

## **Focus on Religion in Central and Eastern Europe**

# **Religion and Society**

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## **Volume 68**

# Focus on Religion in Central and Eastern Europe

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A Regional View

Edited by  
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**DE GRUYTER**

ISBN 978-3-11-022811-3  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-022812-0  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-039068-1  
ISSN 1437-5370

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2016 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston  
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck  
♻️ Printed on acid-free paper  
Printed in Germany

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

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# **Sociology of Religion and Social Network Based Approaches in North America and Central and Eastern Europe: A Review**

Sociologists of religion are working on different topics in different regions of the world. These topics are usually determined by the social setting, cultural heritage, and historical context of the different territories. In Europe, the secularization debate used to be a main subject of research. In the United States, rational choice theory and its applications were highly interesting to scholars in this field (Davie 2013). Obviously, this categorization is based on a fair generalization of trends. The main currents of sociological theories and popular methods have always been different, but these methodological innovations were shared and applied in both settings.

In this study, I review the application of social network theory and social network analysis in the sociology of religion in North America and Central and Eastern Europe, mainly in Hungary, through published works. My proposition is that Central and Eastern Europe has a unique landscape in the sociology of religion, mostly untouched by the most recent tendencies shaping other regions. Methodological innovations diffuse significantly later into the sociology of religion in CEE. The causes of this belated development can be traced back to the “negative modernization” theory of Elemér Hankiss (1982), which justified the different path of social modernization in twentieth-century Central Europe, especially in Hungary. The status of social modernization had strong effects on the development of social scientific subdisciplines, especially the sociology of religion. There are many other factors influencing the scientific development of a social scientific subdiscipline, most of them related to other facets of development. It is important to mention one other reason here: the region’s countries used to be the members of the Soviet Bloc; they were on the Communist side of the Iron Curtain. This fact also underlines the fact that the development of the sociology of religion was different in CEE than in Western Europe and the US, and these effects influence it even today.

To introduce social network theory and social network analysis, I present its role in the sociology of religion in North America. In contrast to the North American findings, I examine the applications and methods of social network theory and analysis used in Central and Eastern European research on religion. The research question of this paper focuses on the occurrence of the application of SNT and SNA methods in religion-related social-scientific works about religion; I am

interested in the presence and the absence of the concept and method in the work of scholars of religion.

## 1 Social Network Analysis and the Sociology of Religion

The sociology of religion has much to gain from the application of the analysis of religious social networks. The sociological study of religious faith and religious groups is usually based on empirical research and interpretation of the research results. The sociology of religion has a broader perspective in studying religious life, but religious social networks usually mirror other characteristics of the religious entities and phenomena being analyzed in order to make it an interesting subject of research. Network science, based on network theory, is a fairly new and innovative field, and its approaches are groundbreaking in many aspects. The social-scientific applications of network analysis methods and concepts are built on the results of network science. Thus, the social network analysis of religious networks is grounded in the methodological principles and assumptions of network analysis, especially social network analysis, as it has developed in recent years. The subjects of research can be members of religious communities or the communities themselves in this approach.

In the social network analysis method, the selected units of analysis or cases are represented by nodes, and the connections between them are represented by lines. There can be many forms of connections among different nodes, so there might be different lines used to represent them. The mapping of a religious social network is supposed to be done on an empirical basis, and the results of the mapping should be interpreted in an objective way. The graphical outcome of social network analysis—in other words, the graph—represents the place of the different actors in the network by points or nodes and the connections between the different nodes with lines. The interpretation of the graphs is done by the researchers, with the help of the graphics and statistical measures. Conclusions can be drawn based on the representation and statistical analyses of the characteristics of the social network. If the researcher wants to go into further detail, there are specific measures developed by network scientists to empirically test their different hypotheses about the network. This new method offers a whole range of new possibilities to do more detailed research on religious networks, but its diffusion among researchers of religion has been very slow.

## 2 Theoretical and Methodological Innovations in the Sociology of Religion

If we look at the general question of the development of new theories, methods, and techniques in sociology over time, we realize that the sociology of religion used to be a catalyst for new theories and methods in the era of the founding fathers of sociology. Although Karl Marx did not consider elaborating a special theory on religion, and rather applied the approaches of critical theory, others, such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Ernst Troeltsch did so (Hamilton 2001). If we look at the theories of the classics—such as Max Weber’s theory of the connections between religiousness, religious values, and the capitalist value system (Weber 1958); Emile Durkheim’s theory on the shared functions of different religions in different societies (Durkheim 2012); and Ernst Troeltsch’s theory, based on Weber’s work, about the church-sect typology (Troeltsch, 1992)—we can see that the sociology of religion used to be an innovative subdiscipline in sociology and made a large contribution to the general development of the field.

The first idea of imagining social structures in shapes and graphics occurred to sociologists in the 1930s. This occurred in very close connection with the “formal sociology” of Georg Simmel and other German sociologists. Lines, points, and shapes were used to represent social structure for the first time, and connections became important elements in the graphical display of social relations (Scott and Carrington 2011).

