THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

AMERICAN JUDAISM

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23 American Judaism in the twenty-first century

BRUCE PHILLIPS

The three classic works on American Judaism in the twentieth century appeared just after midcentury, all echoing the theme of Jews "fitting in" America and reflecting the rapid upward social mobility of American Jews. In *American Judaism*, Nathan Glazer noted the trend toward religious identification among Jews as a way to fit in as an ethnic group by using a religious framework.[1] Even though America at midcentury was hostile to ethnicity, it was open to religiosity. In *Conservative Judaism*, Marshall Sklare observed that this most mainstream of the three movements differed from Orthodoxy in terms of decorum.[2] While the core beliefs and practices of Conservative Judaism mirrored Orthodoxy, the former emphasized decorum in worship that was congruent with American religious life. In *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, Sklare found that the Jews in the Midwestern suburb of Lakeville were ambivalent about Jewish particularism.[3] The midcentury perspective tended to appreciate American Judaism in terms of assimilation. Adaptations to American life were most readily visible in religious behaviors. This perspective has continued to inform more recent studies such as Steven M. Cohen's *Jewish Identity and American Modernity*, which used religious observance to gauge assimilation.[4] Beginning in the 1980s, American sociologists of religion introduced two new perspectives that have informed the understanding of contemporary American Judaism. In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah introduced the notion of religious privatization and the sovereignty of the individual in making religious decisions.[5] While churches and seminaries may proscribe belief and practice, individuals decide for themselves what is most meaningful to them. Arnold Eisen and Steven M. Cohen took Bellah's research into the Jewish community and found that Jews, like other Americans, insisted on discovering religious meaning on their own without worrying about what was or was not "kosher."[6] The second new approach, often referred to as the "new paradigm," was to understand American religion as part of a "religious marketplace." Researchers using the new paradigm emphasized the role of "rational choice" in religious behavior. Most recently, this perspective has

Table 1. *Current religious identification of all adult Jews*

Current religious identification	% of adult Jews
Born Jewish; religion Judaism	62.0
Formally converted to Judaism	2.2
Jewish by religion without conversion	1.6
Secular Jew – "no religion"	13.1
Jew practicing an Eastern religion	3.5
Christian Jew	17.6
TOTAL	100.0

informed the analysis in *Jewish Choices* by Lazerwitz, Winter, Dashefsky, and Tabory.[7]

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, there are many trends at work within American Judaism and its major denominations. The goal of this discussion, based on the Year 2000 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), is to provide a sense of what Judaism will be like in the United States.[8] Therefore, this chapter is focused not on Jewish thought or issues of denominational doctrine, but on the religious beliefs and practices of persons who identify themselves as Jews in some way.

THE DECLINE OF JUDAISM AMONG AMERICAN JEWS

Perhaps the most important phenomenon emerging in the twenty-first century is the declining number of Jews whose religion is Judaism. Largely as a result of intermarriage, the once seamless overlap between Jewish ethnicity and Judaism has begun to unravel. Writing in the late 1960s, Marshall Sklare[9] observed that American Judaism was a special case of the "ethnic church" in which all members of the ethnic group (Jews) professed the same religion (Judaism) and all members of the religion shared the same ethnicity. This is no longer the case, as evidenced in Table 1, which presents the religious identification of all adult Jews. Two out of five Jewish adults did not identify Judaism as their religion. Instead they identified themselves either as secular (meaning that they had no religious identification) or as Christian Jews. Christian Jews are individuals who identify themselves as Jews by ethnicity but are at least nominally Christian. They are the offspring of mixed marriages and were not counted as part of the Jewish population in the report issued by the United Jewish Communities. I include them in this analysis because they are essential for an understanding of the contemporary American Jewish reality.

Table 2. *Current religious identification by Jewish parentage (all adult Jews)*

Current religious identification	Two Jewish parents (%)	One Jewish parent (%)	Jewish grandparent only (%)
Born Jewish, religion Judaism	87.0	23.3	4.5
Secular Jew	8.4	25.5	16.3
Jew practicing an Eastern religion	0.8	8.5	13.3
Christian Jew	3.8	42.7	65.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

Adults who were identified as Christian Jews in the NJPS 2000 were not converts to Christianity but rather the offspring of mixed marriages. Table 2 compares the religious identification of Jewish adults of three kinds of Jewish parentage: two Jewish parents, one Jewish (and one non-Jewish) parent, and no Jewish parents. Individuals with no Jewish parents had at least one Jewish grandparent and identified themselves as Jewish by ethnicity or ancestry. Adults of Jewish parentage overwhelmingly identified themselves as Jews by religion (86 percent). Jewish adults with a non-Jewish parent were twice as likely to identify themselves as a Christian by religion (41 percent)[10] than as a Jew by religion (22 percent). Adults with no Jewish parents identified themselves either as Christians or as practicing an Eastern religion.

