

# JEWISH IDENTIFICATION

## A Survey of the Jewish Community in Amarillo, Texas

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*Amarillo, Texas, is a city of over 200 churches, one synagogue, and less than 200 Jews. Although isolated from mainstream Jewish life and culture, Amarillo Jews are actively involved in Jewish community life, which revolves around the synagogue. As indicated by their interest in their children receiving a Jewish education, they are also committed to Jewish continuity.*

In recent years Jews living in sparsely populated areas of the United States have become the focus of increased attention (Gallup & Casteli, 1990; Goldstein, 1981, 1982; Newman & Halvorson, 1979). As more Jews have settled in small Southwestern cities, a corresponding need for information on these Jewish individuals and their community life has developed (Goldstein, 1981, 1982). Specific issues of interest to Jewish demographers include how Jews living in small Jewish communities—communities with fewer than 200 adult Jewish individuals—maintain and express Jewish identification.

As interest in Jewish identification has grown, a corresponding need has developed for consistency in definitions and measurements of terms. Himmelfarb (1979, 1980, 1982) has facilitated the study of Jewish community involvement by defining the term "Jewish identification" and delineating several dimensions of behavior through which Jewish identification may be expressed. According to Himmelfarb, Jewish identification is "the process of thinking and acting in a manner that indicates involvement with and attachment to Jewish life" (Himmelfarb, 1982, p. 57). Jewish identification may be expressed in one or more of the following six ways: (1) ritual behavior, (2) formal organizational patterns, (3) informal social associations (having

Jewish friends and neighbors), (4) intellectual interest in Judaism (reading, studying), (5) parental behaviors (child-rearing practices that encourage children to be involved in Jewish life), and (6) attitudes toward intermarriage.

Information on Jewish identification patterns for Jews living in areas isolated from mainstream Jewish life is available from several sources: (1) descriptive reports gathered from interviews and questionnaires (Lavender, 1977), (2) analysis of the National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) conducted in 1970–1971 by the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) (Lazerwitz, 1977), and (3) studies that include comparisons of Jews living in small versus large communities (Farber & Gordon, 1982; Goldstein, 1982; Rosenthal, 1963). Findings from these sources were similar and suggested specific differences between Jews living in sparsely populated and those living in densely populated Jewish areas. Jews living in sparsely populated areas were more observant of religious rituals, more active in organized Jewish community life, more interested in the Jewish socialization of children, and had higher rates of intermarriage.

The present study describes Jewish community life in a small Southwestern community: Amarillo, Texas. Its objectives were to provide information on Jewish identification and levels of involvement in

*Table 1*  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Total		Female		Male	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
<b>Age</b>						
18-29	6.4	(6)	10.9	(5)	2.9	(1)
30-39	11.7	(11)	13.0	(6)	8.6	(3)
40-49	29.8	(28)	37.0	(17)	22.9	(8)
50-59	9.6	(9)	10.9	(5)	8.6	(3)
60 +	42.6	(40)	28.3	(13)	57.1	(20)
		(94)		(46)		(35)
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married	77.7	(73)	78.3	(36)	82.9	(29)
Divorced	11.7	(11)	4.3	(2)	2.9	(3)
Never married	4.3	(4)	13.0	(6)	5.7	(1)
Widowed	6.4	(6)	4.3	(2)	8.6	(2)
		(94)		(46)		(35)
<b>Amarillo residence</b>						
Less than 1 year	6.8	(6)	9.8	(4)	5.7	(2)
1-5 years	14.8	(13)	17.1	(7)	17.1	(6)
6-10 years	17.0	(15)	22.0	(9)	17.1	(6)
11-20 years	20.5	(18)	14.6	(6)	14.3	(5)
More than 21 years	40.9	(36)	36.6	(15)	45.7	(16)
		(88)		(41)		(35)
No data		(6)		(5)		
<b>Moved from</b>						
East coast	38.6	(22)	30.8	(8)	53.8	(14)
Mideast	19.3	(11)	19.2	(5)	19.2	(5)
Texas	24.6	(14)	26.9	(7)	19.2	(5)
Midwest	5.3	(3)	7.7	(2)	3.9	(1)
West coast	12.3	(7)	15.4	(4)	3.9	(1)
		(57)		(26)		(26)
Native born	17.0	(16)	21.7	(10)	17.1	(6)
No data		(21)		(10)		(3)
<b>Income</b>						
\$10,000-\$20,000	7.7	(2)	—		7.1	(1)
\$20,000-\$30,000	15.4	(4)	40.0	(4)	—	
\$30,000-\$40,000	11.5	(3)	10.0	(1)	14.3	(2)
\$40,000-\$50,000	26.9	(7)	20.0	(2)	35.9	(5)
\$50,000-\$60,000	23.1	(6)	20.0	(2)	21.4	(3)
\$60,000-\$70,000	3.8	(1)	—		7.1	(1)
\$70,000-\$80,000	7.7	(2)	—		14.3	(2)
More than \$80,000	3.8	(1)	10.0	(1)	—	
		(26)		(10)		(14)
No data		(68)		(36)		(21)
<b>Education</b>						
High school	32.3	(20)	32.1	(9)	28.0	(7)
Bachelor	33.9	(21)	32.1	(9)	32.0	(8)
Master	21.0	(13)	28.6	(8)	20.0	(5)
Doctoral	12.9	(8)	7.1	(2)	20.0	(5)
		(62)		(28)		(25)
No data		(32)		(18)		(10)
<b>Occupation</b>						
Professional	37.7	(20)	34.6	(9)	45.5	(10)
Managerial	32.1	(17)	34.6	(9)	31.8	(7)
Sales	7.5	(4)	7.7	(2)	9.1	(2)
Clerical	1.9	(1)	3.8	(1)	—	
Retired	13.2	(7)	7.7	(2)	13.6	(3)
Homemakers	7.5	(4)	11.5	(3)	—	
		(53)		(26)		(22)
No data		(41)		(20)		(13)

