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Believe, Pray, and Obey: Three Indicators of Religiosity in a Jewish Canadian Community

Abstract

This article examines religiosity among a sample of Jews living in Windsor–Essex County. This study uses three indicators to measure religiosity, including belief in G–d, prayer routine, and the Sabbath. The researcher interviewed fifty members of this community with an age rage between their early twenties to late eighties. The results show that the community has a somewhat moderate belief in G–d but does not pray or honour the Sabbath at comparable levels. To account for this diminished religiosity, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's existential security theory will be applied. The article concludes that given the high degree of existential security derived from the sample's high education level, there is little personal need to adhere to the major tenets of Judaism.

Résumé

Cet article examine la religiosité parmi un échantillon de Juifs vivant dans le comté de Windsor–Essex. Cette étude se base sur trois indicateurs pour mesurer la religiosité, notamment la croyance en Dieu, la routine de prière et le sabbat. Le chercheur a interrogé cinquante membres de cette communauté dont l'âge varie entre 20 et 80 ans. Les résultats démontrent que la communauté a une croyance assez modérée en Dieu, mais ne prie pas ou n'honore pas le sabbat à des niveaux comparables. Pour rendre compte de cette religiosité diminuée, la théorie de la sécurité existentielle de Pippa Norris et Ronald Inglehart sera appliquée. L'article conclut qu'étant donné le haut degré de sécurité existentielle découlant du haut niveau d'éducation de l'échantillon, il n'est guère nécessaire, sur le plan personnel, d'adhérer aux grands principes du judaïsme.

The father of the Jewish Enlightenment, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), offers guidance to Jews trying to balance their religious traditions with a secular society. He advises his fellow Jews to "bear both burdens as well as you can!"[1] It is interesting that Mendelssohn uses the term "burdens" to describe the balancing act between these two identities. This word choice suggests that Mendelssohn recognized that it may be difficult to find a balance between being a religious Jew and a secular citizen. However, it may be possible for Jews, over time, to let go of the "burden" of religion, especially in a secular country like Canada.

In Canada, the Jewish community is about 1% of the national population, which counts to about 329,495 individuals according to the most recent census data.[2] While knowing the population size is important, it simply indicates the number of people who have voluntarily identified as Jewish based on their personal understanding of the term. As with other religions, one can identify as a member without having to believe in or follow the tenets of the faith. To discover the degree to which Jews

practise Judaism, it is necessary to measure *religiosity*.

This study explores how religiosity is expressed by a sample of Jewish Canadians living in and around Windsor—a medium-sized city located on the US-Canada border in Southwestern Ontario. It begins by offering some historical background and statistical figures for contextual purposes. It then offers a definition for religiosity while presenting possible theoretical approaches and models for measuring it. A detailed discussion of the methodological approach to this study follows. An overview of this sample's demographics is also included to place the responses into context. The data section examines the responses to the three indicators on religiosity. The first indicator seeks to uncover to what degree participants believe in G-d. The second indicator enquires about the individual's prayer routine. Finally, the third indicator explores what activities s/he engages in or does not engage in on the Sabbath.

The Community

The Jewish community of Windsor has two Orthodox synagogues, one Reform temple, a Jewish community centre, a cemetery, and a Chabad house. The community had one kosher restaurant until late 2019. As to population size, the community reached its apex in the early 1930s with 2,500 members.[3] The population has been dwindling since the 1930s.[4] The Jewish population of Windsor comprises 1,515 people or 0.5% out of the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) population of 315,460.[5] This number has resulted in a decrease from the last census in 2001 and the census before in 1991.[6]

This community has received little scholarly attention despite being at one time one of the largest in the province.[7] The most important work written about this community was Rabbi Jonathan V. Plaut's *The Jews of Windsor, 1790–1990: A Historical Chronicle* (2007). The work is a significant contribution to scholarship, outlining over two hundred years of history by transcribing oral histories, reviewing committee meeting minutes, examining published photographs, and interviewing leading members of the community.[8] Plaut also gives an interesting account of the life of Moses David (1768–1814) whom history remembers as "the first Jew to settle in the community that is now Windsor."[9] David came from a prominent Montreal family and was dispatched to the area to establish trading links for the family's fur company.[10] However the book, which focuses on major historical turning points up to the early twenty-first century, does not address issues of contemporary religiosity.

