

THE NEED ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION OF CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT MEXICAN-AMERICANS

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The relationship between religion and the development of capitalism has been a central social research problem of the present century. Initially developed by the German scholar Max Weber in his classic 1904 volume, *The Protestant Ethic and the Birth of Capitalism*, this relationship has been given renewed attention in the contemporary era by the reformulation of the psychologist, McClelland, and his associates (1953).

More recent theory postulates an historical sequence consisting of three steps: (1) Protestantism increases independence and mastery training by parents, (2) This result, in turn, produces high need achievement in sons, and (3) This increased motivation finally intensifies the spirit of modern capitalism. The present investigation was formulated to further study the relationship between two variables in this hypothetical sequence, Protestant religion affiliation and need achievement.

Previous investigations which have attempted to directly study the relationship between the two variables have yielded contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, studies by McClelland and by Veroff have failed to demonstrate differences in achievement need between groups of Catholics and Protestants. (McClelland, 1961, and Veroff, *et al.*, 1960). On the other hand Rosen has concluded from his data that differences in need achievement between a group of Catholics and non-Catholic white subjects has satisfactorily been demonstrated (Rosen, 1959).

There are three alternative explanations of these conflicting results. The first would accept them at face value and conclude that Weber's original formulation was not valid. A second possibility is that Weber is right but that contemporary studies have utilized inadequate methods for evaluating the theory. This explanation would maintain that the aspects of personality which Weber described by concepts such as stewardship, individual salvation, and worldly asceticism, were not needs at all but values. Since the TAT and graphic methods were designed to measure "needs," they fail when indiscriminately used as measures of "values."

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A third alternative is that the Catholic and Protestant groups compared in contemporary studies are closer today in value structure than at the time of the early days of capitalism and/or that both exert less influence on the lives of their church members than formerly. Thus, for example, a contemporary Catholic family like the Kennedys may embody in their values many of the standard characteristics of the older Protestant ethic.

The present study was designed as a partial test of the three alternative hypotheses. A first prerequisite for accomplishing this task was the selection of Catholic and Protestant groups not yet fully exposed to the current American religious melting pot. A natural field situation meeting this requirement may be found within the relatively unassimilated Mexican-American ethnic group of the United States Southwest. Here we find living together Catholics whose religion is a blend of Mexican and American Catholic elements and Protestants whose religious orientations resemble those of early Protestantism rather than today's middle-class Anglo-American Protestantism.

In view of the possibly different parameters described by different achievement measures two measures were employed, the one a measure of achievement need, the other a measure of achievement value.

METHOD

The 54 Protestant and 54 Catholic subjects of this study were selected from lists provided by religious leaders of predominantly Mexican-American congregations. The two Catholic priests of the Mexican-American parishes were asked to draw a random sample of names from their entire parish lists. Names were also supplied by eleven Protestant leaders. However, because of the small size of these congregations in some cases the entire male membership was enumerated.

The eleven Protestant churches (the Latter Day Saints and Seventh Day Adventists groups are included here as Protestant) may be described as "sect" or "fundamentalist" and "denomination."¹

¹"Sect" or "fundamentalist" groups, contrasted to "denominational" groups are distinguished by: small size, uneducated leadership, low socio-economic status of membership, literal interpretation of the Bible, strict moral regulation of members' behavior, and highly emotional religious services. Many small, fundamentalist groups are unaffiliated with a large organization, having splintered from the parent church in a protest movement. The "sect-denomination cycle" refers to the regular movement of members and over longer periods of time, churches themselves, from sect to denomination status. New poverty stricken, converts gravitate to the sect groups. As their years of contact with the church increase and they start climbing the socio-economic ladder there is a tendency to move to denomination affiliated churches.

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Twenty-four subjects were identified as denomination members and thirty subjects were identified as sect members. This proportion represents the approximate distribution of sect and denomination members in the total Mexican-American Protestant population of this city.

All subjects were male Mexican-Americans living in a southwestern city of approximately 300,000 people. No significant differences appeared between the two groups of subjects in age (mean age 40 years), education (seven or eight years of schooling completed, on the average), socio-economic status (as determined by income and occupation—the majority being unskilled laborers), and level of acculturation (as determined by language preference, English language usage, and place of birth—approximately half having emigrated from Mexico).