It was Moreno who was interested in the field and space of social relations and social networks. Moreno called his methodological approach “sociometry” and invented the “sociogram.” The sociogram was a visual representation of social networks with the help of points and lines. This method and its applications gained prominence in educational science, and it was further developed in the US and Europe (Scott and Carrington 2011).

The application of social network analysis as a research methodology and theoretical framework became widespread in sociology in the early sixties. The first applications date back to the psychological work of Moreno and his colleagues, as well as the work of Kurt Lewin in sociology. The social network research field had contributed to the formation of several research centers by the seventies. The developments took place in the US and also in Europe, and the development of the method was a shared enterprise of the scientists of both regions. Methodological innovations are ongoing in the field even today (Freeman 2004).

The first instance of using social network analysis in a religious setting can be traced back to the work of Sampson, who performed a network analysis on

eighteen trainee monks in a monastery (Sampson 1969; cited by Herman 1984). There were other sociologists applying the traditional sociometric approach to religious groups in the sixties and seventies, for example for clique detection and the clustering of individuals. However, the patterns of the social networks were not examined in the works of this era (Herman 1984).

Another very important boost was given to the SNA method when social scientists realized that the social network parameters of local congregations could be crucial in group development. The social relations developed in the local religious group or congregational settings were vital for the longevity of the group itself. Hoge and Roozen (1979) even realized that social factors such as relationships in a religious group could well be more important in normal cases than theological disposition. This result contributed to the widespread diffusion of the social network approach and the SNA method in American sociology of religion.

I am following the work of Freeman (2004) to identify works that can be categorized based on the use of SNA methods. He argues that these works can be distributed into four categories, based on the depth and methodological instances of SNA's application. The four categories are: the scientific work either or fully "(1) involves the intuition that links among social actors are important. (2) It is based on the collection and analysis of data that record social relations that link actors. (3) It draws heavily on graphic imagery to reveal and display the patterning of those links. And (4) it develops mathematical and computational models to describe and explain those patterns" (Freeman 2004). These four categories are usually combined in contemporary SNA articles.

In this contribution, I review of the works of American and Central and Eastern European sociologists of religion to see the extent of SNA usage in their articles. The review is not a complete review; it is based on a thorough search of academic journals and books to find articles dealing with social network analysis and religion, articles about the social network effects of religion or religious groups. There may be some important academic works left out, but this chapter is an attempt to map the field accurately. In the case of North American sociology of religion, this chapter focuses on articles with a strong social network orientation, excluding articles about social capital and religion. Social capital is a very important theory, and social networks are the building blocks of social capital, but this contribution focuses on articles that concentrate on the networks themselves, not on social capital. In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the chapter includes articles dealing with religion and social capital, if they had at least reference social networks. The findings are presented based on Freeman's category system in tables at the end of the two reviews.

### 3 Social Network Analysis in the North American Sociology of Religion

Social network analysis became popular in North America as human relations and networks of human relations and interactions moved to the center of sociological attention and inquiry. The methods developed; from network theories new methods of visualizing these relations were created, and complex network measurement methods were introduced. This section reviews many articles using social-network-related methods of research on religion. I have divided the different articles into subsections based on their topics.

#### 3.1 Social Network Analysis of a Congregation

The social network analysis of an Anglican congregation by Nancy J. Herman (1984) is a good example of an application of the method. Herman conducted her exploratory study in a 40-member Anglican congregation in Canada, using the methodology developed by White and Breiger (1975; cited by Herman 1984). 25 members were interviewed and filled in a survey about social ties; the researcher was a member of the congregation. The congregation had 250 members prior to 1975, when a new pastor arrived. The new pastor tried to modernize the congregation, which resulted in a huge decrease in membership: by the time of Herman's study, only 40 members remained in the congregation. The clustering method identified four groups within the congregation: (1) the reformers, (2) the conservatives, (3) the followers, and (4) the isolated individual members. The reformers were a strong group, whose members held each other in high esteem, and who disliked the conservatives. This group included the pastor. Conservatives were also a strong block, but they mingled a bit with the followers block in terms of who they held in esteem. The conservatives were lower in status than the reformers. The followers were the weakest group; they had strong ties within the group, but many unreciprocated ties with the reformers and some with the conservatives. The research paper applied the social network analysis method, specifically the block model analysis, in order to understand the organization and social behavior of the religious group. The identified blocks were not only based on shared beliefs according to the findings, but also on age, kinship, occupation, and length of time as a congregation member. The block model analytic approach, which is a vintage approach in social network analysis, proved to be an excellent research tool (Herman 1984).

