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A STUDY COMPARING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SCORES
BETWEEN A GROUP OF PAROCHIAL SCHOOL PUPILS
AND CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE PUPILS

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty
University of Nebraska
at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

LaVerne C. Iaffaldano

July, 1979

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FIELD PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the Graduate Faculty, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Specialist in Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Supervisory Committee

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Date 7-18-79

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, teaching, to transmit the Christian message, has been an important function. In the modern Church, the teaching ministry continues to be a primary concern. Vatican Council II reiterated the Church's concern with its teaching function and directed local Church leaders to formulate appropriate goals. The American Hierarchy at a National Conference in 1972 supported Christian education and gave direction to those involved in the ministry.

The Catholic Church's educational mission today takes form in various programs and institutions which have been adapted to the needs of the persons to be educated. At the elementary level, there are two modes of religious education in the Church; one is the parochial school and the other is the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine for Catholic children who attend public schools.

The purpose of a program of religious education is to make the message of God's revelation of Himself and of His plan for men clear and understandable to learners. Effective

curriculum plans are based on this goal. It determines the content for a program of religious education regardless of the mode of instruction. There should be, therefore, a unity in the Church's educational mission.

The Problem

Since 1974, Mrs. Julia Bizal has been the Director of Religious Education for Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Omaha, Nebraska. In an effort to foster unity and in the spirit of cooperation, she initiated a unique program of giving inservice and resource information to all teachers in the parochial school and in the Confraternity, including step-by-step directions on activities and materials to be used in the development of lessons. She also teaches some sacrament preparation classes to both groups. This year, with a new all lay faculty in the parochial five-day school and with all lay catechists in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Mrs. Bizal's approach gives rise to the question: is inservice training of lay teachers enough preparation to teach the basic concepts of the faith?

The Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a difference in achievement in religious education, according to the William H. Sadlier, Inc. Review Test, between the five-day parochial school students and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine public school students at

Sts. Peter and Paul Parish at the sixth and at the eighth grade levels, and secondly, to do a survey of these two groups in the areas of student population and their attendance patterns, teacher training and background, and the actual methodology used.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in achievement in religious education, according to the William H. Sadlier, Inc. Review Test, between the five-day parochial school students and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine public school students at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish at the sixth and at the eighth grade levels.

Basic Assumptions

1. Parental desire motivated the study of religious concepts by both groups of students.
2. Certain basic teachings were central in all Catholic religious instruction.
3. There was a spiraling development of concepts taught.
4. The Sadlier test of the basic concepts was a measure of academic achievement in religious education.
5. Students in both groups used the same physical facilities, supplies, books, and materials in the formal religious instruction.

Limitations

1. The sixth and eighth grades were the only levels studied.
2. The time given to formal, systematic instruction in concepts was approximately the same for both groups, one hour to one hour and a half per week.
3. The survey aspect of the study was delved from the experience background of the Principal of the five-day school and of the Religious Education Coordinator.

Definitions

Catechists - instructors in fundamental religious principles.

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine - an organization dedicated to religious instruction for Catholic children who attend public schools and operating within the confines of the parish, henceforth referred to as CCD.

Doctrine - tenents or creed of the Church.

Liturgy - the prescribed form of public worship.

Parish - an ecclesiastical district under one pastor or clergyman.

Parochial - relating to or belonging to a parish, herein referring to the five-day school.

Significance of the Study

In order to function together efficiently and to work toward the goal of active cooperation, it was necessary to

assess the quality of the Religious Education programs provided by the Parish. The strengths and the weaknesses of the programs needed to be determined. This study measured student achievement in religious education and surveyed the differences between the two approaches to this education. If changes are necessary, appropriate action programs can be designed based on data.

A new program of certification of all teachers of religion in both the five-day and the CCD programs is being proposed by the Archdiocesan Director of Religious Education, Fr. Dennis Hanneman. Plans to implement the program are in progress. The results of this type of study could aid in the determination of necessary inservice for either group of instructors.

Procedures

The William H. Sadlier, Inc. Review Test for Level Six, God Among Us, was administered to both Parochial School and CCD classes at the sixth and eighth grade levels in the Spring of the school year. Since the sample size was small, the Fisher t was applied to test the null hypothesis. The Fisher table is based on the difference between the means of two small uncorrelated samples. The researcher hoped to find the difference significant at the .05 level.

For the survey, the administrator of the five-day school and the Religious Education coordinator examined the

student population of both programs and their attendance patterns, teacher training and background of both groups as it relates to staff development, and the actual methodology used.