The two measuring instruments employed were a series of questions devised by Rosen and referred to here as the Rosen Scale (Rosen, 1956, pp. 210, 211) and McClelland's four Need-Achievement cards (McClelland, D. C. *et al.*, 1953). Spanish or English was used depending on the preference and language ability of each subject.

In developing the question used in this study, Rosen attempted to tap three value orientations which he felt were related to the "achievement syndrome." These orientations he labeled "activistic-passivistic," "individualistic-collectivistic," and "present-future" (Rosen, 1959).

The activistic-passivistic continuum is related to attitudes concerning the necessity or futility of attempting to control or manipulate one's physical and social environment. An activistic culture, like that of the United States, encourages the individual to seek to improve his status through direct effort, while in passivistic cultures it is felt that such efforts are useless—*que será será*.

The individualistic-collectivistic orientation is concerned with the emphasis placed on individual action related to self-actualization as opposed to an emphasis on family or group goals. The culture of the United States is individually oriented with characteristic nuclear family loyalties and high family mobility. In contrast, collectivistic cultures emphasize group goals and the physical closeness of the extended family—a situation which often limits vocational achievement.

The present-future continuum describes the contrast between attitudes which encourage enjoying the present to the fullest and attitudes which encourage delay of present gratification for promise of greater rewards in the future.

The four cards used to measure the McClelland need achieve-

ment were scored by standardized procedures described by its author (McClelland, *et al.*, 1953). Scores independently assigned by two trained scorers were averaged and the resultant figure converted in order to eliminate negative and fractional values. Scoring reliability of the independent scorers was .81 yielding reliability of the composite score of .89.

RESULTS

In the present study, affirmative responses to the seven items of the Rosen scale were recorded. High scores indicate a passive-present-familistic orientation. Results are presented in Table I. Inspection of this table indicates that Catholic subjects average 3.8 items in the direction of this orientation while Protestant subjects average only 2.7 items. A *t* test shows this difference to be significant at the .01 level.

TABLE I
Test Comparison of Catholic and Protestant
Achievement Orientation

| | Catholic | Catholic | Protes- | Protes- | Standard Err. D | <i>t</i> | p* |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------|
| | Mean | N | tant Mean | tant N | | | |
| Rosen Value Items | 3.82 | 54 | 2.67 | 54 | .40 | -2.89 | .01 |
| McClelland Need Scoring | 5.17 | 54 | 5.93 | 54 | .66 | 1.15 | N.S. |

*Level of significance using a two-tailed test.

Further inspection of Table 1 indicates that the difference between Protestant and Catholic groups on the McClelland need achievement measure is not significant.

The difference in achievement measures between Protestant fundamentalist and denomination group members is presented in Table 2. On the passive-present-familistic orientation variable measured by the Rosen Scale the fundamentalist group averages 3.4 responses; the sect group averages 1.8 responses. This difference is significant at the .01 level. No significant difference between the groups is reflected by the McClelland need achievement measure.

TABLE II
t Test Comparison of the Achievement Needs and Values of
Denomination and Sect Members

| | Den. | Den. | Sect | Sect | Std. Err. D. | <i>t</i> | p* |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|----------|------|
| | Mean | N | Mean | N | | | |
| Rosen Value Items | 1.83 | 24 | 3.0 | 30 | .50 | -3.17 | .01 |
| McClelland Need Scoring | 6.17 | 24 | 5.73 | 30 | .50 | 0.48 | N.S. |

*Level of significance using a two-tailed test.

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A Pearson product moment correlation-coefficient was compiled between the Rosen and McClelland achievement measures. The correlation coefficient of $-.15$ was not significant at the $.05$ level.

DISCUSSION

The present data indicates that the McClelland and Rosen measures of achievement are measuring different entities. The former measure yields no significant differences between Protestant and Catholic groups; the latter does. Moreover, the correlation between the two measures is very low and not significant. Although these and other results reported previously may superficially seem to be conflicting, a careful analysis suggests that the data are consistent and that divergent statements in the literature may be the result of inaccurate and/or erroneous interpretation of data.

When the measure employed has been designed to measure achievement need, either by the content analysis of thematic material or by the graphic methods, the data have consistently failed to indicate higher need achievement for Protestant groups. This conclusion is valid for the study of United States readers (McClelland, 1961), the study of readers of a world-wide nation sample (McClelland, 1961), thematic apperception data for a representative sample of the United States population (Veroff, *et al.*, 1960) and the comparison of a group of children of a Mexican Catholic and Protestant town (McClelland, 1961).