### 3.2 Interpersonal Connections and the Social Network's Role in Religious Group Life

Stark and Bainbridge (1980) found in their work that interpersonal connections between cult members and potential new recruits proved essential in the success rate of American Moonies in gaining new members. When such interpersonal bonds did not exist or failed to develop during the recruitment process, the effort to draw in the new member was usually unsuccessful. The authors found examples of some people who became members of the Moonie cult because they had strong personal connections to a person who was already a member. Full membership in the cult came with day-to-day interaction among members and potential recruits, and it was largely dependent on the interpersonal connections between them. Stark and Bainbridge concluded that membership in the cult did not occur because the new members were attracted to the ideology, but rather new members accepted the ideology because of persons they were tied to.

It is also interesting to note that the first members of the cult in the US came from the immediate social network of the first converts. In conclusion, it can be stated that social relations and social networks play an essential role in recruiting new members for cults and sects (Stark and Bainbridge 1980: 1379).

In a Hindu setting, Samuel Stroope (2011a) found that social networks either directly or indirectly influence the individual's style of religious participation. The attractiveness of a congregation-style worship model can be based on the social network advantages it might provide for its members.

### 3.3 Social Networks and Religiosity

Cavendish, Welch, and Leege (1998) wrote about social network data as a predictor of religiosity among black Catholics in the United States. They tried to identify differences in the devotional lives and spirituality of black and white Catholics in their research results. Based on a general understanding of social network theory, they state that gratifying social relationships inside a social network can be perceived as strong predictors of religiosity.

McIntosh, Sykes, and Kubena (2002) researched the social network of the elderly. The authors concluded that the most important characteristic of elderly social networks are their religious similarities. Religiosity is a more prominent factor than ethnicity, friendship, shared membership in other voluntary associations, physical proximity of living arrangements, or shared work experiences. The article also concluded that stronger ties to kin and friends increase the likelihood of church attendance, but ethnically homogenous ties and neighborhood

network relationships do not. Greater diversity of roles in the network also increases the probability of frequent religious participation. Networks based on neighborhood do not have these positive effects on religious attendance and participation among the elderly.

### 3.4 Personal Health and Life Satisfaction

Krause and Wulff (2005) researched the relationship between church-based social support and satisfaction with personal health. They emphasized that social ties are generally perceived by sociologists to play a major role in living an effective and meaningful life. They examined social support systems formed in church environments and their effects on health. They used the US Congregational Life Survey data for their empirical analyses. Their data has shown that those people who are long-time members of a congregation are more likely to continue to attend services regularly. Those who attend regularly have a higher chance of getting emotional support from other church members. Those who are getting emotional support in the congregational setting feel more attached to the congregation; they have a stronger sense of belonging. And finally, those who have a strong sense of belonging tend to feel more satisfied with their health. This stronger sense of belonging tends to promote better health, but there may also be alternative explanations (Krause and Wulff 2005).

Brashears (2010) conducted a test of the Durkheim/Berger theory that people who are connected in the same religious group are protected from the effects of anomie by a “sacred canopy.” Their integrated social world is perceived as a sacred canopy, and as long as it is intact, it provides stability to the social structure. Brashears’ research aimed to identify the element that provided this protection from anomie, whether it was the sacred canopy itself or the social network behind it. The data used were the 1985 and 2004 waves of the General Social Survey, and the findings supported the basic ideas of Durkheim and Berger. The religious adherents were in fact protected from higher levels of anomie and forms of deviance by a sacred canopy. The strength of the sacred canopy’s protection lay in the individual’s degree of religious belief and his or her interactions with fellow believers with the same religious ideas and beliefs, but did not rely on frequency of participation in religious services. It seems that the protection is provided by the immediate social network of the individual, consisting of people who share the same religious beliefs and notions. Those believers who are members of strong, religion-based social networks are protected against anomie and demonstrated lower levels of unhappiness and deviance (Brashears 2010).

Lim and Putnam (2010) researched the connection between religion and life satisfaction using the social network approach. They used the survey data of the Faith Matters Study from 2006 and 2007, which examined the connections between religion and social capital in the US. They found that the relationship between life satisfaction and the number of friends the individual has from the congregation is remarkably strong. They concluded that friendship networks inside the congregation mediated the positive effects of attendance on the individual's life satisfaction. They argued that congregational friendships have significance because they are embedded in a special social situation. Networks of congregants may be effective channels of social support because congregational friends might offer more valuable support than friends from other networks. The study states that the social network's effect on the individual is not only traced to the number of ties and their strength, but also to the identities shared in the networks and the contexts in which they are forged. The authors find it difficult to imagine a non-religion-based social network having the same effects on the individual's life satisfaction in a US context (Lim and Putnam 2010).

### 3.5 Religious Social Networks and Solidarity

McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) stated that ties between members in the same religious setting are more likely to be close ties. These close ties are more likely to lead to offering help in an emergency, loaning money, or giving trusted advice or even personal counselling to other group members than ties between the members of a hobby or work social group.

Stroope (2011b) investigated the effects of personal congregational involvement and the individual's social network on religiosity. The connections between congregants and their social embeddedness was evaluated based on the proportion of the individual's friends drawn from the congregation, drawing on the second wave of the Baylor Religion Survey, conducted in 2007. The findings of the study underline that social embeddedness has a strong effect on the measure of a person's religious activity. The higher the proportion of the individual's friends who come from the religious setting, the more active he or she will be. It was also found that congregational embeddedness has a weaker but still significant effect on a person's religiosity.

