

MAURICE AND MARILYN COHEN CENTER FOR MODERN JEWISH STUDIES
and the HADASSAH-BRANDEIS INSTITUTE

Matrilineal ASCENT/ Patrilineal DESCENT

THE GENDER IMBALANCE IN
AMERICAN JEWISH LIFE

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Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures	iii
Introduction: What Is Gender Imbalance, and Why Is It a Problem?	1
Is Feminization of Religion “Natural” or Inevitable?	2
The Problem Is “Patrilineal Descent”—Not “Matrilineal Ascent”	4
The Other Jewish Gender Imbalance: Traditional Exclusion of Women.....	6
Studying Gender Imbalance and Its Implications	7
Triangulating Numbers, Interviews, and Cultural Context.....	9
One: Distinctive Jewish Gender Roles and How They Changed	12
Historical Jewish Societies Reserved Public Religious Roles for Men	14
Women as Historical Brokers for Modernization	17
The 1960s Challenge Middle Class Mores and American Jewish Patterns.....	20
Women Recent Brokers for Jewish Rituals, Ceremonies, Liturgical Skills	22
Cultural Explorations of Jewishness Often Led by Women, or by Men Trained in Orthodox Settings.....	27
Two: Gendered Thinking About Judaism in Jewish Homes	31
Relationship with Organized Religion Varies by Marriage Type.....	34
Women More Likely to Think Religion Is Necessary.....	36
Men More Likely to See Religion as Unnecessary	37
Who Makes Decisions About Your Child’s Religion?	42
Beyond the Judeo-Christian Blend: How Unique Is Judaism?.....	44
How Important Is Being Jewish to You?.....	44
Three: Doing Jewish—Synagogue and Ceremony as the “World of Our Mothers” 47	
Religious Observances in Inmarried Families Reflect Judaism and Gender	52
Gender Affects Ritual Observances in Intermarried Families	53
Brit Milah in Inmarried and Intermarried Jewish Households	56
Four: Peoplehood, Social Networks, Israel Attachments	57
Ethnic Social Capital	57
Denominational Differences in Jewish Social Capital	61
Goals for Raising Children and Brokering Jewish Family Connections	64
Jewish Particularism and American Diversity	66
Conclusion: Engendering Jewish Connections	68
Growing Evidence for Gendered Needs	71
Major Research Findings	75
Women.....	75
Men.....	76
Men and Women	76
Research and Policy Implications	77

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Gender differences among Jews in 51 Nations	3
Figure 1: Inmarried Jewish Parents by Importance of Religion “Very Important”	40
Figure 2: Intermarried Jewish Parents by Importance of Religion “Very Important”	41
Figure 3 Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Primary Decision Maker of Child’s Religion	42
Figure 4: Intermarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Primary Decision Maker of Child’s Religion	43
Figure 5: Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Importance of Being Jewish “Very Important”	45
Figure 6: Intermarried Jewish Parents by Importance of Being Jewish.....	46
Figure 7: Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Frequency of Synagogue Attendance “Weekly of More”	50
Figure 8: Inmarried Jewish Parents by Frequency of Synagogue Attendance “Never”	51
Figure 9: Intermarried Jewish Parents by Frequency of Synagogue Attendance	52
Figure 10: Inmarried Jewish Parents’ Ritual Observance by Affiliation and Gender	54
Figure 11: Intermarried Jewish Parents’ Ritual Observance by Wing of Judaism and Gender	55
Figure 12: Intermarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Brit Milah for Male Child	55
Figure 13: Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Proportion of Jewish Friends.....	59
Figure 14: Intermarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Proportion of Jewish Friends.....	60
Figure 15: Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Ever Been to Israel.....	62
Figure 16: Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Care About Israel “Very Important”.....	63

Introduction: What Is Gender Imbalance, and Why Is It a Problem?

Three decades ago writer William Novak panicked American women with gloomy predictions of *The Great American Man Shortage*.¹ A few years later British feminist psychologist Lynne Segal asked, *Is the Future Female?*² Their titles eerily foreshadowed the fact that today American Jewish boys and men have fewer connections to Jews and Judaism than girls and women in almost every venue and in every age, from school age children through the adult years. The descent of male interest is evident not only in domestic Judaism, as expected, but also in public Judaism, religious leadership, and secular ethnic attachments. In Fall 2005 women outnumbered men two to one in the entering rabbinical class in the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), for example.³ Nationally, girls and women outnumber men in weekly non-Orthodox worship services, in adult education classes, in volunteer leadership positions, and in Jewish cultural events. Only in lucrative, high status executive positions in the Jewish communal world do men outnumber women.⁴

Perhaps most disturbingly, Jewish men rank lower than Jewish women in secular ethnic, social, family or peoplehood connections as well. As we will show, Jewish men have measurably

lower rates of ethnic and religious social capital than Jewish women, as characterized by involvement with distinctively Jewish activities and connections with Jewish social networks. Ethnic social capital—defined either by non-religious, secular, or by religious cultural activities and networks—characterizes American Jewish women far more than men. Men are less likely to value Jewishness in the United States and worldwide as a distinctive culture, and less likely to visit Israel. Jewish women more than Jewish men have mostly Jewish friends and describe themselves as affiliated with one of the wings of American Judaism. Jewish men have weaker family ties than Jewish women, and are less likely to stay in close touch with Jewish family members than Jewish women. Jewish men are less likely to self-identify with a wing of Judaism, and far more than Jewish women call themselves “secular,” “cultural,” or “just Jewish.” Men invest less of their human capital into Jewishness, as we will shortly discuss. This is a matter of deep concern, because minority groups with high amounts of ethnic capital are much more successful at transmitting their culture to the next generation.

The majority of American Jews espouse equality as an important value, but Jewish life today is not gender equal. When it comes to gender equality or

gender balance, contemporary American Jewish life is caught between a rock and a hard place: Traditional public Judaism was and is dominated by men, while contemporary liberal American Judaism, although supposedly egalitarian, is visibly and substantially feminized. Jewish activities from the broad grassroots to the elite echelons of liberal Jewish religious leadership have become devalued, a typical result of feminization. Thus, boys and men as a group value feminized Jewish activities and environments less, and have fewer connections to Jews and Judaism.

Is Feminization of Religion “Natural” or Inevitable?

The American Jewish community has been slow to react to the feminization of Jewish classrooms, synagogues, social networks and leadership positions in part because female prominence in cultural and religious realms seems “natural” on the American scene. A preponderance of female worshippers is characteristic of many American Christian churches, and popular cultural all-American imagery often depicts men fishing and watching football games while women attend to church business.

In social scientific theoretical discussions as well, American scholars have long asserted that women are more “religious” than men through essential psychological differences or social conditioning. “By now it is so taken for granted that women are more religious than men that every competent

quantitative study of religiousness routinely includes sex as a control variable,” Stark articulates the supposedly universal assumption.⁵ While some researchers assert innate psychological leanings are the basis for female religiosity, others suggest differential socialization creates gender differences, arguing: “men are assigned [by society] roles that are more instrumental than socio-emotional and thus are less concerned with problems of morality,” but women are more relational in their development and more inclined toward religiosity.⁶

The theoretical assumption that women are innately more religious than men has led scholars and most policy makers to virtually ignore the feminization of American Jewish life. After all, their attitude seems to be, if greater religiosity is universally “hard wired” into women, how can strategies to increase male involvement make a difference? However, feminization is neither universal nor inevitable, an important new study shows. Examining the intersection of gender and religion around the world, D. Paul Sullins (2006) uses international data revealing that in religions other than Christianity—especially Judaism and Islam—men are often equally or more religious than women. Outside the United States, gendered approaches to religion are diverse. Men, rather than women, are often perceived as more religious. Most salient to our subject, “Worldwide, there is no measure of religiousness on which Jewish females

Table 1: Gender differences among Jews in 51 Nations

Jews in World Values Survey (WVS, 1995-97), N=1,183

% members synagogue or religious organization	Men 63%	Women 62%
% attending services weekly or more	Men 69%	Women 53%
% who say religion is important in their life	Men 87%	Women 87%
% who believe in God	Men 94%	Women 94%
% who believe in life after death	Men 78%	Women 71%
% who call themselves “a religious person”	Men 91 %	Women 93%

Source: Adapted from Sullins “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Diversity” *American Journal of Sociology* (2006, p. 845)

score higher than Jewish males. Jewish men report significantly higher rates of synagogue attendance and belief in life after death than do Jewish women; otherwise, there is no sex difference in religiousness among Jews,” Sullins comments.⁷

If the international evidence demonstrates that women are not necessarily more religious than men, why do American social scientists continue to produce findings that “women are more religious than men on every measure of religiosity,” as Walter and Davie (1998) put it? Part of the answer lies in their research bias. Many recent studies focus on religious belief rather than on religious activities. Survey instruments are constructed in a way which emphasizes—and defines as “religious”—women’s psychological expressions of religiosity. Meanwhile, questionnaires typically downplay or

ignore men’s more activity-based expressions of religiosity. Researchers word questions in ways that direct “the respondent to ignore attendance at religious services or ritual—probably the most basic form of participation in almost all religions—in assessing his or her own religiousness.” This research bias is particularly problematic when studying Jewish religious culture, which traditionally places enormous emphasis on religious activities, and relatively little, sporadic emphasis on belief. In the work of such prominent gender and religion researchers as Stark and Miller, “only affective, personal piety, not institutional participation, ritual practice, or the fulfillment of related norms is what count as religiousness,” as Sullins points out.⁸

Gender imbalance regarding religious activities is not innate. When gender imbalance occurs in the

American Jewish community it needs to be studied so that future policies and plans can be based on targeted research data.

The Problem Is “Patrilineal Descent”—Not “Matrilineal Ascent”

Gender imbalance is a critical problem in American Jewish life not because women are more active but because men are less active. Men’s decreased interest in Jews and Judaism walks hand in hand with apathy toward creating Jewish households and raising Jewish children, as well as lower levels of Jewish education, less synagogue attendance, less organizational involvement, and lower participation both in Jewish cultural activities and Jewish rituals. When dating non-Jewish men, Jewish women tend to pro-actively declare their intention to raise Jewish children. Jewish men, in contrast, tend to be reactive in inter-dating and intermarriage, not talking about the religion of the household or the eventual children until children are born or ready for religious school. Although rates of intermarriage are now similar for Jewish men and women, Jewish men often take the lead in dating non-Jews, articulating negative attitudes toward Jewish women, while Jewish women often turn to non-Jewish men in response to the perceived negativity in men of their own religious group.⁹

The gendered Jewish-connections gap between Jewish men and women married to non-Jews is most dramatic in

their reported commitment to raising Jewish children. The 2005 Boston study indicated that almost nine out of ten Jewish mothers married to non-Jewish men said they intended to raise their children as Jews, compared to about half of Jewish fathers married to non-Jewish women. The families least likely to raise Jewish children are those in which the Jewish parent self-describes as “secular.” Both local and national reports indicate that the fastest growing Jewish population that describes itself as “secular,” “cultural,” “atheistic” or “agnostic” is intermarried Jewish men.¹⁰ As sociologist Steven M. Cohen remarks about data from two Synovate/Market Facts studies, “women are more Jewishly engaged than men,” and there is “a relative absence of men” in almost all Jewish environments.¹¹

Little serious research and discussion have been addressed to the current gender imbalance in Jewish life, partially because such analysis can be misinterpreted as a call for women to retreat from Jewish involvements. Current patterns contradict thousands of years of Jewish history, during which men were the public and signifying Jews—and during which women were often marginalized or shut out of organized intellectual activities and public Judaism. For some, the current prominence of Jewish girls and women might seem to be a simple righting of millennia of wrongs. The increased activity of women in Jewish milieus also seems “natural” because it conforms to American Christian norms of (1)

ethnoreligious attachment being defined by spiritual feelings and beliefs, rather than by activities; and (2) these spiritual feelings and beliefs being perceived as essentially female, rather than male attributes. Thus, the growing feminization of liberal Judaism has often “slipped under the radar” of Jewish communal attention because these patterns are typical especially among Protestant populations in the United States.

Some observers have asserted that the retreat of men from American Jewish life does not comprise a problem.¹² Rabbi Rona Shapiro, among others, strongly asserted in a much-discussed op-ed piece in *The Forward* (January 5, 2007), that the so-called “Boy Crisis” in American Jewish life is a fraud, a kind of “crying wolf.” She asks rhetorically,

Thirty-five years ago when women were not ordained as rabbis, when girls in the Conservative movement celebrated a bat mitzvah on Friday night, when Orthodox girls did not receive an education remotely comparable to that of their brothers, when women were not called to the Torah for aliyot or allowed on the bimah at all—where were the headlines proclaiming a girl crisis?¹³

In fact, thirty-five years ago in the early 1970s, (as we discuss more fully in Chapter One) Jewish feminists in the United States and Israel were doing exactly that—creating headlines proclaiming a girl crisis, working together on multifaceted fronts to

ameliorate that crisis—and transforming contemporary Judaism for men and for women in the process. What distinguished the Jewish women’s movement was that it was both a grass-roots movement and a leaders’ movement, from which it derived great power and salience for broad spectrums of Jewish women. Those Jewish women brilliantly succeeded in creating girls- and women-only environments—“Bat Mitzvah—it’s a girl thing!”; Rosh Hodesh Groups; Adult Bat Mitzvah; Women’s classes in reading Torah, Haftarah and the five Megillot; women’s Talmud school and classes; and numerous other activities.

In contrast, Jewish men—with the exception of Judaic scholars, artists and musicians, and entrepreneurial religious leaders—were much less involved in similar grass-roots movements. Moreover, many suggest that psychologically girls and women are less likely to feel self-conscious if they enter these classes as a *tabula rasa*. Boys and men, conversely, are much more likely to feel on display or uncomfortable if they perceive themselves as not competent where they think people will assume that they are competent. They often shy away from the very classes that attract girls and women. As Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin notes, “both men and women are looking for meaning in their lives. People don’t want to experience the world as a chaotic mess; they want to see there are roadmaps out there.” Women—because of their consciousness of centuries of marginalization—worked

hard to create their own paths of access. But men have difficulty talking about these needs and seeking answers, he argues:

The deep inner needs of men aren't being taken as seriously in our Movement (Reform Judaism) as they need to be. Women, on the other hand, are, in general, getting more of their needs met in the synagogue context. Women have Rosh Chodesh, where they can mark the first day of the Jewish month through study, ritual, and mutual support. They also have numerous opportunities for public activism on behalf of women's issues. And there is a growing body of women's spiritual literature that would fill several shelves at a bookstore. Jewish women have led us in a liturgical revolution that has prompted a rethinking of the very names and attributes of God. In comparison, what new rituals and texts have been created to express themselves as men?¹⁴

The two-sided, gender imbalance among American Jews is a critical—and painful—challenge in Jewish life today. Jewish communities navigate the shoals between the Scylla of patriarchal exclusion of women from public Judaism that characterized the religion for most of its history, and the Charybdes of sweeping feminization in almost every aspect of contemporary liberal American Jewishness.

The Other Jewish Gender Imbalance: Traditional Exclusion of Women

This feminization of American Jewish life reverses a patriarchal gender gap which characterized Jewish societies throughout most of Jewish history, as we detail in Chapter One. By excluding women from public prayer and rabbinic leadership, traditional Jewish societies historically have silenced “half the genius of the Jewish people,” in Cynthia Ozick's words, “a loss numerically greater than a hundred pogroms; yet Jewish literature and history report not one wail, not one tear.”¹⁵ Not only does the patriarchal system make little girls (and many bigger ones) feel excluded and often alienated from the meaningful action, but women's non-participation has produced non-representational venues for rabbinic decision making, with sometimes tragic results (as in the case of *agunot*, women unable to extricate themselves from marriage vows). In less liberal Orthodox synagogues women are often sequestered in balconies or back sections where it is difficult to see or hear the service and the Torah reading. Because they are not counted for the *minyan* prayer quorum, they are frequently considered—and treated—as extraneous to the praying congregation, the *kehillah*.

Gender issues have powerful symbolic resonance. In *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) congregations the marginalization of women has arguably grown more extreme in recent years as a symbolic rejection of the putatively

alien, Western value of gender egalitarianism. The view that feminist demands are heretical has spread to some “Centrist” Orthodox environments as well. Yeshiva University’s Talmudic scholar and Rosh Yeshiva (headmaster) Rabbi Herschel Schachter, for example, compares Modern Orthodox, as well as Conservative and Reform expansion of women’s roles to *minim* (historical heretical groups) such as Sadducees and early Christians.¹⁶ American and Israeli Orthodox feminists¹⁷ attempt to alleviate inequality by supporting policies that bring women closer to centers of halakhic public Jewish scholarship, worship, and decision-making. Their attempts are often slowed by the fact that some rabbinical positions come with a great deal of power but little in the way of checks and balances and accountability. Orthodox egalitarian efforts encounter substantial resistance and “pushback” from some Orthodox rabbis and laity alike, both in Israel and America.

In their efforts to resist cultural assimilation, *Haredi* communities have used gender role construction as a powerful strategy to counter what they see as the erosions of Jewish tradition by Western culture. They go beyond previous gender role differentiations to emphasize differences and separations between males and females. *Haredi* exaggeration of gender role differences not only maintains the male prestige of religious activities but also male rabbinic power and authority. Some observers speculate that the preservation of male

authority is an important motivator for revitalizing patriarchal stringencies. However, these strategies have little appeal or salience for the vast majority of liberal Americanized Jews, including many Modern Orthodox Jews.

Studying Gender Imbalance and Its Implications

The American Jewish community today includes two very different types of gender imbalance, with disproportionate roles for one or the other gender in each. This monograph argues that a healthy and vibrant Jewish society requires the active engagement of both genders. We explore the implications of contemporary liberal American Jewish societies that comprise the vast majority of American Jewry, in which men are often not invested in and engaged by their Jewishness. We begin by asking how we got from the patriarchalism of the past to the feminization of the present.

In Chapter One, to frame our discussion, we briefly highlight salient aspects of male and female gender role definition in some traditional Jewish societies, comparing the differing ways Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors defined maleness and femaleness, exploring the way Jewish boys were enculturated into Jewish religious life. We highlight the roles Jewish women played as brokers of modernity in nineteenth and early twentieth century European life and then, conversely, as brokers of traditionalism in recent decades within liberal American Jewish

communities. We ask why and in what ways men and women historically and American men and women today have related differently to their Jewishness, tracing the ways in which Jewish gender role construction shifted and changed with the advent of modernity. We note the trajectory of changes in gender roles precipitated by modern social trends, the ascent of women to public Jewish leadership, and the social and religious transformations facilitated by Jewish feminism in contemporary American Jewish societies. We discuss the enormous positive effect of women's involvement in Jewish religious and communal leadership, as well as the disturbing decline of men's involvement in these areas in liberal Jewish environments. Our analysis also focuses on gender role constructions in more traditional Orthodox environments in which gender imbalance arguably leans in the opposite direction.

Chapters Two, Three and Four deal with the intersections of gender and secular ethnic and religious identity. Chapter Two looks at attitudes toward religion in general and toward Judaism specifically among men and women, and among Jewish men and women who self-identify with particular wings of Judaism or as secular Jews. Chapter Three explores male and female participation in synagogue life and Jewish ritual observances. Chapter Four focuses on social networks—relationships with family, friends, community and Jews worldwide—and

male and female feelings of attachment to Israel and the Jewish people.

In these chapters we present statistical and systematic interview data to look at the impact of gendered differences in the lives of individual Jewish men and women, on the Jewish character of American households, and on the raising of children within those households. Many factors affect the extent to which a Jewish individual feels connected to Jews and Jewishness. For American Jews, life cycle stage has long been one of the most profound influences: rates of affiliation and quantity and quality of connections increase when people find spouses or life partners; they increase even more dramatically when children enter the household. In other words, if a Jew is ever going to become involved in some way to Jewishness, it is most likely to be when s/he has children at home. Because of this fact, and also because one of our primary research interests was the impact of gender on raising Jewish children, our statistics and interview data focus on married households with children.

To paint the big picture of major Jewish trends and behaviors, we have created a statistical data set of married Jews with children under 18 living at home drawn from the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (NJPS). To look at voices, experiences and motivations, we re-analyze more than 300 transcribed interviews (2000-2003, American Jewish Committee) studying differing types of Jewish marriages to

compare statements about Jewish feelings and connections and parental goals made by both Jewish and non-Jewish men and women who are currently living in endogamous (two born Jews married to each other), exogamous (one born Jew married to one current non-Jew), and conversionary marriages (one or more of the spouses is a Jew by choice, a convert into Judaism).^a To further illuminate and illustrate the phenomena we examine, we incorporate cultural materials such as fiction, essays, film and popular culture that offer insights into Jewish attitudes and behaviors.

Triangulating Numbers, Interviews, and Cultural Context

Analyzing shifting phenomena around us is always a complicated enterprise. Studying contemporary Jewish life, we stand as participant observers in the center of flux and change, as social psychologist Simon Herman remarked in his landmark study of Jewish identity.¹⁸ When a navigator or astronomer is having difficulty getting her bearings, she can employ a mathematical technique called triangulation. By measuring the angles between the points of a triangle, she can

determine the exact position of elusive objects. Triangulation is a useful strategy in the social sciences as well, in which multiple methods of information gathering are employed in order to more accurately identify and analyze social trends. This study works with quantitative, qualitative and cultural data—triangulating these very different types of source materials.

While the intermingling of statistical data, verbatim interview quotations, and content analysis of literary and cinematic materials may seem unorthodox to strict disciplinarians, this strategy was already used by Jewish scholars a century ago to understand rapidly changing times. Analysis of multiple, diverse source materials was pioneered by Jewish scholars who wanted to understand the behaviors and motivations of the “everyday” Jew, rather than focusing as many of their predecessors had done exclusively on Jewish elites and historical watersheds. Institutions such as the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO, 1925) and the Paris-based *Annales d’histoire économique* advocated using the tools of folklorists and ethnographers to analyze “costume, religion, law, sport, music, food, calendars, sexual practices, work,

a. Quantitative data is mostly drawn from a new analysis of the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey (United Jewish Communities. 2003. National Jewish Population Survey, 2000-01. New York, NY: United Jewish Communities [producer]. Storrs, CT: North American Jewish Data Bank [distributor]). We created a data set of men and women who are parents of children ages 1-17 living at home, divided by gender, family type, and wing of American Judaism, if any, that they identify with. Within the 2000-01 NJPS we looked at what they said about who in the family decides the child’s religious identification, and how central Judaism is to their own lives, as well as at their Jewish attitudes, values and behaviors. Much of our qualitative discussion highlights data drawn from a new analysis of existing transcribed interviews, from two research projects originally designed to compare the factors leading up to and the religious behaviors within Jewish inmarried, conversionary, and intermarried households. The original analyses of these interviews, funded by the American Jewish Committee, were published in two AJC reports and a book, *Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage* (Brandeis University Press, 2004). We have returned to these more than 300 transcribed interviews to look at a new subject: the relative impact of gender and family type in connections to Jews and Jewishness and as regards parental ethno-religious goals.

buildings, technology” and other materials, along with statistical surveys. These methods were further developed by such Jewish thinkers as Jewish historical monolith Simon Dubnow, Isaac Schiper, scholar of medieval Jewish economic history, social historian Marcell Handelsman, and Emanuel Ringelblum, all of whom sought to create multifaceted, nuanced pictures of the societies they studied.¹⁹

Finally, in our Conclusion, we highlight our findings and explore policy implications. We also urge further, targeted basic and applied research on the intersection of gender and contemporary Jewishness. The statistics and interviews we present demonstrate that boys and men are being alienated from Jewishness from their early years onward. However, little systematic information exists about how, or why, or what could make a difference for little boys, school age boys, young adolescents, teenagers, college students, young and older singles, married men and fathers, divorced or widowed men. We know little about how boys and men make Jewish connections.

Understanding the impact of gender upon behavior and values is a field that is literally in its infancy. Humankind has long admitted the powerful shaping effect of sexuality, but it is only in recent times that similar attention is paid to the way diverse societies construct maleness and femaleness.²⁰ Although individuals may see themselves as the authors of their own destinies, they are influenced in overt and subtle ways by the attitudes,

values, behaviors, preferences and taboos that their social networks and the societies around them invest in sexual differences.²¹ The American Jewish community will not be able to create effective strategies without using gender as a tool for understanding what is happening and how to deal with current challenges.

Endnotes to Introduction

¹ William Novak, *The Great American Man Shortage* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1983).

² Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?* (London: Virago Press, 1987).

³ Debra Nussbaum-Cohen, “Reform Jews Examining Ways to Retain Their Young Men,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2006, p. A10.

