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Secularization and Scholarship Among American Professors

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In 1969, a large majority of American professors subscribed to a religion, while only one in five had no religion at all. Given the persistence of religious commitment among academicians, it is important to assess the popular notion that religious involvement is incompatible with high scholarly productivity. Recent studies comparing Catholics with Protestants, and secularized Jewish academicians with their nonsecularized Jewish colleagues, have led to contradictory conclusions about the impact of secularization on scholarship. A multiple regression analysis indicates that neither "secularism" nor "secularization" has any appreciable, direct effect on scholarly productivity, except among those disciplines with a high degree of "scholarly distance" from religion. In conclusion, there appears to be little incompatibility between scholarly productivity and the typical form of religious commitment found among academicians, and the lack of incompatibility may be an emergent phenomenon related to increased academic specialization.

"Secularization" is a word of many meanings. If interpreted at an "organizational level," it means that few American colleges and universities today retain the quaint ecclesiastical ties typical a century ago, ties which, to Thorstein Veblen, gave an ineluctable impetus to continual assaults on academic freedom. Alternatively, the word sometimes refers to changes in curricula, to the decline of such disciplines as theology, philosophy, and Latin, and the rise of the sciences and professional schools. Finally, the term often refers to alleged dramatic reductions in the degree to which the personnel of higher education—administrators, teachers, and students—subscribe to religious beliefs and carry out religious observances. Secularization in the first two meanings, no doubt, has proceeded apace; as for secularization in the third meaning, there is room for debate.

In 1969 a large majority of American professors—three out of four—subscribed to a religion, while only one in five indicated no religion at all. It is therefore hard to accept the notion that American higher education has undergone secularization in the sense that academic opinion leaders—the professoriate—are overwhelmingly likely to count themselves among the irreligious. Clearly they are not. Indeed, there is little evidence that academic careers give any impetus at all to the renunciation of religious belief; on the contrary, a study of the secularization process by Fred Thalheimer (1973) leads to the conclusion that ". . . professional training and professional work have little or no influence on the religious beliefs and practices of the majority of the academicians studied. In the rest of the cases, professional *training* is somewhat more likely to have had a secularizing influence, whereas *work* in an academic vocation more often has resulted in increased religiosity."

Thalheimer's studies indicate that, among professors who do undergo a process

of secularization, different aspects of religious involvement do not change at the same time, but tend to change sequentially. Abandonment of religious beliefs, for instance, tends to antedate abandonment of the *practice* of church attendance (Thalheimer, 1973:88-89), a reversal of the usual sociological assumption—expressed, for instance, in the “prejudice-interaction hypothesis”—that behavioral changes tend to antedate changes in attitudes or beliefs. Nevertheless, changes in religious belief and practice *after* one has become an academician are so small that the alleged low religiosity of academicians as opposed to the general population must be attributed primarily to prior selection. It should be noted, finally, that among *social scientists* low religiosity apparently results from “both the tendency for persons who are non-religious in high school to go into the social sciences and remain non-religious and the tendency for individuals in the social sciences to abandon traditional beliefs and practices *after entering college*” (Thalheimer, 1973:194-95). In this, as in other areas, social scientists are an exception.

Secularization and Scholarly Productivity

The persistence of a high level of religiosity among academicians must be a cause of substantial pessimism among those familiar with James Leuba's (1921:277) finding that “. . . disbelief in a personal God and in personal immortality is directly proportional to abilities making for success in the sciences . . . ,” or with Glock and Stark's (1965:c.14) discussion of “the incompatibility of religion and science.” It is possible, however, to entertain misgivings about such contentions as applied to contemporary academicians: in Leuba's case the data are now very old, and it is conceivable that the apparent tension between religiosity and scholarship in the early part of this century has been dissipated by a sort of “gentlemen's agreement” that separates religion and scholarship “within a secularized social climate where attacks on either have lost their power to attract attention” (Glock and Stark, 1965:263). As for Glock and Stark, most of their findings pertain to students, not academicians, and tend to show primarily that religious involvement declines among students who attend superior schools. That is, the incompatibility of religion and scholarship appears primarily to be a contextual effect; whether similar tensions exist within individual personalities is a matter that awaits further clarification.