The number of adherents to Judaism will decline as the twenty-first century progresses. This numerical decline can be anticipated from parents' answers to how their children are being raised. Fewer than half of all Jewish children are being raised as Jews. Table 3 shows how children are being raised according to the religious composition of the family. Endogamous couples almost universally raise their children as Jews, but mixed-married couples do not. Among the mixed-married couples, Jews married to secular non-Jews are the most likely to raise their children in Judaism, but less than two-thirds do so (61 percent). Mixed-married couples in which both the Jewish parent and the non-Jewish parent are completely secular predominantly raise their children in no religion at all (79 percent). A dual-religion couple is made up of a Jew by religion married to a Christian. Only one-quarter of the children in dual-religion couples are being raised as Jews, and almost one-third are being raised as Christians. Although the parents identify with two different religions, less than one-tenth of the children are being raised in two religions. Christian Jews overwhelmingly are raising their children as Christians.

On the basis of the Jewish parentage of the child, Table 4 projects adherence to Judaism into the future. Almost all (98 percent) of the children with two Jewish parents are being raised as Jews. If one of the two Jewish

Table 3. *How children are being raised according to the religious identification of the parents*

		Parents are mixed married					
How child is being raised	Parents are inmarried (%)	Jew by religion – secular non-Jew (%)	Both Jew and non-Jew are secular (%)	Jew by religion – Christian (%)	Christian Jew (%)	Jewish parent is single parent (%)	All (%)
In Judaism exclusively	95.7	60.5	6.4	25.9	1.4	52.1	43.0
In no religion	1.7	26.0	78.6	34.9	13.9	35.4	22.7
In two religions	0.2	9.5	–	9.0	1.3	2.0	2.3
As a Christian	2.4	3.9	15.0	30.2	83.4	10.5	32.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4. *Long-range impact of intermarriage on children*

Jewish lineage of child	% raised as Jewish by religion
Fully Jewish*	97.7
Three-quarters Jewish**	67.2
Half-Jewish***	38.7
One-quarter Jewish****	4.1
Jewish ancestry only*****	1.7
Fully Jewish single parent	70.2
Half-Jewish single parent	28.3
Single parent of Jewish ancestry	9.3
All children	43.0

* Jewish parents and grandparents.
** Jewish parent of Jewish parentage married to Jew of partial parentage.
*** Jew of Jewish parentage married to non-Jew.
***** Jewish parent of partial parentage married to non-Jew.
***** Only a grandparent is Jewish.

parents is only "half-Jewish" (i.e., one of the two was raised in a mixed marriage), the percentage of the children raised as Jews drops to 67 percent. Just over one-third (39 percent) of the "half-Jewish" children (one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent) are being raised as Jews. Children who are one-quarter Jewish show the results of two generations of mixed marriage. When one Jewish parent is half-Jewish (raised in a mixed marriage) and the other is non-Jewish, only 4 percent of the children are raised as Jews. Among children raised in single-parent families, we do not know about the absent parent. However, the same pattern is apparent based on the Jewish lineage of the child's parent: Children of a fully Jewish single parent are three times as likely to be raised as Jews than children of a half-Jewish single parent. Even if the rate of mixed marriage remains steady, the number of adherents to Judaism will decline as the children of today become adults in the future. The number of Jews, however, may not decline if the children and grandchildren of mixed marriages continue to identify themselves ethnically as Jews. It is doubtful, however, that they will be participants in Jewish communal life.

Within the scope of this sea change in adherence to Judaism, there is one consistency that has persisted over the past decades: Children with mixed-married Jewish mothers are more likely to be raised as Jews than children with mixed-married Jewish fathers (62 percent vs. 31 percent; see Table 5). The gender gap is also evident among the children of Jewish single parents. Secular Jewish single-parent mothers are almost four times

Table 5. *Children raised Jewish by intermarriage of Jewish parent*

	The parent of the child is		
Gender and Jewish status of parents	Inmarried (%)	Mixed married (%)	Single parent (%)
Mother is Jewish by religion	98.4	61.8	82.8
Father is Jewish by religion	98.2	31.2	81.8
Mother is Jew by choice[11]	97.1	100.0	95.0
Father is Jew by choice	100.0	0.0	60.5
Mother is secular Jew	28.0	2.0	10.8
Father is secular Jew	27.7	3.1	3.1

as likely to raise Jewish children as are secular Jewish single-parent fathers (11 percent vs. 3 percent). Almost all the children of single-parent mothers who converted to Judaism are being raised as Jews (95 percent) as compared with less than two-thirds (61 percent) of the children whose single-parent fathers converted to Judaism.

