

Dimensions of Jewish Identity among American Jews

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Jewish identity is comprised of both religious and ethnic components, the religious being related to rituals and beliefs deriving from what are considered man's relationship to God, with some transcendental orientation; and the ethnic relating to belongingness and commitment to a particular people and the behaviors expressing this belongingness and commitment (Phillips, 1991). The ethnic component of Jewish identity has, in fact, been de-emphasized in the Diaspora of the past century, as Jews have striven to assimilate into the wider society. Particularly in the United States having a distinctive religion has long been seen as part of the legitimate American denominationalism (including both Christian and Jewish denominations) (Herberg, 1955), but the legitimacy of particularistic ethnic identity has fluctuated considerably (Alba, 1990). It is only in the last few decades that ethnic identity has become a viable component of American Jewish identity.

The strengthening of this ethnic component among American Jews stems from four major developments: the Holocaust in the 1940s, the founding of Israel in 1948 and the later 1967 war in Israel; increasing pluralism in the United States since the 1960s; and increasing secularization.

As the Holocaust developed, Jews were ascribed special characteristics by others only because they belonged to the ethnic category of "Jew," and one of the results of this ethnic categorization by others was to make many Jews identify themselves as Jews no matter how religious they were.

The founding of the State of Israel intensified this ethnic dimension, especially since the State was not mainly religious. It increased solidarity among all Jews, rooting them to a symbolic center which was now manifest in the State of Israel, and gave them a common fate, reviving the sense of "we"-ness. This was intensified by the 1967 war, which brought about an appreciation of the vulnerability of the new State and pride in the Jewish nation's ability to survive. The common worry for the State showed the Jews themselves how meaningful their attachment to Israel was.

Events in the wider American society also intensified the ethnic identification. In the 1960s the civil rights movement belied the myth of the "melting pot" and increased the pluralistic dimension of American identity. No longer Americans of various religious faiths only, many Americans sought their ethnic "roots" and celebrated their cultural diversity. This trend further legitimized the ethnic concept of American Jewish identification.

Finally, increasing secularization among Jews also gave ethnicity a more prominent part in American Jewish identification.

It has been suggested that this ethnic dimension even overrides religious differences among Jews, creating a kind of "civil religion" common to all American Jews (Woocher, 1986). The shift in the centrality of the ethnic component may explain the increasing number of American Jews identified in a minimalist, passive way with their heritage (what Heilman, 1995, refers to as "heritage Jews"), requiring less active commitment and engagement than would a more extensive identification with Judaism.¹

In this paper we focus on the extent to which religiosity and ethnicity components make up Jewish identity, and how this Jewish identity varies among the major American Jewish denominations, according to the New York Jewish Population Survey of 1991.

In previous analysis of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, we factor-analyzed over thirty items relating to Jewish identity and behavior. We found that being Jewish was expressed in six different aspects of involvement which were distinct from one another. Three were religious in nature (one expressing denominational affiliation and background, one expressing more closely the traditional religious aspects of Jewish observance, and one expressing more contemporary ritual observances with communal aspects attached to them); two were more "ethnic" in nature (expressing involvement in formal and informal Jewish social circles and communal life); and one expressed Jewish background and learning, which has both religious and ethnic components in it (M. Hartman and H. Hartman, 1996, pp. 197–207). This analysis established that ethnicity is an independent and separate component of Jewish identity, and that ethnic factors are central to overall Jewish identification. Moreover, those religious rituals in which the communal component was dominant were more central than privately performed and observed rituals.

The New York data used in this work (described in more detail below) unfortunately differed considerably from the 1990 NJPS in terms of the questionnaire, which did not enable us to recreate the same factors². However, we developed a set of indicators of ethnic identification and relate them in this paper to the major American Jewish denominations. The choice of questions to be used was guided by our previous analysis.

American Jews are divided into three major denominations: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Approximately 14% of the New York Jews³ affiliate themselves with the Orthodox, 35% with the Conservative, and 36% with the

¹ An extreme case of this process may be seen in Israel, where for many being Jewish is primarily a nationalistic/ethnic belongingness rather than an active and engaging religious identity (see, for example, Hartman, 1984; and Levy, et al, 1993).

² For instance, the preference to live in a Jewish neighborhood was phrased and defined differently for a select population only; participation in Jewish organizations was lumped together with non-Jewish organizations, etc.

³ New York Jews have a higher proportion of Orthodox, and a lower proportion of Conservative and Reform than the national Jewish population. According to the 1990 NJPS, there are approximately 6% Orthodox, 40% Conservative, and 39% Reform among the nation's Jews (Lazerwitz, 1995).

Reform. Approximately 16% are not affiliated with any of these main denominations.⁴

The denominations are commonly distinguished by their orientation to and interpretation of Jewish religious law. The Orthodox adhere to the biblical law (*halacha*) as divine and to the traditional commentary on it as binding by virtue of tradition and the weight of authority of previous generations' leaders. Even when observance might require separatism and distinctiveness, the Orthodox retain the customs and practices of tradition and law. For the Orthodox, identifying with the Jewish people is part of the religious *halacha* (Rosenberg, 1965; Wertheimer, 1993).

The Reform movement, with roots in the European Enlightenment, separated from the Orthodox with the intent of making Judaism fully compatible with life in the modern, secular world in two major ways: easing ("modernizing") the constraints of abiding by religious laws and customs whose authority was based primarily on tradition. The second way was that the movement tried to minimize the distinctiveness of a particularistic identity in a modern context, offering Judaism as an alternative to other (non-Jewish) religions with minimal particularistic ethnicity (Wertheimer, 1993). In the United States the aim was to fit into American society as fully as possible, erasing the ethnic traces of Judaism and going along with the then-prevalent American "melting-pot" attitude.

The Conservative movement developed in reaction to the Reform, yet differentiated from the Orthodox. Like the Orthodox, for the Conservative there was no separation of Jewishness and Judaism, and the Jewish community was seen as a matrix of Jewish life, values and religion. But while in principle they adopted most of the traditional approach to religious observance, some modifications were accepted to make contemporary observance more compatible with modern existence (Rosenberg, 1965). Some particularistic emphases were replaced with broader more universal themes which were more compatible with the wider American society (Liebman and Cohen, 1990), which also diminished the ethnic element among Conservatives.

