




“Once in a while kosher, once in a while Shabbat”

A Study on the Identities, Perceptions, and Practices
of Children of Mixed Marriages in Germany

Julia Bernstein

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JDC International Centre for Community Development

Project Director

Marcelo Dimentstein

Principal Researchers

Dr. Julia Bernstein (Universität zu Köln)

Research Assistants

Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer (Ph.D. candidate, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Katja Nudelman (Lic. Phil.)

Translation

Kathleen Luft

Copywriting

Avi Herbatschek

JDC International Centre for Community Development (JDC-ICCD), Oxford

Chairman: Luis Bassat

President: Alberto Senderey

Operations Director: Marcelo Dimentstein

Company Secretary: Pablo Weinsteiner

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Prologue

From Threat to Challenge?

Classic anthropology teaches that every human group creates its own rules concerning marriage and reproduction. These “structures of kinship,” to use a term coined by the famous anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, constitute powerful social tools that regulate the way a group ensures its continuity and ultimately sets the boundaries of belonging. Jews are no exception to this. Over time, a series of religious rules came to regulate conversions, membership criteria and Jewish status of the intermarried offspring. Among them, the mandate to in-marry and matrilineal descent as criteria of belonging seem to have become two of the strongest regulations in the religious realm. Yet, biblical sources provide a series of contradictory and ambivalent messages regarding intermarriage, proving that the issue remained in a grey zone for a long time. In fact, the ban on intermarriage seems to have been consolidated during the time of Ezra, around the year 444 BCE. Biblical sources tell us that at the time taking a foreign woman as a spouse was a widely extended practice, not only among ordinary people, but also among the highest dignitaries of the Jewish people: “...the hand of the princes and rulers hath been first in this faithlessness” (Ezra 9:2). Appalled by this situation, Ezra prayed, “weeping and casting himself down before the house of G-d,” until, so the narration goes, “a very great congregation of men and women” approached him, and, while repentant of their actions, took the radical and dramatic decision of expelling all the non-Jewish women married to Jewish men along with their sons and daughters. “And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra: ‘We have broken faith with our G-d, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our G-d to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of HaShem, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our G-d; and let it be done according to the law.’” (Ezra 10: 2-3).¹

Yet, biblical considerations aside, anthropology holds that in every human group there are usually gaps between social regulations and everyday practice. Today, mixed marriages rank at the top of communal anxieties and are regularly pointed to as one of the major threats to Jewish life in many community surveys. Jewish leaders and religious authorities consider marriage outside the ethno-religious group as a way towards assimilation (it is, in fact, already a manifestation of it) and, therefore, a factor that endangers the continuity of Jewish life as such. In effect, until not so long ago, intermarriage was a way to “leave” the community and to “repudiate” Judaism. Someone who married with a non-Jew was making, so to speak, a strong statement towards his or her relationship with Judaism. However, this strong link between intermarriage and disengagement tend today to be less self-evident. More and more research indicates that intermarriage does not equate to assimilation nor do the children of mixed couples grow uninterested in Judaism.

¹ I am grateful to Rabbi Yerahmiel Barylka for pointing out to me these and other passages of the Bible concerning the issue of intermarriage

In the US this community preoccupation has been coupled with the interest of the social sciences regarding this phenomenon, giving place to interesting literature on the subject. Much less has been done in Europe. With the series of studies that JDC International Centre for Community Development (JDC-ICCD) has conducted in France, Germany and The Netherlands, we intend to fill this gap and to make a contribution to this subject. The premises of the studies were the following. Firstly, we were interested in exploring one of the actors that is becoming increasingly important in this issue: the children of mixed couples. Whereas there is already quite a significant bibliography focusing on the experiences of intermarried couples, less attention has been paid to this group. Secondly, we strongly believed that one of the most fruitful scientific approaches that we could adopt was to lend an ear to the children of mixed couples and to try to understand their motivations, anxieties and the emotional bond with their identities. Thirdly, it is within the context of their own cities, countries and communities and the particular type of Jewish institutional life developed, among others, where we should try to understand and contextualize their everyday lives. Last but not least, these research endeavors should serve to inform communal practice.

The following pieces of research reflect these premises. They were done by three different local research teams that worked under the close supervision of and in constant dialogue with the JDC-ICCD. Each of the reports, written in different styles and therefore reflecting the reality of each country, represent the final product of a long process of fieldwork and analysis. They can be read as a whole or on a country-by-country basis.

