

# **Patterns of Date and Mate Selection and Social Activity of Jewish "Singles" in an Intermediate Community**

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*The overall dating pattern showed that only 44 percent (of respondents) dated Jewish or mostly Jewish, while 56 percent showed non-Jewish, or expressed no, preference in religious affiliation in their dating choices.*

The increase in the number of Jewish singles has come to the forefront of awareness. Because individuals are choosing to remain single as a life style, or deciding to marry late in life, or opting for divorce, there is an inordinately large and growing number of Jewish singles entering the 1980's.

This paper reports an exploratory study of this new phenomenon. The study sought to obtain insights as to the effect religion has on date selection, social activities, and mate selection of Jewish men and women, aged 25 to 45.

## **Background for Study**

Attempting any study of singles as a discrete population group has pitfalls, and narrowing the universe specifically to Jewish singles makes the job that much more difficult. Notwithstanding these obstacles, a Jewish singles group having a roster of more than 360 was surveyed in metropolitan Kansas City, Missouri.

Though this group started on an informal basis, unaffiliated with any organized Jewish institution in the community, support was obtained from the Jewish Community Foundation of Kansas City for the Jewish Community Center to

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administer and supervise its program. It was viewed as a demonstration project.

While similar identified groups of Jewish singles have come and gone, this one, "The Society" grew in popularity. During the course of its yearly programming, a definitely positive image was created by its participants. Initial programming focused on large gatherings (pot-luck dinners) and special interest activities such as tennis, hiking, picnics, Shabbat dinners, etc. The demonstration project proved a success and was funded fully during the next fiscal year by the Jewish Community Federation.

By far the most attractive and open ended program, the pot-luck dinner drew the most participants. The atmosphere was relaxed and free. Individuals' homes or apartment club houses were used for the gatherings. An element of trust developed between Society members and its director. The Society became the only neutral place where Jewish singles in Kansas City could congregate on an informal basis and meet regularly with other Jewish singles.

## **Study Design**

A questionnaire with twenty-two items was created. The aim was to develop a profile of the participants and identify patterns in dating behavior as related to religious preference. The guiding hypothesis stated that Jewish singles prefer to date

other Jewish singles over non-Jewish singles. A frequency distribution would provide the profile for the whole.

Invitations were sent to the Jewish singles on the mailing list which numbered 362. All were invited to a pot-luck dinner (the activity which drew the most numbers.) One hundred individuals attended. Eighty-two completed and returned the questionnaire the same evening of the event. The questionnaire had not been pretested. Obviously this is not a random sample; however, due to the elusive nature of this particular age group and the numbers participating, the authors believe the results of the survey to provide a beginning foundation of knowledge.

### Findings

#### I. PERSONAL DATA PROFILE

The sample divided between 43% male and 57% female respondents. Forty-eight percent of these individuals had never been married, 52% were divorced. None was widowed. Thirty-one percent were between 25 and 29, 28% between 30 and 34, 22% between 35 and 39, 15% between 40 and 44, and 5%, 45 years or older. Summarizing, 59% of the individuals were under 35 years of age.

Of those that were divorced, 68% had been married to Jews; 32% were not.

With regard to level of education, 36% were college bachelor-level graduates with an additional 39% having attended or completed graduate school. Two percent had only a high school education and 22% had "some" college.

The income ranges were: under \$10,000, 18%; \$10,000 to \$19,999, 44%; and \$20,000 or over 38%.

It was interesting to note that 14% of the individuals lived in Kansas City less than 2 years, 30% from 2 to 10 years, and 56% 10 years or more.

#### II. RELIGIOUS DATA PROFILE

The results of five questions pertaining to religious information were: 1) With

regard to previous Jewish education, 84% had attended Sunday school, 36% an afternoon religious school, 46% had a bar/bat mitzvah, 36% went to a Jewish summer camp, 26% had taken a trip to Israel, while only 2.5% did none of the above.

Fifty-five percent were affiliated with synagogue or temple, and 45% were not.

Fifty-four percent indicated they attended synagogue at holiday time only, 16% indicated that they went for special services, while 22% indicated attendance once a month, and 8% never attended.

Of those who were parents, 31% said they would have a bar/bat mitzvah for their child while 12% said no. 57% had no children.

With the study attempting to measure Jewish/religious identification through philanthropy, 65% indicated that they did give to a Jewish philanthropy in 1980, while 35% indicated that they had not.

#### III. DATING PATTERN PROFILE

The overall dating pattern showed that only 44% dated Jewish or mostly Jewish, while 56% showed non-Jewish, or expressed no, preference in religious affiliation in their dating choices.

On movie and tennis dates responses suggested that religious affiliation was unimportant (73% and 84% respectively). Dinner at the parents' home brought dividend responses with 51% who would bring a Jewish date while 49% felt that religion was not material.

In choosing a partner to live with, 38% would choose a Jew, while 62% indicated that religious affiliation did not matter.

Sixty-five percent would select Jewish fiances, and 35% indicated that religious affiliation was an unimportant consideration.

Of those dating non-Jews, having decided to marry, 51% would want the non-Jewish spouse to convert and 49% said no.

In a decision to marry and start a family, 70% of the individuals preferred a Jewish

mate while 30% stated no religious preference.

If an individual had children from a previous marriage and planned to marry again, 54% would require their spouse to be Jewish while 46% would not.

### **Conclusion**

The data indicate that Kansas City Jewish singles who choose to attend a function for Jews only are distributed evenly by sex. They will be evenly distributed by marital status and under 35 years of age. If they were married, more than two-thirds would have been married to Jewish spouses. They will have attended college and more than likely be a college graduate with an income between \$10,000 to \$19,999. More often than not the individual would be a Kansas City resident for

ten years or more.

The religious data profile indicates that they will have attended some form of formal religious instruction and supplemented it with informal Jewish educational experiences. They may or may not be affiliated with a synagogue or temple and if a member, would be in attendance at holiday time only. If they had children, one out of three parents would have a bar/bat mitzvah for that child. They would have been a contributor to a Jewish philanthropy. Generally speaking, no preference was indicated for religious affiliation of dates. However, if a person decided to become engaged and get married to start a family, a Jewish fiancée and mate was the preferred choice. Further, Jewish mates were the preference for previously married individuals who had children.