In their article on the state of social-scientific approaches to Canadian Jewish studies, Koffman and Weinefeld survey several subfields, including religion.[11] The authors note that publications on Canadian Jews and religion are "selective" as there tends to be a focus on Orthodox expressions, especially ultraorthodox communities

in Montreal.[12] Koffman and Weinefeld do concede that "comparatively little work has been done on non-Orthodox religiosity in Canada."[13] In addition, the article does not speak of major research projects conducted on the Jewish community of Windsor or other cities in Southern Ontario. These denominational and geographical gaps in the literature prompt the need for research on religiosity in that community. However, a working definition of religiosity is first required before such a study can be carried out.

Religiosity: Definitions, Theories, and Measurements

In taking on a project on religiosity, it is necessary to understand this "complex concept."[14] The late sociologist of religion Johnstone's definition[15] clearly summarizes the term as "the intensity and consistency of a person's practice of their religion."[16] While this definition provides a better understanding of the concept, it also prompts many questions on how this term can be theorized.

In the past few decades, several theories have emerged to describe the nature of religiosity. This article focuses on three of which one of the most discussed in the field of the sociology of religion is secularization theory. In short, this theory argues that religion gradually fades away in modern society.[17] In her historical overview of secularization, Fox begins her chronology with the rationalist ideals of the Enlightenment.[18] Enlightenment thinkers believed that human beings had the potential to rationally understand the nature of the world without religion.[19] The contours of secularization theory started to be more formally defined by several nineteenth-century scholars, including Henri Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber.[20] One of the leading modern scholars to contribute to secularization theory was the Austrian American sociologist of religion, Peter Berger (1929–2017). His seminal work, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* explains the wide reach of secularization in the West: "As there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness."[21] It should be noted that later in his career Berger recanted his position and argued that the tenets of secularization are "essentially mistaken."[22] Given that secularization theory has been largely dismissed, it will not be applied to this study. Nonetheless, because of its historical prominence, it should at least be identified and explained.

A second theory of importance is the religious market approach. This theory envisions humans acting within a "religious market"[23] or "religious economy."[24] Throughout their involvement within their religious community, individuals develop what Laurence Iannaccone calls "religious capital" meaning knowledge of the faith, its rules, and practices.[25] In addition, religious human capital has a direct relationship with satisfaction and engagement in religious-based activities.[26] The theory stresses that both the "consumer" and "producer" of religion are motivated by "self-interest" within the religious market system.[27] In other words, a Jew will attend Shabbat

services to obtain a place in *Olam Ha-Ba* or the World to Come. A rabbi will seek to attract as many congregants as possible to boost his or her profile within the community and reap the potential rewards that follow. This theory's potential applicability to this study rests on what is motivating an individual to practise their religion. For this study, participants were asked what motivated their religiosity overall. They offered several responses, but the leading answer was upbringing. Others enumerated family tradition, personal identity, and respect for their ancestors as reasons for following their faith. None appear to have been motivated by self-interest. Considering the participants' responses, the religious market approach is not applicable to this study.

At the turn of the millennium, Norris and Inglehart introduced their existential security theory. The authors define existential security as a "the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted."[28] The notion of security is not solely national security or protecting the citizenry from international threats.[29] It also includes the individual's personal sense of "human security."[30] The authors recognize that the specific types of risk do vary with the many definitions of human security, but suggest that it can constitute anything that promotes "well-being."[31] One of the major hypotheses posited by the authors is that religiosity decreases in advanced countries that have high levels of human security.[32] In other words, countries with high rates of political stability, economic opportunities, and social equality see a declining interest in religion. Their research is largely supported by data obtained from the World Values Survey.[33]

Given the strong sense of security in Canada, one can surmise that religion carries less weight than perhaps in countries like Afghanistan, Nicaragua, or Ethiopia. In fact, Norris and Inglehart argue that this path towards secularization is evident in Canada, as in Western Europe, Oceania, and Japan.[34] The sample's responses correspond with the secularization trend in highly developed countries like Canada. This hypothesis on the inverse relationship between human security and religiosity will prove useful in explaining the results of this study.

The multilayered nature of religiosity makes it challenging to measure. Researchers have tended to focus on one aspect of an individual's religious behaviour at the expense of others.[35] A solution to this incomplete portrait of religiosity was described by Glock and Stark in *Religion and Society in Tension*.[36] They describe five dimensions of religiosity, including experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, and consequential.[37] Other scholars have since expanded upon this approach.

