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# GROWING UP CATHOLIC IN A SCOTTISH CITY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DENOMINATIONAL IDENTITY, DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS, AND ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRISTIANITY AMONG 11- TO 15-YEAR-OLDS

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*From a large survey conducted in a Scottish city, this article identifies 1,285 students attending Catholic schools (16.6% of whom were not Catholics) and 1,240 Catholic students (14.8% of whom were educated in non-Catholic schools). The data demonstrate that Catholic students educated in Catholic schools hold a more positive attitude toward Christianity than comparable Catholic students educated in non-Catholic schools and that non-Catholic students educated in Catholic schools hold a less positive attitude toward Christianity than comparable Catholic students. Both findings have implications for the evaluation of the Catholic school system.*

As part of a wider program of research concerned with the development of attitude toward Christianity during childhood and adolescence, as summarized by Kay and Francis (1996), a series of studies was published during the 1970s and 1980s concerned with the influence on student attitudes of Catholic schools in England, Scotland, and Wales. The wider program of research was coordinated around the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity, first documented by Francis (1978). This instrument is a 24-item Likert scale concerned with the affective response toward God, Jesus, bible, church, and prayer. A considerable literature now exists on the psychometric properties of this instrument, including studies among school students in England (Francis, 1989), Kenya (Fulljames & Francis, 1987), Nigeria (Francis & McCarron, 1989), Northern Ireland (Francis & Greer, 1990; Greer

& Francis, 1991), and Scotland (Gibson, 1989c; Gibson & Francis, 1989). Other series of studies have supported the reliability and validity of the scale among adults in Australia and Canada (Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown, & Lester, 1995), England (Francis & Stubbs, 1987; Francis, 1992), the Republic of Ireland (Maltby, 1994), Northern Ireland (Lewis & Maltby, 1997), and the USA (Lewis & Maltby, 1995).

In the first study in the series concerned with the influence of Catholic schools, Francis (1979) examined attitudes toward Christianity among 2,272 students between the ages of 9 and 11 years attending 15 nondenominational schools, 10 Anglican schools, and 5 Catholic schools within the state-maintained sector. The schools, selected from three counties in the Southeast of England, were considered to be comparable in terms of student intake. The attitude questionnaire was administered to all year 5 and year 6 students present in the participating schools. After using multiple regression and path analysis to control for sex, age, social class, intelligence, parental religious practice, and the students' own religious practice, the data demonstrated that the students attending Catholic schools held a more positive attitude toward Christianity in comparison with comparable students attending nondenominational schools. This finding is consistent with the view that Catholic schools exert a positive influence on their students' attitude toward Christianity. By way of contrast, the Anglican schools appeared to exert a negative influence on the attitude toward Christianity of their students.

Francis' (1979) original study was replicated in 1978 among the next generation of students occupying the same school desks. This time completed questionnaires were received from 2,389 students. According to Francis (1984), the findings from the 1978 study were consistent with those from the 1974 study. The Catholic schools continued to exercise a positive influence, while the Anglican schools continued to exercise a negative influence, although in both cases the size of the influence was less in 1978 than in 1974. In more concrete terms, the 1978 regression coefficients indicated that students in Catholic schools would score about 3 points higher on the attitude scale than comparable students in nondenominational schools, while students in Anglican schools would score about 2.5 points lower than those in nondenominational schools.

The 1974 study was replicated for the second time in 1982 throughout the same schools. This time completed questionnaires were received from 2,295 students. According to Francis (1986a), the nature and direction of school influence remained consistent over all three surveys. At the same time, these replication studies demonstrated a significant decline in student attitude toward Christianity across all three types of school between 1974 and 1982.

Francis (1987) described a study that set out to monitor attitude toward Christianity among all year 6 students attending state-maintained schools in the county of Gloucestershire. Throughout the county as a whole, students

participated from 86.5% of the nondenominational schools, 79.8% of the Anglican schools, and 62.5% of the Catholic schools. Although the diocesan authorities had been fully committed in the design of the project, a month or so after the student questionnaire had been sent out to the schools, the honorary secretary of the Clifton Catholic Schools Commission decided that the questionnaire was "not suitable for use in our schools" and wrote to the head teachers of the Catholic schools suggesting that they should not participate. In the data analysis multiple regression was employed to control for sex, parental socio-economic status, parental church attendance, student church attendance, and the size of the school. After taking these factors into account, students educated in Catholic schools were found to record a more positive attitude toward Christianity than comparable students educated in nondenominational schools.