Obviously, the differences among the denominations are not constrained to the meaning and performance of religious rituals, but also extend to the place of the Jew in American society, relation to the State of Israel, the type of Jewish community life and interaction of Jews among themselves — in other words, the differences are expected to extend to questions of ethnic identity as well.

Population and Sample

This paper utilizes data from the New York Jewish Population Study conducted in 1991, representing 1.6 million individuals in 668,000 Jewishly-connected households.⁵ For our purposes we narrowed the sample down to those respondents

⁴ Of these, about 1.6% of the New York sample identified themselves as Reconstructionist, but this was too small a group to analyze separately.

⁵ For more details on the New York Jewish Population Survey, see Horowitz (1993).

who met at least two of the following criteria: (1) being born Jewish; (2) being raised Jewish; and (3) currently defining themselves as Jewish.⁶ Our final sample had 4147 respondents, representing individuals in about 610,000 households.

Where appropriate, we have presented the data weighted⁷ to represent the wider New York Jewish population with similar attributes. (When we calculated significance tests, or for analyses based on correlations, including factor analyses, the unweighted data were used.)

Aims of the Present Paper

The aim of the present paper is to outline the components of Jewish identity as it reveals itself from the responses obtained in the survey described above to an extensive set of questions about Jewish identity. In other words, we have used an inductive way of attaining a definition of Jewish identity or at least of the main components of this very hazy and very widely used concept. A deductive approach, starting with a precise definition of the concept based on a theory, may result in more definitive boundaries to what should or should not be included, but this would make it more difficult to connect this definition to an empirical research which attempts to verify the definition's validity or its relation to the actual perception of their Jewish identity by the American Jewish community.

The present work should serve as one of the first steps toward developing a theoretical framework, based on empirical data, which will help to arrive at a valid and detailed definition of Jewish identity in the United States. The present work will also address itself to the question of the existence of a Jewish identity concept which is applicable to all Jews in the United States. More specifically, it considers the extent to which the framework evolving from the data can be applied to all three main denominations, i.e., whether we get to the same framework for all denominations (enabling comparison among them) or whether each denomination's framework is conceptually so different that it is futile to try to compare the Jewish identity of, for instance, a Reform Jew to that of an Orthodox.⁸

The large sample and varied Jewish characteristics of the New York Jewish population allow for a more detailed analysis than did the earlier national survey. However, the larger Jewish population and the "greater propinquity" of Jews within the city reinforce Jewish identification (Horowitz and Solomon, 1992) which may limit its generalizability to the population of American Jews. The extent to which these characteristics make New York Jews different from the rest of the American population awaits further more detailed study.

⁶ This virtually eliminated the category of "Jews by choice," i.e., converts, whose ethnic identification is generally considered to be on a somewhat different level since there was no Jewish element in their upbringing, as well as those who for most of their lives did not consider themselves as Jews. This would have involved us in measuring the factor of non-Jewish influence on ethnic identity, which we could not handle in the present study.

⁷ For more information on the "household weights" used, see Horowitz (1993).

⁸ This directly speaks to the question of whether there is a single Jewishness or many Judaisms, a la Neusner (1987).

The Construction of Jewish Identity Indicators

Our approach to defining Jewish identity was basically inductive, defining the concept based on the available empirical responses to the set of questions in the 1991 New York Jewish Population Survey. This approach usually limits the resulting definition of the concept because it depends on the available questions. It could be conceived that knowing about, eating, and enjoying certain foods ("gastronomical Jews"); or using some Yiddish expressions; or using certain mannerisms characteristic of Jews, also express Jewish identity. Such items were not included in the survey, so for some Jews, the way they express their Jewishness may not be fully measured.

Since the survey did contain over 30 questions relevant to Jewish identity which were based on previous research, the main components and structure of Jewish identity are expected to be provided. The choice of questions included in the analysis was also directed by our previous analyses of similar questionnaires in this area.

Our previous experience with the national data (see M. Hartman & H. Hartman, 1996; H. Hartman & M. Hartman, 1996) and the existing literature led us to hypothesize that:

(a) The concept of Jewish identity has two main components of religiosity and ethnicity, which have been apparent and intertwined historically for all Jews (see, for example, Herman, 1977; Himmelfarb, 1982; Philips, 1991; Sharot, 1991).

(b) The religiosity component was found to be subdivided into public expressions of religious rituals and activities, ceremonies performed in a congregational or community or wider kinship setting (such as a Passover seder or a Purim carnival); and personal or private expressions of religious ritual, performed individually or in a private home (such as lighting Shabbat candles) (M. Hartman and H. Hartman, 1996), and we expected to find that subdivision in the present analysis as well.

(c) From previous research there were indications that the public-personal subdivision would be relevant for the ethnic or non-religious components as well.

(d) We therefore conceptualized two main, cross-cutting dimensions, resulting in four types of expression of Jewish identity. The first dimension distinguishes between a primarily religious or ethnic expression of Jewishness. Religious expressions of Jewishness primarily fulfill religious commandments, celebrate religious holidays, or relate in some other way to the supernatural or transcendental. The ethnic expression of Jewishness includes several subcomponents related to belonging to a distinct and distinguishable Jewish people with a distinct culture and history (such as counting on the Jews in times of crisis, a feeling of importance attached to being Jewish, belonging to Jewish organizations, having mostly Jewish close friends).

We recognize that while some of the indicators (as phrased in the present survey) are accepted as part of Jewish identity, it is difficult to classify them as ethnic or religious; they seem to border on both. For instance, attitudes to intermarriage can be an expression of religiosity or ethnicity: obviously, opposition to intermarriage expresses ethnic identification in terms of not wanting a group to assimilate; but there are also religious restrictions and rules about it which might

govern this attitude. The indicator of participating in synagogue activities is not easily classified as religious or ethnic, since such activities may be prayer or non-religious, cultural or social in nature. In these cases the inductive approach led us to rely on the data to guide us as to where the indicator should be included, by considering its relation with the other indicators. The method we used to establish the various components does just that.

