

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# A Journey of the "Straight Way" or the "Roundabout Path"

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## Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel

Arnold Dashefsky, Bernard Lazerwitz, and Ephraim Tabory

Jewish identity has not remained the same throughout the four millennia, which span the development of Jewish civilization. Nor is Jewish identity identical in all of the societies of the contemporary world in which Jews find themselves. It therefore may be useful to conceive of Jewish identity as a journey, which for some has been a "straight way" (figuratively the traditional trajectory embodied in Jewish religious law or "*halakhah*"), and for others a "roundabout path,"<sup>1</sup> embodying a more circuitous byway to being Jewish (whose entry points do not necessarily follow the traditional road traveled but, rather, individual choices). This distinction highlights the difference between the historic approach in Jewish civilization giving greater weight to communal responsibility vis-à-vis individual rights as compared to the reverse emphasis in modern American and European civilizations.

In this chapter, we will focus on understanding Jewish identity as it dawns in the twenty-first century by focusing on the two largest concentrations of Jewry in the world: The United States with approximately six million Jews, who represent only about 2 percent of the total population,<sup>2</sup> and Israel with approximately five million Jews, where they represent about 80 percent of the population. Most of the remaining more than two million Jews worldwide are scattered in various countries in Europe

<sup>1</sup> This phrase first appeared in Hebrew Scriptures in *Judges* 5:6 "... caravans ceased and wayfarers went by *roundabout paths*" (Heb: *orahot akalkalot*) although it applies to a different context.

<sup>2</sup> According to Schwartz and Scheckner in the *American Jewish Yearbook* (1999), the official estimate is 6,041,000 million or 2.3 percent of the American population, an increase from the 5.5 million (or 2.2 percent of the population) reported in the 1990 National Population Survey (NJPS), a nationwide probability sample. Some scholars would dispute this increase; but the results of NJPS 2000, which will be available in 2002, will clarify the matter.

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and the Americas.<sup>3</sup> We begin with a review of the evolution of Jewish identity within Jewish civilization, go on to examine the conceptualization and measurement of that identity in sociology and the social sciences, review the sources (with special reference to gender) and consequences as well as the role of denominations in shaping identity, and finally offer some concluding thoughts and implications for further research.

## EVOLUTION OF JEWISH CIVILIZATION AND IDENTITY

Jewish identity has generally been regarded throughout the evolutionary history of the civilization of the Jewish people<sup>4</sup> as the result of two forces: "The consensus of thinking or feeling within the existing Jewish community in each age and the force of outside, often anti-Jewish pressure" (Hertzberg 1971: 53). The formal definition of Jewish identity that is most long lasting and harking back about two millennia is provided by religious law or *halakhah* (literally the "way" or the "walk" of Jewish life), namely, one is Jewish who is born of a Jewish mother or is converted to Judaism (see Zohar and Sagi 1994). As Hertzberg (1971) pointed out, this is not the oldest definition, nor the only definition, that has existed since ancient and medieval times; and later, we will compare this definition to that of social scientists.

The conceptualization of Jewish identity (and its oscillation through time and space) requires an understanding of the transformation of Jewish civilization across the multiple millennia of the existence of the Jewish people, but the need for brevity limits this discussion. (For a concise review of Jewish history, see Ben-Sasson 1971.) Suffice it to say that powerful economic and political forces in the social sphere have transformed the cultural (i.e., religious and literary traditions) as well as the personal sphere (i.e., familial and individual identities) of the Jews throughout the development of Jewish civilization from the biblical to the contemporary period.<sup>5</sup> Jewish identity, which in biblical times, was transmitted through patrilineal descent, was changed during the rabbinic period to matrilineal descent. Deviations from this normative Jewish identity, such as the Marranos or secret Jews of Spain after the exile in 1492, were treated differently by various rabbinic authorities during the medieval period. Subsequently, modernity was ushered in by the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, which paved the way for the collapse of the physical and social ghetto in which many Jews had lived in medieval European societies. This emancipation created opportunities to give religious identity a variety of expressions through the development of denominations, especially in the Diaspora. New social contacts developed and intermarriage increased in Western countries, resulting in the notion of Jewish identity being divided between a strict *halakhic* religious definition as well as a non-*halakhic*, ethnic definition, which emerged in Israel and the Diaspora.

<sup>3</sup> By contrast, there were an estimated eighteen million Jews in the world in 1939 on the eve of World War II and the ensuing Holocaust, and they represented eight tenths of one percent of the world's population. The more than thirteen million Jews today represent a mere two tenths of one percent of the world's population, a proportional decline of three fourths.

<sup>4</sup> See Eisenstadt (1992) for an elaboration of this theme.

<sup>5</sup> The approximate time frames for the five periods of the development of Jewish civilization are as follows: 1. Biblical (origins in the fourth millennium removed from the present to the fourth century Before the Common Era or B.C.E.), 2. Second Temple/Talmudic (fourth century B.C.E. to the fifth century); 3. Medieval (fifth–eighteenth centuries), 4. Modern (later eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries); and 5. Contemporary (mid-twentieth century to the present).

## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

### Identity and Identification

Identity is probably the most widely used concept to define and describe the individual's sense of who he or she is. However, in the many works dealing with identity in general (or Jewish identity in particular), different uses frequently appear. "*Identity* may best be understood if it is viewed first as a higher-order concept, i.e., a general organizing referent which includes a number of subsidiary facets . . . measurements of identity are carried out in terms of self-reported statements or placement in social categories, such as age, sex, and race" (Dashefsky 1972: 240).

There are two major sources of a person's identity: the social roles that constitute the shared definitions of appropriate behavior and the individual life history. Both the person and others base their conception of identity on these two sources. Combining these two dimensions (the *sources of definition*, social vs. individual, and the *act of definition* by self and others yields four facets of identity: *Social identity*, *self-conception*, *personal identity*, and *ego identity*. Thus the facets of identity are rooted in both internal, subjective perceptions and external, objective characterizations as noted also by Horowitz (2000) and Waxman (2001) in reference to Jewish identity.

The concept of *social identity* refers to how others identify the person in terms of broad social categories or attributes, such as age, occupation, or ethnicity. By contrast, *self-conception* is a cognitive phenomenon, which consists of the set of attitudes an individual holds about himself or herself (see Fiske and Taylor 1991:195ff.). It has been operationally defined by Kuhn and McPartland (1954) through asking respondents to answer the question "Who am I?"

The concept of *personal identity* refers to how others define the person in terms of a unique combination of traits that come to be attached to the individual. Basically these are biographical data. By contrast, *ego identity* is an intrapsychic phenomenon that consists of the psychological core of what the person means to himself or herself (Erikson 1963: 261–2).

The semantic confusion that envelops the term identity, is no less clear with regard to the term identification, as Winch noted long ago (1962). "Identity in any one of its facets . . . is built up through a series of identifications" (or linkages to) "others in an organizational sense . . . or in a symbolic sense" (Dashefsky 1972: 242). "Identity thus is not the sum of childhood identifications, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments" (Erikson 1964: 90). *Group identification* is a "generalized attitude indicative of a personal attachment to the group and a positive orientation toward being a member of the group" (Dashefsky 1972: 242). The basis of the group may be religious, ethnic, and so on. In sum, it may be concluded that ethnic identification "is both a *process* . . . and a *product* . . ." (Dashefsky 1972: 242).

