

RELIGIOSITY AMONG JEWISH STUDENTS IN A METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY *

By PANOS D. BARDIS
The University of Toledo

ABSTRACT

Copies of a Religion Scale were distributed among Jewish students attending a Midwestern university. The resulting scores were analyzed in terms of certain independent variables and compared with similar scores obtained from various other groups. Religiosity among the Jewish subjects was relatively low and tended to decline as dating liberalism and parental educational and occupational levels rose. Familism and religiosity, however, were directly proportional. Males and females did not differ significantly in attitudes toward religion.

THE PROBLEM

In the present study, an effort is made to investigate certain aspects of the religious life of Jews in their American environment. More specifically, a series of factors has been treated as a constellation of independent variables generating possible changes in the dependent variable of religiosity. The question, then, is: What changes are taking place in the religious life of American Jews and what are the causes of these changes?

METHODOLOGY

To answer a small fragment of this complex question, a Religion Scale was employed among a group of American Jews.

The Religion Scale. This device was constructed by means of the Likert scaling technique¹ for the purpose of quantifying attitudes toward religion². The theoretical range of scores on this scale is 0-100,

* Paper presented at the 1964 annual meeting of the Ohio Valley Sociological Society, Columbus, Ohio. Panos D. Bardis is Professor of Sociology, The University of Toledo, and Editor, of *Social Science*.

1. Rensis Likert, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes* (New York: Archives of Psychology, 1932), No. 140, especially 11-33 and 44-53.

2. Panos D. Bardis, "A Religion Scale", *Social Science*, 36 (April, 1961), 120-23; and "A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes Toward Religions", *Eleusis*, 63

zero representing the lowest possible degree of religiosity. Although the validity and reliability of the instrument had been established satisfactorily at the time of its construction, an additional test was conducted during the present study. This was an odd-even reliability test involving 32 of the Jewish subjects. The resulting reliability coefficient, which was corrected by means of the Spearman-Brown formula³, was .87, that is, significant beyond the .01 level.

The Questionnaire. An additional device consisted of questions dealing with certain independent variables, such as age, sex, education, parental occupation, and the like.

The Sample. At the time of the study, the subjects were attending a municipal university in a large, Midwestern metropolis. To secure a sample stratified according to sex and academic class, eight male and eight female Jewish students were selected from each of the four undergraduate classes. The sample, which thus consisted of 64 subjects, had the following characteristics :

Sex : 32 males, 32 females.

Age : range, 17-34 years (students were about 20 years old, except for one female who was 34); arithmetic mean, 20.19.

Marital status : 53 single, 6 engaged, 4 married, 1 divorced.

College : Arts and Sciences, 11; Business, 15; Education, 31; Engineering, 3; Law, 1; Pharmacy, 3.

Amount of education : 16 freshmen, 16 sophomores, 16 juniors, 16 seniors.

Number of siblings : 4 subjects had no siblings, 29 had only 1 each, 23 had 2 each, 5 had 3 each, 1 had 4, and 2 had 5 each.

Birth order : first, 39; second, 19; third, 4; fourth, 1; fifth, 1.

Father's occupation : 1 semiskilled worker, 11 foremen and skilled workers, 29 clerks and kindred workers, 10 proprietors, managers, and officials, and 13 professionals.

Father's education : range, 0-20 years; mean, 13.70.

Mother's occupation : 34 housewives, 1 semiskilled worker, 7 skilled workers, 17 clerks and kindred workers, 2 managers, and 3 professionals.

Mother's education : range, 8-17 years; mean, 12.52.

(November, 1961), 744-48. Copies of the scale may be secured by writing to Panos D. Bardis, Editor, *Social Science*, The University of Toledo, Toledo 6, Ohio.

3. Henry E. Garrett, *Statistics in Psychology and Education*, fourth edition (New York : Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 338-41.

All of these subjects were interviewed personally and the data thus collected were analyzed by means of various statistical tests.