DENOMINATIONAL CHANGE

One of the distinctly American aspects of American Judaism is denominationalism. Denominations are a reflection of an open society in which there are no officially recognized religions. This analysis uses an expanded definition of denomination that combines the four movements (Reform, Reconstruction, Conservative, and Orthodox) with the two additional categories of "no religion" and Christianity. These are not Jewish denominations per se, but they are necessary to capture the dynamic of Jewish denominational change as it is currently unfolding.

An enduring topic of interest within the American approach to the sociology of religion is denominational change or "religious switching." Religious switching has occurred when an individual's current religion or denomination is different from that of his or her family of origin.

The single most important Jewish denominational change is the movement out of Judaism, which in part is associated with intermarriage (Table 6). Among respondents with one Jewish parent, the shift is away from Judaism; 45 percent of respondents with one Jewish parent were raised in one of the four Jewish denominations, but only 15 percent currently identify with a Jewish denomination. The move was not into secularism but rather into Christianity or a dual Jewish–Christian identity. Among respondents with

Table 6. *Respondents' current and childhood denominations (Jewish parentage controlled for)*

	Both parents Jewish (%)		One Jewish parent (%)		Grandparents or ancestry (%)	
Denomination	Current	Raised	Current	Raised	Current	Raised
Orthodox traditional Sephardic	8.3	18.5	1.0	2.0	0.5	1.7
Conservative	22.9	31.0	3.8	5.9	2.4	0.9
Reform	30.6	25.2	8.2	8.1	1.8	2.2
Reconstruction	1.9	0.4	0.3	0.1	–	–
Jewish by religion, but has no denominational identification	20.4	14.7	7.8	6.2	1.4	11.1
Secular (ethnic, atheist, etc.)	10.1		29.5		26.6	
Postdenominational Jew, Jewish Renewal, Jewish Spirituality, etc.	1.1	0.1	8.1	0.0	15.9	0.0
Jew + Eastern religion or Eastern religion only	0.4	3.2	1.2	13.2	0.6	14.5
Christian Jew	4.3	6.8	40.2	64.3	50.8	69.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

two Jewish parents, there has been a parallel but less dramatic movement away from denominations; 81 percent of respondents with two Jewish parents were raised in one of the four denominations, but only 68 percent currently identify with one of those denominations as adults. Within this move away from denominations, Reform was the only denomination that grew. Orthodox and Conservative Judaism decreased by 11 percent and 9 percent, respectively, while Reform increased by 5 percent. The greatest increase was among respondents who identify with no denomination; 16 percent of respondents with two Jewish parents were raised in no denomination, but 25 percent currently identify with no denomination as adults. Identification with a religion other than Judaism also increased among respondents with two Jewish parents; 4 percent were raised outside of Judaism, but 7 percent identify with a religion other than Judaism as adults.

The shift from Judaism into no denomination observed among respondants of Jewish parentage has a parallel among respondents of mixed parentage: a shift away from Christian identification into the "no religion" category. Three-quarters of the respondents raised in mixed marriages were raised as Christians (64 percent) or in an Eastern religion (13 percent). As adults, however, only 41 percent identified as Christians or with an Eastern religion. Only 6 percent reported being raised in no religion, but as adults, 38 percent identified themselves either as secular or as nondenominational Jews. They have moved to the neutral territory of no religion. A similar pattern is evident among respondents of Jewish ancestry only; 85 percent reported being raised as Christians or in an Eastern religion. As adults, only 52 percent identified themselves in this way. By contrast, only 11 percent were raised in no religion, but as adults, 28 percent identified as secular or nondenominational Jews. There has been much speculation in denominational circles regarding the rise in "postdenominational" Judaism and the Jewish Renewal movement. This is not born out by the NJPS 2000, at least among respondents of Jewish parentage. Instead, the respondents most likely to identify themselves as "postdenominational" Jews or with the Jewish Renewal movement were either of Jewish ancestry only (16 percent) or had only one Jewish parent (8 percent).