## JEWISH IDENTITY AND GROUP IDENTIFICATION

Having reviewed the definitions of identity and identification, let us examine whether these social psychological notions are relevant to the understanding of Jewish identity in contemporary Jewish civilization. In 1970, the Israeli Supreme Court rendered its judgment in the case of Lieutenant Commander Benjamin Shalit. Commander Shalit

had sought to register his children as Jews by nationality *but without any religion*. This did not conform to Israeli regulations based on Jewish religious law. The children did not meet the criteria of being born to a Jewish mother or one converted to Judaism. The mother, Anne Shalit, was of Scottish and French Christian origin, but the family professed no formal religious beliefs. The ruling handed down by the Court permitted the children to register as Jews by nationality without declaring a religion. Thus one could be a Jew in Israel if one defined oneself as such in a secular, cultural, or national sense even though not defined as one in a religious sense (Roshwald 1970).

Could this be extended to include a person who considered himself or herself a Jew by nationality, and, a non-Jew by religion? This question had already been brought before the Israeli Supreme Court in the Brother Daniel case several years before the Shalit decision. Oswald Rufeisen was born a Jew in Poland in 1922 and was active in a Zionist youth movement. World War II erupted as he was preparing to emigrate to Palestine. He twice escaped from imprisonment. While hiding in a monastery, he converted to Catholicism and he later became a Carmelite monk. Brother Daniel, as he was known in his monastic order, eventually migrated to Israel in 1958 and applied for citizenship under the Law of Return, which grants citizenship virtually automatically to any Jew who settles in Israel. He claimed that he was a Jew by nationality and a Catholic by religion. The ruling of the Supreme Court did not permit him to attain citizenship under the Law of Return, arguing that a Jew who converted to another religion severed ties to Jewry as well as to Judaism. He was, however, allowed to become a naturalized citizen (Roshwald 1970).

How do these two cases bear on Jewish identity? First, they point out the complexity of defining what it is to be a Jew. Second, they suggest that being a Jew depends on the congruence of one's own definition and that of others. As Sartre (1948) and Eisenstadt (1970) have suggested, a Jew is someone who considers himself or herself to be Jewish and is considered by others to be one. In social psychological terms, as we have pointed out, there is some correspondence between one's social identity and one's self-conception. Third, these cases indicate that Jewish group identification reflects loyalty to the Jewish people, not specifically to its religious precepts, although formally adopting another religion severs the ties of peoplehood. These rulings tend to give juridical support to the linguistic overlap of the same Hebrew word, *Yahadut*, which stands for both Jewry and Judaism.

This complexity of Jewish identity as understood in the behavioral sciences, was first alluded to by the psychologist Kurt Lewin, who helped to bring the study of Jewish group identification to the attention of social scientists. He observed that it is "one of the greatest theoretical and practical difficulties of the Jewish problem that Jewish people are often, in a high degree, uncertain of their relation to the Jewish group, in what respect they belong to this group, and in what degree" (1948: 148). Indeed, this confusion may be understood in terms of the fact that Jewish identity contains both elements of a sense of peoplehood as well as religion and the relative balance between them varies depending on the society in which Jews live. As Elazar (1999) noted, Jews in Israel consider themselves a "nation;" in the United States, a "religion"; and, in other parts of the world, an "ethnic group." This emphasis on religion among American Jews represents a shift away from ethnicity but is supported by Lazerwitz et al. (1998: 71-2) in their study of American Jewish denominationalism.

## INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND ANTISEMITISM

The traditional sociological approach to studying religioethnic identity and identification has been to focus on intergroup hostility and prejudice and discrimination. According to a formulation by Rose and Rose, group identification occurs when "the members feel that they are the objects of prejudice and discrimination" (1965: 247). In the same vein, the authors of a classic textbook in the sociology of minorities argued that group identification is the product of discrimination (Simpson and Yinger 1972). The consequence of this approach may be to define minority group identity as simply the result of negative forces without any countervailing positive influences. Thus, as Schoenfeld observed, "In popular culture, Jews seem to be represented as either victims, neurotics, or exotics. Consequently, Jewish identity is either a curse, an illness, or something foreign – a source of shame" (1998: 111).

This theme was also readily apparent in the sociological literature about American Jewry. Consider the following statement by Goldstein and Goldscheider: "Even if the social exclusion of the Jew is declining, the fear of discrimination, and concomitant insecurity, may be a powerful factor in the identification of Jews with their own group" (Goldstein and Goldscheider 1968: 10). An even earlier formulation was provided by Wirth in *The Ghetto*: "What has held the Jewish community together . . . is . . . the fact that the Jewish community is treated as a community by the world at large" (1928: 270).

Wirth continued in a prescient manner: "In the past, it was the influx of a constant stream of Orthodox Jews that was relied upon to hold the community together and to perpetuate the faith. Today, however, this force can no longer be depended upon" (1928: 279). Outgroup hostility, then, clearly must be considered in the study of Jewish identity and identification, but its relative contribution may be overstated especially in the contemporary period. This point is emphasized by Lipset and Raab (1995: 199) who assert that the ethnic (or "tribal") identity of American Jews has been weakened by the "inexorably integrative forces of American society" associated with the decline of antisemitism.

## MEASUREMENT OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Farber and Waxman (1999: 191) cited a *Los Angeles Times* survey of 1988, which revealed the various conceptions of Jewish identity held by American Jews. The most popular expression of the personal importance of Jewish identity reported by the respondents was a commitment to social equality (54 percent), followed by support for Israel (16 percent) and religious observance (15 percent). For most of the rest, there was nothing specific they could report as to what was important to their Jewish identity: "Rather it is just there, a part of them. They *feel* Jewish."

### Behavioral Dimensions

Popular conceptions of feeling Jewish, notwithstanding, social scientists have offered a more detailed understanding of the dimensions of Jewish identity. Thus, a move from a theoretical discussion of Jewish identity to empirical research requires operational measurement of such involvement. Before one can assess the complex elements that define Jewish identity, one has to have an operational measure of who is a Jew. Social scientists are not limited in such definitions by rabbinic judgments or rulings by the Supreme Court of Israel as discussed in previous sections. Thus, the National Jewish

Population Survey (NJPS 2000), relying on questions asked in NJPS 1990, arrived at a definition of who is a Jew based on whether the respondent had a religious affiliation, had a Jewish mother or father, was raised Jewish, and considered him/herself Jewish for any reason (Schwartz and Amir 2001).<sup>6</sup>

Once the population is defined, then it is possible to examine the operational, quantitative measures of the elements of Jewish identity, which are often based on four dimensions: (a) childhood family religious and ethnic background and the extent and intensity of religious education during childhood; (b) religious participation; (c) involvement of one's family during childhood; and (d) children's socialization. Note that these variables are products of social institutions. They derive from one's family of orientation and procreation; the religious institution; the social characteristics of one's community; its network of voluntary associations – both general and ethnic; and the characteristics of primary and secondary social groups.

