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JEWISH WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THEIR
ASHKENAZI SECULAR IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

By

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ABSTRACT

JEWISH WOMEN IN THE UNITES STATES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THEIR ASHKENAZI SECULAR IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

By

Freda Ruth Ginsberg

This study examined the unique nature of Jewish women's identity and their experiences of anti-Semitism. Twelve Jewish women were recruited for participation in the study from a Mid-Western city in the United States based on their self-identifying as Ashkenazi, secular, and over thirty years of age. The study utilized a Jewish feminist epistemology to inform its qualitative integrative methodology. (Sinacore, in progress) Mechanisms were put in place to address the researcher's reflexive stance and subjective frame, thus, creating the researcher's data. The participant data were gathered using a structured interview format (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Both the participants' and researcher's data were analyzed for recursive themes and sub-themes (Dey, 1993). The primary findings of this study were that Jewish women's identity was complex and multi-faceted. Jewish women's identity was informed by multiple sources and was fundamental to how they understood themselves and the world. Jewish women played a unique role in the Jewish culture and religion, and experienced gender bias and sexism in traditional Judaism. Jewish women were directly affected by both covert and overt anti-Semitism, and made decisions about how to behave based on these experiences. Jewish women were directly affected by the events of the Holocaust and construct their Jewish identity, in part, based on these events.

To the loving memory of my father, and the strength, compassion, and endurance of my mother.

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Without my partner, Ada Sinacore, I would have never finished this dissertation. Ada insisted that I study a topic that has always been my first love, Judaism. Ada's encouragement allowed me to reflect deeply on my Jewish identity and to benefit immeasurably from this study. As a scholar herself, Ada brilliantly taught me how to be a researcher, an incredible feat, given that I have always been a harsh critic of science. Ada spent countless hours discussing my dissertation with me, and saw me through many days when I did not want to finish.

Similarly, without our daughters' neverending encouragement and good humor, I would not have finished my dissertation sanely. Luisa and Sarah were always around to cheer me on and to remind me how important it is to do well in school. There were many

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

<u>Judaica</u>

The literature on Judaism, referred to as Judaica, is substantial and has longstanding

historical roots. This literature is comprised of a multitude of written works covering the

history and culture of the Jewish people. Judaica also contains the central Jewish religious

texts including the: *Torah** (first five books of the Old Testament) and *Talmud*

(interpretation of the *Torah)* which contains the *Mishna* (Jewish law), *Gemara* (commentary

on the *Mishna*), and *Aggadah* (non-legal rabbinical material). Albeit comprehensive, this

literature is not without its limitations. A defining feature of Judaica is that it is

predominantly written by men, and as such, almost exclusively records their intellectual

ideas and achievements (Baskin, 1991; Biale, 1995). Judith Plaskow (1990) explained that

in any given period, Jewish history, religion, and culture are the creation of a small,

educated male elite, and it is upon the works of this group that the entire Jewish religion and

culture are based. Similarly, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb (1995) noted that the lack of women's

voices in Jewish texts and in constructing Jewish life has been extraordinary: "Our names

have been unrecorded, glossed over, or suppressed. Our contributions have been devalued or

forgotten" (p. 4). Since Judaica is male-authored and male-defined, it solely reflects a man's

perspective on Judaism and fails to acknowledge the presence of Jewish women's realities.

As such, Judaica ostensibly purports that Jewish life, past and present, is not gender-based

(Cantor, 1995), when in fact it is clearly gender-defined.

Note: All italicized Hebrew, Yiddish, and non-English terms are defined in the glossary (See Appendix A).

Feminist Judaica

In response to the historical patriarchal position in Judaica, a noteworthy feminist critique and reinterpretation have recently emerged (see Adler, 1998; Cantor, 1995; Davidman & Tannenbaum, 1994; Heschel, 1983; Peskowitz & Levitt, 1997; Plaskow, 1990). Jewish women have begun to create a body of literature that explores what it means to be Jewish from a woman's perspective both historically and currently.

Woman-authored Judaica sheds new light upon the myriad ways that Jewish women understand themselves and reconsiders women's traditional role in Jewish religion and culture. Since historically Jewish men have been the arbiters and historians of Jewish life (thus defining Jewish women's realities for them), this woman-authored literature marks an important departure from this patriarchal trend.

Expanding Feminist Judaica

Woman authored Judaica is a recent development. As a result, there are many areas in it that still need to be defined. One discipline where this literature has only recently begun to develop is psychology. Rachel Josefowitz Segal and Ellen Cole (1991), editors of the first book of its kind, *Jewish women in therapy: Seen but not heard,* argue that psychology fails to acknowledge the influence that Judaism has on the lives of Jewish women clients and therapists. Kayla Weiner and Arinna Moon (1995), editors of the second and only other book of this kind, *Jewish women speak out: Expanding the boundaries of psychology,* likewise contend that psychology has only just begun to address Jewish women's issues and special concerns. Clearly there is a call for a better understanding of Jewish women in psychology.

Given this call, why is it that so little has been written in psychology on this topic, especially by Jewish women psychologists? Evelyn Torton Beck (1995) offered three possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, she believed that despite the disproportionate and highly visible number of Jews in psychology who are theorists, researchers, and practitioners, many are not strongly identified as Jews in their professional circles, nor do they address Jewish issues in their work. When Jewish psychologists do address Jewish issues in their work, they often focus on the psychological effects of the Holocaust. According to Torton Beck, it may be easier for Jewish psychologists to focus on Jewish issues from the past, rather than focus on the more threatening issues Jews face in the present, such as the existence of anti-Semitism in North America. A second explanation for this phenomenon is that many Jews, "walk around with a subliminal fear of anti-Semitism, the way women walk around with a subliminal fear of rape" (Torton Beck, 1995, p. 19). Thus, to be visible professionally as a Jew, a psychologist must be able to combat this subliminal fear. Moreover, Jewish women psychologists must be able to combat the fears of being both visible as a woman and a Jew if they are to address Jewish women's issues in their work. As such, many Jewish women psychologists may choose to remain invisible as a means to protect themselves from sexism and anti-Semitism. Finally, Torton Beck contended that the dominant discourse in multicultural psychology renders Jewish women's issues invisible in that it only identifies minority status and oppression by one's membership in one of four arbitrary racial groups (e.g. African American, Caucasian, Asian American, and Latino). Since most Jewish women do not belong to one of these four groups, and are considered White by this definition, the impression is given that their concerns do not matter. As a result, the multicultural discourse in psychology may result in Jewish women

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feeling excluded from discussions about oppression, as if Jewish concerns are unimportant, or not as critical as those of racial minorities.

Therefore, to answer the "call" for a better understanding of Jewish women's psychological concerns and to address the problem of Jewish women's invisibility in multicultural psychology, I believe it is imperative to support the emergence of Jewish women's issues in the literature and scholarship in psychology. To this end, I would like to outline the following study that has been conducted. This outline will provide the reader with (a) a review of the current literature on Jewish women written by Jewish women, (b) an epistemology, methodology, data analysis, and results of this study, and (c) a discussion of the implications this research holds for the field of psychology.

<u>Organization of the Literature Review</u>

The literature review is divided into five sections: (a) the standpoint by which the literature was reviewed, (b) the location of the literature, (c) the type of literature reviewed, (d) the literature review categorized according to its central themes, and (e) a summary of the literature.

<u>Researcher's Standpoint</u>

In reviewing this literature, a Jewish feminist standpoint was assumed. The rationale for assuming this standpoint is based on the Jewish feminist standpoint offered in the literature reviewed, as well as, my identity as a Jew and a feminist. In addition, this standpoint can be derived from Jewish women's oral tradition. Oral tradition can be described as follows. Stories are the vehicles through which Jewish culture and religion have been transmitted and maintained through the ages (Frankel, 1996). This oral tradition is particularly salient given that Jews have had to survive centuries of exile and persecution

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(Baumel Joseph, 1998). Honoring this Jewish oral tradition and adhering to the imperative *zakhor*, meaning to remember the stories that tell of Jewish struggle and survival throughout history, has kept the Jewish people unified and strong (Silberstein Swartz, & Wolfe, 1998). Yet, the Jewish oral tradition and its companion written tradition (*Mishnah)* have been fundamentally devoid of women's voices and stories. It is only very recently that women's oral and written traditions have been introduced into the longstanding discourse on Jewish life (Bach, 1999). Chava Weissler (1998) noted that historically, Jewish women were rarely allowed formal education. Thus, there is almost no formal Jewish women's legacy or spiritual heritage to be passed along. Naomi Shepherd (1993) likewise pointed out that, "What is notably absent is Jewish women's testimony about themselves" (p. 22).

In my experience as a Jewish American/Israeli woman, there is a lived reality resulting from the profound absence of women's voices in Jewish tradition and culture. This reality has left me with a struggle to find my place in Judaism, both in Israel and in the United States. Nonetheless, my commitment to my identity as a Jew has remained constant. Therefore, to reconcile my struggle with the patriarchal worldview embedded in Jewish religion and culture I have attempted to locate a place for myself in Jewish tradition by learning about Jewish culture from Jewish women. My experience is consistent with that described in the woman-authored literature on Jewish women. That is, I hold to the same core value of *tikkun olam*, also known as Jewish social action. My personal *tikkun olam* includes working to create a better world for all, as well as a commitment to creating a better place for Jewish women within Jewish culture. As such, one goal I hold for this research is to remain true to this value system.

Further, as a feminist, I am also committed to ending the exploitation and oppression of women. As such, I am primarily focused on confronting patriarchal structures and ways of being in the world and believe that is important with regard to Jewish women. As is argued by Jewish feminists, I, too, believe that Jewish women's voices must be re-introduced into the mainstream Jewish discourse that has been active for the past several thousand years (Frankel, 1996). Sarah Silberstein Swartz (1998) likewise maintained that it is the task of Jewish feminists to reinterpret Jewish legacy through a feminist lens so that we can, "reconcile our heritage with the authentic experience of our own lives" (p. 9). A Jewish feminist standpoint allows for Jewish women's voices to become vocal and heard in the ongoing discussion of Jewish identity and tradition. Thus, out of respect for my Jewish and feminist identities, the literature was reviewed through these lenses and as a result, incorporated both positions.

Location of the Literature

The vast majority of woman authored Judaica is produced and housed in the disciplines of Women's Studies and Jewish Studies. Upon review of the mainstream literature in psychology and multicultural psychology (i.e. Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990), almost no works are dedicated to Jews, let alone to Jewish women. Only one work is dedicated to the intersection of Jewish life and psychology. This one exception is McGoldrick, Giordano, & Pearce (1996), *Ethnicity & Family Therapy*. This book contains three chapters on Jewish families in North America, although within those three chapters only one half of a page is dedicated to Jewish women.

Further, when reviewing the literature in feminist multicultural psychology (i.e. Jordon 1997; Landrine, 1995), almost no works are dedicated to Jewish women's issues. In

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the Jewish feminist psychology literature there are currently two small edited books on the topic of Jewish women, one exploring issues related to Jewish women in psychotherapy (Josefowitz Siegel & Cole, 1991) and the other on Jewish women and psychology as a discipline (Weiner & Moon, 1995). There is also one article, which discusses anti-Semitic and sexist stereotypes of Jewish women (Josefowitz Siegel, 1986).

Types of Literature Reviewed

The literature reviewed can be discussed in terms of six genres: narrative, historical, religious, theoretical, literary, and feminist. The defining factor for choosing literature was not its genre, but the fact that it was written by Jewish women. In the literature that was reviewed, a variety of Jewish women's perspectives are represented. This literature offers both secular and religious perspectives, *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardi* ethnic worldviews, and Israeli and *Diaspora* women's standpoints (Adler, 1998; Gottlieb, 1995; Torton Beck, 1989). The central topics that this literature covers are: Jewish women's history (Baskin, 1991; Ofer & Weitzman, 1998), Jewish women's spirituality (Bronner & Nimrod, 1992; Weissler, 1998), women and Jewish Law (Biale, 1995), women in the *Torah* (Bach, 1999; Frankel, 1996), and modern Jewish women (Josefowitz Siegel & Cole, 1997; Schiffman, 1999). Clearly there are many important topics in this literature, which have been covered in great detail. The majority of these works however, have not utilized a psychological perspective.

Although newly developed, the Jewish feminist literature in psychology has begun to address topics relevant to Jewish women's lives. The main areas discussed therein are: (a) the psychological impact of being a Jewish woman in Christian North America, (b) the psychological impact of anti-Semitism, (c) Jewish women's visibility and invisibility as a

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minority group in North America, (d) Jewish women's identity as defined from within Jewish culture, and (e) Jewish women's issues in therapy (Josefowitz Segal, 1986; Josefowitz Segal & Cole, 1991; Weiner & Moon, 1995). These authors' works are all theoretical, experiential or clinical in their approach to these topics. In fact, in the past fifty years in psychology there have been no data based studies (as could be identified in this search) that address Jewish women's experience in North America. Further, the discussions about Jewish women's identity, anti-Semitism, and Jewish women's visibility are very broad and are largely informed by the individual perspective of each author. Although this literature has initiated the consideration of Jewish women's lives from a psychological perspective, there are still many areas that require further exploration. These areas will be discussed in further detail below.

In summary, in psychology there is clearly a paucity of literature addressing the issues of Jewish women. Moreover, there is a strong need for psychological studies of Jewish women designed to supplement the existing theoretical and experiential literature that already exists. To lay the groundwork for such a psychological study on Jewish women, the following section contains a review of the existing literature.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Central Themes in the Literature Review

A careful review of the existing literature on Jewish women can be organized into the following three over-arching themes: Jewish women's identity, Jewish women's worldview, ethics, and values, and Jewish women and anti-Semitism. Although these topics are covered in mainstream Judaica, for the purpose of representing Jewish women's voices, only women authored Judaica is presented here.

Jewish Women's Identity

The composition of Jewish women's identity is a central topic in the literature about Jewish women written by Jewish women authors. According to Jewish law, Jewish identity is bestowed upon a baby girl at birth (Adler, 1998). As such, if a baby girl is born unto a Jewish mother, she is naturally considered a member of the Jewish people (Shepherd, 1993). Judaism, thus, is matrilineal. Evelyn Torton Beck (1989) explained that "being born a Jew" (p. xviii) automatically initiates a girl into this ancient religious and cultural group.

Yet, Jewish women scholars agree that a Jewish woman's identity, or her Jewishness, is based on more than the practice of the Jewish religion. Jewish women consider themselves to be members of a Jewish people and not merely co-religionists (Smith, 1991). According to Melanie Kay/Kantrowitz (1991), Jewish women's identity is comprised of part peoplehood, part culture, part shared history, and part ethnic identity. Moreover, being Jewish is fundamental to a Jewish woman's internal sense of herself. Laura Brown (1991) explained that above all else, her primary awareness of herself is as a Jew. "It

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is my first identity, the core around which all else has been built and shaped" (p. 41). Rachel Josefowitz Siegel (1991) echoed Brown's sentiment, "And yet I know, as deeply as I know anything, that I am a Jewish woman" (p. xv).

There is no typical Jewish woman (Weber, 1997). In fact, Jewish women do not comprise a homogenous group; rather they are diverse and hail from all nationalities, races, and socioeconomic classes (Torton Beck, 1989). Jewish women also maintain affiliations with all political parties and as a group hold a great variety of beliefs. The diversity of Jewish women's opinions is reflected in the famous Jewish saying, "three Jews, four opinions" (Brown, 1991, p. 49). This saying supports the value placed in the Jewish culture on diversity of opinion and dialogue.

Jewish Women's Ethnicity

A distinction made in the literature is that all Jewish women are members of one of two ethnic groups: *Sephardi* or *Ashkenazi*. The Jewish woman who is *Sephardi*, (which literally means Spanish), is one whose descendants were Spanish expellees or those who lived in Southern Europe, the Balkans, and Turkey, and whose language was predominantly *Ladino* (Cantor, 1995). *Sephardi* Jews are also those from North Africa and other Arab countries, whose language is predominantly *Judeo-Arabic* (Cantor, 1995). The Jewish woman who is *Ashkenazi*, (which literally means German), is one whose descendants were from Central and Eastern Europe and whose language was predominantly *Yiddish* (Baskin, 1991).

The vast majority of American Jews are *Ashkenazi*, and the American *Sephardi* Jewish community is much smaller in proportion. In fact, *Sephardi* Jews in America are less than three percent of the entire American Jewish population (Baker, 1993). Moreover,

Sephardi American Jews and *Ashkenazi* American Jews have distinct cultural backgrounds, are frequently members of their own synagogues and communities, and adhere to different Jewish traditions (Baker, 1993). These fundamental differences that distinguish *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* Jews originate from the various cultural traditions of the various countries from which these Jews came.

Expressions of Judaism in Women's Lives

Although Jewish women can be discussed with regard to two ethnic heritages, *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi*, the literature also offers four main ways of being or living as a Jewish woman that vary in both these ethnic groups. These are the religious woman, the secular/assimilated woman, the Israeli/*Zionist*, and the lesbian. As such, these four ways of being are not exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive, nor do they entirely capture the complexity of Jewish women's lives, they do offer a springboard for understanding the variety of ways in which Jewish women can be understood in context.

The religious woman.

The religious Jewish woman symbolizes and upholds Jewish tradition. In North America, religious women predominantly live in insular Jewish communities and interact with the secular Jewish and non-Jewish world only out of necessity (Baker, 1993). *Halakhah* (Jewish law) defines the religious woman's status and conduct and prescribes a lifestyle wherein her community is to be valued above her individuality and wherein the nature of her worship, diet, economics, family life, appearance, and interaction with the non-Jewish world are determined by religious doctrine (Shepherd, 1993). An observant Jewish home is one in which *Halakha* is strictly followed and where men's and women's roles are gender based, usually relegating child rearing and household duties to women (Weiner,

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1991). Since a religious woman's primary obligation is to her family and household, there are clear distinctions between the religious expectations of men and women regarding obligations for worship and religious study (Biale, 1984). Jewish law does not obligate or condone women reading or studying *Torah* and Jewish law, nor will it count women among the ten participants necessary for a *minyan* (prayer quorum) (Baker, 1993). Thus, the religious woman is valued in her role as wife, mother and homemaker, and not for her abilities as a scholar or sage.

The secular woman.

In contrast to the religious woman, the secular Jew is one who does not rely on *Halakhah* and Jewish religious practice to inform her Jewish identity. In addition, the secular Jewish woman interacts freely with non-Jews and does not rely solely on the Jewish community for her daily survival (Baker, 1993). As a result, that which informs a secular women's Jewishness varies, and these women are described as assimilationists, tending to adapt to the cultures they live in. As such, Laura Levitt (1997) explained that to become acculturated and secular, a Jewish woman must give up the language and tradition of her parents and grandparents so she can fit in to the larger non-Jewish culture. Secularism, thus, can be described as a way for a woman to not stand out as Jewish, and thereby deter unwanted anti-Semitic sentiments (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1989). Irena Klepfisz (1989) theorized that by inheriting a legacy of anti-Semitism, secular Jewish women have concluded that their Jewishness is fundamentally dangerous and to be hidden rather than accentuated. The survival strategy of becoming secular is in direct opposition to the survival strategy employed by the religious woman who immerses herself in Jewish culture and religion to ensure her safety.

The Israeli, the Zionist.

The Israeli woman is a native born in the Jewish homeland of Israel. Israeli women have only recently begun to immigrate to North America and obtain American citizenship (Fogelman, 1996). Unlike other Jewish immigrants to America, most Israelis do not divorce themselves from the country they have left, and maintain their primary identification as Israeli citizens, settling in America largely for economic and personal reasons (Fogelman, 1996). Therefore, Israeli women's Jewishness is based in her national identity, regardless of whether she is religious or secular.

Israeli women are nicknamed the *Sabrit*, or in English the desert cactus, one who is tough and thorny on the outside, and sweet and tender hearted on the inside (Hazelton, 1995). Native-born Israeli women and those who have made *Aliyah* (immigrated to Israel), are typically *Zionists*, women who believe that the survival and safety of the Jewish people is dependent on the existence of the State of Israel (Horwitz, 1989). Israeli women are often portrayed in history and in the media in their roles as soldiers in the Israeli army, farmers on the *kibbutz* (socialistic agrarian society), or city dwellers in Israel's major metropolitan areas (Shepperd, 1993). Popular myth about the Israeli woman contends that she is an equal to her Israeli brother, as evidenced by her military service and role in turning Palestine, the desert and swampland, into the modern Jewish State of Israel (Plaskow, 1990). Despite popular belief about the Israeli woman's liberation, this equality is a myth rather than a fact (Hazelton, 1977). In reality, the Israeli woman is equally influenced by her ability to enjoy freedom of expression as a Jew in a Jewish state as she is by the sexism of Israeli culture and society.

<u>The lesbian</u>

Jewish lesbians are not valued in the Jewish religion and culture nor are they welcomed in the Jewish homeland of Israel (Alpert, 1997; Balka & Rose, 1989). Although Jewish law does not explicitly ban lesbianism, sexuality is only condoned within the confines of heterosexual marriage and thus, lesbianism is rendered problematic (Biale, 1984). Moreover, lesbian sexuality is not valued by traditional Judaism for it cannot fulfill the Biblical procreative commandment, "to be fruitful and multiply" (Lipstadt, 1998). As is the case for any Jewish woman who does not bear children, the childless lesbian is fundamentally devalued in Jewish culture. Therefore, given that heterosexuality is considered normative in Judaism, lesbians are viewed as deviants (Baker, 1993).

<u>Jewish Women's Worldview, Ethics, and Values</u>

Jewish women authors have described the common threads that are woven throughout Jewish women's worldview. Although these authors caution that Jewish women are not a homogenous group (Baker, 1993), most agree that there are common aspects of Jewish women's beliefs and life philosophies that nonetheless cut across their differences. Central to what is described by these authors is a fundamental adherence to a Jewish value system and code of ethics (Torton Beck, 1989). Paramount to this ethos is a commitment to *tikkun olam*, or working toward the establishment of social justice in the world. *Tikkun olam* is achieved by living a just and righteous life and by doing *mitzvot* (good deeds) (Biale, 1995; Brown, 1991). Jewish women commonly believe in the tenant of *tzedakah*, which literally means charity, but actually refers to "a whole notion of community, based on social action" (Segal, 1998, p. 278). Rachel Weber (1997) explained that in Judaism, the concept of *tikkun olam* allows Jewish women to understand that the world is fundamentally "flawed

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and in need of fixing" (p. 185). Similarly, Chaya Shoshana (1989) maintained that Jewish

women are obligated to "repair the world" (p. 93). Moreover, Hannah Lerman, (1997)

explained that the most basic underpinning of her devotion to social activism is her duty as a

Jew to help make the world a better place in which to live. This commitment to *tikkun olam*,

tzedakah, and doing *mitzvot*, essentially requires that Jewish women have a strong

appreciation for suffering and its alleviation in the world (Brown, 1991). Therefore, Jewish

women often have an ongoing and heightened awareness of the suffering of others and the

ways this suffering can be alleviated.

Jewish Women and Anti-Semitism

A discussion of Jewish women is incomplete without elaborating upon the impact

that anti-Semitism has on their identity (Gilman, Tregebov, & Kirsch, 1998). Given the

reality of anti-Semitism in North America, Jewish women must contend with prevalent anti-

Semitic stereotypes that claim to portray their true nature. Among others, the stereotype of a

woman who is too aggressive, pushy, bossy, tense, driven, difficult, and loud is the most

popular (Kay/Kantrowitz, 1991). According to Rachel Josefowitz Segal (1986), this

stereotypical image of the Jewish woman is merely "a sexist caricature of the limited

traditional role assigned to women, presented in an anti-Semitic package" (p. 249). For

example, the anti-Semitic caricature of the Jewish mother, derived from the image of the

religious Jew, portrays a woman who is overbearing, overprotective, and self-sacrificing, as

she constantly puts her husband's and children's needs above her own and commits her life

efforts to their success (Josefowitz Segal, 1986). Similarly, the anti-Semitic image of the

J.A.P, or the Jewish American Princess, portrays the over-assimilated Jewish woman, one

who has over accommodated capitalism and a Western appearance (Torton Beck, 1991).

The J.A.P., however, unlike the Jewish mother who is self-sacrificing for her family, is portrayed as selfish and exploitive (Josefowitz Segal, 1986). What is noteworthy about both these stereotypes, though, is that they mock Jewish survival strategies (i.e. religiosity or secularism) and the requisite personality qualities that ensure these strategies' success, thus allowing Jewish women to survive centuries of persecution. In fact, these survival strategies are only rendered problematic when viewed from an anti-Semitic perspective.

Therefore, Jewish women scholars largely agree that a woman's identity as a Jew is inextricably linked to her awareness of herself as a member of a persecuted minority group both currently and historically (Cantor, 1995). Greta Hofmann Nemiroff (1998) explained that a woman's Jewishness is solidly linked to a shared history of oppression in what she terms "the ever present possibility-of-pogrom"(p. 100). The pogroms to which Nemiroff refers are those that took place throughout Eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century where an organized massacre of the Jews took place. As a result, this awareness of a constant lack of safety is a central component of the Jewish woman's mindset (Weiner, 1991). Further, Rachel Weber (1997) explained that Jewish identity is at its very core founded on a long historical trend of being dominated and discriminated against. Likewise, Norma Baumel Joseph (1998) explained that to identify as a Jew, a woman must identify herself with thousands of years of historical pain and injustice. This notion of identifying with historical persecution and suffering is ritualized in the Woman's *Haggadah*, which is recited during the *Passover Seder*; "I have been in Egypt. I have been in the desert. I have learned our history" (E.M. Bronner, 1982, p. 216). In addition, Lisa Schiffman (1999) theorized that she and all modern Jewish women are "post-Holocaust Jews" (p. 85). That is, modern Jewish women have a direct association with the Holocaust and Jewish tragedy,

regardless of whether or not they actually lived through these tragedies. Therefore, for Jewish women, an awareness of an enduring anti-Semitic world is constant. One who said it well is Sarah Silberstein Swartz (1998), who explained that the memory of Jewish persecution throughout history and an understanding of the vastness of past suffering allow Jewish women to know what their place is in the world today.

