Decentering the Study of Jewish Identity: Opening the Dialogue With Other Religious Groups

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While social science research in Jewish studies is important for the particular knowledge it conveys about and for Jews, it also raises more general questions about the complicated and sometimes ambivalent nature of contemporary ethnic and religious identity in the sociological study of religion and ethnicity. This article focuses on Jewish identity as a way of raising questions about the relationship between religiosity and ethnicity; the dialectical nature of assimilation; and the methodological implications raised by defining identity subjectively or objectively for both qualitative and quantitative research. Our aim in sharing these explorations is to raise questions about the ways in which particularistic concerns and explorations of one group can deepen and/or provoke similar explorations in other contemporary religious and ethnic groups and vice versa.

INTRODUCTION

Jews are often characterized as a rather closed ethnic group into which it is difficult to assimilate (see, for example, Katz 1992; McClain 1995). Attendance at conferences devoted to Jewish scholarship might give the same impression. Yiddish or Hebrew often peppers a conversation or presentation along with references to Jewish jokes and insider research issues at Jewish Studies Conferences and at sessions dedicated to Jewish topics at disciplinary conferences. Jewish researchers, who sometimes have a personal agenda when choosing a topic, often engage in an emotional dialogue with others because of the topic's personal salience. None of this, of course, is unique to Jews. Most minority status groups exhibit similar behavior. We

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speculate that the research/scholarship itself serves as a kind of ethnic/racial identification for the researchers, as well as for the audience.

While the parochial nature of such endeavors may serve some important functions for both the researcher and the recipients, this kind of insularity often leaves such Jewish Studies scholars publishing in specialized journals, presenting in specialized conference settings and often on the margins of their respective disciplines (see Burstein, 2004). Such insularity limits the possibilities of sharing overlapping interests and concerns with scholars outside the field of Jewish Studies. In this article, we connect issues raised in contemporary Jewish studies (often from a particularistic concern and focus) with the broader disciplinary boundaries of religious and ethnic studies.

As the controversies over "who is a Jew" have become more contentious over the past few decades, increasing attention has been given to Jewish identity, its changing nature, its religious and ethnic dimensions and its public and private expressions. What we "know" is always conditioned by "how" we study it. Therefore, critical to any exploration of Jewish identity, or any other identity for that matter, are methodological questions. Methodology, as we use it here, refers to a theory and analysis of how research/scholarship should proceed, or what Jetse Sprey describes as an ongoing dialogue between ideas and reality (1990:19).[1] This ongoing dialogue serves as the theoretical focus for this paper and as a metaphor for the building of bridges between Jewish Studies scholarship and the broader field of religious studies.

Methodological assumptions about how best to gather data, what concepts we use and what questions we ask (or don't ask) are inextricably tied to theoretical assumptions about the social processes that produce and reproduce identity. In this article we have focused on dismantling what Charles Liebman (2003) calls the "ethnoreligious package" dominant in the study of contemporary Jewish identity.[2] By presenting what we see as some of the key challenges and dilemmas in the study of ethnicity and religiosity, we hope to broaden the dialogue and deepen the understanding of the concerns common to all scholars of contemporary religious and ethnic studies.

Postmodern Possibilities and the Dismantling of the Traditional "Ethnoreligious" Package
    One of the important repercussions of a postmodern and feminist approach to Jewish identity is that both shake the "theoretical foundations of essentialist thinking" (Silberstein, 2000:2). Silberstein suggests that:

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[1] Perhaps nowhere is this issue made more clear than in the early writings of feminist scholars (Cook and Fonow 1986, Kaufman and Richardson 1982, Reinharz 1984, 1992; Smith 1974 among others). See especially Davidman and Tenenbaum (1994) who look specifically at feminism and Jewish Studies.
[2] By no means are we arguing that these are the only issues in the study of identity. Indeed, this article does not even pretend to cover the vast theoretical terrain in the study of identity and/or to acknowledge the growing number of contemporary scholars in the field who are contributing new and exciting perspectives, most particularly from an ethnographic perspective.

The awakening of previously silenced or marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and previously colonized peoples; the widespread movement of populations; and the contraction of temporal and spatial distances through technology have revealed the inadequacy of essentialist notions of identity

For Silberstein (2000:3), identity is produced through discourses that identify and categorize people. Such discourses include "ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, socioeconomic position, intellectual perspective, and geographic location" (2000:3). Prell (2000a:35) writes specifically about the far-reaching effects of such theoretical turns for the social scientific study of American Jews. It brings what she terms "a '"bottom up"' approach to Jewish life." Such an approach, she notes, focuses us "on how Jewishness is constructed in relationship to the life course...on the meaning of choices, rather than the choices alone, and the conditions under which such choices are made or not made." (39)

Traditionally, for Orthodox and Conservative Jews, being Jewish is defined ascriptively by birth to a Jewish mother; for Reform and Reconstructionist Jews, a Jew is one who is born to any Jewish parent. Religiosity in Judaism is described by Della-Pergola (1999:66) as:

.... holding a complex of particular beliefs, norms, and values as well as the consistent performing of ritual practices that are in a sense unnatural—a burden one takes upon oneself not immediately and functionally related to some materially defined (or economic) benefit. Judaism involves complying with relatively rigorous behavioral rules coupled with submitting oneself to possible sanctions by a recognized authority or by the whole community.

Gans, who has had a far-reaching effect in both religious and ethnic studies, argues that American Jewish identity differs from that of other groups because Jews not only "share elements of a common past or present non-American culture", but that the "sacred and secular elements of the culture are strongly intertwined" (Gans 1979:7). Others, however, have questioned this fusing of the sacred and the secular, as either a contemporary or even consistent and constant historic condition of Jewish identity. For instance, Sharot contends that

Since the entrance of Western Jewry into modernity at the end of the eighteenth century, the number of Jews and Jewish movements claiming a religious or an ethnic identity without the other are too numerous to be designated as exceptions to the pattern of religious-ethnic fusion (1997:90).