The effects of secularization also have been assessed within the context of particular religious denominations. An intriguing and entertaining controversy about the intellectual effects of religious involvement has been raging for over ten years: on the one side is Gerhard Lenski, a sociologist at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), noted for his book *The Religious Factor* (1963) which had some critical things to say about an alleged lack of high academic aspirations among Catholics; on the other side, Andrew M. Greeley, a survey research specialist at the National Opinion Research Center (University of Chicago), has made vigorous efforts to refute Lenski's notion of an inherent incompatibility between Catholicism and scholarly excellence. By 1963 the controversy was in full eruption, with Lenski (1963:283-94) claiming that

. . . overt conflict between the churches and the modern scientific movement . . . is only one of the factors accounting for the disinclination of Catholics to enter scientific careers. In our opinion, other, less visible factors are equally important; perhaps far

more important. Especially influential is the basic intellectual orientation which Catholicism develops: an orientation which values obedience above intellectual autonomy. Also influential is the Catholic tendency to value family and the kin group above other relationships. In brief, at both the conscious and subconscious levels of thought and action, membership in the Catholic group is more likely to inhibit the development of scientific careers . . .

A footnote to these remarks states that Greeley had already begun a counter-attack, in his University of Chicago doctoral dissertation, by pointing out that Catholic college graduates had academic aspirations—*i.e.*, plans to continue their educations—at least as high as those of Protestants. “Whatever the ultimate outcome of this controversy,” allows Lenski, “Greeley has certainly performed the useful function of adding fuel to the flames, which, while dangerous in some spheres, is essential to the advance of knowledge” (Lenski, 1963:284). The allusion to “some spheres” is left unclear, but one suspects that in a Dantean universe one would not have to search far.

Greeley’s several position papers on the controversy have established that at least within the limitations of his own sampling techniques Catholics “. . . were as likely to go to graduate school, to choose an academic career, to specialize in the physical sciences, and to plan a life of research as were Protestants . . .” (Greeley, 1967:669). Furthermore, “. . . there is no evidence from data available to us that American Catholics are disinclined to enter the top-quality arts and sciences graduate departments, nor that they do poorly in their academic efforts in these departments . . .” In a second article, Greeley (1969) sums up recent research by himself and others showing, among other findings, that those who attend Roman Catholic schools do not suffer any economic, educational, or intellectual handicaps and that a Catholic college education seems to produce a liberal outlook on social and political questions. In a recent article, Greeley (1973:1253) becomes inordinately defensive. “When the debate over Catholic ‘intellectualism’ began,” he says, “it was assumed that the absence of Catholics in scholarly careers was a proof of a Catholic problem of intellectual inferiority”; yet, we have searched the literature of this debate in vain for any reference to “intellectual inferiority” among Catholics. In any case, Greeley concludes with the following observations:

There is a strong reason to believe that an extraordinary and exciting change has occurred in one-fourth of the American population (Catholics) during the last 20 years. Among the aspects of this change has been a dramatic increase in the choice of academic careers by young people in this group—despite social, economic, historical, cultural, and (perhaps) religious obstacles to such career decisions. This change may say much about American society’s capacity to absorb diversity . . . Yet precious little is known about either the facts or the dynamics of the change.

If one accepts Greeley’s claim that “an extraordinary and exciting change” has taken place among American Catholics, it is appropriate to ask why the change has taken place, whether it has affected some Catholics more than others, and whether the change has been limited only to Catholics. Greeley believes that the change in Catholic attitudes toward academic careers antedated the Second Vatican Council, apparently having begun during the middle 1950s. He suggests the alternative explanation that “. . . an ‘acculturation process’ has taken place in which the Catholic immigrant groups have become part of the larger society. In

such a perspective, the earlier Catholic groups ought to be further along in the process than the more recent immigrants, and the Irish ahead of the rest." Indeed, Greeley's data do show that Irish Catholic scholars are more likely to hold the Ph.D., have careers in research, read a great deal, describe themselves as intellectuals, and so forth, than their German, Italian, or Polish counterparts. The acculturation hypothesis, however, seems to be contradicted by the consistent finding of Greeley's research (1967; 1969) that it is the most committed Catholics (*e.g.*, those who attended Catholic schools) who are most likely to value academic careers and scholarly pursuits. In contrast, it has been argued that among Jewish scholars the *least* committed have the greatest likelihood of being eminent scholars. A study of Jewish academicians by Lipset and Ladd (1971:125) showed that ". . . while Jews differ significantly from Gentiles, particularly with respect to their academic achievements and political orientations, the least Jewish Jews differ the most."