Summary

In the past twenty years, as evidenced by this review, the literature on Jewish women, authored by Jewish women, has been growing. Arising as a response to the absence of women's perspectives in mainstream Judaica, the development of this literature began a tradition wherein Jewish women could define their lives for themselves, rather than having Jewish men defining their lives for them. In addition to centralizing Jewish women's voices, this literature is written in a variety of genres, represents a diversity of Jewish women's perspectives, and covers a variety of topics. Two overarching areas covered in this literature are the nature of Jewish women's identities and Jewish women and anti-Semitism.

In addition, a noteworthy fact about this woman authored Judaica is that the majority of it has been produced in the disciplines of Women's Studies and Jewish Studies and is theory not data based. To date, psychology has only begun to address psychological topics central to Jewish women's lives. Likewise, there are almost no works on Jewish women in the rapidly growing multicultural psychology literature. As a result, a psychological perspective on Jewish women remains limited. Given that Jews are major consumers of psychotherapy (Herz & Rosen, 1982), and comprise a disproportionately high number of professionals in psychology (Torton Beck, 1995), this fact is problematic. The first reason this is problematic is because it indicates that although Jewish women may be seen

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frequently in psychotherapy, therapists may not have the requisite psychological resources or training to provide culturally sensitive services (Weiner & Moon, 1995). Second, the reason these psychological resources are lacking might be because Jews do not feel safe to pursue scholarship on Jewish topics in their own discipline (Torton Beck, 1995). Either way, the lack of psychological research on Jewish women needs to be addressed.

Further, regarding the paucity of literature on Jewish women in psychology, the approaches taken to discussing the topics covered therein have been mainly theoretical, experiential, or clinical in nature. What is absent from this literature is both a data-based exploration of these topics and a more specific examination of the psychological experience of Jewish women in North America. For example, Jewish women's identity is theorized to be comprised both of components that are universal (i.e. commitment to *tikkun olam)* and those that are individual (e.g. ethnicity). However, data on Jewish women's identity have never been gathered, nor have clear distinctions been delineated regarding the uniqueness and complex nature of Jewish women's ethnicities, identities, worldviews, and ways of expressing Jewishness. Moreover, no systematic studies exploring how Jewish women experience their Jewishness in Christian North America and its psychological effect have been conducted. In addition to a discussion of Jewish women's identity, anti-Semitism is written about in this literature as having a major influence on Jewish women's experiences and the shape of their identities, but no research is provided to further an understanding of this experience. Given this, a study of the psychological impact of anti-Semitism on Jewish women would prove beneficial for a more in-depth understanding of this phenomenon and the effect that the resulting anti-Semitic stereotypes have on Jewish women. Therefore, given the overall paucity of data based studies on Jewish women in psychology and

multicultural psychology as a sub-specialty, the proposed study is an important step toward filling this gap, by providing data that supplements the current theoretical writing on Jewish women. Therefore, below is described the epistemologies and methodology that will be utilized to address the following research questions. The researcher's underlying assumptions are also listed below and will be analyzed as well.

Research Questions.

1. What is the nature of Jewish women's identity, ethnicity, worldview, and their ways of expressing Jewishness?

2. How do Jewish women experience their Jewishness in a Christian society and what is the psychological effect of this experience?

3. How do anti-Semitism and its related stereotypes influence Jewish women psychologically?

Researcher's Underlying Assumptions.

1. There is a unique entity called Jewishness, which is fundamental to a Jewish woman's view of herself and her life.

2. Being a secular Jew is a simple notion and secularism serves as a distinct defining factor in how the Jewish women understand themselves.

3. A distinction in Jewish ethnicity, (*Ashkenazi* as opposed to *Sephardi*), is meaningful in terms of how women make sense of their Jewishness.

4. Jewish women's personal and family lives are influenced by their being Jewish.

5. Jewish women have specific ways of coping in a non-Jewish/Christian environment.

6. Having Semitic features and "looking Jewish" contribute to women's experience of being Jewish.

CHAPTER 3

Method Section

Epistemology

Feminist Epistemologies

The dominant epistemological paradigm in psychology is positivism (Fine, 1994).

Positivism, originating in the natural sciences, asserts that reality can be known empirically,

when measured and quantified through an inquiry method of objective observation (Kirk &

Miller, 1986). The basic assumptions of positivism are that human behavior parallels

behavior in the natural world, that truth that can be observed and measured separate of

individuals, and that human behavior can be studied without acknowledging context (Riger,

1992). Positivism has been critiqued by feminists because it does not acknowledge that

research supports patriarchal political assumptions, ignores the subjectivity of the research

process, and fails to recognize women's ways of knowing (Hubbard, 1988). As a result,

many feminists in psychology question positivist assumptions and empirical methods and

have replaced them with methods of qualitative and natural inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln,

1994). As such, feminist psychologists recognize the importance of studying women's lives

in context while acknowledging the subjective nature of the research process (Reinharz,

1992). Likewise, feminists maintain that the person of the researcher, that is the researcher

as "knower," directly influences the outcome of research (Fine, 1994). In contrast to

positivism, a feminist epistemological standpoint promotes a focus on women's lives as well

as those of other oppressed groups (Lather, 1991). Thus, a feminist epistemological

standpoint maintains that this focus can "correct traditional masculinist distortions" (Tirosh-

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Rothschild, 1994, p. 91). Therefore, given the importance of acknowledging the person of the researcher, a study conceptualized and conducted about Jewish women, conducted by a Jewish feminist researcher would naturally be influenced by both feminist and Jewish ways of knowing.

Jewish Ways of Knowing

There are several key components comprising a Jewish standpoint on knowing. There is no solitary Jewish standpoint, however, given that ethnicity, national origin, and other factors can vary the nature of Jewish identity. Given that *Ashkenazi* Jews are the predominant ethnic group in North America, for the purpose of this discussion, I will largely describe that perspective. As such, the first feature that influences an *Ashkenazi* Jewish standpoint on knowing is the communal nature of the Jewish people (Baker, 1993). In addition, a major influence on Jewish knowing is *halakhah* (Jewish law) that dictates that Jews come to know God collectively. More specifically, *halakhah* instructs that to know God, Jews must pray communally in a *minyan* (a quorum of ten men) (Gottlieb, 1995). In contrast, Jewish law does not provide equivalent communal determinants for women's prayer (Biale, 1984).

A second component of the collective nature of Jewish culture is that being verbal in one's community is highly valued (Rosen & Weltman, 1996). That is, the importance of being able to express one's knowledge to one's community is held in high regard. Similarly, Jewish culture values those who possess the ability to engage in critical thinking and to articulate insight gained from critical thinking in discussion with others (Rosen & Weltman, 1996). For example, eloquent verbal expression is thought to evidence a learned man's ability to explore the intent of ancient texts and the arguments therein, and to present

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his understanding of these texts and their arguments to his community (Brown, 1991). It is noteworthy though, that there is an absence of a defined role for women who wish to present their knowledge to the community. In fact, historically, the presentation of women's knowledge has been generally discouraged (Shepperd, 1993). Yet, according to the *Mishha* (book of Jewish law), the highest level of spirituality and scholarship is evidenced through this kind of shared knowledge and discussion (Cantor, 1995). That is, to be able to explore God's intent in the *Torah*, in a community of one's peers, is considered one of the highest *mitzvot* (good deeds) an individual can perform (Cantor, 1995).

Jewish Women's Voices

Through the knowledge gained from centuries of discourse and debate in the *beit midrash* and *Yeshiva*, Jewish learned men and rabbis have created the Jewish religion, law, and culture that exists today (Plaskow, 1990). As such, Jewish law is based on men's discussions and debate, whereas women historically have been excluded from formal study and thus could not engage in this meaningful dialogue (Shepherd, 1993). Moreover, historically, Jewish women were not consulted to give input into matters that specifically relate to their lives, and the laws that govern their existence (Gottlieb, 1995). In other words, Jewish women have been historically forbidden from interpreting and defining their own existence as Jews (Heschel, 1995). As a result, Jewish women's realities are not expressed in traditional Judaica. Given the absence of Jewish women from the development of Jewish law, communal prayer and study, this researcher believes that is important for scholars to address women's voices when studying Jewish life.

Jewish Feminist Epistemology

In response to this patriarchal tradition, Jewish feminist scholars have begun to introduce a Jewish feminist epistemological standpoint to the study of Jewish women's lives. A Jewish feminist epistemology can be defined as one that centralizes Jewish women's voices while respecting the traditions of Jewish women (Tirosh-Rothschild, 1994). Similarly, a Jewish feminist epistemology allows Jewish women's realities to be defined by Jewish women, while also allowing Jewish women to critique the Jewish patriarchy without being anti-Semitic (Tirosh-Rothschild, 1994). As such, a Jewish feminist epistemology allows Jewish women's voices to come to the foreground in discussions regarding the nature of Jewishness and Jewish life. Further, by assuming a Jewish feminist epistemological stance in this proposed study, the research outlined below serves as a form of *tikkun olam*, in that it offers a process that could recognize the knowledge of Jewish women. Finally, employing a Jewish feminist standpoint in this study will hopefully create an environment where Jewish women feel safe to discuss key topics in their lives, namely their Jewish identity and anti-Semitism.

Methodology

Method

Feminist researchers have argued that methodology must be informed by epistemology (Reinharz, 1992). As such, this study integrates both feminist and Jewish feminist epistemologies to inform its qualitative methodology. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), qualitative methods are beneficial in that they allow the researcher to capture the participants' points of view, gather contextual data on participants' lives, and offer rich descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, I employed an integrative

qualitative methodology that would allow participants' points of view and experiences to be central (Sinacore, in progress). To integrate a feminist epistemology into the qualitative methodology, I put mechanisms in place to address my reflexive stance and subjective frame. To integrate a Jewish feminist epistemology into the methodology, I employed techniques to analyze my own Jewish frame. This process resulted in my employing an integrative qualitative method (Sinacore, in progress). This integrative methodology is described below.

Design

For this study I used a semi-structured interview format (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For these semi-structured interviews, I met individually with 12 Jewish women. My goal for the semi-structured interviews was to allow participants to explore general topics covered in the literature on Jewish women as outlined in the study's interview protocol (see Appendix C). I followed each research question in the interview protocol with the overall topic in the question to be explored. I followed each overall topic with the key concepts that comprised that topic. I followed these concepts with the initial interview prompt that I gave to the participant to facilitate their exploration of the topic. I followed the initial interview prompt with a list of more detailed prompts related to the topic and its key concepts. At the end of the protocol, I listed several process questions. I used these questions to elicit the participants' overall experience of the interview and to help them debrief.

I used the list of key concepts in the interview protocol solely as a checklist to ensure that participants fully explored the topic. If the participant naturally covered these key concepts, then I took the role of an "active listener" and provided no additional prompts following the initial one. If the participant did not fully address the key topic's concepts,

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then I used a more detailed prompt to ensure that these concepts were addressed. Thus, I utilized the interview prompts to facilitate the participant's exploration of the key concepts if needed. I did not intend these detailed prompts to be a strict guideline for the discussion, rather as previously stated, a means to ensure that the key concepts were discussed.

Given that I came to the interview with an awareness of the topics and items to be explored, I focused primarily on facilitating participant exploration, however, where appropriate, I utilized a feminist research strategy, whereby I entered into dialogue with the participant by introducing my subjective frame, if I suspected it would help facilitate the participant's exploration of the topic (Reinharz, 1992).

<u>Participants</u>

Since there is no data-based literature on Jewish women, I believed that it would have been impossible to study the complexity of this group in one study. To allow for an in-depth study of one segment of Jewish women in America, and in light of the fact that the majority of Jews in America are *Ashkenazi,* I determined that the participants in this study would be *Ashkenazi* Jewish women, aged thirty and older, who self-identified as secular, or non-observant, meaning, "those who identify as Jews - who feel Jewish - yet who have no religious affiliation" (Baker, 1993, p. 92). I chose to explore secular identity because the nature of secular Jewish identity is elusive and often varies.

Given that religious Jews often live in insular communities and only interact with the secular Jewish world out of necessity, this group of Jewish women would not have been an accessible group to be studied by a secular Jew, such as myself. As a result, the participants in this study were secular, as they were more familiar to me and congruent with my standpoint as a researcher. Likewise, since Israeli American Jews constitute a unique

segment of Jewish America and derive their identity primarily from their national origin (Israel), I determined that it would be best to study them separately.

Recruitment

I recruited participants through networking and word-of-mouth in a small Mid-Western city. When appropriate, I made contact with individuals in my professional circle that knew of potential participants, and asked them to provide these potential participants with a brief description of the study, which was excerpted from the consent form, to inform them of the nature of the study. (see Appendix D). Once these potential participants received this information, my original contacts asked them to contact me directly by phone or e-mail to indicate their interest in participating. No parties helping to recruit participants were ever informed by me of an individual's decision to participate.

I recruited twelve participants, in total, in the order that they responded, assuming they self-identified as *Ashkenazi* and secular and were thirty years of age or older. I chose the number of research participants in accordance with Hill, Thompson, and Williams' (1997) recommendation for qualitative research in the field of counseling psychology. These authors recommended utilizing a "large enough sample" (p. 532), such as eight to fifteen participants, so that the results of the data analysis can be determined to be relevant only to one or two of the participants or the majority. Finally, I did not use selection criteria for participation based on marital status or sexual orientation. I did not need to compile a waitlist, as the first twelve participants who expressed interest in the study participated. There was no dropout from the study.

Instruments

Demographic information sheet.

To gather the necessary demographic information about the participants, I designed a demographic sheet for this study. This sheet gathered background information about the participant's age, ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, etc. (See Appendix B).

Semi-structured interview protocol.

To facilitate the semi-structured interviews, I designed an interview protocol. This protocol contained a list of the questions and other items put forth to participants for their consideration. The main topics covered in this protocol included items regarding Jewish women's identity, living as a Jew in Christian North America, anti-Semitism, Jewish culture, and women's role in Jewish religion (See Appendix C).

Data Collection

The procedure I followed for data collection was as follows: First, I identified research participants either by word-of-mouth or networking. Once potential participants indicated their interest in participating to me either by phone or e-mail, I made an initial contact with them by phone to directly discuss the nature of the study and the details of informed consent. The discussion I had with participants regarding informed consent appraised the participant of: the premise of the study, the study's specific nature and design, the general topics to be covered, the general nature and timing of the questions and interview items, the option to participate in member checking, the time involved, the nature or role of the researcher in the interview, the location of the study, and the fact that they

could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. I also informed participants that there was no financial incentive for their participation (See Appendix D).

If a potential participant expressed interest in being involved in the study at the end of the initial phone contact, I provided her with an informed consent and demographic sheet via the mail. After reading the informed consent and demographic sheet, I asked participants to contact me by phone or e-mail to schedule a time to meet and be interviewed based on convenience and scheduling options. When I met the participant for the interview, I provided them with an overview of what was to occur again. Next, I asked the participant to sign and date the informed consent and complete the demographics sheet.

Once the participant signed the consent form and completed the demographic sheet, I conducted the semi-structured interview. That is, I offered the participant topics on Jewish life and Jewish women's role in Jewish culture, various questions, key Jewish maxims, and statements from Jewish text for their consideration. After I provided the prompts the participant explored the meaning of the item at hand. Further, I tape-recorded all interviews. Finally, interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

When the interviews were over, I conducted a short debriefing (See Process Questions at the end of Appendix C). During the debriefing, I asked the participants if they had experienced any discomfort from participating in the study or by discussing the research topics. No participants indicated that they had experienced such discomfort, but I encouraged all to contact me, nonetheless, if needed at any time after the interview. I offered future contact with me to ensure that no harm came to participants as a result of the research process.

Researcher's Data

Consistent with feminist epistemologies, I took the following steps to maintain a reflexive stance and understand the interactive effect of my subjective position on the research process. First, to document my experience as a researcher, I kept a log before and after each data collection session. I also kept an ongoing log throughout the study as needed, noting how my participation in the study affected the overall process and the specific progression of my personal awareness of the topics being studied. Second, as I analyzed the data, I took process notes to keep track of my thoughts, feelings, and questions and concerns to discuss with the auditor. Third, along with the log I kept during the course of the study, I also took notes before the study commenced to clarify the research assumptions I was bringing to the process. Finally, I followed a procedure to analyze my initial research assumptions upon completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Data Preparation

Upon completion of data collection, I had all tapes from the interviews transcribed. I secured Fellowship monies from the College of Education, at Michigan State University to pay for the services of an outside transcriber. Utilizing an outside transcriber allowed me to maintain some distance from the data and increased my ability to self-observe my process in the research.

Data Analysis Procedure

I did not begin the formal data analysis until after all data were collected. I did this to minimize my interaction with the data while participating in the data collection process. Following data collection and transcription, I reviewed and analyzed the transcripts. The

overall data analytic procedures I utilized were consistent with those outlined in Dey (1993). In addition to employing these procedures, I utilized member checking (Janesick, 1994) and employed two judges and an auditor (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Sinacore, in progress). These procedures are described in detail below.

First, I read each transcript separately in their entirety and took notes on my overall impressions. Next I re-read the transcripts attending to one impression at a time. That is, I re-read the transcript and identified data units to support each impression. For each transcript, I created an impression sheet, wherein I identified a general impression and noted the data units, with page and line numbers of the sections of the transcript that corresponded to those data units.

Second, I examined and clustered impressions and their corresponding data units based on similar topic areas. That is, I clustered data into focus points. Once I decided upon focus points, I re-read the individual transcripts attending to each focus point separately to identify any additional data units that supported that focus point. After I completed this process, I re-examined the focus points and re-grouped them to develop categories. Next, I decided upon categories and analyzed across all transcripts for themes and sub-themes. I employed this same data analytic procedure for both the participants' and researcher's data.

Auditor

To check for my researcher assumptions and to maintain the integrity of the analysis I employed an auditor (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). I did not use specific criteria for selecting the auditor other than her willingness to take on this cumbersome task, and her general knowledge of counseling psychology and topics related to those being studied herein. The auditor in this study was female, Catholic, Italian American/Canadian,

Caucasian, forty-one years old, held a Ph.D. in counseling psychology, was eight years post-Ph.D., and was an Associate Professor and active researcher in a University in Canada. The auditor also had expertise in qualitative research, women's issues, feminist psychology, religion, spirituality, diversity, and multiculturalism.

In accordance with the verbal agreement I established with this auditor at the commencement of the study, her role in both the data analysis and writing process was to challenge my views, interpretations, and biases and play the "devils advocate." To accomplish this, I had a weekly one to two hour meeting with the auditor either in person or by phone, from the onset of the data analysis process through to the end of the formal data analysis and write-up. As the auditor questioned my assumptions and impressions, she also raised questions about the data units, focus points, themes and sub-themes I had identified in both the participant's and researcher's data. As such, the auditor provided me with verbal feedback on each transcript, across transcript analysis, analysis of researcher's log, and analysis of researcher's assumptions.

The results produced by using an auditor were that I was required to continually examine my internal process and reasoning and to remain open to hearing how this sounded to an outside reviewer. This process was a critical component of the quality of the data analysis, as well as, the study itself. This process also resulted in my being able to examine my process, biases, impressions, and subjective frame more deeply. The use of an auditor also ensured that the data analysis was thorough and well thought through. In the end, this resulted in my continually reassessing and reviewing the overall data analysis for accuracy.

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<u>Judges</u>

According to Porter (1999), no matter how careful one tries to be in the application

of qualitative methods, one cannot escape from "the eye-of-the-beholder phenomenon" (p.

62). To account for my subjective view embedded in the data analysis, I used two judges as

a means for validating or invalidating the impressions and themes that I identified upon

completion of the data analysis. Likewise, the judges' responses facilitated my ability to

question my general descriptions of the data and overall experience of the participant's

frame. I did not decide upon specific criteria for selecting the judges other than their

willingness to take on this cumbersome task, and their general knowledge of counseling

psychology and topics related to those being studied herein. As such, one judge was

Muslim, Turkish/Canadian, Caucasian, and thirty-four years old. The other was Jewish

American, *Ashkenazi*, Caucasian, and forty-two years old. Both of the judges were female

and held Ph.D.s in counseling psychology. One judge was one year post-Ph.D. and the

other was seven years post-Ph.D.. Both judges were practicing clinicians; one practiced

in a university counseling center and the other in a private practice. Both judges had

expertise in qualitative research, women's issues, feminist psychology, religion,

spirituality, diversity, and multiculturalism.

To gather feedback from the judges, I sent them both copies of the transcripts and a

letter of instruction asking them to read the transcripts and take notes on their impressions

and the recursive themes that came to their attention. I also instructed the judges not to

engage in a formal data analysis process (See Appendix F). After the judges provided me

with their notes, I compared my general impressions I found in the data with those of the

judges, assessing for similarities and inconsistencies. In the end, the judges' feedback was of

very high quality and very useful and in total the judges generated fifty pages of comments. Both judges took a great deal of time in reviewing the transcripts and in note taking. Likewise, both judges provided me with valuable insight into both the overall interview process and the specific content of the interviews. On the whole, the judges strongly validated my impressions and the related themes I had identified. Although the judges commented on various details in each transcript, overall, their feedback was confirming of my final analysis.

Member Checking

After the initial data analysis was complete, I provided participants with a summary of the analysis for member checking (Janesick, 1994). The process of member checking allowed for each participant to review the data analysis summary to ensure that the responses they gave were accurately reflected in the overall analysis. For this purpose, all twelve participants were e-mailed a summary of the results (See Appendix E). If a participant wanted to clarify a point they had made, I invited them to do so at that time. Of the twelve, eight participants responded. All eight participants who responded thought the results summary was an accurate representation of what they had generally said in the interview.

Summary of the Method

As a result of this process, I created a data-based understanding of Jewish women's experiences. I assumed a Jewish feminist epistemological stance, which helped participants give voice to their experiences, beliefs, and thoughts both as Jews and women. To gather data, I utilized a qualitative methodology employing semi-structured interviews. Upon completion of all data collection, I created and analyzed the transcripts and gave participants

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the opportunity to participate in the process of member checking. I read the transcripts repeatedly and analyzed them for general impressions, data units, focus points, overarching themes and sub-themes. I analyzed both the participants' and researcher's data in this manner.

To fully describe my standpoint and assumptions, I kept an ongoing researcher's log throughout the study. Likewise, I involved two outside judges and an auditor in the data analysis process to explore my subjective frame. I included a summary of impressions, from both the researcher's log and the judges' and auditor's observations in the final write-up of the study. Finally, upon completion of the data compilation and analyses, I presented an overarching conceptual understanding of Jewish women's lives.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

The results section is divided into two main sections: (a) participants' data, and,

(b) researcher's data. The participants' data contains the: (a) description of participants,

(b) participants' concepts, themes, and sub-themes, and, (c) data analysis for the research

process questions. The researcher's data contains a: (a) data analysis of researcher's log, and

(d) data analysis of the researcher's underlying assumptions.

Participant's Data

Description of Participants

The recruitment process resulted in the inclusion of 12 participants who self-

identified as *Ashkenazi*, secular and Caucasian. The participants in the study were

predominantly heterosexual, with only one being lesbian. The participants' ages were as

follows: one was 31, one was 32, one was 39, one was 42, three were 44, two were 46, and

one was 53. Eight participants were married or partnered, 2 were dating, 1 was single, and 1

was divorced. Of the married/partnered group, 6 were married to a person who was Jewish,

the other 2 were not. Further, 6 of the participants had 15 children whose ages ranged from 7

to 25. Eleven of the participants were able-bodied; one had a physical disability.

Six of the participants identified themselves as living in a suburban residence and

six identified themselves as living in an urban residence. As for the participant's affiliation

with a particular branch of Judaism, 8 identified as *Reform*, 2 as *Conservative*, 1 as

Reconstructionist and 1 had no affiliation. Also, 6 of the 12 participants held a synagogue

membership. Moreover, 5 participants noted that they were raised in a secular home, 3 in a *Reform* home, 2 in a Religious/*Orthodox* home, and 1 in a *Conservative* home. Participants' described their grandparents' Jewish identity as varying: 2 were *Reform*, 2 were secular, 1 was a cultural Jew, 1 was anti-religious, and 6 were *Orthodox*.

As for the nationalities of the participants, all of their families hailed from Western and Eastern Europe, and all were born of American born parents. All participants identified English as their mother tongue. Eight participants indicated they spoke at least one additional language including: Spanish, French, Yiddish, Hebrew, Italian, and Portugese. Participants' parents were all English speakers and eight spoke at least one additional language including: German, Spanish, Yiddish, Italian, French, Hebrew, Russian, and Czech. Participants' grandparents' nationalities varied, and participants did not know all of the exact places of their births. Participants' grandparents were reported to come from the following locations: Poland, Hungary, Germany, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the United States. Six of the participants' grandparents were reported to speak English. All of the participants reported that their grandparents spoke additional languages including: Polish, Hungarian, German, Latvian, Russian, French, Spanish, and Yiddish.

As for educational status, all of the participants had at least a bachelors degree, 7 had a masters degree, 2 held doctorates, and 2 held juris doctorates. In addition, 6 participants held full-time positions, 5 held part-time positions, and 1 was retired. Regarding socio-economic status, 6 participants identified as middle-class, 4 as upper-middle class, and 2 as lower-middle class. As a group, the participants held a myriad of professional positions including: psychotherapist, author, child advocate, graduate student, administrator, art consultant, quality analyst, novelist, professor, entrepreneur, and psychology intern.