Beyond examples of those "born Jewish," Sharot (1997) also notes that there are those who have not only converted to Judaism, but who bring to their religious identity a different ethnic identity. Moreover, he contends that there are Jewish Christians who claim that adherence to another religion does not invalidate their Jewish ethnic identity. He writes: "This opens up the possibility of different ethnic identities becoming co-joined with Judaism, somewhat similar to Italian Catholics, and Irish Catholics" (Sharot 1999:91). Gitelman (2003:202-3) reports

that 60% of the Russian Jews he surveyed would neither condone nor condemn Jews who became Christians. Moreover, he notes that some Russian Jews think that one is a Jew whether one practices Judaism or not. The many possibilities for ethnic/religious fusion or separation or recombination have grown as Jews have been accepted more fully into "diaspora" countries and nation states (also documented by Aviv and Shneer 2005, and Roman 2003). Sharot (1997) contends that once secularization was accompanied by a willingness to include Jews, many Jews reinterpreted their identities in purely religious terms. Thus, many Jews did not, and even today, do not, define themselves as Zionists (i.e., oriented as a nationality toward resettling Israel) when referring to themselves as Jews.

Sharot (1997:90) elaborates on his ethnic/religious formulations by arguing that the process of secularization made it possible for Jews to identity either in purely religious terms *or to* identify with a people "without religion". He writes:

> Since the "history-cum-mythodology" tells of a people who became the exclusive carriers of a religion through their covenant with God, and because the religious ceremonies recall and celebrate the history of people, they lend themselves to secularized reformulation...once the process of secularization began, it became possible for Jews to identify with the people without the religion.

In his provocative book entitled: *Creating a Judaism without Religion*, S. Daniel Breslauer (2001) moves beyond Sharot's assertions. He suggests that not only have we entered a "new" period of Jewish history whereby we can have an ethnicity (culture) without religion, but that we can have Jewish ethics and theology without religion, as well. Breslauer's postmodern approach opens a plethora of possibilities. It changes, as we mentioned earlier, how we understand the "ongoing dialogue between ideas and reality." Breslauer (2001:5) writes:

> Jews today can choose from a spectrum of religious ways of Jewish living from ultra-orthodoxy to creative innovation to atheistic Jewish religion. American Jews can find secular ways of expressing their identity, cultural forms of Jewish living, and purely individual and idiosyncratic forms of being Jewish.

Recent research suggests that contemporary Jews do not seem to mind this kind of episodic, if not inchoate, picking and choosing characteristic of social processes more in line with "becoming" rather than "being" Jewish. Breslauer (2001:6) notes that the process of "becoming" Jewish involves shifts and revisions, when he writes:

> Exploring the contemporary relevance of inherited traditions does not mean accepting them in their entirety. Instead the old becomes a vehicle for creating the new. Traditional forms serve as a point of departure for contemporary innovation. This approach to creating Jewish spirituality involves shifting meanings and significance, of taking ideas and practices from divergent times and places and refashioning them to fit contexts alien to their original intent. This approach subverts what it preserves from the past by bending it to new purposes.

Depending upon our personal and theoretical predilections, we may or may not interpret the practices mentioned above as "subversion". And most certainly, the bending of past ideas and practices to new purposes is not a new phenomenon. Nonetheless, Breslauer raises issues which present challenges for the study of religious and ethnic identities (for more on such challenges see, Kaufman 2005; Espiritu and Wolf 2000; and Phillips and Kelner, on "ethnic apostasy" and religious switching, in this issue). The practices he describes raise identity issues not only about the meaning and measure of ethnicity and religiosity, but about "tradition", "authenticity", "assimilation", and "diasporic living", as well. For instance, new rituals and programs for feminist and even non-feminist women (i.e., strongly affiliated and Jewishly identified women), trying to reclaim a "tradition" in a religion which is markedly male in almost every aspect, pose particular challenges.

Despite the flexibility and variation among key Jewish thinkers on the topic of tradition, Arnold Eisen (1983) suggests that none of these scholars address how to incorporate "new traditions" into old ones. At what point, Eisen wonders, do new "traditions", for instance, cease to be Jewish. Moreover, what do "self conscious" struggles to reclaim tradition express: religiosity, ethnicity, symbolic religiosity or ethnicity, and/or all simultaneously? What is the relationship between symbol and content? In the following sections we will address some of these issues.

Reconceptualizing Jewish Identity: Methodology and Measurement Issues

Since method cannot be separated from theory, many of the issues raised in the study of Jewish identity relate to the ways in which concepts are conceived and measured. Behavioral measures, for instance, are subject to differing interpretations. They reflect not only more or less of an activity, but can represent ethnic and/or religious components of identity either simultaneously or independently (Lasker 1971). Therefore, we agree with the many critics who suggest that it is difficult to represent and measure the complex interaction of multifaceted identity structures without understanding the priorities and meanings of these many components to the respondents themselves.

Survey data are notoriously weak at allowing us to know how respondents distinguish between the categories presented and the meaning and motivations for their ethnic/religious behaviors. What, for instance, do respondents mean when they are asked to classify themselves and other Jews as an ethnic, religious, and/or cultural group (Heilman 1995)? What do they mean when they classify themselves as a nation or as a race? Early on, Gans (1979) noted that religious affiliation might exist for social and political reasons as much as sacred ones. Kunkelman (1990) has coined the phrase "religion of ethnicity" to describe such a phenomenon (see also Greeley 1972; Winter 1996).

Egon Mayer (2001:11) offers some of the most stringent criticisms of, and then solutions for, the multitude of issues concerning Jewish identity as measured through survey data. He writes that:

...at least within the context of a voluntary society like the United States and other west-ern, democratic and pluralistic societies where religion and ethnicity are not officially established, the simple act of counting the Jewish population involves a negotiation between the social scientist and his/her subject. The setting of the social boundaries is determined as much by the questions asked as by the subjective meaning associated with those questions on the part of the respondent. Such implicit negotiation produces a vari-ety of persons who might be called "Jewish" either by themselves or by those who wish to study them for different purposes.

Mayer concludes that to address the limitations of survey data we must pay attention to the emerging theoretical and methodological challenges up-and-coming in the field of Jewish Studies. Mayer's solution is to place our under-standing of identity directly back onto the intentions of the respondent as opposed to the intentions of the researcher. He uses his measures of "outlook" (self-described responses to a global question about outlook as either religious or secular) as one way of redressing some of the inherent problems within survey research. He writes:

The value of studying people's "outlook" as a means with which to differentiate various segments of the population is that it allows the social scientist to step out of the circular logic of the identification-identity paradigm, and allows one to view the "objective" facets of affiliative or identificational behavior as the consequence of meaningful intentionality. To say that someone is "secular" or "religious" is at once both respectful of their own sub-jective perceptions about the universe and also makes no unwarranted inferences about the strength or weakness of their psychic attachment to their heritage, their ancestry nor any inferences about group loyalty – as the concept of "Jewish identity" implicitly does. It thus allows social scientists to characterize the subjective state of mind of the observed population without imposing a possibly invidious construct like identity (2000:11)

In her seminal work on Jewish identity in the United States, Bethamie Horowitz writes of her own problems in doing identity research. It took awhile, she writes, to convince her respondents that she did not want them to compare them-selves to others when answering her questions, but rather to give their own feelings in response to the questions. "Methodologically," writes Horowitz (2000:10):

a set of judgements about what is worth surveying has come to characterize the sociolog-ical study of American Jewry... This approach has emphasized objective, readily counta-ble behaviors without attending to subjective experience, meaning and motivation. It has resulted in a wealth of information about such questions as who lights candles and how often people have visited Israel. But it has revealed much less about Jews' opinions and beliefs about the world around them and has taught us practically nothing about why people do what they do and feel what they feel or about the role being Jewish plays in their lives.

