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Social Status and Religiosity in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

Since Weber, sociology has aimed to explore the relationship between social status and religiosity. However, in the value-diverse societies of the 21st century, this relationship requires reexamination. This article investigates the elective affinities between social groups and dimensions of contemporary Christian religiosity in Hungary. A national survey was conducted with 1000 Hungarians to collect data on various dimensions of religiosity. The survey measured church attendance, participation in rites, religious beliefs, identity, and values. Hierarchical cluster analysis and correspondence analysis were then used to statistically relate the social status indicators to this extensive set of religiosity measures. The analyses showed significant associations between social status and distinct clusters of religiosity. For example, the upper classes exhibited an affinity for more external, low-commitment forms of religiosity, such as partaking in major festivals and occasional church attendance. In contrast, higher-status skilled workers showed greater attachment to internal Christian values. In conclusion, this study shows that there are significant relationships between social stratification and different expressions of Christian religiosity and culture in contemporary Hungary. These findings can provide better insight into the complex interplay between societal position and multidimensional religiosity in 21st-century societies.

KEYWORDS

social status, religiosity, elective affinity, correspondence analysis.

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Introduction

The study of the relationship between position in the social structure and religiosity has been a central theme in sociology since its early days. In this field, we can basically identify two distinct trends, using different methodological and interpretative heuristics.

The first is implicitly[1] linked to Marx's famous, now-sloganic 'diagnosis' that religion is the 'opium of the people' (Marx 2012, Pedersen 2015, McKinnon 2017). According to this view, religion is not merely a personal belief or spiritual practice, but a social phenomenon deeply embedded in a system of social structures and hierarchies. In this context, religiosity essentially functions as a means of perpetuating inequalities, oppression and suffering, not only to maintain the status quo but also to postpone social change. The paradigm outlined by Marx emphasises that religion is particularly prevalent in social groups that are disadvantaged - be it by lack of education, social exclusion or economic deprivation.

The implications of this approach lead to the empirical sociological question of whether it is really true that religiosity is associated with lower social status, a lower level of education, or even of intelligence (Zuckerman, et al 2013, Webster and Duffy 2016, Zuckerman et al 2020, Dürlinger and Pietschnig 2022). The main issue at stake in these studies is whether religiosity is in fact a product of (or, according to more radical approaches, even a cause of) social deprivation.

In contrast, the other trend is associated with Max Weber, who argued that different social classes have an elective affinity with different forms of religion (Weber 1963). For example, lower status classes tend to have a charismatic, emotional approach to religion, while higher status classes tend to have a rational, intellectual one. Weber argues that this is because different life circumstances make different demands on religiosity (Weber 1963). The difficulties faced by the lower classes - poverty, illness, vulnerability - make it important for them to seek emotional security and comfort. They find this in charismatic religiosity, which emphasises redemption and immediate salvation. High-status people, on the other hand, see religion as an intellectual challenge and prefer a rational way of thinking. This hypothesis has been supported by several subsequent studies. Rodney Stark (1971) argued that people in lower income groups are more receptive to these experiences. A similar conclusion was reached by Wuthnow (1988), who found that experiential, personal religiosity was more common among those with lower levels of education, compared to the intellectual attitudes of those with higher levels of education (Wuthnow 1988).

Studies of religion in Hungary are mainly related to the first trend. In other words, the central question is to what extent the intensity and frequency of religiosity is related to the position in the social hierarchy. For example, Miklós Tomka's research has consistently shown (e.g. Tomka 1977, Tomka 1979, Tomka 1985 Tomka 1990, Tomka 1996, Tomka 1999, Tomka 2006) that the religious are socially in a worse position. This finding has been repeatedly confirmed by other national studies (Révay 1997, Fischer 1997, Hegedűs 2001, Gyorgyovich and Kollár 2020, László 2020). Since the 1990s, research in this field has also drawn attention to another trend: although the over-representation of religious people in more deprived strata is still evident, it has also been observed that the proportion of (young) urban-metropolitan elites among the religious has increased. Although the dynamics of this growth are not clearly confirmed by current research, several authors have shown that a kind of religious elitisation and consequent restructuring of Hungarian society can be observed (Tomka 2010, Rosta 2011 Rosta 2013, Gyogyovich and Pillók 2014, László 2020, Gyorgyovich and Kollár 2020, Gyorgyovich 2022).