Francis and Carter (1980) undertook a similar analysis among year 11 students (15- to 16-year-olds) attending state-maintained secondary schools. A total of 21 nondenominational, Anglican, and Catholic secondary schools were identified from three different areas: Essex, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire. In each school the questionnaire was administered to one year 11 class that was taking religious education as an examination subject. In the nondenominational and Anglican schools, the questionnaire was also administered to a comparable class that was not taking religious education as an examination subject. Questionnaires were processed from 802 students. In the data analysis multiple regression was employed to control for sex, parental socio-economic status, intelligence, personality, mother's church attendance, father's church attendance, frequency of praying, and frequency of church attendance. After taking these factors into account, there was no support for the notion that either Anglican or Catholic secondary schools exert either positive or negative influence on their students' attitude toward Christianity.

In the next study in the series, Rhymer and Francis (1985) explored the influence of Catholic schools on attitudes toward Christianity among Catholic students in Scotland. In this study a stratified sample was constituted, representing the distribution of Scottish Catholic students between Catholic and nondenominational secondary schools within the state-maintained sector, and drawn from areas of the Strathclyde region typical of the geographic and economic conditions in Scotland as a whole. A total of 1,113 Catholic students between the ages of 11 and 16 completed the questionnaire of whom 882 were drawn from Catholic schools, 121 from nondenominational schools in which provision was made for Catholic religious education, and 110 from nondenominational schools in which no provision was made for Catholic religious education. Multiple regression was employed to control for sex, age, parental socio-economic status, and religious practice. After taking these factors into account, there was no significant difference in the atti-

tude scores of Catholic students educated in Catholic schools and Catholic students educated in nondenominational schools in which provision was made for Catholic religious education. The attitude scores of Catholic students in nondenominational schools in which no provision was made for Catholic religious education were significantly lower than either Catholic students in Catholic schools or Catholic students in nondenominational schools in which provision was made for Catholic religious education. In more concrete terms, the regression coefficients indicated that students in Catholic schools would score approximately four points higher on the attitude scale than comparable students in nondenominational schools in which no provision was made for Catholic religious education.

Francis (1986b) addresses a somewhat different question, being concerned not with comparing attitudes of Catholic students in Catholic and nondenominational schools, but with comparing the attitudes of Catholics and non-Catholics within Catholic schools. In this study data were provided by 2,895 students between the ages of 11 and 16 years attending five Catholic comprehensive schools in the Midlands. These students represented 88.9% of the total population in the five schools. The data demonstrated a progressive weakening of Catholic allegiance in each successive intake of students. In year 11, 93.5% of the students were baptized Catholics; the proportions then fell to 91% in year 10, to 88.4% in year 9, to 85.8% in year 8, and to 83.1% in year 7. In year 11, 85.5% of the students reported that their mother was a baptized Catholic; the proportions then fell to 79.8% in year 10, to 76.3% in year 9, to 76% in year 8, and to 73.6% in year 7. A similar pattern occurred in respect to the baptismal status of the students' fathers. The admission of higher proportions of non-Catholic students occurred as a consequence of a fall in the number of Catholic children seeking education in Catholic schools. Francis' research question concerned the implications of this shift in admissions policy for the school ethos, specifically in terms of the overall attitude toward Christianity displayed by the students as a whole. The data demonstrated that non-Catholic students, even from churchgoing backgrounds, in Catholic schools show a less positive attitude toward Christianity than Catholic students do. The recommendation formulated on the basis of this finding is that if Catholic schools recruit a higher proportion of non-Catholic students the doctrinal, liturgical, and catechetical assumptions of the school must be modified in order to preserve the goodwill and enhance the religious development of students from other denominational backgrounds.

Using a different measure of the effectiveness of Catholic education, three studies by Egan and Francis build on Francis' (1986b) study of students attending Catholic schools. These three studies employed a set of three dependent variables defined as scales of attitude toward the traditional view of the Catholic school system, attitude toward religious education, and attitude toward "my school" among 1,638 students attending Catholic schools in

Wales (Egan & Francis, 1986), among 911 students attending Catholic schools in Australia (Francis & Egan, 1987), and among 1,204 students attending Catholic schools in the USA (Francis & Egan, 1990). All three studies confirm that non-Catholic students record a less positive attitude than Catholic students do. These studies also highlight how nonpracticing Catholic students and students from nonpracticing Catholic homes record a less positive attitude than practicing Catholic students and students from practicing Catholic homes.