Table 1  
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (continued)

Characteristic	Total		Female		Male	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Number of children						
None	6.6	(6)	8.7	(4)	3.0	(1)
One	9.9	(9)	8.7	(4)	6.1	(2)
Two	50.5	(46)	45.7	(21)	54.5	(18)
Three	19.8	(18)	26.1	(12)	15.2	(5)
Four	10.9	(10)	8.7	(4)	18.2	(6)
More than 4	2.2	(2)	2.2	(1)	3.0	(1)
		(91)		(46)		(33)
No data		(3)				(2)
Ages of children						
Younger than 3	3.4	(3)	2.3	(2)	3.1	(1)
Between 4-18	34.1	(30)	47.7	(20)	18.8	(6)
No children under 17	62.5	(55)	50.0	(22)	78.1	(25)
		(88)		(44)		(32)
No data		(6)		(2)		(3)

specific areas of Jewish community life and to determine how living in small communities influences Jewish behaviors, attitudes, and the preservation of Jewish tradition.

#### AMARILLO AND ITS JEWISH COMMUNITY

The city of Amarillo, Texas, is located in the northwest part of the Texas Panhandle and has a population of 140,000. In her book, *Blessed Assurance*, Grace Mojtabai (1986) describes the religious atmosphere of Amarillo as "brimming with Christian fellowship." The disproportionately high number of Christian churches in the region places Amarillo in the heart of the Bible Belt. A tally based on listings in the 1991 Amarillo telephone directory found 220 Protestant churches in the city. The largest Protestant denomination was Baptist, with 76 churches. Fourteen Catholic churches were listed, as well as one Jewish synagogue.

Lazerwitz (1977, p. 364) has defined a Jewish community as "the Jewish population served by a locally based network of Jewish educational, religious, cultural and fund-raising institutions." Extending over an area with an approximate 100-mile radius, the Amarillo Jewish community is "multidenominational" in the sense that one synagogue serves the needs of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews living

in the area. One hundred thirty-six individuals, aged 18 or older, belong to the Jewish community. Judging by a list of both former and prospective congregational members, approximately 37 Jewish individuals live in Amarillo and are not presently affiliated with the synagogue.

During the years 1990-1991, 28 children attended religious school. For the 5-year period from 1987-1991 the average number of Bar/Bat Mitzvahs per year was four, and the average number of children in the confirmation class was also four. In the summer of 1990, four of the children in the religious school attended a Jewish camp, and one child visited Israel.