Phillips (1991) provided a summary of the major sociological studies of Jewish identity that emerged in the post-World War II era as Jews began to participate in the suburbanization movement. (See also Segalman's early 1967 report on Jewish identity scales and Schoenfeld's 1998 review of theory and method in the study of Jewish identity.) Phillips (1991) sought to present the traditional measures of Jewish observance based on the most well-known monographs on Jewish identity covering the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> These behavioral measures of Jewish identification also may be supplemented

<sup>6</sup> Based on these questions, the researchers operationally defined a Jew as "a person who (a) says s/he is Jewish by religion, or (b) considers him/herself Jewish and has/had at least one Jewish parent, or (c) considers him/herself Jewish and was raised Jewish."

<sup>7</sup> These Jewish observances (adopted from Phillips 1991: 7) included:

1. *Sabbath*

Light Sabbath candles (Sklare and Greenblum 1967; S. Cohen 1983, 1988, Goldstein and Goldscheider 1968; Bock 1976);

Special/Sabbath meal on Friday night (Sklare and Greenblum 1967, Dashefsky and Shapiro 1993/1974);

Kiddush on Friday night (Sklare and Greenblum, Bock);

No smoking allowed in house on Sabbath (Sklare and Greenblum);

Carries no money on the Sabbath (S. Cohen 1988);

Observed the Sabbath (Dashefsky and Shapiro).

2. *Kashrut*

Bacon or ham never served (Sklare);

"Kosher meat bought regularly"/"kosher meat" (Sklare and Greenblum; Goldstein and Goldscheider);

Kasher the meat (Sklare and Greenblum);

Has two sets of dishes for meat and dairy/separate dishes (S. Cohen 1988; Goldstein and Goldscheider);

Kept Kosher (Cohen 1983; Dashefsky and Shapiro).

3. *Passover*

Seder on Passover/attends Passover seder (Sklare and Greenblum; Cohen 1983, 1988; Dashefsky and Shapiro; Goldstein and Goldscheider)

No bread eaten in home on Passover/ate only special food on Passover (Sklare and Greenblum; Dashefsky and Shapiro).

4. *Yom Kippur*

Either or both parents fast on Yom Kippur/fasts-fasted on Yom Kippur (Sklare and Greenblum; S. Cohen 1983, 1988; Dashefsky and Shapiro).

5. *Hanukkah*

Candles lit/lights Hanukkah candles (Sklare and Greenblum, S. Cohen 1988; Goldstein and Goldscheider).

by measurements of affiliation and attachment as well as attitudinal measures,<sup>8</sup> which Bock (1976) and Dashefsky and Shapiro (1993/1974) utilized.<sup>9</sup>

## POSTMODERN INSTABILITY OF JEWISH IDENTITY

These conceptualizations and measures of Jewish identity discussed have been challenged at the turn of the twenty-first century. As American Jewry has become transformed by a postmodern, individualistic, multicultural society, so Jewish identity and its measurement have been altered from relying on more external, objective measures (corresponding to the “straight way”) to more subjective ones (related to the “round-about path”). This shift has led to even less consensus as to what Jewish identity means to American Jews and has complicated its measurement by researchers as well.

<sup>8</sup> Religious affiliation behaviors (adapted from Phillips 1991: 14) included:

1. *Synagogue membership*: (Cohen 1983, Goldstein and Goldscheider 1968, Dashefsky and Shapiro 1993/1974; Sklare and Greenblum 1979/1967).
2. *Attendance at services*:  
Service attended? (Cohen 1983);  
Attends(ed) services on High Holidays (S. Cohen 1988; Sklare and Greenblum; Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Attended services on Sabbath (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Attended services on other occasions (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Attends services monthly or more (S. Cohen 1988).
3. *Denomination*: (S. Cohen 1988; Goldstein and Goldscheider; Sklare and Greenblum).
4. *Jewish study/Jewish education*:  
Received Jewish education (Goldstein and Goldscheider).  
Attended Jewish camp (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Discussed topics with Jewish themes (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studies Hebrew (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studies Yiddish (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studied Jewish sacred texts (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studies Jewish history (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studied Jewish customs and ceremonies (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Detailed chapter on Jewish education (Sklare and Greenblum);  
Reads Jewish newspaper (S. Cohen 1988).
5. *Jewish organizational and communal memberships*:  
Member of/belongs to Jewish organization (S. Cohen 1983, 1988; Goldstein and Goldscheider; Dashefsky and Shapiro; Sklare and Greenblum);  
Jewish giving (Cohen 1983, 1988);  
Nonsectarian organization member (Cohen 1983);  
Nonsectarian giving (Cohen 1983);  
Has Jewish friends (S. Cohen 1983, 1988; Dashefsky and Shapiro; Sklare and Greenblum).
6. *Israel*:  
Has considered aliyah (S. Cohen 1988);  
Has visited Israel (Cohen 1988; Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Studied in Israel (Dashefsky and Shapiro);  
Danced Israeli dances (Dashefsky and Shapiro).
7. *Intermarriage*:  
Couple is intermarried (Cohen 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Stern (2001) a psychologist, added a number of psychologically oriented attempts at measurement of dimensions of Jewish identity, including works by Geismar (1954), Brenner (1961), Zak (1973), Tzurriel and Klein (1977), Elias and Blanton (1987), London et al. (1988) and his own work (Stern 2001) as well as more recent sociological and social psychological studies, subsequent to Phillips (1991), including Cohen (1997) and Horowitz (2000).

Such a change has led Charles Liebman (2001) to suggest that American Jews have become less Jewishly identified in the past half century, but modern scholarship, he argued, has reformulated Jewish identity as “multivalenced” without a central core of mandated obligations thereby muting this decline in identity. Thus, American Jewish identity becomes a mere personal experience rather than a communal attachment, leading to a diminution of Jewishness (as ethnicity) and accentuation of Judaism (as religion) but without normative standards.

Prell (2001) replied to Liebman that the transformation in conceptualizing Jewish identity is not the response of scholars who seek to toady to the whims of Jewish communal leaders and a “feel good” “anything you want to be” Jewish identity as some have suggested. Rather, Prell argued for a “need to conceptualize a ‘developmental Judaism’, a focus on the life course, and the continuation of Judaism over time for the individual” (Prell 2001: 122). Prell continued: “Rather than finding ‘packets,’ easily identifiable behaviors and attitudes that might be placed in one or another container, this scholarship pays attention to narrative, biography, and life history, and does suggest a powerful role for subjectivity and individual choice (Prell 2001: 122).

Even in Israel, Jewish identity has changed. As Liebman has suggested referring to the time period shortly after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948:

Fifty years ago we could distinguish a small religious public with a strong Jewish identity for whom Jewishness and Judaism (the terms were synonymous) meant religious observance and commitment to the welfare of the Jewish people. . . . The non-religious majority, that is the secular Zionists, all shared a strong Zionist or proto-Israeli identity and reservations if not hostility toward religion. However, the older generation possessed a strong Jewish identity. (2001: 33–4)

For the present era, Liebman noted that a strong Israeli national identity has weakened among the secular Jews in Israel and gained strength among those with a strong religious identity (2001: 36). Citing the work of Herman (1970a, 1970b), who reported that a strong Jewish identity led to a strong Israeli identity, Liebman argued that the finding is more true in the present.