Boyle and Francis (1986) set out to examine whether the middle school system exerted a different influence on student attitudes in comparison with the conventional secondary school. In this study a sample of 1,205 students between the ages of 12 and 13 was drawn from six Catholic schools within two Northern metropolitan districts, one of which had developed a three-tier system of schools involving first schools, middle schools, and upper schools, and one of which had retained the two-tier system of schools, involving primary schools and secondary schools. Of the total sample, 699 students attended middle schools, and 506 students attended secondary schools. Multiple regression was employed to control for age, sex, and church attendance. The data demonstrated that there was no significant difference in student attitudes between Catholic middle and Catholic secondary schools.

Cumulatively these studies demonstrate that a great deal can be learned about the functioning of Catholic schools from cross-sectional surveys of this nature. These studies also confirm the value of patient and careful replication and extension of earlier studies in order to generate a more secure basis of empirical knowledge. Against this background the aim of the present study is to reanalyze a unique and valuable database generated in the late 1980s and documented by Gibson (1989a). Gibson conducted a detailed survey concerned with adolescent religiosity in 12 secondary schools in Dundee, Scotland. The survey included the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity, information about the denominational affiliation of the students and students attending Catholic secondary schools within the state-maintained sector. Key findings from this survey have been published in a series of papers including analyses concerning television and religion (Francis & Gibson, 1992, 1993b, 1993c), television and science (Gibson & Francis, 1993), science and religion (Gibson, 1989b; Francis, Gibson, & Fulljames, 1990; Fulljames, Gibson, & Francis, 1991; Francis, Fulljames, & Gibson, 1992), social class and religion (Gibson, Francis, & Pearson, 1990), the influence of Sunday Schools on adolescent religiosity (Francis, Gibson, & Lankshear, 1991), and parental influence on adolescent religiosity (Francis & Gibson, 1993a). Reanalysis of these data allows two key questions to be addressed with relevance to the Catholic school system in Scotland. The first question concerns a comparison between Catholic and non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools. The second question concerns a comparison

between Catholic students educated in Catholic and in nondenominational secondary schools. Each of these two questions will be addressed in turn on two different subsets of the Dundee data.

## METHOD

### SAMPLE

Gibson (1989c) conducted a detailed survey concerned with adolescent religiosity throughout 12 secondary schools in Dundee, Scotland. The questionnaires were administered by the schools' teaching staffs with guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. A total of 6,838 students participated in the study. Two subsets from this database are employed in the present analysis. These subsets are described as follows.

### MEASURES

The present analysis employs six variables from the questionnaire in addition to age, sex, and denomination.

The students' church attendance, their father's church attendance, and their mother's church attendance were each recorded on a 5-point scale: *weekly, at least once a month, sometimes, once or twice a year, and never.*

Father's social class and mother's social class were calculated on the basis of information provided about their employment according to the classification system proposed by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1980). According to this classification system occupations are graded "according to the general standing within the community of the occupations concerned." Class one includes doctors, accountants, and solicitors; class two includes teachers, social workers, and journalists; class three skilled non-manual includes secretaries and clerks; class three skilled manual includes lorry drivers and bus drivers; class four partly skilled manual includes postmen, machine operators, and brick layers; and class five unskilled manual includes laborers, porters, and messengers.

Attitude toward Christianity was assessed by the instrument developed by Francis (1978, 1989). This is a 24-item Likert scale, including items concerned with affective response toward God, Jesus, bible, church, and prayer. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale: *agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly.* Studies on the reliability and validity of this instrument among secondary school students in Scotland are reported by Gibson (1989c) and Gibson and Francis (1989).

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed by means of the SPSS statistical package (SPSS, Inc, 1988) using the multiple regression routine and path analysis (Keeves, 1988).

## RESULTS

### PART ONE: STUDENTS ATTENDING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

#### Sample

This analysis is based on the 1,285 students between the ages of 11 and 15 years who were attending Catholic schools. The sample comprised 621 boys and 664 girls: 72 11-year-olds, 263 12-year-olds, 312 13-year-olds, 300 14-year-olds, and 338 15-year-olds.