FINDINGS

1. *The Religiosity Mean.* The arithmetic mean of all religion scores was 49.53. This value was compared with those obtained from a group of agnostics and a group of Greek Orthodox persons in the same city, a group of Catholic students in the same university, and two groups of ministerial and nonministerial Methodist students attending a Midwestern denominational college ⁴. The findings were as follows :

Catholics	79.11
Ministerial Methodists	68.83
Greek Orthodox	68.73
Nonministerial Methodists	57.97
Jews	49.53
Agnostics	10.81

In other words, the Jewish subjects were less religious than all other groups — t-tests revealed that these differences were significant beyond the .001 level — except for the agnostics.

2. *Religiosity and Dating Liberalism.* Such rather limited religiosity perhaps implies a correspondingly high degree of ethical liberalism. Indeed, when part of this relationship was investigated by means of a Dating Scale ⁵, the resulting coefficient of correlation for religiosity and dating liberalism was — .38, which, with 62 degrees of freedom, was highly significant beyond the .01 level.

3. *Religiosity and Familism.* Limited religiosity may also imply diminishing family solidarity among American Jews. This form of solidarity was measured at the attitude level by means of a Familism Scale ⁶. Indeed, when the two sets of scores were correlated, the resulting coefficient was .41, that is, quite significant beyond the .01 level (df 62). A similar study ⁷ among suburban Jews in another Midwestern metro-

4. Bardis, "A Religion Scale", *op. cit.*, 122.

5. Panos D. Bardis, "A Dating Scale: A Technique for the Quantitative Measurement of Liberalism Concerning Selected Aspects of Dating", *Social Science*, 37 (January, 1962), 44-47. Copies of this scale may be obtained by writing to the author.

6. Panos D. Bardis, "A Familism Scale", *Marriage and Family Living*, 21 (November, 1959), 340-41. Copies of this instrument may be secured by writing to the author.

7. Panos D. Bardis, "Familism Among Jews in Suburbia", *Social Science*, 36 (June, 1961), 194.

polis gave almost identical results, thus indicating that, when religiosity declines, the importance of the family also tends to decrease.

4. *Religiosity and the Variables of Age, Number of Siblings, and Order of Birth.* Additional correlation tests between religiosity and the variables of age, number of siblings, and order of birth gave extremely insignificant coefficients ($-.02$, $-.06$, and $.00$, respectively).

5. *Religiosity and Sex.* Also quite insignificant was the difference between the mean religiosity score of the males (48.37) and that of the females (50.69; t . 80, df 62). Like the unusually low mean of the entire group, this finding was different from what numerous other studies have indicated regarding religiosity among college students in general. Gordon W. Allport *et al.*, for instance, found that female students tend to be much more religious than male ones⁸. Similarly, a 1948 survey of the students at the University of Minnesota — the percentage of Jews was very small — revealed that 42 per cent of all women and 21 per cent of all men took part in religious activities on the campus⁹.

In view of the three traditional functions of the Jewish woman, namely, creating a family, promoting its solidarity, and perpetuating various familial and religious practices, it is somewhat surprising that the religiosity of the females in the present study was as limited as that of the males. Of course, it would be unrealistic not to expect some degree of liberalization among Jewish women in a democratic and rather secularistic society. After all, these women have deliberately pursued a certain amount of emancipation in numerous ways, including the formation of groups such as the National Council of Jewish Women — the first national Jewish-American women's organization — founded in 1893 and aimed at informing its members about current events as well as enabling them to participate in various philanthropic activities. Still, such emancipation is perhaps more extensive than many Jewish leaders believe or wish it to be. One may also add that, because of her traditionally low status, the Jewish woman in America is probably seeking assimilation so diligently and zealously that she is becoming *plus royaliste que le roi!* Therefore, an interesting hypothesis to investigate would be that, in an increasingly democratic society, the less privileged segments of a minority group are the first to break their chains.

8. "The Religion of the Post-War College Student", *Journal of Psychology*, 25 (January, 1948), 3-33.