The seeming paradox in the fact that academic pursuits seem to be relatively attractive to the *least* Jewish Jews and to the *most* Catholic Catholics may be reconciled by entertaining the possibility that, while the Catholics studied by Greeley have not attained the scholarly eminence of the Jewish *professors* studied by Lipset and Ladd, nevertheless as Catholics continue their ascent in the academic hierarchies (as Greeley insists they will) it will be the *least* staunch Catholics who reach the pinnacles of scholarly achievement. In brief, there may be an inverse correlation between the retention of ethnic traits and the achievement of scholarly eminence, among both Jews and Catholics. Although it is difficult to say anything about the direction of any causal link, Lipset and Ladd have shown such a correlation—although it is weak—for Jewish professors.

Data and Methods

Data for this study are drawn from a survey of 60,028 faculty members conducted in 1969 by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the American Council on Education.¹ We assessed scholarly achievement by combining a faculty member's scores on number of articles ever published, number of books or monographs ever published, and scholarly productivity over the preceding two years. Response categories were "grouped" and numbered 1 through 6 for articles ever published, 1 through 4 for books or monographs, and 1 through 5 for recent publications. Thus, scores range from 5 to 15. "Secularism" was assessed by combining scores on two questions. The first pertained to frequency of attendance at religious services, and was coded 1 for frequent attendance and 5 for infrequent attendance, with three intermediate scores. The second question dealt with the strength of a respondent's religious convictions, and was coded 1 for those who were "deeply religious" and 4 for those "basically opposed to religion,"

¹In technical language, the Carnegie Commission/ACE survey involved "systematic" sampling of faculty members within a disproportionately stratified cluster sample, where each "cluster" consisted of an individual institution. The answers of each respondent must be weighted according to a number of stratification variables, including the sampling ratio used for his particular type of institution. Statistical data for any table can be taken as representative of the entire national population of faculty members. (Tables 2 and 3, however, are based on a ten percent random sample from the larger file.)

with two intermediate scores. Total scores for secularism, then, ranged from 2 to 9. In view of the fact that both scholarly productivity and secularism are related to age and to the type of institution with which a professor is affiliated, it was deemed essential to explore the relationship between productivity and secularism controlling for both age and institutional quality; therefore, a multiple regression analysis was undertaken, an approach permitting an assessment of the *independent* effects of secularism, age, and institutional quality on scholarly productivity.

Results

Table 1 shows that the average (mean) scholarly achievement score is substantially higher among Jewish professors than among Protestant and Catholic professors; in addition, a small difference, favoring Protestants, exists between the latter two categories. When we examine correlations between scholarly achievement and secularism, age, and institutional quality, it becomes clear that, particularly among Jews, increasing age is associated with high scholarly productivity and with a low level of secularism; other things equal, then, we would expect high

TABLE 1
SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT BY SECULARISM, AGE,
AND INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY FOR ACADEMICIANS, 1969

	Average (Mean)	Standard Deviation	Correlation Matrix			Institutional Quality**	Impact (beta weight) on Scholarly Achievement
			Scholarly Achievement	Secularism	Age*		
<i>Catholic</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.09	2.65	1.0	.05	.18	.31	
Secularism	3.24	1.40		1.0	-.15	.08	.06
Age*	4.69	2.11			1.0	-.06	.21
Institutional Quality**	1.48	.68				1.0	.32
(Weighted) N = 61,540; R ² = .14							
<i>Protestant</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.55	2.90	1.0	.12	.24	.33	
Secularism	4.35	1.84		1.0	-.02	.14	.08
Age*	5.11	2.19			1.0	.02	.23
Institutional Quality**	1.57	.73				1.0	.32
(Weighted) N = 203,540; R ² = .17							
<i>Jewish</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	7.28	3.40	1.0	.02	.33	.29	
Secularism	6.65	1.66		1.0	-.11	.11	.03
Age*	4.46	1.99			1.0	.00	.34
Institutional Quality**	2.04	.78				1.0	.29
(Weighted) N = 24,756; R ² = .20							

*Coded 1 (youngest) through 9 (oldest), depending on birth date.