Nondenominational Jews

If twentieth-century Judaism was characterized by denominational tensions, the emerging divide in the twenty-first century will be between Jews who have a denomination and those who do not. Nondenominational Jews (whether they be secular or Jewish by religion without a denomination) do not join synagogues. As their numbers increase, the growth of new synagogues will slow. I ran a logistic regression to understand what differentiates Jews who have a denomination from those who have none. This regression identified the impact of each variable on denominational identification while controlling for the impact of all the other variables. The four strongest predictors were the following.

1. Denomination: Respondents who grew up in a denomination tend to stay in a denomination.
2. Marriage: Inmarried respondents are the most likely to have a denominational affiliation (83 percent), and mixed-married respondents are the least likely (25 percent). Single respondents fell in the middle (42 percent).
3. Generation: Third- and fourth-generation respondents are less likely to identify with a denomination than first- and second-generation respondents.

4. Education: The more Jewish education a respondent received, the more likely he or she was to identify with a denomination as an adult.

Two of the four factors have to do with socialization. Being raised in a denomination and having a Jewish education are both associated with denominational identification in adulthood. The relationship between intermarriage and denominational identification is not so easily explained, because cause and effect are harder to identify. One possibility is that Jews who are attached to Judaism (as measured by denominational identification) are more likely to seek out Jewish spouses. This might explain why denominational identification is higher among the inmarried than among the nonmarried couples. It might also be that so-called normative behavior such as inmarriage leads to more normative behaviors such as denominational identification.

There are two kinds of nondenominational Jews: those who were raised that way, and those who abandoned the denominational identification in which they were raised. To understand this second phenomenon, I ran a second logistic regression to identify those variables that best predict "denominational abandonment." Denominational abandonment means that the respondent was raised in a denomination but now identifies with no Jewish denomination. Thus, this analysis included only respondents who were raised in a Jewish denomination.

There were three important predictors of denominational abandonment. The first and most important predictor was marital status. Inmarried respondents were more likely to have remained denominationally identified than either mixed-married respondents or single respondents. The second strongest predictor of denominational abandonment was Jewish education. Respondents who had no Jewish education were the most likely to drop their original denominational identification, followed by respondents whose Jewish education ended with Bar Mitzvah. Respondents who continued beyond Bar Mitzvah in a supplementary or day school were the most likely to have retained a denominational identification. The coefficients in the logistic regression equation indicate that, although Jewish education is a predictor of inmarriage, Jewish education predicts denominational abandonment when intermarriage is controlled for. The highest rate of denominational abandonment was found among currently mixed-married respondents who had no Jewish education at all. The lowest rate was found among currently inmarried day school graduates. The third strongest predictor is Jewish parentage. Respondents with one Jewish parent were more likely to abandon denominational identification than respondents with two Jewish parents. Again, this factor works in tandem with the other two predictors. Within every level of Jewish education, respondents with two Jewish parents are less likely to have

abandoned denominational identification than respondents with one Jewish parent. Similarly, Jewish parentage and endogamy each have an independent impact on denominational abandonment. Inmarried respondents with two Jewish parents were the most likely to continue identifying with a denomination as adults. Conversely, mixed-married respondents of mixed parentage were the most likely to have discontinued denominational identification as adults.

The strong association between marriage and denominational abandonment is partially unexpected. Not surprisingly, mixed-married respondents are more likely to have abandoned denominational identification than inmarried respondents, and this remains true regardless of age. Less obvious is why single respondents, regardless of age, would be more likely to abandon denominational identification than inmarried respondents. Which is the cause and which is the effect? One factor is previous marriage. Single respondents who were widowed or divorced from an inmarriage were less likely to have abandoned denominational identification than those who were previously married to a non-Jewish spouse. A second factor, as suggested herein, is self-selection. Perhaps Jews for whom religion is important are the most likely to marry endogamously. In other words, retaining some sort of Jewish denominational attachment into adulthood is a reflection of loyalty to Judaism. It could also be that endogamy reinforces Jewish attachments in the marriage. Conversely, Jewish denominational loyalty may weaken in a mixed marriage because it is a potential source of friction with the non-Jewish spouse.