The second dimension extends the division we found in the religiosity indicators between public and private or personal expressions, to the non-religious or ethnic indicators, relating to whether the expression of ethnic identity is a personal or private one, such as a personal belief, a behavior performed at home or personally — feeling it is important to be a Jew, having a close personal relative in Israel — or, on the other hand, a public expression of Jewishness, such as being active in a Jewish organization, or attending a celebration of Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Israel's Independence Day).

The process of empirically defining Jewish identity started with selecting from the study all questions (more than 30) reflecting involvement in Jewish attitudes or behaviors in some way, i.e., which might be part of the concept of Jewish identity. In the first stage of analysis, a factor analysis separated out questions that did not seem in the present data to be related to the other questions, i.e., had little common variation with the other questions.

A second result of this first stage was to group the remaining questions into seven different subgroups. Among these subgroups, one included all and only the variables related to Jewish education. However, the amount and type of Jewish education does not usually depend on the individual and his/her commitment to ethnicity or religiosity, but rather reflects the parents' identity and their consequent desire to pass on the heritage. Education serves as a means of becoming more Jewishly identified and has many and varied effects on different aspects of Jewishness, rather than being an expression of Jewish identification itself. Therefore, we did not include it as a component of Jewish identity.⁹

The remaining six groups of questions included one group of religiosity questions and five groups of questions relating to ethnic identity.

A second stage of factor analysis was aimed at creating one-dimensional factors by analyzing separately each one of the previous groups and testing their one-dimensionality. Where these groups were not one-dimensional, a subsequent factor analysis further broke the factor down into no more than two subgroups, arriving thus at 9 groups of questions, each one adequately expressed by a one-dimensional factor. The religiosity questions subdivided into two factors, and the ethnicity questions into seven.

⁹ It should be noted that in the NJPS analysis (M. Hartman & H. Hartman, 1996), denominational affiliation was included as an indication of different belief systems. But in the present paper's context, we focused on comparing the identity components in the different denominations, and so had to change the role of denomination, focusing on the denominational differences in Jewish identity rather than on denomination as a factor in Jewish identity.

Religiosity

The first subgroup of variables addressed performance of religious rituals. These ritual variables separated into two distinct factors, reaffirming the public/personal dimension as basic to understanding different expressions of Jewish identity.

1) The first (RELPER) includes those rituals done in a personal or private setting, such as lighting Shabbat candles, using separate meat/dairy dishes at home, fasting the Fast of Esther, and not using money on Shabbat. These rituals in contrast to the next set are performed on a personal or household basis, and involve primarily a commitment to follow traditional commandments.

2) The second ritual factor (REL PUB) reflects variables indicating performance of ceremonial rituals which generally take place in wider social settings and have some element of public display in them. Included are such items as attending a Passover seder, attending a Purim carnival, and celebrating Israel's Independence Day.

The religiosity factors separated themselves into public and personal or private expressions of religiosity.

The formulation of the ethnic aspects of Jewish identity resulting from the factor analysis, follows.

Contact with Israel

The second subgroup of questions concerned contact with and activity for Israel. The second stage of analysis separated these questions into two one-dimensional factors.

3) The first factor (ATTOISR) indicated personal attachment to, or contact with, Israel. This included whether the respondent had visited Israel, how often, whether the respondent had plans to visit Israel, whether the respondent had close friends or family in Israel, whether the respondent had plans to live in Israel, and knowledge of Hebrew.

4) The second factor (ACTFORIS) included participation in U.S.-based activities supporting Israel or belonging to a Jewish or Zionist group. These were public expressions of identification with Israel.

Jewish Exclusivity

The third subgroup of questions separated from the other questions initially into one factor related to Jewish exclusivity — the identification of Jews as a distinct “we” group, distinguishable from “them”; a group which could be relied upon in a way that others could not; and a group which was considered differently by others. In the second stage of the analysis, these questions were further subdivided into two one-dimensional factors.

5) The first of these factors (WE-NESS) indicated attitudes about Jews as a distinct, exclusive group, including such items as feeling the importance of being a Jew, attitudes toward intermarriage with non-Jews,¹⁰ the perception of anti-Semitism as a serious problem, and in times of crisis relying primarily on Jews.

¹⁰ As mentioned above, attitude to intermarriage could be interpreted as an ethnic or a religious indicator. The factor analysis directed us to some extent to classify attitude to intermarriage as a predominantly ethnic rather than religious indicator, since it had closer relationships with other indicators of ethnicity.

6) The second of these factors (FRIENDS) was a behavioral indicator of interpersonal socializing with Jews as a distinct, exclusive group, indicating how many of the respondent's closest friends were Jewish.

Jewish Public Activities

A fourth set of questions distinguished involvement in public Jewish activities of various kinds. In the second stage, two one-dimensional factors resulted:

7) The first factor of this set included public activities related to the synagogue (ATSYNAG): belonging to a synagogue, paying dues, and attending synagogue. As mentioned above, whereas other indicators could be clearly classified as religious or ethnic in nature, this factor was more complex. Synagogue activities in the United States include both religious (e.g., prayer) and social, ethnic aspects. One of the results of the factor analysis was that the data forced us to include synagogue activities with the ethnic rather than the religious indicators, since the correlations of three synagogue indicators related more to organized non-religious Jewish community activities than to the religious indicators.¹¹

8) Synagogue participation was differentiated from the second factor of this set of variables, which indicated Jewish activities not related to the synagogue (JCULT), including such items as attending adult Jewish education in the past year, or attending a Holocaust remembrance. These were much more clearly indicative of public participation in Jewish cultural (distinguished from religious) activities.

9) A final sub-group of variables, which was a one-dimensional factor even at the first stage of analysis, indicated participation in publicly organized Jewish activities, mostly during youth or college years (JACTIVE). These included attending or working at a Jewish summer camp, ever participating in a college or adult educational activity, taking an organized educational trip to Israel, belonging to a Jewish or Zionist youth group, participating in Hillel activities, or participating in activities supporting Israel and/or Soviet Jewry. Again, these were public expressions of activities not expressly religious.