Organization of Study

Chapter one includes the introduction, problem, purpose of the study, hypothesis, assumptions, limitations and definitions.

Chapter two examines the related literature.

Chapter three includes the method of research and the presentation and analysis of the data.

Chapter four is a descriptive analysis of the survey.

Chapter five includes the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

"The history of Catholic education in America, like the history of the Church itself, is a story of survival and adaptation. Its faithful were denied their freedom of worship, to take part in civic affairs, and to educate their children" (McCluskey, 11:3). From the first years of the Colonial period to the time of the Revolution, conditions were not conducive to any kind of permanent programs of catechetical instruction. With the Revolution came the deliberate policy of separating of Church and State and with it, according to Collins, "... the establishment of the Catholic parochial school system and ultimately of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine" (5:51).

The first Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 promulgated for the American Church the obligations for pastors and parents. It ordered parish schools and formal lessons for all Catholic youth. The Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866 added a demand that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine be set up when the mandate for parish schools could not be fulfilled (Collins, 5:52).

The CCD had its beginning in Milan in 1536 when a young priest gathered a small group of men and women to found schools of Christian doctrine to instruct children. St. Charles Borromeo, the Cardinal of Milan from 1565-1584, gave the movement his complete support, opened training schools for catechists, and drew up a constitution (Collins, 4:14).

Leading Church figures gave their names and support to the CCD and by the middle of the Eighteenth Century, says Collins, "Specific orders were issued to establish the CCD everywhere and pastors and parents were commanded to teach the truths of the Church to those in their charge" (4:19).

The modern revival of the CCD was initiated by Pope Pius X (1835-1914) who zealously promoted the work of the Confraternity and exalted the vocation of the catechist. In 1935, Pope Pius XI again called the CCD to the attention of all the bishops in the world and in the United States the CCD was organized on a national basis with the establishment of the National Center of the CCD in Washington, D.C. (Collins, 4:27).

In regard to the CCD in the United States prior to 1935, Collins says, "Catechetics in the United States developed progressively from the grass roots. It grew out of the awakening need to provide religious instruction for its millions of children and youth who were deprived of formal doctrinal training in the public schools as well as

to improve catechetical formation in the schools" (4,30).

This progressive development in the early years in the United States was due in large part to Leroy Callahan and Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara. Callahan wrote catechetical publications, such as model lessons and a graded course of study, that were used by religious educators in all parts of the country. Bishop O'Hara developed a nationwide program of religious vacation schools and drew up the structure of parish units in a "Suggested Constitution" of the CCD (Collins, 5,64).

Thus, the early years of sporadic growth and experimentation came to an end with the establishment of the National Center in 1935. The next few decades witnessed the flowering of the Confraternity.

The common school of America and the religious fragmentation of society making it impossible to introduce the teaching of any religious creed into the public school have contributed to the growth of the parochial elementary school. The quality of the Catholic school was steadily improving, and, year after year, the total enrollment continued to rise until 1808 when financing began to interfere with the school system. Since the State did not support the Catholic schools, they had to find a new source of financial aid, so they moved West with the pioneers.

Many teaching orders have been responsible for the movement and the growth up to the present time. The Jesuits,

the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Charity and others all labor now as then to create educational programs for Catholic youth (Komutdang, 9:7-25).

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1973, in a pastoral message on Catholic education, states that "... of the educational opportunities available to the Catholic community, Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education--to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve--among children and young people" (15:28).

Recognizing, however, that today the school system is shrinking visibly because of financial, sociological and demographic problems, the Bishops call for action now to ensure the continuance and improvement of Catholic schools. These steps include such things as school consolidations, reorganization away from parish schools, cooperation with public school counterparts, institutional cooperation with other Christian groups, fiscal and academic accountability, student recruitment, and greater efforts to increase income (15:31-35).

American Catholics, complacent with their extensive parochial school system, are only recently facing up to the statistics. "Presently, eight out of every ten Catholic youngsters of high school age are enrolled in public high schools. On the elementary level, half the Catholic students are not in parochial schools. Indications are

that the percentages will grow" (Conway, 6:11).

In light of these statistics, the National Conference called for efforts to draw together CCD programs and the Catholic schools in closer working relationships. "The objective--integration of all pastoral and educational programs into a unified whole whose components complement and assist one another--should be a major concern of parish leadership" (15:26).

To this end, the Bishops published a text which makes clear what must be stressed in the religious formation of Catholics of all ages. "The Bishops have in mind every type of religious education; in the home, in Catholic schools, in programs of the Confraternity, in classes of adult education in religion" (14:1). The three themes which carry through all religious education are the importance of prayer, participating in the liturgy and familiarity with the Holy Bible. These are followed by a set of twenty-five basic teachings of the Catholic Church (14:6-26).