Although these results inform the discourse of Hungarian sociology of religion, the available research only mentions the relationship between position in the social hierarchy and the characteristics

[1] The idea of the link between religiosity and socio-economic backwardness had already been in the social sciences before Marx. The rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, saw religion as an obstacle to social progress and reason (Voltaire 2017, Rousseau 1979). They believed that religious dogmas based on superstition hindered the development of human reason. Classical economists, such as Adam Smith, also believed that economic progress was a natural consequence of the decline of religious sentiment and the advance of rationality. Religiousness, he argued, was the characteristic of backward, agrarian societies (Smith 1977).

of religiosity. To extend and refine this line of inquiry, my study aims to explore how different social strata show elective affinity for distinct forms of religiosity.

To do this, I will proceed as follows: first, I will introduce the concept of elective affinity, which provides a relevant context for understanding the relations between social status and forms of religiosity. I then conduct a cluster analysis to construct the social-status and religiosity clusters. Then, I use correspondence analysis to explore the relationships between the groups.

Theoretical Background: Elective affinity

As I mentioned earlier, Weber argues that different life circumstances exhibit an elective affinity with different religious forms (Weber 1963). Although the concept of elective affinity appears several times in Weber's work, usually in crucial passages, it does not have a formal definition, but it provides a very applicable analytical framework for our analysis (Kollár – László 2023).

Weber presumably borrowed the term elective affinity from Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in which the concept "refers to the chemistry of the formation and dissolution of human relationships" (Kollár 2021, Hidas 2020, 223; McKinnon 2010: 112-116, Demeter 2022). In Weber's adaptation, it refers to a kind of "sociochemical" reaction (Lakatos 2010). The best-known example is found in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 2013), which shows how modern capitalism emerged from an elective affinity between ascetic vocational ethics and pre-Reformation economic practices. Here, Weber demonstrates how different religious doctrines can influence seemingly unrelated factors, such as economic behaviour.

In recent years, the concept of elective affinity has evolved from its Weberian roots into an independent analytical framework (Kollár 2021, Jost 2009, Gerbaudo 2017). This expanded notion, while still grounded in Weber's ideas, has been applied to a broader range of social phenomena beyond religion. For example, Jost (2009) explored the elective affinity between conservative ideologies and psychological needs for certainty, security, and order. Similarly, Gerbaudo (2018) suggested an elective affinity between social media and populism. Kollár and László (2023) explores the network of elective affinities between factors such as historical trauma-focused narratives, political orientation, and sympathy for authoritarian personality traits in shaping the wounded collective identity of Hungarians.

Central to this broader application is the idea that elective affinity describes a kind of "useability relation" (Kollár 2021, Kollár and László 2023). In this context, useability refers to the potential for one phenomenon to be utilized or co-opted by another owing to its inherent qualitative characteristics, even if such a utilization was not the original intention. The term "exaptation," borrowed from evolutionary biology, is particularly apt here. In biology, exaptation describes a trait that evolved for one purpose but is later co-opted for a different function (Gould and Vrba, 1982). Similarly, in the sociological context, an existing social, cultural, or ideological element may possess qualities that make it particularly suitable for serving the needs or functions of another, even if this was not its original purpose (Kollár D. and Kollár J. 2020).

This useability relation is at the heart of how elective affinities can lead to significant, and often unexpected social configurations. When seemingly disparate elements are brought together by virtue of their inherent compatibilities, they can interact in ways that result in close associations between social forms, practices, or belief systems that may not have been initially related. The Weberian example of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism illustrates this point: the ascetic vocational ethic was not intentionally designed to promote capitalist economic practices, but its emphasis on worldly success as a sign of divine favour made it highly compatible with, and ultimately useful for, the development of capitalist enterprise.

