A STUDY OF RELIGIOSITY AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

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A STUDY OF RELIGIOSITY AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Letters to the editors of newspapers and magazines, as well as many sermons, dwell extensively on the need for sound religious education as a crime preventive. Often outstanding civic or educational leaders insist that delinquency and crime rates could be lowered at once if only church attendance were greater and if those who have become lax in their religious fervor would return to an active church role with greater zeal. Thus it may be assumed that in American life Sunday school attendance, regular church attendance, and religious participation are almost always taken for granted as being antidotes to delinquency and crime by offering assistance in upgrading the character of youth.

If the moral fibers of a society are supposedly supplied by religion which comprises beliefs, values, and practices focused on questions of ultimate meaning—those matters pertaining to the nature, meaning, and often purpose of reality—then the question arises as to what degree of religious belief is expressed by those persons who commit criminal acts?

Studies have been made concerning the relationship between religion and such factors as social class, poverty, political attitudes, divorce,
premarital relations and others; but research is lacking with respect to the criminal and the degree of his religiosity. Studies (11, 19, 21, 22, 38) have been made concerning religion and the criminal by using either church membership, religious preference, attendance, or some combination of these factors as indexes to religious commitments. Scholl and Becker (31) made a comparison between delinquent and non-delinquent Protestant adolescent boys concerning religious beliefs. However, these studies failed to substantiate the popular belief that religion is a primary deterrent to crime or delinquency.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is the attempt to measure the religiosity of prison inmates and to determine if religiosity among prisoners may be more generally associated with certain types of crimes than with others such as homicide, assault, theft by violence, sex offenses, crimes against person and property, theft, embezzlement, and "other" offenses.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses which were investigated grew out of the problem stated above and were suggested by the contents discussed in the "Theoretical Background and Related Studies" section of this chapter. Hypotheses tested were the following:

1. That not only do a high proportion of the prisoners in Texas
Correctional Institutions report church affiliation and frequent church attendance before being incarcerated but they also profess a strong belief in the Christian religion;

2. That there will be a significant difference in the degree of religiosity or intensity of religious belief proclaimed by criminals according to the types of crimes committed. Specifically, persons who commit homicide will indicate a higher degree of religiosity than those who commit offenses against both the person and property.

Definition of Categories

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of categories (37) were used:

**Homicide**: Murder, Manslaughter (negligent and non-negligent).

**Assault**: Aggravated and Simple Assault, Batteries, Attempted Murder, Attempted Manslaughter, Threats.

**Theft by Violence**: Armed and Unarmed Robbery, Muggings, Bank Robbery, Banditry, Hijacking, and attempts at any of the above.

**Sex Offenses**: Forcible Rape, Statutory Rape, Indecent Assault, Carnal Abuse, Sodomy, Adultery, Cohabitation, Incest, Indecent Liberties, Indecent Exposure, Lewdness (male), Peeping Tom, Seduction, Soliciting (male), Commercialized Vice, Pandering, Obscenity, Pornography.
Crimes Against Person and Property: crimes of this nature include those listed under Assault and Theft by Violence in combination with crimes of Embezzlement, Fraud, Forgery, and Theft.

Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery: Embezzlement, Conversion, Confidence Game, Disposing of Mortgaged Property, Obtaining Money or Property by False Pretenses, Fraudulent or Fictitious Checks or Checks drawn on Insufficient Funds, Counterfeiting, Forgery, Uttering.


“Other” Offenses: Sale or Possession of Narcotics, Dope, or Other Drugs, including Marihuana, Weapons Laws, Escape, Abortion, Arson, Bigamy, Bribery, Conspiracy, Blackmail, Extortion, Gambling, Kidnapping or Abduction, Liquor Law Violations, Malicious Mischief, Non-support, Neglect, or Desertion of Wife and/or Children, Perjury, Violation of Automobile Laws, Contributing to Delinquency, Possession of Burglar Tools.

Unclassified: these are multiple-offenses committed by an inmate in which both the seriousness of the crimes and the times committed were weighted so nearly equal that categorization was undeterminable.
Limitations of the Study

This study comprised 400 male prisoners in the Texas Correctional Institutions. The prisoners, 16 years of age or older, had been incarcerated for a period of less than two years.

The test for religiosity was limited to one questionnaire consisting of 52 questions. Some of the questions were designed by the investigator on the basis of religious doctrines and several were selected from various religious questionnaires (2, 10, 12, 13, 16, 30, 35, 36).

Theoretical Background and Related Studies

Religion and Social Control

Religions, of one form or other, occur so regularly in all known societies that it is considered to be one of the most important institutions for influencing human behavior. Organized religion, as exemplified by the church, is generally considered one of the chief agencies of social control in our society. An institution which exalts such virtues as truth, morality, and justice and which is also capable of invoking supernatural sanctions to induce compliance with its edicts is most likely to have a profound effect upon behavior. Thus it would seem that religion might well be a decisive factor in promoting conformity to the accepted mores of our culture. In fact, many people hold the belief that without religion there could not be a civilized society. As this paper...
is concerned only with the Christian religion, Clock and Stark's definition in the statement that "Religion is what societies hold to be sacred, an institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values, and practices focused on questions of ultimate meaning." (13, p. 4) will be used.