A more precise and relevant model for measuring religiosity has been proposed by Verbit, a sociologist of religion and scholar of American Jewry. His approach strives to expand the concept of religiosity so it may be able to "carry a heavier load in the

scientific study of religion."[38] Comprised of four dimensions (content, frequency, intensity, and centrality) and six components (ritual, doctrine, emotion, knowledge, ethics, and community), Verbit's model is more intricate.[39] Each of the six components corresponds to each of the four dimensions.[40] For example, the component "doctrine" could be measured as doctrine–content, doctrine–frequency, doctrine–intensity, and doctrine–centrality. The remaining five components follow this pairing, in turn creating twenty-four different measurements. In this study, three of Verbit's possibilities will be employed for each of the three indicators. The belief in G-d indicator corresponds with doctrine–centrality. Here, participants are asked whether they believe in one of the most important doctrines in Judaism. The prayer indicator corresponds with ritual–frequency. The second indicator asks participants about their prayer routine. Finally, the Sabbath activities indicator corresponds with ritual–intensity. This indicator examines to what degree participants attempt to honour the Sabbath by either limiting their activities and taking part in special religious rituals or having no restrictions on their activities and treating the Sabbath as any other day.[41]

Methods

This study employed face-to-face interviews conducted solely by the author. Interviews were chosen over other possible methods because interviews tend to produce more detailed results. Instead of simply saying yes or no to an online survey, for example, participants could give open-ended responses. This method produced results that would likely not have been obtained using other methods.

This article was part of a larger study that employed eight indicators, including belief in G-d, prayer routine, Sabbath activities, temple and synagogue life, holidays and holy days, dietary laws, commandments, and death and the afterlife. At the end of the interview, as a final capstone question, participants were asked what motivated their religiosity overall. For brevity, only the first three indicators of belief in G-d, prayer routine, and Sabbath activities will be explored here.

The call for participants was disseminated by the Windsor Jewish Community Centre, Congregation Temple Beth El (Reform temple), and Congregation Shaar Hashomayim (Orthodox synagogue). The researcher did not disseminate the call for participants personally because of dual-role issues as he may have had contact with members of the community. In directly asking them to participate, he could have placed undue stress on the potential participant who could have felt obligated to participate. With the call of participants being disseminated by a third party, individuals would be able to decide for themselves whether to take part in the study.

The interviews took place in 2019 and were typically conducted at places of worship, the community centre, the researcher's office, or the participant's home. The length of each interview varied depending on the participant's responses with an average length of about 45–50 minutes. Those who completed the interview each received an $18.00 gift card to a range of stores in the area. This amount was selected because it is associated with the word life or *chai*. The Hebrew word for *chai* is comprised of two letters: *chet* and *yud*. By combining the numerical value for the Hebrew letter *chet* of eight with the numerical value for *yud* of ten one arrives at 18.

Participants

Potential participants needed to meet three criteria to take part in this study. First, the participant had to identify as Jewish, although the researcher did not ask individuals to describe their Jewish lineage as this question is unnecessarily invasive. Second, the participant must have been living in Windsor or the surrounding communities, such as LaSalle, Tecumseh, Lakeshore, Essex, Amherstburg, and Kingsville at the time of the interview. The researcher decided to include the surrounding areas as potential participants from these areas likely had a connection to the city. Moreover, given the proximity of these smaller communities to Windsor, the researcher did not feel it necessary to exclude the participants. Third, the participant must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the interview.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked five demographic questions to offer insight into the responses. These questions included gender, age, highest educational level, denominational affiliation, and diasporic origins. The sample's gender composition is somewhat reflective of the Jews in Windsor. In Windsor, 52.6% of Jews are female and 47.4% are male.[42] In the sample, the gender composition was 31 females to 19 males or 62% to 38%. The age ranged noticeably from those in their early twenties to those in their late eighties. The average age was 62.31 years with the median age of 67.00 and a mode age of 68.00. The age distribution outlined in Table 1 indicates an older population sample since a majority, or 28 out of 50, participants were in their sixties and seventies. Moreover, the lack of a significant number of participants under fifty is evidence to suggest that the community is ageing and not being replaced by younger members. This sample's age distribution is reflective of the Jewish population of Windsor to a degree. For example, 40.3% of Windsor's Jewish community is between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four.[43] This specific age group is the largest out of all age groups within the community.[44]

Table 1: Age Distribution of Participants

Age Range	Frequency
20–29	5
30–39	3
40–49	0
50–59	6
60–69	16
70–79	12
80–89	7
Declined	1

The next question was about educational training. The responses ranged from those with a high school diploma to those possessing graduate and professional degrees. This demographic question revealed a highly educated sample with a strong majority holding post-secondary credentials. The considerable number of participants having attained post-secondary education will be revisited in the conclusion as it helps to explain the results from the interviews.