Unfortunately, these new insights pose almost as many problems as they solve. Common fund financing, relevancy, qualities of good staff, administration, coordination, parental concerns, competencies for good teaching, psychology of change, and teacher training are among the new concerns which have arisen in religious education (Crabtree, 7:643-700).

In discussing the future of Christian education, Ham says, "The majority of teachers come into their classes without significant training and with very limited knowledge of the field that they are going to try to teach. Many of them are relatively inexperienced in dealing with persons at the age level they must teach" (8;7).

Conway confronts relevancy when he says, "The Church realizes that it is liable to be discounted as a vital member of modern society, that for too long, it has spoken a language which modern man can hardly understand" (6;12). In discussing the structures of CCD, he assures parents that CCD never pre-empts parental privileges, but works with parents to guide their children (6;16).

Change does not come easy and there are those who agree with Father O'Hare that "This is why religious schools are an asset, not only to the communities they represent, but to American society at large. Moral values, the kind that support hard, painful decisions, will not be derived from some cloudy abstraction called the 'American way of life'" (16;cover). The cultural experience and the faith community setting of the parochial school are the explicit goals of many who support the contemporary Catholic school (Paris, 17;466).

Others are beginning to heed the Bishop's invitation to cooperation and experimentation. Joseph Maher studied the relationship between the religious orientation of

Catholic parents and their attitudes toward Catholic schools. The results of this study seem to indicate that the Catholic school crisis in New York could not be attributed to a change in the religious orientation of parents (10).

Moriarty did a study in Chicago comparing various parochial schools and the CCD. He found that CCD students are more community oriented and that parochial school students understood the Cult dimensions of the faith better. The differences he observed were significant but narrow. A third theory that attributed increased self-esteem to parochial school students was not supported. On the basis of this study, Moriarty recommended that research be carried on to clarify religious educational goals and to construct new test instruments to use in controlled experimental situations (12).

The planning and collaboration needed for the active cooperation asked for by the Bishops has begun. The Archdiocese of Omaha has issued a curriculum planning guide (1).

Educators, like Sr. Bauer, have begun on a small scale to combine Catholic school students and CCD students for some of their religious education classes (2:13-14). The future seems to hold many changes for both systems.

Summary

American catechetics reflects its practical origin. America's pluralistic religious beliefs and its policy of

separation of Church and State led to the establishment of the Catholic parochial school system. When the mandate of religious education for all Catholic youth could not be fulfilled by the school system, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine grew. Both modes of religious education flourished. At the present time, because of financial, sociological and demographic problems, the parochial school system faces a crisis. The Church, through its Bishops has issued guidelines for the future urging reorganization, cooperation and experimentation. While some religious educators cling to one or the other mode of instruction, there are those who have begun studies to compare and contrast the results of each method and to draw up objectives for alternative approaches. Despite all of the changes which have occurred in recent years, even more significant ones seem to lie ahead for Christian education.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data of this research were obtained from the William H. Sadlier, Inc. Review Tests administered to sixth and eighth grade CCD and five-day school students at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish. No basis for grading is suggested or recommended by the Sadlier Company for these review exercises. The tests administered, therefore, were scored by the researcher on a scale of zero to forty-three allowing one point for each correct answer. The frequency of scores was then plotted.

Table I shows a comparison of the frequency of scores received by both eighth grade groups. The CCD group of four had a top score of thirty-nine and a low score of twenty-three. The five-day group of nineteen had a top score of thirty-seven, a low score of nineteen, and the remainder of the scores evenly distributed.

TABLE I
 FREQUENCY OF EIGHTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT SCORES
 IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Raw Scores 43-0	CCD Group N-4	Five-day school Group N-19
43-40	-	-
39	1	-
38	-	-
37	-	1
36	-	2
35	-	2
34	-	1
33	1	1
32	-	1
31	-	-
30	-	-
29	-	2
28	-	1
27	-	1
26	-	2
25	1	-
24	-	-
23	1	-
22	-	3
21	-	1
20	-	-
19	-	1
18-0	-	-

Table II shows a comparison of the frequency of scores received by both sixth grade groups. The CCD sample of fifteen had a top score of thirty-four and a bottom score of four. The large cluster of scores was between thirty-two and twenty-five. The five-day school sample of twenty-nine had a top score of thirty-four and a bottom score of thirteen and

was distributed with the largest cluster between thirty and twenty-six.