Another measurement problem involves the meaning of any particular behavior across time and culture. For instance, while the Passover seder tradi-tionally includes a structured recitation of the story of the Jews' exodus from Egypt, complete with ritual foods symbolizing various aspects of this legacy, some

Jews have seders today that consist primarily of a social (or ethnic) gathering. The meal includes little or no ritual recitation of the Passover story and may include non-kosher food with little of the traditional foods symbolic of parts of the story. For some, it is either a religious celebration or primarily an ethnic one; for others, it is both. Therefore, developing a scale of Jewish identity– religious or ethnic— for quantitative analysis that has validity for all Jews, is difficult. The concerns are not just a question of quantity of observance, but of quality and content, and whether the behavior or observance in question is held out of religious and/or ethnic identification or both simultaneously.

Since faith and belief play a much larger role in Christian identity than in Judaism, it is not surprising that practice (behavior) remains as the measure most aligned with Jewish religiosity.[3] The connection between religious practice and religiosity has come under criticism by a number of identity researchers. Synagogue attendance, holiday observance (and the rites and rituals associated with each), kashrut (dietary laws), and the observance of the Sabbath are certainly observable measures of at least one expression of Jewish religiosity and identity. Each practice, however, may have a different denominational priority or may not be observed at all (e.g., fasting on a minor fast day). Therefore, frequency and type of ritual may be poor measures of religious identity and certainly of religious intensity (Lebson 2002; Mayer 2001). Moreover, equating the *number* of practices with the intensity of one's religiosity may inadvertently weight religiosity in the direction of one denomination (i.e., Orthodoxy) over another (i.e., Reform). Furthermore, affiliation and frequency of synagogue attendance, when used as measures of religiosity in distinction to ethnicity, may obfuscate, as noted above, the more social, communal and even political functions such practices may also serve (see also Dashevsky and Shapiro 1993, and Elazar 1995).

Similar issues arise in the analysis of other religious traditions. Demographic variables (such as, geographic location, distance from the Vatican, size of family, socio-economic status) alter our construction of religious identity. For instance, while most American Catholics believe you can be a "good Catholic" without going to church every Sunday, fewer are willing to compromise on matters of faith, and nearly half do not think you can be a good Catholic without obeying the Church's teachings on abortion (D'Antonio et. al. 2001). While the sacraments seem to be central to Catholic identity, acceptance of the Vatican's authority seems to be weakening (D'Antonio et. al., 2001). When do individualized meanings take precedence over collective identities? Or as Bershtel and Graubard (1992:8) phrase it: "What happens to traditional loyalties when givens become options?" How do individuals legitimate their differences from mainstream doctrine and practice? What effect do gender, life-cycle stage and socio-economic class have on such understandings?

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[3] Michael Meyer puts it this way: "Unlike Christianity, Judaism is not a religion that has a formulated detailed creed" (2002:93).

Conceptual and operational difficulties with Jewish identity have implications not only for the internal validity of Jewish identity research, but for the possibilities of comparative research across religions and ethnicities. Survey research provides an economical method of using comparable close-ended questions across several populations, challenging the researcher to devise clever research designs in terms of sampling and operationalization of concepts. However, as we have indicated above, there are validity problems, particularly if we envision Jewish identity as fluid and as an individualized phenomenon that fluctuates over time. Even more difficult is the problem of devising identity measures that capture the variation in Jewish identity, with indicators that are comparable across gender, other religions or ethnicities. Is observing the Jewish Sabbath comparable to observing the Christian Sabbath? If one goes to synagogue on Saturday mornings, but does not refrain from using electricity (part of the traditional commandments), is this comparable to going to church on Sundays for those who obey all of the rules and rituals associated with being Catholic? To what extent do other religions – or ethnicities – have a wide variety of rituals and behaviors from which individuals develop their own personal identity within the collective rubric? When Jews "dabble" in their Jewish religion, is this similar to Catholics of Italian heritage "dabbling" in their Italian heritage (picking some traditional Italian foods to continue in their family's ritual meals, paying attention to movies with Italian-American content, writing to their Italian cousins)? Are these mixes of ethnic and religious identity idiosyncratic, or are there common patterns emerging across religions and ethnicities, at least within a common socio-cultural context?

Because the possibilities from which to pick and choose seem infinite, such variations may be difficult to discern using a survey format. Creative research design and analysis may allow a more abstract scaling of religious and ethnic identity across populations to enable comparisons using measures of comparable (if not identical) meaning and saliency (as some of the research presented in this issue exemplifies). When individuals are free to pick and choose their observances, their practices may not reflect any consistency or pattern. For instance, if there is no competing activity, Jews may attend synagogue on a Saturday morning. This may happen, however, twice in one month, and not again for another six months. As such, summary measures may be misleading. While this pattern of inconsistency may be difficult to ascertain in a survey, it reflects a pattern of individualization that has important implications for the study of variation within and among religious communities. How common are these practices in other religions? How are they measured? How can we develop comparable measures to track these phenomena across religions and ethnicities?