Ostow feels that religion intervenes in the pursuit of self-interest or desires of passion by the promise of rewards for good behavior and the threat of dire consequences in return for bad behavior. He also states that the feelings of shame and guilt, induced by confession, sermons, prayer, and self-degradation, aid religion in bringing the individual to become more compliant to religious authority and hence to religion's effort to control human behavior for social stability (28, pp. 572-573).

Thibaut and Kelly maintain that the three different kinds of activities which a person must fulfill if he wants another person to perform a specific behavior are, "Stating a rule, maintaining surveillance, and applying sanctions" (34, pp. 418-419). Therefore, parents must fulfill these three activities in order to get their child to perform according to their expectations, even without their immediate personal surveillance. An external agent may be used to perform some of the functions such as monitoring and applying sanctions. Thus parents may call upon God to perform some of the necessary activities in child-control. The child is
then threatened that God will punish him if he misbehaves (26, pp 418-419). According to Nunn, "The coalition with God does not appear to be an effort at developing internalized values in the children, but rather an effort to get compliance to the norm" (26, p. 431).

Davis holds the view that religion is supposed to do four things in helping to maintain dominance of sentiment over organic desire--group ends over private interest.

First, it offers, through its system of supernatural belief, an explanation of the group ends and a justification of their primacy. Second it provides, through its collective ritual, a means for the constant renewal of the common sentiments. Third, it furnishes, through its sacred objects, a concrete reference for the values and a rallying point for all persons who share the same values. Fourth it provides an unlimited and insuperable source of rewards and punishments (8, p. 529).

The human mind being in large part a social product, the individual acquires a system of goals through communication with other minds which channelize the energies of the organism. Thus religion is believed by some people to help integrate both society and personality (8, p. 351). Hence, some people see in a "crime wave" merely the reflection of a degradation of personal standards. Through the temptation to explain crime in terms of a character debacle may be a common one, the explanation is too facile.

Public behavior is by no means always a reflection of the standards of personal morals. Johnson says:
Men who keep their pledged word and pay their debts may participate without compunction in oppressive political practices. Persons who readily give to charity are sometimes insensitive to the antisocial consequences of business policies that are maintained by their own proxies in stockholders' meetings. Rackets are carried on by men who seem to be exemplary in their private lives (18, p. 125).

Johnson (18) presents the viewpoint that churches, having been preoccupied with individual behavior patterns, have only been enforcing standards of common decency; beyond this, churches, on the whole, have played a relatively small part in the continual building of social-moral standards. This is indicated by the churches' influence on ethical standards often having to be exercised in a negative fashion, the pronouncing of judgment, rather than one of social adjustment through the use of new ideas.

McCabe, before the Episcopal Social Work Conference in June 1935, "gave evidence from various sources showing that religion apparently plays small part in the lives of delinquents, and that church people show little disposition to cooperate with other agencies in attacking the problem" (20, pp. 498-499). Carr says that "verbal exhortation may have some place in the training of young people, but it is a far less important place than many moral teachers have realized" (6, p. 500). He advocates the creation of favorable external conditions making acceptable behavior easy and almost inevitable rather than disregarding such conditions and trying to control behavior by blame and punishment (6, p. 500).
The chance of church contacts seems to be lowest in the deteriorated, high-risk areas of large cities as evidenced by studies in St. Louis and Pittsburgh which show that Protestant churches tend to follow the migration of middle-class homes (6, p. 501). Thus the proportion of individuals per church in the city's core becomes progressively greater than in the suburbs.

Delinquency and crime as forms of deviant behavior are considered by Hager to be a part of the social process. He refers to them as "responses to structural and other stresses that are present in American society" (14, pp. 19-20). For example, the emphasis on success to some extent explains the forces of discontent and frustration that generate delinquent behavior in all classes. Some individuals may be unable to obtain success by the prescribed rules while others may be unable to maintain success; hence the forces of discontent and frustrations arise. Hager believes that the delinquent youth needs something to give him promise, hope, or informed insight in order to obtain success, and being told he is "wrong," "sinful," or that he must conform to specified rules of conduct does not meet this need (14, p. 20).

Church Membership and Attendance

Various studies (4, 5, 15, 17, 27) show the lower social classes to participate in religion less, both in attendance and membership, than
other classes. The question arises as to membership index being a satisfactory criterion of religious activity, and how accurate the measurement is in terms of actual as opposed to reported behavior. For example, some church members' enthusiasm may have diminished and yet they are still shown as members on the church rolls and are not therefore distinguished from members with high enthusiasm. Others may be keen on religion but have never become church members. There are also variations in religious groups' requirements concerning minimum acceptable age for membership. Demerath says "It is possible that church membership per se is a particularly poor measure of religiosity" (9, p. 8). Frequency of attendance as an index has advantage over membership in that its significance is the same for different dates and denominations, and Argyle (1) gives credit to attendance as the best single index of religious activity.