Other factors the participants reported to have influenced their Jewish identity were: socialist/communist parents or grandparents, *Zionism*, Jewish summer camp experiences, trips to Europe and Eastern Europe, growing up in an anti-Semitic environment, and the impact of the Holocaust on family members.

<center>Concepts, Themes, and Sub-Themes</center>

The Concept of Jewishness

A central area of inquiry in this study was Jewishness. The results of this study indicated that being Jewish or the concept of Jewishness was central to how the participants in this study understood whom they were and how they viewed the world. Jewishness was also a complex and multi-dimensional concept and was described by the participants in a myriad of ways. One participant described the multi-faceted nature of this concept, "I would say that being Jewish means having been raised Jewish, having a connection with one's Jewish family, feeling Jewish, feeling a connection with the Jewish community, participating in religious observation, and feeling connected with Jewish history." Speaking to this further, another participant added, "My Jewishness is about identifying with Jewish culture, the larger Jewish population, with Israel, with Jewish foods, with Jewish history, and with Yiddish folklore."

Participants also discussed the unique facets that comprised their Jewishness. The two aspects most commonly mentioned by participants were Jewish law and personal identification. First, many participants referred to Jewish law as a foundational piece. For example one participant stated, "There are the Jewish laws. So, if you are born of a Jewish mother, you're Jewish." Second, participants referred to the notion of personal identification as a component of Jewishness. One participant explained, "I think that there's identification.

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Like someone who identifies themselves as being Jewish, even if technically they wouldn't

be considered Jewish." Another participant echoed this idea, "What makes Jewish women

Jewish? I think it's clearly how we view ourselves. You know, it's our identity. It's not just

religious."

Participants discussed how a Jewish childhood and the Jewish community and

culture informed their Jewishness. When speaking of a Jewish childhood, one participant

believed, "I think Jewishness actually comes from childhood, our upbringing, some of that

early nurturing, and some of the over-protectiveness of our mothers." Participants also

recognized that being members of the Jewish community was another contributing factor.

For example, one participant explained, "It means I'm part of the community. Being Jewish

means I feel that I'm part of something much bigger, just as the *minyan* is important. It's a

communal religion and we don't normally pray alone." Lastly, participants considered the

role Jewish culture played in their Jewishness, and one participant stated, "A lot of what I

am comes from my Jewish culture."

Participants articulated the role that Jewish tradition and Jewish history played in

the make-up of their Jewishness. As illustrated by one participant, Jewish traditions were

understood as being central, "The first thing that comes to mind is *matzo-balls, Hanukkah*

and all the traditions." Another agreed, "It's having *Shabbat* on Friday night, lighting the

candles, and eating the *hallah*." Participants also emphasized the importance of Jewish

history and a legacy of anti-Semitism as being part of their Jewishness. One participant

shared,

> My family and I have been Jewish all the way back through all of our
>
> connections. We are Jewish and our history is important. There's been oppression

and there's been anti-Semitism in quite severe degrees up through the *Holocaust*.

So, maintenance of Jewish history is important. Jews should not deny that history but should affirm it.

Along with Jewish tradition and Jewish history, Jewish ethics and Jewish values were both described as aspects of Jewishness. Participants explained that being raised with Jewish values, participating in a Jewish ethical tradition, and being a good person, all contributed to their Jewishness. One participant noted how being raised with Jewish values was an important aspect, "I think being brought up with Jewish values makes you Jewish." Other participants referenced the Jewish ethical tradition as a facet of their Jewishness. One participant explained, "I feel deeply Jewish partly because I'm participating in an ethical tradition." Still other participants explored the role of being a good person and the way this informed their Jewishness. As stated by one participant, "What it means to me to be a Jewish woman, a Jewish friend, a Jewish wife, a Jewish mom, a Jewish person is really just being a good person."

Finally, all of the twelve participants discussed how their Jewishness was fundamental and central to whom they were and how they saw the world. Participants also described the permanence of Jewishness in one's identity. First, participants discussed the essential and core nature of their Jewishness. One participant said, "It's almost who we are innately," and another added, "I put Jewish before even I put woman. So it's that much a part of my identity. " Similarly, a third participant explained, "It's very important to me, it's in my psyche all the time. I always think, 'I'm Jewish'." Second, participants explained that Jewishness was a lens through which they viewed life. One participant noted, "My

Jewishness informs how I view the world." Lastly, participants thought that Jewishness was a permanent entity. To illustrate this point, one participant described a friend of hers,

> Her parent's were concentration camp survivors and she was raised without religion. She knows nothing about Hebrew school or Sunday school. She doesn't know about any of the holidays. She doesn't know about *Shabbat* candles or *Hanukkah* because her parents, although they were very Jewish, Jewish enough to be put in a concentration camp, rejected God, because what kind of God could do this? In my opinion though, she's still Jewish. You can't take the Jewishness out.

In summary participants explained that Jewishness was a multi-faceted construct comprised of many elements and was integral to the way in which they understood who they were a people and how they interacted with the world. As such, a more comprehensive analysis of the data with regard to how participants understood their Jewishness resulted in the emergence of seven themes: (a) Jewish ethics and morality, (b) Jewish people, (c) Jewish community, (d) Jewish women in Judaism, (e) otherness, (f) anti-Semitism, and, (g) the *Holocaust*.

Jewish Ethics and Morality

The first major theme that emerged from the data was Jewish ethics and morality. Most of the participants explained that Jewish culture, history, and religion provided them with an ethical tradition to which they could adhere. To support this idea, one participant stated, "I feel like Judaism has a terrifically sound ethical tradition." Another participant echoed this view, "It's just a way of framing the doing of good things, good deeds, good acts, in a Jewish framework. This is particularly stressed in a Jewish tradition." Participants also described the nature of this Jewish ethical tradition. One participant said,

Jewish morality seems to be rooted not in a notion of divine retribution, but in ethical debate, you know, that we must discern for ourselves the meaning of good and evil and it is incumbent upon us to do that rigorously through study of the *Torah*.

Similarly, participants explained that Jewish ethics instructed them on how to act and be a good person. One participant offered her view,

I have a sense of how I believe people are supposed to be. I think that somewhere along the line I got that idea that there is a way to be in the world and that you take care of other people who are less well off than you are. This is especially Jewish and I do think that there is a Jewish ideal of charity and fulfillment of duty. I think of this as part of Jewish culture because that was how I was taught and what I absorbed.

Though participants agreed that there is a Jewish ethical tradition, some participants indicated that having an ethical code is not unique to Judaism. These participants believed that morality was a universal notion. One participant stated, "I don't feel like anybody has a monopoly on it, I feel like that is true for all human beings, you know, regardless." Another participant shared this position,

I guess with any religious community I would hope they would have sort of moral principles that correspond. They may have different ways of expressing their political orientation than the ways that I think about it, you know, inequity, race, and gender roles and the like, but I would hope they would have some humane ethical principles. I guess I don't see that as strictly a Jewish identity issue.

Similarly, regarding the ideal of being a good person and its source, one participant explained,

I don't think that there's really something that makes a Jewish woman a good

women versus just a woman or a man or a person a good person. I think there

definitely are values that you can learn in any religion and it seems that they're sort

of the same, you know, throughout Judaism, Catholicism, and a lot of the religions

that I've encountered. Love others as you'd love yourself; try to do your best; don't

step on other people's toes.

As such, these participants indicated there is a moral tradition in all religious belief systems and the Jewish moral tradition is just one among many.

Participants also shared their thoughts about the unique composition of the Jewish ethical tradition. In particular, participants described this tradition as being comprised of four components: (a) being a good person, (b) doing good deeds *(mitzvot)*, (c) doing charitable acts *(tzedakah)*, and, (d) participating in social action *(tikkun olam)*. The composition of a Jewish ethical tradition was illustrated by one participant who said, "I think so much of *halakhah* and moral code in a nutshell is talking about how to be a good person, do *tzedakah* and work to repair the world," and another explained, "*Tikkun olam* and *mitzvot*, it's just how I live my life and because I'm Jewish, they are the Jewish words connected with that."

As for being a good person, participants mostly believed that how one learns to be good comes from being Jewish. As one participant put it, "I guess for some reason I feel a responsibility to be the best person I can be. But then, I feel a responsibility to be even better than that because I'm Jewish." Next, participants described their understanding of the role of doing good deeds *(mitzvot)* in Jewish morality. One participant gave an example from her life,

We shovel the driveway of the woman across the street. My daughter and I do

those things and that's really important. My husband and my daughter sing in

nursing homes, you know. Those are active little things. Those are things that are

really important. And, I think it's vital. I think that's part of our Jewish teaching.

Likewise, participants explored the idea of Jewish charity (*tzedakah*). One participant

shared her view, "I think it's not only doing *tzedakah* but it's also giving of yourself. To

me, that was like really important and very Jewish."

Lastly, participants gave their opinions about the Jewish tradition of social action

(*tikkun olam*). One participant shared what this idea meant to her, "You have to leave the

world a better a place than it was when you got there." Participants not only emphasized the

need to improve the world but also to speak out about injustice and the oppression of all

people. One participant emphasized this point,

I feel very, very, strongly about social justice, equality, inequality, helping people,

and not just Jewish people. I do think that it is a part of the Jewish community even

starting in youth. There's always a lot of social action, and so you learn that that's a

part of being in the Jewish community.

Another participant echoed this sentiment, "For me being a Jew is to see injustice and to

own it, not to wait for someone else to do something about it." And a third agreed that for

Jews there must be a, "willingness to side with the underdog, whether we are the ones who

are the underdog, at that time, or not. I see this as deep, you know, kind of rooted in

Judaism."

Thus, most participants explained that being a good person, doing good deeds,

and participating in social action were all key components of their Jewishness. In

addition, many stressed the importance of raising Jewish children to do the same. One participant explained,

> When I think about passing something on to my children, I want them to have a sense that they need to give back to the world, help make the world a better place, that they're benefiting from people who've left things for them and they have a responsibility to take care of that for the future.

Another participant also emphasized the importance of passing along Jewish morality, "When I have children I feel very strongly about raising them in a Jewish tradition because I feel like it's the best means by which to sort of defend ourselves against moral relativism." A third participant added to this discussion and stressed the value of being an ethical role model, "One of the most important things for me is being a good example for your children, raising good children and being kind to people and being compassionate and loving." As such, participants indicated who they are ethically is inseparable from their experience of themselves as Jewish.

The Jewish People

The second major theme that emerged from the data was the Jewish people. Participants described the concept of the Jewish people and discussed it in two ways: (a) Jewish childhood and the Jewish family, and (b) the Jewish community.

Jewish childhood and the Jewish family.

Two areas that informed participants' concept of Jewishness were their childhood experiences and their current family lives. Participants reported that how they were raised to be Jewish, their childhood Jewish homes, their relationship with their mothers and

grandmothers, and their intergenerational experiences growing up, all informed who they were as a Jews today. When discussing her Jewish childhood, one participant explained,

I was born Jewish so my indoctrination (laugh) or my whole formative years with my parents was in a Jewish household. So that was just very natural for me. I never really questioned whether or not I wanted to be Jewish. If I was trying to figure out who I am, perhaps how observant or non-observant was more the question, not whether or not I wanted to remain Jewish.

Other participants focused on the effect growing up in a Jewish home had on them. One participant illustrated this,

My mother created a Jewish oasis within our home because we were living in an incredibly non-Jewish world. Within the walls there was *shabbat* and we attended synagogue. All the holidays were at our house, *Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover* and there were always lots of people and, you know, lots of other Jewish people invited to our home and it was always positive. There was always food and music.

Other participants specifically discussed the influence their mothers had on their Jewishness. One participant explained, "My mother had the most powerful impact on my Jewish identity of anybody." A second participant spoke of her mother's influence as a role model,

To me what a Jewish woman is, is what I saw in my mother. She volunteered like crazy and she was the president of the *Sisterhood* for fifteen years. And my mom just lived this beautiful existence, you know, of charity and *tzedakah* and

generosity and welcomeness into our home, and tolerance and forgiveness and integrity.

Another participant spoke more specifically about a struggle in her relationship with her Jewish mother,

I think I got lots of mixed messages partly because of _my_ mom's attitude because of _her_ _issues_ having grown up in an *Orthodox* family. Her negative messages sort of carried over a little bit. Her anger at the sexism of Judaism that she got as a child got projected a little bit onto me, like I wasn't given choices about what to do for my *bat-mitzvah*.

Similarly, participants described the ways their grandparents contributed to their Jewishness. One participant offered her understanding of this,

My sense of Jewishness comes from my grandmother. There's a pretty typical division that I absorbed. She took care of the children and my grandfather brought home the money working at this terrible job and he was gone all the time. He was out of town regularly and she was the person that held them together. In a Jewish family the woman holds things together and the man wasn't responsible for the family. In the classical Jewish family, the man needs to be devoted to his work and study.

Another participant spoke of the legacy she was handed by her grandparents,

All my grandparents had Jewish values and being Jewish was very important to them. My grandmother talked to me about coming over in steerage and, you know, trying to make a life in America. The values that I've learned from all of my grandparents were: you work hard; you do your best; you get an education;

and, you follow your Judaism. So I think that was definitely strongly handed

down to me.

Next, participants described the meaning of intergenerational family experiences and

learning about Jewish culture and religion from one's family. One participant highlighted

the importance of intergenerational continuity,

To me being Jewish is every Friday night when I light the *Shabbat* candles that I

know my mother does, my grandmother did, my great-grandmother did, her

grandmother did, her grandmother did all the way back. We all lit *Shabbat* candles

and to me when I see my children lighting the candles, it's a continuum, it's a

continuum of thousands of years.

Further, many participants described the childhood experiences that they participated

in their families regarding Jewish traditions, rituals and activities. Some participants

explained the importance keeping *kosher* (observing Jewish dietary laws) was given in their

homes growing up. For example, one participant noted, "I was raised in a *kosher* home and

my mother had to drive 124 miles to get *kosher* food, so it was that important to her to keep

kosher and to raise us Jewish." Others spoke about Jewish holidays, "We celebrated the

High Holy Days like *Rosh Hashanah*." Still others spoke about the Jewish ritual of *bat-

mitzvah*, the rites of passage ceremony issuing a Jewish daughter into adulthood in the

Jewish community. One participant shared, "I guess it was important to have a *bat-mitzvah*,"

and another added, "I was also the oldest, so I was the first one, and I was proud to be *bat-

mitzvahed*."

Finally, being involved in the broader Jewish community was an important influence

in the participants' childhoods, and included activities such as, attending Hebrew school,

joining Jewish youth groups, and going to Jewish summer camps. One participant said, "I went to Sunday school and I was extremely involved in Jewish youth movement." Another added, "We went to Hebrew school. I probably learned a lot about Jewish values through what I was taught in Hebrew school. We also went to Ramah camp." As previously mentioned, these participants indicated that their childhood and family experiences have influenced their current choices about being Jewish in their homes, families and community.

As such, participants discussed how they have come to make choices about how they are currently Jewish in their lives and homes and how they believe children should be raised. Overall, participants emphasized the importance of cultural preservation and passing along Jewishness to their children. One participant explained,

> So if my children say, "I'm going to choose to not be Jewish." I would say, "Well that's not really an option for us right now. You're Jewish; your grandparents were Jewish; your great, great, great-grandparents were Jewish; and, it's very important for us. We're still around for a reason and you have a responsibility to perpetuate that"

Many participants also described the importance of having a Jewish home and what that entailed. One said,

> I loved when my husband and I were looking for a house together. I had very few requirements but the very first one I had was a dining room that's large enough that it also could expand into the family room so that we could do *Passover* and *Shabbat* and Jewish Holidays. That was a foundational thing that I was looking for.

Another described what having a Jewish home meant to her,

What I mean by a Jewish home is since my kids have been little we've talked about

anti-Semitism, prejudice and what it means to be Jewish. We celebrate *Hanukkah,*

Passover, you know, not like maybe *Orthodox* Jews do but we do.

Thus, each of the participants' childhood experiences and current choices were very

different. All, however, emphasized the importance of these areas in their understanding of

themselves as Jewish women today.

The Jewish community.

Participants described their myriad experiences in the Jewish community. For

most participants, the Jewish community was a familiar and affirming place to be a

member. As one participant described,

To be very honest when I meet somebody Jewish there's a, there is a sense of

familiarity already so I think I have an underlying assumption that they get my

culture. So, I feel more at ease. When I say the word *Passover*, they knew what I

meant because I trusted in that they would have at least a similar cultural sense of

what it means to be a Jew.

Other participants echoed this sentiment. For example, one participant stated that she felt,

more myself, a little more at home because I grew up in a Jewish community and

I grew up with Jewish <u>and</u> non-Jewish friends. I notice with Jewish friends I seem

to be a little more open. It's like a comradery or a feeling of being home when I'm

with Jewish friends.

Yet another agreed, "I'm very comfortable in the non-Jewish world but I need my Jewish

world to come back to. That's my home base. That's my rock." Finally, some

participants also described the safety they felt in the Jewish community, "When I'm

outside the Jewish community, I feel anti-Semitism." This experience of anti-Semitism emerged as a general theme in the data and will be discussed in detail below.

In addition to sharing their general sense of comfort and safety in the Jewish community, participants also conveyed their beliefs regarding their ability to identify other Jews. One participant explained,

> Can I tell who is Jewish? About 80% of the time, some people you just know, you know, you talk, you just know. I don't know how. Some people have a map of Israel face. It's just from conversation; you just feel it. You feel it or you, you just know.

Another participant shared a story her mother told her about identifying other Jews and her thoughts about that,

> My mother said, "Someday you're going to go off to college and you're going to be in a room full of people and there will be another Jewish person from across the room and I can not tell you how you are going to know that that person is Jewish but somehow, some way, instinctively, intuitively you are going to know." And I thought it's like the experience of water seeking its own level and being drawn towards someone similar to you, and she was absolutely right. That's exactly what I experienced. I could be in a room full of fifty people and if there were two Jewish people I'd find them and I don't know why. I have no idea why and sure enough it happened, and I went to a university where only 2-3% of the population was Jewish.

Participants also shared what they believed to be commonalities among Jews. Most focused on Jews as being successful, hardworking, high-achieving, and valuing education. For example, one participant explained,

> We're successful, you know. My grandmother always said, 'if you're going
> to be Jewish, you have to be successful. If you want to be a bum, you got to
> be the best bum there is.' So, education is so important and I think that's a
> Jewish value. I really do. You will go out, you will learn and you will pass
> on what you learn to others. Teaching is a value. I mean the words to teacher
> is the same as for your rabbi so that's a leader and that's an honored position
> and a lot of non-Jewish cultures don't have that value.

Another participant added humorously, "There's a lot of joking around how every Jewish family has to have a doctor or lawyer you know." And finally, a third emphasized that Jews pass these social norms onto their children, "I think that the culture of valuing a very particular kind of success, a high achievement and of nurturing one's children into the highest place possible, I think that goes very deep into our culture."

Participants also explored the notion of Jews as a nation of people spread throughout the world and in Israel. Participants described how they felt themselves to be a part of this nation. One participant said, "I think nationality. For me, it's like I'm part of a people." Another participant elaborated upon this idea,

> It's being one person whose part of a larger whole. I feel really connected with Jews
> around the world. There's something really solid about when I go into a synagogue,
> regardless of where it's located, that I'm going to know basically what's going to

happen. It might vary a little bit and the tunes might not be identical, but they're a part of my extended family if you will.

A third participant also shared these views,

> I was thinking to myself, 'that's not a problem for me because I'm Jewish; there is always a Jewish community. So, it doesn't matter where in the world I go.' That's just an illustration of feeling I can be okay anywhere there's an Israeli Embassy, or a synagogue.

As such, the participants described how they felt they were part of an international community of Jews.

Many participants also emphasized the importance of preserving Judaism and the Jewish people. Most participants mentioned their commitment to cultural preservation. One participant explained what this meant to her, "I can understand people wanting to preserve tradition just for the sake of preserving tradition. So, choosing to do Jewish things, to observe things Jewishly is about cultural preservation for me." Another participant described what cultural preservation meant to her as well, "And I do think that a lot of Jews feel an obligation at whatever level, to keep it going. I mean, I want to see it going on in whatever small way I can." As part of the discussion about cultural preservation participants specifically shared their concerns about the survival of the Jewish people. One participant described her hopes in this regard,

> I think that I am concerned about the maintenance of the Jewish community, and from that point of view, I hope that people are identified enough with their Jewishness, their Jewish identity and the Jewish community, that the Jewish community won't die off. The struggles of intermarriage and lack of formal

affiliation with the community that the Jewish community confronts, that are clearly part of the modern world in this country, make me nervous. That the community itself has the potential, across not that many generations now, to totally collapse. I guess that I would be hopeful that people would participate and identify in a way that increases participation that will allow the community to survive.

Many participants discussed the importance of the Jewish State of Israel. Specifically, participants described how Israel has contributed to their Jewishness and how its existence ensures the survival of the Jewish people. One participant explained how living in Israel affected her, "I would say living in Israel for a year really strengthened my Jewish identity and I am much more verbal about it now." Another participant also conveyed the impact of her experiences in Israel, "For me I think my attitude about being Jewish really changed after I went to Israel. When I came back I sort of stopped being quiet about being Jewish." Further, several participants emphasized the necessity of the existence of the State of Israel for Jewish safety and survival. One participant believed, "I think that the creation of an Israeli State and a Jewish State is a very good and important thing and it has saved the Jews." Another participant echoed this view,

> I felt as an American Jew our standing and safety and security is very much based on a strong Israel. I think it's okay in America as long as I'm treated okay as a minority. I'm okay with that, but again, if Israel weren't there, I don't know how okay with that I would be.

Finally, some participants described their personal commitment to *Zionism*, the political movement asserting the need for a Jewish homeland to ensure the survival of the Jewish people. For example, one participant explained what being a *Zionist* means to her,

I think people would probably describe me as more Zionistic in terms of my identity with Israel being very, very important to me. Israel's survival, its survival issues. I don't want it wiped out. Like not getting wiped out by Iran or Iraq.

Jewish Discourses

A third major theme that emerged from the data was that of Jewish discourses. A careful analysis of this theme indicated two sub-themes, each a major Jewish discourse: (a) *Orthodox* versus *Reform* discourse, and (b) the chosen people discourse.

Orthodox versus *Reform* discourse.

Participants shared their varied opinions regarding two major streams the Jewish community, namely, *Orthodox* and *Reform*. Overall, participants explored the various tensions existing between these two different sects. To illustrate this tension, one participant told this story,

When I came to town X, I would be invited to people's homes and I can remember hearing *Reform* people saying awful things about *Orthodox* people and *Orthodox* people saying terrible things about *Reform* people and I was shocked. I was absolutely shocked. You know, if we're going to fight with one another, I mean forget it, you know, it's hard enough to live in the world, being a Jewish person, let alone fighting among ourselves.

On the whole, participants elaborated upon their struggle with *Orthodox* Judaism. Generally, participants expressed both their inability to understand the *Orthodox* lifestyle and their belief that *Orthodoxy* was antiquated. Only one participant expressed her respect for *Orthodox* Jews,

I happened to become very friendly with people who were *shomer shabbas*, black

hat, very *Orthodox*, religious folks and I came to adore and respect and applaud what

it is that they were doing and even considered a life of that for myself. I realized it

was not for me but I certainly learned a lot from them and gained a deeper

appreciation for folks who have made that incredible, incredible commitment to

themselves, to God, to Judaism, to their children, it's a beautiful thing.

In contrast, most participants described a lack of comprehension of *Orthodox* Judaism. As
one participant illustrated,

I would say that in the modern world being a religious *Orthodox* Jew, I don't

understand, but would I call that too Jewish? Well again that's personal choice, but I

have a really, really hard time understanding it in this day and age. I don't

understand. How you could possibly want to follow the strict religious tractates that

seem to have no apparent logical meaning other than to maintain a separate

community?

Other participants echoed these sentiments and conveyed concerns that *Orthodoxy* was out
of date. For example, one participant shared,

I never felt comfortable with the *Orthodox* way of life. Like growing up in

Brooklyn, you see the *Hassidim*. There was a *Yeshiva* right around the corner from

my great-grandmother's house and the kids with the *peis*, and I used to think, 'Get

real, this is the 20th century. Come on.' So, I never felt that they were in touch with

what I thought religion could be.

Further, many participants noted that they resented how *Orthodox* Jews claimed to
be the only legitimate authority on Jewish life. As one participant explained,

There are people who seem to me to be members of an old religious faith, who seem

to be performing the trappings of cultural or religious identity more than giving a

damn about the content or the substance, like where the style eclipses the substance.

I feel like, who made you the arbiter of Judaism? You know in *Diaspora*, there are a

lot of traditions. There are a lot of ways of keeping Judaism alive and so I am

offended by people who racialize Judaism and who claim to sort of have of it under

lock and key.

Similarly, other participants felt judged by the *Orthodox* community,

Sometimes around *Orthodox* Jews I'm more uncomfortable. I'm okay. I just sense

that they're not okay. Like, when my dad was visiting and he wanted to go to an

Orthodox Temple for a *yortzeit*. When I walked in, it was clear that I wasn't

comfortable there but I was okay with bringing him but I didn't want to hang out. I

felt like if I just stood in the lobby am I breaking a rule here?