The conclusion which Rosen draws from his data (Rosen, 1959) would appear to contradict those uniform results but analysis of his inferences indicates erroneous statistical reasoning. In the study at issue, Rosen administered the McClelland projective pictures to a group of 427 boys divided into French Canadian, Italian, Greek, Jewish, Negro and Protestant ethnic groups and five socio-economic classes. An analysis of variance of the need achievement scores, arranged according to ethnic group and social class, was carried out.

Results of this initial analysis as reported by Rosen indicate an F for ethnicity with a probability greater than $.05$ and an F for social class with a probability smaller than $.05$ and an interaction F , ethnicity by social class, with a P greater than $.05$. Rosen then combines the scores for the Italian and French-Canadian groups to derive what he designates as a "Roman Catholic" score and the scores for the remaining non-Negro groups, the Protestant, Greek and Jewish groups, to form a "White" score. The difference between the two derived group means was then tested (by a one tailed t test) and it was found that the mean Catholic score was significantly lower than the mean score for the Protestant, Greek Orthodox and Jewish groups ($P < .01$).

A first question raised by this procedure concerns the validity of a *t* test performed on data after an initial F Test had indicated results which were not significant. Even more serious is the fact that, as far as can be determined by the report, the difference between the "Catholic" and "White" groups was tested without taking into account the differential social class composition of these groups. On the same page in which the "Catholic-White" difference is reported, Rosen states that "there are relatively more middle class than lower class subjects among the Jews, Greeks, and Protestants than among Italians, French Canadians, and Negroes" (p. 53). Moreover the data of the same study indicate that social class is a much greater determinant of the variance of need achievement than ethnicity. On the basis of the data, therefore, it seems doubtful whether any real difference between Catholic and non-Catholic subjects exists on the need achievement measure and even if it does exist it might just as readily be accounted for by the variable social class as by religion.

Turning from comparative studies of religious groups to studies measuring achievement value, strikingly contrasting results may be observed.

The difference between the Catholic and non-Catholic "white" groups on the Rosen achievement value measure indicates a lower value² for the Catholics and is significant at the .001 level. The difficulties in interpreting Rosen's achievement need data are not applicable to the achievement value data. The F test which he applied to the six religious-ethnic groups previous to his *t* tests was significant at the .001 level. Although the "Catholic-non-Catholic White" religious group difference is again reported without controlling statistically for the social class variable, inspection of the means within each social class of the separate ethnic religious groups indicates that the differences between individual ethnic groups are consistent.

The differences between the results produced by measures of achievement need and value are consistent with other empirical findings and theoretical considerations. Rosen employed the two measures in a previous study but it is curious that he never has attempted to correlate the two measures. In the 1957 study he does, however, report that they are linked with different variables. High achievement need is positively correlated with school grades but high achievement value is not. Conversely, high achievement value is positively correlated with stated desire to go to college but high achievement need is not (Rosen, 1956).

²Rosen's material is scored in the opposition direction from that of the present study. Thus a low score in Rosen's material and high score in this study both represent a passive-present-familistic orientation. The two studies yield similar results.

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McClelland has defined need achievement as a concern with competing successfully with some standard of excellence. It is noteworthy that the need is scored as being present if there is a concern with competing successfully with *any* standard. The content of the standard remains unspecified; it may be individualistic or collective, a standard to accumulate riches to prove to one's self that one is "elected" or a standard to completely confess one's sins in order to attain absolution. If the need achievement measure does not indeed measure what it was intended to measure, it is not at all surprising that Catholics and Protestant subjects are not differentiated by it. For Protestantism is distinguished from Catholicism as a religion not with respect to having standards of excellence of greater or less intensity but with respect to having standards of excellence which are different. Moreover, since they are different, it is also not surprising that an instrument measuring values which is designed to capture some of these differences does succeed in eliciting significant differences between the two religious groups.