In spite of their local differences, one of the most important common findings of these studies is that they suggest that the road to "assimilation" is not as linear and inevitable as it was thought to be; that the children of mixed couples never quite disconnect from Judaism, much on the contrary, Judaism is widely recognized to be an element of their identity. A second important finding is the capital role that the families and the Jewish institutions play in the formation of a positive Jewish identity among the children of intermarriage. Those who grow up in a Jewish household or who have been affiliated with Jewish institutions tend to develop stronger Jewish identities. Last but not least, far from being a "passive" population, most of the interviewees that want to be connected to Judaism show a very active attitude towards the search for a suitable Jewish environment, one that can assure them both legitimacy and acceptance. Obviously, it must be recognized that things are far from being transparent and clear-cut. As the German report duly emphasizes, the way this population deals with its (Jewish) identity is not so different than the rest of society: it is a highly selective and individual practice, multi-identitarian, in other words, post-modern.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that many of the cases analyzed in these texts lie at the crossroads of two large-scale sociological phenomena with respect to Jewish life during the 20th and 21st centuries; on one hand, growing mass secularization and the integration of Jews in western countries and, on the other hand, the reassessment and recomposition of identity, aiming at "returning to," "reassessing," or "rediscovering" a type of Jewish awareness. If the first phenomenon, which began at the end of the 18th century, implied the emergence of a wide variety of forms of secularization that affected the traditional Jewish identity and led to social integration and assimilation, the second phenomenon is associated with late modernity and has been characterized as a "recomposition in terms of belonging and Jewish identity," not under the traditional

forms of intergenerational transmission, but as “individual, selective, multiple and non-exclusive” choices.²

This is why we believe that from a communal perspective the issue of mixed-marriages and, especially, that of the children of mixed couples, should be taken with a more thoughtful attitude. In what degree can and should Jewish institutions (congregations, cultural centers, Jewish schools and other Jewish spaces) play a role vis-à-vis this population? How should these instances react when someone with one Jewish parent reclaims for him or herself a Jewish identity?

In times when the boundaries of Judaism are becoming more and more contested whether from a gender perspective or from a so-called post-denominational perspective; where there are people who declare being “Jews without religion”³; when Jewish observance is becoming a more private, individual, and selective, is it not the time to start thinking about mixed marriages and their offspring as a challenge rather than as a threat?

Marcelo Dimenstein

Operations Director

JDC International Centre for Community Development

² Régine Azria (2006), “Réidentification communautaire du judaïsme”, in Davie, Grace and Daniëlle Hervieu –Léger, *Identités religieuses en Europe*, Paris: La Découverte, pp. 266-267.

³ See A Portrait of Jewish Americans. Findings from Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews, October 2013.

Executive Summary

1) For the purpose of this study, 45 individuals from various cities and towns in Germany were interviewed. 26 of the interviewees had Jewish forebears on their mother's side and 19 on their father's side. 23 had migrated out of which 21 came from the former Soviet Union. As the group represents 90 to 95% of the Jews living in Germany, one can assume it will most likely hold a substantial impact on the future of Jewish life in the country. In terms of research methodology, the interviews were organized in an open-ended, semi-structured fashion. As a result, the research environment was distinct in that the participants became emotionally involved as they shared their life experiences with the research team.

2) Throughout the study, it was found that exogamy did not necessarily constitute a catalyst for assimilation nor did it lead to social, cultural, or religious conflicts, although it did under certain circumstances.

3) The question of identity tends to be far more complex for those who have mixed parents (i.e. Jewish and non-Jewish) and have experienced migration, which can trigger identity crises among many individuals. But for half of the interviewees, this is an integral part of their life stories. Migration affects one's perception and understanding to the extent that identity can no longer be taken for granted. This explains why social support and social affiliation, as symbolic resources, often take on special significance. For such reasons, one can observe that the experience of migration usually takes precedence over the question of Jewish affiliation for some time.

4) Most participants expressed their discomfort when having to face "either-or" identity dilemmas (either German or Jewish; either Russian or German, etc.) in their daily-lives. Instead, respondents create "a third space," and kaleidoscopic identities that combine different elements and ways of self-presentation. Regarding the Jewish aspects, the study shows that, in many cases, the way identities are built follow "postmodern" patterns, which are highly individual, selective, situational, and where symbolic practices acquire a great deal of importance. We identified a situative Jewishness when the participants perceive or present themselves as Jewish only in certain phases of their lives and/or everyday situations and a symbolic Jewishness where participants adopt certain practices and/or external symbols in order to display their adherence to Judaism.