In a third stage of analysis, each of these nine groups of variables were used in a one-dimensional factor analysis which created factor scores measuring the strength of identity expressed by each of the factors. Each respondent, therefore, has nine scores reflecting his/her strength of identity on each particular component. Because all scores are "standardized", the distribution of the total population centers around 0 as the middle point, with a standard deviation of 1. Two of these scores indicated religiosity, two indicated attitudes and behavior toward Israel, two indicated attitudes and behavior indicating Jewish exclusivity, and three indicated participation in organized public Jewish activities.

The indicators which resulted from the factor analysis thus supported the subdivision of Jewish identity components into religious and ethnic elements: two of the factors were religious in nature (RELPER, RELPUB), and the other seven were ethnic in nature. Further, the subdivision of religiosity into public (RELPUB) and personal (RELPER) factors was reinforced by the present data. And finally, we

¹¹ More careful phrasing of the questions might have enabled us to separate out the religious from the ethnic synagogue attachment, such as asking respondents what going to synagogue meant to them or why they belonged, and in what kinds of synagogue activities they participated.

found that the ethnic factors, like the religiosity factors, also separated into two groups: those relating to public activities (JACTIV, JCULT, ACTFORIS, and ATSYNAG) and those expressing more personal aspects of belongingness to the Jewish people (WE-NESS, FRIENDS, and ATTFORIS).

The classification of the factors along the two dimensions religiosity-ethnicity and personal-public is summarized in Table 1. It should be noted that the number of factors created in any particular aspect (religious, ethnic; public, personal) is closely related to the available questions and not to the nature of the dimension itself. So the fact that we have on each of the public and personal dimensions one religious indicator and three ethnic, and one mixed (synagogue), does not reflect the relative importance of any of these components in the total identity.

TABLE 1. STRUCTURE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Identity	Religious	Ethnic
Public	RELPUB, ATSYNAG*	JACTIV, JCULT, ACTFORIS
Personal	RELPER	WE-NESS, ATTOISR, FRIENDS

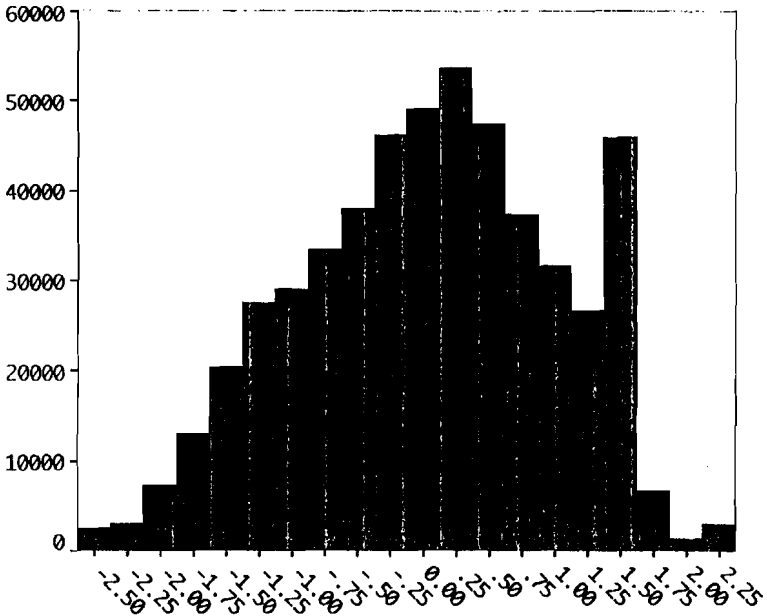
*Because of the wide variety of synagogue functions in the U.S., it is difficult to determine whether ATSYNAG is completely religious activity or has elements of the ethnic or communal as well. Therefore it should be considered as midway between religious and ethnic, but clearly indicating public involvement.

When we look at the distribution of scores in this Jewish population for each of the factors, on some of the factors the distributions look like one-peak populations, while for other factors there are two peaks, indicating that the population subdivided into two characteristic types of responses.

The one-peaked pattern of distribution of scores characterizes four of the factors: JACTIVE, WE-NESS, ATTOISR and RELPUB (see, for example, the distribution for WE-NESS in Figure 1). These perhaps are the elements of what Woocher has termed "civil religion" — continuity of Jewish tradition without negating the virtue of Americanness through RELPUB; the unity of the Jewish people, Jewish survival in a threatening world in WE-NESS; mutual responsibility in JACTIVE; and the centrality of the State of Israel in ATTOISR (Woocher, 1986, pp. 66-67).¹² The unity around JACTIVE rather than ATSYNAG reflects the emphases in this "civil religion" of American Jews which are just as well or better served by communal organizations such as the UJA or JCC than by the synagogue, traditionally a center for ritual, prayer, and learning (cf. Woocher, pp. 162-163).

¹² The only other aspect of Woocher's "civil religion" not indicated here is charity, or *tzedakah*.

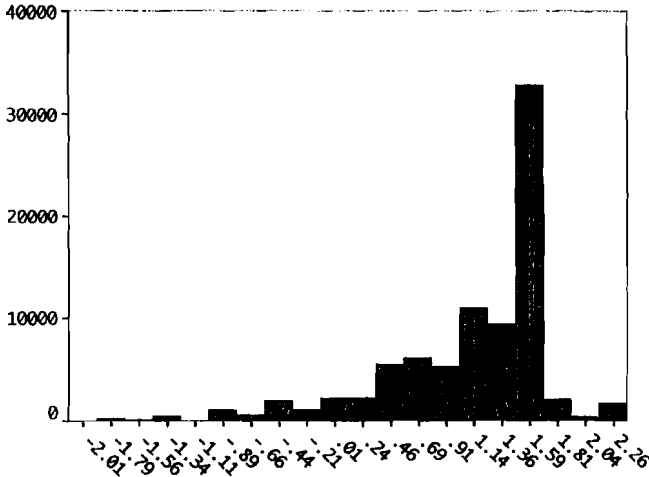
FIGURE 1. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWS AS A DISTINCT EXCLUSIVE GROUP (WE-NESS), TOTAL