The majority of the students (83.4%) described themselves as Catholics, 10.3% as having no religious affiliation, and the remaining 6.3% as belonging to another Christian denomination. Two-fifths (41%) of the students attended church every Sunday, 7.1% attended at least once a month, 25.1% attended several times a year, 12.7% attended once or twice a year, and 14.1% never attended church.

Over one-third (35.1%) of the mothers attended church every Sunday, compared with 26.8% who never attended church. One-fifth (20.2%) of the fathers attended church every Sunday, compared with 42.7% who never attended church.

#### Analysis

Table 1 presents the correlation matrix between attitude toward Christianity, sex, age, father's church attendance, mother's church attendance, father's social class, mother's social class, church attendance, and being Catholic. These correlations suggest that a positive attitude toward Christianity among students attending Catholic schools is associated with being female and with being Catholic. There are significant positive correlations between attitude toward Christianity and personal church attendance, parental church attendance, and having parents engaged in higher social class occupations. There is a significant negative correlation between attitude toward Christianity and age. These correlations also suggest that Catholic students in Catholic schools are more likely to attend church and are more likely to be supported by parents who attend church. Catholic students are likely to come from slightly higher social class backgrounds in comparison with non-Catholic students.



**Table 1**  
**Correlation Matrix: Students in Catholic Schools**

	Attitude	Catholic	Church Attendance	Mother's Class	Father's Class	Mother's Church	Father's Church	Age
Sex	+0.1365 .001	+0.0446 NS	+0.0833 .001	+0.0519 NS	+0.0427 NS	+0.0088 NS	-0.0157 NS	-0.0272 NS
Age	-0.2709 .001	-0.0172 NS	-0.2354 .001	+0.0073 NS	+0.0289 NS	-0.0937 .001	-0.0878 .01	
Father's Church	+0.2757 .001	+0.2220 .001	+0.5460 .001	-0.1563 .001	-0.3183 .001	+0.5301 .001		
Mother's Church	+0.3050 .001	+0.2937 .001	+0.6647 .001	-0.1301 .001	-0.2297 .001			
Father's Class	-0.1101 .001	-0.0833 .01	-0.2580 .001	+0.3496 .001				
Mother's Class	-0.0562 .05	-0.1277 .001	-0.1700 .001					
Church Attendance	+0.4606 .001	+0.4215 .001						
Catholic	+0.2500 .001							

In view of the complex interrelationships between the variables, Table 2 and Figure 1 simplify the pattern of relationships in terms of a path model. Three features of this path model deserve commentary.

**Table 2**  
**Multiple Regression Significance Tests: Students in Catholic Schools**

Criterion Variables	Predictor Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Increase			Beta	t	P<
			R <sup>2</sup>	F	P<			
Father's Church Attendance	Father's Social Class	0.1090	0.1090	82.3	.001	-0.3108	-8.0	.001
	Mother's Social Class	0.1116	0.0026	1.9	NS	-0.0542	-1.4	NS
Mother's Church Attendance	Mother's Social Class	0.0192	0.0192	13.2	.001	-0.0755	-1.9	NS
	Father's Social Class	0.0466	0.0274	19.3	.001	-0.1770	-4.4	.001
Student Church Attendance	Sex	0.0065	0.0065	7.2	.01	+0.0713	+3.6	.001
	Age	0.0593	0.0528	61.8	.001	-0.1678	-8.4	.001
	Father's Church Attendance	0.3381	0.2788	462.9	.001	+0.2406	+10.3	.001
	Mother's Church Attendance	0.5200	0.1819	416.1	.001	+0.4483	+18.8	.001

	Catholic	0.5690	0.0490	124.6	.001	+0.2329	+11.2	.001
Attitude	Sex	0.0178	0.0178	20.0	.001	+0.0993	+3.8	.001
Toward	Age	0.0911	0.0733	88.7	.001	-0.1863	-6.9	.001
Christianity	Church	0.2512	0.1600	234.8	.001	+0.3469	+8.8	.001
	Attendance							
	Father's	0.2527	0.0015	2.3	NS	+0.0478	+1.5	NS
	Church							
	Attendance							
	Mother's	0.2527	0.0000	0.0	NS	-0.0012	-0.0	NS
	Church							
	Attendance							
	Catholic	0.2592	0.0065	9.6	.01	+0.0895	+3.1	.01



**Figure 1**  
**Path Model 1**

First, the social class of the father is an important predictor of both the father's and the mother's church attendance. After taking father's social class into account, mother's social class provides no additional predictive power in respect to either mother's or father's church attendance. The finding that church attendance is higher among the higher social classes is well established in the United Kingdom (Gibson, Francis, & Pearson, 1990). Moreover, the influence of social class in the model is assumed to be mediated through parental church attendance.