5) It was interesting to find that Russian-speaking participants (whether of matrilineal or patrilineal Jewish descent) seem to have strongly internalized the idea that Jewish identity is biologically transmitted. This attitude is certainly influenced by the "one drop rule," based on the tenet that even a single drop of blood makes a person Jewish. This view is in line with the widespread understanding in the Soviet Union that Jewishness is an ethnic subcategory of "race," which comes under the heading of nationality. As a consequence, interviewees born to Jewish mothers perceive themselves, in contrast to their friends and acquaintances who have Jewish fathers, as "real Jews." Thus, they tend to support the halachic definition of Jewishness through matrilineal descent and consider that this should be the sole criteria for membership in the communities

6) Similarly, among those Russian-speaking participants who have decided to adopt a religious path as a way to identify with Judaism, there seems to exist a latent acceptance of the "superiority" of Orthodox Judaism. Orthodoxy is frequently perceived as a self-evident state of affairs, so that *giyur* (formal conversion to Judaism) according to Orthodox rules, is accepted as the only possible path to Judaism.

7) Among participants born in Germany, German history represents a unique context for mixed Christian-German/Jewish-German couples. On one hand, many participants found it difficult to reconcile what they perceive as conflicting German and Jewish narratives, often leading to conflicts of loyalty. Moreover, some relate to experiences of antisemitism coming from within their extended families. Also, German as a language contains words heavily loaded with Nazi significance. On the other side, the non-Jewish German parents of the interviewees are generally described as sensitive, making real efforts to support the Jewish parents by celebrating Jewish holidays, visiting Israel, learning Hebrew, playing a part in the community, and demonstrating initiative, for instance, by organizing trips to Israel or Jewish events, or reading books about the conflict in the Middle East. Some even consider converting.

8) Most of the interviewees report having experienced antisemitism in the past. This represents a daunting dilemma, especially for those with a Jewish father. They feel that they are Jewish enough to experience antisemitism but not Jewish enough to be accepted as full-fledged Jews by the institutions.

9) For a majority of the participants Israel in a way represents a “portable fatherland,” that is an important reference point for ethnic and national pride. Some discovered their Jewish identity when they visited Israel and others reported that while there they do not feel as excluded as in their hometowns. Even though Israel tends to strengthen their identity, it is a topic that is cautiously viewed from a distance and a number of interviewees express criticisms toward some of its policies.

10) The feelings of identity of interviewees with only a Jewish mother and interviewees with only a Jewish father differ in important ways. Depending on their interest, participants with a Jewish mother have easier access to Jewish institutions and to Jewish life in general. They are “free” to circulate and explore different communal offers. However, in certain cases, people with a Jewish mother can feel substantially less Jewish than people with a Jewish father. On the contrary, most interviewees with Jewish fathers perceive their lack of acknowledgment as Jews in the communities as an injustice and an affront to their identity, or as discrimination, because often these individuals feel that they are Jews. The narratives of children of Jewish fathers bring to light how difficult it is to fit into what is considered to be acceptable (often unequivocal or one-dimensional) categories. They have additional problems in defining their identities. Therefore, several interviewees of patrilineal Jewish descent feel compelled to be more traditional, more religiously observant, or at least more Jewish through symbols in everyday life than their friends who are children of Jewish mothers.

11) Another strategy consists in seeking alternative institutional spaces where one can express his or her Judaism. Most participants with a Jewish father and many with a Jewish mother emphasized alternative institutions and offerings that have helped them discover their Jewish identity, invest it with content, act it out, and strengthen it, or even find a Jewish partner—a task that many perceive as very difficult due to the small number of Jews in Germany. There exists a diversity of alternative Jewish spaces. The JDC-sponsored Baminim project in Berlin, Limmud Germany, Jewish students associations were mentioned. It is interesting to note that liberal communities were mentioned in almost none of the interviews.

12) For the majority of the participants being involved in an institution is an important element of their Jewish identity. Jewish communities and other Jewish alternative spaces play a central role as they provide support and stability to their identities. In particular, the

interviews with participants who have Jewish fathers demonstrate how being connected to an institution helps one develop a sense of Jewish awareness. Thus, even highly assimilated participants with a Jewish father who also have a non-Jewish spouse admit wanting their children to attend a Jewish school, so that they can become familiar with the Jewish tradition. They believe this will play a positive role with regard to their identity.

