

“Supply vs. Demand” or Sociology?

Why Context Matters

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Background

- Mormons, Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses (MAW) are all religions that are growing
- However, where they are growing varies
 - Examining aggregated data for the entire religions overlooks the importance of social context
- This paper focuses on MAW “growth” in Europe
- We use MAW “growth” in Europe to test Religious Economies Model

Background

- According to Kelley (1972), “strong” churches are the churches that should grow
 - These are variously called “strict”, “exclusive”, or “high-tension” religions
- This idea was co-opted by the Religious Economies Model (Stark and Finke 2000):
 - PROPOSITION 69. Because exclusive religious organizations offer more valuable and apparently less risky religious rewards, when exclusive firms appear in religious economies previously dominated by nonexclusive groups, the exclusive firm(s) become dominant.
 - PROPOSITION 86. At any given moment, religious growth will therefore be limited primarily to somewhat higher tension bodies.

Definitions and Clarifications

- Stark and Finke (2000) define tension as:
 - Definition 25. Tension refers to the degree of distinctiveness, separation, and antagonism in the relationship between a religious group and the "outside" world.
- This is problematic as Kelley's original term "strong" referred exclusively to conservative religions.
- What's more, I don't think Stark and Finke would suggest that the Metropolitan Community Church has the potential for growth in rural Alabama (though I could be wrong)
- Thus, what Stark and Finke really mean:
 - Tension refers to the degree of distinctiveness, separation, and antagonism in the relationship between a **conservative** religious group and the "outside" world.

MAW in Europe

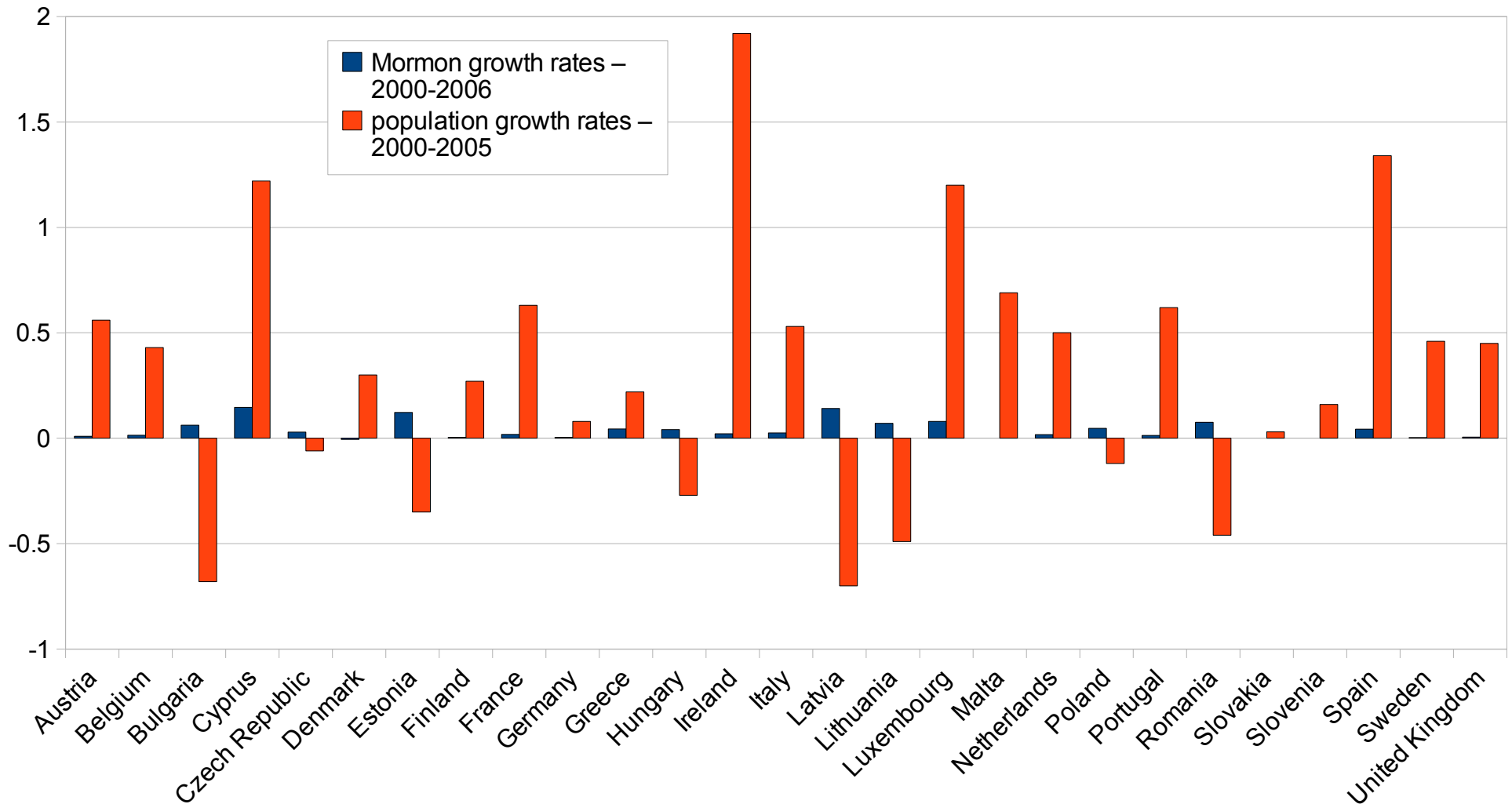
- The MAW religions are all conservative religions
- They are also “higher tension” religions (though we'll examine this in detail shortly)
- Thus, based on the Religious Economies Model (excluding caveats on next slide):
 - Mormons, Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses should be growing in Europe.