The elective affinities between different religious doctrines and social status groups with different lifestyles can be explained similarly. Weber argues that religious explanations satisfy a basic need of

human psychological nature by seeing the world as a rational, ordered cosmos and treating 'irrational' experiences such as suffering or death as symptoms of divine hatred or secret sins (Weber 1963, Miskolczi and Kollár 2018). However, the specific form that this fundamental 'function' takes is decisively oriented by the way of life of the 'carrying' order. Confucianism, for example, showed a strong elective affinity with the educated, secularly rational, bureaucratic Mandarin class. Hinduism was particularly compatible with the Brahman caste of the Vedic literate, Buddhism with the lifestyle of the wandering, world-rejecting beggar monk, Islam with the life situation of the warrior group, and Judaism with the world view of a dispersed 'bourgeois pariah' (Weber 1963).

These examples illustrate the sociological insight that the way in which reality is perceived (Miskolczi 2023) is also strongly linked to the life situation of different social groups. In other words, this model implies that we typically accept as valid truth “only that which is useful to us" (Weber 2013, 32). This means that different social groups, by virtue of their distinct life circumstances, experiences, and needs, will tend to show affinity towards worldviews and belief systems that resonate with their specific situation. For example, a social group that places a high value on social stability and hierarchy may find religious doctrines that emphasize order, tradition, and obedience particularly appealing, while a group that prioritizes individual autonomy and self-expression may be drawn to more individualistic and experiential forms of spirituality. It follows that, in an ideal-typical form, different descriptions of the world and attitudes are valid for people and groups in different situations. This insight has important implications for the study of religiosity and social status, as it suggests that we should expect to find systematic patterns of elective affinity between specific forms of religious expression and particular social groups. By examining these patterns, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the inherent compatibilities between religious elements and the lifestyles and worldviews of different social groups shape the religious landscape of a given society.

Applying the elective affinity framework to the Hungarian context allows us to move beyond simplistic correlations between religiosity and social status, and instead explore the deeper reasons why certain forms of religious expression may resonate with different social groups. For example, we might hypothesize that individuals in different socio-economic positions will show affinity towards forms of religiosity that are most compatible with their specific life circumstances and worldviews. This could manifest itself in a variety of ways, depending on the specific social, economic, and cultural contexts at play.

For some groups, religion may serve primarily as a source of comfort and meaning in the face of material hardship or social instability. For others, it may function as a way of affirming and reproducing social status and cultural capital. Still others may approach religion as a more individualized and experiential matter, seeking out forms of spirituality that resonate with their personal values and aspirations.

By examining these sorts of elective affinities, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of how social stratification and religious expression are intertwined in contemporary Hungarian society. This approach recognizes that the relationship between religiosity and social status is not simply a matter of one-way causation, but rather a complex interplay of compatibilities and useability relations. It also highlights the importance of considering the specific qualitative characteristics of different religious elements, and how these characteristics may make them more or less appealing to individuals in different social positions.

In line with this, the following analysis will attempt to explore the relationships between different types of religiosity and social status in contemporary Hungary, focusing on the close associations that emerge from the inherent compatibilities between these seemingly disparate elements.

Data

The data presented in this study were collected by the Századvég Consortium among the Hungarian adult population in June 2023 by interviewing 1000 randomly selected adults using the so-called CATI method. Our results are representative of the Hungarian adult population in terms of gender, age group, educational level and type of settlement. The data were then weighted according to demographic information from the census.

Methods and Steps of Analysis

The analysis of the elective affinities between social groups and types of religiosity was carried out in two steps. In the first step, cluster analysis was used to create segments of social groups and religiosity.

For the former, three variables were used:

1. Educational attainment
2. Level of income
3. Subjective financial situation

For the latter (religiousness types), nine variables were used.

1. 10 commandments - commandments for human actions[2]
2. 10 commandments - commandments to worship God[3]
3. Christian values[4]
4. Cultural Christian celebrations[5]
5. Christian feast days[6]
6. On a 7-point scale, on which a 1 means irreligious and a 7 means religious, how religious do you consider yourself to be?[7]
7. Apart from weddings, funerals and family events, how often do you usually attend religious services?[8]
8. How often do you pray?[9]
9. In which church or denomination were you "officially" BAPTISED or REGISTERED?