**Coded 1 = low quality or junior college; 2 = medium quality; 3 = high quality. Quality ratings are based on criteria such as accreditation, percentage of faculty with doctorate, faculty salaries, research facilities, SAT/ACT scores, percentage of students receiving scholarships and fellowships, the level of financial aid available to students, etc.

productivity to be associated with relatively low levels of secularism. The correlation of .02 (among Jews) between secularism and scholarly achievement indicates that the anticipated inverse relationship between these two characteristics may be overbalanced by an inherent tendency for secularism and scholarship to reinforce one another. The correlation between secularism and scholarly achievement among Protestants (.12) is stronger than among Jews, but this may be due to the fact that age is not so strong a "confounding" factor among Protestants as among Jews. Lipset and Ladd, in their work on secularism and scholarly achievement among Jews, had anticipated

... a powerful link going both ways, that is, as both cause and effect. It seemed likely that faculty members of a skeptical and questioning bent would be the most successful—for a restless and probing intellect is essential to any significant scholarly work—and that such academics would by this very same quality question all manner of regular religious beliefs and practices. Conversely, an intellectual approach that would leave an academic comfortable with organized religion should militate against his chances for scholarly achievement.

Lipset and Ladd discovered, however, that the relationship between scholarly productivity and secularism, among Jewish professors, is “surprisingly weak” (1971: 124); furthermore, even this highly tenuous relationship may be a spurious result of the fact that both scholarship and secularism flourish at high quality institutions, as indicated in Table 1.

The final column of Table 1 contains a sensitive indicator of the relative *causal* impact—the Lipset-Ladd hypothesis implies causation—of age, institutional quality, and secularism on scholarly productivity. The “beta weights” in this column show that secularism has a negligible impact on scholarly productivity among the three religious groupings, but that it has a larger impact among Protestants and Catholics than among Jews. This surprising finding contradicts Lipset and Ladd’s hypothesis about high scholarly productivity among the “least Jewish Jews”; the discrepancy results primarily from Lipset and Ladd’s failure to separate the effects of age and institutional quality from those of secularism. The beta weight measuring the effects of secularism on scholarship among Jews, .03, means that if we were to compare a number of Jewish professors whose secularism scores are about 6.65 (*i.e.*, the average score) with Jewish professors who score about 6.65 + 1.66 (*i.e.*, the average plus one standard deviation), or 8.31, on secularism, we would expect the latter group to outscore the former by a mere .03 X 3.40 (*i.e.*, the beta weight times the standard deviation of scholarly productivity), or about .1 units on the productivity scale. Such an infinitesimal change cannot sustain the Lipset-Ladd thesis that secularism and scholarship are mutually supportive among Jewish professors. Finally, the corresponding beta weight of .06 for Catholics does not sustain the idea implicit in Greeley’s data (for relatively young Catholics) that the most *Catholic* Catholics will retain the greatest commitment to scholarship as Catholics move upward in the academic hierarchies; rather, it is consistent with Greeley’s explicitly stated hypothesis that an “acculturation process” has begun among Catholic academicians. But, again, the relationship is noteworthy primarily for its weakness.

The redundant phrase Catholic Catholic, used above, refers to the Catholics in Greeley’s studies who had attended Catholic schools. It is conceivable that a certain proportion of professors may have grown up in Catholic homes, attended Catholic schools, and then, as college students, undergone the sort of secularization process described by Thalheimer. Thalheimer’s work indicates, as stated earlier, that secularization *as a process* tends to occur at about the time when future scholars are receiving their academic training, *i.e.*, while they are students. It is probably as important to distinguish between secularism *as a state* and secularization *as a process* as it is to distinguish between status contradictions (*e.g.*, high educational attainment combined with low income) as a state and the process of achieving discrepant statuses through social mobility (Bloombaum, 1964; Faia,

1970). Accordingly, all professors who had been brought up in a family that adhered to one of the major religious traditions, but who by 1969 claimed to have no religion, were classified as having undergone a process of secularization. Table 2 shows that secularization has no greater impact on scholarship than "secularism." For professors of a Protestant background who claimed no religious