⁴ Shifra Bronznick, Didi Goldenhar, and Marty Linsky, *Leveling the Playing Field: Advancing Women in Jewish Organizational Life* (Cambridge, MA.: Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community and Cambridge Leadership Associates, 2008).

⁵ Rodney Stark, “Physiology and Faith: Addressing the ‘Universal’ Gender Differences in Religious Commitment,” in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, No. 3 (2002), pp. 495-507, p. 496.

⁶ Hart M. Nelson and L. K. Nelson, *Black Church in the Sixties* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), cited in Hart Nelson and R. M. Potvin, “Gender and Regional Differences in the Religiosity of Protestant Adolescents,” *Review of Religious Research* 22, No. 3, pp. 268-285.

⁷ D. Paul Sullins, “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity,” in *American Journal of Sociology* 112, No. 3 (November 2006), pp. 838-880, pp. 844, 846.

⁸ Sullins (2006), p. 850.

⁹ Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage* (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 2004), pp. 17-64.

¹⁰ Leonard Saxe et al, *Jewish Population Study of Greater Boston* (Waltham, MA.: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2005).

¹¹ Steven M. Cohen et. al., “The Slipstream Effect: How Marriage Closes Gender Gaps in Jewish Identity,” (University of California, Davis, CA: Florence Heller/ JCCA, 2007)

¹² Rona Shapiro, “The ‘Boy Crisis’ that Cried Wolf,” in *The Forward* (Jan. 5, 2007).

¹³ Shapiro, “The ‘Boy Crisis’ that Cried Wolf,” *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Jeffrey Salkin, “The Retreating Man,” in *Reform Judaism* 35, No 1 (Fall 2006), pp. 70-72.

¹⁵ Cynthia Ozick, “Notes Toward Finding the Right Question,” *Lilith* No. 6 (1979), pp. 19-29.

¹⁶ Herschel Schachter, “Can Women Be Rabbis,” The Torah Web Foundation 2004 (http://torahweb.org/torah/2004/parsha/rsch_dvorum2.html).

¹⁷ Including, but not limited to, participants in Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), Kolech, the Israeli Jewish Women’s Network, and numerous other social change organizations and artistic endeavors, including Orthodox feminist theater groups, filmmakers, and visual artists.

¹⁸ Simon Herman, *Jewish Identity* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2nd ed., 1989), p. 20.

¹⁹ Peter N. Miller, “What We Know About Murdered Peoples,” review essay on Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Indiana University Press, 2008), in *The New Republic* 238, No. 4833 (April 9, 2008), pp. 34-39.

²⁰ Sandra Bem, “The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny,” in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42, no. 2, pp. 155-162, created widespread acceptance for the concept of societally constructed gender differences. The Bem Scale measures the way individuals assess their own “masculine” and “feminine” traits.

²¹ Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchison, 1987), p. 29. Social psychologists look not only at the diverging ways different societies construct gender, but also at how individuals within those societies internalize those ideas and believe them to be “natural” and universal. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall defined the social construction of gender: “Masculinity” and “femininity” are constructs specific to historical time and place. These are categories continually being forged, contested, reworked, and reaffirmed in social institutions and practices as well as a range of ideologies. Among these

conflicting definitions there is always space for negotiation and change although often differing interpretations are covered by a seemingly unified “common sense.”

One: Distinctive Jewish Gender Roles and How They Changed

The social construction of gender roles²² is an extremely important key to how American Jewish life today differs from historical Jewish societies. For centuries, Jews diverged from their neighbors in how they understood “maleness” and “femaleness.” While Western societies frequently constructed maleness around physical strength, battle prowess, stoicism and lack of emotionalism, Jewish societies from the Middle Ages onward created a different ideal, masculinity which emphasized ritual piety, spiritual intensity, and intellectual learnedness, as well as active roles within social networks such as the family and community. Emotionalism among men was not discouraged, unlike many other cultures. The proliferation of Jewish legal obligations, along with Jewish cultural and social mores, required men to attend to many domestic and social welfare tasks that other societies often delegated to women alone.

While Jews certainly were influenced by—and influenced—their non-Jewish neighbors in many ways, both they and their neighbors were aware of the differences. Indeed, the Jewish construction of maleness so departed from that of many European societies in which Jews were embedded as small minorities that Jewish maleness was often misunderstood and derided as

being effeminate. Medieval Christians believed that Jewish men menstruated; 19th century intellectuals like the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer constructed a scale of human behavior with “Aryan” and “masculine” on the high end and “Jews” and “feminine” on the low end.²³ Jews—and the non-Jews around them—perceived Jewish maleness as something quite distinct.

Of course the masculinities encouraged by Jewish societies were not monolithic. As David Biale points out, Jewish men were not always powerless, and “the best-known Jewish military figure of the Middle Ages was the poet and communal leader Samuel HaNagid, who led the armies of Granada in the early eleventh century. He left an array of military poems describing his exploits in battle...[he urged] ‘Take risks when you aim for power and defeat the foe with the sword.’”²⁴ Nevertheless, as Daniel Boyarin and others point out, for hundreds of years Jewish culture preferred the non-violent, scholarly, and in many ways passive male. This ideal Jewish male was defined by Jewish societies as a sexual being, but his sexuality was domesticated and seldom described as accompanied by aggressiveness. For example, Seder plates depicted the “wise son” as a Talmud scholar and the “wicked son” as a militarily clad Roman soldier. In Jewish folksongs young women yearned

for “a little bridegroom...fit for the Torah:

And Torah as the Torah prescribes,
He must learn day and night;
Let him write me a little letter,
Let him remain a good little Jew.

A German-Jewish ethical will from a father to his two sons urges them to emulate their mother: “Be meek and patient, and seek to acquire the character and patience of your mother.” Glickl of Hameln praises her beloved husband’s lack of ambition, which she sees as a Jewish characteristic. Not least, many Jews regarded as “*goyim naches* (gentile pleasures)...violent physical activity, such as hunting, dueling, or wars—all of which Jews traditionally despised.” Little wonder that a French writer in the 1920s mused that Jewish men were “half men, half women.”²⁵ The Jewish paragon of masculinity was a nice Jewish boy, a kind and considerate husband, a restrained and unaggressive community member.

When the Western, assimilated Theodor Herzl and other secular authors of Zionist theory created their images of a “new”—and masculine—Jew, they rejected the pious masculinity of the shtetl, which they perceived as being powerless, and thus effeminate. In its place they proposed a new Jewish masculinity which incorporated all the physical prowess and aggressiveness that the old Jews lacked. American Jews, in their own way, also left the traditional Jewish understanding of maleness behind—although a variant has certainly been enshrined in the films of Woody

Allen. As Harry Brod and others have pointed out, when popular culture chooses to portray overtly Jewish men, it often depicts them in ways that complement the old Jewish picture: “Since Jewish men are already seen as feminized by the culture, using them to embody the more ‘sensitive’ traits stereotypically associated with women is therefore both less threatening and more plausible...”²⁶

Traditional Jewish ideals of femininity also differed from non-Jewish societies. Thus, as Grossman, Baumgarten, and other scholars have recently demonstrated, Jewish women in medieval societies were often actively involved in economic and even educational pursuits.²⁷ Boyarin summarizes these findings:

While Jewish men were sitting indoors and studying Torah, speaking only a Jewish language, and withdrawn from the world, women of the same class were speaking, reading, and writing the vernacular, maintaining businesses large and small, and dealing with the wide world of tax collectors and irate customers. In short, they were engaging in what must have seemed to many in the larger culture as masculine activities, and if the men were read as sissies, the women were read often enough as phallic monsters.

These distinctive Jewish gender role constructions are usefully described by Cantor:

Male violence had to be eliminated. While Jewish male domination of the community was upheld, male power was stripped of the use of force and was redefined as the power of the mind and intellect....When masculinity was redefined as spiritual resistance, women's enabler role was to facilitate it and to accept exclusion from it....breadwinning, which defines masculinity under classic patriarchy, was gender neutral in most periods of Jewish history. Women functioned in the economic sphere of the public realm and were neither marginalized there nor privatized in the home.²⁸

Some contemporary observers have argued that historical Jewish societies fostered countercultural ideals of masculinity and femininity that have much to recommend in their departures from Western norms.²⁹

Historical Jewish Societies Reserved Public Religious Roles for Men

The historical Jewish male-female binary was an important component of the matrix into which Jewish life was embedded. Judaism within its religious culture clearly distinguished between religious "performers," who were almost always men, and religious "facilitators," who were typically women. Feminist historical scholar Moshe Rosman notes:

....those roles interlocked to undergird the structure of meaning and practice that supported Jewish

culture. The elaborate Sabbath and holiday rituals were well served by the combination of women's "freedom" to serve as facilitators and men's "obligation" to serve as performers, which in turn reinforced the facilitator/ performer dichotomy in the family, social, and political realms. Children's initiation into the culture was premised on the mother having a flexible ritual schedule and the father a more regularized one.

Rosman emphasizes: "There was no more pervasive factor than gender in determining the structure of Jewish culture. Defining its parameters will go a long way toward clarifying the nature and dynamics of that culture."³⁰

Traditional Jewish societies from medieval times onward defined public Jewish prayer, education, holiday and life cycle rituals and ceremonies, and many leadership activities as the responsibilities of the broad spectrum of Jewish males. Expectations of men were, in their own way, relatively democratic. Not only male elites, but ordinary males were instructed to pray at daily appointed times, within a prayer quorum (*minyan*) of ten males whenever possible.³¹ The social ideal—if not the reality—that all fathers should teach all their Jewish sons to be Jewishly literate and active in public Jewish worship was distinctively Jewish. Those girls who received educations usually studied at home with relatives or tutors. Frequently, girls in the family were taught to read and write in an ethnic vernacular, typically Yiddish in

European settings, while boys, who needed to function in public prayer settings, were taught Hebrew, the language of Jewish prayer, as well.

To be sure, the lives of most Jewish men did not match the Jewish ideal of masculinity in every detail. Illiteracy was common among the poor, and in impoverished social strata few boys got beyond rudimentary religious education. Socioeconomic inequities and hierarchies were always present. Elite Jewish males who excelled in Jewish text study and/ or enjoyed higher socioeconomic status certainly enjoyed higher social status as well. When Tevye the Dairyman in “Fiddler on the Roof” echoed his progenitor, Sholom Aleichem, “When you’re rich they think you really know,” his sardonic yet yearning comment reflected centuries of folk wisdom and experience, the ideal—and how far the lives of most men fell from the ideal.³²

Nevertheless, even the most ordinary Jewish man enjoyed a certain prominence because he was expected to fulfill public religious obligations that were understood as not incumbent upon women. Women prayed privately at home, or quietly in a separate women’s section in the synagogue. According to rabbinic law and Jewish tradition, the religious obligations of Jewish males are incumbent on them except in cases of extremity, such as life-threatening situations, while many of the religious obligations of women are modified by their obligations to other human beings. Although rabbinic law obligates women

to obey all laws except those that are time-dependent, females’ religious obligations were placed in and modified by the context of their relationships to their parents, husbands, children, and the community at large.

While some women led other women in their prayers, most Jewish women—even well-educated and affluent women—assumed (often erroneously, according to rabbinic law) they needed a Jewish male to help them fulfill many religious obligations. Widows ran to the homes of nearby married couples to listen piously to the recitation of prayers over the Sabbath wine and the Havdalah candle. The birth of a first son was greeted with joy: A “kaddish’l” had been born—a baby who would grow up to recite the kaddish prayer in the synagogue for parents who would eventually die. Widows and daughters with no brother often paid yeshiva students to recite the kaddish in memory of their deceased parents or husbands.

Tova Hartman, a scholar of gender and Jewish studies, comments on the way the peculiarly Jewish version of hegemonic masculinity marginalized women by excluding them from the main action of the synagogue and the study hall:

Torah study is perhaps the most important value informing traditional Jewish culture. It is more than an intellectual pursuit; it represents a primary religious moment of intimate encounter with divine revelation. Becoming a

scholar of Torah and especially of Talmud was the highest religious aspiration; it is no wonder, therefore, that the scholar became the main authority figure in the community. The institution of the yeshiva—an intense, all-encompassing environment—was created in order to produce and nurture this ideal type....In this society, the exclusion of women from Torah study, more than anything else, meant the marginalization of women. Because this culture was so immersed and influenced by the ongoing interpretation of canonical texts, the institutional exclusion of women from yeshiva life and Torah study prevented women from becoming full and active partners in the life of the community. (This exclusion is analogous to the denial of citizenship to women in the Greek polis where the life of the active citizen was regarded as the highest fulfillment of human potential.)³³

When Yiddish writers during the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment that modernity brought to European Jewish life during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, portrayed pious Jewish societies, they captured the deep inferiority complex that afflicted many women as they regarded the many religious obligations of men, which were seen as a privileged status. Thus, Yiddish Enlightenment writer Y.L. Peretz (1851-1915), in his satiric, socially critical mode, created a

domineering mother who expounded on women's subordinate status because of their lesser religious obligations, "What has a man to fear?" Long Serel warned her terrified daughter:

He'll skim through a chapter of the Mishna, and at once six pages of his sins are cancelled. And when are they ever called to account, these men? Once a year, on the day of Atonement! But woman—the poor thing—what does she signify? A pitiful creature, no more than a turkey-hen, the Lord forgive us. When it comes to pregnancy, to childbirth, why her life then actually hangs by a hair. And what do we poor things have for the salvation of our souls?³⁴

In these traditional societies young boys were very effectively enculturated into male roles in their patriarchal cultures. That step by step training socialized boys from toddlerhood onward to aspire to the world of male Jewish identification. Much of that male socialization is retained in Orthodox societies today, in which one can observe the following patterns: Pre-school boys are brought the night before a newborn's circumcision to cluster around his crib and sing the biblical passage with which Joseph blessed his grandsons, *Hamalakh ha-go'el oti mikol rah*, "May that angel who saved me from all evil also save these boys." The first "real boy" haircut at age three, often called by the Yiddish term *opsheren*, becomes a festive event. Primary school boys walk around the men's section

waiting for the moment when they can open the ark. All the male and female congregants smile and beam benedictions on the seven or eight-year old boys who have practiced and trained and mastered the lyrical but long *Anim zemirot* responsive hymn, as they lead the congregation in the closing prayers of the Sabbath service.

In Orthodox communities, by the time boys learn to lead the entire prayer service and chant both the Torah and Haftorah portions for their bar mitzvahs, they are poised to take the male responsibilities of daily group prayer accompanied by prayer shawl and phylacteries, *ta'alit* and *t'fillin*. They—and they alone—can help create a prayer quorum, *minyan*. They develop the loyalties of men in battle to their buddies—they feel responsible to overcome considerable inconvenience to make sure there will be a *minyan*. Although it may seem troubling to contemplate, the corresponding decline of men in contemporary egalitarian Jewish worship environments seems to indicate that, in Orthodox congregations, the fact that someone—girls and women—are excluded gives male religious responsibilities sociological piquancy and power.

Women as Historical Brokers for Modernization

Sweeping social historical changes provided impetus and context for transformations in women's roles: In Western Jewish communities that emancipated Jews in the 18th and 19th

centuries and offered them the opportunity to enter schools and *gymnasias*, the lives of both Jewish men and women were transformed. Although men in general received more education than women, within some traditional societies elite strata of Jewish men were sequestered in Talmudic academies, and Jewish women sometimes preceded Jewish men into the modern world. Indeed, the great writers of the Jewish Enlightenment or *haskalah* often entered modern culture through the reading habits of their mothers and sisters.³⁵ In Germany, while Jewish men immersed themselves in commerce according to the middle-class pattern, and Jewish thinkers reformed and transformed synagogue life, Jewish women became the designated agents of *embourgeoisement* and the transmitters of Westernized lifestyles and forms of Judaism to the next generation.³⁶

Interestingly, even though early Reform Judaism rejected the subordination of women as a mark of East European “Orientalism” and backwardness, Jewish women were accorded few opportunities for religious leadership and public religious expression in the Reform movement until well into American Reform Judaism's 20th century congregations. However, developments within German Reform Judaism did set the stage for feminization in another extremely important way: the psycho-social perception of the nature of religion and spirituality as women's responsibility.

As German Jews adopted bourgeois norms, hegemonic Jewish masculinity no longer incorporated intense religiosity and spirituality. Those attributes began to be seen as female rather than male qualities. This reformulation of male and female gender roles—which discouraged German Jewish women from the previous common Ashkenazi pattern of female marketplace activism—was particularly well-suited to capitalist economies, as Segal explains:

...there remains a neat fit between success in capitalist cultures and the type of single-mindedness, competitiveness and ambition which is still fostered and celebrated at the heart of dominant competitive masculinities in the West....The openness, sensitivity, and capacity to give—and keep on giving integral to successful caring in the home, remains completely at odds with the focused instrumentality required for most types of successful working lives.³⁷

What the American Jewish community today calls “continuity” was seen as the task of the German Jewish matron. German Jewish mothers—like their Christian neighbors—were assigned the tasks of educating their children morally and also imbuing them with just enough—but not too much—religious feeling. The Jewish *paterfamilias*, like his Christian counterpart, became a public but not much of a private Jew. He was expected to make a good living and support his family in respectable style, to be active

in appropriate community activities, and to attend a Westernized Reform congregation often enough to establish his credentials as an upstanding member of society.³⁸

It may be that the current pattern of American Jewish male critiques of Jewish women were nurtured in this milieu as well. Ironically, secularization often did not improve attitudes toward the female gender. Writer and researcher Carol Ascher remembers that her secular German-Jewish psychoanalyst father, “oddly taciturn about anything personal for someone in his profession, was clearly bitter about his own Viennese childhood.” She has vivid memories of his father’s “complaints about his mother” and his conventional, patriarchal attitudes towards his daughters:

He wanted to give me every intellectual and artistic opportunity....Yet when I grew sufficiently confident to argue my own points of view, he became afraid that I would alienate men and never find a mate. I was given lessons in painting, piano, violin, and ballet; but as I began to take each in turn seriously, I was warned of the precariousness of an artistic life, and in each case the lessons were withdrawn. I was to be cultivated, but not ambitious for myself; clever, but not passionate about any pursuit or subject—in short, ornamental, a salon woman, perhaps, who could stimulate and bring together men.³⁹

With the immigration of millions of Europe's Jews to the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries, Jewish women as well as men took advantage of educational opportunities. While Jewish men received more secular education than Jewish women in America, especially in 20th-century America, Jewish girls and women took advantage of educational opportunities far more than women of other ethnoreligious groups: in New York in 1910, at a time when Jews made up about 19 percent of the population, 40 percent of the women enrolled in night school were Jewish. By 1934, more than 50 percent of New York female college students were Jewish.⁴⁰ In 1990, almost nine out of ten American Jewish women aged 30-39 had gone to college, and almost a third had attended graduate school.

The intense educational and occupational ambitions of men and women who were children of immigrants set the stage for Jewish gender wars that have endured until the present day. As Riv-Ellen Prell has compellingly demonstrated, Jewish men and working unmarried women in the early decades of the 20th century were *Fighting to be Americans*, and they often faced each other as enemies competing for identical, deeply coveted prizes of assimilation. In the face of rising antisemitism, Jewish women, but more especially Jewish men feared that the overt Jewishness of Jews of the opposite gender might stand in their way as they strove to become real Americans. In Prell's words, "the image of a 'vulgar'

Jewish woman reminded established Jews that they might forever be found wanting by America's dominant Protestant majority." To protect themselves from what seemed like a clinging Jewish curse, Jewish men tried to distance themselves from what one might call the too-Jewy-ness of Jewish women. Jewish women became the signifying Jews—the Jews who signal to the world that they are Jewish—in American popular culture, in contrast to the many centuries and countries in which Jewish men had been marked as the signifying Jews.⁴¹

However, although Jewish women continued to pursue disproportionately high levels of secular education throughout the 20th century, their labor force participation did not immediately follow suit, for they had thoroughly adapted to the Western bourgeois pattern of ceasing to work for pay outside the home once they married and bore children. This tendency to stop paid employment became a sociological characteristic of Jewish women, who brought their high levels of education and cultural bias toward articulateness and assertiveness into the Jewish communal organizational world, where they created immensely effective unpaid working communities. In addition, American Jewish women, especially in the Reform movement, flocked to the "opulent" Temples, as Karla Goldman demonstrates.

Offered a place in the sanctuary, Jewish women occupied the family pews of these magnificent temples

in force, continuing a trend that had marked early nineteenth century American synagogues. In a departure from the traditional pattern of synagogue worship, but in keeping with the attendance patterns of most American Christian denominations, women quickly came to dominate attendance at weekly Sabbath services, as men increasingly attended to business concerns on the Jewish day of rest..⁴²

However, through the 1950s women sat in worship services primarily as passive recipients, rather than active leaders, whatever the denomination. It was only in Jewish women's organizations—Temple sisterhoods and local and national Jewish women's movements—that they could take leadership roles. These Jewish women's organizations became signifying Jewish institutions. The example of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc., which grew to be one of the most successful Zionist organizations around the world, is the epitome of efficient organizational empires built by American Jewish women during the decades when most of them defined themselves as full-time "homemakers." The stereotypical Jews, instead of being a man with a head covering and a long, grey beard, became a house-proud, temple-attending, beautifully dressed suburban matron raising money for Hadassah.

The 1960s Challenge Middle Class Mores and American Jewish Patterns

Expectations that religiosity would be an attribute primarily of females and not of males had already begun to permeate the American Jewish community during the period of rapid socio-economic upward mobility in the 1930s and 1940s. Nevertheless, synagogues remained male bastions of religious leadership until the middle of the 20th century. Many Jewish girls and women agreed with Herman Wouk's 1955 novelistic protagonist *Marjorie Morningstar* who, attending her younger brother's bar mitzvah, thought wistfully that Judaism was a mysterious and male enterprise. Marjorie suffers a brief moment of what we might call "tallish envy":

....today, despite herself, the girl found awe creeping over her as her brother's voice filled the vault of the temple, chanting words thousands of years old, in an eerie melody from a dim lost time....Seth sang on, husky and calm, and it occurred to Marjorie that after all there might be a powerful propriety in the old way of separating the men and the women. This religion was a masculine thing, whatever it was, and Seth was coming into his own. The very Hebrew had a rugged male sound to it, all different from the bland English comments of the rabbi....Her little jealous pique was lost in a rush of love for her baby brother....⁴³

What Marjorie—and Wouk—did not understand, however, was the role that Jewish women had already played in transforming men’s lives, as well as their own, and how much of a role they were soon to play with the arrival of Jewish Second Wave Feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s.

American social norms had been epitomized by a “melting pot” pressure toward ethnic conformity during the years of mass immigration (1880-1924) and in the decades immediately afterward. Ethnic groups had understood that only if they acculturated would the promise of American opportunities be open to them. Overwhelmingly they abandoned their ethnic languages and cultural mores that made them distinctive and—as they were made to feel—unAmerican. During the 1960s, however, the exploration of Judaism as a religious culture was encouraged by the American Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Vietnam War protest movements, and by a lively and often transgressive youth culture, which advocated “doing your own thing,” including the celebration of ethnic differences. This Jewish awakening was reinforced by Zionist American Jewish feelings of pride immediately after the 1967 war in the Middle East, during which Israel defended itself against massed armies of the Arab states. In a parallel development, American Jewish intellectuals and artists had become extremely influential and were increasingly exploring and emphasizing their own Jewishness.

Together, activism and spiritual searching helped produce a readiness to experiment with new forms of religious expression. The Havurah style of small worship and study groups emerged out of the Reconstructionist movement. In its beginnings, Havurahs were led almost exclusively by elite Jewish males who had received extensive amounts of Jewish education. Soon, however, “havuroid” groups sprang up within all the wings of American Judaism, and egalitarianism became one of the axiomatic values of the Havurah movement. On a scholarly level, Jewish studies departments were established in many non-sectarian universities. For many decades, these departments consisted almost exclusively of male scholars, many of them European-trained. Thus, the Jewish awakening of the 1960s and 1970s was, for men, primarily an elite phenomenon. However, as we shall see, for women it became a grass-roots movement, along with Jewish feminism.

The narrative of the perseverance and triumph of Jewish feminists, bringing women to the center of public Judaism, and public Judaism to the center of women’s lives, is still intensely meaningful to women who lived through it and made it happen.⁴⁴ Sweeping social historical changes provided impetus and context for transformations in women’s roles: These patterns began to change as Jewish women in the 1960s emerged as the best known leaders of the American feminist movement. Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)⁴⁵

became the “bible” of the movement, and feminist activists with Jewish names like Gloria Steinem⁴⁶, Bella Abzug, Shulamith Firestone⁴⁷, and Vivian Gornick⁴⁸, among others, wrote critiques of Western societies that shaped social change.