Weighted N = 522,493.28
 Mean = .05; Std. Dev. = 1.00

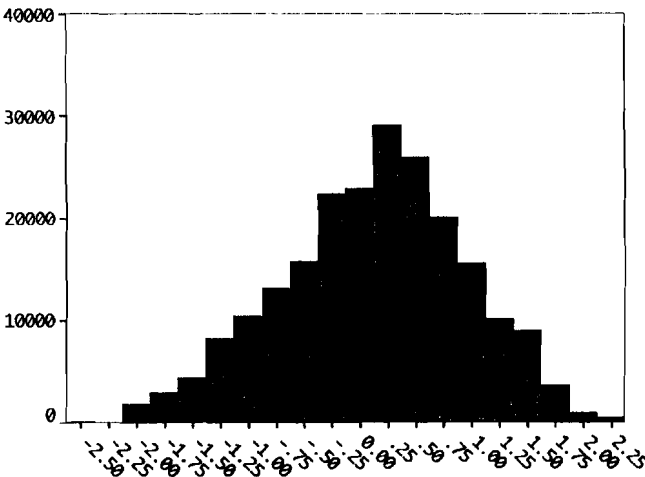
For each of these indicators, the one-peaked distribution also characterizes each denomination (see for example Figures 2–4 for WE-NESS). The denominations differ, of course, in terms of the actual distributions: the means differ, and the distribution of responses differs. But the shape of the distribution (one-peaked) is similar across denominations.

FIGURE 2. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWS AS A DISTINCT EXCLUSIVE GROUP (WE-NESS), ORTHODOX



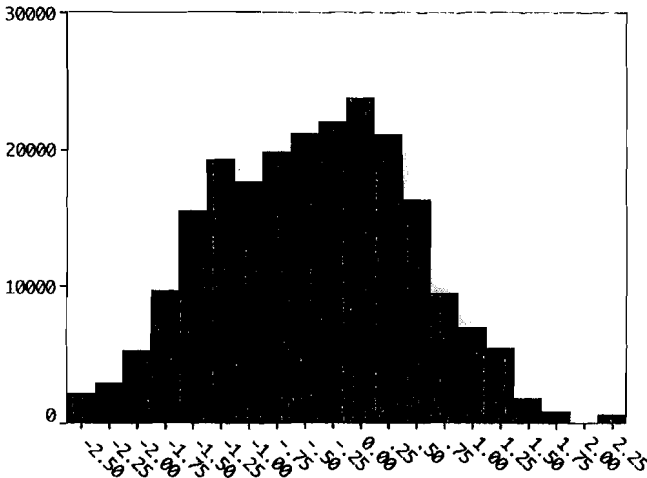
Weighted N = 84,206.16
Mean = 1.09; Std. Dev. = .67

FIGURE 3. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWS AS A DISTINCT EXCLUSIVE GROUP (WE-NESS), CONSERVATIVE



Weighted N = 215,484.30
Mean = .13; Std. Dev. = .84

FIGURE 4. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT JEWS AS A DISTINCT EXCLUSIVE GROUP (WE-NESS), REFORM

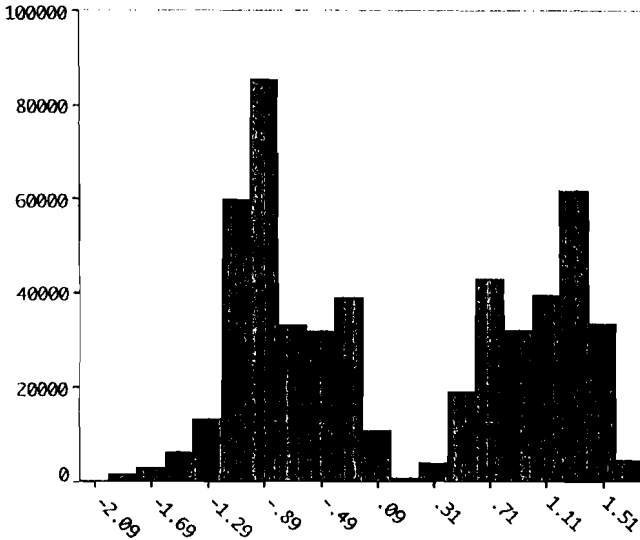


Weighted N = 221,802.97
 Mean = -.43; Std. Dev. = .91

The two-peaked pattern of distribution of scores is characteristic of RELPER, ATSYNAG, ACTFORIS, and FRIENDS. In other words, American Jews are divided when it comes to personal or private religious commandments/rituals; when it comes to synagogue activity; participating in U.S. based activities for Israel; and how exclusively Jewish their close friends are. When we look at the distribution of scores on these factors, we actually see a two-peaked distribution (for example, see the distribution of ATSYNAG in Figure 5).

While we cannot determine what actually causes this division into two peaks, we were concerned that the division reflected such great denominational differences that it would be difficult to combine all denominations into a single analysis or to compare across denominations on these indicators. However, only the two-peaked distribution of RELPER can be attributed to denomination, i.e., the two-peaked nature of the distribution disappears when each denomination is looked at separately. The Orthodox express their Jewishness through the rituals indicated by RELPER, for example, much more than do those identified with the other denominations.