### 3.6 Religious Social Networks and Civic Engagement

Lewis, MacGregor, and Putnam (2013) studied the background of the positive relation between religiosity and civic engagement. They hypothesized that social networks are the basis of this phenomenon. They proposed that extensive social networks usually contribute to higher rates of participation, and that religious Americans are civically and socially more engaged than their less religious peers. They examined different aspects of religiosity, such as the effects of personal religiosity. They presented different views of the ways in which personal religiosity shaped individual action: some authors concentrate on the message of the religious teaching and its effects on the individual; others speak about a mechanism of cognitive framing, through which religiosity might raise the level of sympathy of the person for others and make him or her act in a more civic way.

According to the Lewis, MacGregor, and Putnam (2013) study, religious life happens in the congregational setting, and religious people can learn and practice their civic skills in those settings. We might find some explanation for this by focusing on the roles and actions of the clergy and the levels of civic engagement among different religious groups. Participation is higher in the religious setting because through it, people can make new connections and grow their social networks. By making new friends, people become more involved in the civic activities of the religious group, and they will feel responsibility for other members of the group (Lewis, MacGregor, and Putnam 2013).

The authors claim that religious networks have enhanced social support and resources; thus they might contribute more to civic engagement than any other social network. Religious networks also usually promote norms of social support and help, which make members more active. These social networks may also serve as recruitment networks for volunteer work, because people find it more appropriate to ask friends from such networks than from other networks, such as a workplace network. And as a final argument, in religious groups there are a lot socially and politically involved people, who might inspire or draw others with them on different issues. These can also be features of different kinds of social networks, such as trade union or Rotary Club members; the reasons behind the operation of the network are not necessarily based on religious homogeneity, but on the specifics of a particular case (Lewis, MacGregor, and Putnam 2013: 333–335).

In summary, “[s]trong religious social networks are a powerful predictor of civic outcomes and neighborly activities” (Lewis, MacGregor, and Putnam 2013: 344), and based on the research results, we can conclude that the social network is more important than the type of belief system or the attendance rate.

### 3.7 North American Articles

If we apply the fourfold categorization system of Freeman (2004) to the works reviewed above, we can conclude that most of them applied social network theory, but only one of them applied the graphical SNA method itself. Herman did a block model analysis of an Anglican congregation, which can be categorized under Freeman’s third category.

**Table 7.1:** North American Social Network and Religion Articles Categorized

| Author(s) and year                        | Category 1<br>(realize that links<br>between social ac-<br>tors are important) | Category 2<br>(collect data<br>about links<br>among social<br>actors) | Category 3<br>(use graphic<br>imagery to<br>find patterns) | Category 4<br>(use heavy<br>statistics to<br>analyze pat-<br>terns) |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Herman 1984                               | X                                                                              | X                                                                     | X                                                          |                                                                     |
| Stark and Bainbridge<br>1980              | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Cavendish, Welch and<br>Leege 1998        | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| McIntosh, Sykes and<br>Kubena 2002        | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Krause and Wulff 2005                     | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Brashears 2010                            | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Lim and Putnam 2010                       | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| McPherson, Smith-<br>Lovin and Cook (2001 | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Stroope 2011                              | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Stroope 2012                              | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |
| Lewis, MacGregor and<br>Putnam 2013       | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                            |                                                                     |

Source: The author’s editing, based on Freeman 2004

All the other works recognized the importance of social networks in religious groups and gathered empirical data about them, but did not use graphic imagery to present them of SNA-related statistics to analyze them. This finding suggests that the social network analysis approach is present in the works of North American sociologists, but they do not use social network analysis to graphically dis-

play the ties between the subjects of research. Instead, they use the social capital concept elaborated by Robert D. Putnam. Putnam has built his social capital model largely on religious participation and has devoted an entire volume (together with Campbell) to studying the effects of religiosity on the individual's social life and social capital in the US (Putnam & Campbell, 2012).

## 4 Social Capital Revisited: The Cement of Social Network Norms

From a theoretical point of view, social network theory and the theory of social capital are closely interrelated. Both start from the same social-scientific understanding of society, and their initial development was largely parallel. The apparent bonds between these methods tie them closely together, as social capital is the cement and building blocks of social networks. The main difference is not in the theoretical aspect, but the methodological aspect: social network analysis has a strong application aspect. Social capital theory remains at the theoretical level, and may not present at the applied level.