[2] I will list some of The Ten Commandments and some other more general rules and teachings that the Christian religion also embraces. On a scale of one to five, please tell me how valid and important you think these commandments and rules are today. A 5 on the scale means that you consider them to be completely valid, while a 1 means that you do not consider them to be valid or important at all. Of course, you can also use the middle values of the scale! - 1. I am the Lord your God, you shall not have false gods before me. 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. [If he/she doesn't understand: don't say God's name disrespectfully or unnecessarily] 2. Keep holy the Sabbath day.

[3] 1. Honour your father and your mother.2. You shall not kill. 3. You shall not commit adultery. 4. You shall not steal. 5. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. 6. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. 7. You shall not covet.

[4] I will read out some more general rules and teachings that the Christian religion also embraces. My question is the same: using the scale of five, please tell me how valid and important you think they are today. – 1. To love others unconditionally 2. Caring for the fallen and needy 3.To be happy, to be glad 4. Seeking peace with others. 5. Being patient with others 6. Being kind to others 7. Remaining gentle 8. Exercise self-control

[5] Please tell us about the following feast days and traditions, whether you know them, celebrate them, participate in the Christian rituals of the feast day, and whether you think it is important to preserve the Christian origin of the feast day and pass it on to the next generation. [More than one answer is possible, mark the one he/she answers yes to] – 1. Christmas 2. Easter 3. Feast of St Nicholas / Santa Claus

[6] 1. Epiphany 2. All Saints' Day 3. All Souls' Day 4. Pentecost

[7] 1. Irreligious – 7. Religious

[8] Daily or several times a week /Every week / 2-3 times a month /Every month/ A few times a year /Once a year/Less than once a year/Only on major church feasts /Never

[9] Daily or several times a week /Every week / 2-3 times a month /Every month/ A few times a year /Once a year/Less than once a year/Only on major church feasts /Never

A hierarchical cluster analysis procedure[10] was used to construct the groups using Ward's clustering procedure. This method measures how much the merging of two clusters results in an increase in the within-cluster variance. The two clusters whose merging causes the smallest increase in variance are merged. The Ward procedure was chosen because it gives the most homogeneous, compact clusters (Murtagh and Legendre 2014). It fits the aim of the present research, as we wanted to obtain sharply distinct, well-interpretable segments.

In the second step of the analysis, we use correspondence analysis to explore the interactions between the resulting clusters, as it is a suitable method for exploring the elective affinities between nominal variables (Lakatos 2010).

Correspondence analysis is an exploratory technique for the analysis of categorical variables. Its essence is to represent the relationships between categories visually, using a spatial layout (Beh and Lombardo 2014). As the first step of the method, a cross-tabulation analysis is carried out between the type of religiosity and social status variables. The program (R Studio in this case) then calculates the distance values associated with each category combination and plots the results as a point cloud in a spatial coordinate system. The closer the points in two categories are to each other, the closer the relationship between them.

Results

Results of cluster analysis

The cluster analysis resulted in a five-cluster solution for both social groups and types of religiosity.

The first social group was named "*Capital-poor social group*". The members of this cluster are characterized by low educational attainment (max. 8 years of primary education) and a poor household financial situation. Per capita income typically varies between less than 50,000 and 150,000 HUF. This group represents 12% of the population. The second group (*Lower Middle Social Group*) consists of respondents with an education of either vocational or primary level. They consider the financial situation of the household to be medium. Per capita income is typically between 50,000 and 200,000 HUF. 19.9 percent of respondents belong to this cluster. The third cluster, the *Capital-strong skilled worker group*, is characterised by a vocational education. The financial situation of the household is considered to be medium. The per capita income ranges from 150,000 to over 250,000 HUF. This group represents 19.8% of the population. For the fourth category (*Upper Middle Social Group*), the most common educational qualifications are a secondary school diploma and (to a lesser extent) university degree. The financial situation of the household is considered to be medium by members of this group and per capita income typically ranges from 100,000 to over 250, 000 HUF. 28.2% of respondents fall into this category. Finally, those in the *upper social group* typically have a tertiary education (or secondary school diploma). They consider the financial situation of the household to be good. And per capita income is typically above 250,000 HUF. This group comprises 20.1 percent of the adult population.