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Field note:

During the coffee hour at the Hybrid Identities Conference, one of the attendees asked a pregnant conference participant and her husband (who wore a kippah and said his father was Jewish but his mother was not) when the baby was due. She answered that the delivery date was in mid-December. “Oh, a Christmas child!” Hesitating, she replied, “Or maybe a Hanukkah child?”

Our language influences our thoughts. In this case, the young woman created a new category corresponding to the German category “Christmas child.” An equivalent concept of this kind does not exist among Jews, but it seems to be of great significance to her as a category that establishes identity. Do members of “mixed families” have the freedom and social space to create and introduce their own meaningful categories? What role does the category of “Jewishness” have in the process? These questions and the problems associated with them are the subject of this study.

Field note:

Moris (only his mother is Jewish): “If you’re completely assimilated in your culture and the only thing is, ‘but you have to marry someone who’s Jewish,’ for how many generations is that supposed to be in effect? At some point it will occur to somebody that the barrier is just in your head.” Does this barrier really exist only in people’s minds?

Field note:

Helga (Iranian Jewish father, Christian mother): “There’s no such thing as the Jews, or the opinion or the position on something. I keep trying to make that clear to people.”

1. Introduction: Research Question, Objective, and Methodology

For the purposes of our research project, we interviewed 45 persons from various cities and towns in Germany. Twenty-six of the interviewees had Jewish forebears on their mother’s side, and 19 had Jewish forebears on their father’s side. Twenty-three had experienced migration; 21 of these 23 were from the former Soviet Union. This group accounts for 90 to 95% of the Jews living in Germany and therefore has a decisive influence on the future of Jewish life in Germany. It was important to us to involve the participants in our work and to put their narratives, as a major component, in the foreground of the research and of our development of analytical and discursive categories. Therefore, we planned to use open-ended, semi-structured, narrative interviews (in accordance with the grounded theory, or GT, method) as our interview method. This method allows us to maintain the focus on the subject matter yet simultaneously gives the participants enough freedom to tell their life stories using their own categories. It seemed to us to be the most suitable method for the following questions, which were especially relevant in our research:

- Which categories do the participants use to portray their identities?
- How do the participants address their affiliation with more than one cultural identities?

- Which identities do the participants perceive as significant and in which situations?
- How do the participants bring up the subject of their Jewish identity?
- What components do the participants attribute to this Jewish identity?
- Which components of Jewish identity prove to be especially relevant for the participants?
- Are there differences between participants with a Jewish mother and participants with a Jewish father, and if so, what are they?
- How can these differences be explained?

It is important to mention that to a certain extent, the findings depend on the respondent’s individual style of speaking or on the general *line of self-presentation* chosen by each person during the interview. We were aware of this bias, but it was not possible to influence or alter it because of the research methodology and the form of the interviews. Therefore, some interviewees are more apt to present themselves as people who seize the initiative in various situations in their lives, and they try hard to express themselves in a positive way when talking about other people and about their own lives. Others, however, tend to present their lives overall in a rather negative light, and they feel that they are at the mercy of external circumstances or are incapable of acting (in the sense of “agency”) effectively and ably. These interviewees emphasize the impossibility of changing anything and their sense of being at the mercy of the institutional limitations of society—a phenomenon that Fritz Schütze calls a *heteronomous attitude*. Subjective self-presentations (of great value to researchers) are triangulated by using a great number of interviewees; in the process, important analytic categories or behavioral patterns and identity concepts emerge.

2. The Concept of “Mixed Families”—or “How do you Jew?” The Category “Either—Or”

“Are you more German or more Jewish?” – “Are you more Russian or more Jewish; more Jewish or more German?” The interviewees are frequently asked questions of this kind, and then they feel obliged to decide which of the two categories they feel they belong to. Generally, it is very difficult for the participants in the research to resist the social pressure of the dominant society, and they often get caught in the trap of an unreasonable one-dimensional demand and consequently react by saying, “I feel more A or more B.”