And finally, some participants said they felt discriminated against by *Orthodox* Judaism.
One participant elaborated,

When somebody is so Jewish that they can't see other ways, to me it is absolute

prejudice in reverse. I know some Jewish people that are as crazy as the religious

right [Christian], the people that are of the religious right and I have a real problem

with that. The division that worries me the most is those people that I'm talking

about that are, you know, "too Jewish" don't see me or *Reform* Jews as being Jewish

enough.

Finally, many participants shared their struggle with *Orthodox* Judaism's views of

of women. One participant exemplified the views of many other participants when she said,

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It's sad. It's extremely offensive. I mean, I feel very strongly that women should not be a problem. I don't understand about Orthodox Jewish women, you know, in a world that we have today, accepting the second class citizen role both religiously and socially. It's beyond me. I find it disdainful and I find it hard to believe that when I see young, educated women, it's very hard for me to see this. Probably partly that I wished it didn't exist. How do they find acceptable in this world today? Why do they choose a religious or social structure that rests upon extraordinary gender inequality?

Some participants also described their beliefs and opinions about *Reform* Judaism. On the whole, most participants felt that *Reform* Judaism made the most sense to them, relative to the other streams of Judaism. Many described the ways that they felt supported and affirmed as women by *Reform* Judaism. In addition, several participants directly addressed the issue of gender equality in *Reform* Judaism. One participant described her feelings on this subject,

It would be disrespectful, I'm sure, to very *Orthodox* Jews, but I choose to belong to a place where the *Amidah* for us is having the mothers listed as well as the fathers and it's just natural for me. I know that when there are other Jews that are more religious or more observant than I and when they come to my environment they're like, "What's this *goyisha* thing?" I don't really care because I do think that I shouldn't be passive, so I choose to treat my religion in some ways as a smorgasbord because I don't want to be a part of that kind of hierarchy, like the *mechitzah* thing, ugh, I can't do it. I want to pray and I want to be connected in this way and I want to be with other people who want to do that too.

Another participant continued to describe her experiences regarding gender equality in *Reform* Judaism,

> We went to a Reform Temple so the men and the women sit together and women
>
> learn the Torah. I actually read from the Torah. So there wasn't that type of
>
> division. We had a female rabbi. My aunt runs the Temple, my grandmother is
>
> president of her *Hadassah* so there's a lot of involvement of women in my family.

Still another participant reflected the same view, "I didn't like the sexist nature of prayer and I'm thrilled that we have a gender sensitive service, we don't refer to God in the male sense in our synagogue and that's very, very important to me."

Chosen people discourse.

Participants wrestled with the notion of being part of a chosen people. Many shared their beliefs about what it meant to be chosen as Jews and the related requirement of being "*a light unto the nations.*" On the one hand, some participants explained that being part of the Chosen people was personally meaningful and relevant for them. On the other hand, some participants thought that the idea of being chosen was exclusionary and distasteful. Some participants shared their sentiments regarding the view that Jews were chosen by God to be an example of tolerance and morality, or "*a light unto the nations.*" One participant elaborated,

> I struggle with the chosen people idea. I like the '*light unto the nations*' idea
>
> though. I think as a belief, it's kind of a nicer idea in terms of being a role model,
>
> being a good example, and I think that that's something good thing to strive for.
>
> There's always a need for good, strong leaders and *mensches* in the world. So to

be a light unto others, I'll probably take that, you know. If somebody treats you badly don't treat them badly, instead show them a better way of being.

Another participant added her opinion on the topic,

I look at us as needing to do the right things because that's what we're supposed to do, but not because we have to teach other people how to do it. But, I do think it's important to try to be ethical and moral. I think being judged as a light unto the nation is very, very difficult and I don't care for the double or triple standard that Israel has to be held up to in the press.

Further, participants hypothesized that the Jewish people had been chosen in history to suffer. One participant put it succinctly, "I feel like we were marked as the Jews, you know? And sometimes that wasn't always positive." Another participant agreed and explained in more detail,

We're the chosen people. We choose, even if you make us suffer, to stay Jews. I think we're chosen to suffer. I think that something deep inside me says, "Yes we we're chosen, otherwise why would have been doing this long and under such adverse conditions."

Similarly, a third participant offered her understanding of how Jews were marked historically,

I don't feel like we're a chosen people. I think that we're marked as a people. Marked in that historically, maybe like the Tamil in Sri Lanka, that we're a small well educated mobile group that can tend to be the focus of antagonism when disenfranchised mobs begin to organize against power and power wants to respond.

Participants described how being considered chosen was either a positive or negative experience for them. On the positive side, one participant said,

You know, I hate to admit but I actually do have a sense of the truth of that generally. I don't know. A lot of religious groups feel the Jews are the chosen people. It doesn't make any sense that I would think of us as the chosen people. But I think I do feel that.

Another participant agreed,

Maybe because I'm Jewish, I like being thought of as the chosen (laugh)." And a third participant felt the same way, "I think we're all chosen. I think it's amazing that we've survived and I just interpret it in a way that's positive. It makes me feel special.

On the negative side, participants also shared their views. One participant shared her concerns with regard to being viewed as chosen,

I'm kind of embarrassed when non-Jewish people come up to me and ask me if I think that I'm one of the chosen people. That almost embarrasses me, like who am I to think that I get a get out of jail free card (laughs), just because I'm Jewish, you know. It's kind of a double edge sword in a weird way because there's this pressure to be the very best person you can possibly be, to have this very high standard and expectation for your own behavior, especially publicly, but on the other hand, when it comes to the idea of being the chosen people, I'm kind of embarrassed like, I'm just another person. I'm just an ordinary person, you know, who am I to think that I'm a chosen person just because I happened to have been born Jewish?

Still other participants strongly objected to the idea of being chosen. For example one participant explained,

> It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized how actually of all the things about being Jewish in Jewish learning, that that is the most offensive. It's most offensive. It's destructive to world harmony and it is very upsetting to me actually. I understand it and know where the Biblical origins are. I understand what that's about but I find it just horrible actually.

And finally, a third participant said, "I'm sorry. I actually kind of cringe when I hear that, when I hear Jews talk about being the chosen ones because some of the creates isolationism, creates elitism, and I don't like that at all."

Jewish Women in Judaism

A fourth theme that emerged from the data was Jewish women in Judaism. This theme can be broken into two sub-themes: (a) how being female informs Jewishness, and (b) Jewish women in Jewish life.

How being female informs Jewishness.

Participants offered their opinions about who a typical Jewish woman was. In considering this idea, one participant indicated, "Jewish women are raised strong. I think Jewish women are raised in a confident manner." Another participant added, "Probably she just has an out-goingness, is more expressive and you know, just very open and loving." Similarly, another participant shared, "Jewish women are bright, we have fire in our eyes, we don't settle." Participants also shared what they believed was common to Jewish women's lives. One participant believed, "I think Jewish women are in charge of faith, or in

charge of most things in Jewish life," and another noted, "Jewish women generally are the ones in charge of raising the kids."

In addition to sharing what they believed was typical of a Jewish woman, participants discussed their understanding the concept of *eshet chayil,* or "a woman of valor," and the gender role image embedded in this traditional poem. In particular, participants described their experience of hearing the *eshet chayil* poem and whether or not the ideal of "a woman of valor" had meaning for them. One participant shared a positive view,

> I think it is just a symbolic saying that has meaning to people. People in my family have used it at very opportune times to describe women of my parents' generation. This poem was read at my aunt's funeral. It's a symbolic thing and that's the beauty of the poetry that describes sort of a wise and moral woman. It's community and family oriented.

Another participant shared more critical thoughts about this Jewish female ideal,

> We read the saying *eshet chayil* at the holidays or when going to a funeral. But women have changed so much since my mother's and grandmother's day. What was good for Abraham's wife is certainly not good for me. I'm not going to give up everything. I think I'm a strong woman but I don't know if I would go to the Biblical sense of being "woman of valor."

Finally, another participant shared her struggle with the concept,

> I think the way the prayer *eshet chayil* is, is rather taking care of the needs of your husband and your family, rather than your own. Part of my identity as a Jewish woman is saying to my children, "You know what, mommy has needs too, and for

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mommy to be happy as a whole person includes more than children and *abba*. It means that I travel sometimes for my work and that I always miss you when I'm gone, but I have to have my own destiny." So, I don't resent being boxed in and I think that an *eshet chayil* is boxed in.

In addition to discussing the concept of *eshet chayil*, participants also gave their opinions about the poem Jewish men say every morning when they pray, "*Thank God I wasn't born a woman*." Most participants found this prayer very offensive. As one participant put it, "I remember when I first learned about that, '*Thank God I'm not a woman* thing' from when I was a child. It really made me angry and it still does.' Another participant also illustrated the general view participants had of this prayer,

> When my father and brothers say, "*Thank god I'm not a woman*," I think, "You're not really saying that?" I think, "What you're saying is, I'm happy to be a man and have this obligation. I'm glad this one is for me." Not, "I'm glad I wasn't born a woman." That's what you're saying but that's not what you mean. (laughs) Right, is it?' Because I have to believe that it's not, that women are not a less than thing, you know. It's just like I have this opportunity, how wonderful for me, but I think if a woman wants to do that, that she can do that and would never say, "Thank God I wasn't born a man."

Jewish women in Jewish life.

Participants described the gender role expectations they believed the Jewish culture held for them as women. As such, participants conveyed their thoughts about what they believed the Jewish culture held up as an ideal for them to achieve. One participant explained, "There were things I understood made for a good Jewish woman in

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a good Jewish home, you know, lighting Sabbath candles on Friday night. You know most of it had to do with maintaining the Jewish domestic sphere." Further, another participant explained what she learned as a child about this ideal,

> The messages were be good, good meaning keep kosher, don't do anything on the
> Sabbath that would embarrass us. And, that I would most likely be married in a
> traditional Jewish wedding, I would have Jewish children and I would be a Jewish
> wife. Those were the messages.

A third participant had similar ideas,

> Well to be good, you married within the Jewish faith, you are fruitful and
> multiply, raised your children with a Jewish identity, study the Torah, you truly
> understand the meaning behind the *mitzvot*, life cycle ceremonies, and traditions.
> And, when you didn't behave in those ways then you dilute and hurt the group.

Participants also described the messages they got from their Jewish families and the Jewish community about being female. Many participants described the gender-based role expectations that were taught to them. One participant exemplified this idea as she told this story,

> What I learned from my community and my family, the way we were raised in a lot
> of ways, is that women serve the men. You know I still remember the day when my
> dad said to my mother, "Is there more coffee?" and he stuck out his coffee cup and
> she said, "I think so, and when you get yours would you get me some?" We left the
> room. We knew that something was gonna fly, because my mother catered to my
> dad tremendously. So, we learned that that's what you're supposed to do and that
> men are special.

Similarly, another participant shared what she was taught,

> I've definitely gotten a lot from the Jewish community and my family, that women
> are pretty and should find themselves a good man, which has driven me absolutely
> crazy throughout my whole life. I'm pretty much the only granddaughter in my
> family, and all the boys would get accolades on their intelligence and their successes
> in life. I'd always been told 'Oh, you're so beautiful,' 'You should be a model,'
> 'Have you found a husband?'

Participants in this study also described their personal experiences with women's
role in the Jewish religion. Specifically, they offered their views on women's traditional role
in the synagogue and regarding religious training for girls. As women considered the role of
women in the synagogue, many agreed that women were still not equal to men. One
participant explained,

> Women aren't allowed to do anything really. In my old synagogue, the ritual
> committee had decided that women could read from the Torah but no one yet had. I
> also think a lot of congregations may have like a couple of rows at the front where
> only men can sit.

Another participant echoed this opinion, "I don't even like it when you walk into a
synagogue and the women are one side and the men are on the other. It's just something
that bothers me." Further, a third participant spoke about women's role in the synagogue in
more detail,

> It bothered me to think that a woman could not walk upon the *bimah* because she
> was a woman. God forbid she might be menstruating, you know. I mean if that has
> anything to do with her ability to read Hebrew you know, or to make a contribution.

Even though I have had it explained to me many times and I can respect that other people have made that choice, it really was some of the rules about being a woman in the Jewish religion that bothered me and made me make the choice not to become a traditionally religious Jew.

Participants offered their views about the religious training offered to them and other Jewish girls. One participant stated outright, "I had no religious training. The boys went to Hebrew school, the girls did not." Another participant agreed,

No one ever pushed Sunday school and all I can remember is never being taught about what Jewish girls do because there's no religious training for girls. I remember the holidays when the girls would like to dress up and stand around outside, we couldn't do anything, we were in party shoes and dresses and we didn't have to go to synagogue.

More specifically, participants described the expectations held for them regarding *bat-mitzvah*. One participant noted, "My brothers were told that they were supposed to have a *bar-mitzvah* and I was the one given a choice." Another participant shared a similar story,

I was the only female and so both my brothers went to religious school, they went to a Jewish day school and they had *bar-mitzvahs* that were like weddings. When I was coming up, girls just started having *bat-mitzvahs* in our Temple, and it was a Friday night kind of thing and it was definitely more low-key.

Finally, participants gave their opinions as to whether or not one could be a failure or success as a Jewish woman. In particular, participants discussed being a success or failure as a Jewish woman relative to traditional gender role expectations. One participant explained,

If any woman is behaving in a way that makes her feel good, truly, it's their choice

to practice the way they're practicing. If they're measuring up because their father,

the rabbi, or their husband expects them to be a certain way, then that's different.

Some participants agreed that there was no such thing as being a failure as a Jewish woman.

For example, one said,

If you're saying to me, because I am actively involved in the Jewish community, do

I look at another Jewish woman who's not actively involved and consider her a

failure? Absolutely not. Do I consider somebody who doesn't go to *shul* on *Rosh*

Hashanah or *Yom Kippur* a failure? No. Is it a choice that I would make? No. But,

I'm me and that's a choice that somebody else has made so I don't judge it.

Other participants did have particular ideas about what being a failed Jewish woman meant.

One woman talked about living up to the ideal, "I think the failure end would be if you don't

have a family, don't have a career, I mean I think that the expectation is to do as many of

those things as possible." Another participant focused on Jewish morality as a determining

factor in a Jewish woman's success, "I feel like we fail our tradition when we fail to act

ethically and we fail to sort of act beyond self interest, beyond consumerism." In summary,

the notion of Jewishness, or being Jewish, was central to how these women experienced

themselves, defined their lives, made moral decisions, and interacted with others both

locally and in their communities.

Otherness

A fifth major theme that emerged from the data was otherness. Otherness was

described by participants to be the ways Jewish women experience themselves as being

different from the majority in the United States. Otherness was also described by

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participants as being the ways this majority see Jewish women as being different from them. In particular, participants discussed otherness as being the ways Jewish women live outside of the mainstream in the United States, and specifically, Christian society in America. When considering being different from the majority, one participant explained,

Well, I think I definitely have always felt a sense of otherness. I guess part of it is that I do have a very strong Jewish identity, whatever that may be, however poorly I describe it. An African American friend of mine said she doesn't think of me as White, because I have a strong ethnic identity. I thought that was very interesting, and I think that it's true. I don't feel or see myself as part of that larger culture really. Sure I know that culture and I speak the language, but I still think there's a sense of otherness.

Another participant echoed this sentiment, "I feel that things about me are interpreted differently."

As such, the theme of otherness was comprised of three sub-themes: (a) being a minority in a Christian country, (b) visibility and invisibility, (c) non-Jews, and, (d) dating and marrying non-Jews. These four components of otherness will be fully discussed below.

Being a minority in a Christian country.

Participants offered their views about what being a minority in the United States was like for them. Most were clear that they were members of a minority group. Many participants made statements like, "I'm definitely a minority." Another participant qualified her response on this topic, "I would say that I've experienced being a minority

in terms of being a small group and very often not understood." A third participant explained what being a minority meant to her,

I always feel like I'm a minority. When you are surrounded by Jewish people, you don't feel like a minority. But the truth of the matter is when you are out in the world, like in the work world, where by far the vast majority of the people that I'm working with are not Jewish, I know I'm a minority.

As such, participants described their general views about the nature and status of Jews as a minority group. One participant noted her opinion about the influence Jews have in America,

Look at all the Jews in the movie business. We reach out. Jews reach out and really make a difference in a lot of different ways. It's not only good, but Jews are very involved in the public. Jews are very involved in social work and psychology and there's lots of different ways that Jews reach out for being 2 ½% of the population. We really infiltrate in a lot of public matter.

In contrast, another participant believed that Jews are not always prominent or understood to be minorities, "I struggle with all my friends of color because university X has an Ethnic Diversity Affairs committee and their mission is primarily to recruit, retain and support people of color. I would argue with them that I'm also minority."

Although participants acknowledged their minority status as Jews, they did suggest that there were geographical differences in how they experienced this. For example, one participant explained, "I think being a Jewish woman in the United States is very different geographically. Growing up in California was a very different experience than going and living in Israel, or living in Chicago." Another participant added her thoughts,

I think it is different depending upon where you live in the United States. Having

lived in a small Jewish community, a place where we could fit every Jewish person

in our town in our house, and now in a place like city X, which is a reasonably sized

Jewish community, and then, having lived in New York where there's an enormous

Jewish community and so many people are Jewish, there's nothing really notable

about it. It really depends.

And a third participant agreed,

I think if you live in certain metropolitan areas where a large percentage of people

know Jewish people, or know from what Jewish is, you're more in the majority. If

you don't live in New York or Chicago, for example, Judaism is relatively invisible.

Finally, participants shared how their status as a minority in North America

helped them identify more closely with the experience and concerns of other minorities.

One participant explained her understanding of this,

I always feel like a minority and it's not bad thing. I actually like it. I think it's

made me more of a compassionate person. I have envy and jealousy in my bones

too, but not to demean other people. And when I am more aware and know it's

happening it helps me be a little bit more sensitive to other minorities.

Another participant gave her opinion as well, "For me, I feel that you gotta choose. There

is no way to stay of outside of history. We had better choose to stand with the underdog

whoever they are."

Participants also discussed the ways they saw the United States as having a majority

Christian culture. On the whole, participants acknowledged that the predominance of

Christianity in the United States was the main factor in determining their minority status.

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One participant noted, "I really recognize that we live in a Christian society and as such I am a minority in that society." Another concurred,

> Yeah it's a Christian world. This is a Christian country and when people are saying "God" in this country they're saying the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. They're not saying "God." Yes, I think it's a Christian country.

A third participant agreed,

> Especially having grown up in the States, where it really is a Christian culture and it's not recognized, there's something really important and valuable in no longer being a minority. Like I remember the first time I rode the bus on Friday in Israel and the bus driver said, "Shabbat Shalom" and I was just like, "Whoahhh!!"

When thinking about the United States as a Christian country, participants also noted how many non-Jews are not aware of the predominance of Christianity in America. One participant explained, "This is clearly a very Christian society and being Jewish, is not understood as not being part of the Christian tradition by most non-Jewish people, no matter how open-minded they are." Another participant shared her views on this phenomenon in greater detail,

> Being Jewish in the U.S. is very different than being Jewish in Israel. I strongly believe that and one of the things that I've done is help my friends to understand the subtle ways in which we live in a Christian society, which they're not aware of. For example, a simple thing as the lack of respect for *Yom Kippur* and *Rosh Hashanah* across all levels of educational settings unless you live in a super Jewish area or attend a Jewish school. And this came up at work the other day. Good Friday and Christmas, those aren't religious holidays? But we get them off.

Hello, what's up with that? I think a lot of my friends are unaware of how

Christian society it is.

Finally, participants shared that the lack of recognition of the predominance of

Christianity in the United States was troubling for them. One participant exemplified this

sentiment, "We are supposed to have a separation of church and state and it really scares

me that we really don't." And another added, "I think we're bombarded with Christianity

in really subtle ways and anti-Semitic ways."

Participants noted the specific impact that living with a Christian calendar had on

them. Participants elaborated upon how the Christian calendar and unrecognized

Christian reality gives no attention to Jewish holidays and traditions. Likewise,

participants discussed how living with a Christian calendar keeps Jewish life on the

margins. One participant described how she understood this issue,

This becomes most apparent around Jewish holidays. Most visible for the world is

Hanukkah for whatever silliness it is relative to its importance in Judaism you

know. The *High Holidays* are another prime example of how this comes out.

People do not understand that these holidays are important, that these are distinct

religious holidays.

Another participant echoed this thought, "Holidays are always a choice. Do I go to work

or do I go to Temple? How come it's not a choice about Christmas? I'm not going to

show up then because work's closed."

Participants spoke of how public institutions, schools, and universities in

particular, support the marginalization of Jewish life. Many participants shared their

stories about this problem. For example,

I hear many, many, many stories because calendars are made in public schools and they are not made with Jewish holidays in mind, even though they all are informed of this way in advanced. They're all informed through central institutions but that does not stop them from having something that would make a Jewish child feel awful for missing it happen on *Yom Kippur*. This has not stopped them.

Another participant concurred,

I always find insensitive things like planning big events on Jewish holidays. There's no excuse for that. When university X schedules classes to start on *Yom Kippur*, it's like, "Oh come on. That's blatant. Do you schedule classes for Christmas?"

As such, participants discussed how Christmas was a central focus in American society. As a result, many participants agreed that the Christmas season was a particularly difficult and challenging time for them. Many participants shared their Christmas stories. One participant said, "When I went to buy stamps in December, all they had were Christmas stamps and I said, 'Don't you have anything else?' And they said, 'No, this is the holidays.' And I said, 'Actually it's one of the holidays.' You know I can get really resentful that way." Another participant shared a story about her daughter,

In kindergarten they had a Christmas party and my daughter wrote a letter to ask the principal to change it to a holiday party because she didn't feel included. You know she's resentful because they required her to sing Christmas songs.

A third participant described how she dealt with Christmas as a child,

I've told more than one Christian child that there was no such thing as Santa Claus because I was annoyed that they asked me too many times, "What are you getting for Christmas?" or "What are you asking for for Christmas?" Usually at first I would say, "I'm Jewish, we don't celebrate Christmas." But, if they asked me three or four times, I just shattered their illusions, which was kind of cruel. But even now, I still think they deserved it for being an obnoxious child and unaware of anyone else's reality. It's so insensitive.

Participants shared their views about the political influence Christianity has had in the United States. In particular, participants referenced the Christian Right and believed that this group had no tolerance for anything non-Christian. Participants shared their concerns about the Christian Right. For example, one participant shared "I think the Christian Right is very insensitive to Jews and to all the other religions that aren't Protestant or Christian. You know, if you're not White and male and Christian, you ain't American." Another participant added her concerns about the Christian Right and women's rights,

> Well, the Christian right is what concerns me because of how it affects women.
> The Christian Right's view is very different from the Jewish Right. I mean in
> Judaism, the woman's life always comes first before the life of the fetus.

A third participant agreed,

> The Christian Right is a real concern for me in terms of women's rights. You're
> also more threatened as a Jew in your community and I don't like an Office of
> Religious Affairs. I believe very strongly in the separation of church and state.

Very, very, very, very strongly because it protects all minorities and personal

rights and freedom. The separation of church and state is very important.

<u>Visibility and invisibility.</u>

Participants discussed the concepts of visibility and invisibility and described

them in several ways. When speaking of visibility, the first idea participants considered

was how they were identifiably Jewish to others. One participant shared, "No, I'm not

invisible as a Jew because I identify so Jewishly and I make it known. I'm not invisible. I

tell people I'm Jewish. I'm very open about it and I'm heard." Another participant

agreed, "I don't avoid talking about being Jewish with my non-Jewish friends. I mean,

pretty much everybody knows I'm Jewish." The second idea that participants spoke about

regarding visibility was their Jewish pride. One participant said, "The fact that I'm

Jewish is something that is just pretty out there. I mean it's never a secret. I don't wear a

big sign but I'm very proud to be who I am; and, I don't hide it." Another participant

echoed this view, "A question I often get from people who are non-Jews is, 'Oh well,

were you born Jewish?' And I'll say, 'Yes I was that lucky.'"

In addition to discussing their Jewish pride, participants discussed their concerns

about being too visible as Jews or being seen as too Jewish. In particular, participants

described the ways they felt they stuck out because of the differences between Jewish

cultural norms and those of the mainstream society. Along these lines, one participant

shared her professional experience,

I think it's easy to be too Jewish. I think that a lot of times I've been considered too

Jewish. I think that I had a hard time finding a law job because I was too Jewish. I

was told that I had too many Jewish things on my resume by some, and I said I

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wasn't going to take the job because I didn't want to work for somebody who wouldn't hire someone who had Jewish things on their resume.

Other participants described the concerns they had when they knew their actions would let others know they were Jewish. One participant explained,

> There might be people who think, "Oh, I don't really want it to come out that I'm Jewish because I've heard non-Jews say something negative." Or when I was traveling I was thinking, "Should I change my passport? Should I change my name?"

And another participant told this story,

> This summer when my husband and I went on our honeymoon, we went to Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam. Going through Anne Frank's house I wanted to wear shirts with Jewish stars all over it and just let people know that I'm Jewish. Then at the end of the tour I'm like, "I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish," but then suddenly I'm like, "Well no one needs to know because that can be also a negative." So, it was really confusing for me either being noticed or being invisible.

As participants considered their opinions about how visible to be as Jewish women, many described their ambivalence about sticking out. One participant explained, "I didn't talk about my Judaism right away. I made sure somebody knew me long and well before they knew I was Jewish." Similarly, a second participant shared this view,

> I don't feel a need to advertise who I am or what I am to everybody around me. I don't wear a Jewish star. I don't feel a need for people to know me that way. If somebody asked it's not something that I would hide. I'm a pretty open person but I don't advertise everything about me.

A third participant explained why being visible as a Jew was a concern for her,

> There are days when I think, "Do I want to wear my *Jewish star* earring? Do I want to wear my *menorah* necklace? Will someone have a judgment about that, that I can't control? Do I care about that today?" So, when I pick out my Jewish jewelry I think about that. I think that's a product of feeling oppressed because I don't think about this (points to clothes) but I think about if I'm going to put my Jewish star on.