[10] Several methods for clustering have been tried. Since the optimal number of clusters showed significant similarity between the results of model-based (mclust) and hierarchical cluster analysis, interpretability was considered the primary criterion. Since the shape and boundaries of clusters are not as well defined and sharp in the model-based case, and there is more overlap, we opted for the more compact and homogenized cluster structure of hierarchical clustering.

Dimension	Category	Capital-poor social group	Lower middle social group	Capital-strong skilled worker group	Upper middle social group	Upper social group
What is your highest level of education?	Primary education or lower	38.6%	51.8%	47.3%		
	Vocational school	23.8%	48.2%	52.7%		
	Secondary school diploma	24.8%			65.1%	46.2%
	College or university degree	12.9%			34.9%	53.8%
How do you assess the financial situation of your household?	Bad	100.0%		3.0%		
	Medium		97.1%	53.8%	100.0%	
	Good		2.9%	43.2%		100.0%
Overall, what was the total net income per person in your household last month?	Less than HUF 50 thousand	13.7%	7.0%		1.2%	
	50,000-75,000 HUF	26.5%	14.6%		3.3%	1.2%
	75,001-100,000 HUF	18.6%	22.8%	0.6%	7.9%	1.7%
	100,001-150,000 HUF	26.5%	41.5%	6.5%	20.7%	9.2%
	150,001-200,000 HUF	9.8%	14.0%	28.4%	18.3%	8.7%
	200,001-250,000 HUF	2.0%		24.9%	12.9%	15.0%
	Over 250 thousand HUF	2.9%		39.6%	35.7%	64.2%
Distribution (%)		11.9%	19.9%	19.8%	28.2%	20.1%

Table 1. Characteristics of social status clusters (%)

In terms of the characteristics of the clusters formed by the religiosity indicators, the first cluster is the "*Non-religious group*", in which each indicator is significantly lower than the average. The second cluster ("*Highly religious*") is the opposite of the first cluster. In this cluster, all dimensions of religiosity register above-average values. This category includes 36.7 percent of respondents. The third cluster ("*Externally identified*") includes respondents who score higher than average on the external dimensions of religiosity: they value Christian feast days and are also more likely than average to be baptised, but their identification with Christian values and other dimensions of religious practice are lower than the population average. This group accounts for 8.2 per cent of the population. The fourth group ("*Celebrants*") includes those who mainly value cultural Christian celebrations but otherwise have a low level of religiosity. This group includes 17 percent of the population. Finally, the fifth group, "*Committed to Christian values*", includes those who are high in their acceptance of Christian values but medium low in other dimensions of religious practice. This cluster comprises 17.7% of the respondents.

	Non-religious group	Highly religious	Externally identified	Celebrants	Committed to Christian values
10 commandments - commandments for human actions	-0.38	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.07
10 commandments - commandments to worship God	-0.77	0.80	-0.21	-1.10	0.39
Christian values	-0.50	0.49	-0.60	-0.26	0.21
Cultural Christian celebrations	-0.56	-0.19	0.28	0.52	0.55
Christian feast days	-0.57	0.71	0.80	-0.92	-0.29
Religious self-identification	-0.78	0.87	-0.49	-0.83	0.23
Church attendance	-0.75	0.91	-0.38	-0.76	0.03
Pray	-0.69	0.94	-0.56	-0.90	0.08
Baptism	-1.49	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37
Distribution (%)	20.3	36.7	8.2	17.0	17.7

Table 2. Characteristics of religiosity clusters (standardised variables)

