

# The "Religious Factor" and Delinquent Behavior\*

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*A multivariate model that assumes the effects of religious orientation and attendance for adolescents and their families, the occupational status of the family, and the age and family structure of adolescents are additive is employed to test the effect of religion on delinquent and truant behavior. The test shows that the life chances of being a delinquent or truant depend upon the religious orientation and participation of adolescents and their families. Jews and nonfundamental Protestants have the lowest delinquency rates while subjects with no church affiliation have the highest rates. A higher than expected rate for male Roman Catholics, however, remains unexplained.*

*A test for the additive properties of the model was limited to examining the rates of court recorded delinquency for white males. While several tests indicate that the effects of the independent variables on delinquency are not altogether additive, the model gives a first approximation to the actual measures of religious orientation and delinquency or truancy. Further work on the relationship of religious factors to deviant behavior is discouraged unless more refined measures of religious orientation and of the quality of religious commitment and participation are secured.*

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**A**N ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLE in the sociology of religion holds that religions express and rationalize the

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common values of a society and reinforce group activity. Some theories of socialization hold that religious belief systems not only reinforce group activity but that they control individual action, as well, by establishing moral relationships with transcendent moral beings. Durkheim's statement is perhaps the classic one in the sociological literature:

(. . .) in associating morality with a transcendent power, religion has made authority inherent in moral precepts easily represented. (. . .) moral obligations had an objective foundation from the moment when there was outside and beyond us, a being to whom we had obligations. To convey such feelings to the child, it was only required to make him feel the reality of this transcendent being through appropriate methods. God is not only conceived as a lawmaker and the guardian of the moral order: he also represents an ideal which the individual strives to realize.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the *prima facie* case made for the effect of religious values, beliefs, and their transformation into organized and individual control systems, empirical evidence for these propositions is far from solidly established. Apart from the fact that methodological problems abound in demonstrating relationships between belief systems and behavior or between internalized beliefs and behavior, less attention has been given to establishing relationships for religious, than say primary group, values on behavior. This paper is an attempt to establish some general empirical relationships of religious affiliation and participation in organized religion with delinquent and truant behavior.

#### *The Effects of Religious Belief and Participation on Behavior*

The pluralist character of American society is evident in religious organization as well. The various religious denominations and sects emphasize different characteristics of the

common value system. Yet all in all the religions and denominations generally agree on individual and collective rights to security of person and property. Generally, too, in American society, all denominations, though not all sects, allocate considerable organizational resources to the education and indoctrination of the young even though parochial is less common than religious school education. Given the marked emphasis on integrity of person and property in organized religion, one would expect that, in the aggregate, young persons who participate in organized religion should exhibit less delinquency and truancy than youth not enmeshed in religious organization.

There are difficulties in assessing the effect of organized religion on the behavior of youth since access to organized religion is controlled by the family. Whether or not the family directly transmits the major religious values and the idea of a transcendent reality that sanctions behavior, in many ways it may reinforce the efforts of organized religion to do so. It is no simple matter to disentangle the separable effects of family and organized religion on behavior. This study attempts to measure these effects, in a crude way to separate them, by examining the relationship between parent participation in organized religion and deviant behavior of their children.

#### *The Effects of Denomination on Behavior*

Given major religious and denominational variation in emphasis on both a social gospel and on how an individual must cope with his deviant behavior, one should expect some

<sup>1</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961), p. 102.

variation in patterns of delinquency by major religions and by religious denomination. A small body of research shows a relationship between rates of delinquency and truancy and religious affiliation.<sup>2</sup> Relative to other major explanatory variables, however, the observed differences are small.

The results of previous studies generally show that Jews have the lowest rates of delinquency with Protestants intermediate and Roman Catholics the highest among youth expressing a religious preference. The delinquency rate of youths expressing no religious preference is not consistently observed to be higher than that of youth expressing a religious preference.<sup>3</sup>

Investigators attempting to interpret their observed denominational differences in rates of deviance have generally concluded that there probably are consequences of differences in social class composition of denominations, arguing that denominations which draw a substantial proportion of their members from lower socioeconomic levels have the highest delin-

quency rates.<sup>4</sup> The low rate for Jewish youth is generally explained as a joint effect of high socioeconomic status and high integration of family structure.<sup>5</sup> Plausible as such explanations seem, they remain undemonstrated. This study attempts to measure whether denominational differences in rates of deviance persist when these sources of variation are controlled.