Sveta (Jewish mother, Russian-speaking⁴) talks about the way she reacted as a child when her friend brought up this half/half way of looking at things: “And what kind of half-Jewish girl are you?” Sveta pointed downward from her belly, holding her hand in a horizontal position: “This kind.” Her friend replied by holding her hand in a vertical position, dividing her body into two halves: “And I’m this kind.” Sveta does not question the dichotomy, but uses this metaphor to confirm the existence of the logic of “being half this and half that,” and says that she always knew she was a *polukrovka* [полукровка: Russ., “half-breed”], a “half-Jew.” This can, as in Sveta’s case, increase one’s inner identity conflict.

Michael (Jewish father, Russian-speaking) came to Germany from the CIS⁵ countries at

⁴ Hereafter, the anonymized names are followed, in parentheses, by “J.m.” instead of “daughter/son of a Jewish mother,” “J.f.” instead of “daughter/son of a Jewish father,” and by “R.” instead of “Russian-speaking.”

⁵ Commonwealth of Independent States, regional organisation of former Soviet Republics, formed during the breakup of the Soviet Union.

the age of 25. His Jewish identity is important to him, but he is confused by the socially dominant categories of reasoning in terms of “either—or,” and refuses to be forced to choose between the cultures of his parents. He, too, defines himself by using the formula $50\% + 50\% = 100\%$; two equal halves amount to a whole. Michael regards himself as 50% Jewish. He says, “Exactly half of me is Jewish. That’s how it is.” Many people are afraid of the term “half-Jew,” but Michael thinks that is precisely what he is: He sees himself as 50% Jewish and 50% Russian. “It’s pure mathematics. You can’t be 100% Jewish and 100% Russian, there is no 200%... Only half-and-half.” Michael is convinced that Jews constitute a nation. In his opinion, *Halacha* is outdated. He says, “It just can’t be that one person is Jewish and the other isn’t, just because one has one Jewish half [mother] and the other has the other half [father] who is Jewish. The Jewish communities ought to think about that. The Russians have the same problem, with being Russian passed down only through the fathers. But it can’t keep on this way. You have to take it as it is. Sometimes people are forced to choose. What is that? What does that mean? I really don’t have a choice! I can’t choose. I just have two halves. And one is Jewish and the other is Russian.”

Dichotomous thinking, the logic of “either—or” (either German or Jewish), proves unproductive or reductive and stereotyping from the perspective of people who want to maintain loyalty to both or several of their identity narratives. Moris (J.m.) says, “I’m obligated by birth to show solidarity with my parents.”

But it is precisely illusory absolutism and mathematical logic, which count for nothing in social reality, that frequently make communication difficult. *In the social world, one and one do not equal two*. Social logic often follows rules that do not comply with the dictates of Halacha. Religious law for Jews states that having a Jewish mother (one-half) counts as a whole, as one ($1/2 = 1$), while having a Jewish father (one-half) counts as zero ($1/2 = 0$). Therefore, according to Halacha, only someone who can prove matrilineal Jewish descent is a Jew; someone who is born to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother is not Jewish, in terms of Halacha. In our analysis of constructed social realities, we thus are confronted with the notion that one and one result in a *third space* (according to Hommi Bhabha) or, according to Joela Zeller, in the “Creolization of the third new space.”

This problematic mathematical logic is often transferred to the question of identity. Children from “mixed families” must deal with this contradiction. The categories used by some participants—“half-Jews,” “percentage Jews,” “partly Jewish,” or *Mischlingskind* [“half-breed child”], the German-language category coined during the Nazi past—are a result of strong social pressure and the dictates of the dominant classification in standard categories. That is, these categories are a result of pressure that makes it far more difficult, if not impossible, for children from “mixed families” to find a clear identity and place in society. In this context, the category “*kaleidoscopic identity*” (Lars Danick, 2012) seems especially useful because of its flexibility, as it can be adapted to the dynamic nature of social interaction and the changing concept of culture, in accordance with the social constellation. In every situation, something new appears in the kaleidoscope of identities.

The following report presents examples that show how differently *Jewish kaleidoscopic identity*, in combination with the other identities, can be configured and understood.

3. The Content of Jewishness: “Doing being Jewish”

The central assumption of this study is that there is no universal, “correct” or homogenized form of Jewishness or way of being Jewish, nor can there be such a thing. Moreover, many people may understand the concept in very different, sometimes contradictory, ways. For example, the halachic definition of Jewishness through matrilineal descent does not always correspond with the sense of self of research participants from “mixed families.” Lars Danick, for instance, says that taking various approaches to being Jewish—*Jewish pluralism*—also reflects the new circumstances of postmodern Western life (2012).