Denominational retention

In addition to the abandonment of denominational identification, there are shifts taking place among the Jewish denominations. I examined denominational change in the previous paragraphs by comparing the percentage of Jews raised in a particular denomination with the percentage currently identified with it. Another way to understand denominational change is through the rate of "retention" in which the percentage of respondents who were raised in that denomination continue to identify with that denomination as adults. When retention rates are considered by age, Orthodoxy is seen to have experienced an important transition. For respondents aged sixty years and older, only 20 percent of those raised as Orthodox currently identify with this denomination. The retention rate increased to 35 percent of respondents between forty and fifty-nine years of age and to an impressive 72 percent of respondents younger than forty years of age. The proclivity to leave Orthodoxy is a phenomenon of the past. The retention rate among respondents raised Conservative is consistently about 50 percent across all age groups. In contrast, Reform has a consistently higher retention rate between 67 and

71 percent. The higher retention rate of Reform combined with the tendency of respondents raised as Conservative to switch to Reform explains the numerical decline of the former and the growth of the latter. In addition, the higher retention rate among younger Orthodox respondents dries up what was a major source of recruitment for the Conservative movement.

If we take these together, we can see that there are three trends of denominational change evident at the dawn of the twenty-first century: a move out of Judaism associated with intermarriage; a move to Reform on the part of Jews raised in the Conservative movement; and a strong loyalty to Orthodox Judaism among younger Jews.

SYNAGOGUE MEMBERSHIP

What will the synagogue of the twenty-first century look like, given the denominational trends described here? Overall, only one-quarter of all Jewish households currently pay dues to a synagogue. Orthodox households are the most likely to have a synagogue membership (77 percent), followed by Conservative households (53 percent) and Reform and Reconstructionist households (42 percent). Jewish households in which the respondent had no denominational identification were largely unaffiliated; only one out of ten nondenominational Jewish households claimed a synagogue membership.

Synagogue membership is strongly associated with family by way of intermarriage. Intermarriage marks the great divide between affiliated and unaffiliated households. Currently inmarried households have the highest rate of synagogue membership (62 percent), followed by households in which the respondent is currently divorced or widowed but was previously inmarried (42 percent). Currently mixed-married households have the lowest rate of synagogue membership (9 percent). Respondents divorced from a mixed marriage have a higher rate of synagogue membership than respondents currently married to non-Jews, but the rate is still relatively low (16 percent). Single, never-married households are also largely unaffiliated (16 percent).

After intermarriage, household structure is the next most important predictor of synagogue affiliation. Marriage and children are strongly associated with synagogue membership. Endogamous couples with children have the highest rate of synagogue membership (78 percent), followed by endogamous married couples without children (53 percent). In contrast, only 10 percent of mixed-married couples with children and 7 percent of mixed-married couples without children are synagogue members. Having a Jewish spouse is the strongest predictor of synagogue membership, followed by having children in the household. Among endogamous couples, those with children under

the age of eighteen are 1.5 times as likely to belong to a synagogue as couples without children. A similar pattern can be seen among single parents. Single parents who were previously inmarried were twice as likely to belong to a synagogue as single parents who were previously married to a non-Jewish spouse (57 percent vs. 21 percent). Interestingly, single parents who were divorced from a mixed marriage were themselves twice as likely to belong to a synagogue than mixed-married couples with children (21 percent vs. 10 percent). This is consistent with other research, and it suggests both that single parents divorced from mixed marriages look to the Jewish community for support and that conflicts over the religious orientation of the family may have led to the divorce in the first place.

The synagogue population

Households that belong to a synagogue are most likely to belong to a Reform synagogue (39 percent). Although those households identified as Orthodox account for only 10 percent of all Jewish households, they make up 20 percent of all household memberships. This is because the synagogue affiliation rate is much higher among Orthodox Jews than among Reform and Conservative Jews.

The kinds of changes taking place within synagogues can be seen when the denominational roots of the respondent's family of origin is broken down by age and type of synagogue.[12] The majority of the oldest members of Reform synagogues (sixty years of age or older) were raised either Orthodox or Conservative, while only one-quarter were raised in the Reform movement. The youngest members (under forty years of age), in contrast, were overwhelmingly raised in the Reform movement. About half of the oldest members of Conservative synagogues were raised Conservative, but almost 70 percent of the youngest members were raised Conservative. Conservative Jews raised Orthodox are decreasingly present among younger ages groups; almost 40 percent of the oldest Conservative synagogue members were raised Orthodox, declining to 16 percent of the cohort under the age of forty to fifty-nine, and only 5 percent of the cohort under forty. In contrast, the Conservative movement seems to have some attraction to younger Reform Jews; 14 percent of the youngest cohort of Conservative synagogue members were raised in the Reform movement. In the long run, this may have a liberalizing effect on the Conservative movement with regard to such issues as patrilineal descent.