Ideally, one would like to examine rates of deviance for all major religions, denominations, and sects. Yet given our goal of examining the effects of a number of variables on rates of deviance, even a population of more than 20,000 youths required rather broad categories of denominationalism. Within the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish religious groups, only Protestantism was divided by denominational preference. Given a large number of Protestant denominations and sects, the usual distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental Protestants was employed.<sup>6</sup> Inasmuch as four of every seven Protestants in our population expressed a Southern (missionary) Baptist denominational preference, they were treated as a separate category on the grounds they might otherwise obscure the effects of denominations that are represented in smaller proportions, though there are theoretical grounds for treating them as a separate category.

<sup>2</sup> Sister M. Dominik, "Religion and the Juvenile Delinquent," *American Catholic Sociological Review*, Vol. 15 (October, 1954), pp. 256-64. William Kvaraceus, *Juvenile Delinquency and the Schools* (Yonkers: World Book Company, 1954), pp. 101-106. Sophia M. Robison, "A Study of Delinquency Among Jewish Children in New York City," in Marshall Sklare (ed.), *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 535-541.

<sup>3</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 166-167. Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 102. F. Ivan Nye, *Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1958), pp. 35-36. William Wattenberg, "Church Attendance and Juvenile Misconduct," *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol. 34 (Jan.-Feb., 1950), p. 195 and p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> Sophia Robison, *Juvenile Delinquency: Its Nature and Control* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 168.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-168 and also Robison, "A Study of Delinquency among Jewish Children," *op. cit.*, p. 541. Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 236-237, 253, 285, 288, 302, 310.

ry. Some students of religion maintain that Missionary Baptists hold both strong fundamental and nonfundamental tenets, setting them apart as an intermediate group.<sup>7</sup>

Among Protestant denominations, it was hypothesized that fundamental Protestant youth will have the highest rates of deviance, with Baptists intermediate, and nonfundamentalists least deviant. Given nonfundamentalist emphasis on the needs of others and an acceptance of man's imperfection, it often is argued that they are both more realistic in adapting to and manipulating external social controls. Either or both of these should account for generally lower rates of deviance if the postulates are correct. Fundamentalist bodies on the other hand place a greater emphasis on individual autonomy and the fierce avoidance of ecclesiastical hierarchy, creedalism, and the bureaucratic organization of religious groups either in the form of bureaucratically organized missionary work or in the control of organized units. Theologically they are more individualistic, with a strong emphasis on freedom of the human will and a striving for individual perfection that often means rejection of behavior widely accepted in the larger society such as drinking, smoking, dancing, and gambling—practices often problematic for young people in American society. It has been argued that the strong moral emphasis on conformity *now* in these respects tends to alienate many youth and to foster rebellion against such moral codes.

Although it is possible that reli-

gious influence operates in such a direct fashion as to produce rebellion among some fundamentalist Protestant youth, more likely any effect, if there be one, operates along paths of influence that are less direct. The strong focus on individual autonomy coupled with rigid demands for behavioral conformity in areas that are less normatively compelling in the larger society, however, could affect the relationship between parents and children, fostering rejection of parental and religious norms that are regarded as authoritarian.<sup>8</sup>

The theological position and the organizational arrangements of the Roman Catholic Church is generally at the opposite pole from fundamentalist religious bodies. Like the nonfundamentalists, the Catholic codes for individual conduct are more in keeping with those of the adolescent subculture. On the bases of more realistic conduct norms and the greater bureaucratic provision for the control of individual beliefs, motivations, and actions, it would seem logical to expect lower rates of deviation among Roman Catholics than Protestants. Yet, all previous research does not support this expectation.<sup>9</sup> The higher

<sup>8</sup> The relationship between religious fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and anomia in similar high school populations has been shown by Albert Lewis Rhodes, "Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism of Rural and Urban High School Students" *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 34 (Nov. 1960), pp. 97-105, and "The Effects of Status, Social Participation, Religious Fundamentalism, and Alienation on a Measure of Authoritarianism," Ph.D. dissertation (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Publication No. 20,493 1956), pp. 140-159.

<sup>9</sup> Robison, *Juvenile Delinquency: Its Nature and Control*, *op. cit.*, p. 168 and Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 102. See also Sophia M. Robison, *Can Delinquency Be Measured* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257 and p. 263. See also Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 220.

Catholic rates of deviance may be artifacts of the unfavorable socioeconomic position of Catholics in the populations that have been studied. On the other hand, factors other than socioeconomic selectivity may be operating. Although the Roman Catholic Church emphasizes ritualistic attendance and conformity, it is possible that the result is ritualistic conformity rather than personal commitment characteristic of Protestantism.<sup>10</sup> Self-perfection in this life may be less important for Catholics than for Protestants, particularly the fundamentalists, because the Catholic view holds that it is possible for man to work out his salvation in purgatory.<sup>11</sup> Also, the confessional provides an avenue for guilt reduction that Protestants do not have. One must also acknowledge the possibility that being in a religious minority introduces stresses which can lead to deviant behavior. Given these crosspressures, it may be reasonable to expect that, other things such as socioeconomic status being equal, Roman Catholic youth may be more deviant than the nonfundamental Protestants but less deviant than the fundamentalists.