A study by Brown "points towards religious belief being a relatively isolated cognitive system, in which intensity of belief is independent of the strength of opinions about other matters" (3, p. 268). He says:

The relationships between belief and church membership, attitudinal acceptance of the Church ("institutionalization") and authoritarianism suggest that strong social support is required for the maintenance of a system of religious belief. . . . . . . This social basis of religious beliefs is confirmed by the absence of correlations with personality factors (3, p. 268).
Personality assessments were based on questionnaires of neuroticism, extraversion, and anxiety. It is Brown's contention that the strength of belief is related to church membership and attitudinal acceptance of the church rather than personality variables (3, pp. 260, 268).

So in looking at religious belief in regard to membership and attendance indexes, one needs to bear in mind that neither denotes the quality of religiosity possessed by an individual.

Criminals, Delinquents, and Religion

Inasmuch as the great majority of hardened convicts begin their criminal careers as juvenile delinquents (32, p. 366), it would be wise to give some consideration to studies of religious trends among the latter. The development of religious beliefs in adolescence generally has been explored systematically from various points of view, but little specific attention has been given to the religious concepts of delinquent adolescents (31, p. 250). However, the few studies that have reported the relation of delinquency to church membership and attendance show wide variations in their findings.

Karacocu (19, pp. 264-265) studied 761 delinquents composed of 563 boys and 198 girls. Of these, 66 per cent were Catholics, 23 per cent were Protestants, and 2 per cent were Jews, for a total of 93
per cent claiming church affiliation. Fifty-four per cent were found upon investigation to have attended church regularly, 20 per cent were irregular in attendance, and 25 per cent never attended. There were only slight differences between boys and girls in church attendance.

Neumeyer cites the Gluecks as finding "only 8.5 per cent of their reformatory men attending church regularly before commitment, 83.5 per cent were irregular in attendance, and 3 per cent reported that they were non-churchgoers" (25, p. 236).

Wattenberg (38) reported on a study of 2,137 boys who were interviewed on complaint by the Detroit police in 1946. The frequency of church attendance in terms of percentages are as follows: regular; 43.0 per cent; occasional, 25.6 per cent; seldom, 15.9 per cent; never, 14.2 per cent. Of the original group, 672 got into trouble again in 1947. The church attendance figures of non-repeaters, in terms of percentages, are: regular 48.2, occasional 24.8, seldom 14.2, never 13.8. The corresponding percentages of repeaters were: 37.9; 27.1; 19.5; and 14.9 (38, pp. 196-198).

Middleton and Fay (21) compared attitudes expressed by a group of girls who were inmates of a correctional institution with those expressed by a group of high-school girls. Both groups were approximately equal with respect to age, intelligence, and educational status. Their findings showed 67 per cent of the delinquents reporting church
membership to only 49 per cent of the non-delinquents. But only 67 per cent of the former group indicated that they owned a Bible against 92 per cent of the latter group (21, pp. 555-556).

Scholl and Beker (31, pp. 250-252) compared religious beliefs reported by institutionalized Protestant delinquents with those reported by a group of non-institutionalized Protestant adolescents. The results of the study suggest that the expressed religious attitudes and beliefs of delinquent adolescent boys do not differ greatly from those of non-delinquents. And they could find no evidence to support the idea that whether or not the individual adopts delinquent behavior patterns is critically related to his religious attitudes or beliefs.

There is considerable evidence indicating that known criminals do not differ significantly from the general population with respect to nominal religious affiliation. Dunn (11, p. 206) found in his investigations that 19,882, or 77.3 per cent, out of a total of 25,728 inmates of 27 state penitentiaries, claimed affiliation with either the Protestant or Catholic faith.

Smith's report on the Washington State Penitentiary, as of October 1948, with a prison population of approximately 1,500, gives the following picture concerning prisoners and religion:
A total of 454, or 30 per cent, said they were actually members of some church. Some 500 others were known to "profess belief in God and acquiescence with the principles and tenets of the Protestant faith, but without sectarian connections." Some 400 others failed to answer the questions on religion, while but 25 were listed as "atheists," and only 31 as "agnostics" (32, p. 364).

Bonger much earlier had calculated the proportion of members of various religious groups in the Netherlands who were convicted of different crimes from 1901 to 1906 and found that for most offenses the Catholics had the highest rates, the Protestants the next highest, and that except in cases of receiving stolen goods, embezzlement, and fraud—in which they led the list—Jews came third. The lowest rate was shown by those who were not members of any religious body (22, p. 129).

Murchison's findings concerning inmates in the Maryland Penitentiary showed that 43.5 per cent were members of some Protestant church, 34.4 per cent were Catholics, 7.9 per cent were Hebrews, while 14.3 per cent were agnostics (24, p. 430). The corresponding percentages for the estimated total population of Maryland 13 years of age and over in 1926 were: Protestant, 33.4 per cent; Catholic, 14.7 per cent; leaving approximately 52 per cent who did not belong to any religious body, compared to the 14.3 per cent in prison who did not belong to any religious body (23, p. 79).

