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RELIGIOSITY AND DELINQUENCY

The relationship between religiosity and delinquency is studied on a survey sample (1200) of Maribor university undergraduates (2003). Ensuing from the Hirschi and Stark assertion (1969) as to lack of link between religiosity and delinquency, as well as from the transformation of religiosity during post-modernity in a relativistic direction, it was supposed that there would be no link between religiosity and delinquency. This was rejected in this study by a finding of significant variation in the odds ratio as to committing delinquent acts among those who are intensively religious and those who are not religious at all. It was found that personal religiosity does have a definite inhibitory effect upon general type delinquency, even though the beta coefficient was not high (.155, sig..000). Indications were found that religiosity has a greater delinquency inhibiting impact upon those residing outside a large city, in small town and rural surroundings, supporting the Stark et al. (1982) contention of "moral community", as the environment where religiosity does have an effect, in our case only a minor stimulus. Other variables also intervened, sex being the most potent one.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religiosity and criminality, i.e. delinquency is one of the areas which has not been forgotten in social science, as one may discern from a review of USA literature. Research outside the USA is less frequent.

Theoretically, one faces firstly the classical Durkheim stand on religion and its functions in inhibiting the individual's unlimited wants and integration of society (1914), followed by Parons's view of religion being atop cultural components in an informative way, motivationally the most potent one, including man's external and self control (1951/1964:164, 1951/1964:292-297). This functionalist stand can be translated into more understandable wording as god, particularly monotheistic God being a symbol of social authority (Cortes and Gatti, according to Tittle and Welch, 1983: 657). All this goes, of course, provided moral and criminal law norms are in a basic value conformity, as will be the supposition of our research as well.

In the social sciences this subject comes research-wise into full swing by the seminal investigation of T. Hirschi and R. Stark (1969). Interpreting some California survey data they contend that there is no link between the two facts, due to rewards and punishments in the world beyond not being able – due to distance - to impact behaviour here and now (1969: 211-12).

Later research mainly tested and challenged this contention. Stark himself suggested one modification, that religiosity may inhibit delinquency, but not as an individual stance, only within "a moral community" itself permeated by religion. The supporting data come from another part of the USA. (Stark et al.: 1982). On the other hand, some argue that religion functions inhibitorily exactly in the absence of other controlling agents, in the state of anomie. (Tittle and Welch, 1983: 672-3).

HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis shall be that in Slovene conditions religiosity has no impact upon delinquency, ensuing from the Hirschi and Stark findings, and from the postmodern nature of Slovene religiosity (Lavrič, 2003)

The second hypothesis shall be that religiosity may still have an inhibitory impact, but only as traditional religiosity in the rural which is possibly a "moral community". (Stark et al., 1982).

We will also control for some other factors, low self control by Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990), essentially a social psychological concept, attachment to parents and to one's education, social background (parents' education). We will control both sex and masculinity according to Bem (<1981>, a series of personality traits which are alleged to be socially constructed and separate of sex itself).

METHOD

In 2003 we carried out a survey of 1.200 students at the University of Maribor. The sample was a quota type one, encompassing all tracks of study and years of study. The sample reflected the numerical majority of females (58:42%). The age varied between 18 and 26, with an insignificant number of older (app. 1%), the average age being 21,7.

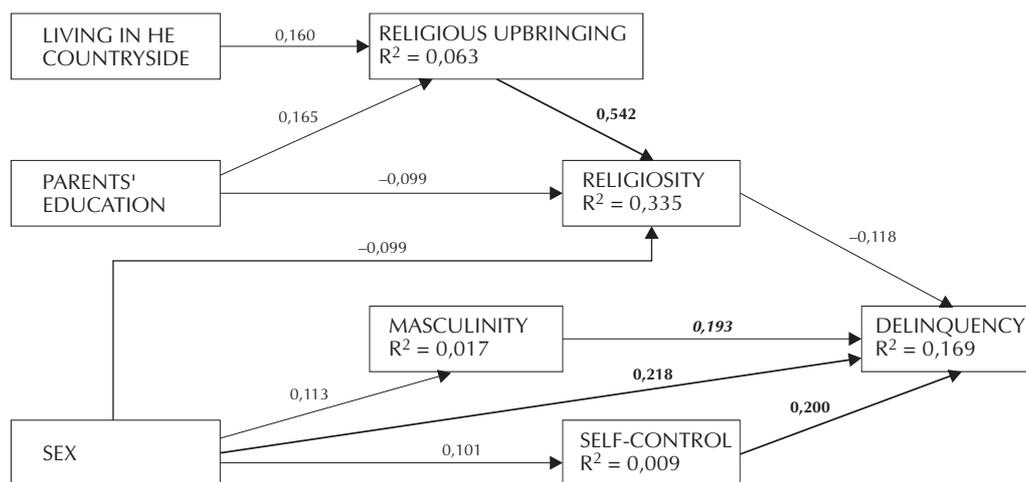
As to the first independent variable, we formed an index of religiosity composed of 11 statements, accounting for the following components: a. rituality (personal prayer and church attendance), b. agreement with basic dogmatic tenets of Christianity, c. attraction of religious practice (rejection of statements on religious practice being dull or boring d. vjersko quest and search, encompassing a striving towards one's religious perfection. In all cases they were five point attitude statements. All was expressed in Christian language, bearing in mind the Roman Catholicism as the dominant teaching and affiliation in the region. Most statements were positively worded, the others were recoded. Factor analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of our religiosity scale. Alpha consistency = 0.72.