#### METHOD

##### Sample

Characteristics of the sample, based on demographic variables, are shown in Table 1. A large percentage (43%) of the respondents were elderly. Women comprised slightly more than one-half (57%) of the sample, and most (78%) of the respondents were married. Approximately 41% of the respondents were either native-born or had lived in the community longer than 21 years. Most of the remaining respondents had migrated from East Coast communities or other cities in Texas.

Table 2  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF JEWISH BACKGROUND VARIABLES

Characteristic	Total		Female		Male	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
<b>Jewish determinant</b>						
Jewish by birth	86.2	(81)	78.3	(36)	94.3	(33)
Conversion	7.4	(7)	10.9	(5)	2.9	(1)
Potential convert	6.4	(6)	10.9	(5)	2.9	(1)
		(94)		(46)		(35)
<b>Intermarried status</b>						
Not intermarried	84.3	(70)	80.0	(32)	87.5	(28)
Intermarried — spouse converted	7.2	(6)	7.5	(3)	6.3	(2)
Intermarried — spouse not converted	8.4	(7)	12.5	(5)	6.3	(2)
		(83)		(40)		(32)
No data		(11)		(6)		(3)
<b>Denominational status</b>						
Orthodox	25.8	(23)	27.9	(12)	27.3	(9)
Conservative	37.1	(33)	37.2	(16)	36.4	(12)
Reform	25.8	(23)	25.6	(11)	24.2	(8)
Other	11.2	(10)	9.3	(4)	12.1	(4)
		(89)		(43)		(33)
No data		(5)		(3)		(2)
<b>Generational status</b>						
First	3.6	(3)	—		10.7	(3)
Second	56.6	(47)	46.5	(20)	64.3	(18)
Third	30.1	(25)	39.5	(17)	17.9	(5)
Fourth	9.6	(8)	14.0	(6)	7.1	(2)
		(83)		(43)		(28)
No data		(11)		(3)		(7)

Although only 28% of the sample responded to the question on income, among those who did respond, one-half had incomes ranging from \$40,000 to \$60,000. The mean income reported was \$45,600. More than one-third (34%) of the respondents held master's or doctoral level degrees, and approximately 70% were employed in professional occupations. A large majority (91%) had between one and four children, and 34% had children in an age grouping in which they would be eligible for religious school education.

Description of the sample in terms of Jewish background variables is shown in Table 2. Most of the respondents (86%) were Jewish by birth, and most (84%) had not intermarried. Denominational affiliation was fairly equally distributed, and slightly more than one-half of the respondents were second-generation Jews.

### Questionnaire

The researchers devised a questionnaire for measuring six dimensions of Jewish identification based on Himmelfarb's (1982) classification scheme. The questionnaire, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope, was mailed to each individual whose name was included on a list of affiliated congregational members. One hundred thirty-six questionnaires were sent out, and 94 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a return rate of 69%.

### RESULTS

#### Ritual Behavior: Descriptive Analysis

The frequency of observance of ritual behaviors in the synagogue and at home is shown in Table 3. Attendance at Shabbat

Table 3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO RITUAL OBSERVANCE

Observance	Percentage	Number
Ritual behavior		
Synagogue-related		
Attendance on Sabbath eve		
Every Friday night	19.8	(16)
1 or 2 times per month	48.1	(39)
5 to 11 times per year	9.9	(8)
Less than 5 times per year	21.0	(17)
Never	1.2	(1)
		(81)
No data		(13)
Attendance on holidays (other than Shabbat)		
Every Jewish holiday	15.7	(14)
Most Jewish holidays	30.3	(27)
Three or more of the following (Sukkot, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, Shavuot)	15.7	(14)
High Holidays only	34.8	(31)
Never	3.4	(3)
		(89)
No data		(5)
Attendance at community Seder		
Yes	79.1	(72)
No	20.9	(19)
		(91)
No data		(3)
Home-related Shabbat		
Lighting candles		
Every Friday night	14.0	(12)
1 or 2 times per month	14.0	(12)
2 to 11 times per year	2.3	(2)
1 time per year	17.4	(15)
Never	52.3	(45)
		(86)
No data		(8)
Partaking in Shabbat dinner		
Every Friday night	21.9	(16)
1 or 2 times per month	6.8	(5)
2 to 11 times per year	1.4	(1)
1 time per year	17.8	(13)
Never	52.1	(38)
		(73)
No data		(21)
Observance of Rosh Hashanah		
Yes	28.0	(26)
No	72.0	(67)
		(93)
No data		(1)
Observance of Yom Kippur (fasting)		
Yes	43.0	(40)
No	57.0	(53)
		(93)
No data		(1)