Second, the student's personal pattern of church attendance is shown to be a function of sex, age, parental church attendance, and being Catholic. Girls are more likely to attend church than boys are. Younger students are more likely to attend church than older students are. Parental church attendance has a very strong influence over the child's church attendance and the influence of the mother is stronger than the influence of the father. Having taken all these factors into account, the data demonstrate that the Catholic students are more likely to be regular churchgoers than the non-Catholic students are.

Third, the student's attitude toward Christianity is shown to be a function of sex, age, church attendance, and being Catholic. According to these data the strongest predictor of attitude toward Christianity is the student's personal church attendance. Moreover, the relationship between parental church attendance and attitude toward Christianity, identified by the correlation matrix, is shown by the path model to be mediated entirely through the influence of parental church attendance on child church attendance. Girls are more likely to hold a positive attitude toward Christianity than boys are. Younger students are more likely to hold a positive attitude toward Christianity than older students are. Having taken all these factors into account, the data demonstrate that the Catholic students are more likely to hold a positive attitude toward Christianity than non-Catholic students are.

By way of summary, higher scores on the scale of attitude toward Christianity among students in Catholic schools are associated with regular church attendance, with parental support for and example of church attendance, and with being Catholic. Thus, Catholic schools that recruit large numbers of non-Catholic students or large numbers of Catholic students from non-practicing backgrounds will experience greater difficulty in maintaining a school ethos supported by a positive attitude toward Christianity among the student body.

## **PART TWO: CATHOLIC STUDENTS**

### **Sample**

This analysis is based on the 1,240 students between the ages of 11 and 15 years who described themselves as Catholics. The sample comprised 581 boys and 659 girls: 76 11-year-olds, 262 12-year-olds, 295 13-year-olds, 297 14-year-olds, and 310 15-year-olds. The majority of the students (85.2%) attended Catholic schools, while the remaining 14.8% attended state-maintained nondenominational schools. Over two-fifths (44.9%) of the students attended church every Sunday, 7.9% attended at least once a month, 26.5% attended several times a year, 14.2% attended once or twice a year, and 6.6% never attended church.

Nearly two-fifths (38.5%) of the mothers attended church every Sunday, compared with 22.2% who never attended church. Nearly one-quarter (22.6%) of the fathers attended church every Sunday, compared with 39.7% who never attended.

### Analysis

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix between attitude toward Christianity, sex, age, father's church attendance, mother's church attendance, father's social class, mother's social class, church attendance, and attending a Catholic school. These correlations suggest that, in comparison with Catholic students who attend nondenominational schools, Catholic students who attend Catholic schools come from slightly lower social class backgrounds, but their parents are more likely to be active churchgoers. In comparison with Catholic students who attend nondenominational schools, Catholic students who attend Catholic schools display a higher level of church attendance and a more positive attitude toward Christianity. In view of the complex interrelationships between the variables, Table 4 and Figure 2 simplify the pattern of relationships in terms of a path model. Two features of this path model deserve commentary.