In this study, it becomes clear that *exogamy does not necessarily act as a trigger for assimilative processes* or as a catalyst for social, cultural, or religious conflicts, but in certain constellations it can indeed have that effect. The participants’ creativity and the dynamic ways in which they describe their own Jewish identities are striking as well. Lena Inowlocki (following Sacks) refers to this process as *doing being Jewish*.

On the basis of the research, it can be said that there are many paths and approaches to Jewish identity, namely cultural, social, political, historical, religious, intellectual and rational, psychological, and individual and creative ones. The following statements, based on the interviews, are clear evidence of the *polyphony of Jewish identities*:

Sveta (J.m., R.) works in one of Germany’s Jewish communities. She links her secular understanding of Jewish identity, on the basis of her migration experience, with the word *intelligentsiia* (Russ., “intelligentsia,” “intellectuals as a group”). This definition reflects, above all, her subjective feeling of “being Jewish.” For Sveta, neither religion nor cultural and traditional aspects are central themes: “*Being Jewish is being an intellectual: half-Muscovite, half-German, somebody who reads a newspaper in the morning, drinks coffee, and vacations in Israel... Being Jewish is a state of the soul.*”

Some interviewees emphasize *Jewish identity as differentiation from other groups*: One such example is Ewelina (J.m., R.): “It’s really better if you’re somehow consciously Jewish, if you know how we differ from the others.” It is important to her to preserve both Russian and Jewish roots as parts of her identity.

Rachel (J.m.) thinks Paul Ehrlich’s term *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* [companions in fate, community of shared destiny] is a very good way of describing Jewish identity. “The really neat thing,” she thinks, “is that it [*Jewishness, author’s note*] is so hard to comprehend: religion, ethnicity, people, nation. It’s a little bit of everything.”

Moris (J.m): Jewishness, for him, is the *special relationship to the written word* (reading is his favorite hobby). That something has been handed down over such a long period of time is fascinating to him. For him, Judaism is a rich culture and a thing of beauty. “I think Judaism is something totally great, but Jews have *always participated in the writing of the tragedy.*” Moris thinks that the separation between Jews and non-Jews often is caused not only by the non-Jews but also by the Jews themselves. To him, it was always clear “that [he] didn’t want to just disappear into a purely Jewish world, where people have such a racist worldview.”

Ilona (J.m.) experiences *getting closer to her Jewish identity as liberating*: “As a child, I was always looking for a reason why I was different from all the others. At the moment I realized that it [*Jewishness, author’s note*] actually is what subliminally made me what I am, it was like a liberation.”

Antja (J.m.): “For me, Jewishness has *a lot to do with family*. In my case, with my Israeli family. A feeling of belonging, *a good socialist upbringing*, is a surrogate religion. In dealing with non-Jewish friends, I sometimes notice that I ‘belong to the other club.”

Alena (J.m.): “I’m a Jew *because my mom is a Jew*. That’s simply a fact. For me, it’s just more of a culture, everything except religion. I’m as Jewish as anybody else, but I don’t believe in God. Religion is part of it, of course, but I don’t believe in God. For me, it’s the traditions, culture, and Israel too, of course.”

Steffi (J.m.): “As long as Judaism revolves around itself, it doesn’t appeal to me. But if people say, *we as Jews are concerned about the environment*, I think that’s great.”

Mathias (J.f.): “*My Judaism is ethical*. The use of Judaism as power, as a political instrument, is something that has nothing to do with my Jewishness. The same thing is true of enforcing Shabbat as rest day with violent means. That I can’t accept.”

Some participants emphasize *the social component of membership in the Jewish community*.

Beni (J.m.): “The social aspect of Judaism is simply terrific.”

In her qualitative research, Christa Wohl (2012) identified the following relevant types in mixed Jewish/non-Jewish families in Germany:

- Mixed origin as an asset
- Apprehensive view of the world
- I put together my own way of being Jewish
- Nonetheless: I am Jewish
- Feelings of foreignness (the mixture as a burden imposed by parents)
- Range of identities: from Jewish to liberal-minded

All these types are to be found in this study as well. In addition, other types were found, and they are described and illustrated in the following material: *situative Jewishness* and *Jewish symbolic ethnicity*. Both types refer to the multiple identities of the participants and originate partly in the attempt to cope with conflict-laden identifications in this respect.