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Table 3

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO RITUAL OBSERVANCE (continued)

Observance	Percentage	Number
Observance of Sukkot		
Yes	10.9	(10)
No	89.1	(82)
No data		(2)
Observance of Chanukah		
Yes	55.9	(52)
No	44.1	(41)
No data		(93)
No data		(1)
Observance of Purim		
Yes	29.0	(27)
No	71.0	(66)
No data		(93)
No data		(1)
Observance of Pesach		
Yes	77.4	(72)
No	22.6	(21)
No data		(93)
No data		(1)
Observance of Shavuot		
Yes	8.7	(8)
(no)	91.3	(84)
No data		(92)
No data		(2)
Keeping a kosher home		
Yes	5.8	(5)
No	94.1	(81)
No data		(86)
No data		(8)

and annual holiday services was relatively high. Approximately one-half (48%) of the respondents attended Shabbat services at least once a month, and one-third reported attending services on most Jewish holidays. Approximately one-fourth of the respondents (28%) participated in Shabbat rituals at home—lighting Shabbat candles and participating in a Shabbat meal. The annual cycle holidays observed most frequently at home were Pesach and Chanukah.

#### Formal Organizational Affiliation: Descriptive Analysis

An estimate of synagogue membership in Amarillo was obtained by comparing the number of synagogue members to the number of synagogue members plus poten-

tial but nonaffiliated members. Nonaffiliated members were (1) individuals living in Amarillo who had belonged to the synagogue at one time but were not presently affiliated or (2) individuals known to the researcher or respondents as Jewish but who did not belong to the synagogue. Using this estimate, the percentage of Amarillo Jews affiliated with the synagogue was 79%. Ninety-four percent of the female respondents belonged to the women's auxiliary organization—the Sisterhood—and 84% of the male respondents belonged to the men's organization, the local chapter of B'nai B'rith. As shown in Table 4, almost one-half of the respondents spent between 2 and 20 hours per week volunteering their time to Jewish-related causes. Less involvement was shown in non-Jewish-related volunteer work.

Table 4

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Item	Percentage	Number
Number of hours spent per year in Jewish related volunteer work		
0	31.0	(22)
Less than 1	12.7	(9)
1	7.0	(5)
2-5	21.1	(15)
6-10	12.7	(9)
11-15	9.9	(7)
16-20	2.8	(2)
More than 20	2.8	(2)
No data		(71)
Number of hours spent per year in non-Jewish related volunteer work		
0	45.5	(30)
Less than 1	6.1	(4)
1	9.1	(6)
2-5	18.2	(12)
6-10	9.0	(6)
11-15	3.0	(2)
16-20	6.0	(4)
More than 20	3.0	(2)
No data		(66)
		(28)

**Informal Organizational Affiliation:  
Descriptive Analysis**

The significance of having Jewish friends is shown in Table 5. These data suggest an acceptance of Gentile friends and social companions. The majority of respondents (64%) agreed that non-Jews perceived them as different because they were Jewish. Being perceived as different, however, was not synonymous with anti-Semitism, as most of the respondents (80%) disagreed with the statement, "I think others dislike me because I am Jewish." An unusually high percentage of respondents (78%) traveled out of town one or two times per year to attend Jewish-related life-cycle ceremonies.

**Intellectual Dimension: Descriptive Analysis**

As shown in Table 6, approximately one-third of the respondents showed a preference for reading fiction and nonfiction on Jewish topics. A higher percentage (55%) showed a preference for watching movies and television programs of Jewish topics.

**Parental Behaviors: Descriptive Analysis**

Responses to questionnaire items regarding parental behaviors are shown in Table 7. A high percentage of the respondents (70%) believed that providing their children with a Jewish education was very important, and more than three-fourths (77%) of the respondents discussed Jewish traditions with family members at home.

In comparing their own Jewishness to their parents' Jewishness, 25% rated themselves as more observant than their parents, and 15% perceived their children as more observant than themselves. However, more than one-third (36%) felt that their children were less observant than themselves. More than one-half (55%) believed having a Bar or Bat Mitzvah was very important, and only 25% did not consider participation in Confirmation to be important.