Before Second Wave Feminism, Jews were the ethnoreligious group most likely to acquiesce to the American middle class norm of homemaker-mothers, dropping out of labor force participation with the birth of their first child. As the movement gathered force, however, on a grass roots level, Jewish women were among those most likely to join feminist “consciousness-raising” sessions and to change their lives in accordance with feminist ideals of independence, assertiveness, and self-actualization. Rather than devoting their excellent educations to volunteer work, which had been the previous American Jewish pattern, in the 1960s Jewish women began to reverse that pattern, and Jewish women increasingly began to take jobs for pay outside the home. By the year 1990, paid outside employment was reported by three-quarters of Jewish women aged 25-44 and two-thirds of those aged 45-64.⁴⁹ Today, the majority of American Jewish women are employed for pay even when they have young children at home. Indeed, except for the most ultra-Orthodox, religiously traditional women are as likely as other groups of American Jewish women to have earned advanced degrees and to work outside the home in a professional capacity.⁵⁰

The increased predominance of women in Jewish life over the past four decades has paralleled Jewish women’s increasing labor force participation. Far from having more freedom from domestic tasks, working women, as Arlie Hochschild has shown, are often carrying much of the burden of family responsibilities on their “second shift.”⁵¹ Thus, assumptions that “women have more time” do not explain the trend. If anything, women’s greater prominence in the professional world is probably directly related to the similar phenomenon in the Jewish world.

Demographic realities such as increased female labor force participation precipitate transformations in gender roles even more than feminist ideology does.⁵² These changes in wider societal gender roles, in turn, have a profound impact on American Jewish religious and communal life. The rise of women into prominence in Jewish life is closely tied to their changing roles in the wider economic, intellectual, and political scene. It is also tied to a renaissance in American Jewish life that began in the late 1960s as part of a new celebration of ethnic and religious particularism. Feminism and Jewish feminism have each played a role in bringing about these transformations.

Women Recent Brokers for Jewish Rituals, Ceremonies, Liturgical Skills

Feminism with a distinctive Jewish focus became differentiated from the generalized movement both in the

United States and in Israel in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The growing interest in Jewish feminism was marked by successive international conferences, bringing together Jewish feminist scholars and activists from around the world, and by the establishment of numerous Judaic studies academies established for women's or co-ed sacred text study. American Jewish feminists began to turn their attention toward their Judaic cultural heritage, contemporary Jewish societies, and Jewish institutions. They were influenced by the publication of Trude Weiss-Rosmarin's "The Unfreedom of Jewish Women,"⁵³ which examined "the inequality of Jewish marriage laws," and Rachel Adler's "The Jew Who Wasn't There,"⁵⁴ which contrasted male and female models of Jewish piety. In the early 1970s Jewish women's prayer and study groups were being formed in St. Louis, Baltimore, Cambridge, and New York communities. Some women who participated in the New York Havurah were later influential in creating Ezrat Nashim (a pun which means both "women's section" and "the help of women"), an activist group that succeeded over the years in transforming Conservative Jewish women's scholarly and public leadership roles, and the more direct incorporation of women into synagogue services.

Jewish feminists were not and are not now a monolithic group, and have had several different areas of primary interest. Some focused on leadership and some on the lives of Jewish girls and women at large, including but not

limited to: (1) marking women's life cycle events with Jewish sacralizing and/or celebratory rituals; (2) including women in Jewish public worship as leaders and active participants; (3) upgrading the Jewish education and Jewish cultural literacy of girls and women; (4) innovating and supporting Judaic scholarship by Jewish women and about Jewish females in classical Jewish texts and throughout Jewish history; creating gender-inclusive synagogue liturgy and other prayers and rituals; (5) reclaiming and publishing materials about the experiences of Jewish girls and women historically and today; (6) examining Jewish religious texts, laws, customs and culture through the lenses of feminist theory and issues of equality; (7) creating religious and secular legislation to end diverse unequal power relationships and abuses against women, such as women who are *agunot* or *m'sarevet get* (women who have not been successful in obtaining desired religious divorces from their husbands); (8) creating inclusive Jewish attitudes and environments for Jews living in non-traditional households, such as single Jews, gay and lesbian Jews, and single parents by choice.

For adult women, preparation for and celebrating the adult bat mitzvah—a ceremony unknown in historical Jewish communities—generated a sweeping, grass-roots phenomenon which became a powerful and meaningful motivator for continuing education. Many hundreds of women acquired new levels of Jewish literacy, including synagogue liturgical

skills, initially motivated by the desire to participate in an adult bat mitzvah (sometimes in conjunction with their daughters or granddaughters).

Researchers studying Jewish education have remarked that women's passion for acquiring these skills often brought their husbands into classes as well—a kind of conflagrating spark.

Today, broad spectrums of Jewish women have reclaimed many ancient life cycle rituals for their own use, and are inventing other rituals to help them sacralize life cycle events which are peculiar to the female experience. Many people—male and female alike—seek out meaningful and satisfying rituals that reflect their personal, communal, and spiritual needs. For example, in the United States it is now almost ubiquitous in congregations across denominational lines for women to recite the *kaddish* prayer at services after the death of a loved one and on the anniversaries of that bereavement (*yarzheit*). Immersion in the waters of the *mikveh* has enjoyed a resurgence not only in Orthodox communities but in liberal Jewish life as well. Indeed, in some communities facilities have been built to accommodate new rituals created to utilize the *mikveh*, including rituals to mark life cycle transitions including but not limited to divorce, abortion, adoption, or menopause.

Women and women's experiences are brought to the center of ritual life through changed liturgical language and liturgical symbolism as well. In most Conservative, Reform and

Reconstructionist congregations (and these comprise the vast majority of American congregations) the names of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah have been incorporated into the central Amidah prayer, along with the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At Passover Seders, an orange is often put on the Seder plate—although the origins of this symbol of Jewish feminist strivings is unclear—and some families set out a cup of water for the prophetess Miriam in addition to the cup of wine for Elijah. Many congregations have stopped using the pronoun “he” to describe God, opting instead for nouns that refer to God's attributes or activities, such as “Creator.” The use of gender-sensitive language has subtly and overtly changed the prayer experience for men as well as women. These changes have affected some Orthodox environments as well: In some American modern Orthodox schools and synagogues, care is taken to give girls as high a profile as possible within the boundaries of *halakhah* (rabbinic law). Tellingly, the Jewish Orthodox Feminism Alliance (JOFA), formed in 1997, with a membership of thousands, has gone on to grow and thrive while some other modern Orthodox organizations have collapsed during the same time period.

The two most sweeping impacts of changing women's roles center around the relationship of women to their Jewish cultural and intellectual heritage: (1) the inclusion of females in Jewish education; (2) the inclusion of gender and women's issues in research. As late

as the 1960s, school-age boys were more likely than girls to receive Jewish education, especially in the Conservative and Reform congregations that comprised the majority of American Jews, partially because preparing for the bar mitzvah ceremony was a prime educational motivator for many families. By the 1970s and 1980s, that gender gap had narrowed significantly. Rates of Jewish education for girls and boys became more similar in response to the spread of the bat mitzvah ceremony.

Today, the gender gap has been reversed for American Jews in the liberal movements, and American school-age Jewish girls are more likely to receive Jewish education than Jewish boys. Differences in Jewish educational levels of young girls and boys become enormous as they enter their teens: After bar/ bat mitzvah girls are far more likely to continue in formal and informal Jewish educational settings.⁵⁵ Jewish girls in college participate in Hillel activities and take Jewish studies classes in much greater numbers than Jewish boys, except for the Orthodox young men who comprise a substantial client group for many Jewish studies classes and Hillel Foundation facilities.

On an elite level, increasing numbers of women have become Judaic studies scholars, teaching and publishing in fields ranging from the Bible and Ancient Near East, Rabbinics, Jewish history, Ancient and Modern Hebrew literature, Jewish thought, Zionism and Israel studies, and the sociology of contemporary Jewish communities.

Moreover, Judaic studies fields themselves have been transformed by insights provided when gender becomes an analytical tool. Paying attention to the lives and sometimes the writings of women in historical Jewish societies has added more than an understanding of women—it has deepened the overall comprehension of the Jewish experience. Feminist scholarship has illuminated the critical importance of gender as a tool for historical understandings, and the centrality of Jewish domestic life to the transmission of Jewish culture historically.

For many observers, the impact of Jewish feminist change has been epitomized by the movement of women into public religious leadership roles: In 1972 the Reform movement ordained the first female rabbi, followed in 1974 by the Reconstructionist movement. In 1985, urged on by Ezrat Nashim and a determined group of rabbis, the Conservative movement's first woman rabbi was ordained. Today, women comprise a large proportion of rabbinical and cantorial candidates, and serve as professionals in numerous Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform American congregations.

As one female rabbi suggests, the entry of women has meant not only women themselves in rabbinical positions—"Imah on the Bimah"—but also the incorporation of women's experiences and insights into Jewish religious leadership. "I hear God say, I call you because you are a woman. You bring the pain and healing of your life,"

she reflects, suggesting that women of “wrestle with God” in different ways and in different settings than men do. Women encounter spirituality in “daily routine and encounters with others....the theology of the thorn bush: transcendence in small gestures, revelations at the kitchen table....constructing networks, not hierarchies, bringing together diverse voices and building consensus.”⁵⁶

The increasing involvement of American Jewish women in public Judaism, including synagogue and ritual settings, and their increasing access to Judaic texts, has generated new levels of excitement and participation for men as well as women. Mature women studying Hebrew, learning the trope (ritual chanting) for Torah and Haftorah, and reading Jewish history in preparation for adult bat mitzvahs, for example, have often been the impetus for innovative synagogue and communal educational programs which are open to males and females. Women in Reform temples proudly donning Israeli hand-crafted *kipot* (head coverings) and *talitot* (prayer shawls) have reintroduced this distinctive ritual garb in environments which discouraged them for decades. In sociological language, women have increasingly served as “brokers,” connecting not only other women but men as well with their Jewish cultural heritage. Transformations in women’s relationship to Judaism have been profound in ways not yet fully acknowledged, and this transformed relationship has deeply affected the

spiritual lives of Jewish men as well as Jewish women.

It should be noted that although women have been brokers for traditionalism within liberal Jewish circles, within the Orthodox world, on the other hand, women often continue to function as the brokers of Western values. For example, one of the most celebrated changes in recent years has been the creation of “partnership minyanim,” traditional services with a *mekhitzah* (visual separation between male and female worshipers) but which nonetheless allow women to perform all prayer functions from which they are not specifically prohibited by Jewish law. As Hartman explains in her account of the formation of one pioneering Jerusalem congregation, Shira Hadashah in Jerusalem, women lead in many portions of the service as well as read from and are called up to *aliyah* Torah honors. (They do not lead during the Amidah services.)⁵⁷ Partnership minyanim, sometimes called “Orthodox egalitarian” services, have been proliferating. They have especially attracted large numbers of Jewish singles from Conservative and Reform backgrounds, as well as the core of Orthodox men and women who tend to create and maintain them.

Sociologically, the growth of halakhic partnership minyanim is linked to the overall growth of independent congregations, despite the fact that Orthodox groups like to stress their differences rather than their similarities. According to a recent study, 77 % of young Jews who attend “independent

minyanim” attend more than once a month—compared to 39 % attending conventional synagogue services.⁵⁸

These young Conservative and Reform partnership minyan enthusiasts often cite the dynamism and spirituality of partnership worship services as their reason for attending. Like the Havurah movement before it, the independent or partnership minyan movement takes pride in its independence from organized Jewish religious institutions and the Jewish denominational movements.

Cultural Explorations of Jewishness Often Led by Women, or by Men Trained in Orthodox Settings

There is ample reason for optimism in new developments among America’s younger Jewish population, including new worship opportunities and cultural creativity and entrepreneurialism. Emerging congregations/ Partnership minyanim have become a “happening place,” attracting singles from across the denominational spectrum. In addition to conventional classes, among innovative female-fueled programs is a new use of the concept of “Salons,” which have surfaced in journalist Mireille Silcoff’s Toronto Salon, a discussion forum for “young, culturally savvy Jews”⁵⁹; and Susan Weidmann Schneider’s similar use of the concept across the United States in Lilith Salons. The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute has vibrant discussion groups with trendy authors called HBI Conversations. Rabbi Sharon Brous has shaken up the Los Angeles worship

community with Ikar, her vibrant worship, study and social justice enterprise.

Indeed, in many ways the “Jewish renaissance,” incorporating not only scholarship and text study but also Jewish film, arts, and literary enterprises, while quite real, wears a predominantly female face. Young novelists who write intensively about Jewish environments and themes, such as Allegra Goodman, Tova Mirvis, Dara Horn, Shifra Horn, Risa Miller, Pearl Abraham, Katie Roiphe, and others, along with veteran writers such as Cynthia Ozick, Rebecca Goldstein, Katie Roiphe, Tova Reich, outnumber distinguished male novelists such as Michael Chabon, Nathan Englander, Jonathan Rosen and Jonathan Safran Foer (not to mention the perennially prolific Philip Roth). Moreover, the writings of such men as Shalom Auslander and Gary Shteyngardt convey a bleak, harshly critical attitude toward Judaism. Jewish women filmmakers (Joan Micklin Silver, Marlene Booth, Claudia Weill, Barbra Streisand), have often produced positive explorations of Jewish topics that counter the negativity of their male counterparts. Visual artists including but not limited to Helene Aylon, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Tamar Hirsch, Judith Margolis, Siona Benjamin and Raquel Portnoy use Judaic symbols and motifs in diverse ways, including the attempt to create consciousness about social justice issues. Other Jewish female painters and performance artists—often in a transgressive mode—including Judy

Chicago, Anita Steckel, and many others, who use Jewish texts and ideas in ways that surely shock conservative viewers but demonstrate that Judaic traditions can serve as a source of creative inspiration.⁶⁰

Where men are the prime movers in contemporary Jewish life, a disproportionate number of them are young men who received their training in Orthodox environments. It is probably no accident that Hadar's Ethan Tucker, who champions the new egalitarian participatory independent congregations, received his ordination at the Orthodox Israeli kibbutz yeshiva Ma'ale Gilboa. Similar backgrounds are shared by Orthodox artistic business entrepreneur Aaron Bisman, and Storahelling's "nonprofit musical and dramatic company" founded by Amichai Lau-Lavie, "Israeli-born former yeshiva student and member of one of Israel's most prominent rabbinic families."⁶¹ The commitment of Orthodox and ex-Orthodox men is an important phenomenon because it illustrates the power of traditional environments to prove intellectually and spiritually compelling to men—discussed in more detail in Chapter Four—even when those men reject Orthodoxy's patriarchal premise in their innovative Jewish leadership.

Endnotes Chapter One

²² R. W. Connel, "Class, Patriarchy, and Sartre's Theory of Practice," in *Theory and Society* 2, pp. 305-320; *Which Way Is Up? Essays on Sex,*

Class and Culture (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1983); *Gender and Power* (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1987); R. W. Connel and J. W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," in *Gender and Society* 19, pp. 829-859, p. 832. Gender theorists explore the ways in which social constructions of masculinity and femininity are influenced not only by the values of individual societies, but also by historical trends and changes. Recommended gender roles diverge not only from society to society but also from one historical period to another. In any given society and historical period, R. W. Connel suggested, the masculine ideal most valued by that society can be considered "hegemonic masculinity," which is "the most honored way of being a man." While many men certainly will not live up to this social ideal, the dominant image of maleness nevertheless has a profound effect because it is shaped by—and helps to shape—the culture and its institutions. Hegemonic masculinity affects both men and women in society, because it requires "all other men to position themselves in relation to it," and legitimates "the global subordination of women to men." Like other aspects of human behavior, these gender role constructions are affected by the shift of time, with new struggles "for hegemony," as "older forms of masculinity" are "displaced by new ones."

²³ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 134.

²⁴ David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 76.

²⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 68, 51, 42, 3

²⁶ Harry Brod, "Of Mice and Supermen: Images of Jewish Masculinity," in T.M. Rudavsky, ed., *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 279-293, p. 291.

²⁷ Avraham Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004); Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

²⁸ Aviva Cantor, *Jewish Women, Jewish Men: The Legacy of Patriarchy in Jewish Life* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1994), p. 5.

²⁹ Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, *op. cit.*.

³⁰ Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), p. 150.

³¹ Avraham Weiss, *Women at Prayer: A Halakhic Analysis of Women's Prayer Groups* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1990), pp. 43-46.

³² See Hillel Halkin, trans. and introduction, *Sholom Aleichem, Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories* (New York: Schocken Library of Yiddish Classics, 1987).

³³ Tova Hartman, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism: Resistance and Accommodation* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2007), p. 33.

³⁴ Y. L. Peretz, "A Marred Holiday," reprinted from *In This World and the Next* (trans. Moshe Segal), Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1958, in Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Follow My Footprints: Changing Images of Women in Jewish Literature* (Dartmouth, New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 1992), pp. 64-71, p. 67.

³⁵ Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century European Jewish Society* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 2004).

³⁶ Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³⁷ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 311.

³⁸ Kaplan, *Jewish Middle Class*.

³⁹ Carol Ascher, Renate Bridenthal, Marion Kaplan, and Atina Grossman, "Fragments of a German-Jewish Heritage in Four 'Americans'" in Abraham J. Peck, ed., *The German-Jewish Legacy in America, 1938-1988: From Bildung to the Bill of Rights* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), pp. 179-198, pp. 181, 192.

⁴⁰ Paula Hyman, "'Gender and the Jewish Immigrant Experience in the United States,'" in Judith Baskin, ed., *The Jewish Woman in Historical Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), pp. 222-242.

⁴¹ Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to be Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), p. 26.

⁴² Karla Goldman, "Women in Reform Judaism: Between Rhetoric and Reality," in Riv-Ellen

Prell, ed., *Women Remaking American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 109-133, p. 111. See also, Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁴³ Herman Wouk, *Marjorie Morningstar: A Novel* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1983, rpt. 1955), pp. 84-85.

⁴⁴ Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963).

⁴⁶ Gloria Steinem, "Humanism and the Second Wave of Feminism," *Humanist* (May/ June 1987).

⁴⁷ Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Morrow, 1971).

⁴⁸ Vivian Gornick, *Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness* (Canada: Harper Collins/ Basic Books, 1971).

⁴⁹ Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *American Jewish Year Book 1992* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1992), pp. 115-116.

⁵⁰ Moshe Hartman and Harriet Hartman, *Gender Equality and American Jews* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 219-225.

⁵¹ Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *Second Shift* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).

⁵² Rosanna Hertz, *More Equal than Others: Women and Men in Dual-Career Marriages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 67.

⁵³ Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "The Unfreedom of Jewish Women," in *Jewish Spectator*, October 1970, pp. 2-6.

⁵⁴ Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There," *Davka*, Summer 1971, pp. 6-11.

⁵⁵ National Jewish Population Surveys 1970, 1990, 2000-01.

⁵⁶ Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, "Celebrating Thirty Years of Women as Rabbis," in *Reconstructionism Today* 11, NO.1 (http://www.jrf.org/rt/2003/women_as_rabbis.htm), Autumn 2003.

⁵⁷ Hartman, *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism*.

⁵⁸ Steven M. Cohen, "The Growth of Emergent Spiritual Communities, 1996-Present" (New York: 2007 National Spiritual Communities

Survey Report of Preliminary Findings, 2007), p. 20.

⁵⁹ Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, "The Continuity of Discontinuity: How Young Jews Are Connecting, Creating, and Organizing their Jewish Lives," www.acbp.net, 21/64 .

⁶⁰ Gail Levin, "Censorship, Politics, and Sexual Imagery in the Work of Jewish-American Feminist Artists," in *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issue* 14 (Fall 2007), 63-96.

⁶¹ Cohen, "Continuity of Discontinuity," p. 11.

Two: Gendered Thinking About Judaism in Jewish Homes

How do Jewish men and women today relate to organized religion in general, to Jews and Judaism specifically, and to the goal of raising Jewish children? Whatever their religious or secular orientation and viewpoints, Jews most agree about the salience of the Jewish culture or religion when they are married to each other. They often disagree not only about specifics but even about how important ethnicity and/or religion are when their spouses are not Jewish. The fewest gender differences are found in endogamous Jewish homes, where both parents are born Jews and often have similar goals.

One of the reasons for these commonalities among inmarried families, despite their diversity, is that as intermarriage has become more common, inmarriage has become less common. Inmarried couples today are a far more self-selecting group today than they have been at any other era of Jewish history. If American culture designates spiritual attachments primarily to women, Jewish men who marry Jewish women today are more likely to attach importance to ethnic and religious identification, and thus to be countercultural. Judaism matters to them also, not only to their wives.

Even the modes of attraction are often different for inmarried than intermarried couples: Inmarried couples often describe their mutual attraction during their courting days by saying, “We had so much in common,” while mixed marrieds talk about the exciting differences they discovered in

the dating process, “She was so different from anyone else I had met.” The strength of finding common ground as an important element for inmarrieds was emphasized in many interviews like that of Gail Jacobs, who grew up in rural Colorado, and is married to a British Jew who, like her, grew up in an observant Jewish home that was far from a center of Jewish population:

When we started to talk we already had half a dozen things that were exactly the same. I mean, virtually the same in terms of importance of the love of Israel, importance of knowing that to be Jewish you have to work at it...

When I went to his place the first time I could go in and find his (dairy) dishes in the kitchen... I mean, I could have gone to his freezer and taken out the same kind of thing that I had grown up with in my freezer at home, the same kind of effort, the values that your family instilled in you. So within – and I’m not kidding--a very short period of time, it had become obvious that there were so many commonalities...they were things that you didn’t even have to discuss.

This commonality during the dating process becomes a source of strength—and Jewish strength—as the couple deals with the challenges of daily married life. This is especially true when husband and wife share strong Jewish commitments, as Gail noted:

After 24 years, we think so much alike on many things that most of the decisions aren’t complicated. I think we

believe in family values, primarily. We've done a lot to make sure that our kids have close relationships with their family. We also want them to feel close to Israel, that's a very high priority for both of us. So when it comes to are they going to do X or Y, and if it includes, or would exclude something that has to do with family, we just count the other stuff and that becomes a priority. When it comes to Jewish day school, camps, all of those are kind of questions that are not debatable. And I suppose some of the decisions that are made are being made more because one of us just is tired of making them. You deal with it, whatever it is. You'll be fine.... I have a lot of faith and belief that he would make the right decision. So the dumb stuff we might have more discussions on it. Most of our decisions are pretty much commonality on values, in terms of what you invest in your children. I think probably the hardest decisions are the amount of time you're willing to sacrifice to doing something.

The common values, including the common Jewish values, that this type of father and mother model for their children as they grow up are often internalized by both male and female children once they are out of the home and on their own in college and beyond. Gail Jacobs talked about her son and daughter going to the East Coast for their college years, and discovering that the human and Jewish lessons they learned in Denver gave them useful guidelines for new challenges:

I think my daughter had an interesting perspective on this when she

went to Boston. She went the year that my son was a freshman in New York. And for the high holidays, he was coming home. She wasn't. She was feeling very isolated, but when she stayed at BU and the kids that actually led the services were two kids from Denver. I think a kid learns by not necessarily having things laid on for them so easily. Even in Denver, where it's a million times easier than it was where I grew up, it still is hard work to be Jewish. It still is – you can't automatically do anything. You're still in the minority here. And I think our children probably have learned that if there is something important to you, you work towards making it happen. There is no such thing as perfect. And you can't be criticized for, at least if you make the attempt and you're willing to take the challenge on. You may not win. You may not succeed. But if you try to make a difference, or you try to make something better for somebody, that's important.

In the Jacobs family, working at maintaining Jewish commitments while living in an open, diverse society was taught by both father and mother and has become a three-generation phenomenon. Although Gail jokes that their values and lifestyle might be thought to be outmoded—"We may be developing our children to be dinosaurs," she laughs, "The truth is that I think that there are people that have that value, and they are the ones that help to shape a community or an organization. The ones that all want it instantly aren't the ones that make a difference usually."

Almost universally, inmarried families with children say they are raising them as Jews (96 %). As we will examine more closely in Chapter Three, most inmarried Jewish parents with children belong to synagogues (77 %) and Jewish organizations (54 %). The vast majority send their children to some type of Jewish religious education (82 %). While the observance of Jewish ceremonies, customs and holidays runs a wide gamut among inmarried American Jews, from fervently Orthodox to virtually completely secular, not more than one in ten (10 %) have Christmas trees—once much more common among inmarried American Jewish families as a symbol of Americanization.

