

RELATIONS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND NONRELIGIOUS JEWS IN ISRAEL*

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This study investigates the cognitions, attitudes and behavioral intentions concerning interpersonal contact between nonreligious and religious Jews in Israel. The hypothesis examined is that distance from Jewish tradition is related to a negative orientation regarding questions of state and religion, tolerance for demands on the part of observant Jews to further religious goals on the state level, and the social distance between religious and nonreligious Jews. The data for this study are based on closed ended questionnaires completed by 671 Jewish male and female Israeli university students. The findings indicate that those who identify themselves as more religious observe more ritual, have a more positive orientation toward an intertwining of religion and state on a macro level and to the specific demands for the observance of religious life in the public sector, and prefer contact with religious persons over contact with nonreligious persons. At the same time, the social contacts between the religious and nonreligious are characterized by more informal than formal isolation. These findings are discussed with regard to the question of social integration among Jews in Israeli society.

Keywords: Jewish tradition, religious, nonreligious, Jews, Israeli society, social integration.

This study examines the cognitions and attitudes of Jews of different religiosity levels in Israel and how they relate to interpersonal contact. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) argue that attitudes, or the emotional orientations that one holds toward an attitude subject, stem from a weighted consideration of the cognitive information that one has regarding the subject. They further contend that attitudes lead only to behavioral intentions regarding the attitude subject. Correspondence between intentions and actual behavior depends on the social norms

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concerning the propriety of such behavior, as manifested and communicated by persons important to the actor.

One of the problematic issues about understanding intergroup relations is determining which cognitions have an impact on intergroup contact (cf. Stephan, 1985: 623). In this study, we assume that attitudes regarding the intertwining of state and religion and the tolerance toward demands made with regard to religious life and laws in Israel affect the behavioral intentions of Jews of different religiosity levels. The basis for this assumption is the centrality of religion in Israel and its pervasive effect in many aspects of civil life (Abramov, 1976; Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983, 1984; Tabory, 1981a, 1981b). It is our contention that distance from tradition has implications for interpersonal tolerance and interaction, inasmuch as those who do not share a Jewish orientation toward the state might be less willing to interact with religious persons with whom they have little in common.

Three levels of religiosity are widely used to classify Jews in Israel. Those who identify themselves as "religious", or Orthodox, observe the most religious ritual; the "nonreligious" observe the least; and "traditional" Jews are between the two groups. Between 15 and 20% of the Israeli urban Jewish population identifies itself as "religious", 40-45% as "traditional", and 35-40% as "nonreligious" (Ben-Meir & Kedem, 1979).

While religious and nonreligious Jews in Israel prefer their ingroups and exclude their outgroups with regard to choice of friends (Barnea & Amir, 1981; Cohen, 1975), the nature and correlates of the conflict between religious and nonreligious Jews have not received much empirical attention. This is despite the feeling of many Israelis that the relations between religious and nonreligious persons constitute an increasingly serious problem (Golan, 1986; Jerusalem Post, May 30; June 20; Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1988; Siegel, 1985).

This study investigates one aspect of this conflict by comparing first generation nonreligious Jews, or those whose parents were at least religiously traditional and second generation nonreligious Jews, or those whose parents were also nonreligious, with second generation traditional and second generation religious Jews. The basis for distinguishing between "new" and "veteran" nonreligious Jews is that those who come from traditional homes may still retain an emotional orientation toward religion and consequently manifest a weaker secular orientation than those who grew up in nonreligious homes. First and second generation nonreligious Jews do tend to differ on their orientation toward religious and Jewish symbols (Tabory, 1989). The hypothesis of this study, therefore, is that distance from Jewish tradition is related to a negative orientation regarding questions of state and religion and tolerance for demands on the part of observant Jews to further religious goals on the state level, and that this will

have an impact on the readiness of religious and nonreligious Jews to interact with one another.

METHOD

The data were obtained by closed ended questionnaires from 722 Jewish students in an Orthodox Israeli university. In order to obtain a cross picture of the student body, the respondents were selected from the mandatory Jewish studies courses required of all male and female Jewish students, regardless of faculty of study. Approximately 60% of the respondents are female and 40% are male. Initial analyses indicated that gender has almost no impact on the dependent variables, and the responses of female and male students are treated as one group. Less than 3% of the students refused to participate in the study.