9. Edmund G. Williamson *et al.*, *A Study of Participation in College Activities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1954).

6. *Religiosity and the Variables of Education and Occupation.* Like the variable of sex, the influence of certain educational factors was statistically insignificant. The education majors, for example, made a religiosity mean of 50.77, while those in arts and sciences were represented by a value of 47.91, and those in business by 50.60. All of these means differed insignificantly, the values being as follows: education-arts and sciences, .62 (df 40); education-business, .05 (df 44); and business-arts and sciences, .58 (df 24). The coefficient of correlation for religiosity and academic class was also quite insignificant (.02).

However, when religiosity was correlated with paternal occupation¹⁰, the resulting coefficient was — .46, that is, highly significant beyond the .01 level. The corresponding coefficients for paternal education, maternal occupation, and maternal education, namely, — .21, — .12, and — .15, were insignificant, but all in the same direction as the paternal occupation value. A final test revealed that the religiosity mean of subjects with gainfully employed mothers was 47.00, while that of those coming from homes where the mother had remained a fairly traditional homemaker was 51.76, the difference being significant at the .10 level (t 1.67, df 62).

All of these tests indicate that, while certain educational forces on the campus seemed to exercise a relatively limited influence on the subjects' religiosity, parental occupation and education, especially paternal occupation, tended to affect the students' religiosity to an inversely proportional degree. Superficially considered, these findings appear inconsistent, since both sets of tests dealt with the influence of education on religiosity — parental occupation is usually related to parental education. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the tests involving the students' own educational characteristics covered only a four-year period, while those including parental education explored a much longer time interval. In other words, the effects of education on certain attitudes appear gradual, almost imperceptible. On the other hand, as family sociologists know, despite the relative decline of the American family, parental influence on children's attitudes remains rather extensive. It seems, then, that the occupationally successful Jewish parents have achieved a higher degree of assimilation which they tend to transmit to their children. The

10. Occupation was quantified as follows: unskilled workers, 0; semi-skilled workers, 1; skilled workers and foremen, 2; clerks and kindred workers, 3; proprietors, managers, officials, 4; professionals, 5. See Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics for the United States, 1870-1940*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 181-86.

test involving homemakers and gainfully employed wives also appears to indicate that the occupational emancipation of Jewish women tends to generate a higher degree of secularism among their children.

Other studies dealing with education and religion have revealed the following : Havemann and West ¹¹ found that the religiosity of Catholic and Protestant students did not diminish in college; a survey by Adam R. Gilliland ¹², another by Dorothy T. Spoerl ¹³, and another by Harvard University's Student Council ¹⁴ showed that, in recent years, college students have become more religious; finally, an evaluation of a religious program at DePauw University ¹⁵ indicated that the increase in religiosity among participating students was somewhat superficial.

SUMMARY

In brief, this study was based on a survey of attitudes toward religion among Jewish students attending a municipal university in a Midwestern metropolis. The main findings were as follows :

1. The relationship between religiosity and familism was directly proportional.
2. The relationship between religiosity and dating liberalism was inversely proportional.
3. The religiosity mean of the males did not differ significantly from that of the females.
4. Religiosity was not influenced significantly by the variables of age, birth order, number of siblings, amount of education, and major field of study.
5. Parental occupational level and amount of education tended to influence the subjects' religiosity to an inversely proportional degree.
6. Finally, the children of gainfully employed mothers made a somewhat lower religiosity mean.

11. Ernest Havemann and P. S. West, *They Went to College — The College Graduate in America Today* (New York : Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1952).

12. "Changes in Religious Beliefs of College Students", *Journal of Social Psychology*, 37 (February, 1953), 113-16.

13. "The Values of the Post-War College Student", *ibid.*, 35 (May, 1952), 217-25.

14. *Religion at Harvard* (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University, 1956).

15. Barton B. Scarborough and John C. Wright, "Assessing the Results of a University Religious Evaluation Week", *Religious Education*, 51 (July-August, 1956), 282-85.