The most striking difference between inmarried and intermarried Jewish families in terms of gender roles is that Jewish fathers as well as mothers in inmarried families often have extensive connections to Jews and Judaism, and are committed to raising Jewish children, while Jewish fathers in intermarried families, as we will soon see in more detail, have limited or weak connections and are much less likely to be committed to raising Jewish children. As a result, ethnoreligious values and religious cultural and familial tasks are much more shared and evenly divided in inmarried households than they are in mixed married households. Inmarried Jewish fathers play a much more active role in the family's Jewishness and in familial relationships. More than three-quarters of both inmarried husbands and wives feel religion is important in their lives and in the way they raise their children.

Typical of many interviews, Matthew Gross, an inmarried Jewish father who affiliates with Conservative Judaism explained:

Although Dori and I are in a very different part of the spectrum in terms of religious conventions, both of us have extremely strong connection to (Jewish) things. Dori more to Israel, peoplehood, to that, to some extent, but also religiously. I suppose I would be in the reverse position of my mother, if our children, for some reason, would not continue Judaism. It has certainly been a major focus in our upbringing to convey to them how important the Jewish connection is.

I think it has been largely very successful. We did not do it by ever requiring of them. I was sensitive about forcing them to do things and building up negative feelings. I felt it was much better to do the opposite of what most families do. They force their kids to go to religious school and have a Bar Mitzvah while they do nothing. I thought it better don't force them, and show an example of our own commitment to Judaism. If they have an example, then it really means something.

Although it is much less pronounced, the feminization of Jewish gender roles is apparent even in inmarried families. Especially outside the Orthodox realm, husbands often delegated many religious activities to their wives, because both husbands and wives assumed that mothers will be the ones responsible for implementing day to day Jewishness. In

some Conservative and especially in Reform settings, husbands and wives often assumed that the mother would be the person routinely accompanying children to synagogue for Sabbath services, for example. As Jack Gornack put it:

When we decided that we wanted to affiliate with the temple, I was very uncomfortable at first going to a Reform temple, because I couldn't get used to the choir or to the organ and to the way just the whole thing was done. I don't think it mattered so much that there was a woman cantor, but it just all sounded so different. Of course, now that I have heard it doesn't sound like, even though at first it sounds like a church, but when you hear a church, a church is different. And Jenny's attitude was, "I am going to be the one principally responsible for taking them and for being there, and I have to be comfortable with it, and that is what I am going to be comfortable with. So get comfortable with it." And I am, it worked out.

This is definitively an American pattern: outside of America, in many cultures men typically assume synagogue responsibilities.

Relationship with Organized Religion Varies by Marriage Type

Within inmarried households in our interview data, more than three quarters of both Jewish men and Jewish women said they were strongly in favor of organized religion. In conversionary households, those with male Jews by choice and born-Jewish wives were almost universally in favor of organized religion. Wives who were Jews by

choice were overwhelmingly attracted to organized religion; their born-Jewish husbands included two-thirds who were strongly in favor of organized religion and a spectrum of more ambivalent feelings among the remaining one-third.

In contrast, gender made a much bigger difference in attitudes among men and women in intermarried families as they talked about their relationship to organized religion. Women—both Jewish and non-Jewish—in intermarried families described themselves as being much more pro-organized religion than were male informants. In intermarried households with Jewish husbands, nearly half of Christian wives but fewer than one-third of their Jewish husbands expressed themselves as being strongly in favor of organized religion. In intermarried households with Jewish wives, well over half of Jewish wives but only 10% of their Christian husbands said they were strongly in favor of organized religion. Here is how Janine Marton, an intermarried Jewish woman, describes her decision to marry a non-Jew and raise Jewish children, and how her husband's hostility to organized religion has complicated that decision:

At 35 I knew I wanted to have kids, and knew I was sort of at the end of that part, and at that point I felt that it was better to have kids as part of a family than to try to do artificial insemination or something else and be a single Jewish parent. So, at that point, I thought that a mixed marriage with a clear commitment at the outset that it was my intention to raise a Jewish family, and I am not going to fool you, I

was very up front, was better than the possibility of not raising a family at all...Luke hates organized religion. He hates any organized religion. He goes to church to hear the Bach music, but this is a man who doesn't believe in—he is a man who believes in ultimate freedom, is own individual freedom to do what he chooses, but any religious system that has obligations doesn't make sense to him because it is externally imposed....That piece of our relationship has left me lonely in the ways I thought it would...I got exactly what I expected in the Jewish piece.

Jewish men frequently spoke with disdain about organized religion, in their case Judaism, which for many of them had consisted primarily of two years of pre-bar mitzvah training. Many of them were bitter about their Hebrew school experiences, and seemed convinced that all of Judaism could be encapsulated in those remembered environments. They were, as one of our interviewers commented, examples of “many Jewish husbands who retain their thirteen year old mindset about religion and never seem to be able to apply an adult perspective on it.” Such husbands often describe their children as being raised as “nothing” or “having both religions” or “making a choice depending on who their friends are.”

For Jewish men who say they are not interested in organized religion, their apathy or dislike of Judaism and Christianity as religious faiths is about equal—but their negative feelings about Jewish women carry most of the emotional baggage. Many told stories similar to Jeremy Naiman, who

described his dating non-Jewish girls almost exclusively, although “there were plenty of Jewish girls,” because “dating Jewish girls is not fun—it is work.” Jeremy, who married in a double Jewish and Christian ceremony, emphasized that as an adult he has “had almost no contact with the Jewish religion as an institution.” Nevertheless, he made it quite clear to his wife that their children could not be raised as Christians; if they needed a religion, it needed to be Jewish.

Jewish men in the interviews repeatedly expounded on the faults of Jewish religious culture. They often reduced Jewishness to a kind of stereotypical materialism, as exemplified by Jewish women, who were described as “trying to act older than they really were, and instead of talking about what they wanted to do with their lives, they were always talking about what they wanted...obsessed with material things,” as Jonathan Milberg explained. Jonathan was not interested in having his 15-year-old daughter attend religious schools of any kind, but the family did participate in yearly religious festivals and meals with their extended families. Jonathan and his daughter attend Christmas church services with his wife's family, but he declared proudly, “I never kneel.” Meanwhile, his wife Caitlin, who thinks religion is important, especially for raising children, secretly went with her mother and had their daughter baptized as an infant. Caitlin reported in a hushed voice:

When she was in fourth grade, our daughter needed to get some X-rays at the hospital. I had to fill out a form that asked about religion among other things. I hesitated, and then I asked her what I should put down. She said

Catholic. I'm not sure if she said that just because I was there. Maybe if Jonathan had been with her she would have said Jewish.

Women More Likely to Think Religion Is Necessary

In the interview data, women—both Jewish and non-Jewish—were more likely to describe themselves as “religious” than their husbands are. Women, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were more likely to describe their intermarried households as relating to one of the formal wings of Judaism, while men, both Jewish and non-Jewish, lean more toward calling the household Secular or Cultural, or Atheistic or Agnostic. It is the mothers in these families, rather than the fathers, who say they think it is important that their children have some type of religious orientation, and men are much more likely to feel “secular”—and much less convinced that organized religion is the foundation of moral and ethical behavior. As Judy Gewirtz, an inmarried Jewish mother, remarked, “I think if my husband was married to someone who was less interested in being actively Jewish, I don't think it would bother him.”

Carol Neal Nagler echoes many, many non-Jewish wives of Jews when she complains, “I am in the weird position of initiating activities in a religion that I don't know a whole lot about.” She remarks that “everyone we know who is interfaith—the mother is not Jewish—says the children are primarily being raised Jewish.” Carol remembers:

I wanted our children raised with some kind of religious background. I

was pretty frankly indifferent to what it was. My husband didn't really care whether or not they were raised with religion, but he said, “If there is going to be a religion, they got to be Jewish, because I would feel weird having a Christian child....My husband is in the awkward position of feeling he should provide some leadership for something he really doesn't believe in. That is true of all these other couples [their friends]....Almost all these men who want their children to be Jewish believe in that for cultural reason—it's a kind of very masculine, very interesting thing.

Carol, most of her friends, and many other non-Jewish women we interviewed perceived their Jewish husbands as being fundamentally uncomfortable with religion in general—but opposed to having Christian children. Carol says her husband Jack would “love to” bring them up without religion. “It would make things a lot easier for him.” However, she thinks bringing children up without religion “is a mistake,” and she explains why she feels that way very eloquently:

Bringing up with religion to me means exposing your children to the myths and stories of your culture, and it means giving a very concrete way of understanding what values and where moral structure comes from. I think that is what faith is. Those are very important concepts even if you don't agree with the content it was taught through. You hear people say, “If your child doesn't speak a foreign language by the time they're five, they'll never have the right accent.”

Well, I think the same thing is true with faith. The same thing is true of developing a belief system. I think there's something really quite extraordinary with the first time that you ask questions about who you are, how you got here, and what the expectations are in your role in the universe. I think those questions, if they're answered early can really fundamentally affect the way you see the world and your place in it. That's very powerful, and I think it stems—and I don't mean that in a moralistic way in terms of “my children need the fear of God so that they won't steal a gun from K-Mart”—I mean it in a broader sense, in “look how big the word is and what people have done to each other over history”...Even just reading these cute little Bible stories to my children, my son says, “Oh, those people used to live in sin.” I mean, that's a real revelation to a three-year-old.

Carol's words reflect a distinctively Christian approach to “scripture.” It would be most unlikely for a person who had grown up in a Jewish environment to use the concept of “living in sin.” She is typical of non-Jewish women raising “Jewish” children in that she thinks religion is important, but, in the absence of any meaningful involvement by her Jewish husband, she has no choice but to fall back on the concepts and values that are embedded in the religious culture in which she was raised.

Jewish women also often find that they are the parenting adults who are pushing a

religious agenda. Janice Goldman, for example, sometimes feels that she is in a “mixed marriage” between someone who wants religious activities in the home and someone who doesn't—her Jewish husband Jack. Jack's lack of enthusiasm for religious activities is similar to many Jewish fathers in both liberal wings of Judaism and of Jewish fathers in intermarried households. Janice explains how she and her husband differ:

When it came to certain things, like keeping a Kosher home, whatever that means to me, that is one thing that I have always insisted on, and that my husband has begrudgingly at first, and ultimately I think comfortably accepted. And in some respects, I think I felt early on that I was in a mixed marriage, even though I was married to someone who was Jewish, because we came from very different Jewish backgrounds. And because I felt strongly about the Jewish background, it took on more of the context of a mixed marriage, because typically in a mixed marriage, you may have conflict between the two over which religion, but for us it was a conflict over how we celebrated being Jewish. And we had very different ideas on what that meant.

Men More Likely to See Religion as Unnecessary

In contrast with the women's frequently voiced opinion that religion is the basis for the formation of a moral and ethical character, many Jewish and non-Jewish fathers, especially in intermarried families, said they feel that religion is at best a

temporary crutch that can help people grow toward ethics and morality. Men are much more likely to feel strongly that leading a good and ethical life is the only legitimate reason for religion, that goodness and ethical behavior are not dependent on religious belief, and that any person can be good and ethical without religion. Gaby Gorelick, a Jewish woman, reflected that her Jewish husband “doesn’t care whether the kids continue or not, and I do. I want my kids to marry somebody who is Jewish, perpetuating the Jewish tradition.” She also notes a gender difference between her teenage children: “Being Jewish is very important to my daughter, and not as important to my son.” While her daughter is currently dating a non-Jewish boy, “I think she would really be unhappy if she lost that part of her life.”

Ken Malone was typical as he insisted that goodness and religiosity are unrelated: Nowadays I would say that whatever work God needs done he needs me to be doing it here, and I feel like I’m doing it almost by any standards. Raising a family, trying to be responsible in my civic duties. A lot of that ethical sort of feeling came in the last couple of years, thinking about the environment and a large population of human beings on the earth and environmental construction. So that extends to other things too. It is not just nature and earth but it is also humans and human society. I decided to be a good person and I feel a very strong ethical compulsion to do right.

And I do right! I may make the difference in decisions about the car I buy and what house I will live in, the

things I will do, even how often I use the car. How I treat other people.

Ken rejected his sister’s claim that his current ethical beliefs are the result of the fact that he grew up a believing Catholic:

My sister tells me that I have got that because, “You grew up with that, and that is the reason that you should have your kids going to church.” But I am not convinced of that. I am not convinced that I am the way I am if I am a good person because I grew up with Catholicism. I don’t think that is necessary. I also have learned a lot from Janie, who is Jewish.

Ken and his Jewish wife Janie have decided to “raise the children Jewish,” but when asked by the interviewer what that means specifically in their family, Ken responded by describing a kind of universalistic ethicism, and also the absence of Catholic rituals and ceremonies. They have some Passover and Hanukkah observances. Their two daughters had no birth ceremonies, and do not attend Jewish schools. No bat mitzvah ceremonies are planned. Ken described their family’s ethicism to his father,

Nominally, the children are Jewish. We occasionally go to synagogue, and we tell them about God. And for my Dad that is enough. And that was kind of comforting to me. He said, ‘Well, there is something more out there than themselves, and I don’t have any problem with that.’ I don’t have any problem with the notion of God. I don’t have strong feelings about doing what God is demanding of me. I don’t know where it comes from, but I don’t call it

God at this point in my life. I have a strong sympathy for people who feel that way.... I feel like my actions are directed by something larger than myself. It is not an individualistic attitudes I have.

Craig Medwin—also a deeply philosophical man—adopted an eclectic, universalistic spiritualism in place of one particular religious approach to living. Today, Craig describes himself as “a practitioner of yoga” who “deeply incorporates Judaism and Christianity and Hinduism into my life in terms of spiritual principles. Put me into a box, but I don’t fit into a box.” Like many non-Jewish parents of Jewish children, he emphasizes the Jewish roots of Christianity, and the common core of the two religions. This pan-religious approach began with his rejection of the exclusivity of Catholicism:

I grew up Catholic. In ways I still consider myself Catholic, but very loosely. I don’t feel like I belong to the Church anymore. But some of the early certainly teachings and formative pieces of Catholicism remain with me. But then I track myself back and I also consider myself Jewish facing the roots of Catholicism. I worked this out in my own self is the best way to say it. I began at an early age to have a sense of not having to be sort of stuck in one religion.

Not surprisingly, when Craig thinks about his goals for his daughter, he says he is fine with Judaism as a kind of beginner’s religion, a strategy for raising a child—“We would probably raise her Jewish until such

time as she starts making her own decision”—but later, although “She might decide to be Jewish all her life,” (and the couple had agreed to raise their children as Jews), Craig hopes that her horizons will be broader, so that she can enjoy “The maximum possibilities unfolding in her own life, and also see her life as part of the larger community of the world or the planet. Having planetary responsibilities.” In that mix, Craig thinks that for his daughter Judaism might—or might not—serve as her “anchor point.” Craig says he believes it is important to see “the relative value say of Hinduism or Buddhism or Judaism.”

A substantial minority of Jewish and non-Jewish fathers of “Jewish” children saw religion as a good framing structure for children as they grow up—but unnecessary for adults, something that could and should be put aside as people mature. Kirk Norwood, for example, was typical of men who feel “disconnected from religion,” and says he will tell his children about his real values during “their early teen years”:

I don’t think of myself as a Christian. I believe in a higher power and that’s pretty much it. And so, when the time is right, I will sit down and explain to them what I think and what I believe. I really want them to grow up learning about other religions....from early on I want them to understand that there are other religions out there, and to me, religion is not a matter of right and wrong, rather it’s an issue of raising inner peace. I want them to grow up not being prejudiced against Indians or Buddhists or whatever.

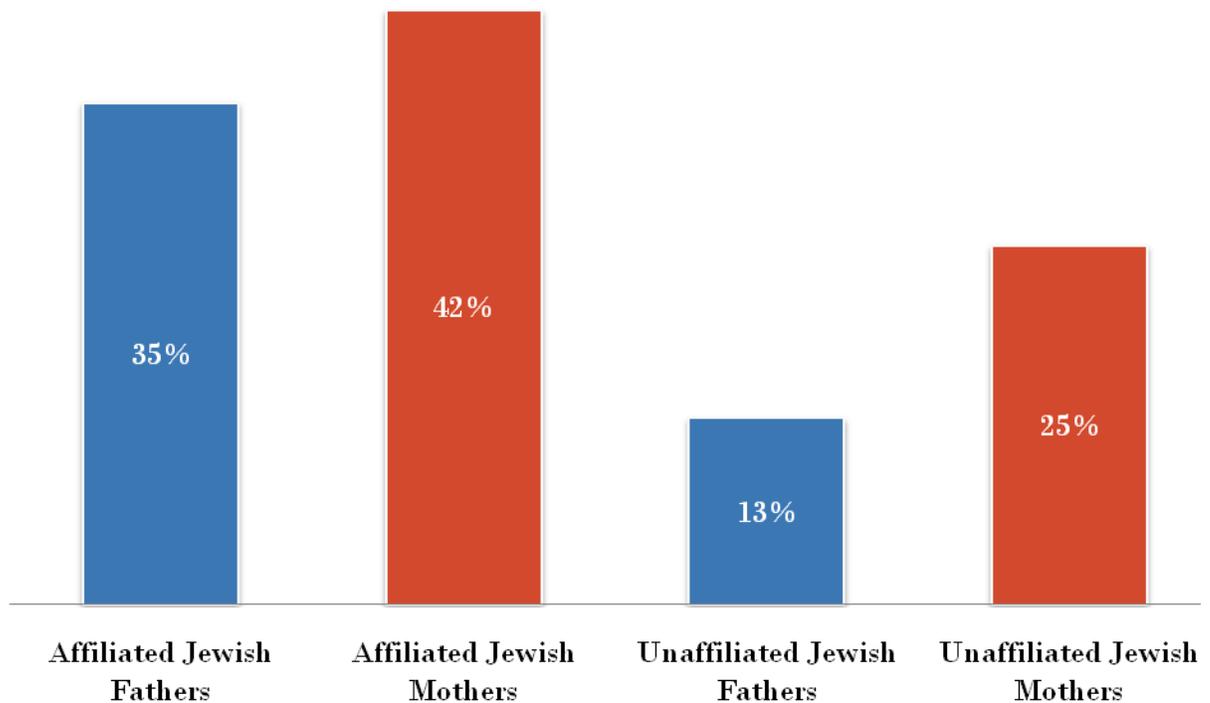
Although their childhood religious backgrounds are often rather similar, intermarried Jewish women and men create very different religious profiles in their adult households. These gender-based discrepancies in descriptions of the family's religious profile were much smaller and in general not statistically significant among our inmarried or conversionary informants. In comparison with the active involvement of non-Jewish grandparents, both Jewish and non-Jewish spouses in intermarried families reported that the Jewish grandparents were

much more reticent about providing Jewish religious or cultural content for their grandchildren. In conversionary households, in contrast, it was much more common to report that Jewish in-laws had pressured toward conversion, and now provided Jewish religious and cultural content to the family.

The National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01 data told a similar story about the relative importance of religion to men and women, Figures 1 and 2, below.

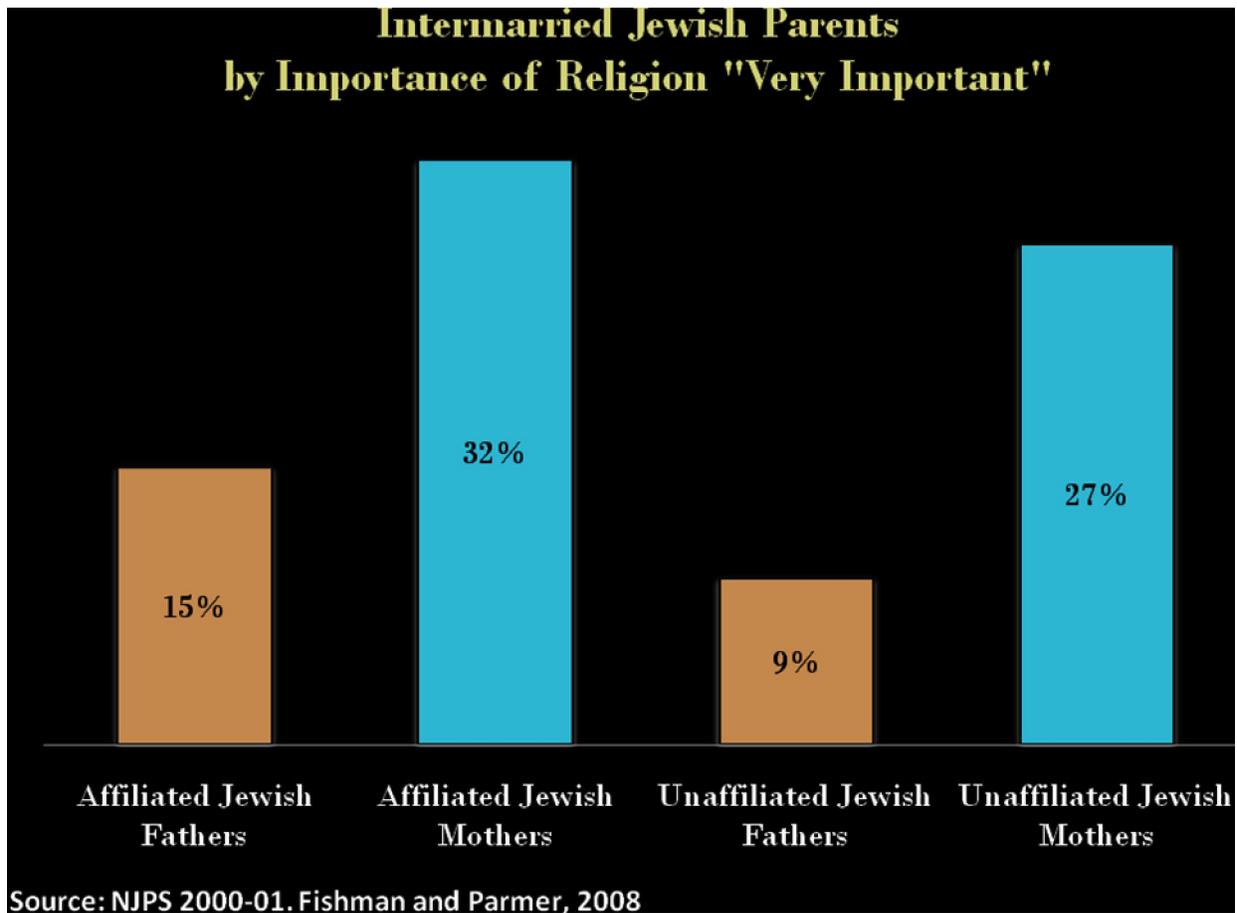
Figure 1

**Inmarried Jewish Parents
by Importance of Religion "Very Important"**



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

Figure 2



The majority of American Jews, it should be noted, do not say that religion is “Very important” to them. However, among married couples with children in the NJPS 2000-01 study, inmarried, affiliated families men and women are frequently “on the same page.” Differences between men and women were far less pronounced in inmarried than in intermarried or unaffiliated families. Thus, in Jewish families that affiliated with a synagogue, a substantial minority among Jewish fathers (35 %) and mothers (42 %) stated that religion is “Very important” to them. Differences between men and women were much more pronounced if (1) the family did not belong to a synagogue, or (2)

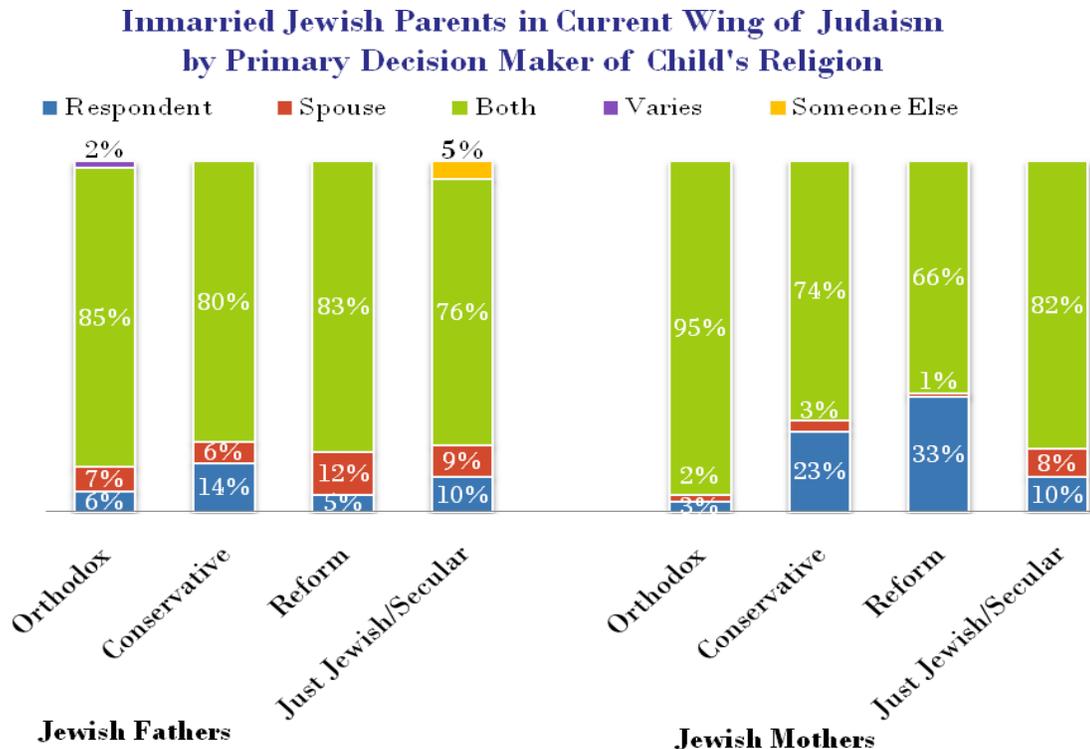
one parent was Jewish and one non-Jewish. Among unaffiliated intermarried Jewish parents, women (25 %) were twice as likely as men (13 %) to rank religion as “Very important” to them. Similarly, within intermarried families, affiliated Jewish intermarried mothers (32 %) were twice as likely as affiliated intermarried Jewish fathers (15 %) to say religion was “Very important.” Not surprisingly, that answer was given by 9 % of unaffiliated intermarried Jewish fathers, who seemed to have the lowest regard for the importance of religion, compared to 27 % of unaffiliated intermarried Jewish mothers saying religion was “Very important” to them.

