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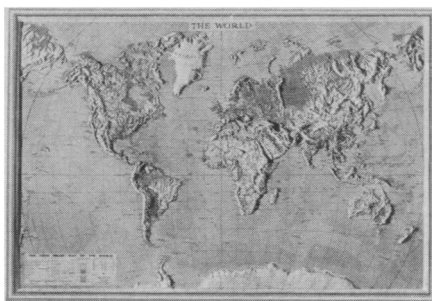
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SOCIOLOGY

Drinking Influenced By Religious Affiliation

► RELIGIOUS affiliation seems to influence drinking behavior to a large extent.

A study among Methodist, Episcopalian and Jewish students reveals a wide divergence in their drinking habits and in the amounts of social complications they have experienced because of their intoxication.

Conducted by Dr. Jerome H. Skolnick, a research associate in sociology and law at the Yale University Law School, the study used a sample of 110 Methodists, 111 Episcopalians, 122 Jews, and 44 non-affiliates with religious abstinence backgrounds. Other religious groups were not included in the study, Dr. Skolnick said, because their national backgrounds may be more important than religion in determination of their drinking behavior.

Results of Dr. Skolnick's statistics show that four percent of the Jewish students experienced social complications on account of their drinking while similar problems were reported by 39% of the Episcopalians, 50% of the Methodists and 57% of the non-affiliates.

Another of his findings, concerning the drinking of alcoholic beverages before the age 11, revealed that 92% of the Jews, 58% of the Episcopalians, 28% of the Methodists and 32% of the non-affiliates had done so.

As reported in *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* (Sept.), Dr. Skolnick's reasons for selecting these religious groups were:

The Methodist Church represents the total abstinence position. The Episcopalian Church permits moderate drinking but opposes drunkenness. The Jewish religion decries drunkenness with as much fervor as the Methodists but controls it by incorporating drinking into ritual practice. The non-affiliates were chosen with the hope of discovering whether their rejection of religion led to different drinking habits than Methodists who break away from abstinence but maintain their church affiliation.

Other findings were:

In the drinking of beer, 27% of the Jews drank at home, while 17% of the Episcopalians, 11% of the Methodists and 13% of the non-affiliates did likewise.

As for drinking beer in commercial places, the percentages were 76% Methodists, 74% non-affiliates, 48% Episcopalians and 42% Jews.

In the category of heavy drinking, the Episcopalians were high with 31%, followed by 22% non-affiliates, 21% Methodists and nine percent Jews.

Among the Jews 55% said they were never intoxicated, while the same was true of 20% of the Episcopalians, 18% of the non-affiliates and 17% of the Methodists.

Dr. Skolnick concluded that "religious affiliation seems to influence drinking behavior more than ideas arising out of any comparable variable, such as regional background, social class position, maturity, or religious participation.

Science News Letter, September 27, 1958