The second independent variable is low self control according to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). Their theory covers analogous to crime behavior in other actions not taking into consideration long term goals and the interests of others. According to Grasmick et al. operationalization (1993) low self control contains 6 components: impulsivity, directedness to easy tasks, inclination to risk, giving priority to physical activity over mental, self-centeredness and loss of temper. Grasmick and associates (2001) in a comparative study of youth presented each component by numerous statements, whereas we chose one only from the set Vazsonyi et al. found to be operational. These were: "I often do things which bring me immediate satisfaction, regardless of long term consequences", "I dislike tasks where I have to stretch myself to the end", "Sometimes I risk just for the fun of it at the moment", "I almost always feel better, when I move than when I sit and think and "When I am mad, I think more of afflicting pain to someone else than to talk to him." We attempted to combine these statements into a meaningful scale.

The third independent variable will be masculinity according to S. Bem (1981). We applied 10 self identified personality traits supposedly of a socially constructed nature pertaining to masculinity. Here we relied on Francis who found these traits to be connected with religiosity (Francis, 1991, 1997, 1998).

The dependent variable will be delinquency, a series of acts taken over from Vazsonyi et al., but stemming from the concepts of Hirschi and Gottfredson. They are delinquent behavioral acts of a general nature, characteristic of younger population. The list contains 7 items: vandalism, inappropriate consumption of alcohol, taking drugs, school delinquency, general delinquency, theft and physical attack. For each time we chose one act only, out of economic purposes. We also intended to create a summational scale. A series of acts are encompassed, some of which are not criminal offences. Cheating in school proved to be non-discriminative (almost all testified to have committed it). We did not enter threat of corporeal injury to parents, which proved to be very rare (2.6%). We took into consideration, at the construction of the summational scale, 5 statements which metrically corresponded. At all, males were more frequent perpetrators. Alpha consistency of the scale was 0,54. This does not indicate a uniform phenomenon, but it does indicate a linked structure.

As to the method applied there are objections in theory: 1. prior events may not be relevant for future behavior, thus some propose asking on planned behavior: Nevertheless, research has proven a high degree of correspondence between prior and future misbehavior (Welch in Tittle: 1991). 2. Youth delinquency does not equate general delinquency and even less business delinquency. (Simpson in Piquero, 2002). We are aware of these limitations.



Arrows indicate standardized beta coefficients. All are statistically significant at the level of at least $p = 0,05$.

Graph I: Path diagram among relevant variables in the explanation of delinquency

FINDINGS

Firstly on Graph I we note the traditional nature of respondents' religiosity, linked to those coming from the countryside and correlating inversely with parents' education. The path diagram explains 17% of the variance of delinquency. If our series of statements had been longer, the explained volume of variance would also have been higher. But this picture still remains very indicative as to the origins of delinquency and criminality. Delinquency is linked to all analysed independent variables. (Vazsonyi et al., 2001: 120). The beta coefficient is lower than for sex, masculinity and self-control. It is directed as expected and we will demonstrate that the link is an important one. Gender and masculinity attain the beta at approx. the level of 0,2 and

remain robust (the regression analysis not presented here). The link between masculinity and sex is lower than could have been expected, which may be interpreted by the instrumental orientation of the population in general, nevertheless the difference among genders is in the expected direction.

As for our first hypothesis, it may be rejected, as there is a clear link between religiosity and delinquency, including by way of regression analysis. The issue of relevance of religiosity will be dealt with in greater detail on Table I. Religiosity will be summed into 3 classes.