Correspondence Analysis

The result of the correspondence analysis is shown in the figure below (Figure 1). It shows that the capital-poor social group has an elective affinity with the Celebrants cluster of religiosity. That is, members of the lower social group are explicitly characterised by religiosity embodied in cultural Christian traditions. The lower-middle social group shows affinity primarily with institutionalised religiosity, which predominates along all dimensions of religiosity. The capital-strong skilled worker group is typically associated with a value-centred form of religiosity. This means that for them ethical elements are more important than institutionalised practices. The upper-middle social group shows an elective affinity primarily with an absolute rejection of religion. In other words, this is the group most likely to reject all aspects of religiosity. Finally, members of the upper social group resonate primarily with external forms of religion. That is to say, it is mainly festivals - both religious and cultural - and baptism that are of explicit central importance to them.

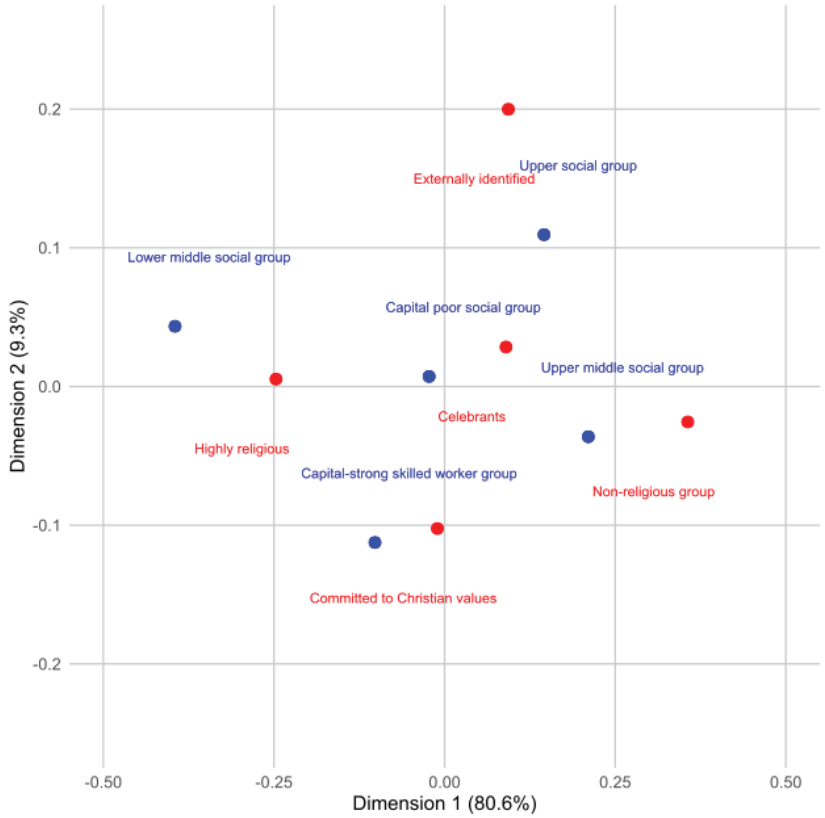

Figure 1. Results of correspondence analysis.

Discussion

These results have several important hypothesizable implications for the relationship between religiosity and social status. First of all, they show that different social strata do indeed have different attitudes towards religion, thus confirming the Weberian elective affinity “hypothesis”. In other words, it has become clear that not only the degree of religiosity differs between different social groups, but also its form. In other words, the results show that different forms of religion resonate with different life situations.

The elective affinity of the capital-poor group for religious celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, indicates that for this segment of society, religion is primarily experienced through major Christian festivals. This finding aligns with the notion that in contexts of (deep) poverty, access to the more complex and nuanced aspects of religion may be limited (Norris and Inglehart 2004). As Bourdieu (1984) argues, cultural capital, which includes religious knowledge and understanding, is often unequally distributed across social classes. Consequently, for the capital-poor group, participation in religious celebrations may serve as a more accessible form of religious engagement that does not require extensive theological knowledge or other resources.