If we would like to understand religious social networks, we should realize that these are complex systems of norms and values related to the basic religious group's norm and value system. The operation of the network is based on the creed and religious beliefs of the distinct religious community, combined with its value system, creating a set of recommended norms for all members of the group. These norms and values govern connections between group members as well as the members' connections to broader society. The concept of social capital seems to be the most useful theoretical approach for the analysis of this complex intertwining of norms, values, and networking. In the United States, the institution of religion generates more social capital than any other American institution. In the opinion of J.A. Coleman, religious communities in America often and clearly foster participation in civil society. Religious organizations provide information for their members on how they can serve both within and outside the organization. They also provide the necessary network, meeting point, and organizational skills for service—that is, practically everything that is necessary for turning good intention into action (Coleman 2003).

Robert Wuthnow writes that the role of religion and religious networks in mobilization for participation in public life can be interpreted in several ways. Based on the above-quoted empirical evidence, which are in turn based on a Gallup survey, Wuthnow also notes that those who practice their religion regularly are more likely to give their money or time to support volunteer organizations.

This is true even if the supported organization is not connected to their church or denomination in any way (Wuthnow 1999).

The social territory of a community underlies its social capital. Organizational characteristics, standards, the existing network, and institutionalized trust form the foundations of civic life. According to the interpretation of Nancy Ammerman, social capital is partly about trust and partly about mutual responsibility—on the one hand, in the form of information in connection with the community, and on the other hand, in the form of standards, which foster communal behavior and confine antisocial behavior. People, meaning, and relations are the three aspects of a community that create social capital. This social product strengthens the community, makes it possible to “stay human among wolves,” and creates the possibility for social interactions (Ammermann, cited by Eiesland and Warner 1998).

## **5 The Social Network Approach in Central and Eastern Europe**

### **5.1 Transition-Era Research**

The historical differences in the development of the societies of this region are very significant compared to the societies of other world regions, but among the countries of the CEE region we can easily identify many parallel processes. Based on the theories of key thinkers such as Paul Zulehner, Miklós Tomka, and András Máté-Tóth (Máté-Tóth, Miklušćák, Zulehner, Tomka and Toš 2000; Tomka and Zulehner 1999; Tomka and Zulehner 2000), we can state with a high degree of confidence that Central and Eastern Europe has special regional characteristics in the fields of religious faith and belonging, historical and social issues, and common value and identity elements determined by its shared socialist past.

The most important factor in the CEE region serving as the basis of cohesion is the common past the countries share and their common experience with the political transition of 1989–1991. These countries used to belong to a block dominated by the Soviet Union, which was an absolute power that dominated all aspects of social and religious life and acted like an empire, with its political interests and social value system forced on all the countries within its zone of influence. The Soviet ‘empire’ was not new to the inhabitants of the CEE region, as they were historically already used to other empires, such as the Hapsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire, which had formerly governed them. The phenom-

enon of being controlled from a distant political center is a common experience these countries have shared over time, with a limited degree of autonomy in different matters. The political transition was a major breakthrough in gaining freedom and autonomy among the states of the region, but it also contributed to the rising nationalism that can be observed across the region in all the societies in question (Máté-Tóth 2010). The political transition was a major, promising event for the entire population of the CEE region, and many illusions were attributed to it; it was followed by a general expectation of a swift social and economic rise in the respective countries. The civil societies of the region lacked the authentic communities ‘healthy’ societies usually have. The ‘negative modernization’ theory of Elemér Hankiss even claimed to detect a general decrease in communitarian attitudes—a widespread atomization among societies and an infantilization of the general public.

Prior to the system change in these countries, most communitarian activities were controlled by the state itself. After this significant political event, societies had no basis on which to organize a healthy civil society by themselves, while the churches already had significant independent social activities in process. For example, in Hungary the Catholic Church had the youth-group movement working underground, and in addition to the official Church structure, small Neo-Protestant churches had the “Council of Free Churches” (*Szabadegyházak Tanácsa*; see Szigeti and Rajki 2012), and there were many other known religion-related activities during that time. It is fair to say that the transition was preceded and followed by a religious revival or by a higher-than-average level of activity among religiously based communities in most societies, which shaped the characteristics of the entire event and time period. Social networks based on religious commitment and belonging played a huge role in overcoming the Communist past, first by actively helping to eradicate the state socialist system, and second by helping build up the democratic powers to take over after the system change. These instances of religious social networking were the first phenomena widely studied by theologians, religious studies scholars, and sociologists of religion. This religious communitarianism decreased significantly in the late nineties and lost its significance in providing a solid basis for social integration and cohesion.

### **5.1.1 The Religious Movements of the CEE Transition Era: Movimenti and Others**

Social integration and the new social cohesion were largely determined by religiously based communitarianism in the era of political transitions in Central and

Eastern European societies. Many religious movements—most of them acting as social movements themselves—have been studied in Hungary and in other CEE countries. The general theory of “Movimenti” was elaborated on the example of the Roman Catholic Church in the nineties, but it may also refer to the communitarian achievements of the Second Vatican Council. This theory aimed to distinguish between movements and communities, and it referred to laypeople as living some form of community life. Movimenti members from the different countries started to meet regularly beginning in 1984 on World Youth Day.