## **SOURCES OF JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL**

### **Static Model**

Lazerwitz (1973) was one of the first scholars to seek to build a multivariate model of Jewish identification following the work of Lenski (1961) and Glock and Stark (1965), among others. The model, based on a probability sample of Jews and Protestants in Metropolitan Chicago, stressed the social and institutional bases in defining Jewish identification by examining the biosocial and socioeconomic factors along with religious, organizational and communal determinants.

The main thrust of the findings were:

1. There is no separation of religion from Jewish communal life . . .
2. There does exist a mainstream of Jewish identity which flows from Jewish childhood background to Jewish education to religious behavior to pietism to Jewish organization activity to Jewish education for one’s children . . .



3. Both Jewish education and to a lesser extent, Jewish background operate through their indirect effects . . .
4. . . . Jewish childhood home background and, then, religious behavior dominate the identity block. (Lazerwitz 1973: 213)

Complementing this approach was that of Dashefsky and Shapiro (1993/1974), who investigated Jewish group identification as a function of specific socialization experiences and interpersonal interaction for two generations of American Jews. Unlike those who argued that Jewish identification was the result of the intensity of outgroup hostility in the form of prejudice and discrimination, they argued that Jewish identification was formed at the interpersonal level through a process of socialization and social interaction with significant others. Their study, one of the first monographs in the field, that utilized multivariate regression analysis to examine the formation of group identification in two generations of the Jewish community of metropolitan St. Paul, Minnesota (n = 302), found that three main socialization factors (family, peers, and Jewish education) produced independent effects on Jewish identification, with the family three times as powerful as peers and four and a half times as powerful as Jewish education. Despite the latter finding, this study was also one of the first to suggest that Jewish education produced a significant *independent* effect on Jewish identification.<sup>10</sup>

Because Dashefsky and Shapiro developed a two-generational analysis that focused on comparing a group of young men between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-nine to a group of fathers, it was difficult to study comparisons of mothers and daughters because of the frequent name changes after marriage prevalent at that time. Strauss, however, studied one hundred and three young Jewish men and women between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-nine living in Toronto, Canada, and reported that "there was strong evidence that the two male groups of subjects [Toronto and St. Paul] were alike" (1979).<sup>11</sup>

Socialization creates a pattern of social interaction that puts children and adolescents on a certain path, but whether they remain on that path throughout the life course depends on the way they are structurally integrated into the larger Jewish community as adults. Dashefsky and Shapiro (1993/1974) examined the combined influences of socialization and structural integration factors for two generations. With regard to the younger generation, they found that synagogue involvement and income produced independent contemporary structural integration effects in shaping Jewish identification.

<sup>10</sup> By comparison in the older generation, the socialization effects documented were more limited with the family accounting for 20 percent of the variance explained and peers contributed 6 percent for a total of 26 percent of the variance explained. Jewish education failed to produce an independent effect. This was probably the case in this generation because Jewish education was not as extensive for the second generation who were educated in the pre-World War II era. The greater assimilation of the younger generation had led to Jewish education having a more pronounced and independent effect on Jewish identification for them.

<sup>11</sup> Strauss relied on Dashefsky and Shapiro's questionnaire, and her findings for the sources of Jewish identification were similar to Dashefsky and Shapiro for the males among her respondents. However, there were some differences that emerged with respect to her female respondents. With respect to males, for example, both Strauss and Dashefsky and Shapiro found that father's religiosity was the most important variable, followed by friends' expectations, Jewish education, and activities with parents. For females, however, Strauss found activities with parents was the most important, followed by Jewish education, friends' expectations, and father's religiosity.

Of the total of 40 percent of the variance explained, 24 percent came from current synagogue involvement, and 2 percent came from current income. The remaining 14 percent of the variance explained resulted from socialization factors, including 9 percent from family influences, 3 percent from Jewish education, and 2 percent from peers. They concluded: "The data indicate that socialization factors had an indirect effect on Jewish identification by affecting current religiosity and adolescent experiences provided a basis for later adult activities" (1993/1974).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless as Sklare had already observed, "The changing significance of the family, and . . . declines in frequency and intensity of interaction with the kinship group, means that identity can no longer be acquired solely through this traditional institution" (1971: 98).

## DYNAMIC MODEL

As American Jewry, in particular, has become transformed by postmodern, multicultural society, so, too, has Jewish identity as well as its measurement. Thus, the conceptualization and measurement of Jewish identity need to be broadened to encompass a new empirical reality. An example of this line of research is illustrated in the work of Horowitz (2000), who gathered her data through face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys, and focus groups with "Jewishly connected" adults aged twenty-two to fifty-four, in metropolitan New York ( $n = 1,504$ ). In this study, Jewish identity was measured both attitudinally ("Subjective Jewish Centrality") and behaviorally ("Religious Ritual Activity" and "Cultural-Communal Activity"). Horowitz (2000: 185–9) found that Jewish identity is not necessarily declining but "persists and is reinvented," it is diverse in levels of engagement ranging from those who are "indifferent" to those who are "tradition oriented," and for some it changes over the life course, whereas for others there is stability of engagement (either high or low). Horowitz (*ibid.*: 190–2) identified parental relations as a powerful source in shaping Jewish identity, but also found that other significant relationships, experiences, and events had a significant impact on Jewish identity. Overall, Horowitz's (2000) study revealed that the Orthodox tend to follow the "straight way" and demonstrate a more predictable outcome than the non-Orthodox who tend to follow the "roundabout path" with less predictable outcomes as supported by the greater amount of variance explained for the former than the latter group.

## GENDER AND JEWISH IDENTITY

Gender also comprises an important factor shaping Jewish identity. This is symbolically indicated in the daily prayer service. Orthodox Judaism has women thank God for "making me according to His will." The parallel blessing for men thanks God "who has not made me a woman" (Tabory 2001). The questions raised about traditional gender divisions in Judaism are having a profound impact on Judaism and Jewish identity in the contemporary period.

<sup>12</sup>In regard to the older generation, a similar pattern emerged albeit with a more limited range of significant variables. Current synagogue involvement accounted for 23 percent of the total of 35 percent of variance explained, with 7 percent for peers, and only 5 percent for family influences. Jewish education offered no independent contribution as noted in footnote 10.

Men have always played the dominant, higher status role in organized Jewish life. The rationale for women's more limited roles has often been interpreted in a way that ascribes to them tasks of great importance that focus on raising and educating the younger generation. These "important" jobs excuse women from a variety of time-dependent ritual requirements that could undermine their devotion to the tasks that they "have" to do as women. The high status activity of Jewish learning also has been restricted to men. Even now, learned, fervently Orthodox women have to hide their knowledge and manifest self-deprecation before their husbands (El-Or 1992).