One of the major debates in the Windsor Jewish community is the denominational affiliation of its members, divided among adherents of Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, or Reconstructionist Traditions. Given that the community is home to two Orthodox synagogues and one Reform temple, one might expect that the sample would lean towards the Orthodox branch. However, the sample results revealed that a plurality, or 32% identify as Conservative. It should be noted that those who considered themselves Conservative-Egalitarian were also included in this category. This result was surprising given that the community is not home to a Conservative synagogue. The next largest denomination was Reform with 30%. A sizable percentage or 26% identified in post-denominational terms, such as "just Jewish" or with other denominations. There were only two participants who stated that they were Orthodox despite the presence of two Orthodox synagogues and a Chabad house in the city. Another four identified as Conservadox which stands between the Orthodox and Conservative branches. Finally, participants were asked about their diasporic origins, such as Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, and others. The overwhelming number of participants or 86% identified as Ashkenazi. The remaining identified as Sephardi, Mizrahi, mixed, and other.

Belief in G-d

The first question asked was whether participants believed in G-d. The question was phrased as "Do you believe in the existence of one omnipotent, omniscient, and

omnipresent G-d?" The researcher's rationale for selecting this question to open the interview had to do with its importance in Judaism. The centrality of a monotheistic deity in Judaism is evident in scriptural and theological works. In the Ten Commandments, the first four commandments revolve around G-d's relationship with His people.[45] The first commandment is clear in expounding the importance of G-d in Judaism as it plainly declares to the Israelites gathered near Mount Sinai that "I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage."[46] The next three commandments proscribe polytheism, idolatry, and blasphemy,[47] all of which substantiate the supreme nature of G-d in Judaism. The monotheistic image of G-d is not only seen in laws, but in one of the most popular prayers in Judaism: the *Shema*. The *Shema*, or more formally *Shema Yisrael*, literarily means "Hear Israel" and recites as follows: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone."[48] The prayer summarizes the monotheistic nature of Judaism. The third reason why this question was chosen to begin the interview was due to Moses Maimonides' (c. 1135–1204) *Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith*. The researcher sees Maimonides' *Principles* as a doctrinal creed outlining Judaism's foremost beliefs. For example, the first principle affirms that "God is the Creator and Ruler of all things" and the second principle reminds Jews that "God is One" and "He alone is our God."[49] The prominence of G-d in scripture, prayer, and doctrinal works rightfully warranted the first question to be about one's belief in G-d.

The results revealed a somewhat moderate belief in G-d among participants. A slight majority or 58% affirmed their belief in G-d. In some cases, participants rationalized their belief in G-d. One participant declared that there is "something beyond our understanding and comprehension" and in turn "that's G-d."[50] Another participant affirmed his or her belief in God, but still wondered about the perennial question as to "why innocent people die?"[51] This number was complemented by another 10% who partially believed in G-d along with another 8% who believed in a supreme being. One of the participants who partially believed in G-d explained that G-d was not omnipotent, was omnipresent, and maybe omniscient.[52] This participant seemed to see limits to G-d's power. Another participant questioned the notion of G-d's omnipresence due to the concept of *tzimtzum* or contracting.[53] If G-d is omnipresent, it was necessary to temporarily remove His presence to make room for creation and free will.[54] There was a small minority, or 8%, who were uncertain about the existence of G-d followed by 16% who did not believe in the existence of G-d at all. This sample's responses correspond with the findings of other studies on Jewish religiosity.

In 2013, the Pew Research Center conducted a comprehensive study on American Jews entitled, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews*. The report explored religious beliefs, place of worship attendance, adherence to religious practices and laws, and relations with other faith groups. In reference to the question of believing in G-d, the report discovered that 34% of

Jews[55] were "absolutely certain" in their belief in G-d or a universal spirit, 38% indicated "believe but less certain," 23% did not believe, and the remaining 5% did not know what their thoughts were on this question.[56] In summary, by combining the participants who indicated "absolutely certain" with those who "believe but less certain" one arrives at 72% of participants who believe in G-d or a universal spirit at various degrees.[57] This number is nearly the same as the sample derived from the Jewish community of Windsor if those who indicated, yes, partially yes, and belief in a supreme being are put together.