TABLE 2
SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT BY SECULARIZATION, AGE, AND
INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY FOR ACADEMICIANS 1969 (10 PER CENT SAMPLE)

	Average (Mean)	Standard Deviation	Correlation Matrix				Impact (beta weight) on Scholarly Achievement
			Scholarly Achievement	Secularism	Age*	Institutional Quality*	
<i>Catholic Family Background</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.37	2.90	1.0	.13	.21	.32	
Secularization	.15	.36		1.0	-.13	.18	.10
Age*	3.59	2.06			1.0	-.03	.22
Institutional Quality*	.56	.70				1.0	.31
(Weighted) N = 7,844; R ² = .16							
<i>Protestant Family Background</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.63	3.00	1.0	.04	.23	.35	
Secularization	.20	.40		1.0	-.12	.13	.02
Age*	3.95	2.19			1.0	.02	.23
Institutional Quality*	.61	.75				1.0	.34
(Weighted) N = 28,818; R ² = .18							
<i>Jewish Family Background</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	7.4	3.41	1.0	.03	.34	.14	
Secularization	.24	.43		1.0	-.06	.06	.04
Age*	3.49	2.01			1.0	-.08	.36
Institutional Quality*	1.1	.77				1.0	.17
(Weighted) N = 3,710; R ² = .15							

*See Footnotes to Table 1.

affiliation in 1969, the beta weight showing the impact of secularization on scholarly achievement is a mere .02. For professors of a Jewish background, it is .04. For these two groupings, then, the process of breaking away from the religious traditions of one's "family of orientation" is not associated in any appreciable way with scholarly achievement, once the effects of age and institutional quality have been removed. Among professors of Catholic origins, however, the slightly larger beta weight of .10 indicates, again, that there may be some slight tendency among Catholics for a renunciation of religious belief to be associated with higher scholarly productivity. As before, the relationship is weak.²

²My colleague Gary A. Kreps suggested that, in view of the different rates of change in attitudinal and behavioral aspects of religious involvement (as shown by Thalheimer's work cited earlier), it would be appropriate to assess these two dimensions of religiosity independently in their impact on scholarly productivity. The correlation between the two religiosity items is .67. Among Protestants, the item on attendance at religious services accounts for .4 per cent of the variance in scholarly productivity, independently of age and institutional quality; the beta weight is .06. For the item on attitude toward religion, variance accounted for was .8 per cent, with a beta weight of .09. These results do not lead to any substantive change in the conclusions presented in this paper. Another colleague, Satoshi Ito, suggested a way of reconciling Thalheimer's findings, reported above, and the prejudice-interaction hypothesis. Thalheimer, it will be recalled, found that secularization usually involves a sequence in which the attitude dimension of religiosity changes first, followed by a change in the behavioral dimension (attendance at religious services). According to the prejudice-interaction hypothesis, behavioral changes (e.g., living in integrated housing) may antedate changes in relevant attitudes (e.g., reduced prejudice). Ito proffered the hypothesis that the former pattern may occur when change is voluntary, while the latter may occur when change is imposed by, say, civil authority.

Discussion

Lipset and Ladd anticipated a strong, mutually supportive relationship between secularism and scholarly achievement, largely on the basis of their conviction that the skeptical, questioning mind of the successful college or university professor would lead to serious doubts about traditional religious practices and beliefs. As we have seen, there is little or no relationship between scholarly productivity and either secularism as a condition or secularization as a process, with other factors controlled.³ We must therefore entertain a healthy skepticism about the Lipset-Ladd hypothesis and also about the related hypothesis (Gordon, 1971; Anderson, 1971; Murray, 1971) that the more productive scholars tend to belong to an “intellectual subculture” where religious or other differences (*e.g.*, race, sex, nationality) are considered either to be irrelevant or to be dangerous in the sense of impeding the “free flow of ideas” or rational decisions about such matters as hiring or research funding. If such a subculture thrives among academicians of high scholarly attainment, it may not necessitate the abandonment of religious beliefs or activities. It may well be that the intellectual subculture is able to function even though its members retain a wide variety of religious and ethnic identities. Future research on the intellectual subculture—if such an entity exists—should ask how such differences in social background are accommodated among academicians who may work intensively with one another as scholars.