Improving the status of women in Judaism went hand-in-hand with the formation of Reform and Conservative Judaism. The civil equality adopted by the Jews of the Emancipation also led to a more positive self-concept among Jewish women (see Hertz 1998). The changing role of women in Judaism was still relatively slow in the non-Orthodox movements, because it was the slowly changing identity of women in society that trickled down to the identity of women in Judaism (see Kaplan 1982; Burman 1986).

Changes that came about in non-Orthodox Judaism included the inclusion of women as part of the synagogue service quorum and their right to receive the same Torah honors that had traditionally been restricted to men. The last bastion of formal separation of men and women is related to clerical ordination. The Conservative movement joined the Reform denomination in admitting women to its rabbinical studies program only in the 1980s. Clearly the social environment of the United States that affected the social identity of women and the development of a strong feminist movement had its consequences in the Jewish world as well. For some Reform women, and for a larger number of Conservative women, the combination of a modern secular orientation together with a traditional Jewish identity considerably moderates the degree of feminist expectations. Some women, for example, support the principle of equality, even as they do not necessarily want to personally benefit from the greater roles available to them because of a lingering conservative Jewish identity (Tabory 1984). The relative importance attributed to the male in Judaism is also manifested by some women adopting the male dress pattern of wearing a skull cap and prayer shawl in the synagogue.

The greatest impact of feminism is being felt in the Orthodox community. Reform and Conservative Judaism try to accommodate themselves to the surrounding society. Feminism is part of that culture. Orthodox Judaism by and large tries to segregate itself from secular influences. Orthodoxy involves a total life style. Those Orthodox Jews who take part in secular society must compartmentalize their identities, but they are doing this as a member of a denomination that does not make such separation easy. An Orthodox Jew in the secular world has to try to manage his or her dress, Jewish dietary restrictions, and limitations regarding work and travel on the Sabbath and Festivals (see Frank 1975). In this respect, accommodation works from the inside out – as the internal requirements of Judaism affect life outside Jewish society. The impact of feminism is in the opposite direction, as the ideology of the general society is carried inward to the Jewish world and affects the identity of Orthodox women caught up in a dual value system. (See Greenberg 1981 for a very interesting attempt to reconcile feminism and Orthodox law.)

The traditional division between men and women in the Orthodox world affects many facets of life, including areas of religious study. Even in the twenty-first century,

when Orthodox women undertake religious studies, they are exposed to a different, less prestigious curriculum than men. Orthodox males in Israel can receive an exemption from military service as long as they commit themselves to full-time religious study. Orthodox females can receive an exemption from compulsory conscription by merely declaring their religious identity.

A change is taking place in the religious identity of Orthodox girls in Israel, and even more so in the United States. Many Orthodox women now receive high quality secular education as a consequence of the principle of gender equality found in the Western world. This exposure shapes their identity as Jewish women. They are not demanding radical change; that would go against their perception of Orthodox Judaism as the legitimate manifestation of organized Jewish religion. (Many women who are totally disillusioned and want to leave the fold of Orthodoxy do so if they can gather the personal strength to overcome the social pressure against their move.) The interesting impact of feminism on Orthodox identity relates to genuinely Orthodox women who want a greater religious experience that involves, ipso facto, greater equality. Some Orthodox women seek to participate in women's prayer groups, for example, and study the same types of texts as the men do because such behavior will enrich their Jewish lives. In fact, their initial desire is affected by broader social norms, and it is therefore no wonder that the movement for more religious participation has been stronger in the United States than in Israel, where feminism is relatively less of an issue (Yishai 1997; Herzog 2000). At the same time, the women who are affected by the wider social values system do not really recognize those norms as undermining their traditional religious identity. They are not trying to consciously revolutionize Orthodox Judaism but to express their identity as Orthodox women in the contemporary world.

While the motivation of the women may be innocent, some Orthodox leaders (most of whom happen to be men) reject their acts as undermining *halakhic* Judaism. Religious fundamentalists are more opposed to change than are "modern" Orthodox Jews. The latter accept some form of accommodation even if religious law has to be somewhat stretched (cf. Frimer and Frimer 1998). Pararabbinic functions for women have even been approved in Israel by the state authorities, although the women involved have not met total acceptance from all Orthodox authorities. It is not inconceivable that Orthodox women may eventually be ordained as rabbis as there is no apparent prohibition in Jewish religious law, but quite a few revised editions of this handbook will likely appear before that day comes.

## **CORRELATES AND CONSEQUENCES OF JEWISH IDENTITY**

### **Contrasting the Religiosity of American and Israeli Jews**

An interesting comparison arises when contrasting the correlates of Jewish identity by examining the differences in religious involvement in Israel, where Jews are the dominant group, and the United States, where they are a small minority. Two surveys, NJPS 1990 for American Jews and the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics Survey (1995) for Israeli Jews, permit a comparison of religiosity.

Table 18.1 contrasts American Jewish religiosity with its Israeli equivalent. It is feasible to combine those in Israel who consider themselves very religious or religious and to consider them as equivalent to American Orthodoxy. When done, this indicates

**Table 18.1. Contrasting Jews of America and Israel on Religiosity Orientation**

American Jews		Israeli Jews			
			European Descent	Middle Eastern Descent	All Israeli Jews
Orthodox	6%	Very religious and religious	14%	16%	14%
Conservative	40%	Traditional-religious orientation	5%	20%	11%
Reform	39%	Traditional, but nonreligious orientation	25%	45%	34%
No denominational preference	15%	Not religious	56%	19%	41%
Total	100%	Total	100%	100%	100%

Sources: For American Jews, Lazerwitz et al. 1998; for Israeli Jews, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics Survey 1995.

that the "Orthodox" group in Israel is more than twice as numerous as in the United States. If one regards the religiously oriented traditionalists as akin to the American Conservative denomination, it shows that this orientation is weak within Israel. The U.S. Reform and the Israeli traditional, but not religious, category are just about equal. The "not religious" grouping within Israel is about three times as numerous as the no denominational preference group in the United States.

There are also major differences between Jews of European and Middle Eastern descent. The Middle Eastern country descendant group has a much smaller percentage declaring themselves to be not religious. Instead, this group has almost twice as many who opt for the traditional but not religious orientation as do the Jews of European descent and four times as many in the traditional with a religious orientation than has the European descendant group. All told, a majority of the European Jewish group regard themselves as not religious, while almost two-thirds of the Middle Eastern Jewish group fall into either of the two traditional categories.

Table 18.2 contrasts the groups on synagogue attendance. While the question on synagogue attendance was coded differently on the two surveys, it is possible to contrast the American category of several times a month or more with the Israeli categories of most Sabbaths or daily attendance. This contrast shows both national groups are relatively similar on the frequently attending categories. At the other end of the scale, the Americans have 51 percent stating they attend around three times a year or less in contrast to the European descendant Israeli group with 46 percent attending seldom or never and 30 percent of the Middle Eastern country descendant Israelis attending seldom or never.