Second, many participants described their experiences with feeling invisible. Overall, participants explored the ways they felt non-Jews did not recognize that they were Jewish or what being Jewish meant. For example, one participant said, "I think most people outside of limited number of metropolitan areas have not contact with Jewish people. They don't know Jewish is from a hole in the wall." Another participant agreed,

> Very, very, very often in town X, I was the first Jewish person that they had ever met and it was not like an occasional experience. It was a very often experience. I also experienced people who, you know, practically were looking in my hair for horns, you know, had never been exposed to a Jewish person before.

Further, participants explained that being invisible meant not being seen or identified as different. One participant illustrated this, "I know that there's definitely not one way that I can be identified as Jewish because when I've traveled around the world, you know, people have thought that I was everything from Italian to Turkish, to Spanish." Another participant agreed,

> Sometimes people look at me and often they think I'm Greek or Italian. Everybody would say to me, "Well what are you? What's your nationality?" And I would say, "I'm American." And they would say, "No, what are you?" "An

Xian I would say." And they would say, "No, what were your grandparents?" And I would say, "Ukrainian." And they would say, "Oh well why do you look the way you look?" And I would say, "Oh, I'm Jewish."

Participants also reported that invisibility meant not being understood as to how one was different religiously in ways that differ from Christianity. Moreover, participants shared their stories of dealing with the anti-Semitic stereotypes people held due to their lack of exposure. One participant shared,

> I had taken over this Girl Scout troop of junior high girls and they were all talking about Christmas and kept asking me, "What are you going to do for Christmas?" And I was like, "I don't celebrate Christmas?" And they would be shocked and say, "What do you mean you don't celebrate Christmas? Even if you don't go to church you celebrate." And I said, "No, I'm Jewish. Jewish people don't celebrate Christmas." And they said, "Do Jewish people have horns?" And they had a real anti-Semitic stereotypical idea of what a Jew was, and they couldn't believe I was a real person and I was Jewish, and I didn't have horns and a tail like the devil.

Another participant shared a similar story about a girl in her class,

> This one girl came up to me afterwards and she said, "If you don't believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins you are going to go to hell and I was just wondering if you were worried about that." And I asked, "Where did you learn that?" And she said, "That's what they taught us at church." In her church she had been taught that.

Finally, a third participant recalled,

When I lived in Spain, people would ask me, "So are you Catholic?" And I would

say, "Well, actually I'm Jewish." And they would gasp and say, "Oh my God."

And they would say, "You don't believe in God, you're part of the devil." They

had no idea what being Jewish was about. Of course they didn't know Jews since

1492. They didn't know Jews, you know.

Non-Jews.

Participants discussed non-Jews generally. Noteworthy was that when giving

specific details about non-Jews, Italians and Catholics were most often discussed. Italians

were viewed as being most similar to Jews culturally. Some participants described the

similarities they noticed in the mannerisms shared by Italians and Jews. For example, one

participant said, "It's just that Jewish people have this tendency to be more open and

expressive and use their hands and love strongly. That's just the way they are, just like

Italians." Another participant added, "I don't put up with shit ever. I also grew up with

families who were Italian Catholic who had female heads of the household and they

embodied most of those same traits." Other participants described what they thought Italians

and Jews had in common regarding parenting styles,

> I don't think it's something you can necessarily stick your finger on and say
>
> everybody who does this is Jewish. I think that there are values that when you see
>
> them tend to make you think, "This is a Jewish mother." But, often it's a nice Italian
>
> mother. Putting your children at a certain level of importance, nurturing and valuing
>
> education, those are Jewish mother criteria, but I think you see that in Italian
>
> mothers too. I think you can say there is a tendency toward similarities.

Lastly, a third participant agreed,

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That's not just for Jews. I mean my neighbor who lives across the street is Italian and she worries about her kids too much too. I think it's cultural that they were always taught the mother is the nurturer for the family. A lot of our neighbors who were Italian Roman Catholics were especially like us.

Next, several participants reported their experiences with Catholics. Some participants described positive feelings for this group. For example, one participant said, "I feel a strong affinity for Catholicism which is of no part of my family tradition. I think I admire how bodied that religion is." Another participant agreed, "In particular I love Catholic writers, you know, that kind of artistic representation is very compelling to me." In contrast, other participants had less positive stories to tell about Catholics. One participant shared,

I had an instructor in Law School who was more than insensitive, somewhere in between insensitive and anti-Semitic in her reaction, when I requested an extension for turning something in because of the way the Holidays fell that year. I even explained to her that these are very important Jewish Holidays and that I don't do school work on Jewish Holidays because I go to Synagogue. Later, someone in my class who is Catholic asked for an extension for another paper because she was engaged and she had to go to some sort of Catholic retreat class over the weekend, that same instructor, who also was Catholic said, "Oh, I understand totally, it's not a problem."

Similarly, another participant told her story,

I'm standing at the Pentagon and these men kept saying, "You guys this and you guys that." And I'm like, "Time out, you guys is me guys, we guys, we guys

together are American." And I asked him, "What's your religion?" And he says, "Well, I'm Catholic." And I said, "Yeah, I'm Jewish. If you are American, I'm American too."

Some participants reported that in some ways they found it difficult to trust non-Jews in general. Some participants said that they did not reveal that they were Jewish until finding out whether or not a non-Jew was anti-Semitic. For example one participant said, "I'm not going to go against a compatriot, you know, but if it's somebody who is outside of my culture, they don't have any investment in me, why should I trust them?" Another participant concurred,

> There are women at the school who have anti-Semitic feelings, and knowing that and having heard those voiced I try not to push being Jewish in their face because it will taint how they treat my kids. I have learned to be very careful when I'm in a new group to feel out how the feelings are about Jews.

A third participant agreed,

> It's not something I usually ask a person up front so I tend not to be friends with people who aren't tolerant of anybody. Usually, if they're not tolerant of one group they're not tolerant of most groups so I kind of scope that out.

Other participants, however, were not naturally distrustful of non-Jews. One participant explained,

> I think that I never ever heard the expression don't trust the *goyim*. It wasn't until I grew up and was exposed to more Jewish families outside of my family. And then, I was like, "What are you talking about?" Then it sounded ridiculous to me when I heard it. It was so clearly as ugly a prejudice as what I experienced other people

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putting upon me because I was Jewish. I was absolutely appalled because weren't we supposed to be at a higher level of and more evolved human being to? I mean, weren't we supposed to behave better than that? It was very shocking to me.

Similarly, another participant held the same view, "To me, that's more of like a Jewish ghetto mentality, you know, they're dangerous, you can't trust them. I don't know. It seems to belong to a different era."

Further, participants also reported their experiences of having to educate non-Jews about Jewish life. For example, one participant had a positive view, "I'm happy to explain. I think it's good for everybody to learn more about more things. Education is good." Another participant was more realistic,

Generally I find people pretty receptive when I start talking to them about Jewish issues. I understand that it doesn't necessarily mean that they want things to change though. So, when I say, "Today's a holiday," and their response is, "Oh why don't we have off Hanukah?" I say, "Well, frankly Hanukah isn't a religious Jewish holiday."

Dating and marrying non-Jews.

Participants' views varied regarding the issue of dating and marrying non-Jews. Many participants believed that most Jews feel that is better not to marry non-Jews. For example, one participant said, "I think that probably most Jewish parents, they would prefer that their child end up with someone who is Jewish." Moreover, most participants explained that they felt intermarriage with non-Jews was not right for them and might weaken the fabric and preservation of the Jewish people. As such, one participant explained why she felt this way,

My fear about intermarriage and the children of intermarriage is that interfaith marriages end up with kids not knowing anything about Judaism. So, it ends up that you're losing people from the community totally. So, I worry about the continuity of the community, the survival of the community.

Another participant agreed with this view,

If I don't marry a Jewish man, it will be very easy for my children to assimilate and lose their Jewish identity and the faith. So, I see how easy it would be to assimilate and just disappear. I can't tell you why I feel so strongly about it but it's just a real deep unconsciousness psyche core in the genetic code issue.

Similarly, a third participant felt the same way, "People realize that when their child marries someone who is not Jewish that their potential grandchildren, most likely won't be Jewish in reality. Whether they are technically or not, in reality they won't be." And lastly, a fourth participant concurred,

I have strong feelings in my heart because I see it among the families of my Temple, that when you have a non-Jewish parent, unless you make those clear delineations that this is a Jewish family, the Judaism does get lost.

Some participants, however, were not as clear about intermarriage being a detrimental choice. One participant said,

I will understand if my children don't marry Jewish men. But, it might be a disappointment because I realize what it means for having Jewish family. It might be a disappointment. I wouldn't be mad at them. I wouldn't not understand it.

Similarly, other participants addressed the way some Jewish families disown children who intermarry. One participant shared,

What about the daughter in "Fiddler on the Roof?" You know the daughter who found love with somebody who wasn't Jewish. Why did her father completely reject her? How can a father reject a child? To me, it was about a father rejecting a child not about a parent insisting upon Judaism or wanting to preserve our faith that is dwindling and assimilating so quickly. It was just about a parent rejecting a child as far as I was concerned.

Finally, many participants shared the views given to them by their families regarding this issue. Some described the impact these views had on them. A few explained that their parents did not pressure them to marry Jews. For example, one participant recalled, "I dated some Jewish guys but it's interesting that I went out with a lot of non-Jewish guys too. My parents never really seemed to be bothered by that." Another participant's experience was similar, "Nobody in my family would ever consider *sitting shiva* for someone who married someone who wasn't Jewish." In contrast, most participants were taught not to intermarry. For example, one participant shared what her family told her, "It's just as easy. Christian boys are just as nice as Jewish boys. It's just as easy to fall in love with a Christian boy, so date Jewish boys." And another participant described the same idea, "Marry inside the faith was a very, very, very strong, a very strong message." Likewise, a third participant shared, "I was told to date Jews, not non-Jews. That was pretty strict." A fourth participant described her grandmother's beliefs on the subject, "My grandmother had the point of view that so many Jewish people were killed during the *Holocaust* that to perpetuate our people you would need to marry other Jewish people." Finally, one participant described her father's extreme views,

My father made it very, very clear to me before the age 10, that if I ever married outside the faith he would shred his clothing, he would *sit shiva;* he would not acknowledge me as his daughter anymore. I would be dead to him.

Anti-Semitism

The sixth major theme that emerged from the data in this study was anti-Semitism. This theme was comprised of three sub-themes: (a) stereotypes, (b) personal experiences of anti-Semitism, and, (c) responding to anti-Semitism. All participants offered their definitions of what anti-Semitism was and why it existed. As for what anti-Semitism was, one participant explained, "I think it would encompass overt acts and hate crimes, obvious anti-Semitism, as well as, bias rooted in ignorance or insensitivity." Another participant added, "I would define that as the hatred of people based on a perception of their Jewishness, you know, or certain traits attributed to Jews." Another participant continued illustrated what anti-Semitism looked like to her,

> There's lot of examples, It might be as silly as someone saying, "Show me the receipt," trying to somehow prove that I really did spend the right amount of money. And I know that that comes from a stereotype. Or, I could be with people and they say, "Oh, I 'Jewed' that person down." Or, "You don't look Jewish."

Further, a third participant explained in detail how she recognizes something is anti-Semitic,

> Sometimes I feel anti-Semitism because I just know that's what it is. And sometimes it's people making judgments, having negative things to say, and using my Judaism as a way of trying to make me feel bad. Sometimes it's true lack of information and stereotypes, and people just feel uncomfortable to ask, and don't

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realize that they're being insensitive. So, being treated poorly because I'm Jewish is not something that I can necessarily prove but boy I can taste it. It's like whenever anybody uses a tool to exercise power over you, that's what anti-Semitism feels like.

Participants theorized about why anti-Semitism exists. As such, some participants offered historical reasons. For example, one participant explained,

In the time of the bubonic plague, Jews didn't catch it as much because if you take a bath every Friday, like Jews did for *Shabbat,* you're less likely to have fleas on you. But they didn't know that then. They just knew that Jews didn't die of it as much or get the plague as much so they would be suspicious. It was deeply rooted, irrational suspicion.

Another person offered her understanding of why anti-Semitism existed in the past,

Historically, Jews had been positioned as the handmaiden to the aristocracy, sort of this second tier in a hierarchy. So, it's been convenient for those with supreme power, when the mass without the power rebels, to turn that rebellion against a privileged minority like the Jews.

Furthermore, other participants explained that anti-Semitism was caused by jealousy and resentment. One participant hypothesized, "I think its jealousy. In history when people had things that other people didn't have, they would say, 'Jews are chosen and they think they're so great and we're going to teach them their lesson.' You know that's jealousy." Another participant concurred, "Because they believe we're the chosen people of God and we're the favorites, God's favorites, and everybody else is not the favorite. Therefore, let's

just destroy the favorites so somebody else can become the favorite." And a third participant

believed it was due to Jews not accepting Christianity,

> I think people resent that the fact that we don't want to be Christians. I remember
>
> reading some book about Jews in America and it said why. Why do people resent
>
> us? Well for centuries when they said you have to be Christian, we said, "No way"
>
> and people resent that.

> Other participants described the cause of anti-Semitism as being rooted in hatred.

One participant explained, "Hatred. I think that it's people being hated for something that

they identify with, you know, hatred of a particular group. So, anti-Semitism would be a

hatred of the Jewish people." Still others believed that anti-Semitism existed because non-

Jews believed Jews had too much power. For example, one participant shared her thoughts,

"They have it in their heads that the Jewish people are trying to run the world or the Jewish

people are taking over." Another participant agreed with this view,

> The concern that there's a Jewish conspiracy, that Jews own Hollywood, and we
>
> now own the political process as well. People are scared of anybody who's different.
>
> Everybody needs to blame somebody when there are problems. We're vocal and
>
> organized and we have a lot of leadership and power for such a small minority. We
>
> can look at the sheer numbers for the power and clout we have as a community. It is
>
> pretty amazing. I mean we're like one percent of the population yet we have impact
>
> and we are organized and I think that's threatening to people.

Finally, one participant said humorously, "Because we're different? We're a minority?

We're identifiable? We have strong families? Many are successful? Education is always

important? Jealousy factor? We killed Jesus? Who knows why?"

<u>Stereotypes.</u>

Participants also described the nature of common anti-Semitic stereotypes and how these affected them. Several participants shared what they thought was common to Jewish stereotypes. One participant said, "Well, they would say that Jews are selfish, conceited, think they're better." Another participant added, "I think in other people's eyes that Jews are in general financially pretty successful. We're hard workers, but I think a lot of it comes out in materialism." Further, a third participant believed,

The rich Jew and the loud pushy mother and the JAP, but I don't think that non-Jews

actually have any cognizance of the Jewish American Princess although they hold

the stereotype of Jews being rich. I think that is the common stereotype of Jews.

More specifically, participants discussed the two most common stereotypes of

Jewish women, namely, the Jewish American Princess (JAP) and the Jewish mother.

One participant described the stereotype of the JAP, "She's a materialistic, gotta have the

new car and the jewels and gotta go out to dinner three times a week kind of woman."

Another participant added, "Materialist, incapable, nudgy, *nudniks*." A third also said, "She

is polished, has a nasal way of speaking and tends to say, 'doll' a lot." In addition to sharing

their thoughts about the Jewish American Princess, participants described the stereotype of

the Jewish mother. One participant thought about the negative aspects, "Let's see, bossy,

overbearing, raise mommas boys, constantly feeding you, the ultimate martyr, the guilt trips,

big, overweight." Another participant shared both the positive and negative aspects,

I think a stereotypic Jewish mother is a mother who nags, who is overprotective of

her sons, who is strong. In a negative light, she's aggressive rather than assertive. In

a positive light, she will do anything to protect her family, strong sense of moral compass, and her value system is clear and directive.

Finally, a third participant shared both the positive and negative aspects as well,

Worrying. I think that would be the biggest thing. Being involved in your kids' life to the point where you worry about them too much. That to me is what I think of as a Jewish mother in a negative sense. In a positive sense, a Jewish mother is welcoming everyone into my home. So in the positive way a Jewish mother is that you nurture, you take care of your kids.

When considering the Jewish American princess and Jewish mother stereotypes, some participants validated the reason for their existence, even though they believed they were exaggerated. In contrast, others asserted the negative, anti-Semitic, and sexist nature of these images. On the one hand, several participants believed that these stereotypes were somewhat based in reality, "I think there's always a grain of truth in pretty much any stereotype, but I don't think that's the be all and end all and I think they've been greatly exaggerated." Another participant concurred,

I think there's validity to any stereotype. I mean, you wouldn't have them otherwise. I've known spoiled Jewish women, teenagers from Long Island and in some ways they just fit the stereotypes, but that doesn't mean that their non-Jewish neighbor wasn't just as spoiled.

Similarly, a third participant explained,

The truth is in any stereotype. Clichés wouldn't exist if they weren't true and we all know Jewish women with long fingernails and hen-pecked husbands and you know,

closets full of minks and plenty of plastic surgery. I mean it exists, but you know, its one piece of the total picture.

On the other hand, several participants found the Jewish American Princess and Jewish mother stereotypes problematic. One participant explained why she didn't like the idea of a JAP,

I hate the stereotype of the JAP. I say, you know, I know Christians who are more Jappy, you know, so maybe that's Long Island, maybe that's Beverly Hills. I think that's a socio-economic phenomenon rather than a Jewish one. So, I resent the JAP stereotype but it is there. I see it. But, I really resent the JAP stereotype.

Another participant agreed, "What I don't like about the JAP stereotype is the shallowness it portrays." Likewise, a third participant shared her similar views, "I hate it when people use the word J.A.P., I really don't like that term. Although I think of myself as a Jewish mother and I make jokes about it, I say it in a loving way."

In addition to giving their opinions regarding the stereotypes about Jewish women, several participants described how they felt when they saw Jews behaving in ways that confirmed Jewish stereotypes. One participant expressed her concerns,

I have to admit that there are times when I've been out in the really Jewish section and I see somebody behaving the epitome of the American Jewish stereotype and it's really hard. I want people to understand there's more to us than that and sometimes it gets lost in the snapshot. We are individuals of people and we have strengths and weaknesses and there are bad Jewish people and there are good Jewish people and there are the Jewish people that follow similar to the stereotypes and there are those of use who don't but we're not all this image.

Another participant felt the same way, "When I lived in town X and I saw somebody Jewish behaving obnoxiously or rudely it totally embarrassed me. I wanted to wear a flashing neon sign that said, 'We're not all like this'."

Moreover, several participants described the ways that they actively try to disprove common Jewish stereotypes. One participant explained, "One of the things that I like about being out there in the non-Jewish world as a Jewish woman is I can bust through a lot of myths and stereotypes and that's important for me." Another participant recalled how her parents had raised her regarding this issue,

My parents put loving pressure on us to be good, to behave well, because they had experienced people as having preconceived notions of what a Jewish person from New York was like. I think that they had very high expectations for our academic performance, our sportsman-like conduct, and in the level of respect that we showed teachers. A higher standard, actually, because we had a lot of stereotypes to rise above and anything that we said could be considered just being a loud mouth Jew from New York. So, therefore, we had to be really, really kind and good because it's almost like it was a hard job to break that stereotype.

Personal experiences of anti-Semitism.

All of the participants shared the diverse ways they had experienced anti-Semitism in their lives. One participant confirmed, "There were lots of ways that we were discriminated against growing up." A second participant also stated, "All kinds of anti-Semitic stuff happens. Yeah, every day, all the time. It happens a lot." A third participant agreed, "I am very aware of anti-Semitism. I'm not trying to make it a problem, although I have had quite a few things to happen to me over my life." Similarly, a fourth participant

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said, "I'm always sensitive of anti-Semitism. I know that I might not be accepted now everywhere I go."

Several participants described the stories that they had heard from others. One participant exemplified this point, "I definitely hear stories all the time." Another participant spoke of what her father had told her, "My dad told us stories of anti-Semitism in the army and how he kept losing rank in the army because he was Jewish." A third participant recalled the stories a woman she knew had told her,

> A woman I met in Israel told me her story. She had a sister who was a secretary for the head SS Nazi guy, until they figured out she was Jewish. She told me that they made her watch as they cut trees down on her children and husband and then killed her.

Next, participants described the various ways they had experienced anti-Semitism themselves. First, some spoke of how they felt they had been stereotyped. One participant illustrated this idea, "I've experienced more negative comments about looking Jewish, which I know is a way to stereotype me." Another participant spoke of the stereotype of Jews being like the devil,

> When I was twelve, I was the only Jew at camp and when this girl heard I was a Jew she said, "Can I see your horns?" I had never run into anything like that before. It was a seminal moment for me.

Likewise, a third participant explained her experience dealing with the stereotype of Jews being stingy and obsessed with money, "I was very conscious of being Jewish there because there were no Jewish people and I remember that was the first time I had ever heard the expression 'Jew you down'."

Second, participants described their experience with being called names and having been the victim of anti-Semitic vandalism. One participant told this story about being called names,

My boss to be in Huston looked me right in the eye and said, "I'm not going to have a kike on my staff." And I heard a lot of things like that even in the Pittsburgh area like, "Oh, I 'Jewed' him down," and, "Jews this, and Jews that," and "Hey Jew girl," they would say to me.

Another participant added, "Growing up we were called lots of names, negative names, like dirty Jew and *kike*." A third participant had a similar experience, "When I was in elementary school I had one girl call me a dirty Jew and it was someone who was in my circle of friends." Further, a fourth participant shared, "I was called 'bagel girl,' and 'matzoh ball.' They mostly used Jewish words and food in a derogatory way. Oh yeah, and the occasional kike, the occasional 'he Jewed me' and that really pissed me off." In addition to being called names, participants described how they had experienced anti-Semitic vandalism. One participant shared, "Oh like a swastika on the driveway, swastikas were painted on my Temple, and I had swastikas painted on my locker in high school." Another participant had a similar experience, "There were swastikas and various anti-Semitic what nots painted on the different Temples I have been a member of."

Third, participants described experiences with anti-Semitism that were more severe including being accosted, being beaten up, and drive-by shootings at their synagogue. One participant told her story,

I was accosted on campus by a Libyan and Iraqi student who didn't like what I had said in a class. They came up to me and they each took me by the arm and said,

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"You're coming with us," and I was pretty scared because I knew how they felt about Jews.

Another participant described how she was beaten up for being Jewish,

One day I was chased and beaten up by girls from a Roman Catholic school and the experience was so terrifying but so bizaare because it was clearly it was a religious incident. I'd never even heard the epithets before. I had no idea that such a thing could happen. I remember it very well as a seminal event. It is still a profound, immediate, tangible experience for me.

And finally, a third participant said, "There were always the drive by shootings at my synagogue."

Responding to anti-Semitism.

Overall, participants' strategies to addressing anti-Semitism varied. Some participants responded to anti-Semitism by educating their children. One participant explained, "Since my kids have been little we've talked about anti-Semitism." Other participants choose to do nothing and just feel sad. For example, "There are other times I just cry. I just feel sad. I'm just hurt and I just have an emotion. I can't change the way other people view me or think and that's very sad." Other participants explained that they speak out about anti-Semitism. One participant shared,

There were different times and different situations that I made different choices but I always ended up feeling so much better about the choice of standing up and saying something then not saying something. I've just learned how to say in a more tactful way because I think that you have to be very careful not to embarrass the person. An embarrassed, prejudiced person is a very dangerous thing.

Further, other participants engaged in social action to respond to anti-Semitism. One participant gave an example,

> When the Ku Klux Klan was planning a march here for *Rosh Hashanah*, I went ballistic. I couldn't understand how the organized Jewish community wasn't going ballistic. And I thought, "Why won't the KKK march through Harlem? Because they will get their butts kicked and they don't think the Jews are going to kick their butts." And I thought they needed to understand, "Oh, yes we will." I wanted to go with a baseball bat. But my husband said, "You can't be at City Hall with a baseball bat." So, I organized something. On my own I organized a program. I figured okay, I'm going to use the energy that the Klan is generating to raise money for Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). And I raised about $10,000 for Friends of the IDF at a private dinner called, "Zero Tolerance for Terror and Hate."

Holocaust

The seventh theme that emerged from the data in this study was the *Holocaust*. As such, there were two sub-themes: (a) effects of the *Holocaust*, and, (b) responding to the *Holocaust*. All of the participants offered their theories of what the *Holocaust* was and why it happened. In regard to what the *Holocaust* was, one participant explained, "My understanding of what took place there was that Hitler, the Nazis and the all people who ran the show there at that time considered it a cleansing, which meant the destruction of the Jewish people." A second participant gave her opinion,

> The *Holocaust* was Hitler's systematic attempt to eliminate anyone who was non-Aryan, the largest proportion of which was Jews. Jews were the main targets, but not

the only ones. There were lesbians and Gypsies and others. Hitler systematically

tried to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth by use of the work camps and

the death camps and crematoriums and science experiments.

Likewise, a third participant offered her understanding, "Hitler and the Nazis got rid of the

Jews and the Catholics and the gays and everybody who wasn't what he said was perfect."

Moreover, in regard to why the *Holocaust* happened, participants offered several

explanations. One participant explained,

Hitler was able to come to power initially because he told people what they

wanted to hear, that they had a problem and he knew the cause of it and he was

able to get stupid downtrodden people, like they were after the First World War in

Germany, to feel better about themselves. These people believed him and he was

able to get enough of a following and attract enough of the folks to put fear in

everybody's heart.