For the Canadian case, Brym, Neuman, and Lenton's *2018 Survey of Jews in Canada* reported that 62% of Jews surveyed believe in G-d or some sort of universal spirit.[58] Like their American counterparts, the Canadian researchers did not separate belief in G-d from belief in a universal spirit. There is, however, a methodological problem given that the Jews of the Windsor sample did separate belief in G-d with belief in a universal sprit or higher power. In other words, it is difficult to determine what percentage of Canadian and American Jews believe in G-d and what percentage in a universal spirit. There are others who might argue that the entire notion of G-d or a universal spirit may not be a necessary requirement to be Jewish. In the Pew Study, 68% of Jews believe that people can still be Jewish even if they do not believe in G-d.[59] Given the centrality of G-d in Judaism, it is clear that the Pew Study's participants have taken a more inclusive approach to what constitutes being Jewish. Both national surveys raise countless more questions that one must consider in determining religiosity, particularly regarding prayer or observing the Sabbath.

Table 2: Belief in G-d

Belief in G-d	Percentage of Participants
Yes	58%
Partial Yes	10%
Supreme Being/Higher Power	8%
Uncertain	8%
No	16%
Total	100%

Prayer Life

This indicator sought to understand the sample population's prayer routine by asking whether participants prayed to G-d three times a day. The rationale for asking participants whether they pray thrice daily is due to the "Orders of Service" that occur in the evening, morning, and afternoon.[60] The Babylonian Talmud mentions that the three prayers may have been instituted during the patriarchal era by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or the fixed prayers could have revolved around the sacrifice schedule at the Temple in Jerusalem.[61] On the note of the Temple, Maimonides said that

prayers were closer to G-d's "first intention" of worship rather than animal sacrifices performed in the Temple.[62] This indicator was therefore included given the integral role of prayer in Judaism. If the participant indicated that they did not pray three times a day, the researcher asked if they prayed at all. While praying three times a day would indicate a high level of devotion, the researcher did wish to determine whether responses were concentrated at other levels.

The study revealed that a plurality (36%) of participants do not pray at all. This response represented the most popular answer. The second most popular response was specified by 32% who stated that they prayed somewhat. The fact that 68% either do not pray or pray infrequently reveals that prayer is not important within this sample population. In some cases, those who affirmed that they never pray helped to provide insight into their conception of G-d. For example, one participant asserted that "I don't have to pray to G-d for Him to know what's going on."[63] This response expresses the belief that prayer is a sort of communication line between G-d and the supplicant. The participant's response also showcases that G-d is omnipotent and does not require human beings to convey updates. However, prayer could also be a way of thanking G-d, seeking guidance, or being silent and away from distractions. Prayer can also be a way of asking for G-d's intervention in a serious matter, such as one's health. One participant clarified that, "I don't believe in the concept of praying to G-d for things to happen."[64] This response seems to reject the characterization of G-d as a wish granter who listens to the pleas of the faithful and then decides whether to grant or refuse their requests. The disinterest in prayer is not only showing among those who do not pray, but also among those who pray infrequently.

The second most reported response included all those who pray somewhat. To be included in this category, participants had to confirm that they prayed, but could not pray on a daily basis or during services, as these would be separate responses. This response was challenging to code as participants used a range of words and phrases to describe their prayer routine. The participants employed responses such as "occasionally,"[65] "somewhat,"[66] and "a little."[67] An interesting response from this category was noted by a participant who explained that he or she does not pray every day, but may say the *Shema* when an ambulance siren is heard.[68] There were only a small minority or 10% who pray during services or holidays. For example, one participant remarked that he or she might attend a *minyan* or prayer quorum on occasion.[69] Another participant shared that he or she will pray during the three Torah readings per week.[70]

There were also 6% who mentioned that they "talked to G-d." The researcher suspects that this response is more informal than prayer. This point can be substantiated by one participant who explained that he or she "talk(s) to G-d all the time not with a *siddur*."[71] Though it is not necessary to use a *siddur* or prayer book to pray, doing so suggests an interest in the more routinized aspects of prayer. Moreover, it implies a

connection to one of the denominations within Judaism, namely Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or Reconstructionist. Since each denomination publishes their own *siddur*, the participant would be showing an affinity for one of the denominations by using its *siddur*. In a sense, saying that one talks to G-d is akin to being more "spiritual" rather than "religious." Finally, because the participants used the verb "talk" rather than "pray," the researcher concluded that the participants were seeking to make a distinction between the two ways of communicating with G-d.