In reviewing the basic Hungarian bibliography related to Movimenti, I should mention the work of István Kamarás (1994), titled “Inwardly Oriented Bases (*Belsőszéges Bázisok*),” about the small Catholic communities extant in the era of the system change. János Dobszay wrote an important book about the history of the Catholic social movement “Regnum Marianum” in Hungary (Dobszay 1991). András Máté-Tóth compiled a book about another influential social movement of the time called Bush (*Bokor*), which was led by a Catholic monk-priest called György Bulányi (Mate-Toth 1996). These works usually contain examinations of the social structure and networks of these groups; this aspect was inevitably a part of the different analyses, but not the main part.

In an overview of the era, Máté-Tóth (2011) writes about forty years of persecution of the underground Catholic movements after the Second World War. In his view, the movements served to renew and pass on of Christian beliefs, and members of the small groups were priests, members of different congregations, and laypeople as well. Based on their deeds, Máté-Tóth calls these people heroes of faith. Obviously, the leaders of these communities played a major role in shaping the groups’ norms and values, and through these important characteristics also shaped the social network of religious small groups.

### 5.1.2 Research on Small Catholic Communities

István Kamarás writes about small Catholic communities in Hungary after 1945 in his book titled *Intimate Bases* (1994). These small communities simultaneously represent the unchanged original ideas and practices of the Church and the continuous renewal of the religious group. There are major spiritual movements within the church, and the driving forces behind these movements are usually the small communities. Kamarás estimated the number of such communities at 2,000–3,000, their total membership around 30,000–40,000, and the average group size at 8–15 members. The majority of these members used to be Catholics.

Kamarás researched these groups from different perspectives: he examined the types of religious practice in different groups, the different activities inside the groups, and the different types of small groups. He highlighted four different movements: the 80-year-old *Regnum Marianum* movement, which was initially mainly active in raising pre-adolescent boys but had its organizational profile broadly extended over time; the *Bokor* (Bush) movement established by the *Schola Pia* monk-priest György Bulányi, which proclaimed non-violence, poverty, and strictly following Jesus as a role model; the international movement *Fokoláré*, established by Chiara Lubich, which became popular in Hungary and taught the importance of living the love of Christ in everyday life; and the Charismatic movement, which emphasized the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit in people's everyday lives.

Kamarás examined the different network characteristics of small communities belonging to these four major groups. The research questions were about group leadership models, the integration and legitimacy of group membership and leadership, the openness and closeness of the different groups, and the characteristics of different groups' members.

Kamarás's important finding regarding social networks is that, in the Catholic small-group setting, they are usually formed around a priest or a charismatic layperson. Kamarás realized that the small groups have different life cycles based on group characteristics. He examined in-group dynamics and in-group conflicts and their effects on the operation of the group. When he wrote about the small groups' out-group connections, he mentioned that such connections "are low in number even in the early nineties" (Kamarás 1994: 108). The communities were seldom connected to the leadership of their own Church; their leaders were usually harassed by the state police and communist secret agents. Half of the small groups had no connection to any kind of religious organization at all. This is partly due to intentional self-separation (e.g., *Bokor*). Kamarás also examined the individual members and their sociological characteristics. In conclusion, one could say that he did a social network analysis without making a sociometrical analysis or drawing a social network map. His research is invaluable to the sociology of religion, as most of these small groups have disappeared, and Kamarás's discoveries can serve as important factors in understanding the religiosity of the transition in Hungary. The research is also significant for social network research on religion. Kamarás applied the concepts and some of the methods of social network analysis due to the nature of his research topic.

### 5.1.3 Research on Regnum Marianum

Regnum Marianum is a Catholic spiritual movement of Hungarian origin. It was established by Hungarian priests on the fringes of currents of Catholic spiritual movements worldwide. Its organization dates back to 1896, but it was legally established in 1903. It was founded by nine Catholic priests working independently of parishes. The original idea was to organize a worldly priestly community without the members taking oaths. Its original goal was to help young boys who were spending their leisure time on the streets without meaningful activities (Dobszay 1991). The organization was forcefully disbanded under state socialism in 1951, and its leaders were imprisoned. The movement became an underground movement and struggled diligently against communist oppression by performing and maintaining its activities, establishing small groups, and spreading its spirituality. The network approach is seldom present in Dobszay's work, as his review is mostly historical, but we can conclude that a strong social network of Regnum Marianum groups was active in the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s. These groups were forced into hiding and had to operate in secret, but they served as a religious social network for the upkeep of the movement's ideas.