TABLE II
 FREQUENCY OF SIXTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT SCORES
 IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Raw Scores 43-0	CCD Group N-15	Five-day school Group N-29
43-35	-	-
34	1	1
33	-	2
32	1	1
31	2	1
30	1	2
29	-	2
28	2	1
27	-	3
26	2	3
25	1	-
24	-	2
23	-	1
22	1	1
21	-	3
20	-	-
19	1	1
18	1	1
17	-	1
16	-	1
15	-	-
14	-	1
13	1	1
12	-	-
11	-	-
10	-	-
9	-	-
8	-	-
7	-	-
6	-	-
5	-	-
4	1	-
3-0	-	-

The mean of each group of scores was then found and a Fisher t test was applied to determine the significance of the difference between the means of the two small uncorrelated samples. Since the null hypothesis assumes that they represent the same population, both samples are considered together and t is given by the formula (Smith, 18:89)

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - \bar{Y}}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2}{n_x + n_y - 2}\right) \left(\frac{n_x + n_y}{n_x \cdot n_y}\right)}}$$

where \bar{X} and \bar{Y} are the sample means, n_x and n_y the number of cases in each sample, and x and y the deviations of the individual scores from the means of their samples. The resulting value of t was then matched to Fisher's Table of t (Smith, 18:87). The Fisher t for Grade 8 was 0.8. The Fisher t for Grade 6 was 0.8. The scores, therefore, were not significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY

The researcher was aware that the data from the test scores present only one limited view of the five-day school and the CCD programs. The numbers of students tested were small in all groups and especially so in the CCD classes. In order to assess the two programs of religious education at Sts. Peter and Paul, an analysis of student population of both groups and their attendance patterns, the background and training of the teachers and the actual methodology used in the programs was examined. The experience background of the principal of the five-day school and of the Religious Education Coordinator, Mrs. Bizal, were the source of the information.

In 1978-79 the 294 youngsters in grades one through eight in the five-day school came from 196 different families. There were twenty-six families new to the school including the families of first graders. The attendance rate was high, seldom dropping below 97%.

The 1978-79 enrollment in the CCD program for grades one through eight was 125 students from 104 families. The final attendance count showed seventeen with perfect

attendance and forty-three who were absent no more than one or two days for the school year. The attendance rate was rarely lower than 92%, although these classes meet on Sunday mornings.

The number of students at each grade level is, of course, dependent upon many factors, not the least of which is the birth rate. An examination, however, of students by grade level in the CCD program shows the highest number of children, twenty-two, at the second grade level. The numbers stay fairly stable between twelve and eighteen until eighth grade where there were only six students. This pattern has been a common occurrence. The sacrament of the Eucharist or First Communion is administered at the second grade level and the sacrament of Confirmation is administered at the seventh grade level. The incentive to stay in the program seems to be highest during preparation for reception of the sacraments and lowest after the reception of Confirmation. In the five-day school, there is no such fluctuation. There were thirty-eight in the second grade, thirty-three in the seventh and thirty-eight in eighth.

The greatest differences in the two programs surface during scrutiny of the backgrounds of the teaching and administrative personnel. In 1978-79 all teachers in the five-day school were college graduates endorsed by the state of Nebraska either in elementary education or in a particular subject area. Five of the teachers were first year teachers,

three had one to three years of experience and the rest had seven or more years of experience. At the seventh and eighth grade levels, a religious with no previous teaching experience, on a regular basis, gave instructions. He was not a full time member of the staff.

All teachers were Roman Catholic. Some had Catholic school backgrounds, but at least seven had attended private or state colleges or universities. Graduate courses and workshops were a part of the backgrounds of several teachers.

One teacher had children in the school and was a member of the Parish. Another had a child in a parochial school near her home. There was even one teacher who had been a graduate of the school. The rest of the teachers had no connection with the parish and either had no youngsters or had families too young to be in school.

The administrator had a parochial school background with college work done at private and state institutions. She has an advanced degree in elementary education, is certified by the state of Nebraska in administration, has graduate hours beyond the degree and has teaching experience in public, parochial and CCD programs.

In the CCD program, the backgrounds of the personnel are more varied. Only one teacher and one regular substitute were certified teachers, three others were, at the time, college students in education, while four more had some college background or a degree in a field other than

education. All others had high school or technical school backgrounds.

Four regular teachers and two substitutes have youngsters in the CCD program. Five regular teachers had children, at the time, in the five-day school or were parents of graduates of the five-day school. Three were themselves graduates of the five-day school and one was a graduate of the CCD program at Sts. Peter and Paul. All were volunteers and almost all were parishoners.