**Attitudes toward Inter-marriage:  
Descriptive Analysis**

As shown in Table 8, more than one-half of the respondents (57%) had negative

*Table 5*

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO INFORMAL SOCIAL PATTERNS

Item	Percentage	Number
Proportionate number of Jewish friends		
Most	6.4	(6)
At least ½	35.1	(33)
Few	58.5	(55)
		(94)
Proportionate number of Jews at social functions attended		
Most	19.1	(17)
At least ½	24.7	(22)
Few	56.2	(50)
		(89)
No data		(5)
Think others view as different because of being Jewish		
Strongly agree	11.5	(10)
Somewhat agree	52.9	(46)
Disagree	26.4	(23)
Strongly disagree	9.2	(8)
		(87)
No data		(7)
Think others dislike because of being Jewish		
Strongly agree	1.1	(1)
Somewhat agree	18.4	(16)
Disagree	55.2	(48)
Strongly disagree	25.3	(22)
		(87)
No data		(7)
Out of town attendance at Jewish ceremonies		
3 or more times per year	12.0	(7)
1 or 2 times per year	77.6	(45)
Less than 1 time per year	3.4	(2)
Never	6.9	(4)
		(58)
No data		(36)

*Table 6*

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO INTELLECTUAL DIMENSIONS

Item	Percentage	Number
Preference for reading Jewish-related fiction		
Yes	36.1	(30)
No	63.8	(53)
		(83)
No data		(11)
Preference for reading Jewish-related non-fiction		
Yes	38.8	(33)
No	61.2	(52)
		(85)
No data		(9)
Preference for viewing movies and television related to Jewish topics		
Yes	55.1	(49)
No	44.9	(40)
		(89)
No data		(5)



Table 7  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Item	Percentage	Number
Degree of importance of children's Jewish education		
Very	70.0	(56)
Somewhat	25.0	(20)
Not	5.0	(4)
		(80)
No data		(14)
Home discussions of Jewish traditions		
Yes	77.0	(57)
No	23.0	(17)
		(74)
No data		(20)
Ratings of respondent's Jewishness compared to parents		
More observant	25.0	(21)
As observant	33.3	(28)
Less observant	41.7	(35)
		(84)
No data		(10)
Ratings of children's Jewishness compared to respondent's Jewishness		
More observant	15.3	(11)
As observant	48.6	(35)
Less observant	36.1	(26)
		(72)
No data		(22)
Degree of importance of children's Bar/Bat Mitzvahs		
Very	55.4	(41)
Somewhat	21.6	(16)
Not	23.0	(17)
		(74)
No data		(20)
Degree of importance of children's Confirmation		
Very	44.7	(34)
Somewhat	30.3	(23)
Not	25.0	(19)
		(76)
No data		(18)

feelings toward intermarriage. Yet, despite the negative feelings, few (7%) reported that they would strongly oppose intermarriage should it occur. The reason for opposition to intermarriage cited by the greatest number of respondents (69%) was concern for grandchildren not being Jewish.

#### DISCUSSION

Previous research has indicated that Jews living in small Jewish communities are, in some ways, more aware of their Jewish identity than Jews living in larger Jewish

communities (Brown, 1974; Lavender, 1977; Rose, 1961; Schoenfeld, 1967, 1974). This awareness leads to involvement in activities through which Jews can lessen their feelings of isolation and can fulfill their responsibility for preserving Jewish traditions. To counter the sense of isolation, Jews in small towns tend to congregate at the synagogue, to attend religious services, and to discuss issues related to local Jewish community life. To fulfill their responsibility for preserving Jewish traditions, Jews show interest in transmitting these traditions to their children. Thus, one might

Table 8

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERMARRIAGE

Item	Percentage	Number
Feelings about child's intermarriage		
Very negative	20.2	(18)
Somewhat negative	37.1	(33)
No difference	39.3	(35)
Positive	3.4	(3)
		(89)
No data		(5)
Reaction to child's intermarriage		
Strongly oppose	6.8	(6)
Discourage it	46.6	(41)
Accept it	46.6	(41)
		(88)
No data		(6)
Reason for concern about intermarriage		
Decline of Jewish people		
Yes	50.0	(38)
No	50.0	(38)
		(76)
No data		(18)
Not being close to child		
Yes	37.3	(28)
No	62.7	(47)
		(75)
No data		(19)
Grandchildren not being Jewish		
Yes	69.0	(58)
No	31.0	(26)
		(84)
No data		(10)
Child might reject Jewish principles		
Yes	56.3	(45)
No	43.8	(35)
		(80)
No data		(14)
Your child might be rejecting you as a parent		
Yes	34.9	(29)
No	65.1	(54)
		(83)
No data		(11)
Your child might be less likely to have a happy marriage		
Yes	41.6	(32)
No	58.4	(45)
		(77)
No data		(17)

