

Abstract

Church attendance has fallen to its lowest level since the 1970s. This inquiry deals with some of the reasons why it could be falling. The declining religious attendance rates for every denominational group in the country may be because the U.S. is following many other secular nations in becoming a society without rigorous systems of religious education in which churches, mosques, synagogues and temples serve as moral training grounds. According to some social science literature, individuals have stopped attending religious services for a variety of reasons: total family income (TFI), decreasing family unity, none-secular education in the home and at school (Ploch & Hastings, 1995). These examples may not be the root problems to why religious attendance is down, but they are important factors that cause inquiry into why attendance not only has gone down, but also is a graying culture, a graying congregation (Bahr, 1970).

Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

Religious attendance in this country is at an all time low, it has fallen to its lowest level since the 1970s. In the article "Church attendance on the decline" (1996) a survey indicates that "37% of adults attend church in 1996, compared to 49% in 1991" (p. 843). Therefore, it is my opinion that the lack of religious influence for young people in the United States will continue to decline, which may lead to more social problems.

In the article "who attends church more" (1997) the proportion of people who attend church regularly, "varies dramatically by race, age, affluence, family structure and geography" (p.39). Consequently, the primary focus of this analysis is to examine if there is a positive or negative correlation between income and church attendance.

According to (Babbie & Halley, 1996) this analysis will require one to advance the analytical procedure to what "social researchers call bivariate analysis, involving two variables: a cause and an effect." More simply put, whatever an individual's income is (the cause) may – to some degree – affect that particular individual's religious service attendance (the effect).

Chapter Two: Review of Previous Literature

There has been, in this particular analysis, an over-abundance of literature on religious service attendance, and an obscenely low review of literature where and when it pertained to church attendance in relation to total family income. Virtually every study on church attendance focused on the percentage of people, their denomination, their race, their gender and the region or age. Very little was mentioned about the relationship between income and church attendance. There was, however, an article in Jet Magazine (1997) which noted "[t]hose having a household income below \$10,000 (37 percent) attended church less than those who made more than \$60,000 (47 percent). Those making between \$40,00 and \$60,000 (50 percent) said they worshipped in church the most" (p.39).

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