The age profile of Orthodox synagogue members is the most volatile of the three major movements. The oldest members of Orthodox synagogues were overwhelmingly raised Orthodox. In the cohort that roughly corresponds to the Baby Boom (forty to fifty-nine years of age), just over half of

the membership were raised Orthodox, and one-quarter were raised in the Conservative movement. Marshall Sklare commented on the defection of the cream of the Conservative movement to Orthodoxy as a result of the intensive religious socialization they experienced in Conservative institutions such as Camp Ramah. Although many more Baby Boom Conservative Jews defected to Reform than to Orthodoxy, there was also a large defection into Orthodoxy in this cohort. As a result, "Camp Ramah" Jews are a significant segment of middle-aged members in Orthodox synagogues. The youngest members (under forty years of age) of Orthodox synagogues were raised Orthodox, and this is consistent with the high retention rate already discussed for younger Orthodox Jews. The youngest Orthodox Jews are also the most geographically concentrated; 80 percent of them live in the Northeast, as compared with 66 percent of the forty- to fifty-nine-year-olds and 46 percent of the oldest cohort (one-third of whom now live in Florida). This suggests that the rightward movement within Orthodoxy will either stabilize or continue, but it will not decrease. The youngest Orthodox synagogue members are concentrated in a region (the Northeast) that is losing its Jewish population. Thus, Orthodox Jews will constitute an increasingly larger proportion of the northeastern Jewish population and will have a growing influence.

The popular conception that American synagogues are too "family oriented" to be attractive to single persons turns out to be only partially correct. While it is true that single households are underrepresented among synagogue members, they constitute one-third or more of synagogue members in the three major dominations. Within the single population, previously married respondents are more prevalent than never-married respondents among synagogue members. Thus, while it is true that married couples are more likely to join synagogues than single Jews, the synagogue population is becoming more evenly divided between married couples and single Jews. Perhaps this is the result of greater sensitivity to singles on the part of synagogues in response to previous criticism.

The presence of mixed-married couples in the synagogue population varies according to the openness of each movement toward including them. Mixed-married couples are almost nonexistent in Orthodox synagogues. Only 7 percent of Conservative synagogue members are currently mixed married, and another 3 percent were previously mixed married. The proportion of mixed-married couples in the Reform synagogue population is double that in the Conservative movement, and one out of five Reform synagogue members is either currently or previously mixed married. This figure might seem low given the emphasis on outreach to mixed-married couples in the Reform movement and the preference that mixed-married couples have for the Reform movement. Nevertheless, two other trends must be kept in mind. First,

even though mixed-married couples prefer the Reform movement (62 percent of affiliated mixed-married couples belong to a Reform synagogue), synagogue affiliation among the mixed-married population is low to begin with, so it is safe to assume that they do not attend synagogue services often. Second, mixed-married couples have a greater impact on Reform synagogues than on Conservative and Orthodox synagogues. Mixed-married couples have an even greater impact on the Reconstructionist synagogue, where they make up 44 percent of Reconstructionist synagogue members. However, there were not many Reconstructionist cases in the sample, so this high figure must be interpreted with some caution.

JEWISH OBSERVANCE

Joining a synagogue is a public expression of Judaism. Jewish observance is more private, usually taking place in the home. In his classic work, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier,* Sklare observed that the most widely practiced Jewish observances were infrequent and associated with children (i.e., family). His observation remains true fifty years later. Among the Jewish rituals and observances included in the NJPS 2000, those associated with family are the most widely practiced. Attending a Passover Seder or a Jewish mourning ritual were the most widely practiced Jewish observances, followed closely by lighting Hanukah candles and fasting on Yom Kippur at least part of the day. Although not a child-centered holiday in the sense described by Sklare, the High Holidays can be considered family events because the whole family attends synagogue together.

Surprisingly, Jews who are not Jewish by religion claim to practice Jewish observances. Among respondents who experienced a death in the family, for example, one-quarter of the Christian Jews and one-third of the secular Jews reported observing a Jewish mourning ritual. This was probably not so much self-initiated but rather the result of an invitation to a funeral or a shiva at the home of a Jewish relative. This may say less about this person's connection to Judaism than to his or her extended Jewish family.

An unexpectedly large proportion of secular and Christian Jews observed dietary Judaism in some way. One-quarter of the secular and Christian-Jewish respondents reported fasting for part of the day on Yom Kippur. Similarly, one out of ten of the secular respondents and one out of five Christian Jews said that they refrained from eating pork or observed kashrut through vegetarianism. These are essentially passive observances in the sense that the person refrains from eating. There is a difference between fasting part of Yom Kippur day at home or at work and fasting for part of Yom Kippur day in a synagogue.