4. Multiple Identities

Personal identity can be viewed as “a person’s sense of self in relation to others, or the sense of oneself as simultaneously an individual and a member of a social group” (London & Hirshfeld, 1991). “The others and the self emerge together from participation in social action” (Mead 1969). In the sense of Stuart Hall (1994), cultural identities can symbolize unity and difference at the same time. One interviewee put it this way: “*I know that for the others, I’m somewhat different, but I also know that I’m not any different!*” At every moment, depending on the situation and social constellation of the participants, cultural practices are institutionally or spontaneously (re)produced, modified, and presented in social interactions. Thus identities, too, cannot be regarded as fixed, primordial characteristics, because their content is constantly changing, depending on social requirements, situations, or circumstances (Banske, 1994; Goldstein, 1985; Neeman, 1994; Shabtay, 1996; Leshem & Shuval, 1997). Identities are a “meeting point” or “interface” between discourses, practices, and processes of subjectivization (Hall 1994; Supik 2005). Identity is understood not as an essential property or quality, but rather as “positionality,” a marker of relational

position, or as a biographical narrative, which is created and presented in the narration by the narrator him/herself and various other people. In more recent studies of everyday life that deal with culture and ethnicity, therefore, "people's horizons of experience, action patterns, and self-conceptions" (Anthias 2003) come to the fore. Thus, the multiple nature of identities (Gitelman 1995), "hybrid lifeworlds" (Hall 1994), and "a new prospect of global, mutual interrelations as well as cultural penetrations" (*interconnectedness*, in Ulf Hannert's term) are being scrutinized to a greater degree in the relevant research. No one has just one single "separate" identity. Our multiple identities are associated with various kinds of status, which can play different roles in interactions. Thus, in the case of people who belong to several minority groups (migrants, women, people with a Jewish father, people with a Christian mother), emphasis can be placed on the identities that are perceived as positive. At the same time, the situation seems to be especially hurtful for the participants when the other person involved in the interaction decides which component of identity should be given special emphasis. In this case, it is generally the differences that are emphasized. Many of the participants express dismay and discomfiture when they are addressed as representatives of a group, as a woman, a Jew, a Russian, and a representative of the State of Israel. Fritz Schütze refers to the assignment of multiple negatively loaded categories of this kind as "*increased proneness to injury*."

Tina (J.f.) puts it in even more general terms, in reference to an increased sensitivity regarding minorities and discrimination. She says "that people who come from a mixed family constellation (not only a Jewish one, but in general) react more sensitively to discrimination because they don't really belong to any side."

For most participants, self-determination concerning the presentation of one or more identity components from a range of identities, depending on the situation, seems to be especially important. As agents with the capacity to act, people would like to have the freedom to decide for themselves which of the multiple identities and affiliations they want to present in a certain situation. By so doing, people want to determine for themselves how they are perceived. At the same time, people logically try to push the more positively perceived parts of their identity to the fore and share the negative ones only under certain conditions, with trusted persons.

What is most important for the identity of the participants?

On the basis of the interviews, it can be stated that *integrity, belonging, recognition, protection, and self-actualization* are perceived as especially important in the event that there are several identities.

At the same time, the person concerned asks him/herself through which of the multiple identities *integrity, belonging, recognition, protection, and self-actualization* can best be achieved.

For many, it is primarily through their *studies or career*. Mila (J.m., R.): "I'm a university student [studying business administration, *author's note*], very ambitious. Being Jewish would rank in fifth place. In third and fourth... I'd put career ahead of nationality. I'm very ambitious in my studies, and people define themselves primarily through what they spend a lot of time on, and in my case that's my studies."

For Stephanie (J.m.), it is *Salsa dancing*: "I feel that I'm German. Being Jewish is an important question, but difficult to answer, because identity has many facets. I also define myself through Salsa."

Multiple identities manifest themselves in different situations. *Describing themselves above all or only as Jewish would not be sufficient for many interviewees.*

Kaleidoscopic identity is expressed in a certain combination of several identities. Kiril (J.m., R.) illustrates this concept in his narrative. His identities vary. When he tries to describe how he feels, then he is a Jew in both instances, but sometimes he is a “German Jew of Russian, not Ukrainian, origin,” and sometimes he is a Jew, not a German Jew but rather “a Jew, a transmitter of German culture.”