THE INDICES

Those who identify themselves and their parents as nonreligious ($n = 271$, or 38% of the sample) are classified as second generation nonreligious, while those who classify themselves as nonreligious and their parents as either religious or traditional, form the first generation nonreligious group ($n = 79$, or 11%). One hundred and eleven persons classified themselves as traditional and said they came from traditional backgrounds (15%), and 210 persons are second generation religious (29%). Fifteen religious and 36 traditional respondents whose parents differed from them religiously were excluded from the analysis, and thus the results are based on 671 replies.

Ritual observance This was measured by a seven item scale (Cronbach alpha = .89) that dealt with the observance of fasts, daily prayer, sanctifying the Sabbath wine, and different ways of observing the Jewish dietary laws.

State-religion orientations Respondents indicated their degree of agreement regarding eight items (such as whether there should be separation of religion and state and whether civil marriage should be allowed) forming a state-religion scale (Cronbach alpha = .92). A score of 1 indicates a strong position against the intertwining of religion and state while a score of 5 indicates a maximum pro state-religion overlap.

Tolerance for religious demands This six item scale examined issues such as whether religious girls and yeshiva students should be exempted from military service (Cronbach alpha = .75).

Interaction across religiosity lines scale Respondents indicated their degree of willingness to interact with a religious or nonreligious person on 7 items. Three focused on nonreligious persons (n) and four on religious persons (r). An extreme response on any item is taken to indicate a preference for segregated interaction, and a negative response is taken to indicate preference for interaction with the other group.

These included choosing a neighbor (*r*); a roommate in an office (*r*); serving in the civil guard (*n*); studying for a test (*r*); choice of a lawyer (*n*); going out on a date (*r*); and choice of a spouse (*n*). A cumulative mean score of 1 point scale indicates a preference for interaction with nonreligious persons while a score of 7 indicates a preference for interaction with religious persons. A score of 3.5 indicates an egalitarian attitude regarding interaction. (Cronbach alpha for the entire scale = .73.)

To relate these attitudinal questions to behavioral intentions, respondents were also asked to indicate whether they have frequent, occasional, or infrequent social contact with religious and nonreligious persons. They also indicated the levels of religiosity of their three closest friends. Respondents were classified into three groups: those who have only religious friends; those who have only nonreligious friends, and those whose friends are religiously diverse (or are all traditional).

RESULTS

The monotonic relationship between religious identity, ritual observance, and the dependent variables is seen in Table 1. The pattern of differences between first and second generation nonreligious Jews is consistent, although not always statistically significant. "First generation" nonreligious Jews observe more ritual than do second generation nonreligious Jews. They are also slightly more supportive of an intertwining of religion and state, although the difference is not statistically significant. Both nonreligious groups lean toward a negative position regarding this overlap. They are also quite similar regarding their intolerance for religious demands. Their relative ranking on the religiosity interaction scale is in the expected direction, although the difference between them is not significant. In all cases, the second generation nonreligious are more extreme than the first generation, and they are consistently followed by the traditional and religious groups.

With regard to actual visits, first generation nonreligious interact somewhat more frequently with religious persons than do the second generation and tend more to include religious diverse persons among their friends.

While the religious respondents are clearly different from the nonreligious on all of the measures, they are not as extreme in their responses as they might be. The mean on the state-religion orientation scale is 4.1 out of 5, but the mean score for tolerance of religious demands is only 3.4 (out of 5). It is possible that many of those who believe that religious law and customs should dominate civil life in Israel choose not to attend university (and are therefore not included in this study) since secular studies might undermine religious life.

It is also possible, however, that middle of the road religious Israelis may be more sensitive to the limits to the religiously based political demands that can be made in a

modern state than their religious representatives in Parliament. Religious conflict on the national level is affected by the stance of religious parties on the one side and liberal parties on the other. The students in this study are less politicized, and need to get along with the nonreligious persons with whom they often come into contact. Religious differences are a factor to be overcome, not a salient issue upon which to make demands.