As suggested by Glock and Stark, the process of secularization in academe, rather than involving an erosion of religious conviction and observance, may be understood primarily as a separation, or differentiation, of religious and scientific perspectives. Such a process would explain the apparent contradiction between Leuba’s findings in the early part of the century and the lack of any relationship between religiosity and productivity among contemporary scholars. Warren Haggstrom (1965) has argued convincingly that competition among scholars tends to produce a division of labor in a manner reminiscent of Durkheim’s famous theory, and it is conceivable that increased specialization has produced a modern breed of scholar who finds it easy to disassociate his narrow scientific concerns from religious or eschatological concerns. The presence of religious convictions and the practice of religious devotion do not necessarily inhibit the full development of “skeptical, questioning minds” among scholars who do not conceive of any way in which their scholarly pursuits could possibly interact with their activities as persons of religious commitment. A master’s thesis recently completed at the College of William and Mary (Finn, 1974) shows that when the second law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, was originally given systematic formulation more than a century ago, it generated sharp controversy among scholars as to whether it implied an inexorable process of “heat death” throughout the universe. It appears that at the time the controversy flourished, a scholar’s position on the question of heat death could be accurately predicted from a knowledge of the nature and extent of his religious involvements. One could speculate that if

³*Cf.* Blau’s finding (1973:91) that “the religious affiliation of an academic institution exerts no independent influence on faculty qualifications, but it does play a role in the preferences of able students . . . When the conditions that make religious institutions less attractive are controlled, disproportionate numbers of outstanding students are seen to prefer religious colleges. . .”

contemporary religions are less likely to compel a belief in the "fall of man" and the imminence of the millennium, the acceptance of a contemporary religion would not inhibit a questioning, skeptical attitude toward even so solidly established a principle as the second law of thermodynamics. In a sense, contemporary science and religion may have provided a classic example of a "strain toward consistency" among institutional structures.

Lehman and Shriver (1968) have raised important objections against the notion that it is the skeptical attitude—the "subversive" character—of science that leads to a high level of secularism among scientists. In their view, "the most prevalent position for differentiating between academic disciplines in relation to religion focuses on the scientist. He is pictured by many as the irreligious atheist who, intentionally or not, corrupts the faith of his unsuspecting students and readers . . . From such premises some observers have argued that scientists tend to be less religious than nonscientists" (1968:172). Lehman and Shriver then present evidence that ". . . the scientist-nonscientist stance is an oversimplification. A more fruitful basis for classifying academic disciplines in relation to religion is *scholarly distance from religion*, a construct which refers to the extent to which a discipline's institutionalized activity includes scholarly study of religion"; they anticipate ". . . a higher degree of religious involvement among faculty in disciplines characterized by high scholarly distance than among scholars in fields of low distance" (1968:173). The mechanism accounting for this relationship is not entirely clear, but insofar as Lehman and Shriver attempt to describe such a mechanism they invoke an imagery strikingly similar to that of "differentiation," as described above (1968:174):

The anthropologist, for example, would be less able to think of religion as "something different" from other cultural forms he scrutinizes and tries to explain than would the physicist. The former discipline involves the study of religion specifically; the latter does not. Persons in physics and other like fields are characterized by a great deal of scholarly distance from religion and can keep religion psychologically segregated from the rest of their lives more easily: *i.e.*, from the scientific and scholarly outlooks associated with their vocations.

Lehman and Shriver develop the concept of "scholarly distance" as a way of explaining variations in secularism among academic fields; it requires only a small extension of imagination to suppose that the same properties that influence secularism could readily influence the *relationship* between secularism and scholarly productivity. If it is essential that scholars maintain a highly secularized outlook within those disciplines having little scholarly distance from religion, then it is plausible that scholars with relatively strong religious convictions, regarded by Lehman and Shriver as norm violators (1968:174, 180, and *passim* for a discussion of "social support"), would be less likely to become highly productive. We anticipate, then, that within disciplines characterized by low scholarly distance from religion, the impact of secularism on scholarship will be higher than within those disciplines where there is little interest in religion as an object of study.