Who Makes Decisions About Your Child's Religion?

One of the most suggestive but little analyzed questions in NJPS 2000-01 explored the process of major familial decisions about the religion in which children will be raised. Dividing parents by family type, affiliation, wing of Judaism, and gender, the interaction between these various factors becomes apparent. In inmarried Orthodox and Conservative households, both mothers and fathers overwhelmingly reported they made decisions together. Within inmarried Reform households, one-third of Jewish mothers

said they made the decision themselves. (Their husbands apparently thought they were making joint decisions.) In intermarried families, most Jewish fathers said they and their non-Jewish wives made the decision together. In contrast, almost two-thirds of Jewish mothers married to non-Jewish men said they made the children's religious decisions by themselves, seen in Figures 3 and 4. The determination of intermarried Jewish women to raise Jewish children with or without the help of their non-Jewish husbands, evident in the interview data, is thus clear in the statistical data as well.

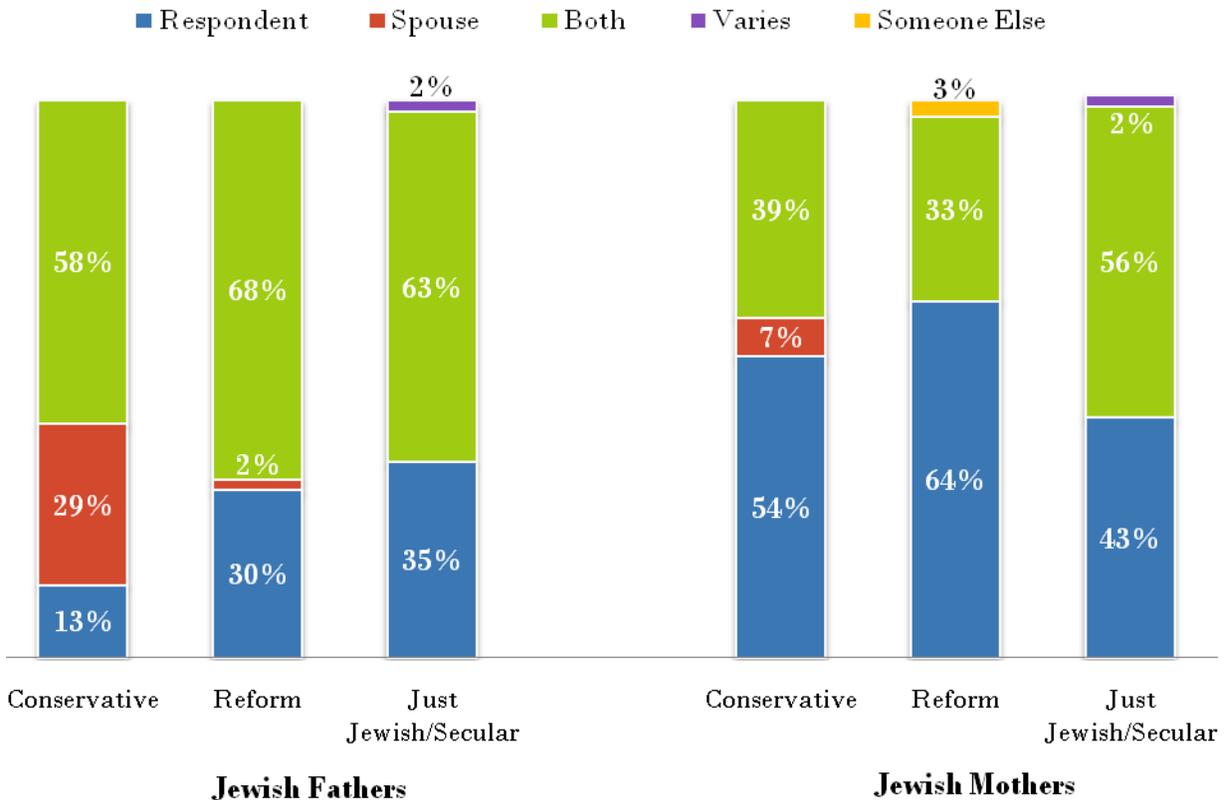
Figure 3



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

Figure 4

Intermarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Primary Decision Maker of Child's Religion



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

The self-perceptions of parents about who makes religious decisions for the child(ren) are important, because they indicate which of the parents has “taken ownership” for the task of raising children in a particular religious cultural tradition—or not. The fact that even in inmarried households one-third of Reform mothers see themselves as the primary determiners of their child(ren)’s religious identity is striking, particularly in the face of the Patrilineal Descent decision that apportioned religious identity equally to Jewish fathers and mothers. Despite religious

proclamations, sociologically the Reform movement probably conforms most to the American pattern that perceives women as the religious actors in the household. This, rather than cultural holdovers from traditional Jewish Matrilineal Descent, accounts for this attitude.

Beyond the Judeo-Christian Blend: How Unique Is Judaism?

Jewish men married to non-Jewish women in our interview population were much more likely than Jewish women married to non-Jewish men to perceive Judaism and Christianity as mostly similar: One-third of the intermarried Jewish men we interviewed said that the two religions were “the same except for Jesus”, or that they “shared more than they differed”; or that “all religions are essentially the same”. In comparison, one-fifth of intermarried Jewish women held these beliefs. Conversely, the belief that “Judaism is more than just a religion” was expressed by two-thirds of intermarried Jewish men, compared to three-quarters of Jewish women.

These disparities between Jewish husbands and wives and their Christian spouses are all the more striking when compared with the attitudes of inmarried and conversionary Jewish husbands and wives. The belief that Judaism is unique was expressed among inmarried couples in our interview population by four out of ten of both men and women. The idea that Judaism is based on more than just common religious values was shared by six out of ten of both men and women. None of the inmarried couples saw Judaism and Christianity as very similar.

None of the conversionary couples—whether born Jews or Jews by choice—saw Judaism and Christianity as very similar

either. Within conversionary households, the vast majority of informants subscribed to the belief that “Judaism and Christianity share some values, but Judaism is based on more than just common religious values.” One in five female converts expressed the even stronger idea that “Judaism is uniquely good, and shares very little with other religious traditions.” Thus, conversionary households were very similar to inmarried households in their attitudes toward the distinctiveness of Judaism. Women who converted into Judaism were especially similar to born Jews in seeing Judaism as distinctive—and distinctively good—in the marketplace of American religious life.

How Important Is Being Jewish to You?

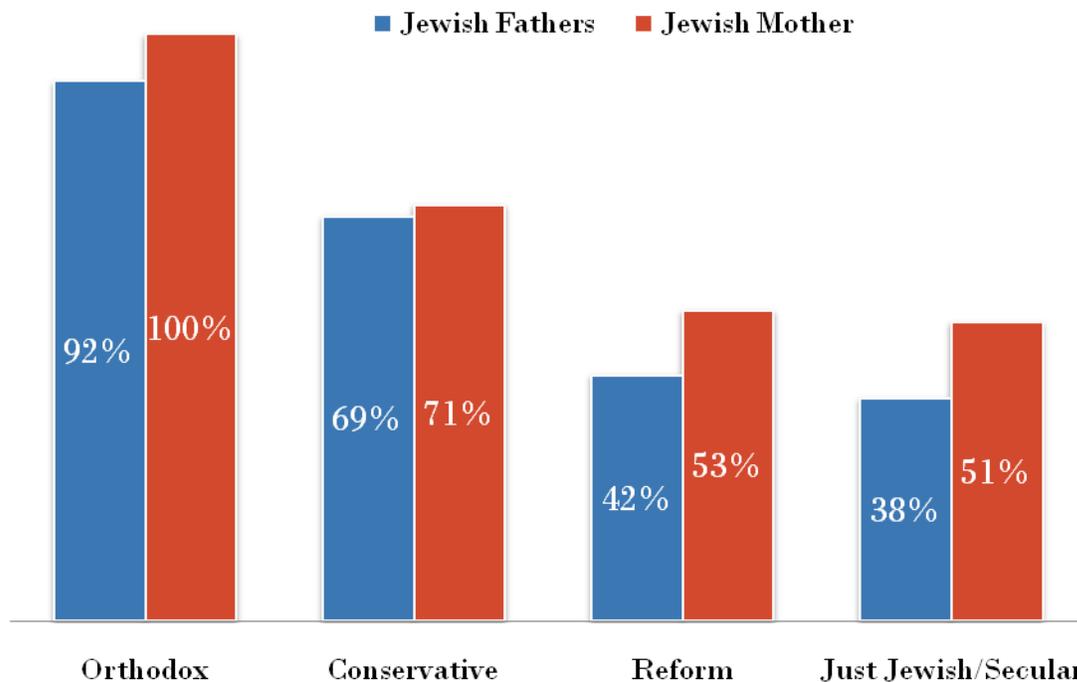
The centrality—or lack of it—of being Jewish was also explored in NJPS 2000-01. In families with two Jewish parents the wing of Judaism with which the family was affiliated was far more predictive than the gender of the respondent, as we see in Figures 5 and 6. There was little gendered difference on the importance of Jewishness between Orthodox fathers (92 %) and mothers (100 %) or Conservative fathers (69 %) and mothers (71 %) who said that being Jewish was “very important.” There were more gender differences in answers from Reform fathers (42 %) or mothers (53%), or Just Jewish/ secular fathers (38 %) and mothers (51 %).

However, in contrast, as we see in Figure 6 below, which depicts “the importance of being Jewish” among affiliated and unaffiliated intermarried families, gender differences are particularly revealing in intermarried families. Even in families that are affiliated with a synagogue or temple, Jewish women are almost twice as likely as Jewish men to say Jewishness is “Very important” to them. The majority of intermarried Jewish women (54 %) who are affiliated with a synagogue or temple in any wing of Judaism say that being Jewish is “Very important” to them, compared to 27 % of affiliated intermarried Jewish men.

Put another way, intermarried Jewish mothers are twice as likely to see Judaism as “Very important” as are intermarried Jewish fathers. Indeed, there is little difference among intermarried Jewish fathers whether or not they are affiliated, while there are great differences among affiliated and unaffiliated intermarried Jewish mothers. With 24 % saying Judaism is “Not very important,” intermarried Jewish mothers who do not affiliate with any wing of Judaism may be a very alienated population indeed, Figure 6 suggests.

Figure 5

Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Importance of Being Jewish "Very Important"

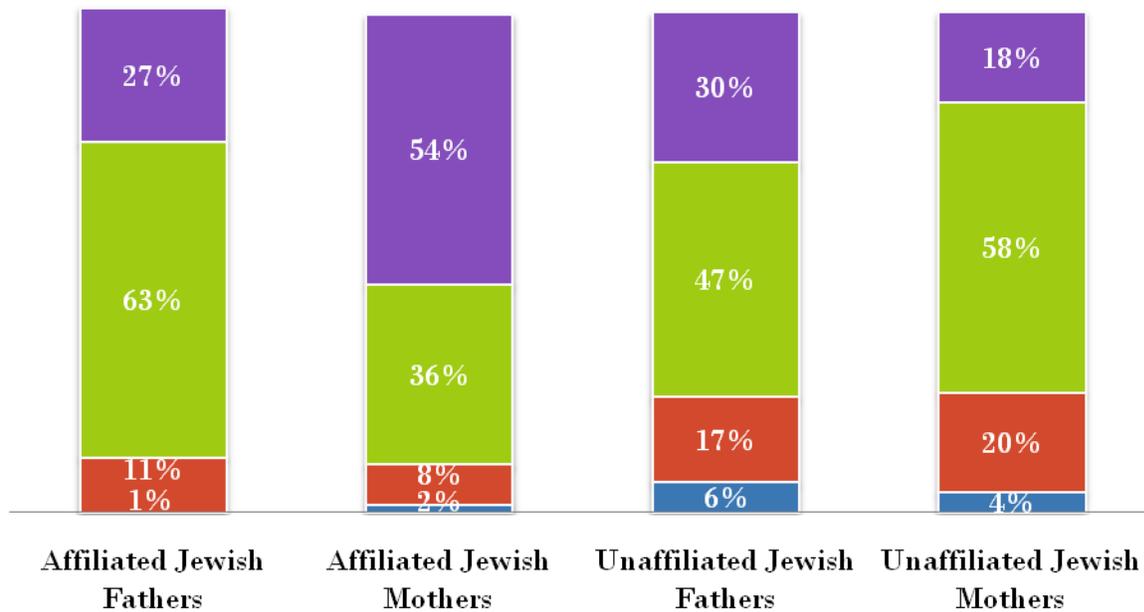


Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

Figure 6

Intermarried Jewish Parents by Importance of Being Jewish

■ Not at all Important ■ Not Very Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Very Important



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

In this chapter we have discussed how men and women feel and talk about religion. In Chapter Three we analyze interview participants' reports of their own religious and ethnic behavior. Although we have separated ideas—the importance of religion and of Judaism specifically—from institutional affiliation and synagogue attendance, and from social networks such as connections to family and to friendship circles, all of these factors are intertwined in the lives of real people. Jewish mother Gloria Grossman spoke for many when she described the interaction of feelings, beliefs and activities in her Jewish calendar year:

Rosh Hashanah's probably one of my favorite holidays. Believe it or not I love Passover—the food kills me, but I just love the Seder. Yom Kippur, it's the break-fast that we all look forward to. But it's really family, that's what it is to me. That's why I keep saying, it's not just about Judaism, it's really about my family. With the holidays, I know I get a kind of warm and fuzzy feeling when I go into temple. Even though I'm sitting there for three hours and I get a little bored, you know, I look forward to it all. I look forward to Jared learning more Hebrew, to raising my children, to having my Mom coming to temple with us as a Bohbe. How cool will that be!

Three: Doing Jewish—Synagogue and Ceremony as the “World of Our Mothers”

For much of Jewish history, the synagogue was the place where little boys left the world of their mothers to join the world of their fathers. The older they grew, the more the synagogue and formal classroom became the primary venues for religious behavior. Although to be sure there were many home based religious experiences for boys and men as well, the social network aspects of their religious lives were constructed around the synagogue. Men “made” a *minyan* (religious quorum of ten men) for each other. Without each other they could not recite key prayers in the service, nor could they recite the *kaddish* prayer fulfilling their obligation to pay respect to departed loved one. Men’s religious social networks were thus institutionally located.

Girls and women developed their religiosity primarily within the home and in connection to home-based social networks. Women’s religious lives often incorporated deep spirituality, expressed in prayers specifically crafted for their quotidian and life cycle experiences, from baking bread to immersing themselves in the ritual bath to gestating and giving birth. As Robert Wuthnow has noted, women’s home-based, rather than institutional connections, weathered the secularizing influences of modernity:

If young women learned that theirs was to be a submissive role, they nevertheless saw in their mothers’ activities that this role could be

performed meaningfully. In contrast, young men saw that...many other men remained largely indifferent to the activities of their congregation. It was relatively easy for many of these young men to drift away.⁶²

Today, including synagogue religious attendance and religious and lay leadership, girls and women are more active than boys and men in almost every aspect of religious and educational Jewishness within liberal, especially Reform American Judaism. The predominance of women has a psychological effect, and becomes a self-fulfilling trend. In the Reform movement, girls outnumbered boys in all youth activities, from 57 percent to 78 percent, according Rabbi Michael Friedman, director of junior and senior high school programs at the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). Friedman graphically connects this demographic shift directly to the movement’s ordination of female rabbis and the predominance of female cantors: “Before it was always a man high up on a bimah wearing a big robe in a deep voice, a model of leadership that was male-only and top down,” Friedman comments. “Those synagogues now have everybody sitting in a circle with someone playing a guitar and sharing feelings....they are styles that women may be more comfortable with than men...[boys] don’t necessarily see themselves there.”⁶³ These changes leave Jewish boys and men wondering what the synagogue can mean to them. Harvard

University psychologist and author of the book, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, William Pollock explains, "They [teenagers and young adult Jewish males] are struggling with who they are, with what masculinity means, and what being a Jewish male means in American society."⁶⁴ The decline of the synagogue as a venue for specifically masculine rites of initiation and life cycle passages leaves a lacuna.

Psychologists and gender theorists tell us that by middle school boys are beginning to be impatient with mothers, sisters, and female educators, and by adolescence they are ripe to feel themselves separate from their mothers and to enter a male world. Indeed, contemporary theorists like Joel Kovel note that "much psychoanalytic writing...read like a string of complaints directed by a boy against his mother."⁶⁵ Western cultures, according to Nancy Chodorow, often expect boys to, "repress and deny the intimacy, tenderness and dependence of the early symbiotic bond with the mother if he is to assume a 'masculine' identity." While this once was the province of the synagogue and the study hall, today young men complain, in contrast, about the "maternal vibe" of his liberal synagogue. This hardly increases the appeal Jewish environments because, as Chodorow emphasizes, "masculinity is always defined negatively as that which is not feminine."⁶⁶

A female Reconstructionist rabbi, interviewed by Brandeis student Mitzi Grossman, reflected on the way her congregation looks to her from the *bimah*:

Women are more present in more ways than they used to [be]. But I feel

like, in literal Judaism, in Orthodox Judaism, men don't have a choice. You have to show up, so you do. Once that "you have to" piece disappeared in liberal Judaism, men were like, "ok, we don't have to, and they disappeared. So I think that the issue is not so much that the synagogue has gotten feminine—it's that the men have retreated. I don't know if this is a question for clergy. I think this is a question for the men, themselves: "What do you want? What's not meeting your needs that you're not there?"

One theory that I have is that in American culture, it's okay for women not to know things, or not to be good at things, and it is not okay for men. In a synagogue like ours, which attracts...attracts a lot of people who aren't Jewishly knowledgeable....it's easier for a woman without a lot of background to sit in a service and say, "I don't know what's going on." My guess is that for a man that is intolerable in our society....it's hard for men to say, "I don't know."

Similarly, a 20-something young man interviewed by the same student reflected on the "maternal vibe" emanating from women rabbis and Jewish religious leaders:

Mostly women have taken over the power of the congregation. We have a female president, and a lot of the board is run by women....And it seems when you go to services, there's less men every single time, and more women. Sometimes it's a little too lovey-dovey, hugging everybody....Men don't care.there are a handful of men who make

a concerted effort and do a great job.Beth El is trying to integrate women, but at the same time, now that they are doing that, women are kind of overpowering.

I only had 3 male teachers in 13 years of Hebrew School.⁶⁷

Their words echo the concerns of Reform Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, in his reflections on “The Retreating Man” in a recent issue of *Reform Judaism*. “Liberal Judaism is following the lead of liberal Christianity,” he notes. However, as Salkin correctly observes, by adapting to mainstream Protestant patterns Reform Judaism is adapting to a religious movement which, while large, is shrinking in comparison to more stringent Christian movements. “Tough Christianity” does well because it makes demands on its adherents, especially men. Salkin asserts. Liberal Judaism, like liberal Christianity, makes few demands. Salkin describes a kind of “Catch-22” situation. On one hand, “demonstrating Jewish skills-- like *davening*, chanting Torah, and putting on *t’fillin*--is a kind of Jewish macho that fathers want to pass on to their sons,” a traditional Jewish pattern that can be very engaging for boys and men. On the other hand, these liturgical skills are often not salient to men in the liberal wings of Judaism—although, as we have noted, they have become desirable to many girls and women in recent years. Perhaps even more important, if men do not have the skills, and are put into an environment where they are expected to have them, the experience can actually alienate men by making them feel incompetent:

In the age of classical Reform, it was easier for men. People in the pews didn’t have to have expertise in Hebrew; they basically relied on the rabbi to have all the Jewish knowledge. The turning toward tradition with an expectation of Jewish literacy is a direct challenge to men who grew up in the Classical Reform tradition.⁶⁸

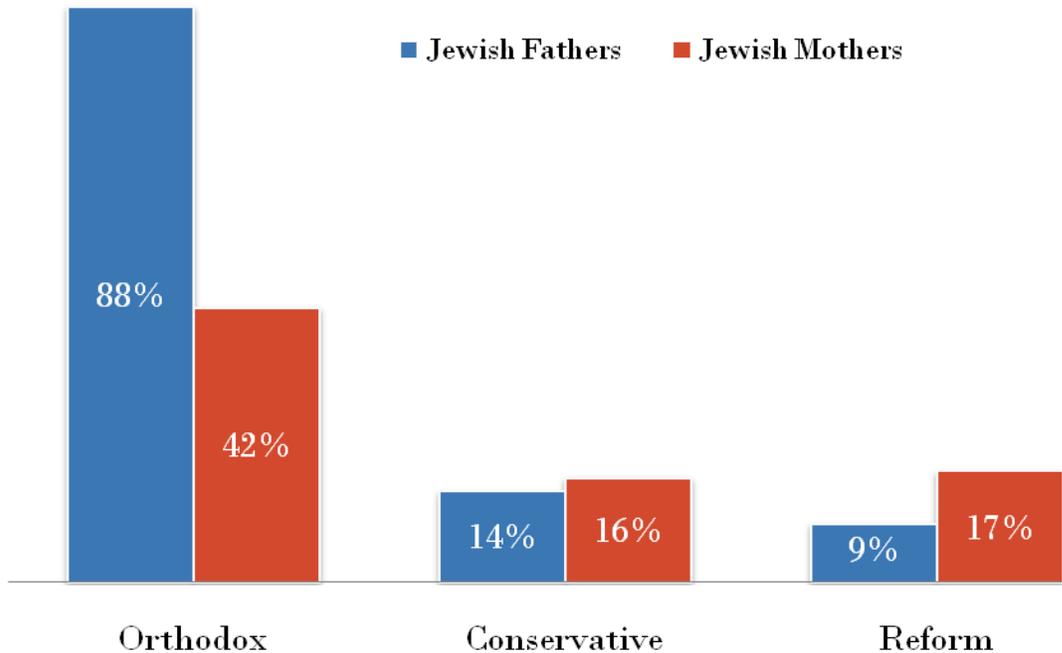
Figures 7, 8 and 9, below illustrate dramatic gender differences between the men and women in the diverse wings of American Judaism. They show that how often Jewish parents attend synagogue varies by four characteristics: (1) Whether they are married to a Jewish spouse; (2) What wing of Judaism they affiliate with, if any; (3) Whether or not they are synagogue members; and (4) Whether they are male or female. Gender makes the most difference among affiliated Reform Jews and among intermarried Jews, whether affiliated or unaffiliated.

Among inmarried Jewish parents, if they are Orthodox Jews, almost nine out of ten men attend synagogue weekly or more, compared to four out of ten women. Conservative men (14 %) and women (16 %) have almost identical weekly attendance rates. Reform women (17 %) are almost twice as likely to attend services every week as Reform men (9 %). At the low end of the inmarried spectrum, affiliation or lack of affiliation was far more important than gender: unaffiliated Jewish fathers (15 %) and mothers (16 %) were half as likely to never attend services as unaffiliated Jewish fathers (37 %) and mothers (34 %).