Possibilities

- If MAW are growing in Europe, Religious Economies Model is possibly correct.
- If MAW are NOT growing in Europe, could be because:
 - There is government or social regulation preventing growth
 - They are no longer higher tension religions
- If the case, Religious Economies is not wrong and explains growth/lack of growth.
- If none of the above are true, the Religious Economies Model fails to explain the growth/lack of growth of MAW in Europe.

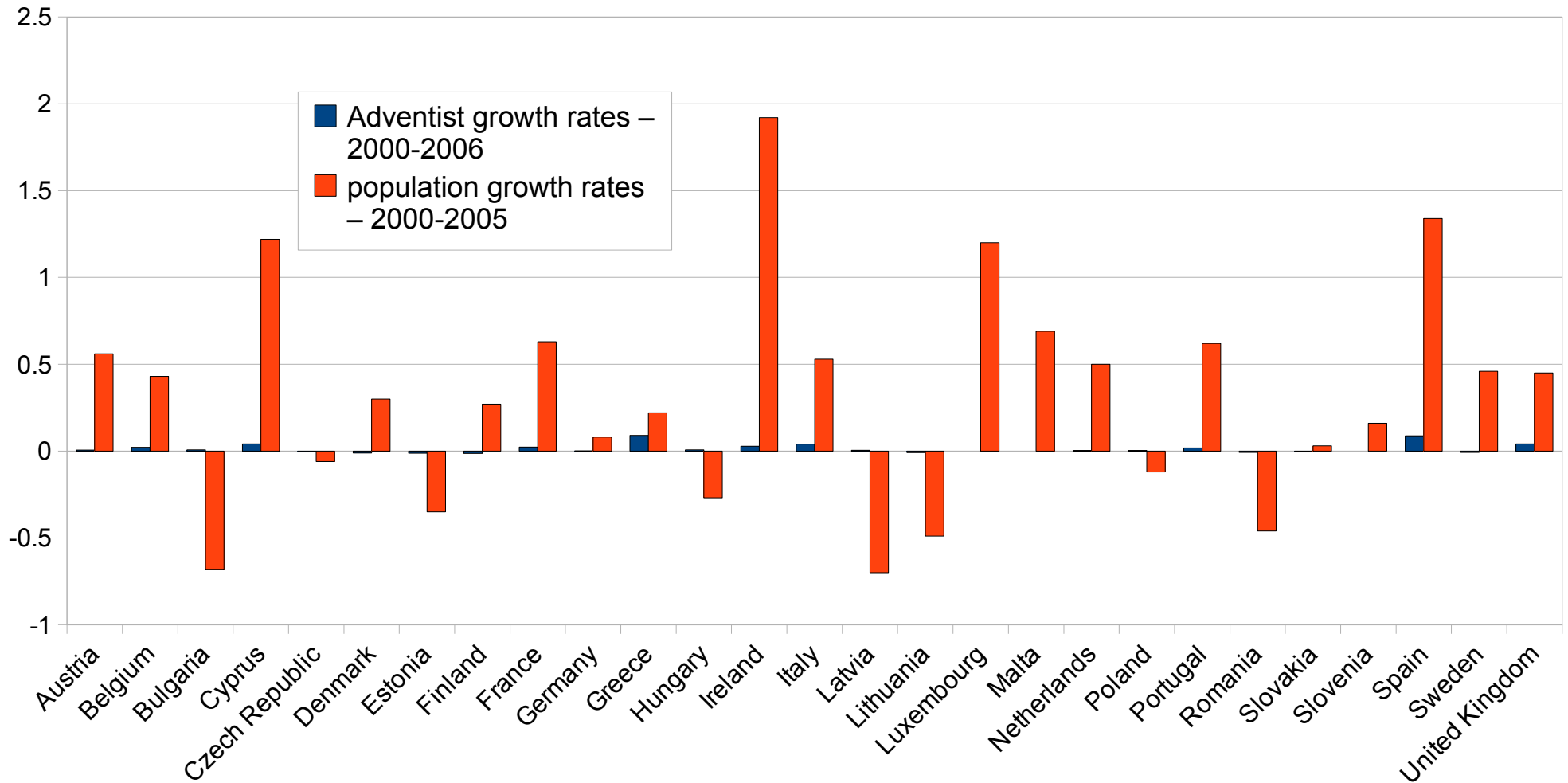
Establish Growth - Mormons

Mormon and Population Growth Rates for European Union, 2000-2005/6.