A second participant added her view,

Why did he get away with it? Because people didn't have instant news like we

have today and people didn't get the message out faster and the Germans didn't

even believe it. It was happen in their backyard and they didn't believe it. So, if

they didn't believe it why would they tell anybody? He got away with it for a

long time because nobody knew and then when they did know everyone said, "It

can't be."

Likewise, a third participant believed, "My understanding is also that most of the world

stood by and watched and let it happened, denied reports or refused refuge when the few

Jews who tried managed to get out of Germany."

In theorizing about why and how the *Holocaust* happened, other participants did not have such clear explanations. One participant remarked,

Who can explain the *Holocaust*? (sighs) I (sighs) as a human being am kind of fatalistic and believe usually that everything happens for a reason. We don't always know the reason. We may never know the reason but I still nevertheless think that there is a bigger plan and that there is a reason for everything, but I just don't know that I could ever extend that to the *Holocaust* because it was just so inhumane and barbaric and brutal and I mean they actually haven't invented a word to describe the *Holocaust*.

A second participant felt the same way, "I've been to *Dachau* twice and have been to Israel and I don't have any more answers than I did before."

Effects of the Holocaust.

Many participants reported that they had known survivors and that this had affected them. Some reported having *Holocaust* survivors in their family. For example, one participant explained, "My nanna had lots of friends who had come to the States as survivors. So, we kind of took them into our family, adopted them into our family as survivors of the *Holocaust*." Another participant also said, "A very good friend of my grandmother's was in the *Holocaust* and I remember she was coming over to my grandmother's house and she would have the concentration camp numbers tattooed in her arm." A third participant had a similar experience, "You know, I grew up with many children survivors of the *Holocaust*." Similarly, a fourth participant stated, "Well, I know a lot of *Holocaust* survivors." Further, some participants explained that they had *Holocaust* survivors in their family and described the impact that had on them. One

participant talked of her grandfather, "My grandfather came to the United States after *Kristalnacht* from Germany, and there was always that shadow." Another participant also spoke of her grandfather,

The *Holocaust* helped to create the man that he was and how he raised his son and how his son then turned around and help raised me. My personality was molded because of the *Holocaust* and I see, very, very clear direct connections from it.

Furthermore, all of the participants reflected on the *Holocaust* deeply and had much to say. Most participants reported that the *Holocaust* had a profound and unchangeable effect on them personally, as well as, on the Jewish people. One participant explained how she understood this,

Jews are hugely affected by the *Holocaust*. I think emotionally as a people we are. In my experience all Jews know about the *Holocaust*. I mean we <u>really</u> know about it, at least as adults. We have visited a *Holocaust* Museum, or have known concentration camp survivors or have been somehow directly connected to some part of it.

Another participant echoed this sentiment, "The *Holocaust* changed the world and it changed the way the next generation of Jews, who descended from those survivors, will ever see the world." Similarly, a third participant believed, "I think the *Holocaust* affects being Jewish, especially as an American Jew. The way the *Holocaust* is taught in the United States is basically learning about the six million being led to the slaughter."

Moreover, participants described how the *Holocaust* affected them personally. One participant shared, "The Holocaust impacts me to the core of who I am as a human being." Another participant added, "When I think about the Holocaust it's not from an objective

point of view. It's from a subjective point of view in that it happened to me. It happened to my family kind of a feeling." Another participant described the effect the *Holocaust* had on her,

> So how it impacts me is I'm not going to change my name on my passport. I'm going to identify myself as a Jew and I'm going to take this risk whatever it is because it pales in comparison to what my ancestors did 50 or 60 years ago. I'm very lucky and fortunate that no one in my immediate family was a part of that to my knowledge. But in reality, I feel like my immediate family was.

Further, other participants shared their experiences. One explained, "I've been in crowded situations, where I think, 'God, is this what it was like in the cars?' I have these kinds of visions." Another participant added, "I think that those are seminal images. I think for a long time my body was informed by images of nude, young women in trenches." Finally, a third participant shared,

> After seeing 'Shindler's List' I couldn't speak for two days. And I remember thinking that I wanted to drop being Jewish. I wanted to move someplace where someone didn't know us, some little town where there were no Jews. We could learn about Christianity, so that my children could have a good, full life doing positive *mitzvot* in a Unitarian Church or in a Methodist Church. We didn't really have to believe in Jesus. I just never wanted my children or my grandchildren or their children to suffer what I saw in that movie.

In addition, several participants described that distrusting Germany and the German people was another effect the *Holocaust* had on them. One participant explained,

If somebody is German, I will say they don't like Jews. If somebody's German, they

don't like Jews so I don't like them. I know it's really not a good way to be. It's a

prejudiced way on my part to think but I can't help it. We all have our prejudices.

Other participants shared stories of recent trips they had made to Germany that also

illustrated this distrust,

Last year, when we went to Germany, my mom and I couldn't wait to get out. The

first time I heard a siren, an ambulance, or a cop car, was really scary, and I knew

that my mom felt the same way. It's not that people weren't friendly, because

basically everybody was friendly. But, the siren especially, hearing that siren. I just

wanted to leave.

A third participant told a similar story about her trip to Germany,

I traveled through Germany one time and there was a woman I had met on the train

who was so nice She didn't know I was Jewish, and at one point she had said there

was a game that they used to play where they would drive around the city and they

would try to pick out the Jewish people by like who had big noses or who had

certain hair. And I was completely offended. And I said to her, "Well I'm Jewish.

Would you have pointed me out I mean, what does that mean?" She was taken

aback. She didn't think of it as anything bad. But I just thought it was a sort of a

strange game for someone German to be playing who wasn't Jewish.

Responses to the *Holocaust*.

Participants offered three responses to the *Holocaust* namely: never forget, it could

happen again, and never again. First, some participants believed that if people forget why

and how the *Holocaust* happened than there is nothing to ensure that it wouldn't happen

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again. A few participants also reported that it was important to never forget because there were some non-Jews who didn't believe the *Holocaust* ever happened. One participant explained, "One thing that I agree with that I hear all the time is that the *Holocaust* shouldn't be forgotten." Another participant agreed, "I think it's very important not to forget. I think that *Holocaust* survivors are dying off and it's going to be very easy to forget." A third participant echoed this sentiment, "A post *Holocaust* society needs to not forget."

A few participants also explained that there are some people who want the world to forget the *Holocaust* ever happened. For example, one participant shared what happened to her, "When I was growing up, the history teacher claimed the *Holocaust* was a ruse. We never got to study it in school because it didn't happen." Another participant told a similar story, "My daughter came home from school last week and one of her classmates had told her that the *Holocaust* had not happened." A third participant concurred, "A lot of people don't even think the *Holocaust* ever happened."

The second response to the *Holocaust* described by participants was the notion that it could happen again. Many participants were certain that Jewish persecution was a given in the world and that it is just a matter of time until the next atrocity happened again. One participant said, "It probably can happen again. I don't think you would have to have a unique historical situation, like with Hitler, because it didn't come from him alone. So, I think that it can happen again." Another participant agreed, "There's probably some immigrant or second generation American post-Holocaust thing of, well you can't ever get too comfortable because you never know when it will happen again." A third participant concurred,

I think that this could happen again. I read things that are happening in Germany, not just in Germany but all over. The young kids who were shot at one of the schools and there were swastikas. It seems like so many of these shootings or so many of these crimes, behind them is anti-Semitism in our country. I think it could happen again.

And finally, a fourth participant shared her view,

I'm a student of history and as a Jew it is only good for so many generations in any place. For a while, it was great in Poland. Sometimes where you think it's the best is where you can have the worst destruction and it can happen in a heartbeat and I'm very aware of that. It doesn't matter if you don't consider yourself a Jew and you want to assimilate somebody else will see you as a Jew and that will be that.

Finally, the third and last response participants had to the *Holocaust* was to never let it happen again. The concept of "never again" was a stance of resistance and defense against anti-Semitism. As one participant explained,

I think it would be awfully nice to have more of the Israeli resistance stance on the *Holocaust*. That includes more about resistance. I learned that in Israel they don't focus on the six million so much, they focus on fighting back.

Another participant had a similar opinion,

When I think about the Holocaust, I think about the heroes and I want to think about the heroes and the survivors and the risks they took. The people that came and fought against oppression and lost their lives because they valued life and fought back.

Data Analysis for Interview Process

At the end of each interview participants were asked questions in relation to how they experienced the interview process. The specific process questions asked were: (a) What was this process like for you?, (b) What was helpful about the discussion?/What was not?, (c) What was meaningful about the discussion?/What was not?, (d) Was anything important missing from the discussion?, and (e) Would this process have been different for you if I (the facilitator) wasn't Jewish?/If so, how?. In response to these questions, participants reported that they found the researcher easy to talk to because she was Jewish, and that her being Jewish helped create an openness and sense of trust. Further, participants explained that the cultural familiarity shared with the researcher facilitated the ease in answering the interview questions. Participants also reported that the benefits of the interview were that it was interesting and thought provoking. Moreover, participants did not report that the process was at all distressing. In addition, participants were very generous with their time and offered to help contribute to this research effort as it unfolded. Finally, some participants reported that while they enjoyed the individual interview, they would have liked to have direct contact with the other participants so they could know what they had to say.

Researcher's Data

Researcher's Log

As is described in the methodology section of this document, over the course of data collection and data analysis, I kept a researcher's log to record my subjective frame. My analysis of the researcher's log resulted in the emergence of three insights unique to my process as a researcher. First, I indicated in the log that I became more comfortable and

skilled with regard to the interview process over time. This occurrence was also noted by one of the judges who said,

> It seems as though the interviews got more complex as you went on. You got all the answers in the earlier ones, but, somehow the answers were shorter and more to the point. I'm wondering if this reflects your own interaction with the subject matter as you went on, increased comfort, warming up to the topic. It could be just where the women were at developmentally. Somehow, I was more engaged with the later interviews, even though the first ones had some relevant important stuff to say.

The researcher's log I kept confirms this judge's impression that I was more confident and more aware of finer nuances in the later interviews. I also noted in the researcher's log that the early interviews were thorough and produced meaningful results.

Second, I indicated in the researchers log that I found the interview format challenging, especially for interviewing Jewish women. Overall, I struggled to work in a cultural frame that was not Jewish, in style, as I understood it. That is, the formality of the interview structure, and the necessity to adhere to a sequential question and answer format felt overly rigid to me. I described these feelings frequently in my log, even though I employed the feminist strategy of inserting my subjective frame as the interview process warranted. I also noted in my log that several of the participants felt equally frustrated with the formality of the interview. In part, I described this phenomenon as being influenced by my personal experience of interacting with Jews in ways that are less formal, more interactive, and that do not comply with standard rules of politeness regarding interrupting, taking turns when speaking, and staying focused on the speaker. I noted in my log that the participants also commented on these issues. This is not to say that a focus on the

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participant's frame was not the overall goal of the research. It does indicate, however, that there may be a Jewish style of interaction that I am accustomed to that for whatever reason did not lend itself naturally to the interview process. Thus, this raises the question as to whether I would have experienced a more congruent style differently and would have elicited different information from the participants.

Third, throughout the interviews, I found myself reflecting upon the participants' responses based on how I might have answered the questions. This awareness helped me to keep my potential responses to the questions from guiding the interview. I aimed to be true to the protocol of a structured interview format and bracketed my answers to the questions in my mind, as I listened and attended to what the participants had to say. I recorded these bracketed thoughts in the researcher's log in between interviews. In summary, through the use of a log, I was able to be aware of my assumptions, subjective frame, and responses to the interview questions to keep from overly imposing them on the participants' process.

Analysis of Data for Researcher's Underlying Assumptions

As previously discussed, the researcher entered into this project with six underlying assumptions. The existence of these six assumptions operating throughout the study was supported upon completion of the data analysis of both the researcher's log and the feedback provided by the auditor and judges. Upon completion of the general data analysis looking for themes and sub-themes, the data was analyzed once again to assess whether or not these six assumptions were tenable. The results are of this specific analysis of the researcher's assumptions are discussed below.

The researcher's first assumption was the notion that there is in fact a unique entity called Jewishness, which is fundamental to a Jewish woman's view of herself and her life. This assumption was indeed supported by the data in that all of the participants in this study reported in detail how they understood and maintained their internal and external Jewish worlds. As such, participants provided descriptions of how they understood their Jewishness. For example, many participants shared this view, "It's who we are innately." Similarly, participants echoed the notion that their inner Jewish world was reflected in their outer Jewish life. When discussing their external Jewish lives, many participants made comments like, "I think the history, the culture, the religion, the Jewish community, and a Jewish home, all work together to form one's Jewish identity."

The second researcher's assumption underlying this study was that being a secular Jew was a simple notion and that secularism would serve as a distinct defining factor in how the participants understood themselves as Jewish women. Simply stated, this was not found to be the case. Interestingly, women were required to identify as secular to participate in the study, and all did so both during the initial screening phone conversation and on the study's demographic sheet. When asked to discuss their understanding of the role secularism played in their lives during the interview, all the participants struggled with this concept. One participant illustrated this struggle,

> I feel very Jewish, spiritually, but I don't necessarily practice it so does that make me secular? We do light *Shabbas* candles though on Friday night if we're home and do other Jewish things. I guess maybe I really don't know what secular means. I know I'm not very religious, but I'm still Jewish.

Another participant added,

> I really had trouble with what the secular/religious distinction means. While I
>
> participate in the Jewish community and in religious things, I don't feel like I
>
> have very strong religious beliefs. So, I guess in most ways I would be defined
>
> as a secular Jew, but I feel like I'm part of the religious community. I think the
>
> dichotomy is a problem when it comes to being Jewish.

A third participant agreed, "I struggle with that because sometimes secular means

assimilated, so I tend to prefer non-practicing versus secular. Or culturally identified

perhaps? But I did check off secular." Further, a third participant explained,

> Secular to me implies no religion or the things that people think their religion
>
> isn't affected by. I'm secular, but I think everything I do is affected by my
>
> Judaism. Jewishness is so deeply ingrained in me and that it's just a part of who
>
> I am and how I express myself. I guess it doesn't make sense to me.
>
> Furthermore, many participants identified themselves as secular, but

qualified what this meant to them. For example,

> I see Jewishness as more of a complex continuum. I think being religious or
>
> secular are amorphous ideas and don't really exist. I just pick and choose
>
> how I want to be Jewish. Some of that is secular, some is not.

A second participant shared her thoughts,

> How I interpreted it is that I think as a *Reform* Jew, I am religious as a
>
> *Reform* Jew, and religion and the future of my faith is important to me. But, I
>
> am secular too. What I do when I'm not with other Jewish people is secular,

but I don't feel that compartmentalized. I checked secular, but I could have also checked religious.

Still other participants reported being confused about the idea of being a secular Jew and others did not even understand what being secular meant. For example, "I guess it's been how I live my life, I don't know because I am Jewish. I don't know. I'm not sure. I'm going to have to come back to that." Another participant also said, "I'm Jewish but I'm a non-believing Jew. Does that make me secular?" Finally, one participant shared,

It's funny because if I had a dictionary I would look that word up. I don't really know what that means. I guess that's where I fit in, but on a secular versus not doing anything at all having to do with Judaism level, that's not me.

Therefore, given the complex ways participants understood their Jewishness, the term secular as a way of identifying as a Jew was found to be useful in name only. As such, the concept of secularism as understood by the researcher, was not supported by the data gathered in this study.

A third research assumption underlying the study was that a distinction in Jewish ethnicity, (*Ashkenazi* as opposed to *Sephardi*), was meaningful in terms of who the participants were and how they made meaning of their Jewishness. A selection criterion for the study was that women had to be a member of the *Ashkenazi* ethnic group. All participants in the study met the criteria. When asked to describe the meaning of being *Ashkenazi*, however, almost all of the participants described the technical aspects of their background and did not speak to how their

ethnic heritage affected them more deeply. Some participants did not even know what it meant to be *Ashkenazi* at all. For example one participant said, "I don't know what is typical. There is nothing very unique about being *Ashkenazi* for me." Another participant added, "Not that I'm aware of. I mean, I'm sure there are things and maybe they're a part of who I am. I just don't know what's unique to being *Ashkenazi*." A third participant stated simply, "I wish I knew more."

Further, many participants provided concrete descriptions of the kinds of food they might eat, where previous generations of their family had lived in the world and technical aspects of how one spoke that were a product of their *Ashkenazi* ethnic heritage. Some participants spoke of food. For example, "Oh, you know, the cooking. I don't know how to do the *Sephardi* cooking, you know. I like the *matzoh* balls. I like *blintzes*, I like *Ashkenazi gefilte fish* better than *Sephardi gefilte fish*. Another participant added, "Probably certain foods that I prepare traditionally, but I don't necessarily think, 'Gee, this is an *Ashkenazi* recipe versus a *Sephardic* way of cooking.' But, it nevertheless probably is." In addition to mentioning *Ashkenazi* food, participants also spoke of where their families had come from that identified them with this Jewish ethnic group. One participant stated, "I think part of it is the immigrant tradition in my family." A second participant agreed, "Well I guess Ashkenazi means Jews that settled in European areas." A third participant explained, "Well, I know that my background is German and French and that's where the people who came before me were from." And finally a fourth participant said, "My mom's parents were immigrants. I'm not sure where exactly in Eastern Europe or Russia they're from. I think Polish-German-Russian." Lastly, participants explained

the technical linguistic aspects of their Jewish culture that were derived from their *Ashkenazi* heritage. For example, one participant said, "My mom's parents spoke in *Yiddish*." Another participant added, "I think I noticed a difference in how the Hebrew letter *Taf* is pronounced like an S." A third participant concurred, "I know certain little things about the pronunciation of Hebrew."

Thus, being *Ashkenazi* did not appear to have a major effect on how participants understood themselves as Jews. As one participant explained, "It doesn't play any major role in my psyche or consciousness other then where people come from." Another participant agreed, "I don't think that I have, you know, this pride over being *Ashkenazi* versus being *Sephardic*."

A fourth researcher's assumption underlying this study was that a Jewish woman's personal and family life would be influenced by her being Jewish. As such, this assumption was found to be the case, as was indicated in the data analysis. The construct of Jewishness that emerged, and in particular the sub-theme of the theme the Jewish people, namely, Jewish childhood and the Jewish family, support this assumption. These sections of the data analysis speak to this thoroughly. In general, though, it was common for participants to make comments like, "I think Jewishness is a part of who we are and part of that heritage is sharing it with our children or family and the others in our lives." Likewise, a second participant added, "What I feel is really important is living in a Jewish home and values. We have a Jewish family life." Similarly, a third participant agreed, "Living in a Jewish home, which means to me that you talk to your children about being Jewish, you celebrate *Hanukkah*, you celebrate *Passover* and that is very important."

A fifth assumption underlying this study was that Jewish women would have specific ways of coping with being Jewish in a non-Jewish/Christian environment. As supported by the data analysis, this assumption was found to be the case. As such, the two major themes of otherness and anti-Semitism, elaborate upon this in great detail. Overall, participants described the various ways they have coped with being Jewish in a Christian society, and in particular how they dealt with anti-Semitism. The first way that participants coped with being Jewish in a non-Jewish country was by choosing to be visible. For example, one participant explained, "I'm not shy about my Jewishness, and I've found that the higher you hold your head, the more respect you command." Another way participants coped with being Jewish in a Christian society was choosing to be invisible. Another participant stated, "I'm not going to walk up to somebody in the KKK and say, 'Hey guess what, I'm Jewish.' I'm not looking for trouble." Further, a third way participants coped with being Jews in a non-Jewish country was by not intermarrying. One participant shared her view, "I think marrying Jewish makes having a Jewish family life, in which the identity of being Jewish is unquestionable, central, and much easier." A fourth way participants reported coping with living in a non-Jewish country was reflected in how they responded to anti-Semitism. One participant illustrated this point,

> There are different ways of responding to anti-Semitism. It depends on the situation. If I'm not in danger of being physically threatened then I will confront it directly. If I'm in a situation where it's dangerous to me, then I will escape, even by not saying anything. If somebody who said something anti-

Semitic is unaware or ignorant, then I can educate or open a dialogue about it and if nothing else tell them how that made me feel.

A six assumption underlying this study was that Semitic features and "looking Jewish" contributed to women's experience of being Jewish. As such, this assumption was only supported somewhat, as some participants reported they did not find women attractive who looked like a Jewish stereotype. Likewise, some participants described how they felt having a stereotypical Jewish nose, curly hair, or larger body size affected them. As such, one participant shared how she feels about Jewish women who resemble the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess, "Personally, the most unattractive Jewish women that I've ever met are the ones that are dolled up and have lots of jewels." Another participant reported how she felt about her nose and curly hair,

> I've totally given up on straightening my hair um, not that I wouldn't be happy
> to wake up tomorrow with straight hair; that would be fine. I've never wanted
> to get my nose fixed although I'm not crazy about having my pictures taken in
> profile. If I accidentally got my nose broken, I would want them to straighten it
> out a little bit.

Likewise, a third participant spoke about Jewish women and body size, "There is always a pressure to be thin and to meet that sort of Barbie stereotype, which of course most Jewish women are even farther away from than the average person."

In contrast, several participants did not feel that appearance was a particularly Jewish issue. One participant explained,

> From a psychological viewpoint, I think that beauty issues aren't specific to a
> particular people. There are certain things that I think Americans are trained to

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think that are beautiful. If those things come out in a person who is Jewish then

they would be considered beautiful in the same way that someone of a different

group of people would be considered beautiful.

Finally, a second participant agreed, "As a Jewish woman? I would say probably

similar to my standards of attractiveness regardless of religion. Jews come in all sizes,

shapes, colors all races. I probably have less stereotypical view of that."

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

As indicated in the literature review, the writing on Jewish women is theoretical in nature. Further indicated in the literature is the paucity of data based studies on Jewish women in psychology. Thus, given that this is the first data based study of Jewish women of its kind, I will first focus on the comparison of the overall findings of this study with the broad theory in the literature looking for similarities and differences. Second, I will consider the implications this study holds for psychology. Third, I will provide a discussion of the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

The Concept of Jewishness

Theoretical writings suggest that a woman's Jewishness is multi-faceted. As such, Jewish identity is matrilineal (Adler, 1998) and is comprised of part peoplehood, part culture, part shared history, part ethnic identity, and is based on more than just the practice of the Jewish religion (Smith, 1991). The literature also indicates that a woman's Jewishness is informed by a variety of nationalities, races, socio-economic statuses and political positions (Torton Beck, 1989). As was indicated by the results of this study, Jewishness was found to be a complex and multi-dimensional concept, thereby supporting existing theory. Participants reported that having a Jewish mother certainly contributed to their being Jewish, but that the nature of their Jewishness was far more complicated than that. Participants described the fundamental nature of their Jewishness and how it related to how they were raised, who they were, how they thought, how they interacted with both Jews and non-Jews, and how they made decisions in their lives.

It is important, therefore, for psychologists to understand that being Jewish is far more complex for women than their identification with a particular religious group. Psychologists need to understand that a woman's Jewishness may even be more central to her experience of herself than her ethnicity, nationality, race, or gender. This view of Jewishness may depart drastically from current reductionist understandings held by psychologists regarding religious identification in general, and of Jewish women in particular who may be seen simply as co-religionists (Smith, 1991). Similarly, this understanding of Jewishness, as being a predominant identity above all others, may conflict with a current focus in psychology on race and ethnicity as the main sources of identity and experience. As most Jewish women in the United States are Caucasian, psychologists might oversimplify their understanding of this group based on their racial identity. Thus, if Jewish women clientele present for services and the attending clinician is unaware of the possible centrality of a woman's Jewishness, misdiagnosis, inaccurate conceptualization, and misunderstanding are likely to ensue. It is therefore incumbent upon psychologists to broaden their understanding of Jewishness and to begin to see Jewish women's concerns in a more comprehensive and holistic light.

Jewish Worldview

Theory indicates that fundamental to a Jewish woman's worldview is a Jewish value system and code of ethics (Torton Beck, 1989). Paramount to this ethos is a commitment to establishing social justice in the world (*tikkun olam*), living a just and righteous life, doing good deeds *(mitzvot)*, upholding the tenant of *tzedakah*, and having a strong appreciation for suffering and its alleviation in the world (Brown, 1991). The results of this study support the conceptual understanding that Jewish values and ethics do, in fact, inform a Jewish woman's

worldview. Participants described the nature of their Jewish morality and values in detail and provided myriad examples as to how this was reflected in their lives.

Some psychologists currently acknowledge the importance of understanding client's values and worldview. In support of this tradition, an appreciation of the unique nature of Jewish women's ethics and values would prove invaluable in providing "culturally sensitive" services to this population. In addition to a Jewish woman's obligation to do *mitzvot*, *tzedakah*, and *tikkun olam*, psychologists need to understand that the values of maintaining a Jewish home, supporting the Jewish community, raising Jewish children, participating in Jewish culture and tradition, and preserving Judaism may be central to how Jewish women understand their lives and how this may vary. Likewise, psychologists need to appreciate that the values of being well educated, educating others, being successful, high achieving, and hard working, may well be part of the contextual fabric of a Jewish woman's life. Moreover, psychologists need to understand what failing to or being unable to live up to these standards may mean to a Jewish woman. A lack of appreciation of the predominance of this worldview for Jewish women can only result in poor service provision and possible misinterpretation of the motivating factors in these women's lives.

<u>Jewish Ethnicity</u>

The theoretical literature on Jewish women's ethnicity indicates that Jewish women are members of one of two distinct ethnic groups: *Sephardi* or *Ashkenazi*, each having unique customs, traditions, and ways of understanding Judaism. The data of this study, collected from *Ashkenazi* women, however, indicated that ethnic identity was not particularly salient to how participants understood their Jewishness. Participants did provide technical information about their ethnicity such as, family lineage, cuisine, and language

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(e.g. *Yiddish*). Yet, this discussion was very limited and not all participants were well informed about the nature of their *Ashkenazi* heritage. As such, this occurrence may be an artifact of how ethnicity is treated in the United States and the assimilationist (e.g. melting pot) tradition imposed upon most of its immigrants. This occurrence might also be a bi-product of anti-Semitism in the United States and a Jewish response style of minimizing differences in the face of this prejudice.