Few participants prayed daily. The study found that 10% pray once per day. Among Conservative and Orthodox Jews, it would be expected that the morning prayer be said with *tefillin* or phylacteries that are affixed onto the forehead and arm. This expectation is in fulfillment of several Biblical passages. In the Book of Exodus, G-d commands, "And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead—in order that the Teaching of the LORD may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand the LORD freed you from Egypt."[72] In the sample, only one participant shared that he or she "tries" to lay *tefillin* every day for prayer.[73] It should be understood that the participant "tries" to lay *tefillin* which gives the impression that he or she may not do this task each day. The fact that *tefillin* are largely not used among the participants demonstrates that this religious attire has fallen into disuse.

Among those who pray once daily, the numbers continued to decline as the frequency of prayer per day increased. Only two participants prayed twice daily, and one participant prayed more than three times per day. Interestingly, the question they were posed was whether they prayed three times a day. Despite this, no one mentioned praying exactly three times a day. To obtain insight into this lower response rate, it is necessary to review one participant's unique response to this question. In discussing as to why he or she does not pray three times day, one participant confessed that "prayer is difficult."[74] This participant moves to address the reason for three prayers per day by remarking that three times a day is "habit-forming" with the hope that the individual will start to follow a "routine."[75] A majority of participants do not take up prayer as a part of their daily routine; nevertheless, participants do have a favourable perception of prayer.

Participants were also asked if they saw prayer as an important part of their lives in order to better understand their perception of prayer. Interestingly, the results were not as divided as in the prayer routine question. In this case, 42% said that they did not see prayer as an important part of their lives and 34% said that they did. The fact that just over one-third saw prayer as an important part of the lives did not substantiate the 68% who either did not pray or prayed somewhat. There appears to be a disconnect between "saying" and "doing." If participants did believe that prayer was an important component of their lives, perhaps more individuals would incorporate it into their routine.

Table 3: Prayer Routine

Prayer as Important Part of One's Life	Percentage of Participants
No	42%
Yes	34%
Somewhat	8%
Increasingly Important	4%
Uncertain	2%
Used To	2%
Other	8%
Total	100%

Table 4: Prayer Importance

Frequency of Prayer	Percentage of Participants
No Praying	36%
Somewhat	32%
Services/Holidays	10%
Once Daily	10%
Twice Daily	4%
More than Thrice Daily	2%
Talk to G-d	6%
Total	100%

Sabbath Observances

The last indicator relates to Sabbath observances. The purpose of the Sabbath is to honour G-d who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.[76] In Judaism, this day of rest occurs from Friday evening to the beginning of Saturday evening. The relief from work on the Sabbath is in fulfillment of a commandment in the Book of Exodus: "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God: you shall not do any work…"[77] Now, the precise meaning of "work" is a matter of debate. For some, it means not working at one's place of employment. Still, other, more traditional Jews may refrain from the *Thirty-Nine Categories of Forbidden Work*. These forms of work not only include more onerous agricultural tasks, but also activities such as baking bread, tying a knot, writing a note, or kindling a fire.[78]

Participants were asked two questions about the Sabbath. The first question enquired as to what participants typically do on the Sabbath. In other words, did participants recognize the sanctity of the day by taking part in some special activity?

The responses revealed that a majority, or 56%, do not engage in any special religious activities on the Sabbath. There were seven participants who stated that they "used to" engage in specific activities on the Sabbath. A few said that they would engage in more activities on the Sabbath when their children were living at home.[79] There was another participant who shared a similar response noting that he or she used to take part in Sabbath activities "growing up."[80] It seems that it was important for children to have a connection to their Jewish heritage, but once they left home, this necessity disappeared. Another participant revealed that his or her Sabbath activities would fluctuate based on the company.[81] The participant remarked that if he or she was with his or her parents, it was an "unwritten rule not to make alternative dinner plans on Friday nights."[82] The participant disclosed that if he or she was alone, then there was more freedom.[83] These responses should not give the impression that honouring the Sabbath has disappeared or that it is something that is imposed by family members. There are still individuals who freely chose to engage in Sabbath-specific activities.