Thus these studies indicate that the great majority of inmates claim nominal affiliation with some church or express a preference for
some denomination, and Smith reports that "usually less than 5 per cent fail to designate at least a superficial interest in organized religion" (33, p. 462). He also makes the following comments:

Studies of prisoners' social backgrounds reveal that many of them make exaggerated statements regarding the nature of their relationships to the church. . . . There are practically no "atheists" among convicts . . . but this does not mean that a large proportion of them . . . may not be almost wholly indifferent to the church as an institution (33, p. 462).

Thus it seems quite obvious that church membership and/or attendance does not prevent the individual from committing aggressive deviant behavior.

Coe (7, p. 182), in studying characteristics that distinguished well-adjusted from poorly adjusted inmates, found that the religion variable did not significantly differentiate well-adjusted from poorly adjusted inmates.

Another approach to the study of religion and crime is to test the hypothesis that if religion is effective in preventing crime, then we should find in areas where a large proportion of the population has membership in some church that there would be relatively few crimes; but in those areas where the percentage of church members declines, there should be many crimes. However, Miner (23, pp. 80-81) found little relation between the proportion of church members in a state and the crime rates, but he did find homicides, on the average, to be fewer in states with high percentages of Catholics than in states with high percentages of Methodists and Baptists.
Even though emphasis is placed on liquor prohibition by many churches, Miner found that states with large percentages of church members are the states where the enforcement of liquor laws is poor (23, p. 81). So again the question arises as to the effectiveness of religious beliefs in deterring people from crime. Miner summarizes his study dealing with the correlation of percentage of church members to commitment ratios with this conclusion:

There is probably a slight tendency toward an inverse relationship between percentage of church members and amount of crime, a tendency which shows itself more clearly for the total religious bodies than for the Catholics or the Methodists and Baptists separately, but there is not that invariable marked inverse relationship which one might expect a priori for an institution which is traditionally one of the chief guardians of morality. In brief, there is little evidence that the churches play any major part in the prevention of crime (23, p. 81).

The Criminal Act and the Criminal

Since this study is concerned with both the criminal and his criminal act with respect to religion, some attention is given to studies dealing with the criminal and his criminal act.

Peterson, Pittman and O'Neal studied the assaultive component in criminal behavior. Their assumption was

That the two broad divisions into which the several legal categories are conventionally separated, i.e., crimes against persons and crimes against property, have certain unique attributes which clearly set them apart from each other (29, p. 44).

One of the two means used in the preliminary identification of the
differences between offenders in the two categories was "by showing that individuals have stable patterns of deviance, tending to commit either violent or non-violent crimes, but not both" (29, pp. 44-45)

Their findings showed:

Eighty of the sample of 88 cases, or 91 per cent, presented a pattern of stable deviancy. . . . Eighty-six per cent of all prior arrestees in the sample showed patterns of stable deviancy in terms of person and property crimes.

These eight cases with unstable deviancy patterns differ rather markedly from the rest of the sample in a number of ways. They have been arrested far more-often than the average. . . . There is not a single arrest for murder in the group, and their larcenices tend to be petty. Thus, the picture of the violator with an unstable deviancy pattern is. . . . that of the frequently arrested nuisance offender (29, pp. 45-46).

Webster interpreted his findings to show intelligence among criminals to be grouped in the following order—from highest to lowest: Fraudists, Larcenists, Robbers, Sex Offenders, Burglars, and Murderers. Thus, there would seem to be a relationship between level of intelligence and type of crime committed. And it is his view that there is a relationship between personality and crime committed which is most noticeable in the cases of Sex Offenders, Murderers and Robbers—from highest to lowest deviation from normal (39, pp. 177-179).

Thus in view of the literature, one may expect a high proportion of prison inmates to report either church affiliation or to have a preference for some religious faith. Since a high percentage of the prisoners
do express church membership or state a religious preference, it is conceivable that they may have a strong belief in the Christian religion. As the literature suggests that there exists a possible relationship between either intelligence or personality and type of crime committed, one can also postulate a relationship between the type of crime committed and the quality or intensity of religious belief possessed by the criminal.

Hence, the need exists for a determination of the quantity of religious belief possessed by persons who have committed crimes, since the variables of church membership, religious preference, and frequency of church attendance used to measure religiosity are not in themselves indicators of the quantity of religious belief. If the quantity or intensity of religious belief of prisoners is assessed through a religiosity questionnaire and is found to correlate significantly with their claims of church membership and church attendance, then the prisoners' expression of a high degree of religiosity can result in more credence being placed in the various studies which have used religiosity indexes consisting of church membership or frequency of church attendance. These previous studies have tended to indicate that religion has not been the strong deterrent to crime that might have been expected from an institution which exalts such virtues as truth, morality, and justice and which is also capable of invoking supernatural sanction to induce compliance with its edicts.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

METHOD

Description of Subjects

The subjects involved in the present study were 400 prison inmates of the various units of the Texas Correctional Institution as of March 1968. Out of a prison population of approximately 12,000, there were 6,742 with less than two years confinement which was the population universe sampled. This selection was made in the attempt to gain a better measure of the prisoner's religiosity prior to his incarceration.