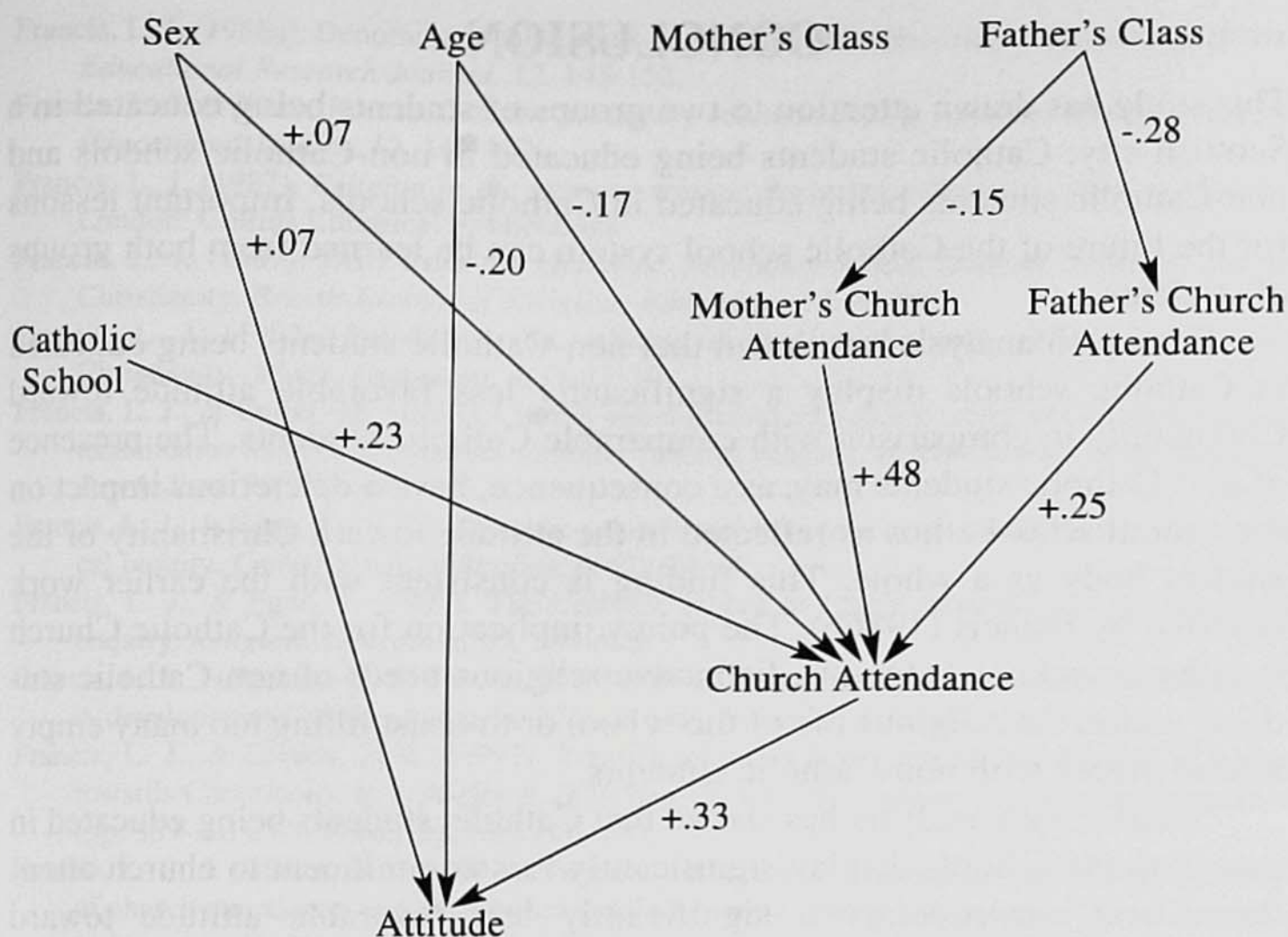
**Table 3**  
**Correlation Matrix: Catholic Students**

	Attitude	Catholic School	Church Attendance	Mother's Class	Father's Class	Mother's Church	Father's Church	Age
Sex	+0.0842 .01	-0.0370 NS	+0.0539 .05	+0.0341 NS	+0.0675 .05	-0.0259 NS	-0.0491 .05	-0.0006 NS
Age	-0.2655 .001	+0.0727 .01	-0.2039 .001	+0.0218 NS	+0.0015 NS	-0.0518 .05	-0.0620 .05	
Father's Church	+0.2229 .001	+0.0605 .05	+0.4871 .001	-0.1417 .001	-0.2821 .001	+0.4771 .001		
Mother's Church	+0.2288 .001	+0.0690 .01	+0.6083 .001	-0.1149 .001	-0.1969 .001			
Father's Class	-0.0354 NS	+0.1176 .001	-0.2326 .001	+0.3685 .001				
Mother's Class	-0.0157 NS	+0.1494 .001	-0.1499 .001					
Church Attendance	+0.3992 .001	+0.0999 .001						
Catholic School	+0.0772 .01							