The remaining 44% engage in at least one special religious activity on the Sabbath. These activities range from having a Sabbath meal, *kiddush* (blessing over the wine), *hamortzi* (blessing over the bread), lighting candles, taking part in Torah study, and attending services at the temple or synagogue. Several of these activities, particularly those related to meals and lighting candles can be cultural. Some take this time to do something enjoyable, such as watch television, go for a walk, or take a drive. The Sabbath can also be an opportunity to maintain a sense of fellowship rather than to express religiousness. For example, in the case of attending services or participating in Torah study, there might be a desire to be part of the community. While these appear to be religious activities taken up by religious people, one participant shared that he or she participates to feel some sense of community with other Jews.[84] He or she may not subscribe to the major beliefs of Judaism but does enjoy the fellowship that comes with being Jewish in a communal setting.[85]

The second question sought to determine what activities participants avoid on the Sabbath. Nearly two thirds or 66% have no restrictions on the Sabbath. In short, these participants can do anything. In reflecting on this question, the researcher noticed that nearly all participants who explained that they are unencumbered did not feel a sense of remorse for transgressing the laws on the Sabbath. There was only one participant who expressed some level of regret for engaging in prohibited activities. This participant revealed that that he or she tended to do some housework but "don't like it."[86] One can view this high number as an indication that participants are irreligious for not limiting their activities on the Sabbath. For religious Jews, it would be expected that they would recognize the sanctity of the day. While the percentage of participants who indicated unrestricted activities on the Sabbath is high, the question needs to be understood in the context of modern Canadian society.

If participants were living in a *shtetl* or small Jewish town in Eastern Europe during the first few years of the twentieth century, it would be easier to observe the commandment to rest from work on the Sabbath. This ease lies in the fact that the *shtetl* was strictly focused around Jewish life. Given its homogeneity, few outside influences in the *shtetl* might have swayed Jews to work on the Sabbath. The Jews of Windsor are not living in a *shtetl* setting. They are residing in a secular nation that encourages multicultural connections between groups. This Jewish community is also living in a capitalist system that often requires people to work on evenings and weekends as part of their jobs. For example, if a Jewish couple owned a restaurant it would be expected that they would be open on Friday and Saturday to accommodate customers. It would not be advisable to close the restaurant on these days as it would result in significant financial loss, likely driving them out of business. Finally, the ubiquitous nature of technology today blurs the division between work and rest. It seems employees are always tethered to their workplace by checking their cellphones or computers for texts and emails. However, as the next section will show, there are a minority of participants who try to establish limits on technology and other activities that may transgress the Sabbath.

The 34% who reported that they have restrictions on the Sabbath listed activities that they either avoid or try to avoid. The participants named several responses, such as to avoid or try to avoid shopping, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, or electronics. The most popular of these responses was shopping on the Sabbath. This activity becomes tempting with the convenience of online shopping which can be done with a few clicks. In addition to the more popular responses, there were others such as avoiding or trying to avoid work or physical labour, handling money, signing contracts, and going to movies, plays and parties. In reference to the perennial question of driving on the Sabbath, only one participant said that he or she would not drive except to attend services.[87] This response is to be expected given the geographic size of Windsor thus requiring some sort of motor transportation. On the note of driving on the Sabbath, one participant shared a fascinating response. The participant said that he or she would drive on the Sabbath but would not lock his or her car with the automatic keylock.[88] The participant explains that he or she respects the sanctity of the location in which Sabbath services take place and shows deference to the rabbi by choosing not to use electronic devices.[89] While the researcher found these limitations interesting, they do not point to an overarching trend within the sample. Instead, this research shows that the sample has dissimilar views on what is meant by honouring the Sabbath. In some cases, honouring the Sabbath means avoiding financial matters while others see it as a day free from habitual labours. The study revealed a wider, more diverse range of responses compared to other studies which tend to focus on specific activities on the Sabbath.

