004 and 2006; 'post-' is 2008, 2010 and 2012

Notes

1   Economic inequality is measured as the average Gini coefficient from 1981 to 2001, and religiosity is measured as an average taken from the World Value Survey (WVS)/European Value Study (EVS) for the same time period.

2   Other publications by Inglehart and Norris regarding existential security do integrate some analysis of differences in values based on demographic variables such as age/generation and education (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglehart and Welzel 2010; Norris and Inglehart 2002). However, there is no integration of individual insecurity variables such as unemployment, safety or victimisation. Existential security is measured at the national level only and comparisons are made between countries. In a subsequent publication (Inglehart and Welzel 2010), Inglehart defends the use of national-level mean scores of relevant social indicators (and ignoring individual-level variables) by stating that national differences between countries are much more substantial and significant than variances found between compositional variables such as age and education (2010: 553–4).

3   Given the difficulty in accessing this information from census materials for Portugal and Spain (Dix 2009), these statistics have been computed from European Social Survey data (merged data from 2002 through 2012). It is important to note, however, that ESS data are only collected from respondents who communicate in the language of their host country or in languages spoken by at least 5 per cent of the inhabitants of a country, which could bias these results. To address this issue, van Tubergen and Sindradóttir (2011) compared their findings on immigrants and religiosity using ESS data to findings from an earlier immigrant study that had used data specifically from an immigrant survey (van Tubergen 2006). They were satisfied that their results were not biased.

4   Norris and Inglehart (2004) analyse religiosity and religious practice separately, but do not hypothesise as to how the impact of existential security might differ in terms of each variable.

5   One limitation of the survey data is that 'religiosity' itself is not clearly defined. The respondents are left to define the term for themselves. However, the question asked of respondents is: 'Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?' This in some ways indicates that 'religiosity' as reflected in the intensity of a relationship or a devotion to a particular religious denomination or practice is not what is being asked.

6   Both variables originally were ordinal on a 7-point scale ranging from 'never' to 'every day'. They were converted into dichotomous variables for ease of interpretation and to deal with some distributional issues (similar to Immerzeel and van Tubergen 2013).

7   Income was not included due to high levels of missing data (there is no variable for amount received from social welfare payments). Variables for religious denomination either indicating whether someone belongs to one or indicating the specific religion that the respondent belongs to were not included as explanatory variables because they are too highly correlated with the dependent variables. Given that the term 'religiosity' has not been explicitly defined in the ESS, including denomination in the analysis could be somewhat akin to predicting religiosity based on religiosity (similar to discussion in van Tubergen and Sindradóttir 2011).

8   Ordered logistic regression was also used on the original 7-scale variable for both attendance and prayer, and the findings are robust. Only the results of the logistic regression on the (constructed) dichotomous variables are presented in this article.

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