Collection of Data

At the time the study was conducted, the Texas Correctional Institution used 747 codes in the classification of criminal acts. These codes were analyzed for categorizing under nine groupings: Homicide; Robbery; Assault; Burglary; Larceny; Auto Theft; Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery; Sex Offenses; and "Others." With the exception of "Others," 378 codes were used in the major categories and the balance—369—were placed in the "Others" category.

After this grouping, there was the problem of assigning multiple-offense prisoners to the proper category. Within the population universe
studied, there were 1,376, or 20.4 per cent, who were multiple-offense prisoners. An IBM listing of the population was made, giving not only the different offenses committed by each prisoner but the number of times each offense was committed. From this the following categories were set up: Homicide; Assault; Theft by Violence; Sex Offenses; Crimes Against Person and Property; Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery; Theft; "Other" Offenses; and Unclassified Offenses. The arbitrary determination as to the category a multiple-offender was assigned was based on the seriousness of the crime—e.g., Theft by Violence; Robbery; Crime Against Person and Property; and Embezzlement and Assault—with consideration given to the number of times the act was committed in each category. Thus the multiple-offenders necessitated the readjustment of the categories from the original designations.

The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by chaplains of the different correctional units, and they also assisted those prisoners who were illiterate. However, they were to emphasize that answers would in no way bias the prisoner's commitment. The chaplains were also advised to explain terms which the respondent did not understand so as not to influence the prisoner's answer.

The questionnaire was not anonymous since identification was necessary for grouping the questionnaires according to the crime categories; therefore, the name and number of each respondent appeared on his questionnaire.
The sample size of the various crime categories is not based on proportionality since some groups would have consisted of only 10 or 11 respondents, thus making the measure of religiosity less accurate for these groups. Hence the sample sizes range from 27 to 76 prisoners, or from 2.4 to 11 per cent, for each of the crime categories. Systematic sampling was used in the selection of respondents from each category. The selection began with the first prisoner on the IBM listing who had committed the specified crime and who was also categorized in that particular crime category. Then the following selections varied from every 7th prisoner in a particular category to every 29th prisoner in other categories depending on the number of prisoners listed in a category.

Description of Measuring Instrument

A religious intensity questionnaire was administered to each of the subjects as a measure of religiosity. A specimen copy of the instrument is presented in the Appendix. The questionnaire was constructed by the investigator through the consulting of religious doctrines and from other studies (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,) in regard to religion. It is a 52-item questionnaire to which numerical values are assigned to each of the questions. Numerical values range from a score of zero, indicating that the respondent “Strongly Agrees” with the statement, through a score of
four, which indicates the respondent "Strongly Disagrees" with the statement. A summation of the scores divided by the common denominator 52 gives the person's religiosity score, which was used in the analysis of the data. Nine personal background questions were also asked, of which church affiliation and church attendance were used in the analysis of the data. Regular church attendance was defined as attending church three times or more each month, and occasional attendance as less than three times each month.

The validity of the questionnaire was based on the results obtained from administering it to 204 college students enrolled at North Texas State University during the 1967-1968 fall semester. They were enrolled in freshman sociology classes, although the class standings included freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Although mere frequency of church attendance cannot be construed as the absolute degree of a person's religiosity, it is probably acceptable that there is likely to be a high degree of association between religiosity and frequency of attendance. Thus, this was the basis for the test of validity in regard to religiosity.

Findings showed that 25, or 86 per cent, of those individuals who indicated church membership and scored within the "Strongly Agree" category, (N=29), had also indicated regular church attendance. Those who scored within the "Agree" category, (N=83), showed 41, or 49 per
cent, with regular church attendance. The "Undecided or Don't Know" group, (N=51), had 14, or 27 per cent, with regular attendance; and in the "Disagree" category, (N=11), there was 1, or 9 per cent, indicating regular attendance. There were no church members in the "Strongly Disagree" category.

Of the students indicating church membership, 46.5 per cent reported they attended worship services regularly, and 53.5 per cent said that they attended occasionally or never. Thus this seems to indicate that as the degree of religious intensity declines so also does the frequency of church attendance decrease.

The questionnaire required from 10 to 15 minutes for administration.

Procedures for Analyzing Data

The tenability of the hypotheses of this study was determined by the following means:

1. Hypothesis One was tested using the respondents' reported church affiliation and frequency of church attendance, and by a comparison of the religiosity mean scores of the three groups: church members, those expressing a religion preference, and those indicating no religious affiliation. Fisher's t test was used to determine the significant difference between these three groups, with .05 chosen as the acceptable level.
2. **Hypothesis Two** was tested by the analysis of variance of mean religiosity scores among the nine crime categories, and also testing for a significant difference between means of the independent groups using Fisher's \( t \) technique.