Psychologists, at minimum, need to be aware of the existence of these two distinct Jewish ethnic groups and what differentiates them. Moreover, most Jewish women in the United States are *Ashkenazi*, and therefore, largely Caucasian. This, however, distinguishes these Jewish women from other Caucasian women in the United States, in that their families are predominantly from Eastern Europe and Germany, and who came to the Unites States due to a need to flee severe anti-Semitism in their countries of origin. Many parents or grandparents of *Ashkenazi* Jewish women are *Holocaust* survivors, pogrom survivors, or refugees of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. As such, these women's family histories may be quite different from those of other Caucasian women. When working with Jewish women, psychologists may wish to clarify the ethnic origins of these clients, and learn the relevant questions to ask which would provide salient information about immigration histories of anti-Semitism and the effect this history has on a client's personality, coping strategies, and worldview.

Secularism

The theoretical literature that discusses secularism suggests that secular Jews do not rely on *halakhah* and religious practice to inform their Jewish identity. Further, it suggests that the secular Jews interact freely with non-Jews and that they do not rely largely on the

Jewish community for daily survival (Baker, 1993.) Moreover, some literature hypothesizes that secularism exists as a survival strategy. As such, Klepfisz (1989) theorized that secular women, who have inherited a legacy of anti-Semitism, have concluded that their Jewishness is fundamentally dangerous and needs to be hidden and not accentuated. The results of this research indicated that the theories about Jewish women and the concept of "secularism" are problematic or oversimplified. The results of this study indicated that even participants who identified themselves as secular, still felt that the tenants of Judaism were integral to how they acted in the world and how they understood themselves. These "secular" participants did not directly explain that being secular was a function of their experiences and awareness of anti-Semitism either. They did, however report many anti-Semitic experiences. Although these participants described the styles they employed to respond to anti-Semitism, they did not specifically explain that "being secular" was a way to cope with anti-Jewish prejudice, nor did they believe that they were trying to hide or not accentuate their Judaism. They reported that they were just choosing one way of being Jewish among Jews.

Psychologists, therefore, need to understand that the phenomenon of secular Judaism in the United States is complex, and may indicate far more than merely the personal choice not to practice a religion. Psychologists may want to consider that a woman's choice to identify as secular may be the product of how Jewish women negotiate sexism and the "old world" nature of *Orthodox* Judaism, which is seen as "religious" Judaism. Psychologists might also consider that a Jewish woman who chooses a secular identity may be responding to anti-Semitism on some level, but not necessarily. Simply stated, to understand a secular Jewish woman's relationship to Judaism and the

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Jewish people, psychologists would benefit from an exploration of the role and meaning of secularism in a Jewish woman's life.

Christian Society

The theoretical literature on Jewish women does not specifically address what it means for Jewish women to live in a Christian society per se. Although, the literature does discuss anti-Semitism and Jewish stereotypes, it ignores the overall psychological implications of being Jewish in a society that is structured around a Christian value system, calendar, politic, and religion. The data of this research indicated that living in a Christian country had a strong effect on participants and is, in fact, a key variable in how Jewish women experience their lives and surrounding environments.

Psychologists need to understand that Jewish women experience themselves as "being other," as do other racial and ethnic minorities, and that being Jewish is what defines this otherness. Psychologists need to understand that due to their experience of "being other" Jewish women may have a strong identification with other oppressed groups. Jewish women may strongly identify with other minorities who have suffered extreme prejudice and have been the victims of attempted cultural annihilation. Given that current psychological multicultural thought is largely focused on race and ethnicity as defining experiences of marginalization and oppression, psychologists should consider that being Jewish may also create experiences of marginalization, even though many Jewish women in the Unites States are Caucasian. Psychologists need to explore how Jewish women experience themselves as being visible or invisible in their worlds and what is required of them to "be out" as a Jew in a Christian world. In particular, psychologists need to understand that for some Jewish women, being Jewish puts them at

risk in society with regard to anti-Semitic violence. Likewise, non-Jewish and Christian psychologists need to appreciate that many Jewish women do not inherently trust non-Jews of all racial groups. This fact is critical as it can directly affect a working relationship with Jewish women in therapy and other service provision settings. Christian psychologists, in particular, need to be aware of how their assumption of Christianity and Christian frame may impact a Jewish woman client.

Anti-Semitism

The theory- based literature indicates Jewish women must deal with covert and overt forms of anti-Semitism. The literature also explains that for Jewish women, an awareness of an enduring anti-Semitic world, both currently and historically, is constant. The results of this study support the literature in that participants described in detail the ways they had experienced all forms of anti-Semitism, including: hearing about the oppression of Jews in their community, being called names, being stereotyped, experiencing violent acts against them, and having their property vandalized. In addition, participants discussed their understanding of institutionalized anti-Semitism in schools, politics and the media.

Psychologists may need to deepen their appreciation of the anti-Semitic reality in the United States and the historical tradition of anti-Semitism, as well, and the ways this affects Jewish women. Psychologists can provide "culturally sensitive" services to this population only if they appreciate the nature of anti-Semitism in North America and the ways Jewish women have chosen to cope with it. Since psychology and psychological intervention is aimed, in part, toward understanding stress and coping, realizing the demands that anti-Semitism places on Jewish women will certainly contribute to more thorough conceptualizations of their lives and presenting problems. If psychologists do not appreciate

anti-Semitism as a real influence and ongoing stressor causing fear in some Jewish women's lives, they may misdiagnose or misinterpret Jewish women's personalities as being neurotic and paranoid. Likewise, psychologists need to explore their personal and familial beliefs about Jews and any stereotypes they may have about Jewish women in particular. Psychologists need to consider how they interpret Jewish women and if they misattribute characteristics to Jewish women that are more a product of their own unacknowledged anti-Semitism, than those belonging to Jewish women themselves.

<div align="center">The Holocaust</div>

The literature explains that all modern Jewish women are "post-*Holocaust* Jews" (Schiffman, 1999; p. 85). That is, modern Jewish women have a direct association with the Holocaust regardless of whether or not they actually lived through it. Consistent with this theory, the participants in this study all discussed the intense impact that the *Holocaust* has had on their lives. Participants explained that the *Holocaust* confirmed for Jews that they are not safe in the world and that the ethnic cleansing of the Jews could happen again. Participants explained that the *Holocaust* was vicariously traumatic for them and it was as if they had lived through it themselves and that it had happened to their families. Several participants also reported that the *Holocaust* left them feeling unsure of their safety in the United States.

Psychologists need to appreciate how the historical trend of anti-Semitic violence and most recent occurrence of the *Holocaust* affect the Jewish woman's psyche. Psychologists need to understand that Jewish women inherit the legacy of the *Holocaust* and that this legacy impacts their worldview, experience of non-Jews, and sense of overall safety in the world. In working with Jewish women clientele, psychologists can incorporate a

conceptualization of vicarious trauma into their understanding of Jewish women's worldview and life strategies. Most importantly, psychologists and service providers need to appreciate that for many Jewish women, events like the *Holocaust* are a common thread in the familial and community fabric that these women are a part of. As such, living in the shadow of the *Holocaust* creates a unique experience for the modern Jewish woman; and, this unique psychological reality should not be underestimated by psychologists.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As with all research, there are several limitations of this study that need to be addressed by future scholarship. Specifically, these limitations are related to the research sample, the epistemology and methodology, the subjective stance of the researcher, and the unresolved topical issues that arose from this study.

The first limitation of this study is that it utilized a convenience sample, generated by word of mouth, which was small in size. Given that this is one of the first studies of its kind, future research on this subject would be beneficial in that it would add to the volume of voices informing our awareness on this topic. Similarly, this study is also limited by the fact that the participants were all from a small Mid-Western town and from middle to upper middle class socio-economic statuses. Likewise, the study's participants comprised a fairly homogeneous group with regard to education, race, age, and sexual orientation. As such, it is possible that this study is only reflective of the reality of this small sector of Jewish women in the United States. Women from larger cities, where there is a larger Jewish population, may provide different types of responses to the questions asked in the interviews. Also, further data on Jewish lesbians, poor Jewish women, non-Caucasian Jewish women, etc., need to be collected to help stratify the information available on this

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unique population. Future research could benefit the data base on Jewish women if it could increase our understanding of the unique ways that sexual orientation, class, and race vary a Jewish woman's identity.

Further, the participants in this study were only *Ashkenazi* Jewish women, whose families had at one point immigrated to the United States. The exclusion of non-American *Ashkenazi*, religious, *Sephardic*, and Israeli Jewish women, among others, makes these results relevant only to this particular group. Given that the world's community of Jewish women is quite diverse, this study could be replicated with different types of Jewish participants. That is, Jews from different sects of Judaism (e.g. *Conservative, Orthodox*), different ethnic groups (e.g. *Sephardi*), different nationalities (e.g. Israeli), and with different types of commitment to Jewish identity (e.g. cultural Jews, non-believing Jews, Orthodox feminists, *Zionists*), could be studied to understand the similarities and differences within the Jewish community, thus, painting a more complex picture of this population.

The second limitation of this study is the specificity of the Jewish feminist epistemology with which I chose to frame this study. As a Jewish woman, quite immersed in my Jewish identity and very involved in the Jewish community, both in North America and in Israel, I brought a very idiosyncratic frame to this research. To account for my subjective position, I employed an integrative qualitative methodology, whereby, I put mechanisms in place to help explore and describe my reality and to allow the reader to understand the ways my beliefs may have affected the data as both a researcher and Jewish woman. Further, as described in the discussion of the researcher's log, the data collection method chosen for the study (e.g. interviews) had both pros and cons for me. On the one hand, one-on-one interviews allowed me to focus exclusively on the reality of the woman I

was interviewing. On the other hand, many participants echoed my sentiments regarding the solitary nature of the interview process. As such, a more traditional qualitative methodology might be reconsidered in future studies. Possibly, future research might combine a group data collection method, along with one-on-one interviews. Alternatively, unlike the approach where the participant is interviewed, future research could employ the use of interviews for data collection, but could shift the interview format to a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee, thus creating a more interactive form of data gathering. Likewise, future research could utilize a group data collection method alone to ascertain the nature of data gathered as the bi-product of group dialogue. Given that this study is one of the first of its kind, a variety of researcher standpoints, epistemologies, and methodologies would possibly generate different types of data and this would be beneficial to a more complex and varied understanding of the lives of Jewish women.

Third, as is true with any study, the results of this research are largely inconclusive. That is, many topics theorized in the literature were explored herein and the results of that exploration can serve only as an initial foray into this vast unstudied topic. In particular, several findings of this study offer future researchers interesting topics to explore. Among others, the unique nature of secular Judaism, the complexity of various Jewish discourses, and the potentially unrecognized effect of anti-Semitism and the *Holocaust* on Jewish lives could be studied to offer psychology a deeper understanding of this population. In addition, this study was designed to only focus on those questions that came directly out of the existing literature. Future research could choose to generate new areas of inquiry related to Jewish women's lives that heretofore have not been considered. For example, future research could examine the unique relationship that North American Jewish women have

with Israel and the myriad ways that the political reality in Israel affects how Jewish women negotiate their identity with non-Jews. Likewise, future research could explore the ways that Jewish women's experience of themselves as ethnic minorities is both similar and dissimilar to that of other ethnic minorities. That is, future research could explore how the emotional impact and coping strategies of being a minority vary between Jewish women and those of other ethnic groups.

<div align="center">Concluding Remarks</div>

As a new psychologist, this study has opened many doors for me. In pursuing a research topic with great personal meaning, I have reconfirmed my interest and dedication to expanding the literature base in this area. Conducting a study so "close to home" was not without its challenges. In so doing, I attempted to produce a quality study, while remaining true to the spirit and nature of my Jewishness. At times, the means to this ends was obvious, at others, it was not. Scholarship and science, as it is currently defined, does not always lend itself easily to the finer nuances of studying culture and religion. At the conclusion of this work, I am left with many new questions. For example, how can the reality of Jewish women's lives inform the current multicultural theory used by psychologists? How do non-heterosexual Jewish women negotiate their Jewish identities? What role does the political reality in Israel play in Jewish women's lives? In summary, as a new psychologist, this study has renewed my interest in scholarship, and has deepened my commitment to exploring my Jewish identity and that of other Jewish women. Ultimately, I hope that as research on Jewish women is pursued by a growing group of scholars, and that prejudice toward this group will be replaced with knowledge, understanding, and familiarity.

Finally, in studying any marginalized minority, such as Jewish women, it is important to note that I am aware that the results of studies, such as this one, could be used by those so inclined to reinforce common anti-Semitic stereotypes. As the investigator in this study, I am well aware that there may be individuals reading this document searching for ways to prove that Jewish women do, in fact, live up to their stereotypes. For example, if these data report that Jewish women describe themselves as embodying certain stereotypical traits, then perhaps anti-Semitic views of Jewish women are, in fact, true? To anyone reading this document intent on using these results to perpetuate anti-Semitism in such a way, take heed. Not only are the results, herein, elaborated upon in order to complexify people's understanding of Jewish women, they are also intended to demonstrate the fallacy inherent in reducing Jewish women to particular stereotypical traits which they may embody. I would like to directly caution any reader choosing to use the results of this study to promote anti-Semitism. Misusing the data in this way is unethical and ultimately reflects upon the ignorance of the person doing so. Anyone using this study to work toward the ongoing marginalization and oppression of Jewish women is misrepresenting the spirit of this work. It is my express hope as a researcher that this study does not support anti-Semitism, and that the results herein will be contextualized and used to improve psychologists' awareness of this unique population.

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Hebrew, Yiddish and non-English Terms

Abba - Hebrew word for father.

Aggadah - Also known as *midrash aggadah,* it is the genre of non-legal rabbinical commentary that expands and explicates biblical text. *Aggadah* is comprised of the sayings, homiletic interpretations, historical information, legends, anecdotes, and folklore of rabbinic literature. (Biale,1984, p.288; Heschel,1995, p. 283).

Aliyah - Jewish immigration to Israel. The term also designates the calling up to the altar to read from the *Torah* (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 324).

Amidah – Prayer said in a Jewish religious service. Different sects of Judaism have different practices regarding the amidah.

Ashkenazi - The term specifically denotes German Jewry and their descendants in other countries. From the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the center of *Ashkenazi* Jewry shifted to Bohemia, Poland and Lithuania. In Slavonic territories, the *Ashkenazi's* use of Yiddish became prominent. After the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648, *Ashkenazi* Jewry spread throughout Western Europe. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, *Ashkenazi* Jewry massively emigrated from Eastern Europe. Before World War II, ninety percent of the world's Jewish population was *Ashkenazi* (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 324).

Bat/Bar Mitzvah - Literally meaning "Daughter or Son of the Commandments." This rite of passage indicates the coming of age in Jewish culture and is thus marked with a ceremony. Girls come of age at the age of twelve, boys at thirteen (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 283).

Bimah - The raised section of the synagogue where the leader stands to lead prayers and where the *Torah* is read (Balka & Rose, 1989 p. 283).

Blintzes – Jewish crepes, filled with sour cream and fruit, typically of the *Ashkenazi* tradition.

Conservative Judaism – One of four streams in American Judaism. Less pure in its observance of Jewish law, but less liberal and more rooted in Jewish norms than *Reform* Judaism. Conservative Jews tend to follow some, not all of the laws and commandments, and may not do so consistently (Brown, 1991, p. 52).

Dachau – The name of a concentration camp used by the Nazis.

Diaspora – The lands of the Jewish dispersion, or all lands outside of Israel (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 326).

Eshet Chayil – Traditional Hebrew prayer that praises women and her accomplishments in the domestic sphere.

Gefilte Fish – A Jewish specialty consisting of ground cod or white fish mixed with eggs, matzoh meal, boiled in broth, and served with horseradish (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 326).

Gemara - The *Talmudic* commentary on the *Mishnah* (Biale, 1984, p. 287).

Goyisha – Something that is characteristic of gentiles (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 326)

Hadassah – An international Jewish woman's organization focused on social action and charitable affairs.

Haggadah - Collection of hymns, tales, psalms, etc. read during the *Seder* on the first two nights of *Passover* (Kaye/Kantrowitz & Klepfisz, 1989, p. 348).

Halakha - Literally, "The way of walking." A term which refers to the rules and norms of Jewish law. If something is "*halakhically*" correct," it is precisely within the lines of Jewish law. *Halakhah* encompasses both the written *Torah* and the oral tradition (Brown, 1991, p. 51; Heschel, 1995, p. 284).

Hallah/Challah – Braided egg-bread traditionally served on *Shabbat* and other holy days (Josefowitz Seigel & Cole, 1997, p. 314).

Hannukah – Jewish festival of lights commemorating the Jewish rebellion and victory over the Romans (Josefowitz Seigel & Cole, 1997, p. 315).

Hassidim – People who belong to a specific branch of *Orthodox* Judaism.

High Holidays – The ten days observed as the beginning of the Jewish New Year, beginning with *Rosh Hashanah*, the new year, and concluding with *Yom Kippur*, a day of fasting and atonement (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 284).

Holocaust – Literally means the burning. Attempted genocide of the Jewish people in Germany & Eastern Europe by the Nazi party.

Jewish Star/Magen David – The six-pointed star associated with the Jews and the State of Israel (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 285).

Judeo-Arabic - Language of the *Sephardi* Jews and their descendants from North Africa and other Arab countries (Cantor, 1995, p. 159).

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Kibbutz - Collective agricultural community in Israel where childcare and eating arrangements are collectivized and where socialized principles govern (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 327).

Kristalnacht – German word meaning the night of broken glass. Kristalnacht was a chain of events (a pogrom) in German and Austrian towns and cities, where Jewish institutions, synagogues, businesses, homes were vandalized, burned to the ground, and destroyed. Many people were also killed, tortured, and harassed in these pogroms.

Kosher – Something is kosher that pertains to, or is in accordance with, the Jewish dietary laws.

Ladino - Hispanic language written in Hebrew characters developed at the end of the Middle Ages. After Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, various dialects of Ladino crystallized in the new lands of settlement: North Africa, Balkan States, Turkey, the Middle East, and later in the United States and Latin America. The first printed book in *Ladino* appeared in Constantinople in 1510; widespread literature developed in subsequent centuries. *Ladino* is also referred to as *Judeo-Spanish, Romance, Judezmo*, and *Spaniolish* (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 327).

Light Unto the Nations – Biblical directive from God to the Hebrew people to have them represent the Ten Commandments and monotheism to the world.

Matzoh Balls – Jewish soup dumplings made with the meal of the unleavened bread used for *Passover*.

Mechitzah – The physical barrier used to separate men and women in a traditional prayer service (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 285).

Menorah – The candelabrum lit during the festival of *Hannukah* (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 285).

Mensche(s) – A good person/people.

Minyan - A quorum of ten men required by Jewish law for a proper religious service (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 328).

Mishna - The oral tradition codified in 200 C.E. under the direction of Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi (Biale, 1984, p. 288).

Mitzvot - Commandments, usually referring to good deeds, such as helping one in distress; of the 613 *mitzvot* listed in the Bible, 248 are positive commands (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 329).

Nudnik/s – The Hebrew word for someone who is a pest and bothers you in a negative fashion.

Orthodox Judaism – Stream of Judaism that adheres to the letter of the Jewish law. Considered the strictest and most traditional stream of Judaism. Within Orthodox Judaism there are various sects as well, who vary in their degree of strictness.

Passover - English for *Pesach*, the festival for commemorating the liberation of the Jews from their bondage in Egypt. It lasts seven days, and during the first two nights, a ritual meal (*Seder*) is held, where the story of the bondage and liberation is recalled. A particular set of dietary laws governs food consumption during this week (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 329).

Peis/Peyes – Long uncut locks of hair which *Orthodox* Jewish males grow in front of their ears in accordance with the Biblical prescription, "They shall not cut the corners of their beards" (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 329).

Pilpul - Techniques of *Talmudic* disputation utilizing subtle differentiations in arguments; sophistry (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 329).

Reconstructionist Judaism - One of four streams in American Judaism. Less pure in its observance of Jewish law, and considered the most liberal sect in Judaism. Reconstructionism adheres to a historical consciousness or civilization of the Jewish people (Heschel, 1995, p. xliii).

Reform Judaism - One of four streams in American Judaism. Less pure in its observance of Jewish law than *Conservative* and *Orthodox* Judaism. Reform Judaism lays claim to the idea or spirit of Judaism and Jewish law (Heschel, 1995, p. xliii).

Rosh Hashanah – The Jewish New Year.

Sabarit - Female of the Hebrew word *Sabra*, nickname for the native Israeli, referring metaphorically to the cactus ("prickly pear"): prickly exterior and tender heart (Torton Beck, 1989, p.330).

Seder - The religious home service/evening ritual meal recounting the liberation from Egyptian bondage, and celebrated amidst festivity on the first and second nights of *Passover* (Torton Beck, p. 330).

Sephardi - A descendent of Jews who lived in Spain or Portugal before their expulsion in 1492. Sephardim (pl.) established communities of numerical, economic, and scholastic importance in North Africa, Italy, the Near East, Western Europe, America, and the Balkan states (especially Constantinople, Salonika, Izmir). The distinctive language of the *Sephardim* is *Ladino*. Together with other non-*Ashkenazi* Jews, *Sephardim* constitute seventeen percent of world Jewry and approximately half of the population of Israel (but the

term refers to all Arab and Oriental Jews). Three percent of the Jewish population in the United States are *Sephardi* (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 330).

Shabbat/Shabbas – Jewish sabbath beginning at sundown Friday night and ending on sundown Saturday night.

Shabbat Shalom – a typical greeting to give on Shabbat meaning "Have a good and peaceful Sabbath."

Shomer Shabbas – Literally meaning, abiding by the laws of Shabbat. According to Jewish law, there are many special rules of conduct for Shabbat and one's behavior on that day. People called shomer shabbas are committed to following these laws exactly.

Sisterhood/Brotherhood – The governing body of women/men in a synagogue, typically in charge of coordinating synagogue cultural and volunteer affairs.

Sitting Shiva/To Sit Shiva – Seven day period of mourning following a death where loved ones sit together to grieve.

Talmud - The literature containing the *Mishnah* and *Gemara,* and the discussion of the *Mishnah*. This body of teaching comprises the commentary and discussions of the meaning of the *Torah* (Heschel, 1995, p. 287; Torton Beck, 1989, p. 331).

Thank God I wasn't born a Woman – Traditional prayer said every morning by observant Jewish men. The intention of the prayer has been debated. Some claim that is a man's way to be thankful that he has the honor of serving God. Others believe that it is a sexist prayer intended to point out the superior status of men in Judaism.

Tikkun Olam - The Jewish communal ethic of activism in the world (Shoshana, 1989, p. 94).

Torah - A parchment scroll containing the first five books of the Old Testament (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 331).

Tzedakah - Charity or acts of justice; Jewish law obligates the community not just to give *tzedakah,* but to provide community services to meet the basic physical and spiritual needs of community members. The *Talmud* states that a *Torah* scholar can only live in towns that have a communal fund for *tzedakah*. Jews are obligated to give *tzedakah* to gentiles as well as other Jews, though the commandments surrounding charity to Jews are more strict (Segal, 1998, p. 282).

Yeshiva - Literally meaning academy. *Yeshiva* is the traditional Orthodox Jewish institution where men devote themselves to the study of *Talmudic* law (Schiffman, 1999, p. 284).

Yiddish - Written in Hebrew characters, Yiddish is the Language of medieval German origin used by Ashkenazi Jews over the past thousand years. Began in the tenth century in Middle Rhine region, and spread with Jews in their wanderings throughout Europe. By 1939, there were 11 million Yiddish speakers. However, the forces of the Holocaust, Soviet anti-Semitism, anti-Yiddish forces in Israel, and assimilation throughout the world have drastically reduced the number of Yiddish speakers in the world (Torton Beck, 1989, p. 332).

Yom Kippur – The final day of the High Holy Days, observed through fasting, prayer, self-examination, and redirection (Balka & Rose, 1998, p. 287).

Zakhor - The Biblical commandment to remember, *zakhor* has been a fundamental responsibility of the Jewish people throughout history. It is enshrined in the Ten Commandments by association with the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8) and liturgically elevated through the *yizkor* memorial prayer for the dead (Baumel Joseph, 1998, p. 178).

Zionist - Modern political movement for the return of the Jewish people to Zion, the old prophetic name for Palestine. This movement began in the 19th century with the thinking and writings of a number of men in various parts in Europe, and was followed by the founding of several Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine. *Zionism* received its political form from the work of Theodore Herzl and its clearly defined program at the First *Zionist* Congress, held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897 (Schreiber, 1998, p. 292).

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information Sheet

Please answer all of the following questions by circling the appropriate response/s. Please fill in additional information where necessary.