There were only three beginning teachers in the CCD program. Ten had three to five years of experience and the rest had six or seven years.

The administrator had a Catholic school background, is certified in elementary education by the state of Nebraska, has had several workshops and graduate courses in religious education and has taught in public, parochial and CCD settings.

The occupations of the CCD teachers were as varied as their educational backgrounds. In addition to the teachers and college students, there was an author of children's books, a nurse, an engineer, four secretaries, two electricians and a union steward.

Religious education institutes and workshops are made available periodically to both groups of personnel by the Archdiocese of Omaha. Several teachers from both groups have attended various sessions of the institutes. In

addition, four of the CCD teachers had attended an inservice termed Cycle A for three hours a day for two weeks. The purpose of this inservice is to offer the opportunity for personal renewal and to provide the participant with experiences which will enable him to share his faith with others.

Students in both groups use the same facilities, texts, and materials. Mrs. Bizal, the coordinator, maintains a resource room within the school facility for use by both groups of teachers. Filmstrips, dittos, materials, activities and books are available in the room. Additional items can be obtained through her from the Archdiocesan Media Center.

All teachers were made aware of the resources available in the room and of the expectations at each grade level. Group goals were set and a conference was held with each teacher to determine objectives and set the direction. Suggestions on resources specifically suited to the grade level and to the objectives were made at the conference time. Demonstration lessons and advice on subject matter, methodology or lesson planning were available from either the coordinator or the principal at any time. At the second and seventh grade levels, where the preparation for the sacraments is intensified, special assistance was given upon request.

Both administrators adhered to a philosophy of leaving to the discretion and creativity of the individual teacher

the manner and method in which the material was presented to the children. This decision was based on their conviction that the teacher who is comfortable with the technique will do a better job. Much of the inservice training of the teachers, therefore, was done on an individual basis. Whenever suggestions were made for the common liturgical themes or for grade level expectations, alternatives were always given so that the teacher was free to choose one or to use it as a springboard to one of his own.

The most common limitation of beginning teachers in both groups was their fear that they would inadvertently teach "erroneous" theology. Close adherence to the teacher's manual provides much security and was recommended by the administrators for such teachers.

Communication between the two administrators was informal but done on a regular basis. All planning and organization for the two religious education programs between the administrators and with the priests, liturgist and music director was done in the spirit of the team approach to the education of all the children in the Parish.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to demonstrate if there is a difference in achievement in religious education, according to the William H. Sadlier, Inc. Review Test, between the five-day parochial school students and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine students at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish at the sixth and eighth grade levels and to survey the two approaches to religious education at the Parish. A comparison of the frequency of the scores received by the groups was made and the Fisher t Test was applied. An analysis of the student population and their attendance patterns, the teachers' background and training and the methodology employed was done.

Conclusions

The difference between the means of the two groups of sixth graders and the two groups of eighth graders was statistically not significant at the .05 level. The data, therefore, failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in achievement in religious education at

the sixth and eighth grade levels between Confraternity of Christian Doctrine students at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish and the five-day school students.

Implications

The writer would caution that broad generalizations cannot be made from this study. This sample of two grade levels may be indicative of the school population as a whole. In no way, however, is this to imply that on all aspects of religious education the groups would test the same. In this one area, only, the groups are performing at comparable levels. The positive articulation between the programs under the expert direction of Mrs. Julia Bizal is apparent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since the Catholic schools are based on a three-fold purpose of education--to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve--further research could well include studies in the last two areas.

2. Programs consistent with the new cooperative goals and objectives between the five-day school and the CCD should continue to be designed. These programs should be studied and evaluated under controlled conditions. Programs already initiated at Sts. Peter and Paul which might lend themselves to further study include unified CCD and five-day

school sacramental instructional programs, common seasonal themes and activities, parent involvement in sacramental preparation, and demonstration teaching and assistance in lesson planning in religious education by the Religious Education Director.

3. Continue the team approach to parish religious education.

4. The inservice training of lay teachers does prepare them to teach basic doctrine. Some inservicing of both faculties at the same time, therefore, would seem to be the next step.

5. Now that articulation between the programs is well under way, preparation for some unified liturgies, other than the sacramental ones, should be considered.

6. Assure the CCD program a fair share of the parish budget.

7. Hold periodic combined faculty meetings for both the CCD and the five-day school.

8. Continue to share the Religious Education resource center, media equipment, and resource materials as a way to foster unity and to provide quality programs efficiently.

9. Work toward a common funding of religion programs for both five-day school and CCD operations.

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