The data in Table 1 indicate the function that traditional Jews can play as they bridge the religious and nonreligious groups. Traditional respondents rank near the middle score on nearly all the measures, and in all cases, they score between the religious and the nonreligious groups. The traditional group is significantly different from the religious and from the second generation nonreligious groups on most of the measures. They do not always differ, however, from the first generation nonreligious. When it comes to actual behavior, the first generation nonreligious tend to be somewhat more similar to the traditional group than to the second generation nonreligious. Whereas the nonreligious groups less discriminate in their behavioral intentions regarding intergroup interaction, their frequency of social visits with the religious (1.8 and 2.1 for the nonreligious groups) is less than is the frequency with which the religious visit the nonreligious (2.4).

The intentions of the nonreligious on the social interaction scale are more egalitarian than are those of the religious. The traditional group is midway between them. Yet here too the religious group is not as extreme as to indicate an intention to live completely separately lives. They prefer their own group more than the nonreligious prefer theirs. However, in practice, it appears that more religious persons have social contacts with nonreligious persons, than the other way around. This is probably because the relatively small number of religious Jews in Israel means that their exposure to nonreligious persons is greater than is that of the nonreligious to them. It is the experience of segregation that has an impact on minority and majority group members, not necessarily the physical structural separation (Massey & Denton, 1988).

Zero order correlations indicate a decline in magnitude from the identity variables (a correlation of .91 for religious identity and ritual observance) to cognitions (.73 for state religion orientation and tolerance for religious demands) on to behavioral intentions (correlations in the .60s for religiosity interaction) and then on to the variables tapping actual behavior (in the .50s for social interaction and religiosity of friends). These data indicate that religious identity has a stronger effect on cognitions than cognitions have on behavior. The high correlations in general suggest that religious identity is incorporated in an overall framework that fundamentally divides Jewish Israelis with regard to their beliefs and intergroup behavior. A factor analysis

TABLE 1
 VARIABLE MEANS AND ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BY RELIGIOSITY GROUPS

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Nonreligious</i>		<i>Traditional</i>		<i>Religious</i>		<i>F</i>	<i>Scheffé Range Test</i>		
	<i>Second Gen. (NS)</i>	<i>First Gen. (NF)</i>	<i>(T)</i>	<i>(R)</i>						
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<i>Ritual observance</i>	1.4	.26	1.8	.40	2.3	.34	2.8	.16	1128.74*	NS→NF→T→R
<i>State religion orientation</i>	1.9	.57	2.2	.67	3.2	.78	4.1	.54	515.03*	NS→NF→T→R
<i>Tolerance for religious demands</i>	2.2	.51	2.3	.54	2.6	.68	3.4	.49	201.39*	NS/NF→T→R
<i>Religiosity interaction</i>										
- <i>Total</i>	3.3	.76	3.5	.58	3.9	.62	4.9	.67	196.83*	NS/NF→T→R
- <i>Religious</i>	3.5	.83	3.7	.82	4.0	.79	5.1	.93	138.45*	NS→T→R→NF
- <i>Nonreligious</i>	3.1	1.2	3.3	.93	3.7	.97	4.6	.99	72.91*	NS→T→R→NF
<i>Frequency of social visits with</i>										
- <i>religious</i>	1.8	.72	2.1	.70	2.3	.64	2.9	.77	142.45*	NS→NF/T→R

- Nonreligious	3.0	.17	2.9	.22	2.9	.36	2.5	.61	59.58*	NS/NF/T→R
Religiosity of 3 friends	1.3	.48	1.6	.52	1.9	.46	2.4	.55	141.05*	NS→NF/T→R

* $p < .01$

*Key: Ritual observance: 1 = no observance; 2 = partial; 3 = maximum observance State religion: 1 = against overlap; 3 = unsure; 5 = for overlap
Tolerance for religious demands: 1 = intolerant; 3 = unsure; 5 = tolerant Religiosity interaction: 1 = prefers contact with nonreligious only; 3.5 = no
preference; 7 = prefers contact with religious only Frequency of social visits: 1 = infrequent; 2 = occasional; 3 = often Religiosity of 3 friends: 1 = only
nonreligious; 2 = traditional, religious and nonreligious; 3 = only religious*