Lighting Sabbath candles, by contrast, is an active and regularly recurring observance. Only one-quarter of respondents who are Jewish by religion reported usually or always lighting Sabbath candles. Only 5 percent of secular and Christian Jews reported lighting Sabbath candles on some sort of regular basis. This is a much smaller percentage than Jews by religion, but it is much higher than would be expected from persons who do not identify Judaism as their religion. One explanation for this phenomenon is socially desirable responses. Christian Jews in the sample were sufficiently identified as Jewish as to want to be interviewed, and they may have exaggerated their observance somewhat. It could also be that these Jewish observances have strong personal relevance to the respondent outside of a religious context; for example, a Catholic daughter whose Jewish mother lit candles on Friday night might continue the practice in her home.

Overall, Jews by religion and Jews by choice are more consistent about practicing Judaism than secular Jews or Christian Jews. More than 90 percent of them practiced at least one out of nine possible rituals.[13] Half of the secular Jews observed at least one of the nine rituals, and two out of five Christian Jews observed at least one of the nine rituals. Jews by religion and Jews by choice, however, practiced many more rituals (an average of four out of the nine) than did secular Jews and Christian Jews (an average of one).

I have argued that, for Christian Jews, Jewish observance has a primarily private meaning. Consistent with this interpretation, public association with other Jews is relatively rare among them. While 71 percent of Jews by religion and Jews by choice attended synagogue at least once during the year, only 12 percent of Christian Jews attended synagogue. The contrast between Jews who practice Judaism and those who do not is even more dramatic when synagogue membership is considered. Jews by choice are the most likely to belong to a synagogue (51 percent), followed by Jews by religion (43 percent). In contrast, almost none of the secular and Christian Jews paid dues to a synagogue (3 percent or less).

ATTITUDES AND IDENTITY

The Jewish observance of Christian Jews and secular Jews raises the question of personal meaning. Why do individuals who do not claim Judaism as their religion practice Jewish rituals? How do secular and Christian Jews understand themselves as Jews, and does this understanding explain why they maintain some degree (however small) of Jewish observance? The NJPS 2000 had a number of attitude statements that provide some sense of what being Jewish might mean to secular and Christian Jews. Writing in the 1970s, the Israeli sociologist Simon Herman introduced the notions of salience and

valence to the study of Jewish identity. Salience means that being Jewish is important to the individual, while valence indicates either a positive or negative feeling about being Jewish. More than three-quarters of Jews by religion and Jews by choice indicated that they feel "very positive" about being Jewish, but more than one-half of secular and Christian Jews feel this way as well. In contrast, four out of five secular and Christian Jews indicated that being Jewish was not "very important" to them. They were also more likely than born Jews and Jews by choice to strongly agree that "being Jewish has very little to do with how I see myself." Christian and secular Jews were also much less likely than born Jews and Jews by choice to strongly agree with this statement: "Judaism guides important life decisions." As compared with born Jews and Jews by choice, secular and Christian Jews generally feel positive about being Jewish, but it has few if any consequences for them and is not particularly important to them. Secular Jews and Christian Jews accurately described themselves as not being Jewishly observant. Christian Jews and Jews by choice are much more likely than born Jews to describe themselves as "personally very religious" and to say religion is very important in their life.[14] This is consistent with numerous studies that have found American Jews to be less religious than other Americans. Both Christian Jews and Jews by choice (formerly Christian) are both more religious than born Jews.

Another set of attitudinal statements in the NJPS 2000 relates to Jewish peoplehood. Secular and Christian Jews indicate that they do not feel as strongly about belonging to the Jewish people as do born Jews and Jews by choice, but almost two-thirds somewhat agreed that they have "a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people." Interestingly, Jews by choice were less likely to strongly agree with this statement (38 percent) than were born Jews. Secular and Christian Jews are less attached to Israel than born Jews, but they are slightly more attached than Jews by choice. Thus, attachment to Israel is a product both of Jewish religious identification and of Jewish descent. Born Jews are both of Jewish descent and of the Jewish religion. Secular and Christian Jews are Jewish by descent only, while Jews by choice are Jewish by religion only.[15] Jews by choice, in contrast, are less personally connected to Israel than secular or Christian Jews, but they are the most likely to "strongly agree" in the abstract that "Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people."