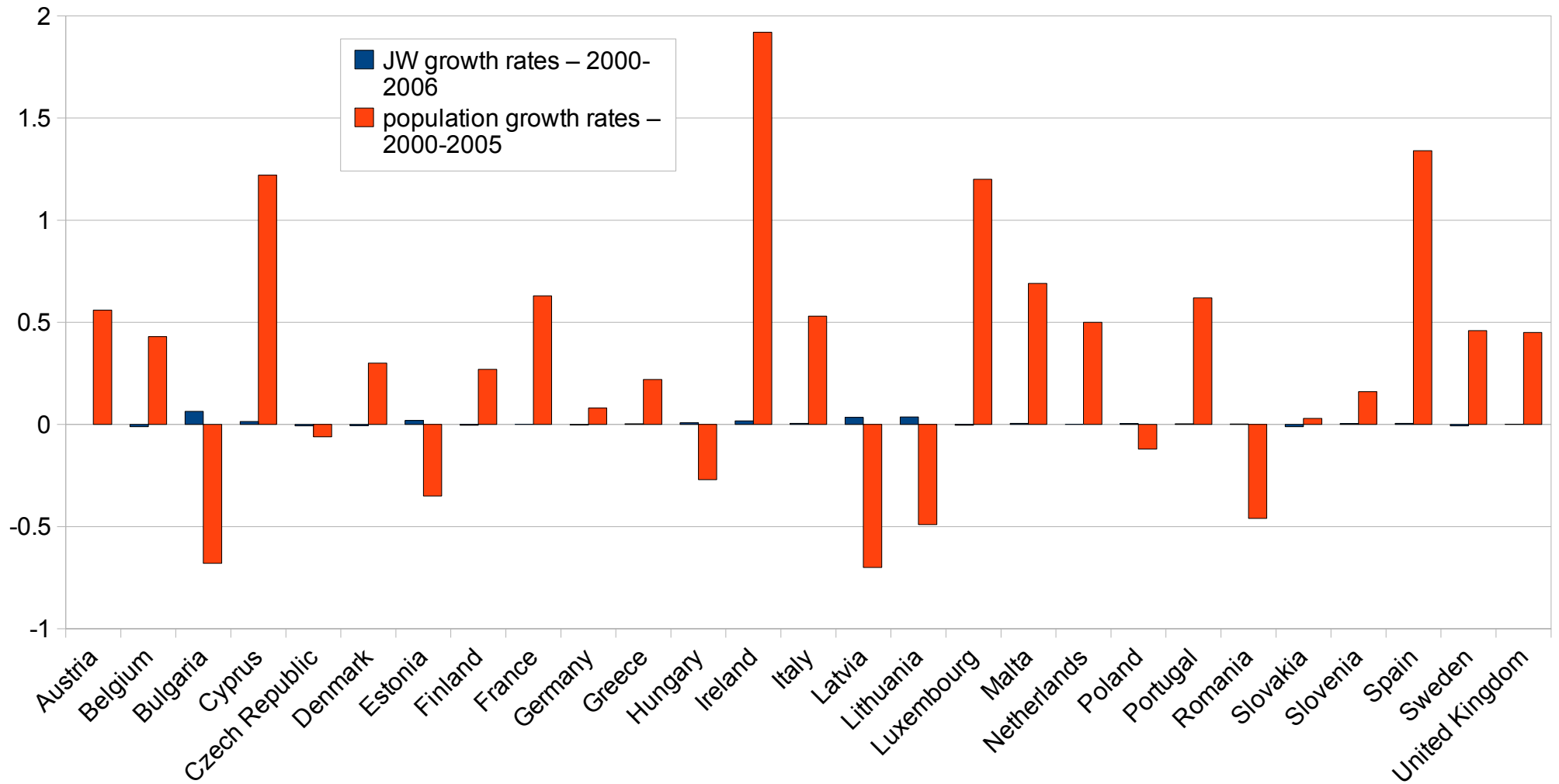
Establish Growth - Adventists

Adventist and Population Growth in European Union, 2000-2005/6.



Establish Growth - JWs

JW and Population Growth Rates for European Union, 2000-2005/6.



Establishing Growth

- The only places where MAW religions are outpacing population growth is in countries where population growth is actually negative.
- Otherwise, these religions are actually growing slower than population growth, which means they are, for all intents and purposes, shrinking relative to their past percentage of the population
- This also suggests they are losing their offspring, which means they are not growing
- In short, they are not, generally, growing in European Union.

Is it government regulation?

	government favoritism	government regulation	social regulation
JWs	0.07	0.62	0.01
Mormons	0.17	0.43	0.18
SDAs	0.22	0.27	0.47

Using Grim & Finke's government favoritism, government regulation, and social regulation measures, there are only positive correlations between growth rates and regulation from 2000-2006. Thus, government regulation may actually increase growth, but it certainly doesn't impede it in the European Union in general.

Is it declining tension?

- Religious Economies Model argues:
 - PROPOSITION 83. As religious groups move into range of the largest niches and abandon their original market niche(s), they tend to suffer schisms as sect movements break away to serve members with higher tension preferences.
 - PROPOSITION 88. Low-tension bodies will typically have declining memberships and will tend to disappear via mergers.