The .05 level of significance determined the acceptance or rejection of Hypothesis Two. The significance of the \( t \) ratio results will be indicated in the following manner:

* \( P \leq .05 \)
** \( P \leq .01 \)
*** \( P \leq .001 \)
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CHAPTER III

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The data collected as a result of the procedures described in Chapter II were analyzed statistically in regard to their relevance to the hypotheses stated in Chapter I. Analyses of the results were made through the use of two statistical techniques: analysis of variance and Fisher’s $t$ technique.

Hypothesis One was the prediction that not only do a high proportion of the inmates in Texas Correctional Institutions purport church affiliation and frequent church attendance before being incarcerated but they also profess a strong belief in the Christian religion.

The findings provided by questionnaires from 400 prisoners showed the following: 196 prisoners, or 49 per cent, indicated they were church members; 138, or 34.5 per cent, indicated that they were not church members but they did support a church or had a religious preference; and 66, or 16.5 per cent, of the prisoners reported neither church affiliation nor a preference. Thus these percentages do support the hypothesis that there would be a high proportion of the inmates in Texas Correctional Institutions who would report church affiliation prior to
incarceration, and it can be seen that only a minor per cent (16.5) of the prisoners have neither church affiliation nor religious preference.

The frequency of church attendance showed the following: 103 prisoners, or 27 per cent, reported regular attendance; 182, or 45.5 per cent, reported occasional attendance; and 110, or 27.5 per cent, either failed to answer or reported that they never attended church. Thus a combined total of regular and occasional church attendance amounted to 290, or 72.5 per cent, of the prisoners. Although this combined total percentage is quite significant, the low per cent of regular attendance distracts from the substantiation of frequent church attendance in Hypothesis One.

There were 382 of the questionnaires which were sufficiently answered for use in the determination of religiosity. These questionnaires showed the following degrees of religious intensity: those prisoners indicating church membership possessed a religiosity mean of 1.07, placing them in the "Agree" category; those expressing church support or preference had a religiosity mean score of 1.08, also placing them in the "Agree" category; those expressing no church affiliation possessed a religiosity mean score of 1.60 which placed them in the "Undecided or Don't Know" category.

Although Fisher's t test does not distinguish a significant difference between the religiosity score of those prisoners indicating church
membership from those indicating a religious preference, it does show a significant difference between both of these groups and the group of prisoners who indicate no church affiliation or preference. The means, standard deviations, and t ratios are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

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<th>Categories</th>
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<tr>
<td>Church Member (N=189)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Preference (N=132)</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Member (N=189)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Church Affiliation (N=61)</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Preference (N=132)</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Church Affiliation (N=61)</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P ≤ .001.

It will be noted that the religiosity of the prisoners does support the hypothesis that a high proportion of the inmates in prison will profess a strong belief in the Christian religion. Table II shows the significance of regular church attendance in relation to the religiosity score.
Table II thus indicates a significant relationship between the religiosity score and regular attendance, but other than regular attendance this relationship is not significant.

It was stated in Hypothesis Two that there would be a significant difference in the religiosity of a prisoner and the type of crime he had committed. Specifically, there would be a significant difference between the religiosity score of a prisoner who had committed homicide and the religiosity score of a prisoner who had committed a crime or crimes against both person and property. Table III shows the summary of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Member (N 189)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>2.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular attendance (N 66)</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Preference (N 132)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>2.08*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular attendance (N 29)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Member (N 189)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular and occasional attendance (N 159)</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05.
analysis of variance of mean religiosity scores among the nine crime categories and the 382 respondents.

TABLE III

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF MEAN RELIGIOSITY SCORES AMONG NINE CRIME CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Variation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>180.90</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>185.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An F ratio of .89 was obtained, which indicates no significant difference at the selected .05 level of significance. Table IV shows the results obtained by using a t test between pairs of religiosity mean scores of crime groups.

TABLE IV

t RATIOS BETWEEN PAIRS OF MEAN RELIGIOSITY SCORES FOR EIGHT CRIME CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Categories</th>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide (N=33)</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-2.20*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person and Property (N=33)</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It will be noted that in general Hypothesis Two was not sustained, since the analysis of variance shows no significant difference between the religiosity means at the .05 level of significance. However, the \( t \) test partially confirms the hypothesis by showing a significant difference between the religiosity mean score associated with the Homicide crime.
category and the religiosity mean score associated with the Person and Property crime category. There is also a significant difference between the crime category of Embezzlement, Fraud, and Forgery and the crime category of "Other" Offenses versus the category of Person and Property. But these are the only combinations showing a significant difference out of many possible combinations.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This discussion is restricted to the implications of the statistical results presented in Chapter III. It will consider the criminal and his religious affiliation and frequency of church attendance prior to his incarceration, as well as the prisoner's prior religiosity and the type of crime which he committed.

Church Membership and Attendance

The literature suggests that among delinquents and criminals there is a high proportion who profess to church affiliation. However, the few studies have varied conclusions and thus provide no basis for making generalizations with regard to membership and attendance.