**Table 4**  
**Multiple Regression Significance Test: Catholic Students**

Criterion Variables	Predictor Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Increase			Beta	t	P<
			R <sup>2</sup>	F	P<			
Father's Church Attendance	Father's Social Class	0.0857	0.0857	64.5	.001	-0.2777	-7.1	.001
	Mother's Social Class	0.0870	0.0013	1.0	NS	-0.0396	-1.0	NS
Mother's Church Attendance	Mother's Social Class	0.0161	0.0161	11.3	.001	-0.0693	-1.7	NS
	Father's Social Class	0.0360	0.0199	14.2	.001	-0.1523	-3.8	.001
Student Church Attendance	Sex	0.0008	0.0008	0.9	NS	+0.0664	+3.0	.01
	Age	0.0428	0.0420	47.8	.001	-0.1704	-7.6	.001
	Father's Church Attendance	0.2713	0.2284	341.1	.001	+0.2523	+9.9	.001
	Mother's Church Attendance	0.4505	0.1792	354.5	.001	+0.4774	+18.8	.001
	Catholic School	0.4544	0.0039	7.8	.01	+0.0630	+2.8	.01
Attitude Toward Christianity	Sex	0.0048	0.0048	5.3	.05	+0.0660	+2.4	.05
	Age	0.0736	0.0687	80.8	.001	-0.1951	-7.0	.001
	Church Attendance	0.1941	0.1205	162.7	.001	+0.3337	+9.1	.001
	Father's Church Attendance	0.1960	0.0020	2.7	NS	+0.0549	+1.7	NS
	Mother's Church Attendance	0.1963	0.0002	0.3	NS	-0.0194	-0.5	NS
	Catholic School	0.1990	0.0027	3.7	NS	+0.0526	+1.9	NS

First, as was seen in the previous path model, the student's personal church attendance is shown to be a function of sex, age, and parental church attendance. Having taken these factors into account, attendance at a Catholic school contributes additional predictive power to the student's church attendance. In other words, Catholic students who attend Catholic schools display a slightly higher level of church attendance than Catholic students of the same age, sex, and parental levels of church attendance who attend non-denominational schools.



**Figure 2**  
**Path Model 2**

Second, as was seen in the previous path model, the student's attitude toward Christianity is shown to be a function of sex, age, and personal church attendance. However, having taken these three factors into account, attendance at a Catholic school contributes no additional predictive power to the student's attitude toward Christianity. In other words, Catholic students who attend Catholic schools display neither a more positive nor a more negative attitude toward Christianity than Catholic students of the same age, sex, and level of personal church attendance who attend nondenominational schools. The relationship between attending a Catholic school and a more positive attitude toward Christianity, identified by the correlation matrix, is shown by the path model to be mediated entirely through the influence of personal church attendance on attitude toward Christianity.

By way of summary, attendance at a Catholic school is associated with a greater commitment to personal church attendance among Catholic students. In turn, a greater commitment to personal church attendance among Catholic students is associated with a more positive attitude toward Christianity. Thus, Catholic schools appear to be making a small but significant contribution to the positive religious development of their students.

## CONCLUSION

This study has drawn attention to two groups of students being educated in a Scottish city: Catholic students being educated in non-Catholic schools and non-Catholic students being educated in Catholic schools. Important lessons for the future of the Catholic school system can be learned from both groups of students.

First, path analysis has shown that non-Catholic students being educated in Catholic schools display a significantly less favorable attitude toward Christianity in comparison with comparable Catholic students. The presence of non-Catholic students may, as a consequence, have a deleterious impact on the overall school ethos as reflected in the attitude toward Christianity of the student body as a whole. This finding is consistent with the earlier work reported by Francis (1986b). The policy implication for the Catholic Church is either to acknowledge the distinctive religious needs of non-Catholic students within the religious life of the school or to resist filling too many empty school places with non-Catholic students.

Second, path analysis has shown that Catholic students being educated in non-Catholic schools display significantly less commitment to church attendance and consequently a significantly less favorable attitude toward Christianity in comparison with comparable Catholic students being educated in Catholic schools. The education of Catholic students outside the Catholic school system may, as a consequence, have a deleterious impact on the overall attitude toward Christianity within the Catholic community. This finding is consistent with the earlier work reported by Rhymer and Francis (1985). The policy implications for the Catholic Church are to affirm the distinctive contribution of Catholic schools to the life of the Catholic community and to seek to make the schools attractive to a wider spectrum of Catholic parents.

These findings have been derived from a unique and thorough survey conducted throughout a whole Scottish community in the late 1980s. The survey now needs replicating at the beginning of the 2000s.

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