

Abstract for the „8th International German Socio-Economic Panel User Conference“

Religion as a Resource: Individual Religiosity, Religious Context and the Creation of Social Capital in Germany

The paper examines the role of religion as a source of individual social capital in the form of social networks and trust in Germany. Do religious people have more social contacts, receive more social support and exhibit greater trust than non-religious? Are there any differences between religious traditions, e.g. Protestantism, Catholicism, other Christians and especially Islam, to be discerned? Furthermore, does the religious context in a given region impact on social capital formation and is this effect irrespective of individual religiosity? To answer these questions, the paper specifies individual level, contextual level, and cross-level interaction hypotheses. These are tested by means of a sub-national comparison of 97 German regions (*Raumordnungsregionen*) using Multilevel Analysis, therefore allowing for the simultaneous study of the impact of individual religiosity, the regional religious context, and their interplay on social capital while controlling for possible confounding factors both at individual and contextual levels. Making use of the SOEP *Geocodes*, the analysis combines survey data from the 2003, 2005, and 2006 GSOEP waves with macro data for the regional contexts. Preliminary results suggest that individual religiosity as well as religious regional contexts play an important role in the creation of individual social capital. Especially weekly church attendance is a major factor explaining variation in social networks and trust at the individual level. Whereas Protestants do not significantly differ from Catholics in this regard, Muslims show lower overall levels of social capital. Last, while a regional culture of Protestantism is more conducive for widespread social trust, Catholic dominated contexts foster social networks to a greater extent.

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