Recent research in Jewish studies has been greatly broadened by the use of narratives to explore the construction of "meaning-making" in identity studies (for example, Aviv and Shneer 2005; Charme 2000; Cohen and Eisen 2000; Davidman 2003; Heilman 1999; Horowitz 2002; Kaufman 2002, 2003, forthcoming; Kelner 2003-4; Roman 2003; Zuckerman 1999). Such narratives, to be sure,

have their own pitfalls (retrospective and selective memory and, generally small, non-representative samples) but they offer the possibility of expanding our current repertoire of the measure and meaning of "being" and/or "becoming" Jewish. They offer the possibility of moving beyond "dualities" of ethnicity and religiosity to the fluid and conflicting ways in which each may be expressed. For instance, Horowitz (2000) finds several major patterns or "journeys" over the life course by which Jewish identity is constructed. Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods (in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and telephone surveys), Horowitz identified five major patterns of identity over the life course: steadily high or low involvement; lapsing or increasing involvement; and "interior", "where a person's internal subjective value commitments intensified, while religious and communal practice remained low or decreased." (vii-viii) Are the patterns of change Horowitz finds found in other religious/ethnic traditions? Do similar life-course events result in similar directions of change across religions? Perhaps even more compelling than comparative narratives would be comparative panel studies tracing changes over the life course. Such tracings could document life course "journeys" without the drawbacks of retrospection. Such comparative narratives might also shed light on "symbolic" ethnicity and/or religiosity and how each is constructed among different religious and ethnic groups.

To frame the methodological issues as quantitative versus qualitative masks the important ties between any methodological practice and our a priori assumptions about which questions, issues, and/or foci are important to the study of identity. We will return to this discussion later. For now, we will focus on one example of the way in which a particular methodological conundrum in assessing identity in the National Jewish Population Survey has implications for the study of identity, in general (a focus which resonates throughout this volume).

National Jewish Population Surveys

The masking of the connections between ethnic and religious identity has strong political as well as methodological ramifications. One specific example is the controversy about the ways in which Jewish identity has been defined and, consequently measured, in the National Jewish Population Surveys conducted in 1970, 1990, and 2000-1. We will not rehearse here the internal and external political reasons that motivate "minority" groups to pay close attention to their size in relationship to other minorities and to the majority culture. Jews, in particular, have had a long history of internal self-accounting.

The U.S. Census does not include a question about religion. Because the proportion of Jews included on national social surveys, such as the NORC, is small (less than 2% given the estimated size of the total U.S. Jewish population), we have no way of reliably gauging the accuracy of the NJPS population estimates. The publication of the estimated size of the Jewish population, after the data release of the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000-1, unleashed a major controversy, both within the community of Jewish scholars and in the national

media. Compared with the 5.5 million estimate of the 1990 NJPS, the Survey of 2000-1 offered a 5.2 million estimate, indicating a decline in the American Jewish population. To further complicate matters, the 2003 American Jewish Year Book printed an estimate of the Jewish population at 6.2 million (DellaPergola 2003).

The controversy over the "true" Jewish population size spilled into the popular press. Op-ed pieces by the editor of the Jewish newspaper, *Forward*, in his own newspaper and in *The New York Times*, accused the sponsors of the NJPS and the United Jewish Communities, of "fraud" and intentional misrepresentation of the numbers of Jews in the United States (Goldberg 2003a, 2003b). Following these accusations, a fiery debate among Jewish scholars on the listserv of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ) during September and October, 2003, brought out several difficulties in estimating the actual numbers of the American Jewish population, some methodological, but the majority conceptual. To be counted in the Jewish population, did a survey respondent need to have Jewish parentage? Did one need to consider oneself Jewish by religion? Was considering oneself Jewish (for any reason) enough? If a respondent said they were Jewish (for any reason) and then claimed to be practicing another religion (such as Buddhism or Christianity), were they considered a Jew for the population count? If someone refused to identify as a Jew or a non-Jew, should they be considered a non-Jew (as they were in 2000-1) or as missing information (as they were in 1990)? These questions mirror the changing nature of Jewish identity and the growing number of expressions of it that ethnographic studies have produced.

Estimating the rate of out-marriage was even trickier. If someone practiced another religion after marrying a spouse of a non-Jewish religion, but still considered her/himself to be Jewish, was this intermarriage? Answers to this scenario could result in rates of intermarriage ranging from 43-52% (Sheskin 2003). The "answer" to the population and intermarriage rate questions is that any of the above criteria might be used, depending on the definition of Jew (and intermarriage) adopted by the researcher or reporter in question. It is one of the reasons why each author in this issue, for instance, must clarify for the reader how each of them defined who was "Jewish" in their samples. The reader can see that this varies from paper to paper, depending on the author(s)' perspectives and the purpose of analysis.

Whether Jewish parentage, or Jewish upbringing, or current Jewish identification (ethnically or religiously) provide adequate criteria for being considered Jewish can vary—and have different implications—for both theory and practice. Clearly, our theories and methods are tied to our personal, political and professional concerns. The controversy over the "true" size of the American Jewish community sparked questions about the political and social concerns of those doing the research, as well as ontological questions about the ways in which we know and what constitutes knowledge within any field of study. Such questions, although raised in the context of Jewish identity, are clearly relevant to all reli-

gious and ethnic inquiry. As religion changes to a more voluntaristic and individualized pattern of behavior, the census questions considered by Jewish demographers become relevant for all religious communities (see, for example, Liebman 2003). If one is born to Catholic parents, is one automatically considered Catholic, or must one attend a Catholic Church? Must one attend mass at least once a year? Go to confession? Hold certain beliefs, celebrate certain holidays? Can one be a Catholic and practice abortion? Divorce? In other words, are "lapsed" Catholics counted as Catholics for population surveys? Ethnically, is Chinese heritage enough to give one an identity as a Chinese American, or must one identify as such and behave in some stereotypically "Chinese" way to maintain that identity? Have not ethnic and religious identities become voluntary choices for most Americans who are not new immigrants to the United States? (See also Waters 1990 and Alba 1990).

Choice in a Multicultural Context

Jewish patterns suggest how we might better understand the complexities and nuances associated with both ethnic and religious identity among other contemporary American ethnic/religious communities. One of the first challenges to traditional notions of ethnicity, and consequently to identity studies, was Glazer and Moynihan's (1963) contention that one can consciously choose one's identity, depending on the situational context. Jews, like the Irish and the Italians, may be considered white ethnics today, but were considered something other than "white" in the past (Brodkin 1998). Similarly, many contemporary Asian Americans are treated as "honorary whites" (Tuan 1998). In contrast, are other communities of color treated similarly? That is, as Waters (1990:17) points out, even if blacks have many non-blacks in their heritage, do they have the same options as white ethnics to take on non-black ethnic patterns? What happens when people of "color" convert or become part of a "white" ethnic/religious group? For instance, consider the ethnicity of a growing population of Asian-American Jews in the United States. Such Jews include mixed-race individuals born to Asian and non-Asian-Jewish parents, Asians who were adopted by non-Asian Jewish parents, and Asian converts to Judaism. In addition, there are a growing number of Asian-American Jews who are born to Asian-American Jewish parents.