Table 18.3 provides data on religious observances, including the extent to which families observe the religious laws of keeping kosher by having separate dishes for meat and dairy foods and also the degree to which respondents observe the Yom Kippur fast, which takes place outside the synagogue. About three times as many Israeli Jews keep separate meat and dairy dishes as do American Jews. Then, in contrast to American

**Table 18.2. Contrasting Jews of America and Israel on Synagogue Attendance**

American Jews		Israeli Jews			
			European Descent	Middle Eastern Descent	All Israeli Jews
Several times a month or more	16%	Almost daily	6%	6%	6%
Once a month	11%	On most Sabbaths	9%	19%	13%
A few times per year	22%	The nine major religious holidays	39%	45%	42%
1-2 times per year or high holidays	35%	Seldom or never	46%	30%	39%
Doesn't go	16%				
Total	100%	Total	100%	100%	100%

Sources: For American Jews, Lazerwitz et al. 1998; For Israeli Jews, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics Survey 1995.

**Table 18.3. Contrasting Jews of America and Israel on Observing Kosher Law and the Yom Kippur Fast**

Religious Variables	American Jews (n = 1905)	Israeli Jews		
		European (n = 1258)	Middle Eastern (n = 956)	All Israeli Jews (n = 2214)
1. Keeps separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy				
Yes	17%	34%	64%	47%
No	83%	66%	36%	53%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
2. Fasts on Yom Kippur				
Yes	59%	60%	81%	74%
No	41%	40%	19%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Sources: For American Jews, Lazerwitz et al. 1998; For Israeli Jews, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics Survey 1995.

Jews, about four times as many Israelis having Middle Eastern country descent keep separate dishes as do about twice as many European descendant Israelis. In contrast, American and Israeli Jews of European descent report equivalent fasting percentages. However, Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern country descent have one-third more reporting the observance of the Yom Kippur fast. In summary, on the religiosity measures thus far introduced, one finds those Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern country descent being the most religious followed by Israeli Jews of European descent with American Jews coming close behind.

Even the not religious, European descent Israeli Jews have more home religious practices than do the equivalent American “no denominational preference-no synagogue membership group.” In the Israeli not religious group, 10 percent claim separate dishes and 41 percent claim to fast on Yom Kippur. The American equivalent group has just 4 percent claiming separate dishes at home and just 15 percent claiming to fast on Yom Kippur. Thus in many ways, the identity aspects of Jewish life in Israel are equivalent to Protestant identity in the United States.

As just seen, being not religious in Israel involves a different type of behavior than it does among the Jews of the United States. The not religious group in Israel performs more home religious practices than the American no denominational preference group without a synagogue affiliation, or those who prefer the Reform denomination but are not members of Reform synagogues and who do little in the way of home religious practices. Both in Israel and the United States, these Jewish groups seldom attend synagogue services. This comparison highlights the differential effects for Jews who live in a society where they are a small minority (e.g., the United States) as compared to the one society where they constitute the dominant group (Israel).

## INTERMARRIAGE

No social science study focusing on American Jewry in the recent past has had the effect on public discourse that the NJPS 1990 (Kosmin et al. 1991) has had. This survey helped to show that 46 percent of recent marriages (1970–90) were mixed marriages involving a couple who, at the time of their marriage, consisted of one Jewish partner and one partner of another faith (Lazerwitz et al. 1998: 99). Furthermore, a corollary finding of this study revealed that only 38 percent of those who were in mixed marriages were raising their children as Jews (1998: 108–9). These findings represented the stimulus that led many Jewish communities in North America to initiate commissions which investigated how they could respond to what they viewed as a severe challenge to Jewish continuity (see Dashefsky and Bacon 1994).

Jewish-gentile intermarriage had already been studied in Europe in the first quarter of the twentieth century with the finding by Engelman (1928) that both Jewish men and women in Switzerland were out-marrying at a higher rate than they were in-marrying.<sup>13</sup> By the middle of the twentieth century in the United States, some early signs of increasing intermarriages were becoming evident. *Look* magazine ran an article on “The Vanishing American Jews” in the early 1960s, which alluded to increased rates of intermarriage. Perhaps most people did not take this observation very seriously because *Look* magazine vanished before American Jewry showed much signs of disappearing!

A more scholarly article was published by Rosenthal (1963), who documented higher rates of intermarriage in states such as Iowa where there was only a very small proportion of Jews and also showed increasing rates of intermarriage by generation in the Jewish community of Washington, D.C. Again, not much serious attention was paid to this, because most Jews did not live in states like Iowa, where the Jewish population was very small, nor in cities like Washington, DC, which was characterized by

<sup>13</sup> This study by Engelman is the earliest reported on this subject accessed by computer-assisted searches of the social science literature.

a high degree of residential migration and mobility. Research based on the 1990 NJPS revealed that intermarriage was highest among Reform Jews, followed by Conservative and then Orthodox Jews, a pattern that corresponded to the popularity of denominational preferences of American Jews (Lazerwitz et al. 1998:101).

While Jewish-Gentile intermarriage exists primarily as a phenomenon of diaspora Jewish life, it has appeared within Israeli society. As there is no possibility of civil marriages in Israel, there is no official, legal evidence of such marriage. This proportion will likely increase with the emergence of civil marriage in Israel, the globalization of the world economy, the breakdown of barriers of cross-national communication and transportation, the influx of non-Jewish immigrants and Gentile migrant workers, and the opportunity for eventual peaceful relations between Israel and her neighbors as well as a breakdown of barriers between Israeli Jews and Arabs. This likely small initial increase in intermarriage will introduce some of the complicated issues surrounding Jewish identity which are already manifest in diaspora Jewry with one major difference. All of the tensions surrounding Jewish identity among the intermarried for the partners themselves and for their children take place within the context that the Jews are very small minorities (about 2 percent or less of the population) in all of the diaspora countries. In Israel, nevertheless, Jews will likely continue to reside in a country, where over three-fifths of the population will be Jewish and the society will likely continue to be imbued with a culture and calendar rooted in the continuously evolving Jewish civilization. Thus, the children of such mixed couples in Israel will likely become Israeli Jews without religious affiliation.

It is in the diaspora, however, where the empirical research on Jewish-Gentile intermarriage has grown, especially in the United States with the appearance of the National Jewish Population Survey of 1990. As Medding, Tobin, Fishman, and Rimor argued about intermarriage: "The size of the Jewish population, the vitality of Jewish life, and the future of the American Jewish community all depend upon a clear understanding of the phenomenon and appropriate actions by individual Jews, scholars, and communal bodies" (1992: 39). What can we learn from this research that helps us to understand the nature of Jewish identity?

Phillips (1997) suggested that it is useful to see the intermarried not as a homogeneous but as a heterogeneous group. Based on interviews of both the Jewish and Gentile partners in 1994 and 1995 (as a follow-up to the 1990 NJPS), Phillips identified six categories of intermarried couples: Judaic (14 percent), Christian (28 percent), Christocentric (5 percent), Judeo-Christian (12 percent), Interfaithless (10 percent), and Dual Religion (31 percent). Given this classification, the identity of the Jewish and Christian partners in the mixed marriage is better understood "according to the balance of religious commitments in their homes" (Phillips 1997: 77).