#### *Deviation from Educational Norms and Religion*

At law, school attendance is required of all youth physically and mentally able to attend school. Organizationally most major school systems define certain classes of absence as "truancy" and are organized

through attendance officers and procedures to process youth as "truants" when they do not comply with prescriptions to attend school. Within the Tennessee jurisdiction from which our sample was drawn, the law provides that a truancy petition may be drawn, and following a hearing, the Juvenile Court may officially define a boy as "truant." The question arises whether the normative and secular organization of religions affects the conformity of youth to the requirements of regular attendance in school.

It is no simple matter to assess the effect that religious orientations and organization may have on conformity to educational norms since there is considerable variation in organized religion ranging from organizational facts such as parochial school systems to normative facts such as strong religious-cultural traditions for and against learning.

Jews, for example, are expected to have very low truancy rates stemming from the strong rabbinical tradition of learning that is institutionalized in the Jewish family.<sup>12</sup> There is ample evidence in the research literature that the Jewish family provides strong cultural support for scholarship,<sup>13</sup> and that educational aspirations or goals are highest for Jews in American society as measured by such variables as proportions expecting to enter college or seek higher degrees.<sup>14</sup> While some small Protestant

<sup>12</sup> Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson Toby, "Educational Maladjustment as a Predisposing Factor in Criminal Careers: A Comparative Study of Ethnic Groups," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1950, pp. 178-207.

<sup>14</sup> Charles B. Nam, A. Lewis Rhodes, and Robert E. Herriott, *Inequalities in Educational Opportunities*, Report to U.S. Office of Education, Contract No. OE-5-99-150, 1966, p. 39 and pp. D-4 and D-15.

<sup>10</sup> See Thomas M. Gannon, S. J., "Religious Attitude and Behavior Changes of Institutionalized Delinquents," a paper presented to the American Catholic Sociological Association, Miami Beach, Florida, August, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Mayer, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

denominations or sects, e.g., Quakers, may place equal emphasis on learning, it generally is assumed that Protestant and Catholic traditions are weaker in these respects. Ergo it is predicted that the rate of truancy will be very low among Jews even when social class is controlled; indeed evidence is offered that at any class level the educational aspirations of Jews for their children is higher than for other religious or cultural groups.

Yet, it is difficult to make predictions about rates of truancy for Roman Catholics and Protestants based on religious orientations and the organization of education. Given the support of the practicing Catholic family as well as of the religious for a parochial system of education, it could easily be predicted that Catholic students in parochial schools would have lower rates of delinquency than those in public schools. Yet, it also is possible that any observed difference in rates between Catholic youths in public and parochial schools could be a consequence of organizational practices where parochial and private schools dismiss deviants from their schools, thereby relegating them to the public schools. Similarly, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of religious orientations toward education and learning among Protestant denominations. Although the relationship between religion and truancy is explored in this investigation, it has not been possible to separate these variables in any kind of causal sequence.

#### DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

To investigate the relationship between religious orientation and delinquent or truant deviant behavior, it is essential that known major determi-

nants of deviance and of religious composition be taken into account. To examine the effect of religious orientation, it is essential that extent of individual and parental religious participation be investigated. Age and sex are among the most powerful determinants of deviance necessitating an examination of their effect apart from that of religion. Since socioeconomic status is related to delinquency, religious preference, attendance at church, family integration, and school attendance, the analysis must examine its effect. The design and analysis therefore was such as to examine the interrelationship of all of these variables.

Ideally the problem calls for a longitudinal study, but it was necessary to settle for a cross-sectional design involving comparison of differences in rates of delinquency and/or truancy across a series of subgroups described by various kinds of religious orientation (or lack of it), individual and family participation, age, race, sex, socioeconomic status, and nuclear family structure in a large adolescent population. Conventional partialing techniques of analyses were rejected as a mode of analyses since a few categories of these few variables soon produces more cells than cases. A multivariate analyses technique was used that takes the combined interrelationship of these variables into account. It was necessary, however, to resort to simplification and assume that the effects of religious orientation, participation, etc. on delinquent and truant behavior are additive. Even the additive model requires a large number of cases if this many variables are to be employed.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> If there are seven independent variables with an average of four variables per category and 1,400 cases were distributed *equally*

Anonymous questionnaires were obtained from 21,720 junior and senior high school students representing over 90 percent of the enrollment in the Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee school systems.<sup>16</sup> All but 276 of these questionnaires were subsequently matched with cumulative records of pupils and records of the juvenile court and attendance division; the present study excludes these unmatched cases.<sup>17</sup>

The rates for *court-recorded delinquency* are experience rates. Any boy or girl who was referred to the Davidson County Juvenile Court at some time between their twelfth birthday and one year after the questionnaire was administered, and who was either officially or unofficially adjudged to be a delinquent person is counted in the numerator of the rate if there was a questionnaire for him (her). The denominator is the matched questionnaire population with rates expressed per thousand youth. Biases in this procedure are noted elsewhere.<sup>18</sup>

across all categories, the rates for individual categories would depend on just 50 cases. In actual practice the cases are unequally distributed across categories.