Thus, comparing inmarried Orthodox and Reform men and women provides a

Figure 7

**Intermarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism
by Frequency of Synagogue Attendance "Weekly or More"**



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

picture which is in many ways symbolic of the interface between Jewish denominational norms and gender role differences today: Orthodox men attend weekly services twice as often as Orthodox women. This reflects the fact that traditional gender role construction posits that men are obligated to try to pray in a group, whereas women are not. However, Orthodox women's rates of attending weekly or more are far higher than those of either Conservative or Reform men or women. Reform women, in contrast, attend weekly services twice as often as Reform men. The gap between intermarried Orthodox and non-Orthodox adults is more profound than differences in gender in regard to frequency of synagogue

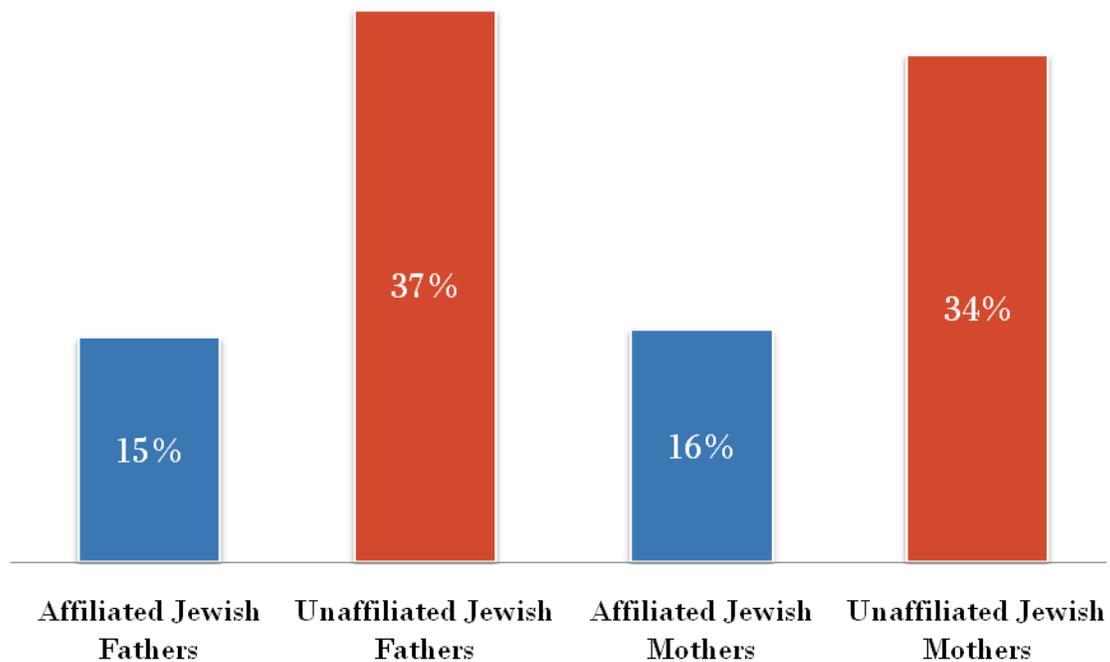
attendance. Orthodox societies continue to replicate communal norms of group prayer at least once a week. Conservative and especially Reform societies tend to lack this normative practice.

Among affiliated intermarried Jewish parents, gender makes a difference. Of affiliated Jewish mothers who were married to non-Jews, 14 % said they attend services weekly or more—almost the same rate as affiliated (non-Orthodox) intermarried Jewish mothers! An additional 40 % of affiliated intermarried mothers said they attend services twice a month, again, rather similar to the synagogue attendance rates of affiliated intermarried Jewish mothers. For the intermarried Jewish fathers, however, the

rates were strikingly different. Of affiliated intermarried fathers, 41 % said they never went to synagogue services. 16 % were there once or twice a year. Intermarried affiliated Jewish women are much more likely to attend synagogue on a regular basis than intermarried affiliated Jewish men. Rates of synagogue attendance were exceedingly low among intermarried, unaffiliated men and women.

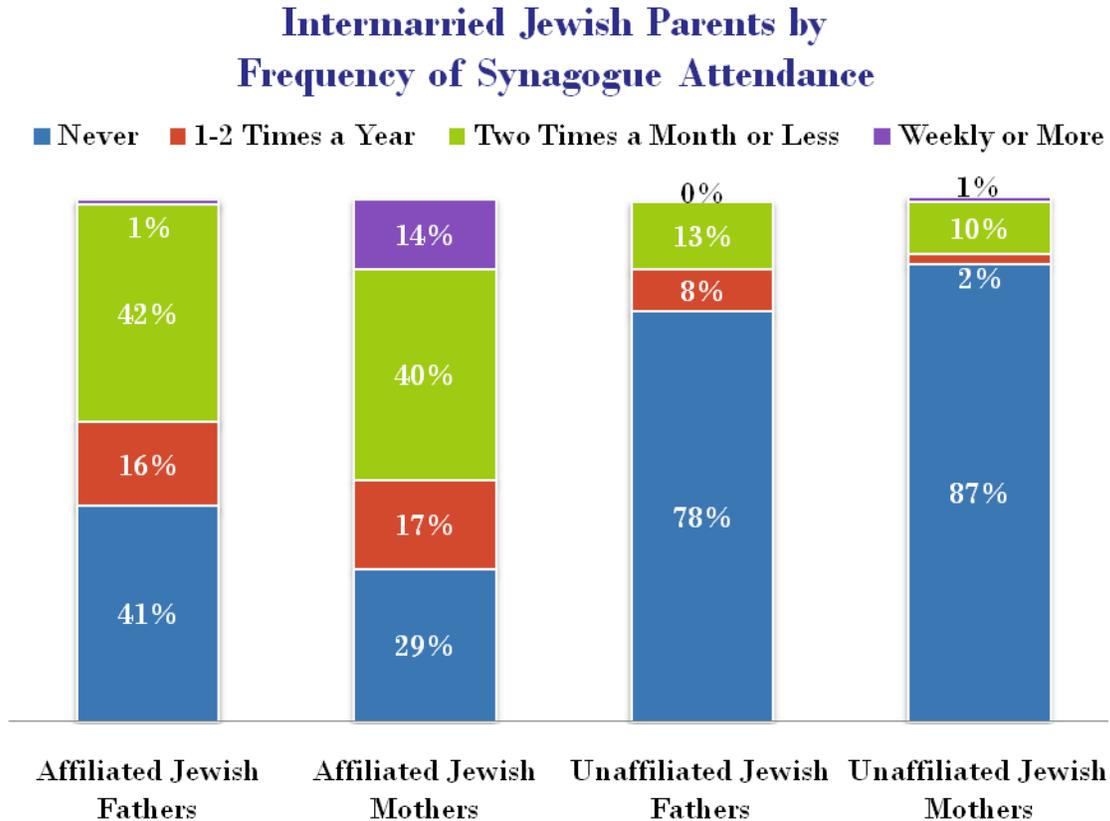
Figure 8

**Inmarried Jewish Parents by
Frequency of Synagogue Attendance "Never"**



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

Figure 9



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

Religious Observances in Inmarried Families Reflect Judaism and Gender

Observers sometimes criticize research reports for putting too much emphasis on conventional Jewish religious rituals. While religious observances do not tell us everything about a family's attachment to Jews and Judaism, they tell us something. Synagogue attendance statistics, for example, may or may not indicate piety, but certainly tell us something about attachments to communal social networks and to Jewish religious expression. Different types of attachment can be studied by

looking at annual home-based ritual observances such as lighting Hanukkah candles or attending Passover Seders, or weekly home observances such as lighting Shabbat candles. These behaviors are performed by individuals, but their performance is often in a family setting, and can provide information about the family's Jewish social capital. A ritual like fasting on Yom Kippur can be grounded in communal norms, although it sometimes primarily an expression of personal religious or spiritual sensibilities. Nationwide, for example, people who live in communities like Baltimore where most Jews fast, regardless of affiliation, are more likely to fast than those who live in communities like San

Francisco, where far fewer proportions of Jews participate in the fast. Thus, while gender is often a factor in religious observance, gender is part of a complex web of factors that have an impact on attitudes and behavior.

Levels of activity involving Judaism as a religious faith are, not surprisingly, connected not only to the community but also to the type of family—inmarried or intermarried, and the wing of Judaism, if any, with which respondents affiliate, as well as to gender. Figures 10, 11, and 12 illustrate ritual observances in unmarried and intermarried families. Unmarried Orthodox men and women tend to report very similar levels of observance in most activities. Unmarried affiliated non-Orthodox women report higher levels of observance than unmarried affiliated non-Orthodox men, except for fasting on Yom Kippur, where men report much higher rates of fasting all day than women do. Among unmarried families, most rituals are reported in similar rates by men and women. Lighting Shabbat candles is universal among the Orthodox, and performed by more than half of Conservative Jews, and by one-third of Reform Jews. The most common ritual observances in all Jewish families with children are lighting Hanukkah candles and attending Passover Seders. Sentiments like those of Joseph Katz, an unmarried father from Boston were shared by many Jewish families:

We always do a Passover seder, so I would believe that we'll continue to do that. But I'm thinking, like, the minor holidays--those would probably go. Whereas maybe Passover and

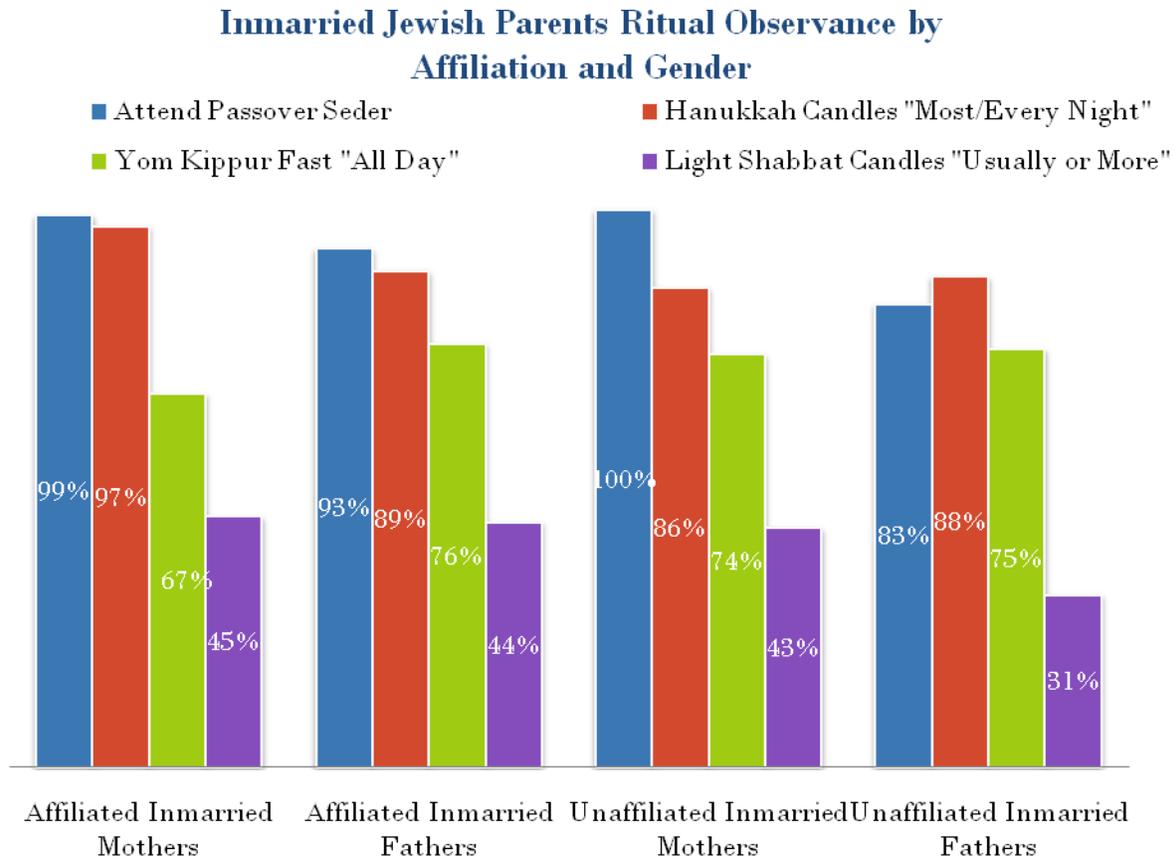
Hanukkah would be the two Jewish holidays -- well, obviously, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, so those are the two high holy days. So I would say four Jewish holidays probably be celebrated.

Passover and Hanukkah are indeed the most commonly celebrated Jewish holidays. Because their celebration is close to ubiquitous among affiliated families, the lack of their observance is extremely significant. About one in seven unmarried Reform fathers and one in ten unmarried “Just Jewish” or “Secular” fathers said they never lit Hanukkah candles; one in ten unmarried Reform fathers and one in six unmarried “Just Jewish” or “Secular” fathers said they never attend Passover Seders. Their lack of participation in these widespread communal norms may in some cases be indicative of their alienation from Jewish social networks, as expressed by those who reported, “I didn’t go to Seder because I wasn’t invited.” Alternatively, in some cases they may simply be an indication of disinterest in religious rituals.

Gender Affects Ritual Observances in Intermarried Families

Gender is much more of a key factor affecting ritual observances in intermarried families than in unmarried families. Simply put, homes with Jewish mothers tend to have much higher levels of ritual observance than homes which have Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, as we see in Figure 11 below. This is true both of widespread annual rituals like Hanukkah candles, and less practiced weekly rituals like Sabbath candles. Thus, of intermarried fathers with

Figure 10



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

children under 18 at home, 40 percent of those who describe themselves as Just Jewish or Secular say they never light Hanukkah candles, compared to 15 percent of such mothers. Among intermarried Jewish fathers who describe themselves as Reform, 55 percent say they light Hanukkah candles every night, compared to 72 percent of such mothers. Among Conservative intermarried fathers 40 percent report that they light Hanukkah candles every night. Conservative intermarried mothers are twice as likely to say they light Hanukkah candles (79 percent).

Looking at Sabbath candles, reports of “never lighting” were given by the great majority of intermarried Jewish fathers,

whether Conservative (71 percent), Reform (69 percent), or Just Jewish/ Secular (84 percent). Among intermarried Jewish mothers, in contrast, the norms of the Jewish movements they identified with were much more evident. “Never lighting” was reported by 39 percent of Conservative, 66 percent of Reform, and 87 percent of Just Jewish/ Secular intermarried Jewish mothers.

Unlike candle lighting, the incidence of fasting on Yom Kippur among intermarried Jews was little affected by gender, and much more reflective of the norms of the wings of Judaism with which they identified. Moreover, men’s observances were somewhat more rigorous, especially among Conservative intermarried men.

Figure 11

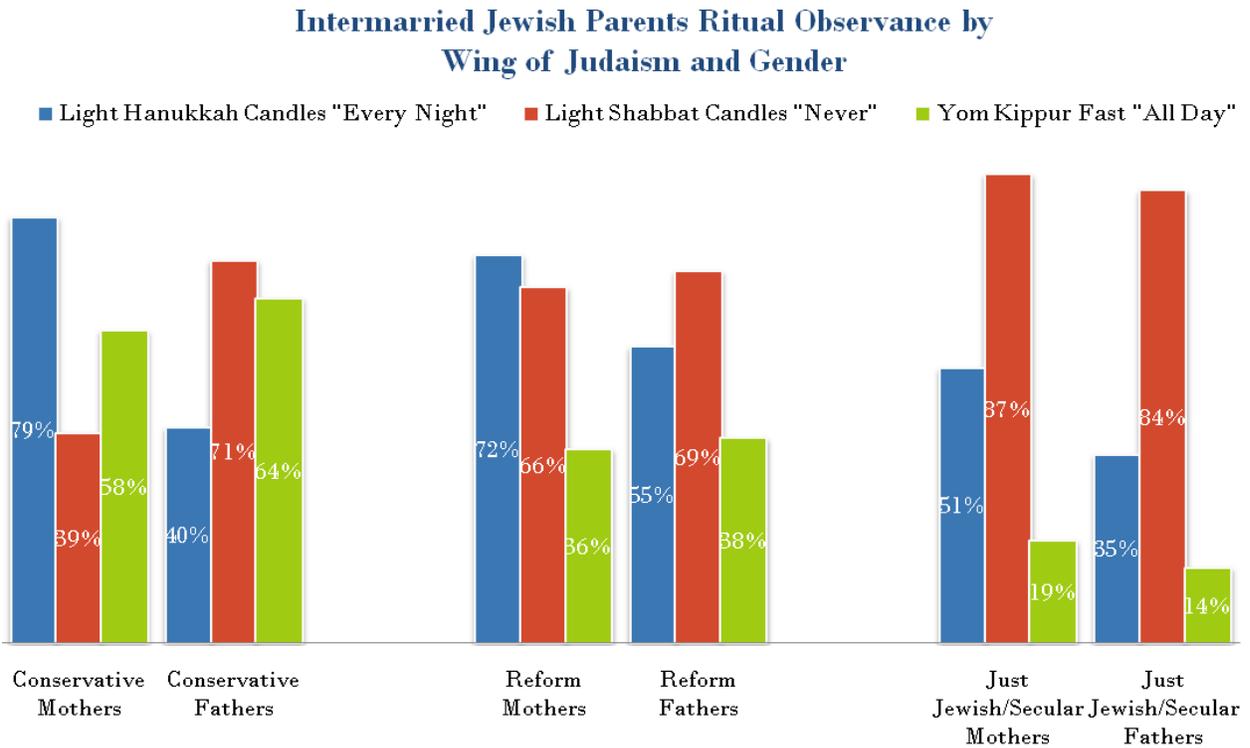
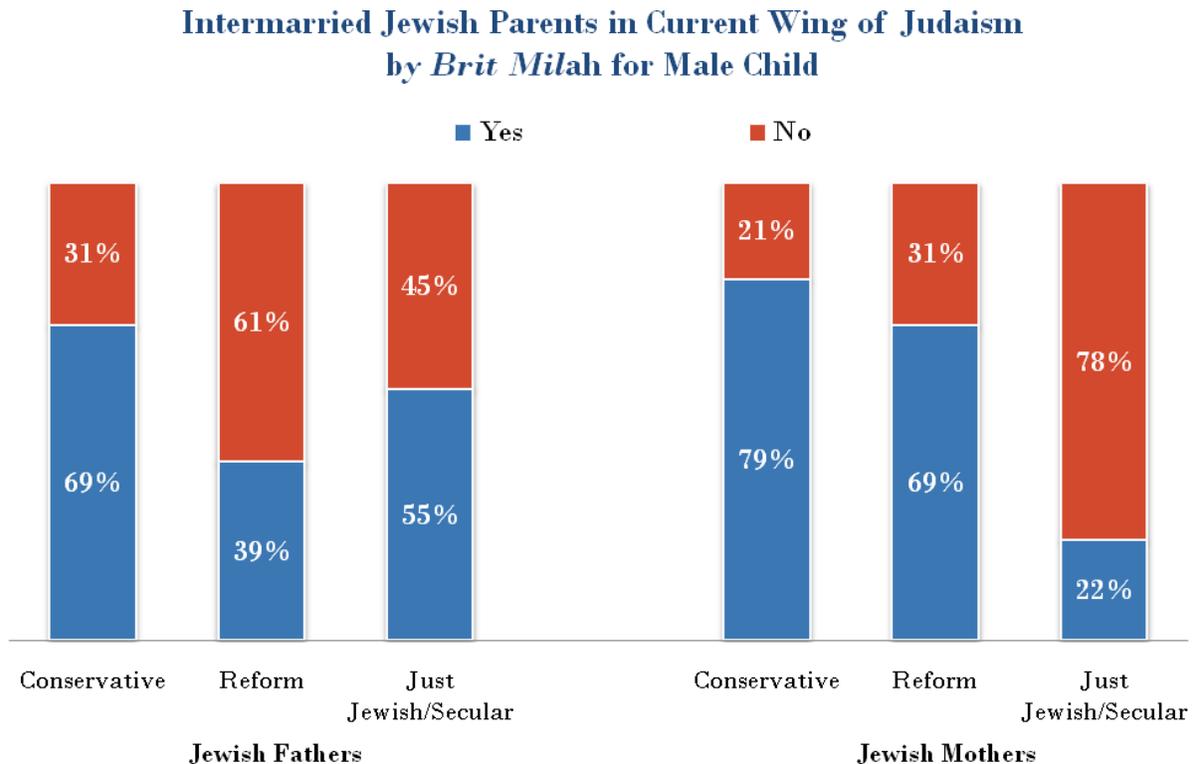


Figure 12



***Brit Milah* in Inmarried and Intermarried Jewish Households**

The ritual circumcision of a male child—the Jewish *brit milah*—is arguably the most vivid symbol of differing attachments to Jewish tradition demonstrated by Jewish men and women in intermarried households. Ritual circumcision is still virtually universal among inmarried Jewish parents who affiliate with any wing of American Judaism—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. Only “Just Jewish/ Secular” inmarried parents report about one in five not providing their male children with a *brit milah*. However, among the intermarried population the picture is very different. About one-third of Conservative men and well over half of Reform men married to non-Jewish women report that their male children have not had a *brit milah*. The pattern for intermarried Jewish women is diametrically opposite. Among Conservative women married to non-Jewish men eight out of ten and among Reform women married to non-Jewish men, seven out of ten report their sons have had a *brit milah*.

The determination of intermarried affiliated Jewish mothers to see that their sons receive a ritual circumcision is counterintuitive according to popular psychological theories that say that fathers like their sons to resemble them and have similar experiences to them. However, this finding is very much in keeping with our interview data. Our interviews showed that most Jewish fathers are not willing to battle with their non-Jewish wives over the issue

of providing ritual circumcisions for their sons. As one father put it—reflecting many interviews—“I just didn’t want to go to the mat fighting over that issue.”

In contrast, the great majority of Jewish mothers see themselves as responsible for their sons having a *brit milah*, whether or not their non-Jewish husbands are thrilled with the idea. The lack of commitment that many intermarried Jewish fathers reveal for a ritual that has always seemed quintessentially male—whatever other reservations people may have had about it—is a powerful symbol of gendered differences in doing Jewish in American families today.

Endnotes to Chapter Three

⁶² Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), p. 120.

⁶³ Nussbaum-Cohen, “Reform Jews Examining Ways to Retain Their Young Men,” p. A 10.

⁶⁴ Nussbaum-Cohen, “Reform Jews.”

⁶⁵ Joel Kovel, *The Age of Desire: Case Histories of a Radical Psychoanalyst* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 73.

⁶⁶ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (London: University of California Press, 1978), p 181

⁶⁷ Both interviews conducted by Mitzi Grossman in her unpublished Brandeis University Senior Honors Thesis, *Perceived Feminization of American Liberal Jewish Congregations*, May 2008.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey Salkin, “The Retreating Man,” in *Reform Judaism* 35, No 1 (Fall 2006), pp. 70-71

Four: Peoplehood, Social Networks, Israel Attachments

Jewishness is not only (and for some Jews not primarily) a religion, but also connection to an ethnicity and an ethnic culture. For some Jews, attachment to their ethnic group is an important aspect of their lives and their own personal identity. Some see their Jewishness as a membership in the Jewish peoplehood.

For most of human history identification with an ethnic group (sometimes understood as a racial group) was something one was born into and didn't have much choice about. But Jews and other hyphenated white European ethnic descendents (Greek-, Italian-, Irish-Americans, etc.) in America today usually have a choice about whether and how much they wish to associate with their "people." The relationship individuals have to others who share their culture is sometimes called "intersubjectivity," that is, "to be engaged in a conscious sense of sociality with others," to "see the essential internal connections or bonds that connect individuals together," and sometimes to engage in specific activities that are expressive of those connections.⁶⁹

When intersubjectivity is an aspect of ethnic identification, it is often supported by religious and/or "ethnic social capital," cultural expressions of ethnicity which typically include the sharing of ethnic languages, ethnic cultural expressions such as foods,

music, arts and textual materials, and ethnic ceremonies and rituals which may or may not be religious in nature.

Ethnicity usually includes the sense of some relationship to an ethnic homeland. As we will see in this chapter, within the more traditional wings of Judaism, these characteristics of ethnic religious and/or social capital are found among both men and women. Within the liberal wings of American Judaism, the Jews who are most likely to have religious and/or ethnic social capital today are female Jews.