FIGURE 5. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SYNAGOGUE (ATSYNAG), TOTAL

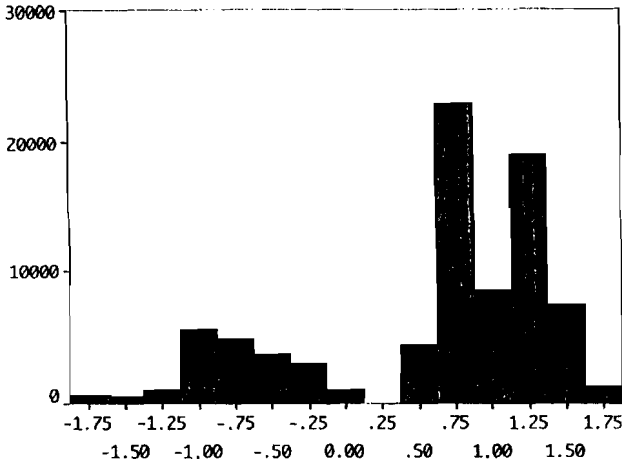


Weighted N = 522,493.28
 Mean = .06; Std. Dev. .99

On the other indicators, the two-peaked distribution repeats itself within denominations (see Figures 6-8 showing the distribution of ATSYNAG for each denomination). The two-peaked distribution is not a result of “different Judaism’s” separating the denominations. Surprisingly, we find the same two-peaked distributions for ACTFORIS, ATSYNAG, and FRIENDS within each denomination, suggesting that different parts of the Jewish population give different meanings to these indicators, but that this difference is not coincidental with denominational lines.

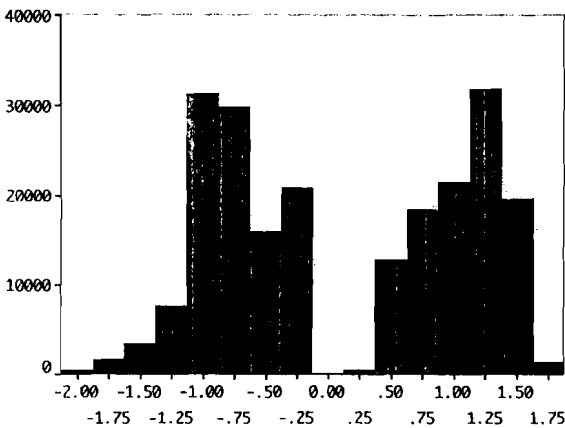
Apparently the population is divided in how it relates to the synagogue, some Jews frequenting the synagogue on a much more regular and probably religious basis, while others make use of the synagogue in a different and more sporadic manner. Since United States-based activities for Israel are often sponsored by synagogues, the two-peaked distribution may be related to synagogue participation. Jews who center their conception of Jewishness around the synagogue and related activities are apparently distributed in all the denominations, just as each denomination has members who do not relate to the synagogue in the same manner.

FIGURE 6. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SYNAGOGUE (ATSYNAG), ORTHODOX



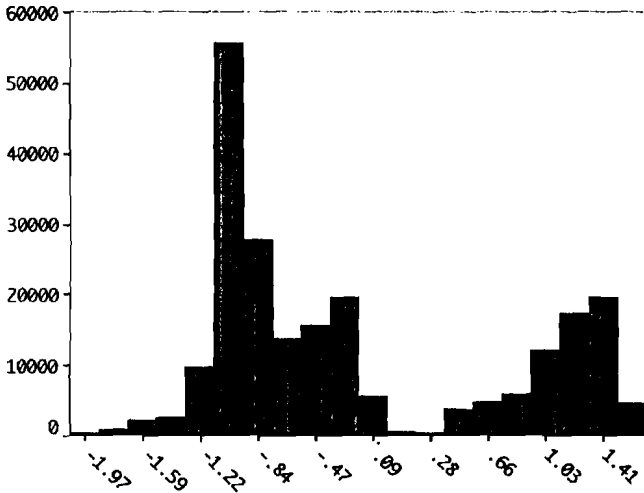
Weighted N = 84,206.16
Mean = .59; Std. Dev. = .82

FIGURE 7. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SYNAGOGUE (ATSYNAG), CONSERVATIVE



Weighted N = 216,484.30
Mean = .13; Std. Dev. = .98

FIGURE 8. SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SYNAGOGUE (ATSYNAG), REFORM

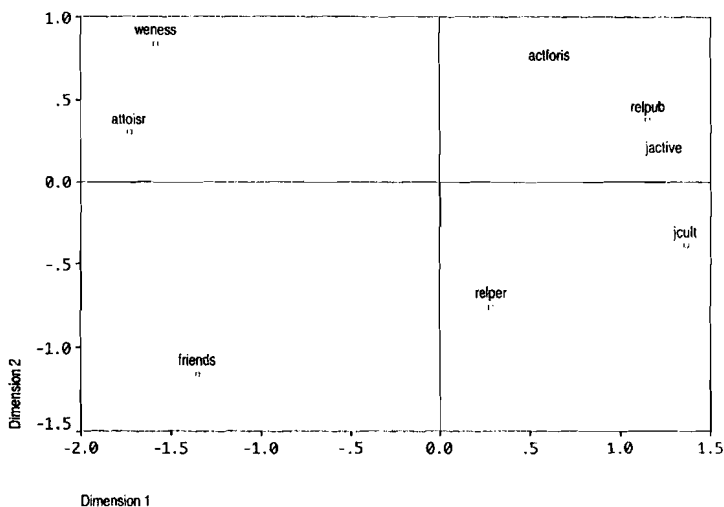


Weighted N 221,802.97
 Mean = -.20; Std. Dev. = .96

The Structure of Jewish Identity

We now turn to the interrelationships among the indicators. There tend to be higher relationships among the public expressions of Jewish identity, on the one hand, and among the personal expressions of Jewish identity, on the other, than there are between the two sets of variables. Thus the correlation between JACTIVE and ACTFORIS is .637; between RELPUB and ATSYNAG, .432; and between RELPUB and JACTIVE, .356. And among the personal factors, for example, the correlation between RELPER and ATTOISR is .529. But the correlation between JACTIVE and WE-NESS is only .269, and the correlation between ACTFORIS and FRIENDS is only .193. (Because of the size of the sample, these correlations are still statistically significant, even if they are smaller.) This reinforces the importance of the second dimension mentioned above, the personal-public.

To see a more general picture, we present the interrelationships of all the indicators in a single two-dimensional MSA figure (the "derived stimulus configuration" in Figure 9). In this picture, each point represents one factor of Jewish identity, and the distances between them represent the inverse of the correlation between them. In other words, the greater the distance between any two points, or the farther apart two points are, the smaller the correlation between them (or the greater the difference between them); the smaller the distance, the higher the correlation, or the more similar or related they are.