<sup>16</sup> These questionnaires were administered in all public secondary schools and in the only private high school for boys. Private and parochial schools for girls were excluded from the population because of limitations in the budget.

<sup>17</sup> The questionnaires were anonymous to the extent that only the project staff knew who the individuals were. Questionnaires were matched by batch numbers and day and month of birthday.

<sup>18</sup> Biases in the measures, the study population, the juvenile court procedure, questionnaire completion, and various aspects of validity are discussed in Albert J. Reiss, Jr. and Albert Lewis Rhodes, *A Socio-Psychological Study of Conforming and Deviating Behavior Among Adolescents* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, Project 506, 1959), Chapters 2, 5, and 8. See also Albert J. Reiss, Jr. and Albert Lewis Rhodes,

A single year was used when *truants* were identified by records of the attendance divisions of the city and county school systems. The numerator includes all questionnaire-respondents who were voluntary truants *more than once* during that year; the denominator is the same as for the delinquency rate. This truancy rate is a prevalence rate.

A *composite delinquency-truancy* measure also was constructed that includes the official delinquency and truancy measures together with the individual's report on the questionnaire that he does either or both of the following "pretty often": "break laws" or "swipe things." These two behavioral items are at the "deviant" end of a seven-item quasi-scale of self-reported conforming and deviating acts.<sup>19</sup> Although we have evidence that some white males who checked these items are probably conformers, the majority of persons who checked these items probably represent cases of hidden delinquency.<sup>20</sup> It is more likely that this measure understates the actual experience of hidden delinquency in this population—especially among poor readers. This last qualification is especially important for Negro students in this population.<sup>21</sup>

"The Distribution of Juvenile Delinquency in the Social Class Structure," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 26 (October, 1961), pp. 720-732.

<sup>19</sup> Reiss and Rhodes, *A Socio-Psychological Study, etc.*, Chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Data indicate Negroes are about one year behind whites in reading achievement test scores. Five percent of the white males and nine percent of the Negro males did not complete the questionnaire. Only 1.7 percent of white females and 3.3 percent of Negro females did not complete the questionnaire. There were no differences between conformers and deviants in non-completion rates. *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, p. 33.

Separate analyses were performed for white boys, Negro boys, white girls, and Negro girls because of known race and sex differences in delinquency rates and to allow for the possibility that there are differences in Negro and white branches of churches included on the questionnaire check list. The following items were used to measure preference for and participation in organized religion:

- Do you go to church? \_\_\_\_yes; \_\_\_\_no  
 If yes, please check the kind of church you usually go to:
- \_\_\_\_Baptist (Southern or Missionary)
  - \_\_\_\_Church of Christ
  - \_\_\_\_Methodist
  - \_\_\_\_Presbyterian (except Cumberland Presbyterian)
  - \_\_\_\_Any of these: Church of God, Cumberland Presbyterian, Holiness, Nazarene (Circle one)
  - \_\_\_\_Episcopal
  - \_\_\_\_Other Protestant (name:\_\_\_\_\_)
  - \_\_\_\_Catholic
  - \_\_\_\_Jewish
  - \_\_\_\_Don't know what kind
- Does your father go to church?
- \_\_\_\_Yes, to the church I go to
  - \_\_\_\_Yes, to some other church
  - \_\_\_\_No, he doesn't go to church
- Does your mother go to church?
- \_\_\_\_Yes, to the church I go to
  - \_\_\_\_Yes, to some other church
  - \_\_\_\_No, she doesn't go to church
- How often do you go to Sunday school, church, or young people's meeting?
- \_\_\_\_Never go
  - \_\_\_\_Less than once a week
  - \_\_\_\_Once a week
  - \_\_\_\_More than once a week
  - \_\_\_\_More than twice a week

Socioeconomic status was measured by one of three categories of father's or guardian's occupation.<sup>22</sup> The "high" category includes the old and new professions, managers, selected

<sup>22</sup> Reiss and Rhodes, *A Socio-Psychological Study, etc.*, Chapter 4, pp. 2-4.

officers, proprietors, and salesworkers. The "middle" category includes craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers, farm owners and managers, clerical workers, protective service workers, selected officials, self-employed persons and sales workers, and quasi- and semi-professionals. The "low" category includes operatives, all other service workers, and laborers of all kinds. Cases of no specific occupational title are included in the low category since data from the cumulative records of students and interviews with a subsample of white males confirms that most of the cases with no occupational information have fathers who are in low prestige occupations or who are unemployed and seeking such jobs.