Nadia Kim (2003:198) writes that: "America's white-black binary largely essentializes Americans as whites and renders blacks the subordinate (approximate) Americans." In her work on Korean Americans, Kim points out that as neither a white or black group, Koreans believe that they are "denied a claim to an 'American' identity. In part a defensive response to this exclusion, [their] attachment to their ethno national identity gets reinforced" (2003:198). What place does ethnicity hold in their identities and, if so, what is the content of such ethnicity? Are Koreans, then, "religiously" white and "ethnically" people of color? How might this differ, for instance, from other white ethnics?

Current research among other ethnic/racial groups shows that ethnic identity varies over time and geographic location. For instance, Kim (2003) departs from a complete acceptance of the "ethnic attachment" thesis—a model that points to shared origins, culture, and history as the basis of ethnic identification (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Gordon 1964; Greeley 1972) — when she writes:

> while "adhesive" socio-cultural adaptation – i.e., the grafting of American cultural norms onto traditional Korean ones "without replacing or modifying any significant part of the old"— is in many ways supported by my informants, this thesis is less applicable along gender lines. That is to say, while Korean women maintain cultural pride in certain aspects of Korean culture – an important reinforcement of their Koreanness – they are also imagining and seeking a transformation of the "old" system of Korean patriarchy. And they critique this system by subordinating it to the more "advanced" American model of the married household (298-299).

As we have noted earlier, Jews use their communities for both religious and social support. This is true for other communities as well. For immigrants and African-Americans, for instance, church affiliation has been a source, not only of religious sustenance, but of ethnic/racial belonging as well, serving to bring like-minded people together to provide a source of community and social networking (see, for example, Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Gilkes 1980, 2001).

Components of Jewish Identity: Symbolic or Real? Assimilated or Pluralistic?

The study of Jewish ethnic and religious identity poses theoretical and methodological questions for the study of acculturation, most particularly some of the arguments between assimilationists (such as, Park and Burgess 1925; Gordon 1964; Wirth 1928) and pluralists (such as, Agocs 1981; Cohen 1977; Greeley 1971, 1972; Novak 1973). For instance, consider Jewish patterns of ethnic and religious identification in comparison to other "white" ethnics: Are their experiences, from immigrants to fourth and fifth generation Jews, parallel to those of other immigrant groups, either white or non-white? Have Jews, like other immigrant groups, reached a position of what Stein and Hill (1977) refer to as "dime store ethnicity"? That is, like other white ethnics, have Jews reached a situation where they can pick and choose an ethnicity dependent on their life-cycle stage and geopolitical situation (Waters 1990)? How conscious are such choices? If ethnicity is a matter of individual appropriation, is there something called collective Jewish identity? And finally, what is ethnicity to people when it is an option, not an ascribed characteristic? (Bershtel and Graubard 1992).

Alba (this volume) argues that Jews make clear the broader pattern of white ethnic assimilation. Their pattern, he argues, is one of "boundary blurring", a pattern, which results in what he calls the "two-sided" effect of assimilation. In this sense the majority culture is affected as much as the minority one by inculcating many of the values and behaviors of its minority constituents into mainstream culture. Perhaps then, he suggests, assimilation moves beyond a hyphenated

identity to a hybrid identity. Such an identity allows the individual to be simultaneously a loyal member of her/his ethnic group as well as an "assimilated" American (see Kim's earlier description and Kaufman 2005). But for Alba the most critical dimension of looking at the incorporation of American Jews into mainstream society, at this moment in history, is that it can "yield clues about how religious pluralism can be attained for other excluded groups, most notably perhaps, the Muslims of western Europe" (this volume).

From the sociological perspective, several structural mechanisms help to maintain ethnicity: residential segregation, ethnic economic enclaves, and social networks, which include common religious affiliations (Alba and Nee 2003; Goldscheider 1984a). As such structural mechanisms decline, it is assumed that ethnicity will disappear or that it will take on a mostly "symbolic" form. Early on, Glazer and Moynihan (1963) wrote of the complications such a thesis poses. They contend that "Americans become more American and less ethnic all the time. But in the course of participating in this process, they may also simultaneously become more ethnic" (Glazer and Moynihan 1963:16).

Waters (1990) offers an important insight into Glazer and Moynihan's seeming conundrum. She notes that ethnicity fulfills the need among many Americans to be simultaneously a symbol of community and a symbol of one's individuality. For Waters, "having a symbolic ethnicity combines individuality with feelings of both community and conformity." (151) In this way, Waters argues, one has ethnicity and community "without cost" to one's individuality. (155) One may differentiate oneself from the broader American mainstream as an individual, while simultaneously affiliating with the collectivity of a smaller, more differentiated group of fellow ethnics. Therefore, even when ethnicity is not imposed from an external source, it may be adopted and maintained by members of the group by choice.[4]

Breslauer (2001) acknowledges that "the choice of one act to refer to Jewishness rather than another arises from the subjective experience of the actor" but it is, he recognizes, also "drawn from a community of symbols and possibilities." (13) He suggests that the "Jewishness of an act may reside in associating it with a story, with a text, [and] with a fragment from the tradition" (9). Ethnographic and qualitative studies tend to support this selective process in the making of Jewish identity and to expand upon the many idiosyncratic expressions of ethnicity we are currently witnessing among contemporary Jews (see especially Cohen 2002; Davidman 2003; Horowitz 2000). Traditional holidays such as

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[4] As discussed in Hartman & Hartman (2000), the once-religious act of converting to Judaism seems to be conceived more and more generally in a broader sense as a way of becoming a member of the ethnic Jewish community, conversion adopted as a mechanism that allows the ethnicity to be "altered," to get around the particularistic given, to accept someone who voluntarily chooses to become part of the "tribe," even if that acceptance is laden with obstacles. But since conversion cannot physically change ethnic origin, some may feel that it cannot "really" make one a Jew in the full sense; hence the colloquial platitudes of "once a goy [non-Jew], always a goy" or "Jews are born, not made."

Chanukah and Passover may be celebrated in untraditional and even non-religious ways. Moreover, "Jewishness" may not only reside in its association with a story, song or text from within the tradition, as Breslauer suggests, but it may even go beyond the tradition to forge that identity.