*Scheffé: Arrows to right indicate cumulative difference between groups. Arrows to left indicate a difference between only those two groups. No difference
between adjacent groups is indicated by /.*

of the composite scales used in this study produces one factor with an R^2 of .77. The factor loadings are: religious identity, .86; ritual observance, .88; state religion orientation, .85; tolerance for religious demands, .62; and the religiosity interaction scale, .65. An additional indicator of the composite unity is the Cronbach alpha of .90 when all of these variables are included in one scale.

DISCUSSION

Following the Fishbein-Ajzen (1975) model, it was our contention that religious background and identity affect the cognitions and emotions regarding interaction between religious and nonreligious Jews in Israel. The separate socialization pattern of religious and nonreligious Jews throughout the educational system has a lasting impact that takes time to erode, as one moves from a more religious background, to one that is less religious. Nevertheless, religious and nonreligious Jews are not totally closed off from one another, and social norms mandate at least correct interaction between them. It is difficult to translate discrepant religious orientations into animosity when potential protagonists regularly come into contact with one another in situations that require some cooperation. So it is that religiosity among our respondents is related to their orientation regarding questions of religion and state, but less affects the religious demands that could interfere with daily coexistence.

The impact of religiosity on cognitions and interpersonal contacts raises a question about the relationship between interpersonal and intergroup relations in Israel. Intergroup relations take place only when the identity of one's membership group is called into play (Taylor & Moghaddam 1987). Tajfel (1978) questions whether theories of interpersonal relations can be extrapolated to cover intergroup relations because of the difference in behavior between interpersonal and intergroup contexts. The question is the degree to which interaction between individuals is determined by their individual characteristics or by their social identity (Tajfel & Turner 1979).

The absence of almost all social interaction between Jewish and Arab students on Israeli university campuses highlights the relative similarity of religious and nonreligious Jews. The main conflict between them is relegated to the political level, as the groups struggle for power and limited resources (Gutman 1981; Krausz & Glanz 1988; Lehman-Wilzig 1986; Tabory 1981a, 1981b). For many well educated modern Israelis, reflected here in the student population, typical interpersonal interaction in formal settings should not involve much consideration of religiosity as a defining membership category. Nevertheless, the consistent findings here suggest the case might be otherwise. Social interaction between religious and nonreligious Jews is

problematic even when one wishes to have dinner together because of the dietary laws of *kashrut*, as well as to schedule times and places for meetings because of religious laws that proscribe travel on the Sabbath and holidays. While religiosity as an element of social identity is relevant to a particular range of social interaction situations, the possibility of encountering these situations is substantial even in casual interaction. This has implications regarding the integration of a people seemingly united, and yet divided, by a common religion. Differences in religiosity levels in Israel do not prevent different persons from working side by side in businesses, offices, schools, in the military and in government, but it is probably not far from one's consciousness that one is interacting with someone who is religiously different. In this respect the traditional group can bridge the religious and nonreligious groups as they share some features of both groups. Externally, they are indistinguishable from nonreligious Jews, but they probably have a better cognitive understanding and emotional empathy for traditional religion. The differences that do emerge between the students are clearly related to their overall religious orientation. The university setting probably reduces the impact of one's religious orientation on social distance but outside of the university there is an increasing tendency for religious persons to prefer housing in religiously segregated communities. This might be beneficial for maintaining a religious life style unaffected by secular society, but such a pattern can lead to even less tolerance between the groups and to more polarized stances on issues of religion and state (Liebman 1983). Attitudes do appear to form an ideological core (cf. Apostle et al., 1983; Judd, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1981), and residential and occupational segregation can easily contribute to a crystallization of a religiously based ideological orientation that shows little consideration for dissimilar others. The findings of this study on an admittedly limited population can be expected to be more moderate than the intergroup attitudes and orientations of residents of religiously segregated communities in Israel.

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