Age was obtained from the pupil's cumulative record. Nuclear family structure was obtained from the questionnaire. Percentage distributions of white and Negro males by each of the independent variables are shown in Table 1. Percentage distributions for white and Negro females are shown in Table 2 with the exception of occupational level, age, and nuclear family structure. There are no important sex differences by occupation, age or nuclear family structure within categories of race.

The statistical analysis is descriptive and depends upon a multivariate model that assumes that effects of religious orientation and attendance, parental participation, occupational and age status, age, and family structure are additive. Each category of each variable is treated as a dummy variable.<sup>23</sup> The technique is multiple

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Suits, "Use of Dummy Variables in Regression Equations," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 52 (December, 1957), pp. 548-551.

TABLE 1  
GROSS AND ADJUSTED DEVIATIONS\* FROM GRAND RATES PER THOUSAND FOR  
COURT-RECORDED DELINQUENCY, TRUANCY, AND COMPOSITE DEVIANCE OF WHITE AND NEGRO  
MALES BY SUBJECT'S RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE AND ATTENDANCE AND PARENTS' RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

Categories of Item	9,235 White Males				1,544 Negro Males					
	Juv. Court Record		Truancy Record		Juv. Court Record		Truancy Record			
	Per Cent in Catg.	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	Unadj. Rate	Composite Deviance	Per Cent in Catg.	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	Unadj. Rate	Composite Deviance
Grand Rates		77	30	147		65	31	108		
Religious Preference										
Jewish	100	-37	-25	-20	-9	-26	-6	-	-	-
Nonfundamental Protestant	26	-28	-21	-18	-11	-47	-37	-	-	-19
Fundamental Protestant	29	-3	-2	2	0	-18	-14	-	-	-21
Baptist	31	8	5	0	-1	8	5	-	-	-1
Roman Catholic	4	10	-3	-22	-19	35	17	-	-	18
Other	1	5	2	11	5	173	156	-	-	4
No preference—no answer	9	62	55	55	44	133	105	-	-	77
Church Attendance	100									
More than once per week	31	-17	-8	-10	-5	-41	-24	-	-	-17
Once per week or less	56	1	3	-2	0	1	5	-	-	3
Never go and no answer	13	36	5	34	12	94	36	-	-	-12
Parent Participation	100									
Both go to same church	50	-25	-13	-14	-5	-45	-21	-	-	-13
Go to different churches	6	17	8	0	-2	26	11	-	-	18
One goes; one doesn't go	23	23	15	7	4	42	32	-	-	3
Neither parent goes & NA	21	28	11	25	8	53	11	-	-	10
Occupational Level Family										
High	21	-20	-5	-23	-14	-30	-3	-	-	-58
Middle	46	2	1	-3	-4	-3	-4	-	-	10
Low and NA	33	10	2	19	14	23	7	-	-	2

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Categories of Item	9,235 White Males			1,544 Negro Males				
	Per Cent in Catg.	Juv. Court Record	Truancy Record	Composite Deviance	Per Cent in Catg.	Juv. Court Record	Truancy Record	Composite Deviance
		Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	Unadj. Rate	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate
Age								
No Information	6	-29	-47	-10	-26	7	-31	10
11-13	25	-51	-47	-12	-9	-80	-70	24
14-15	36	-2	-1	7	8	-4	-2	33
16 and Over	33	46	45	3	3	65	60	33
Family Structure								
Intact	76	-11	-6	-7	-3	-19	-8	49
Adopted	1	10	7	20	20	54	41	2
Father Dead	6	39	24	21	16	50	24	10
Mother Dead	2	38	26	35	32	54	34	6
Parents Separated	2	42	27	36	26	95	67	10
Parents Divorced	9	48	34	27	20	82	61	13
N/A	4	-6	-26	0	-34	3	-78	10

\* These deviations from total rates are adjusted for interrelations between religious preference and attendance, parents' religious participation, occupational level of family and nuclear family structure.