For instance, a young man in Kaufman's study (1998) of post-Holocaust Jewish identity relates the following narrative about his Sabbath observance. He reports that while he and his friends may or may not have dinner together on Friday nights, may or may not light the Sabbath candles, may or may not have challah (traditional Sabbath bread) available and may or may not make the traditional blessings over the wine, they always bring their musical instruments and sing. They always, he notes, end the evening by singing "Amazing Grace." For this respondent, the celebration of the Sabbath may or may not include many of the traditional prayers and behaviors associated with it, but it always includes a Protestant hymn, written by a slaveholder in retribution for his part in slavery. "When I hear Amazing Grace," says this young man, "I think Shabbos (the Sabbath)!" (Kaufman 1998:49). [5]

One ongoing debate in the identity literature is whether contemporary ritual or ethnic expressions are qualitatively different from similar expressions of earlier generations (see also Prell 2000a). Put another way, are such expressions more "symbolic" in meaning (using Gans' term) than those of earlier generations? Herbert Gans' 1979 article about symbolic ethnicity among Jews heralded decades of debate about the meaning and measure of symbolic ethnicity (and later symbolic religiosity). For Gans, the collectivity with which the individual identifies does not have to represent an interacting group. It can be "mythic or real, contemporary or historical." (1979: 8) Jews, he argues:

> can express their identity as synagogue members, or as participants in a consciousness-raising group consisting mostly of Jewish women...they can also identify with the Jewish people as a long-suffering collectivity which has been credited with inventing monotheism. If they are non-religious, they can identify with Jewish liberal or socialist political cultures, or with a population which has produced many prominent intellectuals and artists in the last 100 years (1979:8).

Thus, not only can Jews choose the collectivity with which they identify, but that collectivity, while carrying the common symbol "Jew", may have a different meaning and expression among individuals and from one generation to the next. Gans insists that 'symbolic ethnicity' is "...a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (Gans 1979:9). Fifteen years after introducing his concept of "symbolic ethnicity", Gans (1994) developed a parallel concept called "symbolic religiosity". For him sym-

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[5] See also Davidman's work (2003) for an exploration of the many intriguing and inventive ways in which contemporary American Jews choose to portray themselves. However, it may be the work on crypto Jews which presents the most challenges to our understanding of the interplay between ethnicity, religion and identity, see especially, Jacobs (2002) and Ross (2000).

bolic religiosity is the "consumption of religious symbols, apart from regular participation in a religious culture and in religious affiliations—other than for purely secular purposes" (1994:585). Some critics have referred to symbolic ethnicity and religiosity as "stand ins" for the substantive process and practices associated with ethnicity or religion. The debate among scholars about what constitutes "substantive" or "authentic" (as opposed to "symbolic") ethnic and religious processes and practices raises a central issue common to all identity scholars (Kaufman 2005). Such debates are contingent upon the theoretical approach taken to the study of identity (as an example, see Alba's comments on boundary blurring above). A fluid, non-linear approach to the study of ethnic and religious identity asks: whose experiences constitute shared culture and whose authority authenticates a tradition (Kaufman 2003; see also Heschel 1983).

In Jewish studies, the celebration of the holiday Chanukah is often used as an example of symbolic religiosity. According to Gans, Chanukah represents symbolic religiosity "...if it is introduced into the home by otherwise non-observant parents to strengthen their children's interest in a Jewish identity once a year; not if it is celebrated *regularly as one among many religious holidays of the year*" (italics ours, 1994:585). Unless he means quite literally by non-observant that the only Jewish holiday celebrated is Chanukah and only for the children, Gans' example presents several problems. In his formulation, the numbers of observances over the year condition a priori whether religiosity is symbolic or not. That is, the greater the number of observances over the year, the "less symbolic" the celebration of any one holiday. What is missing, of course, is the notion that the motive for regular observance of other holidays, including the celebration of Chanukah, may be the same as for those who are observant some of the time, all of the time and even inconsistently. Religious observance of Christmas among Christians brings up similar issues of meaning. If one only goes to church on Christmas and Easter is one less religious than those who are regular churchgoers? In a dynamic model of identity construction, one discovers multiple motives for religious and ritual behavior (see our earlier discussion of Mayer and intentionality).

Gans' interpretations present a variety of theoretical dilemmas in assessing symbolic religiosity and ethnicity. He confesses that, "...in Judaism, as in some other religions, religiosity may be expressed in forms other than regular observance of the religious rules and rituals" (1994:586). But we have no way of distinguishing those rituals from symbolic religiosity in his model. Despite his protests to the contrary, Gans depends on distance from "traditional" observance and practices to measure expressions of religiosity. Ultimately, symbolic religiosity is defined as a behavior pattern (rather than a meaning system) that does not involve "regular participation in a religious culture and in religious affiliations." (1994: 591) [6]

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[6] While the distinctions are hard to decipher in Gans' models, Greeley (1972) reminds us that such distinctions are necessary if we are to understand the differences between the "meaning" and "belonging" functions of religion.

Gans assumes a priori which behaviors qualify as symbolic religiosity and which as symbolic ethnicity. He writes: "As a sacred rather than secular activity, symbolic religiosity is presumably not as often a leisure-time activity as symbolic ethnicity, but none the less, it involves the consumption of religious symbols in such a way as to create no complications or barriers for dominant secular lifestyles" (1994:585). What "way" creates no complications or barriers? Gans assumes, as do many of the researchers in the field, that fewer observances and fewer rituals can only mean "fewer complications and barriers" to a secular lifestyle. In Judaism, for instance, denominational differences are often charac-terized only as responses to modernity (creating fewer complications for assimila-tion and acculturation) rather than alternative platforms for belief and theology (see Kaufman 2005). In an insightful coverage of the theological responses to the American experience, Susannah Heschel (2003) reminds us that the challenges presented by assimilation and acculturation do not simply result in "accommo-dation", but in theological reinvigoration and re-creation as well.

Symbolic ethnicity and religion have been related to specific assumptions about the assimilation process. Some theoretical formulations understand sym-bolic ethnicity and symbolic religiosity as accommodations to existing condi-tions, where assimilation is seen as inevitable and eventually complete, even if it takes a bit of a circuitous (Dashefsky et. al. 2003) and sometimes bumpy (Gans 1979) course. However, some scholars within the Jewish community have come to challenge not only straight-line theories of assimilation but the concept itself (Silberstein 2000).