### 5.1.4 The Bokor Movement

The Bokor movement operated in a special way; it was organized according to the way Jesus organized his network in biblical times (Mate-Toth 1996; Zsumbera 1998). The organization operated on the basis of intense and effective relationships among members, who were organized into small groups with 12–15 active members acting in a network. These small communities were organized into a large, religiously based social network, with solid personal ties forming the cement of trust, which enabled it to counter the efforts of the communist secret police to infiltrate the groups. The main idea was network growth: it was envisaged that members joining Bokor would grow spiritually in the communities, would eventually reach adulthood, and would themselves establish new small groups under their leadership. In this manner, the social networks were supposed to grow like a bush, although due to the lack of personal skills and motivation among individual members, this did not happen. The communities were held together by organizers, who were responsible for organizing and overseeing the meetings. The communities were organized into branches, and branch leaders were elected to enhance horizontal communication within the community. The communities and branches were independent and had regular meetings on different topics. The members were men and women from different walks of life,

who came together every two or three weeks and at a larger event in the summer to talk about important questions of faith, life, and society. The Bokor movement is an excellent example of social networking applied, and the scientific works analyzing it are the first to apply this network approach to the analysis of religious communities in CEE.

Pater György Bulányi, the leader of Bokor, had a lot of influence on the organization. Máté-Tóth (Máté-Tóth 2011) introduces his concept of everyday heroes through the life and work of Bulányi. According to him, these heroes (including Bulányi) were symbolic figures in the religious field and in society as well. Máté-Tóth divided the Communist Era into two phases: the first from 1945 to 1974, and the second from 1975 to 1990. In this chapter I mainly focus on the second phase, which Máté-Tóth called the “Babylonian Captivity.” This second phase was a much less violent era, with fewer obstacles for religious organizations, although the harassment of religious organizations by the state police and secret agents continued (Máté-Tóth 2011).

## **5.2 Religious Social Networks in Pre-Transition Hungary**

Based on the works of Kamarás, Dobszay, and Máté-Tóth, we can conclude that the social network analysis concept was widely used in research on Movimenti groups in pre-transition Hungary. These groups could not operate freely within Hungarian society; they were closely monitored by the police and the secret service. There were obvious violent attempts to regulate or even restrict the operations of these groups. This outside pressure forced these groups to organize themselves in a special, protective way to prevent infiltration by secret agents and other possible invaders.

## **5.3 Post-Transition Era Instances of the Social Network Approach in CEE Sociology of Religion**

Gabriella Pusztai applied social capital and social network approaches in her work on denominational schools in Hungary (2004). She applied and tested the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu and James Samuel Coleman regarding cultural capital and the strength of religious social networks with a survey of high school students attending denominational schools in Hungary. She notes that denominational schools in Hungary are founded on the grounds of tight social networks among parents who are believers. The schools also have very strong and well-connected social networks within the various grades, which makes the students

studying there perform better compared to those in other schools. This kind of advantage is not present in public schools or non-religious private schools, because students lack the support of this strong social network. Denominational school students coming from families with religious backgrounds perform better than children who come from a non-religious background, according to Pusztai's findings. Thus Coleman's argument that students who come from closed social networks governed by norms perform better was justified in Hungary (Pusztai 2004).

Bahovec, Potocnik, and Zrinscak (2007) wrote about social capital and religion. Their article is one of the first Central and Eastern European reviews of the problem. They put the theory of social capital at the center of their research and conducted a secondary analysis of the available EVS survey data to look at the situation in different European countries. They write about social networks, but they do not apply any direct form of network analysis.

In their research about New Religious Movements in Hungary, Máté-Tóth, Török, and Nagy (2008) applied the concepts of social embeddedness and social network to the religious groups surveyed to analyze the operation of different NRM networks. They found that a higher level of social embeddedness and an inwardly oriented social network was strongly connected to a high level of religiosity and religious attendance in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses had a very strong inwardly oriented social network; most of the individual's friends came from inside the group, and there were only a few work colleagues included in the social network. Weaker social ties linked members to colleagues who were not Witnesses themselves. Marriage connections were formed almost exclusively between members. This inwardly oriented, closed social network was based on an exclusivist view of salvation as the utmost religious good and was paired with a perception of hostility in broader society toward the members of the group (Máté-Tóth et al. 2008).

The same research project also investigated Hungarian Scientologists. These findings suggest a more heterogeneous social network compared to the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Scientologists had strong connections outside the religious group, and marriages were not exclusively between members. The Scientologists tried to establish good connections with the outside world but still had the perception of a hostile societal view of their group (Máté-Tóth et al. 2008)

This research among Scientologists was extended and continued by Máté-Tóth and Nagy (2011). Survey research was performed among more than 400 Hungarian Scientologists with a questionnaire putting special emphasis on social network and social capital aspects. The findings suggested strong in-group solidarity, governed by a special set of network norms, built on a strong social network of religious group members. The social network acted as a safety net

for Scientologists; it also provided business and employment opportunities for group members. The social network of the religious group was diverse and homogeneous, and it seemed to be able to help the individual members, as a high percentage of respondents said that they had received help from or given help to other Scientologists. The most important form of giving help was friendly advice, but there were a high proportion of people lending money to other group members, and group members were using their social networks to help other members get jobs or contracts by recommending them (Máté-Tóth and Nagy 2011).