In contrast, the lower-middle social group's affinity for institutionalized religion suggests that this group seeks the stability and social order provided by religious structures. This finding resonates with the idea that religion can serve as a "sacred canopy" (Berger 1967) that provides a sense of meaning and coherence in the face of life's uncertainties. For the lower-middle class, which has achieved a degree of financial security but still faces limited opportunities, the predictability and continuity offered by institutionalized religion may be particularly appealing (Norris and Inglehart 2004). As Wuthnow (1988) notes, participation in religious institutions can provide a sense of belonging and support that helps individuals navigate the challenges of their lives.

The value-oriented religiosity of the capital-strong skilled workers presents an interesting case, as it suggests that for this group, religion primarily serves an ethical rather than a compensatory function. Given their relative material prosperity, it is plausible that religion does not need to fulfil the role of alleviating deprivation for this segment of society (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Instead, their elective affinity for value-based religiosity indicates that they are drawn to the moral and ethical teachings of religion. This finding aligns with Weber's (1963) notion of "inner-worldly asceticism," which emphasizes the pursuit of virtue and righteousness within the context of everyday life. For the capital-strong skilled workers, religion may provide a framework for leading an ethical and purposeful existence, rather than a means of coping with material hardship.

The upper-middle social group's stark rejection of religiosity may reflect the broader trend of secularization, wherein economic stability and social security diminish the need for religious legitimation (Norris and Inglehart 2004). As Bruce (2002) argues, modernization processes, such as urbanization, education, and technological advancement, can erode the plausibility and relevance of religious worldviews. For the upper-middle class, who are likely to benefit most from these modernizing forces, religion may no longer serve a vital function in their lives.

However, the upper social group's elective affinity for external religious forms, such as festivals and baptism, suggests that religion may still play a significant role as a cultural tradition and status marker. This finding resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) concept of "cultural capital," which posits that cultural practices and tastes can serve as a means of social distinction. For the upper class, participation in religious rituals and celebrations may function as a way of signaling their cultural sophistication and social status, rather than reflecting a deep spiritual commitment. As Köhrsen (2012) notes, in some contexts, religious involvement can serve as a form of "conspicuous consumption" that enhances one's social prestige.

Finally, the findings of this study have important implications for understanding the changing nature of religious belief and practice in contemporary societies. As Davie (1994) argues, many European countries have witnessed a shift from "obligation" to "consumption" in religious participation. In other words, individuals increasingly approach religion as a matter of personal choice and preference, rather than a binding social duty. The elective affinities observed in this study, whereby different social groups gravitate towards distinct forms of religiosity, may reflect this broader trend towards religious individualization and customization.

Limitations and Future Research

While the findings provide important insights into the elective affinities between social status and forms of religiosity in contemporary Hungary, it is important to acknowledge their limitations and identify areas for future research.

One key limitation is the reliance on quantitative survey data, which, while representative and statistically robust, may not fully capture the nuanced and contextual nature of religious beliefs and practices. The categories and clusters identified in this study provide a useful heuristic for understanding broad patterns of religious affinity, but they may obscure important variations and exceptions within each group. To gain a deeper understanding of how individuals in different social positions perceive and engage with religion, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews would be highly valuable. These approaches could shed light on the subjective meanings and motivations that underlie the elective affinities observed in this study, and could reveal how religious beliefs and practices are shaped by local contexts and individual life experiences.

Another important avenue for future research would be to explore how the elective affinities identified in this study intersect with other dimensions of social identity, such as gender, ethnicity, and political orientation. While social status is undoubtedly a key factor shaping religious attitudes and behaviour, it is not the only one. By examining how these various axes of identity interact and intersect, future studies

could provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex social dynamics of religion in contemporary Hungary.

Finally, comparative research could also yield valuable insights into the relationship between social status and religiosity across different cultural and national contexts. While the findings of this study are specific to the Hungarian case, they may have broader implications for understanding the social dynamics of religion in other post-communist societies, as well as in other regions of the world undergoing rapid social and economic change. By comparing the Hungarian experience with that of other countries, future research could identify both common patterns and unique variations in the ways that social status shapes religious beliefs and practices.

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