TABLE 2  
GROSS AND ADJUSTED DEVIATIONS\* FROM GRAND RATES PER THOUSAND FOR  
COURT-RECORDED DELINQUENCY, TRUANCY, AND COMPOSITE DEVIANCE OF WHITE AND NEGRO  
FEMALES BY SUBJECT'S RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE AND ATTENDANCE AND PARENTS' RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

Categories of Item	8,900 White Females			1,765 Negro Females			
	Juv. Court Record	Tuancy Record	Composite Deviance	Juv. Court Record	Tuancy Record	Composite Deviance	
	Per Cent in Catg.	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	Per Cent in Catg.	Unadj. Rate	Adj. Rate	
Grand Rates	12	16	85	17	12	29	
Religious Preference	100						
Jewish	1	-12	-5	-16	-9	-25	-14
Nonfundamental Protestant	28	-3	-1	-9	-6	-12	-8
Fundamental Protestant	31	-1	-3	-1	0	-2	-2
Baptist	35	0	-2	1	0	2	1
Roman Catholic	1	0	15	34	34	83	77
Other	1	-12	-8	45	44	69	65
No preference--no answer	3	45	55	34	31	67	47
Church Attendance	100						
More than once per week	47	-1	1	-2	0	-7	-3
Once per week or less	48	0	1	0	0	2	2
Never go and no answer	5	11	-12	20	0	50	19
Parent Participation	100						
Both go to same church	52	-3	-1	-8	-6	-13	-7
Go to different churches	5	-6	-9	7	4	7	-1
One goes; one doesn't go	25	-1	-2	5	4	5	2
Neither parent goes & NA	18	13	7	16	11	29	17

\* These deviations from total rates are adjusted for interrelations between religious preference and attendance, parents' religious participation, occupational level of family and nuclear family structure.

classification applied to rates instead of means.<sup>24</sup> The model takes the following form:

$$R_{ijklmr} = R.. + a_i + b_j + c_k + d_l + f_m + g_r + e_{ijklmr}$$

where  $R_{ijklm}$  describes the rate for a subgroup defined by the  $i^{\text{th}}$  category of religious preference, the  $j^{\text{th}}$  category of attendance, the  $k^{\text{th}}$  category of parent participation, the  $l^{\text{th}}$  category of occupation, the  $m^{\text{th}}$  category of age, and the  $r^{\text{th}}$  category of family structure plus an error term ( $e_{ijklmr}$ ). The solution vectors "a" through "g" are obtained by solving twenty-eight simultaneous linear (normal) equations having weighted differences in the grand rate and individual category rates [i.e.,  $R.. (n_i) - R_i. (n_i)$ ] as right-hand members.<sup>25</sup> The twenty-eight solution vectors, called "adjusted deviations" ( $a_1$  through  $g_r$ ), for white males and twenty-seven adjusted deviations for Negro males are shown in Table 1; Negroes have one less vector than whites since there are no Jewish Negroes. The adjusted deviations for females are shown in Table 2.

## RESULTS

*Delinquency as measured by an official court record varies with religious orientation, church attendance, and parent participation even when major variables affecting delinquency rates are taken into account.* White boys with no religious preference have almost twice as high a delin-

quency rate (132/1,000) as all white boys having religious preference (72/1,000) after the rates have been adjusted for occupational status, subject and parent religious participation, age, and family structure. Adjusted rates for Negro boys with no religious preference are twice as high as those for other Negro boys (115/1,000 versus 57/1,000). Delinquency rates for girls are very low, rendering questionable any application of this adjustment procedure. For what it is worth, adjusted rates for white girls with no religious preference are over four times greater than those of other white girls; adjusted rates for Negro girls with no preference are three times greater than for Negro girls with preference.

*The major variation in adjusted rates is by presence or absence of religious orientation, but there are differences by categories of denomination and the differences are consistent with previous studies.* Jews have the lowest rates. White-female and Negro-male Catholics have the highest rates, but this is not true in the case of white-male and Negro-female Catholics. Baptists and fundamentalists have higher rates than nonfundamentalists except in the case of white females where the adjusted rates are about the same.

There is not much difference in the adjusted rates of delinquency by extent of subject's church attendance except that one finds the curious reversal from the expected direction for white and Negro girls. This is consistent with the Kvaraceus study.<sup>26</sup>

Data for parents' church participation indicate that delinquency rates

<sup>24</sup> Otis Dudley Duncan, "Multiple Classification of Specific Growth Rates" (University of Michigan, Population Studies Center), Mimeograph, 1963.

<sup>25</sup> The solution vectors represent the net effect of one category of an independent variable on deviance after intercorrelation of other variables are taken into account.

<sup>26</sup> Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 104. See also Nye, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

are higher for children whose parents do not go to church than for children whose parents both attend the same church as the child. Boys with mixed parental participation have higher rates than boys whose parents go to the same church. In the case of white boys, the rate is one-and-a-half times higher when only one parent goes to church than when both go to the same church as the boy.

