

# Are gentiles more prone to suicide?

The suicide rate for Oakland County Jews in the 70s was less than half the rate for gentiles, a husband-wife team concludes from a study.

The study also revealed that suicide rates among Oakland County blacks were substantially lower than rates among gentiles in Detroit.

Based on a review of death certificates, the study was conducted by psychologist Bruce Danto and his social worker wife, Joan.

"THE SUICIDE rate for Jews is fairly low," said Danto. "It's 6.8 (deaths) per 100,000 (population per year). For non-Jews, it's slightly over 14 per 100,000."

Danto theorizes strong Jewish cultural taboos against suicide tend to reduce its rate of occurrence among Jews.

The total number of Jewish suicides included in the study was 108, compared to 1,258 for gentiles.

Danto used the death certificates to extrapolate the total number of Jews in the county. Since death certificates do not identify religious affiliation, Danto singled out Jewish suicide victims by which morticians and cemeteries were involved in funerals.

There are two funeral homes which serve Jewish people and 14 cemeteries, Danto said. Suicide victims whose funerals involved one of the two funeral homes and who were buried in the one of the 14 cemeteries were identified as Jews.

The Danto study acknowledges that a previous study of membership in synagogues, temples and social organizations estimated Oakland County's Jewish population at about 75,000. But

Danto's death certificate-acquired estimate of actual Jewish population was 143,000. The U.S. Census Bureau does not attempt to identify population by religion. The 11-year average county-wide population used in the Danto study was 950,000.

THE DISPARITY in numbers could have significant impact on suicide rates. If the synagogue-membership population estimate were correct, then suicide rates for Jews and gentiles would be virtually identical.

The study also found differences in the ages at which suicide was most likely for Jews and gentiles; times of year when suicides were most frequent for the two groups; methods of suicide; home city of the victim and sex of the victim.

"Jews had a higher suicide rate in October, which is understandable because of the high holy days. And non-Jews had a high rate in December," at the time of traditional Christian holidays, Danto said.

"Blacks, who have a high population at least in some parts of Oakland County, have a very low suicide rate. This indicates there's something different (about) life in the suburbs for blacks," said Danto, since black suicide rates

are much higher in Detroit. Danto includes Pontiac as a suburb.

Most of the Jewish victims lived in Southfield, Oak Park, Birmingham or Farmington Hills.

"The homogeneity of this group in terms of socio-economic location was much greater (than for gentiles). This shows that Jews tend to be ghettoized," Danto explained.

WHILE MEN were twice as likely to commit suicide as women in the gentile group, the ratio between the sexes was approximately equal for Jews, Danto said. There were 58 Jewish males and 50 Jewish females included in the study, compared to 840 gentile males and 409 gentile females.

Jewish women who killed themselves were twice as likely to be widows as were female gentile victims, 18 percent compared to 9.65 percent.

Jews as a group were considerably less likely to shoot themselves than were gentiles, with gunshots the cause of death in 31 percent of Jewish male suicides compared to 60.7 percent for gentile males, and 10 percent for Jewish females compared to 27 percent for gentile females.

Jewish females chose drugs most often.

## consumer mallbag

### Perk up neighborhood with your summer fun

My Scout troop would like to do a project that would help make our neighborhood prettier this summer. Do you have some ideas that wouldn't be too expensive?

Jimmy B.

There are many neighborhood improvement activities that can be undertaken with a minimum of expense. It is important to choose one that best suits your needs and talents. Here are two possibilities:

• **Paint a Mural** — Channel young people's energies and creative urges into "constructive graffiti." Select a building with a large exposed side wall. After you have the owner's permission, have your troop create a design. Set up committees to determine the materials needed, arrange adult supervision and carefully check safety factors.

Outdoor murals are fun, they encourage neighborhood involvement and they are good business.

• **Beautify Street Corners** — Obtain permission to hang baskets of flowers from street signs, or to set up large planters at street corners. Money for these projects can be raised by conducting crafts and bake sales, or seek financial assistance from civic organizations.

Set up committees and schedules to do the planting and to care for the plants on a regular basis.

ECO-TIP: Upland Hills Ecological Awareness Center presents a Summer Solstice Celebration. There will be two full days of family fun, June 20-21, including nature walks, hayrides, movies, crafts, food and entertainment. For information, call 693-1021.

Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to Grace R. Guskin, Concern, Inc., Detroit, 1 Northfield Plaza, Troy 48068.

## U-M names engineering heads

Three University of Michigan-Dearborn School of Engineering department chairmen have been reappointed to three-year terms. The reappointments were approved by U-M Board of Regents at its May meeting.

Reappointed are: Murray H. Miller as chairman of the Department of Electrical Engineering. Prof. Miller joined the U-M-Dearborn

faculty in 1971 after 10 years on the faculty of the Ann Arbor campus.

George M. Kurajian as chairman of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Prof. Kurajian joined the U-M-Dearborn faculty in 1964.

A. Adnan Aswad as chairman of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. Prof. Aswad joined the U-M-Dearborn faculty in 1972.

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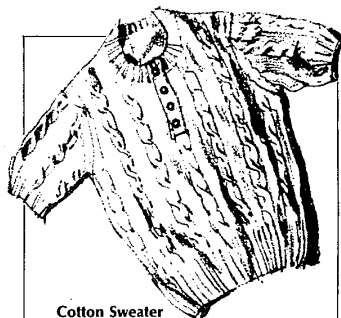
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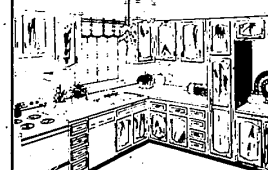


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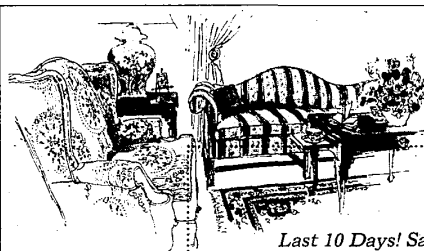
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