In addition, Phillips found that about one-fifth of adult Jews who were the products of intermarriage and who have themselves intermarried have stated their intention to maintain their Jewish identity (Phillips 1997: 78). Furthermore, Phillips uncovered a pattern of "return in-marriage," that is, Jews who are products of intermarriage who marry a Jewish spouse. Indeed, it is the murky issue of intermarriage that so clearly reveals that, for many American Jews, their Jewish identity is a journey on the "round-about path" rather than the "straight way."

As is to be expected in the highly individualistic religious climate of the United States, intermarriage has a variety of outcomes with respect to whether the children



of such marriages are raised as Jews (Mayer 1985: 245–7). A crucial factor for the religious socialization of children of an intermarried couple is whether the originally non-Jewish parent later identifies as a Jew (Mayer 1985: 253). In the 1990 NJPS, 97 percent of conversionary couples with children in their homes were raising their children as Jews. Among the mixed marriages (those marriages in which the non-Jewish spouse remained as such), just 38 percent were raising their children as Jews where the non-Jew is Christian and 37 percent where the spouse is of another religion or has none at all (Lazerwitz et al. 1998).

The gender of the Jewish spouse also makes a difference as to whether children in an intermarriage are raised as Jews. When it is the wife who has a Jewish background, a majority (52 percent) report raising Jewish children; when it is the husband who has a Jewish background, only a minority (25 percent) are raising their children as Jews. The perpetuation of the Jewish population, then, is not threatened by intermarriage *per se*. Fewer than 1 percent of respondents (25 of 1,905) reported converting from Judaism to some form of Christianity. Nevertheless, the decision of those who are intermarried, even though they themselves remain Jewish, not to raise their children as Jews does pose a threat to the perpetuation of the Jewish population in the United States. The absorption of those with a Jewish heritage into the non-Jewish world occurs not so much with the intermarriage of parents as with their decisions about how to raise their children.

## DENOMINATIONALISM AND JEWISH IDENTITY

### The Relations Among Jews of Different Denominations

The relationship between the evolution of Jewish civilization and the conceptualization and measurement of the sources, correlates, and consequences of Jewish identity are especially evident in the emergence of Jewish denominationalism. The willingness of the Jews to continue to adhere to the restrictive practices of Judaism was affected by political emancipation in Western and central Europe (Katz 1961). Increased social contact with non-Jews and acceptance of the Jews as equals led many Jews to incorporate the values of their national societies in their own lives (Yinger 1970: 232–3). Many persons felt that traditional religious symbols, suitable for a closed, segregated subgroup had to be modified if the Jews were to become part of general society. The “enlightened” upper-class Jews of nineteenth-century Germany who were uncomfortable with their ambiguous status as Jews and as Germans preferred to deemphasize the national, cultural, and ethnic aspects of Judaism and to define Judaism only as a religion. The development of Reform Judaism in Germany in the nineteenth century thus involved a redefinition of the nature of Judaism as a religious collective (Philipson 1967). By limiting the scope of Jewish ritual, Reform Judaism enabled its adherents to aspire to acceptance as equal citizens with non-Jews, and yet to retain a Jewish identity as members of the Mosaic faith (Glazer 1957/1989).

Whereas the Reform movement became one of the largest Jewish denominations in the United States, Israelis perceive Reform Judaism as inauthentic because of its rejection of traditional Judaism and its initial negative attitude toward Zionism. While Reform Judaism’s anti-Zionist orientation has undergone change – the movement affiliated with the World Zionist Organization in 1975 – the effect of its initial stance still lingers. The Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA), which held its first national

assembly in 1978, warmly supports Israel and calls on its members to visit Israel and even move there.

Conservative Judaism developed in reaction to Reform Judaism. It was established by people who wanted to allow innovative religious change, but in a manner that still recognized the basic legitimacy of the Jewish legal system of *halakhah*. With regard to ritual observance, Conservative Judaism falls between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. From a peoplehood aspect, it is closer to Orthodox Judaism. Conservative Judaism had a much easier time recognizing Zionist aspirations and its adherents were less fearful of being accused of loyalty to two separate peoples. The formation of Conservative Judaism completed the division of contemporary Judaism into three major denominations competing for adherents.<sup>14</sup> Conservative and Reform Judaism recognize pluralism in Judaism but Orthodox Judaism continues to deny the legitimacy and religious authenticity of all non-Orthodox movements.

### THE DENOMINATIONAL SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

The separation of religion and state in the United States makes the mutual recognition of the movements in that country a relatively moot question. While there is some friction between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews (Freedman 2000), state authorities recognize the religious actions (such as marriage ceremonies) of all rabbis. In Israel, however, there is an Orthodox state Rabbinate that is accorded official status by the civil authorities. Only Orthodox performed weddings and conversions are recognized when conducted in Israel. This sole authority, granted to the official (Orthodox) Rabbinate to undertake conversions to Judaism (an issue that is subsumed under the heading of “who is a Jew”), has led to various political crises in Israel and tension with the Reform and Conservative movements in the United States.

The issue of “who is a Jew” relates to the question of which rabbis are granted recognition as authentic clergy (Samet 1985, 1986), but questioning the authenticity of Reform and Conservative rabbis in Israel undermines the legitimacy of the Jewish identity of Reform and Conservative Jews everywhere. The message received by non-Orthodox Jews is that their beliefs and identity are not authentic, and that if one wants to be part of the Jewish religion, one has to accept the premise of Orthodoxy as the yardstick of religious belief and practice (Tabory 2003a).

The relationship between Jews within Israel is affected by the fact that Jews constitute the majority (80 percent) population. In contrast with societies in which Jews are but a small minority, little consideration has to be given to Jewish identity in Israel. It is largely taken for granted. Herman (1970b) found that religious (or Orthodox) Jews in Israel give some prioritization to their Jewish identity and nonreligious or secular Israelis give some preference to their Israeli identity, but there is nevertheless considerable overlap between the two identities. One of the reasons for this is that many Jewish Israelis seem to accept the Orthodox definition of Jewish identity, even if they are not themselves observant. The degree of observance is used to indicate whether one is

<sup>14</sup> Newer approaches, such as the Reconstructionist denomination, the Renewal Movement, and Humanistic (secular) Judaism, have not yet been widely studied and are too small as of now to produce large enough sample sizes in demographic and social surveys in the American Jewish community.

“religious,” “traditional,” or “nonreligious,” but not whether one is Jewish. Israeli Jews by and large do not need to affiliate with a synagogue in order to identify as a Jew, let alone affiliate with one that is non-Orthodox (Tabory 1983, 1998).