FIGURE 9. DERIVED STIMULUS CONFIGURATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY FACTORS (MSA), TOTAL

As we see in Figure 9, the factors divide between the public and the personal. On the right upper part of the figure are the public factors ACTFORIS, RELPUB, JACTIVE, JCULT. The proximity of RELPUB to the ethnic public factors suggests the strong ethnic function that public celebrations of Jewish holidays and rituals have.

More personal expressions of Jewishness include having a sense of WE-NESS about the Jewish people, having close FRIENDS who are Jewish and having personal connections to Israel (ATTOISR). These are expressions of personal beliefs about the specialness and distinctiveness of the Jewish people, solidarity with the Jewish people, and personal connections to other Jews. Because of the common element of religiosity in RELPER and RELPUB, RELPER is pulled toward RELPUB, assuming a position closer to the public factors than the rest of the personal factors.

As we can see, the public factors cluster in one part of the figure, while the personal factors are in a different area, demonstrating the presence of the public-personal dimension in the data. The figure shows that the religious and ethnic factors are strongly interrelated, and especially that RELPUB is strongly related to the ethnic expressions of Jewish identity. Some of this stems from the fact that there are fewer religiosity indicators than ethnic in the original data; probably if there were a more even distribution of the number of indicators representing religiosity and ethnicity, the picture would show more clearly the religiosity-ethnicity dimension (possibly a three-dimensional picture could also show it more clearly).

Denominational Differences in Jewish Identity

One question we ask about this structure of Jewish identity is whether it is common to American Jews of all denominations. We have seen above that for practically every indicator, the denominations share similarly shaped distributions, even if the actual distribution differs. In the following section we compare the structure of the relationship between the various identity factors in each of the main denominations. Separate MSA's for each denomination are presented in Figures 10–12.

Overall in each of the denominations, we see the same division into public and personal factors, with ACTFORIS, JACTIVE, JCULT, and RELPUB being close to each other, and WE-NESS, ATTOISR, and FRIENDS being close to each other on the other side of the figure. The similar structure of the public factors in all of the denominations reinforces the idea that these factors (RELPUB, JACTIVE, JCULT, and ACTFORIS) form the core of American Jewish identity.

The different placement of RELPER in the three denominations is instructive and interesting, as it appears to move according to the role it plays in the Jewish identity of the different denominations. For the Orthodox (Figure 10), there is very little differentiation between RELPER and RELPUB in that both are fulfillments of religious commandments. Therefore the two religiosity factors are pulled together, and are differentiated from both the public ethnic and the personal ethnic factors, making the religiosity dimension stronger. The central place assumed by RELPER and RELPUB indicates the centrality of the religious involvement of the Orthodox to their Jewish identity.

FIGURE 10. DERIVED STIMULUS CONFIGURATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY FACTORS (MSA), ORTHODOX

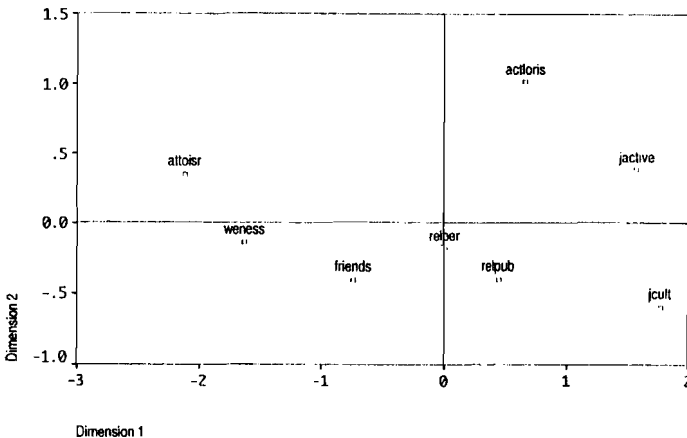


FIGURE 11. DERIVED STIMULUS CONFIGURATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY FACTORS (MSA), CONSERVATIVE

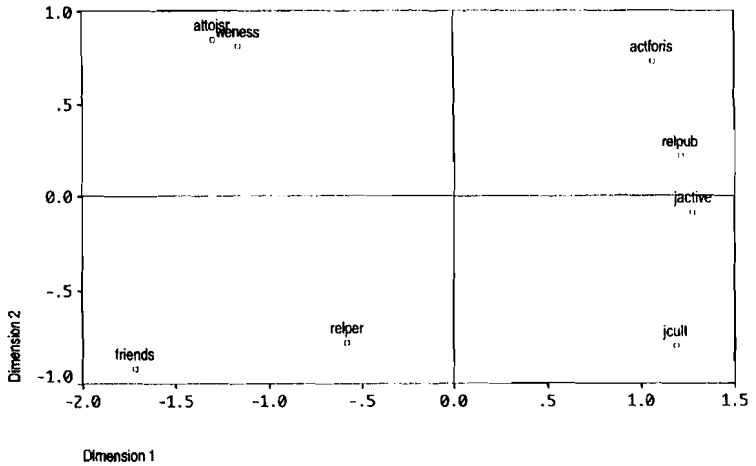
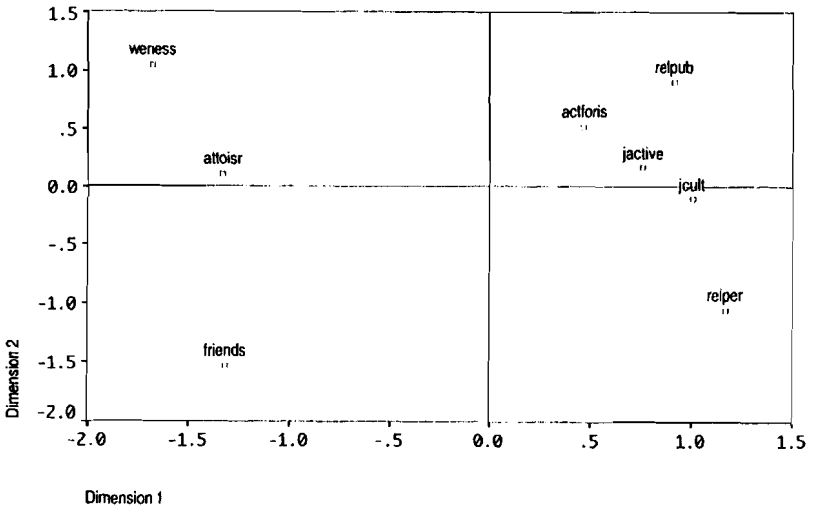


FIGURE 12. DERIVED STIMULUS CONFIGURATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY FACTORS (MSA), REFORM



The Reform have weaker forces coming from RELPER because few of them perform the rituals represented by RELPER (Figure 12). With RELPER a disappearing element, what is left in terms of religiosity is more of a "civil religion", expressed by RELPUB and the public ethnic factors. Whatever is done in RELPER appears to be closer to this general expression of public religiosity and ethnicity.