*Truancy varies with religious orientation and, to a lesser extent, with youth's and parents' church attendance, but the pattern is somewhat different from that observed for delinquency.* Adjusted truancy rates are about three times higher for youths with no religious orientation than for others. There is some variation by categories of denomination. Jews and nonfundamental Protestants are less likely to be truant than Baptists and fundamentalists. White Catholic boys have the lowest adjusted rates of any denominational subgroup while white Catholic girls have a high rate. Since two out of three Catholic boys and none of the Catholic girls is enrolled in parochial school, this difference could account for the reversal in truancy rates. The white Roman Catholic girls in parochial schools were not included in the study, hence the rates for Roman Catholic boys and girls are not comparable.

Frequency of church attendance has a modest effect in adjusted truancy rates for boys with the absence of attendance group showing a somewhat higher adjusted deviation. There is no relationship between church attendance and truancy of girls. Parents' church participation has a weak effect in the expected direction on adjusted truancy rates for white boys and girls and Negro girls, and an

unexpected effect in the opposite direction for Negro boys.

*Adjusted rates for the composite measure of deviancy vary in predicted patterns according to subject's religious orientation and church attendance, and according to parents' church participation.* It is hardly surprising that the same general patterns observed for court-recorded delinquency and truancy by the religion variables also hold for the composite measure, since it incorporates these more specific measures. However, the self-reports should be less sensitive to selectivity in the operation of police and school attendance systems of enforcement. Since the patterns are generally similar, it may save time if we concentrate on subgroups where the adjusted rates differ markedly from the other rates.

First, the low rate for Jews based on official delinquency tends to fade when self-reports of delinquency are included. On the other hand, the adjusted composite rates for Catholics are higher except for Negro girls. Subjects with no religious preference have the highest adjusted composite rates. Nonfundamental, fundamental, and Baptist Protestants continue their same relative positions. The ratios of adjusted composite rates for the no religious preference, race-sex subgroups are: 1.85 for white boys, 1.89 for Negro boys, 1.58 for white girls, and 3.32 for Negro girls. The patterns of official rates for youths' and parents' participation remain unchanged for composite rates. In sum, it seems safe to conclude that the addition of a substantial proportion of youth with self-reported delinquent activity does not substantially alter the patterns observed for rates of court-recorded delinquent activity.

TABLE 3  
 EXPECTED\* AND OBSERVED CASES OF COURT-RECORDED DELINQUENCY FOR  
 14- AND 15-YEAR-OLD WHITE BOYS FROM INTACT FAMILIES BY RELIGIOUS  
 PREFERENCE, ATTENDANCE, PARENTS' PARTICIPATION AND OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

Occupational Level Church Attendance and Preference	Parents' Church Participation and Delinquency Cases								
	Both Go			One Doesn't Go			Neither Goes		
	N	Exp.*	Obsv.	N	Exp.	Obsv.	N	Exp.	Obsv.
Middle Occupational Level									
Attend 1/week									
Nonfundamental	62	3**	4	15	1	0	6	0	0
Fundamental	126	6	3	26	2	3	10	1	1
Baptist	106	5	1	17	1	1	7	1	3
Attend 1/week or									
Nonfundamental	125	8	2	37	3	1	34	3	1
Fundamental	96	6	3	57	5	8	37	3	9
Baptist	117	7	9	66	6	2	48	4	6
Low Occupational Level									
Attend 1/week									
Nonfundamental	23	1	2	10	1	0	1	0	0
Fundamental	75	4	3	21	2	0	5	0	1
Baptist	54	3	2	16	1	2	9	1	2
Attend 1/week or									
Nonfundamental	38	2	3	24	2	1	24	2	2
Fundamental	59	4	5	43	4	5	29	2	0
Baptist	55	4	4	52	5	6	31	3	3

\* Expectation calculated by sum of grand rate plus adjusted deviations.

\*\* Rounded to nearest whole number.

#### *Adequacy of the Additive Model*

The preceding analysis of the effect of religion on delinquency and truancy depends upon a multivariate model that assumes the effects of religious orientation and attendance, parental participation, occupational and age status, and family structure are additive. We chose to test this presumption of additivity for the effects of religious orientation and participation. The test for additivity was limited to examining the rates of court recorded delinquency for white males.

Suppose one examines the two subgroups that the model predicts would be most likely and least likely to have a court record. The most

deviant subgroup includes 16 to 19 year-old boys with no religious preference, no church attendance, from nonintact, low-occupation families where only one parent goes to church. There are only five boys in the population who fit this description and two have juvenile-court records. The model predicts that 226/1,000, or more than one out of five, boys would have a court record. At the other end of the continuum there are 57 nonfundamental-Protestant boys less than 14 years old who attend church more than once a week. They are from intact, high-occupation families where both parents go to church. The model predicts that none of these boys will have a delinquent record, and in fact none of them do.