Table I: Religiosity and delinquency

Religiosity		Number of delinquent offences			Total
		0 or 1 offence	2 or 3 offences	4 or 5 offences	
Irreligious	Count	123	170	72	365
	% within Religiosity	33,7%	46,6%	19,7%	100,0%
	% within Delinquency	26,3%	35,3%	36,7%	31,9%
Mixed type	Count	232	239	98	569
	% within Religiosity	40,8%	42,0%	17,2%	100,0%
	% within Delinquency	49,7%	49,6%	50,0%	49,7%
Religious	Count	112	73	26	211
	% within Religiosity	53,1%	34,6%	12,3%	100,0%
	% within Delinquency	24,0%	15,1%	13,3%	18,4%
TOTAL	Count	467	482	196	1145
	% within Religiosity	40,8%	42,1%	17,1%	100,0%
	% within Delinquency	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

$r = -0,124$, $p = 0,00$

The connexion between religiosity and delinquency, rather modest within the regression analysis context, proved very clear and strong in crosstabulatory analysis. Further quantitative analysis confirms our presented findings. See Table II. The odds ratio of committing numbers of types of offences rises from irreligiosity to religiosity.

Table II: Religiosity and extreme categories as to delinquency

Religiosity	Number of delinquent offences		
	0 or 1 (Non-delinquency)	4 or 5 (Delinquency)	TOTAL
Irreligious	123	72	195
Religious	112	26	138
TOTAL	235	98	333

$r = -0,195$, $p = 0,00$

The odds ratio is thus $= (123/72)/(112/26) = 1,708/4,308 = 0,3965$.

It is 1,7 times more probable for irreligious students to be delinquent than not, whereas among their religious colleagues the ratio is more acute: it is 4,3 times more probable for them to be delinquent than not. The final odds ratio indicates that the absence delinquency is more than 3 fifths less probable among the irreligious than among the religious. The reciprocal coefficient indicates that delinquency (in comparison to its absence) is 2,5 times higher among the irreligious than among the religious.

Our findings are in line with most others (Johnson et al.: 2001, in Europe Petterson, 1991).

The impact of attachment to study is also clear, in contrast to attachment to parents.

Sex comes out as the most potent independent variable ($\beta = 0,213$), where the coefficient of determination would indicate an entire explanation of 7% variance as to delinquency, remaining robust even controlled for masculinity (shedding a shadow at Bem's concept) and indicating that sex is an irreducible factor, or at least that layers below it have not been uncovered yet. The basic findings on Graph I extend a certain plausibility for the sociobiological explanation as (Kanazawa and Still: 2000).

As to our second hypothesis, traces are to be found to support it. There are explicit differences among Maribor inhabitants religiosity and delinquency link (religiosity being low; $R^2 = .007$, $\beta = .083$). Almost the entire explained variance on Graph I pursues from those living in the outside Maribor ($R^2 = .029$, $\beta = .170$) The countryside does function as a "moral community".

This may most illustratively be discerned when observing those committing the highest number of offences. Even among religious it is much less likely that they would be coming from the countryside than from Maribor (it is about one half more likely they would be coming from Maribor). If we were to apply more precise instruments as to type of settlement, this would be even more acutely discernible.

CONCLUSIONS

We have found that in Slovenia, at least as far as youth and general delinquency are concerned, a clear inhibitory, bridling impact of religiosity exists. This is not the most potent factor on the social scene by which delinquency is to be explained, but its independent nature is clear. Undoubtedly, there are major differences as to committing offences among those religious and those not.

An even more potent factor is to be found in sex, which is in conformity with all known findings. What is interesting in our findings is that Bem masculinity traits are not behind sex, but are an independent explanatory variable. The impact of (low) self control, according to Hirschi, Grasmick, Vazsonyi and others is also clearly discernible and potent.

At the finding that religiosity bridles and inhibits deviance, it is most plausible to fit them into a functionalist framework. This also means that are not faed with a relativistic, fragment-composed, post-modern religiosity, but with religiosity in the standard meaning of the word.

The fact that we have found that attachment to study appears as a deviance inhibiting factor means that greater attention needs to be paid to social control, including the inclusion into the prevailing institutions and values and loyalty to them. On the other hand, attachment to study may be a synchronic correlation within a developed world view and behavioral pattern, coinciding with non committing offences.

The possibility of generalizing student findings to the general population is limited and here we would differ with Gottfredson and Hirschi. Economic, business, organisational crime is completely a different area, much to do with "organizational culture" and less to do with personality traits and structure, religiosity included.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sergej Flere, professor of sociology, University of Maribor, Slovenia. Previously, taught sociology at the University of Novi Sad (Serbia) (1971-1991). Fulbright professor at the University of Missouri and University of California (1986). Took part and led research in various sociological areas, particularly those dealing with religion, education and youth. Recent publications: "Blind alleys in ethnic essentialist explanations of the downfall of the former Yugoslavia", *Critical Sociology* (37), 2003, 237-255, "Slovenia: at a distance from a perfect religious market"; *Religion, State and Society*, (32) 2004, 151-157.

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