As in other aspects, the Conservative are a mixture of these two tendencies, trying to balance the religiosity and the ethnic factors (Figure 11). Therefore RELPER and RELPUB are pulled together to some extent but less than among the Orthodox, so the religious dimension is weaker than for the Orthodox but much stronger than for the Reform.

There are also some other differences between the denominations. For the Reform and Conservative, the sense of the Jews being a different and separate people is far away from their other expressions of Jewish identity, especially the public expressions of Jewishness. Their Jewish identity does not imply being different from other Americans. For the Orthodox, a sense of WE-NESS is more related to the rest of Jewish identity; being Jewish is a distinct, unique status.

Personal attachment to Israel is also far away from the other identity expressions, especially for the Conservative. While participation in United States-based activities supporting Israel and world Jewry is integral to their sense of Jewish identity, having a personal connection to Israel is not.

Having close friends who are Jewish also has a different place in the Jewish identities of the three denominations. For the Orthodox, it is an integral part of Jewish identity, closely related to public expressions of Jewishness be they religious or ethnic. For the Reform, having close friends who are Jewish is somewhat separated from the other aspects of Jewishness, as if it is incidental and not part of an active commitment to being Jewish. This may be related to the setting of the sample in New York, as having close friends who are Jewish in New York does not necessarily reflect an active seeking out of Jewish friends, but is a by-product of the proximity and density of Jews in the New York area. Further analysis of a national sample may show indications of whether among Reform Jews in less densely Jewish areas having close friends who are Jewish would be separated from the other public expressions of Jewishness which constitute the Reform Jewish identity.

For the Conservative, having Jewish friends is more central than for the Reform, somewhat more related to the traditional aspects of religiosity than to the public expressions of Jewishness, but it does not seem to be as integral a part of their Jewish identity as among the Orthodox, who are forced into closer communities to be near synagogues and not necessarily because they are seeking out Jewish friends.

Summary and Conclusions

In the first part of this paper we showed that contemporary American Jewish identity has several components, which can be subdivided into the religious and ethnic. Previous research had shown a division of the religious component into public and personal expressions of rituals, and our present research confirmed this

same structure in the New York population. We went on to show in this paper that the ethnic component could be subdivided in a similar way, between public and personal expressions of ethnic identity. Personal attitudes toward Jewish solidarity, personal connection to Israel, and evidence of behavioral exclusivity in the choosing of friends, were personal expressions of ethnic identity; while participation in organized public activities of the Jewish community (including support of Israel, Jewish cultural events, or other organized activities) were public expressions of ethnic identity. As a result of these two dimensions, the expression of Jewish identity among American Jews could take four forms, created by the combination of the two dimensions of religious-ethnic, and public-personal.

The significance of the second dimension becomes apparent when we compare denominations in terms of the structure of their Jewish identity, showing the dominance of the public dimension among the Reform, the balance of the two among the Orthodox, with the Conservative being a combination of the two. It will also enable (at a later stage) a more general trend analysis showing the direction in which Jewish identity is changing.

We identified the following components of ethnic identification: informal interaction with other Jews, formal interaction with other Jews (which was further differentiated in terms of activities for Israel, cultural activities, synagogue activities); attitudes about Jewish solidarity; and personal connections to Israel. New data bases which will include questions based on the theoretical guidelines in this paper might be more inclusive in their identification of the ways in which Jews express their Jewish identity. For example, the nature of synagogue participation and contact represents diverse values ranging from the religious to the ethnic, which need to be differentiated. Having close friends who are Jewish may result from actively seeking out Jewish socializing, or may be an unintentional by-product of residential segregation. Modifications of such indicators will enable us to refine the present understanding through additional factors and to refine the measurement of those factors obtained here.

We went on to show the patterns of distribution of scores in each of the components, and to show the structure of the interrelationships between these various components of Jewish identity.

Despite well-known differences between the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox denominations, we showed that there is a similar structure to the interrelationships between the components of Jewish identity in all three denominations, which indicated that there is a commonality in the meanings attached to the various expressions of Jewish identity in all three denominations. While there is a great variation in the level of Jewish identity expressed from one denomination to another, the structure of the interrelationships between the various components was very similar in each of the denominations. This may be likened to each denomination having more or less the same ingredients of Jewish identity, but using (or expressing) different quantities of each ingredient. The similarity of the indicators and their interrelationships in each of the denominations showed that they are meaningful in similar ways to all Jews, at least enough to compare the results and to combine the denominations in common analyses.

As we noted above, more extensive research on the components of Jewish identity is needed. Because of the inductive nature of developing the components,

our analysis was limited by the available indicators, although it has been guided by our previous research and that of others. It is interesting that this inductive analysis of the dimensions of Jewish identity does not arrive at a differentiation between “symbolic” and “active” ethnic or religious identity, which has received so much attention recently (Gans, 1979, 1994; Sharot, 1997; Winter, 1996). The personal/public dimension does not correspond well to differentiations of symbolic or non-symbolic identity: each of the dimensions expresses a gamut of commitment and penetration into every-day life. Either the available indicators are not able to tap this dimension accurately, or the applicability of this conception of identity to the Jewish situation is questionable, as Winter (1996) suggests.

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