It remains to relate the values taught in the Mexican-American Protestant church to the values singled out by the Rosen value instrument. The religious values seem to emphasize the following behaviors: stewardship, or the proper use of one's abilities; individual responsibility, both in using potential and in accepting and leading a righteous life; the putting off of present gratification for future gain; and hard work and frugality. The Rosen Scale indicates that Protestants, as compared with Catholics, have the following values or orientations: an activist approach toward controlling the environment; an individualistic rather than a familistic point-of-view; and a future as opposed to a past-present orientation. The resemblance between what is preached in the church and values expressed by the parishioners in response to the test instrument is striking. Moreover, these values, propagated by the church and apparently internalized by the congregation, are directly antithetical to such problem behaviors of the Mexican-American ethnic group, as apathy, irresponsibility, resignation, poor impulse control, and acting out behavior—particularly alcoholism.

It is probably for this reason that in another study, previously reported, using the subjects of the present investigation, it was found that the Protestant-Mexican-American group has lower pathological scores on the Conell Medical Index and a greater tendency to keep appointments with the research team (Meadow and Bronson, *J. of Abnormal Psych.*, in press).

In summary, the three alternative hypotheses which initiated this study may now be evaluated in the light of the results and the analysis of the previous literature. Our conclusion is that there is

a difference between Catholic and Protestant groups in the achievement area but it is with respect to value content and not with respect to need. This difference in values was demonstrated in the Mexican-American Protestant and Catholic groups of the present study. Moreover, within the Protestant group demonomination members differ from sect members, in their value orientation—a phenomenon probably reflecting their differential contact with Protestantism. And again, no such difference appears in their need scores.

Turning to the larger scene, there is some evidence that a similar difference value is found when French-Canadian and Italian Catholic groups are compared with a mixed group of Greeks, Jews, and Protestant white Americans (Rosen, 1959). Whether or not these differences can be obtained with large representative samples of United States Catholics and Protestants still remains open to empirical question and probably depends on the degree to which the value structures of these groups have become amalgamated. As early as 1956, one large scale study utilizing 2,205 male white salesmen, engineer, bank officials and clerks indicates no differences between Catholics and Protestants on various measures of social mobility (Mack, R. W. *et al.*, 1956). This study suggests that perhaps at least in upper middle and upper class levels of the United States population the process of amalgamation of Protestant and Catholic achievement values has made considerable progress.

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ABSTRACT

The Need-achievement orientations of fifty-four Protestant and fifty-four Catholic Mexican-American subjects of similar levels of acculturation and socio-economic background are here reported. It was hypothesized that values relevant to the "Protestant Ethic" would be reflected by Protestant subjects. One instrument, evaluating basic achievement motivation, reflected an equal drive in both

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groups but a second instrument reflecting values and attitudes showed the Protestants to have achievement goals more related to an activist-individualistic-future orientation. It is suggested that certain elements of the Protestant religion such as stewardship, individual responsibility, asceticism and self-discipline are responsible for the attitude differences expressed by Protestant subjects.

RESUMEN

Se informa aquí acerca de la orientación de la "necesidad-de-logro" de 54 sujetos protestantes y 54 sujetos católicos mexicano-americanos de niveles semejantes de aculturación y antecedentes socio-económicos. Se hipotetizó que los sujetos protestantes reflejarían valores pertinentes a la "Ética Protestante". Un instrumento, evaluando la motivación básica de logro, reflejó un empuje igual en ambos grupos, pero un segundo instrumento, reflejando valores y actitudes, indicó que los protestantes tenían aspiraciones más relacionadas a una orientación activista-individualista futura. Se sugiere que ciertos elementos de la religión protestante, tales como la mayordomía, la responsabilidad individual, el ascetismo y la disciplina propia, son responsables de las diferencias en las actitudes expresadas por los sujetos protestantes.

RESUMO

As orientações quanto ao motivo de realização de 108 sujeitos,



54 protestantes e 54 católicos de origem mexicana nos Estados Unidos e do mesmo nível de aculturação e background socio-econômico, são aqui apresentadas. A hipótese proposta foi de que os valores relativos a chamada "Ética Protestante" seriam refletidos pelos sujeitos protestantes. Um instrumento, avaliando o motivo de realização básico indicou um impulso (drive) igual em ambos grupos; um outro instrumento medindo valores e atitudes revelou protestantes como tendo metas de motivação mais relacionadas a uma orientação ativa-individualista-futura. Sugere-se que certos aspectos da religião protestante como mordomia, responsabilidade individual, ascetismo e disciplina pessoal são responsáveis pelos diferenças em atitude expressadas pelos sujeitos protestantes.