Ethnic Social Capital

In Jewish culture, the ethnic and the religious aspects of social capital have long been intertwined, and "secular" Jewish ethnic social capital may be derived from and borrow much from religious terms, history, concepts and activities. This is especially apparent in Israel, where fiercely secular Jewish writers freely use language, symbols and concepts drawn from traditional rabbinic literature. Jews around the world increase their ethnic social capital when they learn Jewish languages, are involved with Jewish organizations, including temples and synagogues, participate in Jewish culture by reading Jewish books, listening to Jewish music, and viewing Jewish films. Social capital deepens when Jews are engaged by ideas of Jewish peoplehood, and when they

make and keep many Jewish friends, visit Israel, and care about Israel.

Jewish ethnicity is somewhat different than many others because the “homeland” in which the majority of Jewish grandparents (or great-grandparents) were born is usually not the country that Jews regard as their “homeland” today—the State of Israel. The daily language of Jewish grandparents or great grandparents was often a historical Diaspora Jewish language like Yiddish, or Ladino, or Judeo-Arabic—but seldom Hebrew. Nevertheless although Hebrew was not a vernacular spoken language, it was the virtually universal language of Jewish prayer. Hebrew words were often incorporated into Jewish vernacular languages, so it did function as a very specific ethnic passport of sorts.

Today, as the vernacular language of the Jewish State of Israel, Hebrew has become an ethnic language—but one that is familiar to only a minority of American Jews. To many American Jews, Hebrew retains the flavor of religiosity, because they are still likely to encounter Hebrew in a worship setting. Thus, for American Jews the “secular” ethnic language of Hebrew—one of the foundation stones of secular ethnic social capital—is experienced as part of the Jewish religion, not only or even primarily as part of secular Jewish culture. Instead, American Jews are likely to think of “secular Jewish culture” as being comprised of edgy Jewish humor, skepticism and irony, feelings of guilty responsibility for

misfortunes around the world, a commitment to social action—including promoting tolerance and multiculturalism, and recognizable styles of urban intellectualism and artistic creativity.

These aspects of Jewish secular identification remain virtually untouched by social scientific research. In assessing the strength of Jewish ethnic attachments, social scientists often look at social networks and other local markers of ethnicity, and also at attachments to Israel, the homeland many American Jews have never visited. They examine the extent to which Jews see themselves as a distinctive people, want to transmit Jewish culture to their children, and want their children to continue their attachments to the Jewish people and Jewish culture.

Social networks such as friendship circles have repeatedly proved to be a very salient aspect of Jewish connectedness. Statistically, family and friendship circles are one of the best predictors of Jewish values and behaviors, second only to population density. One might say that, in a certain sense, social networks like family and friends create their own bubble of population density. Social networks tend to create and reinforce behavioral norms. They also construct attitudinal norms, especially establishing ideas of which activities are or are not worthwhile. Thus social networks can encourage members of the network to think that such activities as jogging every morning or playing an instrument or reading

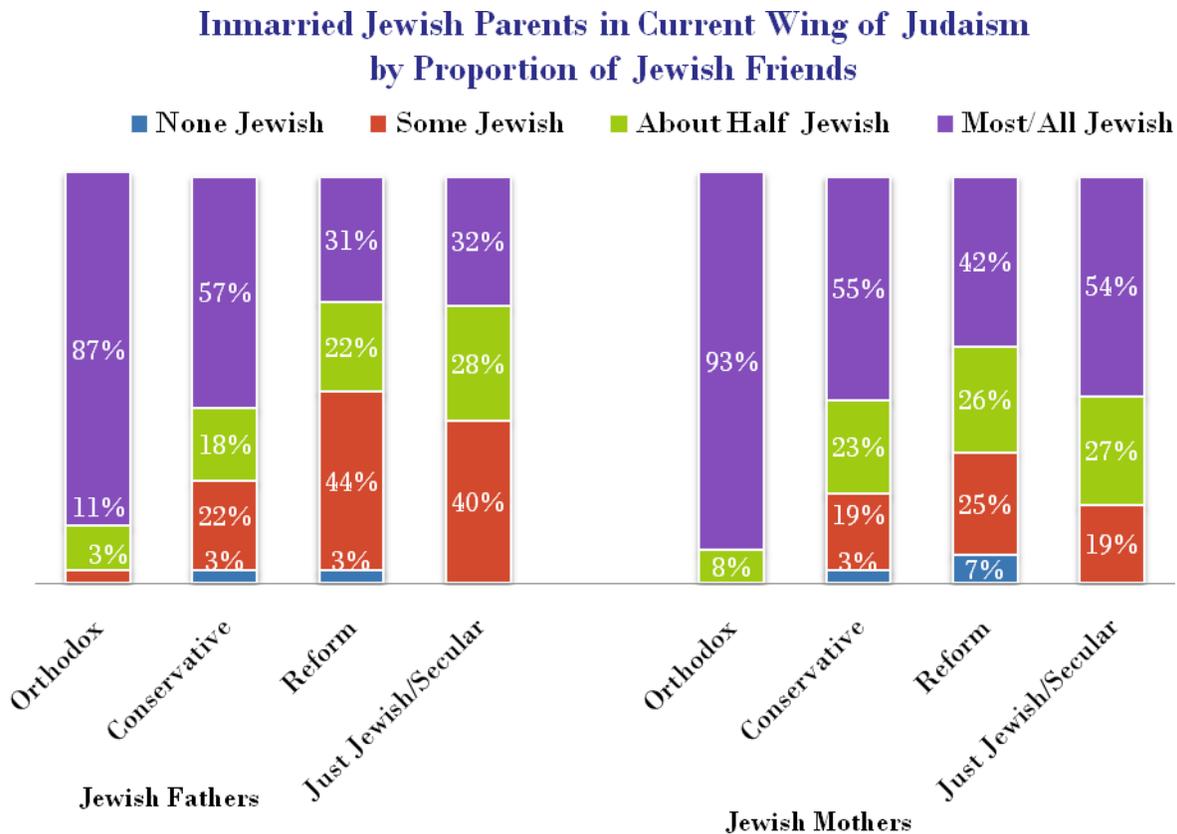
challenging books are—or are not—worthwhile. In thinking about American Jewish life, diverse Jewish societies make Israel visits or extensive Jewish education seem worthwhile—or not. The behavioral norms and shared attitudes of social networks can have a profound effect on the behavior of individuals.

As we see in Figure 13 and Figure 14, inmarried Reform men and women differ very little at the high end of Jewish friendship circles, but differ strikingly at the low end. Almost half of inmarried Reform men (47 %) report that “some” or “none” of their close friends are Jewish, compared to only one-third of inmarried Reform women (32 %). Reports of “mostly” Jewish or

“all” Jewish were given by 31 % of inmarried Reform men and 42 % of inmarried Reform women, with 22 % of men and 26 % of women reporting that about half their friends are Jewish. These figures may be reflective of which parent primarily forms the social networks for the family—overwhelmingly the mother, rather than the father. The inmarried Jack Gelbman, for example, remarked that his Jewish wife Janice creates the family’s social networks:

Most of the circle of friends we have developed from Janice’s circle. Josh is at a preschool and there’s ten other children in his class and so we’ve become friendly with some of those parents. And some

Figure 13



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

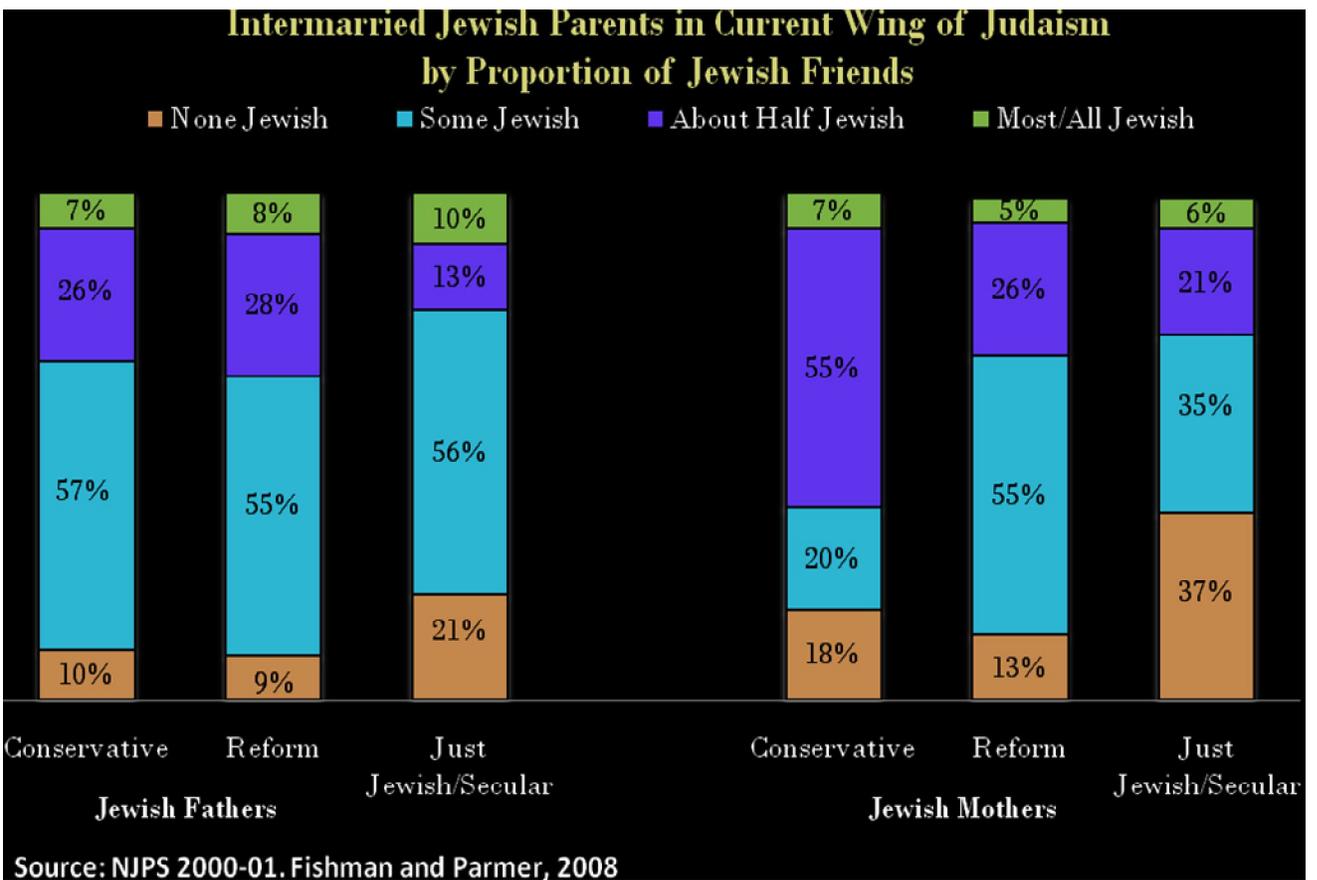
relationships with people I work with, but I'd say that Janice is responsible for bringing more of the people that we spend time with than I am.

Wing of Judaism, as well as gender, makes a difference, and inmarried Conservative Jewish parents have much higher numbers of Jews among their close friends than do inmarried Reform Jewish parents. Among inmarried Conservative Jewish parents, 57% of men and 55% of women report having mostly or all Jewish friends and only about one-quarter (25% and 22% respectively) of men and women report

“some” or “none.”

Reform intermarried households report markedly lower levels of Jewish friends. Family type—rather than gender—seems to be the salient factor in Reform friendship circles. About two-thirds of intermarried Reform Jewish men (64%) and Reform Jewish women (68%) said “some” or “none” of their close friends were Jewish. Slightly more than a quarter of both men (28%) and women (26%) said about half of their close friends were Jewish. Only 8% of men and 5% of women reported mostly Jewish friends.

Figure 14



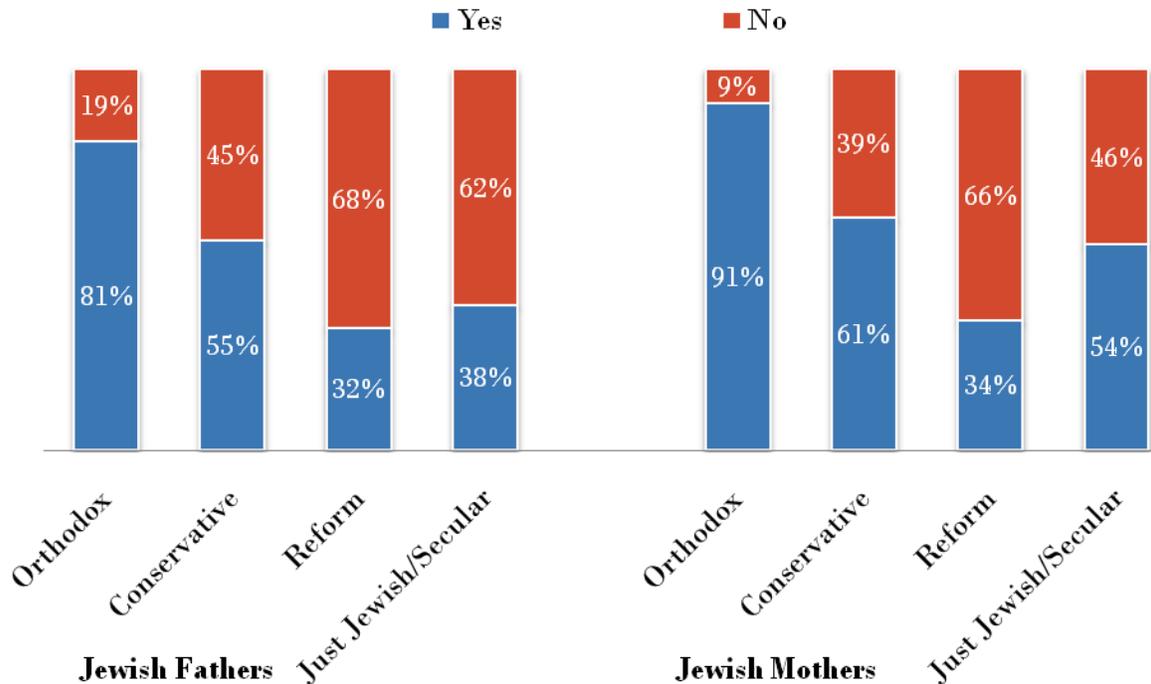
Denominational Differences in Jewish Social Capital

One subtext of social networks is that they reflect a psychological state: how closely one identifies as a member of the Jewish people. As we see in Figures 13 and 14 above, the NJPS 2000-01 data showed inmarried Jewish parents having “Mostly Jewish friends” among nine out of ten Orthodox Jews (87/ 93 %), slightly over half of Conservative Jews (57/ 55 %) and about a third of Reform Jews (31 % of Reform men to 42 % of Reform women). Not surprisingly, there are differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews when it comes to areas of Jewish connections that people define as “religious.” With activities such as attending synagogue services and lighting Shabbat candles, the Orthodox profile is much higher than that of Conservative and Reform affiliated Jews. However, the 2007 American Jewish Committee Public Opinion

Poll,⁷⁰ along with data from the NJPS 2000-01 and other studies, suggest that in areas of non-religious, ethnic or peoplehood identification, there are substantial differences among Jews identifying with the various wings of Judaism as well.

These statistics are very similar to the comparable percentages on having visited Israel. Looking at the most highly Jewishly identified group, inmarried families with children, in the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, American Jewish men and women who are married to Jews and have children, we see that visits to Israel are reported by nearly nine out of ten Orthodox men (81 %) and women (91 %), well over half of Conservative men (55 %) and women (61 %), and one-third of Reform men (32 %) and women (34 %).⁷¹

Figure 15
Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism
by Ever Been to Israel



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

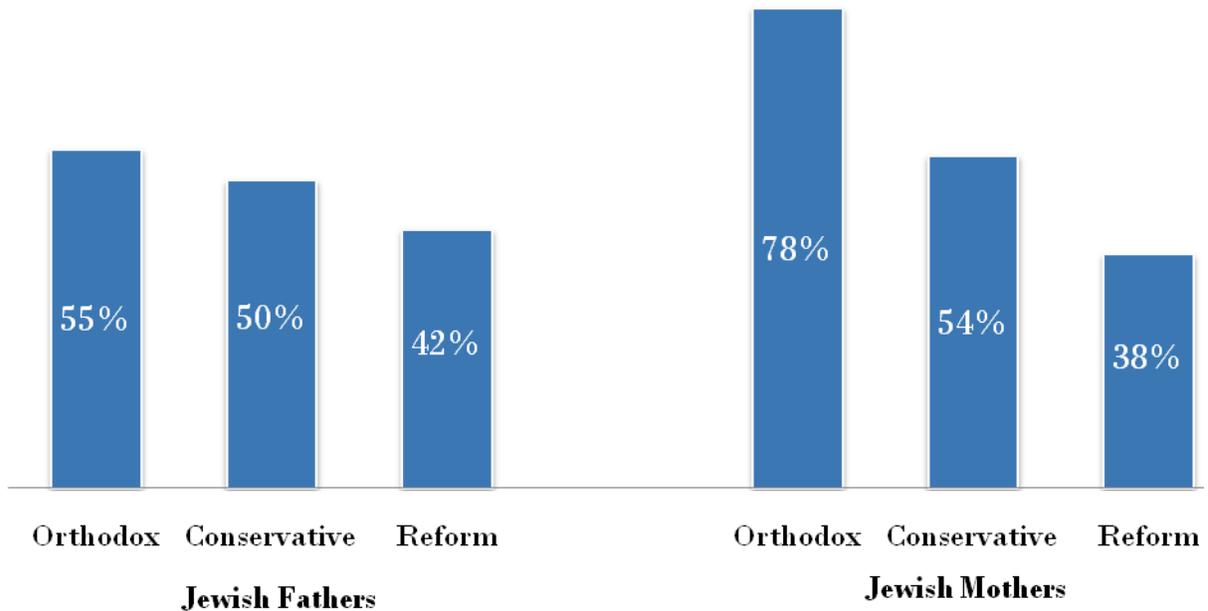
Another way to look at attitudes toward Israel is to see where respondents rank “Care about Israel” compared to other “Very important Jewish values” in NJPS 2000-01. When asked to rank values they thought were “very important Jewish values,” those who thought “Care about Israel” was “Very important” included 55 % of Orthodox men and 78 % of Orthodox women, 50 % of Conservative men and 54 % of Conservative women, 42 % of Reform men and 38 % of Reform women. In other words, the group of American Jews most likely to have visited Israel and to rank caring about Israel as a very important Jewish value were Orthodox

women. Orthodox men were at the same level as Conservative Jewish men and women. As we can see from these figures, gender as well as denomination can make a difference in the centrality of Israel to one’s Jewish identification.

Caring about Israel is tied in complicated ways to Jewish identification. As we explored in Chapter Two, questions about importance of Jewishness produced descending results among those affiliated with American Judaism, from a high among Orthodox Jews to a midpoint among Conservative Jews to a low among Reform Jews, with

Figure 16

Inmarried Jewish Parents in Current Wing of Judaism by Care About Israel "Very Important"



Source: NJPS 2000-01. Fishman and Parmer, 2008

significant variation between men and women among Reform Jewish respondents. Connections to Israel are consonant not only with the likelihood of having visited Israel but also with connections to other Jews in their American neighborhoods.

Moreover, the wings of American Judaism differ in terms of marital status—what we might call “family styles.” Orthodox Jews form their own Jewish family networks earlier in life than non-Orthodox Jews. They get together with family and with Jewish friendship networks on a weekly basis in Sabbath celebrations, as well as

synagogue attendance. All of these activities are textbook cases of the building of ethnic social capital. Although they take place in a religious context, they build ethnic identification.

In certain ways Orthodox and non-Orthodox American Jews live in different Americas. There are many more Jews with substantial religious and ethnic social capital within Orthodox Jewish communities than within non-Orthodox Jewish communities. Gender makes less of a difference among Orthodox Jews: The social capital of men and women within Orthodoxy is equal—which may seem ironic to those

who are critical of Orthodoxy because of the obvious inequality of gendered religious roles. This is because Orthodox Jewish communities invest more of their human resources as well as their financial resources into the creation of religious and ethnic social capital. Indeed, it is in these human resources that the major differences exist.

American Orthodox Judaism has managed to create committed and highly engaged laity, including male and female lay persons, men and women who are willing to sacrifice a great deal, when they need to, in order to participate fully in Jewish life. The attitudes toward Israel, and the Israel-influenced attitudes toward American politics that are so evident in the 2007 American Jewish Committee Public Opinion Poll, are a symbol and reflection of those commitments.

But this statement is not quite “the truth,” because it simplifies, and in this case simplifications can distort. For example, American Jews who call themselves Reform Jews or Orthodox Jews today often grew up in another Jewish movement. Looking at our data set of married Jewish with children under 18 living at home, about one-quarter of current Orthodox Jews say they grew up as Conservative, Reform, or Secular Jews. Well over one-third of current Reform Jewish parents grew up as Orthodox, Conservative, or Secular Jews (NJPS 2000-01). There is nothing magical about denominational labels. Calling oneself an Orthodox or Conservative or Reconstructionist or

Reform Jew doesn’t suddenly make one highly identified and engaged—or weakly identified and engaged—with Jewishness. Men in liberal Jewish movements are not alienated from Judaism because of the denominational label. But they may well be alienated partially because of the movement’s norms.

Goals for Raising Children and Brokering Jewish Family Connections

Each interview informant was asked to discuss his or her goals in raising children—what qualities would their children have as adults that would make the parents feel that they had succeeded in raising them well. Almost universally, men and women in our inmarried and conversionary households felt it was “extremely important” or “very important” that their children grow up to be Jewish. All parents, of course, want their children to be happy, and the vast majority of our male and female informants in every family type stated happiness as a parental goal for their children. Inmarried men and women were the most likely to articulate the goal that the child should meet someone who could help them achieve a fulfilling life, but even among inmarrieds only a quarter of parents mentioned this goal. Men in various types of marriages were much more likely than women to mention “to be successful” as a goal for their children, including, interestingly enough, about 40% of both intermarried and inmarried Jewish men. Both men

and women (but not a majority in any case) spoke of diverse goals, such as “being a mensch,” being “independent,” and “accepting individual differences.” Parents seemed very much aware that their children would make their own choices—as they themselves had done.

Ever since Marshall Sklare established a scale for ranking “The Image of the Good Jew in Lakeville,” sociologists of the Jewish community have been using similar scales to measure evolving Jewish values. As Sklare explained, the utility of this exercise is that it enables us to juxtapose the relative stress put on universalism versus Jewish ethno-religious social capital. Most Jews embrace the importance of “leading an ethical life”—the question is, does that universalistic ethicism obviate the need for Jewishness as a distinctive religious culture and civilization?

Among our interview population, we imposed a Sklare-like scale on our transcribed conversations, yielding an indication of the relative differences in values within the differing family types, and, in some cases, of relative differences by gender. “Leading an ethical life” was highest on the hit parade for intermarried Jewish men (70%) and their Christian wives (80%) and Christian husbands (78%). It was somewhat less so for intermarried Jewish wives (55%). Within inmarried families, 35% of Jewish men and 5% of Jewish women singled ethics out as a Jewish value. The second highest scores were garnered by the idea of “feeling

pride in one’s religious heritage,” which was cited by 22% of intermarried Jewish husbands and 7% of their Christian wives; 35% of Jewish wives and 6% of their Christian husbands; 47% of inmarried Jewish men and 32% of inmarried Jewish women. Other goals were not mentioned frequently enough to extract any patterns, although “pursuing social justice” was mentioned by women more often than men, as was “studying the Jewish heritage,” which was especially popular with inmarried Jewish women (22%)

Jewish women tend to think about the implications of being a Jewish parent well before children are born. If they date non-Jewish men, they often bring their concerns up during the dating process, as Jenny Katz Mahoney explained:

Then I said, “Look, if we’re going to think about marriage, we need to take some steps.” There was no opportunity for compromise as far as I was concerned. I wasn’t going to have kids with Jewish and something else kind of thing. I just don’t think that works....I just kind of see religion as you’ve got to pick one, and if you’re called to the Torah, you’re called to the Torah as a Jew, not a Jew and something else.

Whether they marry a Jewish or a non-Jewish man, Jewish mothers often see themselves as the editors and the transmitters of Judaism to the next generation, as the inmarried Gail Gershon described that transmission:

When kids are little, they just take all this in. When you're so young, it really does become a part of your life. My husband's real Conservative. I grew up Reform. We belong to a Reform temple now. When he grew up, they lit the Shabbat candles. Growing up, for me, Judaism was a way of life. It's nice, it's traditional, and it's just something that's so instilled in me, and I love it. And especially when we had the kids, we wanted to belong to a temple, because we just -- we were just feeling that way. We just wanted to belong to a temple. And be part of the community more. And lighting the Shabbat candles.