expect Jews living in small communities to show relatively high levels of involvement in those areas of Jewish identification concerned with the synagogue and Jewish socialization of children. Findings from this survey supported these expectations.

The two areas of identification in which Amarillo Jews showed the highest level of involvement were parental behaviors and concerns regarding intermarriage. That 95% of the respondents felt that their children's Jewish education was important

and more than three-fourths of the respondents discussed Jewish traditions at home indicate respondents' concern for the preservation of Jewish traditions. The lack of differentiation in respondents' perceptions of their own, their parents, and their children's Jewishness may be construed as sustained interest in maintaining Jewish heritage across generations.

The ranking of objections to intermarriage is yet another indication of interest in the preservation of Judaism. Intermarriage concerns that were universal in nature and addressed the decline of the Jewish community were more salient than those that were personal in nature and pertained to the impact of intermarriage on parent-child relationships.

As was expected, Amarillo Jews showed high levels of ritual observance, especially those rituals that entailed synagogue attendance. One possible explanation for respondents' higher level of involvement in synagogue-related as opposed to home-related rituals may be the sense of fulfillment derived from sharing Jewish traditions with other Jews.

Measured by the percentage of respondents who belonged to synagogue auxiliary organizations and the mean number of hours dedicated to Jewish-related volunteer work, Amarillo Jews showed a high level of participation in the formal organizational structure of the synagogue. Involvement in the synagogue is basic to local Jewish community survival since the synagogue provides the foundation and direction for other religious activities.

Compared to the interest in formal organizational affiliation, interest in informal affiliation was less pronounced. For the majority of the respondents, having mostly Jewish friends and being mostly among Jews at social functions did not appear to be highly important. Respondents perceived themselves as being different because they were Jewish, but felt they were not necessarily disliked for that reason.

Apparently, for Jews living in small

communities, similar religious beliefs are a contributing factor to friendships, but not a sufficient factor. Since Amarillo Jews live in a predominantly non-Jewish world, interaction with Gentiles may promote economic survival and provide social diversification. It appears that, when Jews in the community do congregate, their purpose in meeting is to attend services, discuss matters pertaining to the synagogue, or attend synagogue-related functions.

Given the relative disregard for having mostly Jewish friends, the high percentage of respondents who traveled out of town at least one time per year to attend Jewish-related life-cycle events was unexpected. Several explanations can be proposed to explain this phenomenon. Out-of-town travel may fulfill the needs of Amarillo Jews to be with family members, to be in a predominantly Jewish setting, or to be with a greater variety of Jewish people.

Compared to the involvement in other dimensions of Jewish identification, interest in reading and watching media presentations on Jewish-related topics was relatively low. For those who did indicate a preference for Jewish as opposed to non-Jewish intellectual material, this vicarious involvement may reflect their need to be more actively involved in Jewish cultural activities.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although relatively isolated from mainstream Jewish life and culture, Jews living in Amarillo, Texas, have indicated interest in maintaining and preserving Jewish continuity. Judging by the large percentage of respondents who attend synagogue, participate in the Sisterhood and B'nai B'rith, and dedicate their time to Jewish-related volunteer work, Jews are actively involved in Jewish community life. The synagogue seems to be a focal point of activity, and much of the activity involves events scheduled at the synagogue.

The interest expressed by a large proportion of respondents in their children

receiving a Jewish education, the concern for children having a Bar or Bat Mitzvah and being confirmed, the importance placed on discussions of Jewish traditions in the home, and the interest in Jewish observances being maintained across the generations indicate commitment to the preservation of Jewish life. The negative attitudes toward intermarriage, juxtaposed with a reconciled acceptance of intermarriage should it occur, reflect the small-town Jew's attempt to preserve his or her religious heritage while living in a predominantly non-Jewish world.

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