Respondents were asked about what is important in how they are Jewish. The question was worded like this: "Personally, how much does being Jewish involve. . . ." For all respondents, remembering the Holocaust was the most central aspect to being Jewish. The second most central aspect of being Jewish for all categories except Jews by choice was "connecting to your family's

heritage." This was the least central aspect of being Jewish for Jews by choice because they have no Jewish family. Instead, "celebrating Jewish holidays" is the second most central aspect of being Jewish for Jews by choice. Countering anti-Semitism was the third most central aspect for all groups. The pattern discussed so far shows that born Jews have something in common with secular Jews and even Christian Jews: common ancestry. The Holocaust and anti-Semitism are negative aspects of that ancestry that put Jews in common danger, while connecting to the family's heritage is a positive aspect.

Celebrating Jewish holidays is not at all central for secular and Christian Jews because Judaism is not their religion. This supports the interpretation already put forth that Jewish observance for secular and Christian Jews represents a family connection more than a religious observance per se. For all the religious categories, "attending synagogue" is in last place, although it is more central for born Jews and Jews by choice than for secular and Christian Jews. Similarly, being part of the Jewish community and supporting Jewish organizations are relatively unimportant for all four categories, but born Jews by religion and Jews by choice place a greater emphasis on these than do secular and Christian Jews.

The order of importance for the various aspects of being Jewish is strikingly similar among all four religious categories of Jews (born Jewish, secular, Christian, and Jew by choice). Born Jews and Jews by choice give all the items relatively more importance than do secular and Christian Jews. The biggest difference between Jews by religion (whether born Jewish or not) and secular and Christian Jews is Jewish education for children. Jews by religion give this much more importance than do secular and Christian Jews, which is logical since neither of the latter two categories are Jewish by religion.

CONCLUSION

This analysis is but a preliminary reconnaissance of the NJPS 2000, but it has revealed four trends that will shape the contours of American Judaism. The first trend is the separation of Jews from Judaism. Largely as a result of intermarriage, the number of adherents to Judaism will decrease, and the number of synagogue members will decrease as a result. The adult children of intermarriage will, according to the NJPS 2000, continue to identify as Jews by ethnicity. Many of them will be at least nominally Christian, and the Reform and Reconstructionist movements may find themselves having to respond to a religious syncretism among these so-called Christian Jews. The second trend is the numerical decline of Conservative Judaism. At the current pace of change, the Conservative movement will continue to lose numbers while the Reform movement will grow. The greatest shift, however, is the

trend into nondenominational Judaism and no religion at all. Both Orthodox and Reform congregations will increasingly see an adult membership that grew up in the respective movements if the youngest cohort of synagogue members is typical. The number of Orthodox Jews will either stabilize or grow, given the high retention rates in the youngest age cohort. Orthodox Jews will continue be concentrated in the Northeast, where they will make up an increasingly larger proportion of Jews in that region. One aspect of American Judaism that will not change is that the family will remain the most important connection to Judaism for American Jews. Among adherents of Judaism, family-oriented rituals will remain central to Jewish practice. For the growing population of secular Jews, the trend will be a sense of connection to the broad family of the Jewish people that leads them to identify ethnically as Jews. Some may even return to the faith that is at the origin of that peoplehood.

Notes

1. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
2. Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism, An American Religious Movement* (New York: Schocken Books, 1955).
3. Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on The Suburban Frontier* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).
4. Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York and London: Tavistock Publications, 1983).
5. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).
6. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within, Self, Family, and Community in America* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2000).
7. Bernard M. Lazerwitz, J. Alan Winter, Arnold Dashefsky, and Ephraim Tabory, *Jewish Choices, American Jewish Denominationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).
8. The data for the 2000–2001 National Jewish Population Survey was provided by the United Jewish Communities through the North American Jewish Data Bank.
9. Marshall Sklare, *America's Jews* (New York: Random House, 1971).
10. There were a small number of Jewish adults who identified themselves as both Jewish and Christian, and they are included in the Christian Jew category.
11. Here a Jew by choice means a formal conversion to Judaism. Individuals who said their religion was Judaism but had not formally converted were counted as non-Jews for this table.
12. Here were too few cases of Reconstruction synagogue members for this detailed of an analysis.
13. They lit Hannukah candles at least part of the week, lit Sabbath candles at least usually, fasted on Yom Kippur at last part of the day, kept kosher at least symbolically, attended a seder, observed a mourning ritual, or attended synagogue at least once during the year.
14. The attitudinal questions were asked only of Jews by choice, Jews by religion, and secular and Christian Jews who answered affirmatively that they considered

themselves Jewish. It is probable that secular and Christian Jews who answered these questions were more positive about being Jewish than their counterparts who did not consider themselves Jewish.

15. It should be noted that only about one-third of the Jews by choice had formally converted to Judaism.