Table 3 shows that exactly the opposite pattern obtains: the impact of secularism on scholarly productivity is greatest among scholars who rarely undertake systematic investigations of religion. Following Lehman and Shriver's suggestions

TABLE 3
 SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT BY SECULARISM, AGE, INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY,
 AND SCHOLARLY DISTANCE FROM RELIGION, 1969 (10 PER CENT SAMPLE)

	Average (Mean)	Standard Deviation	Correlation Matrix				Impact (beta weight) on Scholarly Achievement
			Scholarly Achievement	Secularism	Age*	Institutional Quality*	
<i>High Scholarly Distance**</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.90	3.07	1.00	.28	.15	.36	
Secularism	5.07	2.35		1.00	-.17	.25	.23
Age*	4.56	2.13			1.00	.01	.19
Institutional Quality*	1.64	.77				1.00	.30
(Weighted) N = 6,495; R ² = .20							
<i>Medium Scholarly Distance****</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.78	3.06	1.00	.15	.23	.34	
Secularism	5.07	2.25		1.00	-.06	.21	.10
Age*	4.95	2.15			1.00	.00	.23
Institutional Quality*	1.66	.75				1.00	.32
(Weighted) N = 26,082; R ² = .20							
<i>Low Scholarly Distance***</i>							
Scholarly Achievement	5.78	3.17	1.00	.16	.33	.35	
Secularism	5.57	2.56		1.00	-.14	.23	.13
Age*	4.60	2.08			1.00	-.02	.35
Institutional Quality*	1.62	.76				1.00	.33
(Weighted) N = 10,157; R ² = .25							

*See Footnotes to Table 1. **Physical Sciences. ***Social Sciences, English, History, Philosophy, Religion, Theology.

****All Other Fields

(1968:173, 174, 178), various physical science disciplines were classified as “high” on scholarly distance from religion; certain social science and humanities disciplines as “low”; all other disciplines as “medium.” For the first grouping the beta weight showing the impact of secularism on scholarship is .23, which exceeds the beta weight for age; for the other two groupings, the relationship is substantially weaker. It is significant that, in Table 3, all beta weights showing the impact of secularism on scholarship are larger than in Table 1, an outcome due primarily to the fact that the zero-order correlations between secularism and scholarship become stronger when academic discipline is controlled. Academic discipline is an important “confounding variable” because of the fact that while scholarly achievement *increases* somewhat with scholarly distance, secularism (as Lehman and Shriver’s work would lead us to expect) tends to *decrease*. Lipset and Ladd’s notion that secularism makes for scholarly productivity because of its association with a skeptical, questioning attitude seems to be valid primarily for physical scientists—*i.e.*, scholars who are trained to have a highly critical attitude toward existing knowledge and whose disciplines do not tend to involve them in the systematic study of religion.⁴

⁴Historically, a substantial amount of interaction probably has taken place between “scholarly distance from religion” and the content of the typical academician’s religious beliefs. Merton has shown, in his famous essay entitled “Puritanism, Pietism, and Science” (1956:574ff.), that during the early development of the physical sciences it was not unusual for scientists to be motivated primarily by a belief that a major purpose of their calling was to discover the “divine plan” and, having discovered it, to promulgate an attitude of veneration toward it—all for the glorification of the deity. The differentiation of scientific and religious perspectives would seem to require, among other changes, the abandonment of an anthropomorphic conception of the deity as a being with any interest in man’s ability to discover the “divine plan.” Dean Hoge of The Catholic University of America has pointed out in recent correspondence that if Thalheimer (1973) is correct in his contention that change in religious views occurs prior to and during undergraduate training, then it is highly improbable that scholarly discipline, as discussed by Lehman and Shriver, would be causally important.

In closing, it should be mentioned that another aspect of secularism (or secularization) that merits the attention of researchers pertains to the nature of any causal relationship among secularism, scholarship, and institutional quality. Tables 1 through 3 assume that scholarly productivity may be directly influenced by secularism, age, and institutional quality. It is possible, however, that the effects of secularism on scholarship may be indirect, mediated by institutional quality: individuals who are highly "secular" in outlook and behavior (or who have undergone a process of secularization) may have a better chance of getting established either as students or faculty members (or both) at high quality institutions; and high quality institutions offer superior opportunities for development as a scholar. In a sequential process of this kind, the selection of one's undergraduate and post-graduate institutions, as well as the early stages of one's career as a faculty member, would be of paramount importance.

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