Hypothesis One of this study pertained to the prisoner's church affiliation, frequency of church attendance, and religiosity prior to incarceration. The findings show that a high proportion of the prisoners do profess to a religious affiliation. The results of this study tend to fall within a lower range of the percentages reported by the literature. The religious supporter or preference group percentage agrees with the literature. The findings relating to no church affiliation or preference
show a slightly higher percentage than that reported in the literature, but since there is a dearth of literature on this subject a comparison has little meaning.

The frequency of church attendance, based on the findings, tends to indicate a rather low percentage of church participation. Whether this is low in comparison with the general population outside the prison is beyond the scope of this study. Since the literature deals only with delinquency and frequency of church attendance, it can only be stated that the criminals' reported attendance was in agreement with one study, but it was lower than that reported by two other studies. A plausible explanation for this disagreement could be the age factor, assuming that parental influence has thus diminished for the older group and that they probably also have less tendency to give the so-called "proper" response. Thus it seems these results would be expected for an older age group.

There are wide percentage separations between the groups of religious affiliations and the categories of frequencies in church attendance. However, the frequency of church association does not appear to have been a crime preventive, as the percentage of prisoners expressing regular church attendance is so nearly equal (5.5 per cent) the percent of those prisoners reporting no church attendance.
The findings on religiosity as expressed by the prisoners did sustain the hypothesis. Even though the amount of exaggeration is not known, neither is this known when working with individuals who are not criminals and who profess to a belief in religion. Exaggeration is probably presumed to be greater among criminals than non-criminals because they have broken the rules of society, have been "caught," and are thus believed to be attempting to make a favorable impression upon the authorities.

One interpretation of the significant difference between the mean religiosity score of the group expressing no church affiliation or preference (N=31) versus the mean religiosity scores of the church member and church supporter or preference groups (N=321) is the support it gives to the view that religious belief is not the deterrent to crime that it is commonly believed to be. There is also an indication that prisoners do not necessarily attempt to portray a pseudo-image with the hope of a personal gain.

The use of prison chaplains to administer the questionnaires did not appear to have influenced the prisoners' answers in the direction of a higher religiosity score. The scores are very diversified and out of a possible range from zero to 4.00, they vary from zero to 3.73. Even the assistance which the chaplains gave the illiterate prisoners (there were 23, or 6 per cent, such cases) did not appear to have
influenced the respondents' answers. Many prisoners without assistance scored a higher religiosity than did those receiving help.

The Criminal Act and the Criminal

The literature suggests that certain unique attributes may be associated with the criminal and the type of crime he commits. This was the basis for Hypothesis Two, but in general this hypothesis was not sustained. Although the analysis of variance did not distinguish a significant difference at the .05 level of significance, Fisher's t test did distinguish a significant difference at the chosen level between the following crime categories: Homicide versus Person and Property; Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery versus Person and Property; and "Other" Offenses versus Person and Property. But these were the only categories between which there did exist a significant difference. A possible explanation for this could be that crimes which were grouped under the categories of Homicide, "Other" Offenses, and Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery may be of such nature that the individual can justify their commission, rationalizing his behavior to be congruent with his religious belief. The rationale for the other categories may be the use of unlawful means to gain lawful ends. Thus religious justification or highly desired ends may be the determining factors in these situations.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent religious belief exists among the individuals who are incarcerated for criminal acts. The study involved the determination of church membership or religious preference, frequency of church attendance, and religiosity prior to confinement.

The hypotheses of the study were as follows:

1. That not only do a high proportion of the prisoners in Texas Correctional Institutions purport church affiliation and frequent church attendance before being incarcerated, but they also profess a strong belief in the Christian religion.

2. That there will be a significant difference in the degree of religiosity or intensity of religious belief proclaimed by criminals according to the types of crimes committed. Specifically, persons who commit homicide will indicate a higher degree of religiosity than those who commit offenses against both the person and property.

The subjects employed were 400 male inmates of the different units of the Texas Correctional Institution as of March, 1968. They
responded to a 52-item questionnaire designed by the investigator to obtain personal data and to measure religiosity. The questionnaire was designed to be scored quantitatively to provide a total religiosity score.

Following the collection and tabulation of the data, the results were analyzed by two statistical techniques: analysis of variance, and Fisher's $t$-technique.

The statistical analysis of the data revealed the following findings:

Hypothesis One was in general confirmed; however the frequency of church attendance could be considered to be weak in its support.

Hypothesis Two was partially confirmed. The statistical computations were made on the basis of 382 scores. The analysis of variance showed no significant difference among the nine crime categories, although Fisher's $t$-test did show a significant difference at the .05 level for Homicide versus Person and Property; Embezzlement, Fraud and Forgery versus Person and Property; and “Other” Offenses versus Person and Property.

Conclusions

While the findings of the study apply only to the population studied, they do have certain general implications for other similar populations.

It may be concluded that there is a high proportion of prison inmates who profess to being church members, and a lesser proportion
who have a religious preference. However, the religious preference proportion will be greater than that for the no-church-affiliation, no-church-preference group.

Also there will be a significant difference between the percentage proclaiming church membership and the percentage reporting regular church attendance, with the latter being much the lower.