- If MAW have had a lot of schisms, then maybe they are lower-tension?
- They have not merged, ergo, they cannot be “lowest-tension”.

Is it declining tension?

Splinters or Sectarian Divisions

Religion	original religion	pre-1900	1900-1950	post 1950	Total
LDS	Church of Christ	23	3	8	34
SDA	Millerites	0	4	1	5
JW	Bible Students	0	5	5	10

The “schisms” argument doesn't seem to work. Perhaps Mormons have become less “tense”, but of the three, the JWs have remained the most strict but have had the second largest number of schisms in the last 50 or so years.

Additionally, most of the LDS schisms happened prior to the open practice of polygamy (highest tension period), which suggests schisms are not a good indicator of tension.

Conclusion

- Unless the Religious Economies Model is somehow modified to explain the lack of growth of higher-tension religions in an unregulated religious marketplace, which would basically undermine the primary tenet of the theory, it does NOT adequately explain what is happening in Europe, particularly for MAW religions.

Context & Secularization

- What does explain it?
- Context: MAW religions are growing in some of the least developed countries in the European Union, but have no or negative growth in the most developed:
 - Bulgaria - .834, Cyprus - .912, Estonia - .871, Latvia - .863, Lithuania - .869, Romania - .825
- Cragun and Lawson (forthcoming) explain this using Secularization Theory:
 - Secularization is curvi-linear – MAW grow most rapidly in developing countries and least rapidly in highly developed countries