In contrast, Jewish men are often reactive, rather than pro-active. Particularly those Jewish men who marry non-Jewish women may not think pro-actively about raising Jewish children, but instead react strongly to the idea of having a Christian child, as many non-Jewish women who were interviewed suggested:

I wanted our children raised with some kind of religious background....My husband didn't really care whether or not they were raised with religion, but he said, 'If there is going to be a religion, they've got to be Jewish, because I would feel weird having a Christian child....That is true of all our friends too. The men don't want Christian children, for a cultural

reason—it's a kind of masculine thing.

What being a Jewish male does not seem to mean in American society is being the parent in the household who brokers religion, spirituality, and social connections to an ethnoreligious group for the family. As we have seen, especially within marriages that incorporate more than one ethnoreligious and/ or cultural heritage, the task of relating to religion, religious culture, and spirituality is seen as the task of the wife—no matter what her religion is. For many couples, not only is religion "a girl thing," so is the task of relating both to the older and the younger generation. Both Jewish and non-Jewish wives are often the parties in their households designated to maintain relationships with parents and in-law parents, aunts, uncles, cousins. Since it is often in those homes that religious ceremonies and celebrations take place, the responsibility placed on wives and mothers is even more significant.

Jewish Particularism and American Diversity

Within inmarried families Jewish men seem to have found a place within Judaism. Both inmarried men and women tend to value Jewishness over diversity. Significantly, inmarried men and women felt that their efforts in raising children should emphasize Jewish particularism, and diversity would take care of itself in open American societies. In contrast, intermarried Jewish men were suspicious

of too much particularism. Intermarried Jewish men were especially concerned that their children's Jewish experiences not "ghettoize" them. Jewish men who marry Jewish women—and Jewish men who marry non-Jewish women—are more different from each other, as groups, than inmarried and intermarried Jewish women. Intermarried Jewish men tend to be apathetic or ambivalent toward Jewishness. Many would be happy to drop religion altogether except that they do not think they could tolerate having completely Christian children. Inmarried Jewish men, on the other hand, often have strong positive feelings toward and are actively engaged in Jewishness.

Jewish mothers, as a group, tend to be committed to raising Jewish children, overwhelmingly in inmarried families, but also in mixed married families. The presence of a Jewish mother means there is likely to be an attempt, at least by one parent, to raise Jewish children. The presence of a Jewish mother and a Jewish father most often indicates two parents with positive commitments to raising Jewish children. While there are certainly some inmarried Jewish men and women who are Jewishly neutral or ambivalent, uninvolved Jews, that type comprises a smaller and smaller proportion among younger inmarried Jews, because, all other things being equal, neutral or ambivalent Jews are

more likely to marry non-Jews than to marry Jews.

Inmarried mothers and fathers tended to share values and goals for themselves and their children, although Jewish mothers tended to be more Jewishly focused in their thinking and in their social networks than their husbands were. Orthodox Jewish men and women, despite their more emphatic gender role definitions, were the closest of all the groups studied in sharing Jewish values and goals for their children.

Interestingly, younger Orthodox married couples also have the highest rates of educational and occupational spousal equity—physicians married to physicians, lawyers married to lawyers, etc. Today, inmarried families are much more differentiated from intermarried families—especially those with Jewish fathers—than they were in previous decades.

Endnotes to Chapter Four

⁶⁹ David A. Schultz, "The Phenomenology of Democracy: Putnam, Pluralism, and Voluntary Associations," in Scott L. McLean, et. al. eds., *Social Capital: Critical Perspective on Community and "Bowling Alone,"* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 74-98, pp. 82-83, citing diverse definitions of intersubjectivity.

⁷⁰ American Jewish Committee 2007 Annual Survey of American Jewish Public Opinion, New York, AJC, conducted by Synovate (formerly Market Facts, Inc.), 2006-07.

⁷¹ Unless otherwise specified all references to the 2000-01 NJPS are drawn from the data set of married Jews with children created for this monograph.

Conclusion: Engendering Jewish Connections

Feelings about Jewish cultures and societies are related to feelings about Jewish men and women. Male role models, as well as male peer relationships, are an important element in the construction of strong attachments to Jewishness among Jewish men. Jewish men with connections to Jewishness often had memorable male role models when they were growing up. Interview participants talked about fathers, uncles, and family friends who embodied for them a positive male Jewishness. Sometimes they remembered these men in religious settings, such as synagogues or family religious festivities. More often their memories had secular locales—card games, Jewish resorts, basketball. Occasionally one mentioned a rabbi or teachers, but family members were much more frequent touchstones. However, we do not know if these same men are providing positive male role models and memories for their own children, because few of them spoke about creating those memories.

At the other end of the spectrum, ambivalent feelings toward Judaism as a religion or Jewishness as an ethnic culture, as expressed by many intermarried Jewish men, also extended to their negative feelings about Jewish women. As we saw in the interviews, many adult Jewish men—especially those who are attracted to and marry non-Jewish women—complained that dating Jewish women is “work,” not “fun,” and that Jewish women are demanding, overbearing, and best escaped. The alienation of Jewish men and their weak

attachments to Jewishness have the auxiliary effect of increasing the likelihood that they will marry non-Jewish women. The decision for intermarriage introduces an alternative ethnoreligious narrative into the household, which Waters discusses as a factor that weakens the strength of ethnic or religious attachments.⁷² Not only does the presence of a Jewish mother in the home dramatically increase the likelihood that the children will be raised as Jews, her absence increases the likelihood that they will not.

The bottom line seems to be that when Jews do not find Jewishness attractive, they do not find Jews attractive. The tenuous Jewish identification of intermarrying men precedes their intermarriages, rather than the intermarriage causing the weak Jewish identification. Nevertheless, the intermarriages themselves then continue to contribute to decreased connections, compared to the Jewishly reinforcing effect of inmarriages. Our research indicates that outreach programs aimed primarily at non-Jewish mothers that do not also deal with the ambivalence or antipathy of their Jewish husbands will have limited success. Intermarried men who have negative feelings about Jews and Jewishness are the “weak link” in contemporary American Jewish life.

This is much less frequently the scenario for Jewish women in the interviews who married non-Jewish men. Intermarried Jewish mothers overwhelmingly said that their original preference was to marry a Jewish man, but that with the passage of

time other factors gained consideration. (Jewish women who marry non-Jewish men marry on average three years later than those who marry Jewish men.) Even when they marry non-Jews, women have higher levels of Jewish social capital than men, as we have seen. They are more likely to enter into the many vibrant programs that exist for girls and women specifically, or into co-ed programs frequented largely by women.

An additional factor that our monograph has explored is that Jewish boys and men are in some cases alienated from synagogue life, or at least apathetic to it. Synagogues do not seem engaging places. Other Jews may not seem engaging either. Intermarriage may be related in unobvious ways not only to the continuing negative stereotypical depiction of Jewish women in American popular culture, but also to the perceived domination of Jewish life by Jewish women. Reform, Reconstructionist, and the majority of Conservative congregations have adapted their religious tenets to incorporate egalitarianism. In the liberal Reform, Reconstructionist and Renewal Jewish worlds the gender imbalance has already tipped, leading to feminization. (Conservative congregations vary widely in this regard, with the more traditional sharing some of Orthodoxy's male strength and the more egalitarian sharing some of Reform's female prominence of worshippers.) Liberal Jewish religious and communal leaders are increasingly women facing client groups composed primarily of women. Young Jewish males in the non-Orthodox world report they feel uncomfortable with the "maternal vibes"—as one young man put it—of contemporary religious institutions.

For those who find the synagogue's "world of our mothers" too overwhelming, it is possible that dating non-Jews becomes a way to escape from the ubiquitous Jewish woman.

American males are less attached to Jewish life not because men are innately "less religious" than women in some essential psychological way, but because American culture and society value religious activities and behaviors for women but devalue them for men. Moreover, those aspects of religion that men are typically more attracted to—namely religious activities—are not regarded as "religious" by the Christian-shaped society that values religious belief over religious behavior. American Jewish males measure lower on self-perceptions of religiosity than Jewish males in many other countries. Weak connections of Jewish men to Jewishness are a multifaceted measure of assimilation into American norms and values.

Secularism—which is statistically associated with estrangement from Jews and Judaism in America—is growing among the intermarried population, but is far less prevalent in the unmarried American Jewish population. Among all Americans—including Jews—men are dramatically more likely to describe themselves as "secular." Men who are secular, or who feel estranged from Jewishness, also frequently perceive stereotypical negative qualities to be characteristic of Jewish women. This negativity toward Judaism and Jewish women on the part of single American Jewish men is one of the reasons that waiting for marriage to "fix" the problem is not an adequate answer. By the time a large

proportion of American Jewish men choose to marry, after many years of singlehood with few Jewish connections, they are far more likely to choose non-Jewish partners and wives who do not facilitate the family's moving in Jewish directions and making Jewish connections. Thus, they do not tap into a Jewish version of a phenomenon Steven M. Cohen calls, "the slipstream effect." While it is probably true that "marriage does more for men than for women in socially and psychically connecting them to social networks, community and society," it is not Jewish social networks, community or society that half of today's single Jewish men will choose.⁷³ The Jewish community must intervene well before the marriage years if it hopes to have an impact. Systemic problems require systemic solutions.

Both the *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, the 1990 and 2000-01 National Jewish Populations Surveys, and the American Jewish Committee Public Opinion Polls of 2007 and 1997⁷⁴ show that American religious identification is amazingly fluid. While fluidity often moves in the direction of fewer Jewish connections, sometimes it moves in the direction of more Jewish connections. Indeed, the Pew data show that nearly half of Americans who define themselves as "Secular" during their college and young adult years start to identify with some religious group when they get a little older. Jewish data show that time is often when they marry and think about having a family.

The liberal wings of American Judaism today face the great challenge of creating a committed and highly engaged laity—and

especially to re-engage boys and men—within their congregations. Many Jews find the exclusion of women from various aspects of traditional Jewish life to be a violation of the sacred ethical principle of egalitarianism, basic to American values and extended to more and more American populations over the passage of time. However, just as Jewish women were marginalized from the centers of Jewish life for much of Jewish history, for complicated social psychological reasons American Jewish men now feel displaced from Judaism. While Suzannah Heschel is undoubtedly correct in her assessment that large numbers of men had already lost interest in Jewish prayer and text study by the 1950s, before feminism began making a place for women in these activities in the late 1960s and 1970s⁷⁵, it is also true that feminism continued the process of displacement and continued it onward into the next generation. This displacement roughly parallels the movement of feminism as a social trend, as Lynne Segal describes Western feminism in general:

When feminism first emerged in radical circles at the close of the 1960s, most men reacted with disbelief, often turning swiftly to ridicule and anger. Within a few short years, however, as women's liberation went from strength to strength, a very different reaction emerged. The experience of being left out, on the sidelines, was the new and threatening reality for many a young male radical, no longer feeling as certain as he had in the 1960s of his own participation in the making of history.⁷⁶

Growing Evidence for Gendered Needs

Vibrant and dynamic Jewish life involves both genders, men and women. Resisting the American pattern that marginalizes men because “women are the religious ones” requires intellectual independence, countercultural attitudes and behaviors. Some models from historical Judaism can be instructive. Traditional Jewish gender role construction was and is organized differently than that of America and many Western cultures. As we have discussed, males were systemically groomed for active participation in Jewish religious culture. Fathers, like mothers, were expected to be intimately involved with their children. In toddlerhood, in the pre-school years, during the school years, at and after bar mitzvah, boys were repeatedly socialized through a ladder of rites of passage into a male world in which male group prayer, male exclusivity of many ritual observances, and male study of sacred texts defined masculine identity.

Traditional Judaism created (and still creates) its own gender imbalance, namely the exclusion and marginalization of girls and women from most public religious venues. However, on the positive side, in most traditional Jewish cultures boys typically did not reject familial warmth and family involvements to “become a man.” As Jews have become westernized, they have incorporated many Western notions of male gender role construction. Nevertheless, we can see cultural resistance in the fact that the image of the Jewish male, both inside

and outside the Jewish community, is still that of a sensitive, caring, responsible individual, rather than a Clint Eastwood type of rugged manhood.

Boys and men—like girls and women—benefit from and enjoy having gender-peer activities. Some contemporary advocates, including family physician and single-sex-education advocate Leonard Sax, show that boys and girls may respond better to different learning environments and strategies. He suggests that American classrooms have largely been brought into conformity with feminine styles of learning, and that these environments often alienate boys, who then learn less well—and dislike the classroom even more. As David Chadwell, coordinator of Single-Gender Initiatives at the South Carolina Department of Education explained in a recent *New York Times Magazine* article: “You need to get them [boys] up and moving. That’s based on the nervous system, that’s based on eyes, that’s based upon volume and the use of volume with boys.... You need to engage boys’ energy, use it, rather than trying to say, No, no, no.” With girls, in contrast, the tendency to want to talk to each other which often generates teacher reprimands can be used in the service of education as well: “If you try to stop girls from talking to one another, that’s not successful. So you do a lot of meeting in circles, where every girl can share something from her own life that relates to the content in class.”⁷⁷

Whether or not one agrees with single-gender learning advocates (and we believe this is a far more complicated issue than Sax and Chadwell are willing to admit), their suggestion that there may be a need for

gender-aware activities, including some educational venues, is an intriguing concept for the Jewish world. Without advocating single-sex education, it is critical to recognize that programs geared to Jewish boys and men—and to Jewish girls and women—create positive connections to Jews and Jewishness, beginning with the pre-school years and extending over the life cycle of the individual. Excellent co-ed and single sex programs and activities may be particularly important in the middle school and teen years, when boys in liberal Jewish settings often grow most impatient with female religious and educational leadership. Ironically, the women's movement—responding to great gaps in Jewish life—has often created successful materials and programming for female teens, while teenage boys have often been left behind.

We know little about what generates adult connections to Jews and Jewishness. The Reform movement has already taken some steps toward addressing gender issues, notably in the 2007 Reform Biennial in San Diego, where, as Sue Fishkoff put it, they began the process of “trying to figure out how to lure men back into the synagogue without diluting the gains made by women.”⁷⁸ The ground-breaking organization “Moving Traditions,” under the leadership of Deborah Myers, is committed to supporting research as well as publicizing “best practices” programming and helping to create new educational strategies as part of their “Campaign for Jewish Boys.”⁷⁹

The multi-dimensional problem—and the solutions needed, however—are both broader and deeper than these important beginnings. Synagogues and Jewish

communal organizations need to find ways to balance the moral principles of egalitarianism with the psycho-social needs of boys and men to spend meaningful Jewish time in gendered peer groups. We have ample documentation that Jewish education is very strongly related to Jewish social capital. Special research and programming efforts should explore educational programs and techniques directly designed for boys and men, as well as for girls and women.

Nor is this exclusively a problem of the Reform movement. As we have noted, Orthodox Judaism—“literal Judaism,” as some have styled it—certainly has its own profound gender challenges, and must struggle, as surely as liberal Judaism, with the tension between the ethical demands of egalitarianism and the psycho-social realities of gender. Complicating the discussion on both ends of the spectrum is the fact that talking about gendered educational and spiritual needs is regarded—for opposite reasons—by many “literal” and by many liberal circles as a dangerous, politically incorrect activity.

Research and policy planning efforts should be placed in the context of historical Jewish societies and values and in the broader American context, which profoundly influences American Jews. Because of their high level of educational and occupational achievement, and because of the high socioeconomic status they and their peers usually occupy, Jewish men avoid feelings of incompetence or inadequacy. This makes it difficult to increase men's Jewish cultural literacy—creating a downward, self-fulfilling spiral.

Programs and educational ventures need to take these sensitivities into consideration, while at the same time maintaining a high level of excellence.

Jewish women have, in recent decades, emerged more and more as the brokers of Jewish religious and spiritual life, bringing excitement about and knowledge of Jewish religious texts, customs, and celebrations back into deeply Westernized Jewish communities. Their efforts not only acquired for them substantial cultural literacy—it also created for them powerful, meaningful social networks of like-minded women. These new activities by Jewish women have not only brought Judaism to the center of women’s lives, and women to the center of Judaic life, but have also served to ignite the religious sensibilities of the acculturated Jewish men around them. Jewish women’s transformative influences on contemporary Jewish religious life have been sweeping and powerful. Now they face a new challenge: working together with their sons, fathers, brothers, husbands and friends to help these Jewish boys and men find their own path to Jewish connections.

Valuable work has already begun in looking at gender-segregated peer environments that work to create social networks and also to nurture feelings of connection to Jewish texts, culture, and secular and religious activities. In this work, the wings of American Judaism can learn much from each other. The Reform and Reconstructionist movements have influenced Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in regards to expanding roles of women. Conversely, Reform Judaism has learned much about the importance of ritual,

and text study, and joy and spontaneity during worship services, from Orthodoxy. As both the more liberal and the more traditional forms of contemporary Judaism struggle with gender issues and the need to increase levels of Jewish religious and ethnic social capital today—an enterprise which may well define the difference between Jewish cultural transmission or its failure—they can each gain much from dialogue, and increased opportunities for cross-denominational interaction are important.

The alienation of boys and men from Jews and Judaism is a critical and systemic problem in American Jewish societies, beginning early and persisting through many areas of life. It affects not only religious rituals and synagogue attendance, but also attachments to Jewish peoplehood, in the form of friendship circles, marriage choices, caring about Jews in Israel and around the world, as we have shown. What we have called here “patrilineal descent” has been developing for many decades, but it has been virtually ignored. Today it has become sweeping and dramatic. The decline of male interest in Jews and Judaism is a crisis, and needs to be recognized and responded to as such.

Research and policy discussions about gender imbalance must start with the knowledge that gender imbalance is not a foregone conclusion—and it is a critical problem in American Jewish life today. Jewish social history reveals that men need not be distant from Jewishness—indeed for much of Jewish history men have defined Jewishness. However, contemporary sociological research shows that American

Jewish men are certainly alienated from great swaths of Jewish life today. Honest and open conversations that do not silence the need to talk about gender and its implications can provide a basis for future targeted research. That research, in turn, will help American Jewish leaders, educators and policy planners discover ways to honor egalitarianism as an ethical principle while at the same time honoring the now manifest need for gendered as well as gender neutral experiences of Jewishness, in all its multivocal diversity.

Endnotes to Conclusion

⁷² Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁷³ Steven M. Cohen, Ari Y. Kelman, and Lauren Blitzer, "The Slipstream Effect: How Marriage Closes Gender Gaps in Jewish Identity" (New York: The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and the Florence GI Heller/ JCC Association Research Center, August 10, 2007).

⁷⁴ *1997 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion and 2007 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion* (New York: American Jewish Committee, Conducted by Market Facts, Inc./ Synovate, Inc.), 1998 and 2008.

⁷⁵ Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist*.

⁷⁶ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 280.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Well, "Teaching to the Testosterone," in *The New York Times Magazine* March 2, 2008, pp. 38-45, 84-87, pp. 42-43.

⁷⁸ Sue Fishkoff, "Reform trying to lure men back," *JTA: The Global News Service of the Jewish People* December 18, 2007.

⁷⁹

<http://www.movingtraditions.org/index.php?option=com>. Moving Traditions Boys Campaign.

Major Research Findings

Women

- Women—Jewish and non-Jewish—are more likely than men to say that religion is very important to them personally and for raising moral children.
- Jewish women are more likely than Jewish men to say the religion of Judaism is “very important” to them.
- Women retain closer ties to family members than men do, and create social networks for the whole family. Jewish women stay close to Jewish family members, and create largely Jewish social networks for their families.
- Intermarried Jewish women are usually “pro-active” about raising Jewish children. They say they personally “are responsible for making religious decisions for their children.” They take personal responsibility for raising them as Jews. Their children are much more likely to receive Jewish education than the children of intermarried Jewish fathers.
- Non-Jewish wives in intermarried families often complain they are expected to raise Jewish children with Jewish husbands that have few Jewish connections.
- Liberal synagogues and temples have become “the world of our mothers.” Women comprise many of the rabbis, cantors and synagogue presidents, and the majority of the worshippers.
- Jewish girls and women attend synagogues more often than Jewish boys and men, especially in Reform and other liberal congregations.
- Jewish females today get more Jewish education than Jewish males, from childhood through the teen and adult years.
- Jewish women tend to have more Jewish ethnic cultural capital than Jewish men. Jewish women aim to be the editors and transmitters of Judaism to their children, and to “make Jewish memories” for them.
- Jewish women are more likely than Jewish men to have visited Israel, and ranked support of Israel more highly as an important Jewish value.

Men

- Jewish men have less Jewish social capital than Jewish women do. Men are less likely to stay in touch with family members. Their personal friendship circles include more non-Jews, especially in intermarried families.
- Intermarried Jewish men are more often “re-active.” They say that religious decisions for their children are made by them and their non-Jewish spouses together. Jewish fathers often prefer no religion in the family, but say they do not want Christian children, so if there is a religion it should be Jewish.
- Jewish boys and young men in liberal congregations complain that their synagogues are primarily places for women. One used the terms: “too lovey-dovey” and have a “maternal vibe.”
- Psychologists and gender theorists say that teenage boys and young men crave activities which separate them from their mothers and establish them in a male world—a form of socialization prevalent in traditional Jewish environments.
- Many Jewish men are deeply affected by toxic images of Jewish women: “Dating Jewish women is work—not fun.”
- Jewish men who feel strongly connected to Jews and Judaism often talk about strong male role models when they were growing up. These are usually fathers or grandfathers, but sometimes uncles, teachers, or youth group or camp counselors. These role models are often recalled in “males-only” settings, whether religious (synagogues) or secular (card games, etc.).
- Intermarried Jewish families with Jewish fathers are the least engaged of all affiliated “Jewish” family types.
- These Jewish fathers enter their interfaith marriages with weak Jewish profiles. While they often say their non-Jewish wives make them “feel very Jewish,” they do not promote Jewish activities or increase the Jewish connections of their children.
- Jewish men with weak Jewish social capital who are married to non-Jews avoid conflict over religious issues when it comes to raising their children.

Men and Women

- Jewish fathers and mothers in inmarried families share goals, including Jewish goals, in raising their children. Their Jewish attitudes tend to be similar.
- Jewish fathers and mothers in intermarried families differ in their religious goals for their

- children and their attitudes toward Jewish peoplehood.
- Intermarried Jewish families that do not affiliate and call themselves “secular” are the least Jewishly connected, with few differences between Jewish fathers and Jewish mothers.
 - Jewish social networks reinforce and support Jewish connections and activities, including holiday observances. Christian or mixed married social networks reinforce and support Christian-cultural activities.

Research and Policy Implications

- Boys and men—like girls and women—benefit from and enjoy having some gender-peer activities. These activities can help bond them to each other as Jewish males, to Jewish peoplehood now and historically, and also to Judaism culturally and religiously. Programs for Jewish boys and men are needed that create positive connections to Jews and Jewishness, beginning with the pre-school years, targeting the all-important middle-school and teen years, and extending over the life cycle of the individual.
- New, targeted research is needed on Jewish boys and men. Some of that research should be sociological and psychological in nature, and some should be very practical: What programs successfully appeal to Jewish males? Why do they appeal? How can these “success stories” be replicated?
- Synagogues and Jewish communal organizations need to find ways to balance the moral principles of egalitarianism with the psycho-social needs of boys and men to spend meaningful Jewish time in gendered peer groups.
- Jewish education is very strongly related to Jewish social capital. Special research and programming efforts should explore educational programs and techniques directly designed for boys and men.
- Jewish men seem especially sensitive about feelings of incompetence or inadequacy. Programs and educational ventures need to take these sensitivities into consideration, while maintaining a high level of excellence.
- Outreach programs aimed primarily at non-Jewish mothers that do not also deal with the ambivalence or antipathy of their Jewish husbands will have limited success. Intermarried men who have negative feelings about Jews and Jewishness are the “weak link” in contemporary American Jewish life.

- Emerging congregations/
Partnership minyanim have been especially popular with married men and women, but primarily Jewish single women. There is evidence, however, that when single men are exposed to this form of worship they find it dynamic and engaging. Since these groups are typically not affiliated with or supported by congregations, communal support and publicity efforts towards single Jewish men may prove valuable on several levels.
- Secular Jewish venues such as Jewish film series, etc., are also attended by more single Jewish women than men. Jewish men are much more likely than Jewish women to call themselves “secular.” Publicity targeted at men would be a useful way to attract secular Jewish males into Jewish experiences they might find accessible and easy to relate to once they had experienced them.

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