In addition, it can be said that high religiosity is related to regular church attendance.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is recommended that (1) a study be conducted using both a prison population and an outside group in a comparison of religiosity, and (2) that further study be done in the area of crime categorizing to develop a more refined and uniform system of classification.
APPENDIX

RELIGIOSITY QUESTIONNAIRE
An Experiment in Religious Intensity

The value of this experiment depends upon your willing and thorough cooperation. Please answer all the questions and show as near as possible what you believed concerning each of these questions before the time of your arrest.

1. Age ______. 2. Religious Denomination_______________________________.

3. Highest standing you attained at school or college:
   - Completed 8th Grade. Yes ______; No ______.
   - High School--Grade 10 ______; 11 ______; 12 ______.
   - High School Graduate. Yes ______; No ______.
   - College--
     - First Year ______. Fourth Year ______.
     - Second Year ______. Graduate ______.
     - Third Year ______.

4. Church affiliation. Supporter ______; Member ______; Official ______.

5. Did you attend church regularly (3 times or more each month)? ______;
   Occasionally (less than 3 times each month)? ______; Never ______.

6. Did your parents differ on religious questions? Yes ______; No ______.

7. Do you consider your parents to have been strict? ______;
   Reasonable ______; Lenient ______.

8. Would you consider your parents to have been liberal or conservative
   in religious matters? Liberal ______; Conservative ______.

9. Did your best friends go to your own church? Most of them? ______;
   Few ______.

10. Do you pray on your own? Daily ______; Sometimes ______; Never ______.

In the following statements please circle the number that most nearly expresses your belief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided or Don't Know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples: If you Strongly Agree with the statement circle 0

If you Agree with the statement circle 1

If you are Undecided or Don't Know about the statement circle 2

If you Disagree with the statement circle 3

If you Strongly Disagree with the statement circle 4

Please be sure to answer all the Statements.

Circle one

0 1 2 3 4 (1) I believe that God really exists.

0 1 2 3 4 (2) I believe that there is a soul.

0 1 2 3 4 (3) I believe in the divine nature of Jesus Christ.
0 1 2 3 4 (4) Christ died to save sinners as the Bible claims.
0 1 2 3 4 (5) God really answers people when they pray.
0 1 2 3 4 (6) I believe in the forgiveness of sin.
0 1 2 3 4 (7) Before one can be saved, one must feel that he is a sinner.
0 1 2 3 4 (8) Christ was really born of a virgin as the New Testament says.
0 1 2 3 4 (9) Sunday is a holy day.
0 1 2 3 4 (10) I believe that Christ performed miracles.
0 1 2 3 4 (11) The people who wrote the Bible were told by God just what to put in it.
0 1 2 3 4 (12) I believe there is a Holy spirit.
0 1 2 3 4 (13) I believe that a heaven really exists.
0 1 2 3 4 (14) I believe there is a life after death.
0 1 2 3 4 (15) I believe that man is saved by faith.
0 1 2 3 4 (16) I believe everyone will be called before God on the judgment day to answer for his sins.
0 1 2 3 4 (17) I believe that at the resurrection people will be brought to life again to live forever.
0 1 2 3 4 (18) There are angels in heaven.
0 1 2 3 4 (19) There is a Hell in which the wicked will be everlastingly punished.
0 1 2 3 4 (20) I believe that sex is evil.
0 1 2 3 4 (21) To believe in evolution is not agreeable with belief in a Creator.
0 1 2 3 4 (22) The spirits of human beings continue to exist after the death of their bodies.
0 1 2 3 4 (23) God made man out of dust and breathed life into him.
0 1 2 3 4 (24) There is a God who is altogether good.
0 1 2 3 4 (25) The world was created by God.
0 1 2 3 4 (26) The devil really exists.
0 1 2 3 4 (27) There is a God who is all-powerful.
0 1 2 3 4 (28) To believe in God makes life more meaningful.
0 1 2 3 4 (29) Jesus Christ was the Son of God.
Opposition to evolution is not due simply to ignorance.

The idea of God gives me a sense of security.

I trust in God to support the right and condemn the wrong.

People should say grace at all meals.

Prayer can solve many problems.

If the Biblical accounts conflict with the findings of science, then science must give way to the Biblical recordings.

God rewards those who live religiously.

People should attend church once a week if possible.

A sound religious faith is the best thing in life.

The church is the greatest institution in America today.

People who do not attend church regularly usually lead unconstructive lives.

There has to be some kind of a power higher than that of man.

Some sort of religious outlook is necessary to achieve fully mature principles of life.

God hears and sees everything we say and do.

On Sunday if one is unable to attend church, the person should listen to a sermon or other religious address on the radio or television.

The miracles related in the Bible are really true happenings.

Children are born into this world with a sinful nature.

God may cause children to die just to punish their parents.

Nearly all people are religious at least to some degree and this proves that we have a religious instinct.

Christ really arose from the dead after He was crucified.

Prayer is necessary to the development of the highest type of individuals.

Going to church makes a person better than the person who does not go.

Man is saved by works, not by faith alone.
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