Nagy (2010) also published an article about the connections between social capital and religion and the role of religious social networks in social capital formation. The article presented the main concepts of social capital and reviewed the state of Central and Eastern European research in this area. The article demonstrated that the social capital concept was quite influential, with obvious applications in the field of religion, but social networks were not studied directly. Social networks were regarded by most researchers as only one dimension of religious social capital.

Sinziana Preda (2011) studied the social networks and identities of Romanian and Czech Baptists. The case of Romanian Baptist immigrants to the Czech Republic was explained using the social network concept. Romanian Baptist immigrants moved to the Czech Republic to escape economic hardship. Their religious social network provided protection for them and helped them find jobs. They were also able to secure their place in Czech society. Their main social network was created out of religious belonging, and the Baptist church played an important part in the integration of immigrants in their new social settings. Thus the social and economic part of the process of immigration was made easier, and the trauma was significantly decreased by the religious social network.

## 5.4 Central and Eastern European Articles

The results of the review of Central and Eastern European articles are shown in Table 7.2. We should recognize that many articles in the field of sociology of religion researched and theorized the importance of connections between different social actors. There was a lot of emphasis placed on the study of the network aspect of different religious groups, but most of the research did not collect specific data about the links among social actors. If we compare the results of Table 7.2 (CEE) with Table 7.1 (North America), we realize that the applications of social network analysis methods and theories are more frequent and used to a greater extent in the North American setting. Theories about social networks are very im-

portant in Central and Eastern European research, but the methods are not extensively used on a general level.

It is especially interesting to observe that no graphical imagery was used to depict religious social networks in any of the Central and Eastern European research. The application of these methods is the next step to be taken in the adaptation of social network analysis. The demand for more elaborate methods of network analysis seems to be realistic, as a lot of work applies social network theories.

**Table 7.2:** Central and Eastern European Social Network and Religion Articles Categorized

| Author(s) and year                     | Category 1<br>(realize that links<br>between social ac-<br>tors are important) | Category 2<br>(collect data<br>about links<br>among social<br>actors) | Category 3<br>(use graphic<br>imagery to<br>find pat-<br>terns) | Category 4<br>(use heavy<br>statistics to<br>analyze pat-<br>terns) |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dobszay 1991                           | X                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Kamarás 1994                           | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Máté-Tóth 1996                         | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Zsumbera 1998                          | X                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Pusztai 2004                           | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Bahovec, Potocnik and<br>Zrinscak 2007 | X                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Máté-Tóth – Török and<br>Nagy 2008     | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Nagy 2010                              | X                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Máté-Tóth and Nagy 2011                | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Preda 2011                             | X                                                                              | X                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                     |
| Máté-Tóth 2011                         | X                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                     |

Source: The author’s editing, based on Freeman 2004

## 6 Conclusions

This chapter has analyzed the situation of social-network- and religion-related research in North America and Central and Eastern Europe. I have reviewed the articles published on these topics in both geographical settings. The goal

was to find instances of the application of SNA-related theory and methods by researchers of religion. The articles found were presented in tables 7.1 and 7.2, and the concepts elaborated by Freeman (2004) were used to categorize the works reviewed.

The works were selected based on their use of the social network method and social network theory in research on different aspects of the religious field. I tried to exclude the topic of social capital and religion and concentrate on those articles that had a clear social-network-related topic. I attempted to clarify the connections between social capital and social networks to justify our selection of articles from the overlapping pool. Based on this review, I have demonstrated that the links between social actors are theorized in the articles, and there are measures introduced to map those links. Most of the articles reviewed were building on empirical methods, with different survey research concerning different characteristics of social networks.

There was only one article, by Herman (1984), which actually used a predecessor of the present-day social network analysis method: the block model analysis. Otherwise, graphical presentations of social networks were missing from the articles reviewed. The statistics related to social network analysis graphs and patterns were entirely missing, and conventional regression statistics were mostly used to analyze the social-network-related variables in the different articles. It is fair to say that the real advantages of social network analysis theories and methods were not used in any of the two geographical areas I researched. I can also say that social network approaches are used to a greater extent in the North American setting, not only on the theoretical level, but also on the data collection level in empirical research.

There is still a lot of possibility for the application of SNA methods and theories in both geographical settings. The social network mapping of different religious groups could offer a better understanding of many of the questions posed in the research reviewed in this chapter. For example, the answer to the question about the particularities of religious networks compared to other social networks could be found if actual SNA research were performed on the group level. It would be necessary to draw multi-dimensional social network maps of the different communities in a graphical way for further analysis in order to use social network statistics. This method could be used to answer otherwise thorny and difficult research questions and to pave the ways for new findings and new ways of understanding religious networks.

The SNA method promised many possibilities for the sociology of religion, and it is highly probable that a lot of social network research will be conducted in religious settings in the coming years in order to create accurate and meaningful analyses of the operation of different religious group networks. There is also

the possibility of researching the connections between different social networks and gaining a better understanding of the workings of contemporary social structures. The opportunity for such research is emphasized by the possibilities presented by new research methods making use of new technologies, such as smartphones, cheap tablets, and extensive social networking sites.

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