1) Year of birth:
2) Relational status:
    a) Married
    b) Single and dating
    c) Single and not dating
    d) Partnered
    e) Cohabitation
    f) Divorced/Separated
    g) Other

3) Is your partner, husband, or person you are dating Jewish? If you are not currently involved with someone, do you date non-Jews?

    a) Yes
    b) No

4) Do you have children?
    a) No
    b) Yes - If yes, number and ages of your children _____

5) Sexual Orientation:
    a) Heterosexual
    b) Lesbian
    c) Bisexual
    d) Transgender
    e) Other

6) Residence:
    a) Rural
    b) Urban
    c) Suburban

7) Highest educational degree obtained:
- a) High School
- b) Bachelor's
- c) Master's
- d) Doctorate
- e) Other

8) Current occupation: _____

9) Employment status:
- a) Full-time (35 or more hours per week)
- b) Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
- c) Unemployed
- d) Other _____

10) Please describe your socio-economic status: _____

11) Race:
- a) White
- b) Black
- c) Native American
- d) Asian/Pacific Islander
- e) Latina
- f) Other

12) Ethnic background:
- a) Sephardi
- b) Ashkenazi

13) Country of origin _____
   Nationality/ies _____
   Languages you speak _____

14) Parents' country of origin _____
   Parents' nationality/ies _____
   Languages your parents' speak _____

15) Grandparents' country of origin _____
   Grandparents'nationality/ies _____
   Languages your grandparents' speak _____

16) Jewish identity:

    a) Secular
    b) Religious
    c) Other _____

17) Jewish affiliation:
    a) Reconstructionist
    b) Reform
    c) Conservative
    d) Orthodox
    e) Other _____

18) Synagogue membership:
    b) No
    a) Yes - If yes, name and type of synagogue _____

19) What type of Jewish home were you raised in?
    a) secular
    b) religious
    c) other _____

20) Describe your parents' and grandparents' Jewish identity:
    Parents: _____
    Grandparents: _____

21) Other factors influencing your Jewish identity
    a) child of Holocaust survivors
    b) parents or grandparents socialist/communists
    c) Zionism
    d) other

22) Any other relevant information: _____

APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Below are the research questions that will be explored in the semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews utilize an open format allowing for the participant to explore broad topic areas. In this protocol, each research question is followed by the specific overall topic in the question to be explored. Each overall topic is followed by the key concepts that comprise that topic. These concepts are followed by the initial interview prompt that will be given to the participant to facilitate their exploration of the topic. This initial interview prompt is followed by a list of more detailed prompts related to the topic and its key concepts. At the end of the protocol, a list of process questions are provided. These questions will be used to elicit the participant's overall experience of the dialogue and to help them debrief.

The list of key concepts will be used by the researcher solely as a checklist to ensure that participant fully explores the topic. If the participant naturally covers these key concepts then the researcher will take the role of "active listener" and will provide no additional prompts following the initial one. If the participant does not address the key topic's concepts, then the researcher will use a more detailed prompt to ensure that these concepts are addressed at some point in the interview. Thus, interview prompts are provided to illustrate what might be utilized to facilitate an exploration of the key concepts if needed. These detailed prompts are not intended to be used as a strict guide for the discussion, but as previously stated a means to ensure that the key concepts are discussed.

Research question #1

How can one understand the relationship between Jewish women's identity, ethnicity, worldview, and their ways of expressing Jewishness?

Topic A - Jewishness
Key Concepts: meaning of Jewishness, description of Jewishness, expressions of Jewishness

Initial Prompt: What makes Jewish women Jewish?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe what it means to be Jewish.
Describe your way of being Jewish in the world.
Describe what makes a woman Jewish.
Describe how you can tell that a woman is Jewish.
Describe how Jewish women express their Jewishness to other Jews.
Describe how Jewish women express their Jewishness to non-Jews.

Topic B - Models of Jewish women
Key Concepts: ideals and types of Jewish women

Initial Prompt: Who are Jewish women?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe an ideal Jewish woman.
Describe the typical Jewish woman.
Describe your understanding of the expression "a woman of valor" (eshet chayil).
Describe a successful Jewish woman.
Describe what makes a Jewish woman a failure.
Describe what makes a woman "Jewish enough," "not Jewish enough," or "too Jewish."
Describe the model of being a Jewish woman you ascribe to.

Topic C - Expectations of Jewish women from Jewish religion and culture
Key Concepts: family expectations, community expectations, gender role expectations

Initial Prompt: What does Jewish religion and culture expect from Jewish women?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe what you were taught about Jewish women from your family?
Describe what you were taught about Jewish women from your Jewish community?
Describe what this traditional prayer means to you "Thank God I wasn't born a woman."
Describe your understanding of Jewish women's obligation to study Torah, worship and pray.
Describe your understanding of what Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus meant when he said, "It is better to burn the Torah than to teach it to your daughter?

Topic D - Secularism
Key Concepts: meaning of secularism, expressions of secularism, role of secularism

Initial Prompt: What is secular Judaism?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe what being secular means to you.
Describe what makes a Jewish woman secular
Describe how you came to identify as a secular Jewish woman.
Describe the specific influences on your secular identity.
Describe your understanding of why Jewish women are secular.
Describe how you tell if a Jewish woman is secular.

Topic E - Ethnicity
Key concepts: nature and expression of ethnicity

Initial Prompt: What makes a woman Ashkenazi?
Detailed Prompts:
Describe a typical Ashkenazi Jewish woman.
Describe what is unique about being Ashkenazi.

Describe your understanding of Ashkenazi traditions.

Topic F - Jewish ethics:
Key Concepts: Jewish values, Jewish virtues, Jewish worldview

Initial Prompt: Describe what you understand about Jewish morality

Detailed Prompts:
Describe what makes a Jewish woman a good person.
Describe what makes a Jewish woman a bad person.
Describe your understanding of the notion "the chosen people."
Describe your understanding of the of the notion of being "a light unto the nations."
Describe what values you hold that you feel come from being Jewish.
Describe what doing mitzvot means to you.
Describe what doing tzedakah means to you.
Describe what believing in tikkun olam means to you.
Describe what Rabbi Hillel meant when he said:
"If I am not for myself, who am I? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now when?"

Research question #2

How do Jewish women experience their Jewishness in a Christian society and what is the psychological effect of this experience?

Topic A - Being Jewish in the United States
Key Concepts: experience of being Jewish in the U.S., minority experience, visibility issues

Initial Prompt: What is it like to be Jewish in the United States?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe your experience of Jewish women in the United States.
Describe your experience of the majority culture in the United States.
Describe your experience of being a minority woman in the United States.
Describe your experience of Jewish visibility in the United States.
Describe your experience of Jewish invisibility in the United States.

Topic B - Being Jewish in a Christian Society
Key Concepts: expression of Jewishness to non-Jewish society, experience of Jewishness in Christian society, Jewish survival strategies in Christian society

Initial Prompt: What is it like to be Jewish in a Christian society?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe how you express your Jewishness to non-Jews.

Describe how you express your Jewishness to Jews.
Describe how Jewish women experience being Jewish in a Christian society.
Describe the impact of being Jewish in a Christian society.
Describe how Jewish women are affected by being in a Christian society.
Describe the benefits, limitations and challenges of being Jewish in a Christian society.
Describe your understanding of why parents tell their daughters not to trust goyim/non-Jews.
Describe your understanding of why parents want their daughters to marry Jews.

Research question #3

How does anti-Semitism and its related stereotypes influence Jewish women psychologically?

Topic A - anti-Semitism
Key Concepts: definition of anti-Semitism, experience of anti-Semitism, expressions of anti-Semitism

Initial Prompt: What is anti-Semitism like in North America?

Detailed Prompts:
Describe your definition of anti-Semitism?
Describe your experience of anti-Semitism in North America.
Describe how you know something is anti-Semitic.
Describe your understanding of how non-Jews dislike Jewish women.
Describe your understanding of why non-Jews dislike Jewish women.
Describe your experience of Jews being blamed for societal problems.
Describe your response anti-Semitism

Topic B - The Holocaust/Historical persecution
Key Concepts: effect of the Holocaust on modern woman, effect of legacy of persecution

Initial Prompt: How are Jewish women today affected by the Holocaust and the history of Jewish persecution?

Detailed prompts:
Describe what you understand about the Holocaust.
Describe how the Holocaust affected you.
Describe your understanding of the historical persecution of Jews.
Describe how you were raised to understand Jewish persecution.
Describe your understanding of the expression "never forget."

Topic C - Stereotypes of Jewish women
Key Concepts: types of stereotypes, impact of stereotypes

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<u>Initial Prompt</u>: How are Jewish women stereotyped?

<u>Detailed Prompts:</u>
Describe how you see Jewish woman portrayed in the media?
Describe how you see Jewish women being stereotyped?
Describe what it means to be a "J.A.P."
Describe what it means to be a "Jewish mother."
Describe your understanding of the validity of stereotypes about Jewish women.
Describe how stereotypes about Jewish women have impacted you.
Describe the stereotypical traits of Jewish women that you embody.

<u>Topic D - Jewish women and appearance</u>
Key Concepts - Meaning of looking Jewish

<u>Initial Prompt:</u> Describe what a Jewish woman looks like.

<u>Detailed Prompts:</u>
Describe what makes a Jewish woman beautiful.
Describe what makes a Jewish woman unattractive.

**<u>Process Questions</u>
What was this process like for you?
What was helpful about the discussion? What was not?
What was meaningful about the discussion? What was not?
Was anything important missing from the discussion?
Would this process have been different for you if I (the facilitator) wasn't Jewish? How?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Please read this form carefully and if you decide to participate in this study, sign and date this form at the end.

Title of Study: Jewish women in North America: A qualitative study of their Ashkenazi secular identity and their experiences of anti-Semitism.

Investigator: Freda Ruth Ginsberg, M.A.
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**University Committee Chair
for Research on Human Subjects:** Dr. David E. Wright - Tel.: 517-355-2180

Investigator's Statement

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

I invite you to participate in this study of Jewish women's secular Ashkenazi identity and their experiences of anti-Semitism. The results of this study will provide information to psychologists and other mental health care professionals who research, teach, train, or provide therapy to Jewish women. This study is being conducted for the fulfillment of the researcher's Ph.D. dissertation requirements in Counseling Psychology at Michigan State University.

PROCEDURES

You were identified to participate in this study through word of mouth and contact with Jewish women's organizations and synagogues. Anyone else interested in learning more about the study can contact the investigator by mail, telephone or e-mail. To protect your confidentiality, no one involved in recruiting you will be apprised of your involvement in the study. Jewish women 30 years of age or older, self-identifying as Ashkenazi and secular, are being invited to participate.

You will be asked to complete a demographic sheet regarding personal background information (i.e. age, synagogue membership, ethnicity, etc.). You will be scheduled for an interview according to your convenience and scheduling options. The interview questions you will be asked will cover the topics of Jewish identity, Jewish religion and culture, and

anti-Semitism. Your interview will be held in a confidential and private location, will last for approximately 60-90 minutes, and will be tape recorded for the purposes of transcription.

Upon completion of your interview, a short debriefing will occur. Following the debriefing, you will be reminded to contact the investigator via telephone, e-mail, or regular mail, if you have anything to discuss about the research process over the course of the week following data collection. Although it is unlikely, you are hereby informed that personal discomfort may come from your participation in the study from discussing the research topics. You will be asked to identify a source of personal support to use in case you need to talk at length about this discomfort. The investigator will provide you with a professional mental health referral if needed. You may refuse to answer any question or stop participating at any time during the interview. You may also contact me after the interview if you want to have any of your information removed from the corpus of the data.

Your name will not be given to the transcribers to protect the confidential nature of your participation. If your name is on the audiotape, it will be replaced with a code number on the transcription. Transcripts and audiotapes will be kept in a locked file until the completion of the study. Transcripts will be analyzed using a qualitative methodology and results will be analyzed for thematic content and then written up in the form of a dissertation. You will be given the option to read a summary of the initial data analysis. If you would like to share your impressions of the analysis, you may do so at that time. The results of this study may be re-analyzed in the future. This study may be presented at professional conferences or written up in the form of a scholarly article and submitted to a professional journal for publication.

Before joining this study, you need to sign this informed consent form below, signifying that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you will not be remunerated for your participation. No harm is intended to come to you as a result of your participation. All data will be presented to protect the confidentiality of participants and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

By signing below, I affirm that I understand and consent to all that is written above.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's signature: _____ Date: _____

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APPENDIX E

Data Analysis Summary for Participants - Jewish women: A qualitative study of their

Ashkenazi secular identity and experiences of anti-Semitism

<u>Themes and Sub-themes</u>

The data analysis in this study resulted in the emergence of four major themes:

Jewishness, Otherness, Anti-Semitism, and The Holocaust. Each of these themes and their

sub-themes are discussed below.

<u>Jewishness</u>

The first major theme emerging from this study was the concept of Jewishness. All

of the twelve participants discussed how their Jewishness was central and fundamental to

who they were, how they saw the world, how they gave meaning to their experiences, and

how they were viewed by others. As such, participants discussed Jewishness in the context

of three specific sub-themes: (a) Jewish Ethics and Morality, (b) The Jewish People, and

(c) Jewish Women.

<u>Jewish Ethics and Morality</u>

Most of the participants explained that Jewish culture, history, and religion provided

them with an ethical tradition to which they could adhere. Only two indicated that their

sense of morality was not specific to Jewish culture. The ethical tradition described by all

was comprised of five components: (a) being a good person, (b) treating others well, (c)

doing good deeds *(mitzvot)*, (d) doing charitable acts (*tzedakah),* and (e) speaking out

against injustice to make the world a better place *(tikkun olam)*. Thus, most participants

explained that the quality of who they were as a person should be reflected in how they treat

others, specifically through good works and volunteering. Participants emphasized the need

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to improve the world they lived in and, in particular, to speak out about injustice and the oppression of all people. As such, most participants indicated that who they were ethically was inseparable from their experience of themselves as Jewish.

The Jewish People

Participants described the concept of the Jewish people and discussed it in five ways: (a) Jewish Childhood and the Jewish Family, (b) Jews in Their Local Jewish Community, (c) Jews as a Nation in the World and Israel, (d) Jews as The Chosen People, and, (e) Jewish Women.

Jewish childhood and the Jewish family.

Two areas that informed participants' concept of Jewishness were their childhood experiences and their current Jewish family situations. Participants reported that how they were raised to be Jewish and how the experiences they had growing up as Jews informed who they were as Jews today. The childhood experiences that they discussed were from within their immediate families and homes, as well as, from their participation in Jewish traditions, rituals, and activities. With regard to their families, participants stressed the importance of a Jewish home and described the impact of intergenerational family experiences with parents, grandparents, and siblings. In each of these areas, participants discussed Jewish cultural traditions such as keeping kosher and how their Jewishness was linked to celebrating Jewish holidays, observing Jewish traditions, and participating in rites of passage, such as, *bat-mitzvah*. Finally, being involved in the broader Jewish community was reported to be an important influence on their childhood and included: attending synagogue, Jewish youth groups, and Jewish summer camps.

Participants indicated that their childhood experiences had influenced their current choices about how to be Jewish in their homes, families, and community. In discussing their current home life, most participants indicated the importance of it being Jewish. Participants also shared their opinions regarding the nature of their current families and thoughts they had about raising Jewish children. Finally, participants discussed how they had come to make choices about attending synagogue, observing Jewish holidays and traditions, and practicing Jewish rites of passage. Although participants' childhood experiences varied, and their current choices of how to practice Judaism were different, all emphasized the influence of Judaism, Jewish family life, and the Jewish community in their understanding of themselves as Jewish women today.

Jews in their local Jewish community.

The discussion of local Jewish communities included participants' thoughts, feelings, and critiques of the various sects of Jewish practice, with a particular focus on the practice of Orthodox and Reform Judaism Many participants were strongly identified with their local Jewish communities and synagogues and described the nature of that involvement. Participants also explained the importance of bringing children into the Jewish community and supporting its existence.

Jews as a nation in the world and in Israel.

Participants explored the notion of Jews as a nation of people spread throughout the world and in Israel. Participants described the ways they did or did not feel part of this nation. Participants emphasized the importance of preserving the world's Jewish community and the Jewish people, specifically due to the Holocaust and history of Jewish persecution.

Many participants discussed the importance and necessity of the existence of the State of Israel. They indicated that Israel was necessary for the safety and survival of the Jewish people. Some explained that Israel provided them with a sense of security and possibly a place of refuge if needed. Further, some participants described their general loyalty to the Jewish State whereas others described their commitment to *Zionism*.

Jews as a chosen people.

Participants wrestled with the notion of being part of a chosen people. Participants provided their understanding of this concept and some hypothesized that the Jewish people had been chosen to suffer. Others thought that the Jews were chosen to be an example of tolerance and morality. Further, some participants explained that being part of the chosen people was personally meaningful and relevant to them. Others thought that the idea of being chosen was exclusionary and distasteful.

Jewish women.

Participants explained how being female informed their experience of being Jewish. Participants discussed the gender role expectations they had known from within Judaism and their Jewish communities and families. Specifically, participants offered their opinions about the idea of a typical Jewish woman, which they described as talkative, nurturing, family oriented, and in charge. In addition they shared their views regarding the concept of eshet chayil or a woman of valor. Finally, participants gave their opinions as to whether or not one could be a failure or success as a Jewish woman, and many felt conflicted or frustrated regarding the standards of Orthodox Judaism.

In summary, the notion of Jewishness, was central to how these women experienced themselves, defined their lives, made moral decisions, and interacted with others.

<u>Otherness</u>

A second major theme that emerged in this study was that of Otherness. Otherness was defined by participants as one being significantly different from others and experiencing oneself as living outside of mainstream American society because she is Jewish. Participants also described themselves as being other within Jewish religion and culture because they were women. As such, the theme of otherness was comprised of four components: (a) visibility and invisibility, (b) being a minority in a Christian country, (c) non-Jews, and, (d) sexism and misogyny from within Judaism.

<u>Visibility and invisiblity.</u>

Visibility was defined in two ways. First, participants described visibility as being identifiably Jewish and proud of that fact. Participants also discussed visibility relative to their concerns about being too Jewish and sticking out because of differences between Jewish cultural norms and those of mainstream Christian society. Some explained how sticking out in these ways left them feeling unsafe and at risk of experiencing discrimination.

On the other hand, participants explained that being invisible meant not being seen or identified as different. For example, participants reported that people might not know that they were Jewish or what that meant. Others reported that invisibility meant not being understood as to how one was different ethnically or religiously in ways that differed from mainstream Christianity or American society. Participants reported being asked questions such as, "Who or what are you?" or "What is a Jew?" Depending on the context, participants reported experiencing these questions in two ways: a) as an invitation for conversation; or, b) as a sign of anti-Semitism or ignorance.

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Being a minority in a Christian country

Participants offered their views about being a minority in America. Many participants explained that Jews were a unique and influential minority. Some suggested that there were geographical differences in how they experienced their minority status. All participants acknowledged the reality of Jews as a religious and ethnic minority in North America. Some participants shared how their status as a minority helped them identify more closely with the needs and concerns of other minorities.

Participants discussed the ways that they saw America as having a majority Christian culture, with a predominantly Christian politic, calendar, morality, and value system. All described the impact this had on them. Specifically, participants noted the impact of living on a Christian calendar, which gives no attention to Jewish holidays and traditions. Many participants discussed how Christmas was a central focus in American society and that this focus left Jews and Jewish life on the margins. Many participants agreed that the Christmas season was a particularly difficult and challenging time for them. Further, participants discussed their concerns about the Christian Political Right and this group's lack of tolerance for anything non-Christian.

Non-Jews.

Participants gave their opinions about non-Jews, recalled their experiences of interacting with them, and offered their beliefs about dating and marrying outside of Judaism. Some participants reported that in some ways they found it difficult to trust non-Jews and some did not reveal that they were Jewish until finding out whether or not a non-Jew was anti-Semitic. Participants also reported either being committed to or weary from educating non-Jews about Jewish life.

For the most part, participants discussed non-Jews generally, but when giving specific details, Catholics and Italians were mentioned the most. Protestants were discussed less, and some reported a lack of familiarity or trust toward Protestants and fundamentalist Christians. Many participants also reported growing up in neighborhoods where they interacted regularly with Catholics and Italians. Some participants reported feeling positive toward Catholics. Others experienced blatant anti-Semitism from this group. In general, Catholics were somewhat of a familiar group, and thus, participants used them as a reference point when discussing non-Jews. Italians were also mentioned frequently by participants. Italians were viewed as being most similar to Jews in their mannerisms, family values, ways of thinking, and parenting styles.

Dating and marrying non-Jews.

Participants' views varied regarding the issue of dating and marrying non-Jews. Some participants, either currently or in the past, had dated or married non-Jews. Others explained that they felt this practice was not right for them, and some even felt that this weakened the fabric and preservation of the Jewish people. Participants shared the views given to them by their families regarding this issue and the impact these views had on them. Some discussed their beliefs about raising children in inter-faith marriages. Some participants, currently in inter-faith marriages, discussed the ways they felt judged by the Jewish community for their choice to marry outside of Judaism, whereas others explained that they did not experience this judgment.

Anti-Semitism

A third major theme in this study was anti-Semitism. This theme was comprised of five sub-themes: (a) nature of anti-Semitism, (b) stereotypes of Jews, (c) stereotypes of Jewish women, (d) experiences of anti-Semitism, and, (e) responding to anti-Semitism.

Regarding the nature of anti-Semitism, all participants offered their definition of it and an explanation as to why it existed and how it functioned. Further, participants also described the nature of common Jewish stereotypes and how these affected them. Some reported trying "to not live out the stereotype" whereas others explained how they tried to "break the stereotype" as a way of combating anti-Semitism and keeping themselves safe. Similarly, participants discussed common stereotypes of Jewish women, such as the JAP (Jewish American Princess) and the Jewish mother. Some participants validated the reality of these stereotypes, while others asserted the anti-Semitic and sexist nature of these images.

Participants also described their many personal experiences of anti-Semitism. Some experiences reported included: being stereotyped, name calling, vandalism, and harassment in the workplace. Other experiences reported were quite severe and included: aggressive and violent acts such as being beaten up and gang attacks. Finally, participants reported the ways in which they had chosen to respond to anti-Semitism both as it occurred in their personal lives and in the broader society. Participants' responses to anti-Semitism included: educating their children, speaking up as it occurred, and direct social action at the community and national level. Some participants' responses to anti-Semitism also included a belief in *Zionism*. All found that living with and responding to anti-Semitism was a challenging, discouraging, and psychologically exhausting endeavor.

<u>Holocaust</u>

A fourth theme that emerged in this study was that of the Holocaust. All of the participants in the study reflected on the Holocaust deeply having much to say. Most reported that it had a major effect on their lives, their view of the world, and their existence as Jews. Participants discussed the Holocaust in three ways: (a) theorizing about why and how it happened, (b) describing how it affected them personally, and, (c) responding to the Holocaust.

In theorizing about why and how the Holocaust happened, participants largely agreed that the occurrence of this event was unfathomable, regardless of existing historical explanations. Participants did explain, however, that evil, severe anti-Semitism, jealousy, and the dark-side of humanity were all contributing factors. Many concurred that while the Holocaust was the most tangible Jewish atrocity they knew of, the vast array of others (e.g. pogroms, the Crusades, the Inquisition) were important to remember.

All participants concurred that the Holocaust had a profound and unchangeable effect on them, the world, and specifically on the history of the Jewish people. Some participants indicated that the Holocaust left them feeling at risk and not safe in the world as Jews. Some explained that while they were currently American citizens, their primary identification was as a Jew, and that they would not be surprised to find themselves living elsewhere when American anti-Semitism becomes more intense. Some did not believe that anything close to the Holocaust could ever occur in America. Many participants described feeling a general lack of trust towards Germany and German people. Some participants shared their stories of recent trips to Germany and the unnerving impact these had on them.

Many participants explained that the Holocaust increased their commitment to preserving Judaism and addressing injustice and hate in the world, as well as, how they raised their children. Participants offered three responses to the Holocaust namely: never forget, it could happen again, and never again. Some theorized that if people forget why and how the Holocaust happened, than there is nothing to ensure that it won't happen again. Others were certain that Jewish persecution was a given in the world, and that it was just a matter of time until the next atrocity happened again. Finally, others described the Israeli position of, never again, whereby one takes a defensive position toward protecting Jews and Jewish life and anticipates anti-Semitic events.

Data Analysis for Interview Process

At the end of each interview participants were asked questions in relation to how they experienced the interview process. Participants reported that they found the researcher easy to talk to because she was Jewish, and that her being Jewish helped create an openness and sense of trust. Further, participants explained that the cultural familiarity shared with the researcher facilitated the ease in answering the interview questions. Participants reported that the benefits of the interview were that it was interesting and thought provoking. Participants did not report that the process was at all distressing. In addition, participants were very generous with their time and offered to help contribute to this research effort as it unfolded. Finally, some participants reported that while they enjoyed the individual interview, they would have liked to have a group interview instead so that they could know what other participants had to say.

APPENDIX F

Letter to Judges

July 11, 2001

Dear Judge,

Thank you for volunteering to act as a judge in my dissertation study. Your input is an invaluable component of the data analysis. The goal of your involvement in this process is to validate the themes that have been identified via the formal data analysis, and to check the researcher's underlying assumptions with regard to the themes. Therefore, please be cautious not to provide a data analysis, per se. Instead, I ask you to simply be attentive to recursive themes that seem to be coming up in each transcript. To complete this process, please follow three steps while working with each transcript:

1) Read the transcript to familiarize yourself with it. Do not take detailed notes as you read, rather jot down your first impressions either as you read or when you are done.

2) Read each transcript for the second time more thoroughly and identify the major themes that seem to be catching your attention. Please take note of these themes. If possible, note the page/line numbers where these themes seem most prevalent.

3) Return all your notes for each transcript. If it is easier, you can send me your notes via an e-mail attachment if you have access to Microsoft Word. Also, if you have access to a paper shredder, feel free to shred the transcripts when you are done. If not, please return the transcripts with your notes.

Let me know in advance how long you think it will take to complete this process. Thank you again for your assistance. Your feedback is certain to make this study richer and more interesting.

Sincerely,

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Counseling Psychology
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