The two major publications on Jewish religiosity both take a different approach to understanding what is meant by honouring the Sabbath. For example, the *2018 Survey of Jews in Canada* discussed the percentage of Jews who light candles on the Sabbath.[90] The study determined that 34% of Canadian participants said that someone in their home lights candles on a weekly basis.[91] The lighting of candles on the Sabbath evening is an essential component of honouring the day, but it is not the only activity that is expected. Later in the report, a group of Montreal parents are asked, "What types of experiences and activities are most important to your family, or would be likely if and when you have children?"[92] From this question, the researchers learned that only 14% said honouring the Sabbath.[93] The issue with this response is that it does not describe what keeping the Sabbath exactly entails. In *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*, the research reveals that 23% will "always/usually light Sabbath candles" on a weekly basis and 13% will not touch money on the Sabbath.[94] The survey also asked participants, "can a person be Jewish if he/she works on the Sabbath?"[95] In response, 94% of Jews reported that people can be considered Jewish if they work on the Sabbath.[96] This commanding percentage demonstrates that working on the Sabbath is not perceived to be a deciding factor in determining whether one is Jewish or not.

Conclusions

This article has investigated three indictors of religiosity to better understand the beliefs and practices of a sample of Jews living in greater Windsor. In evaluating several theories of religiosity, this study has adopted Norris and Inglehart's existential security thesis. In applying this theory, people living in highly developed nations like Canada will have a stronger sense of existential security and, by extension, a diminished sense of religiosity.[97] The interviews conducted for this study tend to confirm this thesis. Participants displayed a somewhat moderate belief in G-d, but did not show a comparable devotion to praying or honouring the Sabbath. In reviewing these three indicators, it does not appear that this sample is a particularly religious group. Granted, a slim majority indicated that they believe in G-d. However, that figure needs to be read alongside the paramount importance of G-d in most branches of Judaism. It is also necessary to evaluate the sample's disinterest in prayer and their regularization of the Sabbath as an ordinary day. Prayer and the Sabbath are key components of Judaism at various levels of adherence. The question that this article seeks to conclude with is why does this sample display a diminished religiosity?

A possible answer to this question incorporates the existential security thesis and the proposition that as security increases, one's sense of religiosity decreases.[98] An assessment of the existential security of this sample can be determined by reflecting on their educational background. The fifty participants in this study are highly educated, with 34% holding professional or graduate degrees, 16% with multiple under-

graduate degrees, 28% with undergraduate degrees, and 4% with a college diploma. The fact that 82% hold postsecondary credentials is one indicator of their overall existential security. Confirming Norris and Inglehart's existential security theory and their analysis of the World Values Survey data, this study does show that religious values drop in Canada and other developed societies as education increases.[99] Since the majority has strong educational credentials, it is also likely they have stable occupations with ample income. If the participants do have steady jobs and enough income, that would help to explain the sample population's overall diminished sense of religiosity.

The question that remains is whether this sample's sense of religiosity on these three indicators is reflective of the entire Jewish community of Windsor. The next step would be to conduct interviews with fifty other members of the Jewish community and see if these results can be confirmed. This possibility of replicating this study with fifty new participants is a sound social scientific approach. However, one problem may prevent the study from being replicated. Since the Jewish community in Windsor is relatively small, it is likely that members have heard about this study and some of the results obtained. The call for participants was advertised by the major Jewish organizations in the city. Moreover, *The Windsor Star* and other media published stories shortly after the research project was launched. Finally, as part of the researcher's employment obligations, he presented a public lecture on the preliminary results. The community's awareness of the study could produce some methodological issues related to reliability and validity. In short, the researcher is concerned that future participants may know about the study and this in turn could influence their responses. Given the community's likely familiarity with this study, it would be difficult to execute to replicate the study.

Nevertheless, the results from this study could be used as a springboard for comparative research with other regional Jewish communities. One potential community that could be studied is the Jewish community of London, located two hours northeast of Windsor. London has a larger Jewish community of 2,675 individuals and a total population of 467,260.[100] There are also other similarly sized Jewish communities in the southern regions of the province that might be suitable, including St. Catharines–Niagara and Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo. These comparative studies of religiosity could fill a conspicuous gap in the literature on the Jews of Canada. A study like this would help to explain how this sample compares with their neighbouring coreligionists. Perhaps this sample represents an outlier when compared to other communities. It could be possible that this study confirms a growing trend away from religion and closer to secularism among Canadian Jews. In short, these studies could also help to determine what Mendelssohn noted about the "burdens" of being a Jew.[101] Have Jewish communities in Canada shouldered the weight of practising Judaism in Canadian society or have they dropped it in favour of secular values?

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68
Response from Participant 5.

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Response from Participant 24.

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