Jewish identity is undergoing change in Israel, with implications for the relationships between Jews. There are an increasing number of persons for whom Jewish identity is irrelevant and who are disillusioned with the “in your face” attitude of the Orthodox establishment that seeks to impose its will with regard to mandatory religious observance that infringes on the personal rights of the population (Cohen and Susser 2000; Tabory 2003b). The regulations regarding religious observance include the proscription of public transportation and the opening of stores on holy days, the observance of religious dietary laws, and the question of who is a Jew. A new breed of Israelis is beginning to ideologically identify as secular Jews reflecting their nonbelief in a traditional god (Tabory and Erez 2003), and they oppose the condescending attitude of Orthodoxy that views them as sinners who would change their ways if they had not been the victims of modernity. The attitudes of these persons suggest that assimilation is possible even in a Jewish state (Schweid 1999). This also raises the question, posed by Susser and Liebman as to whether adversity – an ideology of affliction – is enough to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people:

The essential guarantor of contemporary Jewish survival is not to be found outside in the Jewish world. It is what Jews think rather than what Gentiles do that is decisive. If the will to live rooted in a commitment to Jewish ideas, values, and practices perishes, nothing can – perhaps nothing should – retard the natural death of the Jewish people. (1999: 175)

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **The Study of Jewish Identity in Sociological Context**

The study of Jewish identity within sociology emerged in the United States during the transformation of Jewish civilization in the 1940s as a result of the destruction of the Holocaust and subsequent creation of the State of Israel. Seminal studies in this era were Glazer’s sociohistorical account of American Judaism (originally published in 1957) and Sklare and Greenblum’s study of Jewish identity in “Lakeville,” (originally published in 1967). By the 1960s, the sociological study of intergroup relations based on the Park (1950) model of the inevitability of assimilation began to be challenged and refuted in the work of Gordon (1964) and Glazer and Moynihan (1963). They argued that assimilation was multifaceted and not inevitable and that ethnic groups might alter their character but not necessarily disappear. These influential sociologists of ethnicity in general and Jewry in particular were read by a generation of students who received their doctorates in the late 1960s and 1970s and built on their work to create a new subfield of the sociology of Jewry, which included a professional association (Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry) and journal (*Contemporary Jewry*), as well as to develop undergraduate and graduate courses (see Porter 1998). Furthermore, the National Jewish Population Surveys conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations (in 1971 and 1990) and its successor organization the United Jewish Communities (in 2000), together with local Jewish community population surveys (see Sheskin 2001),

added to a growing database through which studies of the dimensions of Jewish identity increased.<sup>15</sup>

### For Further Research

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are two major trends among American Jews that ought to be among future research concerns: decreasing ethnicity and increasing religiosity. First of all, American Jews continue to assimilate and are becoming more and more like other citizens of the United States. This development appears as a decreasing sense of ethnicity. What differentiates Jews in the United States from others are their religious activities and ideology. How these trends – reduced ethnicity and gradually increasing religiosity – develop in the coming years ought to be a concern for researchers in the sociology of religion.

Meanwhile in our judgment, a similar trend with an opposite effect is occurring among the Jews of Israel. As the major ethnic subgroups of Israel's Jewish society assimilate as well and become more alike and marry among one another across traditional Jewish ethnic divisions, it will become less and less a matter of concern over whether one's immediate forebearers came from European or Middle Eastern countries. Along with this trend toward the mixing of ancestry is the negative reaction to Israeli religious orthodoxy, which leads to a decreased religiosity and increased ethnicity in Israeli Jewish life. How will the Jews of Israel handle the differences between the highly Orthodox and the highly secular? Etzioni-Halevy (2000) describes the situation as an unbridgeable rift. What implications does this have for the identification of American Jews and their identification with Israel? What religious shifts will occur in the near future? Will versions of American Conservative and Reform Judaism grow to numerical importance in Israel?

Future research should include a focus on the family as a whole.<sup>16</sup> Too often, current and past researchers have focused their surveys upon individual adults, usually the head of household. This has led to getting information on religious rituals, usually at home, that are basically family activities. We think it wise to obtain information on both partners in a household. Thus, one can also determine how couples from differing denominational and religious backgrounds resolve their differences. This would expand research and yield more reliable data on interfaith and interdenominational marriages.

Finally, our review of Jewish identity in the United States and Israel began with the metaphor of Jewish identity being a journey. For some (the more traditional and the Orthodox in the United States and even more so in Israel), the journey follows the straight way based on the traditional trajectory of Jewish religious law.<sup>17</sup> For a growing number of Jews in America and to a lesser extent in Israel, they follow the roundabout path, which embodies a more circuitous route to developing and maintaining Jewish identity (see Davidman, Chapter 19, this volume). Therefore, it is important

<sup>15</sup> The National Jewish Population Survey of 1990 spawned a series of monographs on varying topics which were all concerned with Jewish identity in a significant way. See Goldstein and Goldstein (1996) on mobility; Hartman and Hartman (1996) on gender; Lazerwitz, Winter, Dashofsky, and Tabory (1998) on denominations; Keysar, Kosmin, and Scheckner (2000) on children; Elazar and Geffen (2000) on the Conservative denomination; Waxman (2001) on baby boomers; and Fishman (2000) on identity coalescence.

<sup>16</sup> Fishman (2000) has demonstrated the significance of such an approach.

<sup>17</sup> See Cohen and Eisen (1998) for an innovative documentation of the moderately affiliated Jews.

to rely on multiple research strategies incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to ascertain the more complete truth. As Horowitz noted, Jewish identity is not a unilinear phenomenon but one that is multiplexed, "moving in a variety of historical as well as structural directions. To discuss the Jewish condition is to examine religiosity, nationality, and culture all at once as well as one at a time" (1998: 3).

### **Final Thoughts**

Jewish identity incorporates dimensions that carry across time and space. Many Jews view their ancestry and origins as integral parts of their identity. Moreover, a sense of Jewish peoplehood also ties Jews around the world together. The feeling of Jewish unity involves a communal identification that is surely related to Jewish practice, but is even more affected by Jewish ethnicity. Both push and pull factors have operated to link Jews around the world together as a people. Anti-Jewish sentiment and attitudes, discrimination, pogroms, and genocide are very effective in leading people to identify themselves as members of a common group. The central role of Israel as a component of Jewish identity is not unrelated to the feeling that "the whole world is against us," but it also incorporates positive feelings of pride in identifying with the Jewish state.

All this is changing in modern society. In an age of globalization, when everything is related, there is little to distinguish one group from another. In an age of cultural relativism, when everything is legitimate, there is little to justify the perception that one's unique group is better than the others. Rather than serving as a source of pride, group identity stigmatizes and labels minority group members as different. Rituals that distinguish a group are dropped or moderated in a manner that is in keeping with the dominant group. Sklare and Greenblum (1979/1967) have found this to be the case with regard to the Jews of the United States. With little internal belief about the correctness of one's ways, why should group identity become a focal concern for continuity? The question is rarely openly mouthed among Jews, but by default many of them are asking what difference does it really make if the Jews (or any group for that matter) disappear? The response has been framed in popular works such as Wolpe's *Why Be Jewish* (1995) and Jewish communal policy makers' efforts at Jewish continuity, renaissance, and renewal.

For social scientists studying American Jewry in particular, the issue of whether Jewish identity can persist and Jewish continuity endure for yet another century (or millennium) is debated by the optimists and the pessimists (see Cohen and Liebman 1987). Perhaps the most appropriate response as to whether Jewish identity will endure is neither full-blown optimism or pessimism but agnosticism; namely, it is difficult to know for certain, in which case, cautious optimism (see Goldstein 1994) may be the most prudent response.