Additional tests for additivity of independent variables on court-recorded delinquency were confined to a few of the largest subgroups of white males. This was necessary because a low experience rate does not produce enough cases in many subgroups even in the large population of this study. The data are restricted to the largest categories of age and occupational status, parent religious participation, religious preference, and church attendance. The actual and expected number of court cases of delinquency for these subgroups are shown in Table 3. There are some obvious fluctuations but the additive model gives a fairly good fit to actual observations, although the chi-squared test of goodness-of-fit shows only a probability of .10 (with 34 degrees of freedom) for the difference between expected and observed distributions.

It seems reasonable to assume that the effects of the independent variables examined above for their influence on delinquency or other rates of delinquency are not altogether additive, given the presumed complexity of the etiology of delinquent behavior. The results of our analysis therefore should be viewed as a form of data reduction that gives a first approximation to the actual relationship between these crude measures of religious orientation and delinquency or truancy.

Note should be taken as well of the fact that whenever a rate for a population is fairly low, as it generally is for rates of deviance, it becomes difficult to make comparisons among all subgroups of a population. Some impression of what is involved in such subgroup comparisons can be gained

from the fact that our cross-tabulations for white males alone where all categories of all variables except family structure (which was collapsed into two categories of "intact" and "not intact") yielded a table with 2,016 cells. Almost one-fourth of the cells were empty.

#### DISCUSSION

The life chances of being a delinquent or truant (as measured in this study) are probably not independent of fact or type of religious orientation or of individual and family participation in church activity. Jews and non-fundamentalists have the lowest delinquency rates. Subjects with no reported church connection have the highest rates. Contrary to the predicted pattern, male Baptists and Catholics have higher rates (adjusted or unadjusted) than the fundamentalists. Further investigation is needed to determine why this may be so. It may serve some purpose to speculate about these findings even though the data are insufficient to explain why these two preference groups have higher rates.

The high Baptist rate may be some artifact of high proportions of Baptists in some segments of the population that are subject to more intensive police operations. If one searches for a theological explanation, it may be that the high rate is a consequence of Baptists placing a greater emphasis on individual autonomy than other denominations.<sup>27</sup>

It likewise is hazardous to suggest an explanation for an apparent higher rate for Roman Catholics. It could be a consequence of religious-mi-

<sup>27</sup> Mayer, *op. cit.*, especially p. 257 but also pp. 266-270.

nority status in an overwhelmingly Protestant community. It is particularly interesting that adjusted rates for white Catholic girls, all in public school, are proportionally higher than adjusted rates for white Catholic boys, most of whom are in parochial school. Unadjusted delinquency rates for public-school Catholic boys are higher (104/1,000) than for parochial school boys (80/1,000). Differences hold if age or occupation are controlled (e.g.: below age 16, 78/1,000 vs. 50/1,000; age 16 and over, 137/1,000 vs. 110/1,000; low occupation, 172/1,000 vs. 96/1,000; middle plus high occupation 84/1,000 vs. 76/1,000). These differences may represent another form of selectivity. It is possible, or even likely, that Roman Catholic parochial high schools expel problem youth who then attend public schools. Studies conducted in communities with different Catholic-Protestant and public-parochial school ratios may shed further light on these observed differences.

There is good reason to be cautious about our results given the relative crudeness of our measures. Several of these measures are particularly open to question. First, a three-category occupational measure does *not* adequately control for denominational differences in socioeconomic composition. Therefore, it is possible that any of the observed differences in rates of deviance by religious orientation would be spurious were there adequate control for socioeconomic level. In fact, some might argue that measurement of religious orientation and participation merely represents a refinement of social class position. Second, church affiliation and frequency

of attendance are rather poor indicators of the *quality* of an individual's religious commitment. A better test of the propositions introduced here would include measures of 1) the degree to which adolescents have internalized denominational norms and values, 2) the intensity with which these are accepted, 3) the degree of "value-stretch" that serves to modify the effects of religious commitment, and 4) separation of components of religiosity that are ignored in this study. Third, although this study was conducted in a large metropolitan area, the area is located on the fringe of "The Bible Belt." It remains to be seen whether these differences hold up in more secular community settings.

Findings of the study support the notion that there is a "religious factor" in delinquent and truant behavior. These findings do not depend exclusively upon official records, thereby making doubtful any conclusion that the observed differences by religious orientation are entirely artifacts of socioeconomic status and/or court or attendance division selectivity. This indicates that further research is warranted to specify under what conditions and *how* religious orientation affects life chances of being classified a delinquent or truant. Nonetheless, given problems of measurement where there are low rates of deviance for populations, the crudeness of many sociological measures, and the likely possibility that religious effects, if there be such, are small, we would discourage the rather simple analyses that have characterized most of the research on religion and delinquency reported in the literature.