While Gans admits that ethnicity is "constructed" and/or "invented" anew with each generation, he still believes that assimilation and acculturation erode the ethnic "repertoire" on which to draw behavior (see, however, Phillips and Fishman and Mott and Hurst, in this issue, who suggest that the ethnic "reper-toire" expands for various uses in contemporary American society). Gans suggests that although "micro invention" goes on all the time, most people "are incapable of 'macro-invention': *unlikely either to invent deliberately whole new ethnic patterns or to reconstruct old ones which they have never experienced personally*" (1994: 580, italics ours). This however misses the postmodern point. New ethnic patterns are not any more "whole" than old ones. We contend that as ethnic/racial/religious communities become economically and socially stronger than proceeding gener-ations, they also gain autonomy in narrating and re-imagining (and selectively remembering) their own cultural/ethnic/religious histories (see also Fischer 1986; Kaufman 2005). As Glazer and Moynihan predicted (and as we reported earlier), the course of assimilation may not run smoothly nor linearly. Indeed, assimilation into a multicultural society may produce more ethnic identification rather than less, as exemplified by the pride of many blacks in the slogan that Black is beau-tiful or in the eating of only kosher or hallel meat by Jews and Muslims. Waters (1990), as noted earlier, suggests that for many Americans, ethnicity serves both as a symbol of community or collective identity and as a symbol of one's individ-

uality. Indeed, Fischer (1986) argues that contemporary ethnic re-creations are stimulated by "the fear not merely of being leveled into identical industrial hominids, but of losing an ethical (celestial) vision that might serve to renew the self and ethnic group as well as contribute to a richer, powerfully dynamic pluralist society" (1986:197). Ethnicity, in this sense, is a re-invention and discovery "of a vision, both ethical and future-oriented" (Fischer 1986:197).

Mainstream culture is dynamic and fluid, reflecting a burgeoning multiplicity of cultural connections and customs. Measures of acculturation and assimilation reflect many of the same concerns raised by the study of ethnic and religious identity. For instance, rather than naming it as either straight line or bumpy, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin offer a dialectical analysis of the process of assimilation. For the Boyarins this kind of assimilation allows for the possibility of recognizing a synthesis that permits "for a stubborn hanging-on to ethnic, cultural specificity, but in a context of deeply felt and enacted human solidarity" (1993:720). Postmodern in their inclination, they write: "Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tension with one another" (1993:721). It is this kind of dialectical tension we see as bridging Jewish studies to other religious/ethnic/racial communities. Without this tension, the development of such concepts as "secularization," "implicit religion," or "invisible religion" (Christiano et. al. 2002) would never have become part of contemporary and mainstream sociology of religion.

Components of Jewish Identity Challenged by Gender and Life Cycle Considerations

If "symbolic religiosity" is practiced, as Gans suggests, "apart from regular participation in a religious culture or in religious organizations" (1994:585), then rituals practiced at home in an idiosyncratic manner fall into a religious "no man's land". Indeed, this may be a most apt interpretation, since home rituals traditionally have been the space where women express their religiosity, especially within Judaism. Kaufman (2005) argues that departures from traditional models based on male experiences and practices result, for both men and women, in what is characterized as a "symbolic" rather than "substantive" religious act.

The host of research/scholarship on gender and Judaism has seen a virtual explosion over the past twenty-five years. That men are the primary carriers and interpreters of tradition has been challenged in such works as *Fighting to be Americans* (Prell 2000b) and *Hidden Heritage* (Jacobs 2002). The general expectation that women conceive of their religiosity in interpersonal terms, while men in more formal religious ritual has been challenged by both quantitative and qualitative work (for example, Hartman and Hartman 1996; Sered 1992). Moreover, to compare men and women, in general, is deceptive. Life cycle stage and circumstance, age, marital status, number of children in the home, employment status and occupation have different interactions with religious or ethnic practices for men and women. For instance, Hartman and Hartman write that:

> Given the difference in the traditional obligations for men and women to perform certain *mitzvoth* [religious commandments], even the most observant women may be less active in Jewish activities when their domestic roles are more demanding...Further, more men may find communal participation advantageous in terms of making connections that would be useful in their careers. At older ages, more women than men are left on their own and may find communal religious activities a meaningful way to spend their time and make connections to other people (1996:212).

Certainly, these interactions of gender, life-cycle stage, and age with religious and ethnic identity are not unique to American Jews. Kim (2003) reports, as noted earlier, that gender interacts with immigrant status in the formation and maintenance of Korean identity. Ethnographic work has helped expand our understanding of the complex and multiple ways in which gender helps to create and maintain our understanding of ourselves as Jews. Prell (2000b) has given us evidence in the ways in which immigrant women were as likely as immigrant men to interpret and pass "Judaism" on to the next generation. Jacobs' (2002) perceptive thesis on the legacy of Crypto-Jews is that women are crucial for cultural, and consequently, we would add, religious survival. She writes that her findings resonate "with the experience of other colonized and oppressed groups whose cultural survival relied on the creativity and persistence of women" (2002: 17).[7]

Constancy of Identity Across Cultural Contexts

The interplay of religious and ethnic definitions of the Jewish collectivity means that Judaism cannot be understood independent of the secular context in which it is located. This perhaps becomes most evident when comparisons between American and Israeli Jewish identity are made (Auerbach 2001; Gavison 2003; Hartman & Hartman 1996; 2000; Rosenthal 2003; and Rebhun and Levy update this comparison in this volume). In their landmark book comparing American and Israeli Jews, Liebman and Cohen (1990) emphasize how secular context and religious identity interact differently for Israelis and Americans. For instance, American Jewish identity is strongly influenced by American liberalism and American "civil religion" in a way that distinguishes it from the Israeli Jewish context. Liebman and Cohen (1990:171-3) suggest:

> that American Jews have reconstructed the tradition of Judaism through the prisms of personalism, voluntarism, universalism, and moralism – all value orientations compatible with the wider values of the American civil society. Personalism reflects the wider society's emphasis on individualism, which marks a radical difference from Israeli society's emphasis on collectivism...Voluntarism reflects the lack of formal institutionalization characteristic of a subgroup within a society that provides wider institutions for all of its societal needs. Universalism reflects the American ethos of equality for all and an emphasis on Western liberal and humanistic orientations. Moralism enables the Jew to follow

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[7] Since this is not a review of the literature, it should be noted that these are but two cases of the many excellent pieces of work in the field and certainly do not cover the work on gender and Judaism either within or outside of the social sciences.

Jewish practices as an ethical rather than a particularistic or exclusive system, which would create tensions with the wider American society.[8]

As do American Jews, we ask if other religions within the United States show similar variations from their global counterparts. Are the personalism, voluntarism, universalism and moralism, discussed by Liebman and Cohen (1990), specific to the American context, or even characteristic of most Western democracies?

The religious pluralism of the American context has fostered the development of distinctive Jewish denominations within the United States. They are defined by divergent religious as well as divergent ethnic orientations (Hartman & Hartman 2002; see also Klaff's article in this issue). Woocher (1986) suggests that American Jews have developed their own "civil religion", which emphasizes ethnic (or secularist) concerns, such as a focus on the well being and survival of Israel. Unlike the role of "homelands" for various ethnic groups, Israel serves as a center even for Jews who cannot trace any ancestors who lived there and/or who have never set foot on its land. Even globally, Jewish communities outside of Israel are referred to as "diasporas," and their collective activities often focus on Israel, which can serve as a basis of solidarity among those with disparate beliefs and practices (Ben-Rafael et.al. 2003). However, as Auerbach (2001) points out, the role of Israel for American Jews is an ambivalent one. It fluctuates with changing political events and varies among the American Jewish denominations (Hartman & Hartman 2000). It is perhaps the dialectic of that focus on Israel which best distinguishes the American Jewish community rather than a unity of belief or attachment by its adherents (reminiscent of the Boyarins' dialectics of assimilation discussed above).

The importance of the secular context for understanding the development of ethnic and religious identity is of course not unique to Jews. As Eisenstadt (1982) suggests, religions in complex, axial-age civilizations, such as our own, are best characterized by their inherent dialectics rather than their static characteristics. In *Crossing the Gods* (2001), Demerath presents the variations in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism across multiple political-cultural scenarios, putting the U.S. in comparative global context by showing that its particular constellation of political-demographic, socio-cultural context is but one of many unique constellations influencing the religious life within its borders. Indeed, as Demerath (2001) suggests, no religion can be fully understood apart from its global context. Such awareness has led anthropologists and social scientists of religion to recognize the importance of developing the concept of secularism to understand variations among religions (Asad 2003; Casanova 2003).

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[8] In his book, *Elvis in Jerusalem*, Segev (2003) challenges these distinctions between Israel and the United States, claiming that the United States has greatly affected Israeli identity resulting in a much more individualized approach to identity within Israel. Moreover, many would suggest that macro narratives no longer hold in assessing cultural symbols, or at the very least, such symbols may vary in dialectical ways. See for instance the work of Aviv and Shneer (2005) and Sheffer (2003b) on the many variations on the meaning of Diaspora and Levy and Sznaider (forthcoming) on the global and local uses of the Holocaust.

Diaspora communities are surrounded with a mix of secularism and religiosity (often not of their own religion) which influences their variation. For example, a Jewish diaspora in a Moslem theocracy may have more in common with the Armenian or Coptic minorities in similar settings than a Jewish diaspora in a modern Western and predominately Christian setting. Moreover, a Jewish Diaspora in a modern Western setting might have more in common with Buddhists in a Western setting than with Jewish counterparts elsewhere. Sheffer (2003b) believes that studying the patterns found among Jewish diasporas provides insights for the wider study of contemporary diasporas. Analyzing the axes of variation of diaspora communities, he shows that patterns of accommodation and assimilation vary according to the following: whether the diaspora is formed as a result of forced vs. voluntary migration; whether the diaspora community sees itself as permanent or temporary; whether they have an advantaged or disadvantaged status; how organized they are and how active toward their real or created homelands they are; and, finally, whether this homeland accepts their focus of attention, energy and resources (Sheffer 2003b).

As immigrants and communities marked as "other" gain social and economic status, the dynamic interplay between mainstream culture and the ethnic/racial subcultures they represent become more visible. And, like Jews, immigrant communities, such as Hispanic, Vietnamese, Korean, Indian Hindus, Greeks and Zoroastrians, to name a few, are bound by identification with "a common past" and diasporic and/or "non-American" culture (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Kurien 1998; Zhou and Bankston 1998). Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) suggest that ethnic identity and community are reinforced in many of these communities by religious practice and vice versa.[9]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study of Jewish identity raises many issues that are important for the broader study of religious and ethnic identity. Perhaps most fundamental is the insight into how religious, ethnic, racial and secular identities are intertwined, both for individuals and collectivities. Jewish identity has often been construed as unique because of its blend of ethnic and religious identity. However, concepts like"religious ethnicity" and the "ethnicity of religion" suggest that this is not a concern unique to the study of Jews. Attention to the ethnic function of religion for immigrants in a host country, attention to ethnic differences within religions, and attention to "civil" religion, that is, the sacred aspects of secularism, all reinforce the necessity to broaden the contexts within which religious and ethnic identity are conceptualized.

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[9] Aviv and Shneer (2005), Tye (2001) and Roman (2003) offer a complex view of the "diasporic" experience.

Comparative studies of Jewish identity result in insights about the ways in which American Jewish identity differs from Jewish identity in other contexts (e.g. differences between Israelis, Russians, and/or Latin- Americans and the United States). Highly touted American cultural values such as personalism, voluntarism, universalism, and moralism are evident in the construction of Jewish identity among American Jews but they are not necessarily evident among Jews outside of the United States. Trying to categorize Jewish identity as religious *or* ethnic, assimilationist *or* distinctive, communal *or* privatized, poses theoretical and measurement problems. Indeed, Jewish identity seems best captured by the dialectics of these components. Such dialectics call for a fluid and dynamic model of identity, one capable of recognizing the different "journeys" over the life course and different socio-economic settings for its many expressions.

Examining the role of symbolic religiosity and ethnicity in Jewish identity has raised several issues. How do we determine what is symbolic and what is "authentic?" If American Jews include in their construction of identity some attachment to Israel, even if they have never been there and have no personal contact with it, is their attachment "symbolic?" Should we say "only" symbolic? In this postmodern age of virtual and imagined community, should not most identities be understood as "symbolic?" (see Kaufman 2005 for elaboration on this point). Is symbolism the same for all ethnic/religious groups? How should we understand the distinction between symbolic or "felt" identity and actual behavioral manifestations of identity? Should "felt" identity be understood primarily as "personal" or "privatized" identity, as opposed to communal or public expressions of identity? Do private and public expressions of identity suggest different meanings and/or priorities for individuals? Do external (or public) manifestations of identity reflect similar motives for all who engage in such behavior?

It has been our intention to bring to light some of the issues raised in Jewish identity research. All, we argue, have wide-ranging implications for contemporary identity research, be it ethnic or religious. We hope that the issues and questions we raise will be the bridge to a more complex reflection of identity in a feminist, post-modern, global context.

Note: For References, refer to the Bibliography at the end of this issue.