Helga (J.f.; her father comes from Iran): “I have Persian carpets at home, I love to cook Persian food, but at the same time I’m adapted to German society and want to live here, and then there’s this love for Israel and the fact that I defend Israel like a lioness.”... “I’m a German, half-Persian Zionist who fasts at Yom Kippur and goes to the synagogue.” And “I love shrimp—fixed any way!”

Mark (J.m.) says that answering the question about his identity is especially difficult for him, because he sees himself as a successor to both the victims and the perpetrators. He combines three labels in his self-description: “A German Jew with a Hungarian background.”

Pasha (J.f., R.) describes himself as a “Soviet man” or a “*mixture of all cultures.*” He says, “I can’t say that I’m *only* a Jew. I can’t be what I’m not... do you understand? I treat everybody well. I’m an international person. I respect all people just as they are.”

Alena (J.m.) introduces an additional relevant construction. She sees herself as European and Jewish at the same time—as a “*Jewish European.*” She has two passports, one German and one Hungarian, and in terms of religion, she is a Jew.

4.1 Situative Jewishness

In many cases, we are dealing with a form of *situative Jewishness*, when the participants perceive or present themselves as Jewish only in certain phases of their life, in certain situations, or at certain events, and “act out being Jewish.” Repeatedly described in many interviews is a cultural mix that was influenced by positive memories of the *Christmas tree and menorah* at home, depending on the date and relevance. Mark (J.m.): “In those days the family celebrated Hanukkah and Christmas.” Not until later did Mark notice that the other children were not celebrating Hanukkah. His Jewish grandmother taught him the *Shema Yisrael* and told him that this had to be memorized, “and that means forever!” Mark can recite the *Shema*, and with the same Hungarian accent with which his grandmother recited it. “Other than that,” he says, “there was nothing Jewish in the family.”

“We observe Shabbat every week, but we insist on having a Christmas tree,” says Stefi (J.m.), who celebrated Christmas and Hanukkah with her husband and the children. When she was a child, Christmas was celebrated in a big way, and by comparison there was only a very small *hanukkah*.

Alena (J.m.): “In our house, all the holidays were celebrated. On the Jewish holidays, the children were with Mother in the [Jewish, *author’s note*] community. At Christmas the entire family dined together, and at Easter the children hunted for Easter eggs.”

4.2 “Once in a while kosher and once in a while Shabbat”—Postmodern Forms of Jewish Identity

Situative Jewishness reflects the fragmentary postmodern forms of identities that are creatively implemented and individually lived out. In this case, the identities naturally will not continue as static conditions, unchanged, collective in orientation, and permanently defined; instead, they will be dynamic and dependent on the context. People do not just maintain certain identities, but rather think that they are “educating themselves” (Moris, J.m.). Thus, some elements of the traditions are “picked out” and made use of once again, on an individual basis.

Interestingly, Alena (J.m.) explains that she “*goes to the synagogue more for the purpose of meditation.*” Using a concept that is not exclusively Jewish, she describes a special mental and physical (in this case, related to Jewishness) state in which she seeks to bring about a collective Jewish connection. To her understanding of Jewish identity, she adds an affinity for Jewish culture, music, and books, and emphasizes that religion plays a large role for her, even though she tends to have a skeptical attitude toward religion as an institution.

Stefi (J.m.) sees herself as Jewish, but feels more strongly connected to God when she takes a walk in the forest than when she is in the synagogue.

Moris (J.m.), too, describes inspirations from other religions and selective employment of several rituals. He took a course on Islam and was very inspired by the rituals of daily prayer and the clear division and structuring of the day—something he never became acquainted with in Judaism in such a manner. Then he began laying *tefillin* every morning, because he had a sense of needing clear structures.

Some of the participants report that they eat kosher only once in a while or observe Shabbat only in certain contexts: “*Kosher is a seasonal thing,*” says Mathias (J.m.).

Kiril (J.m., R.) keeps Shabbat when he is in Frankfurt. But when he visits his parents in Stuttgart, he doesn’t keep Shabbat. “Shabbat requires a particular atmosphere, specific feelings,” he says, and he has those things only in Frankfurt. Here, a special postmodern form becomes discernible with reference to the observance of Halacha. Compliance with the dictates of Halacha is linked to an atmosphere that is connected with a specific place. Kiril eats only kosher meat, and he does not eat shellfish. He is not strict about the tableware, and he has a lot of problems with cheese. When visiting his parents, Kiril does not eat meat, but he does use the tableware in their home.

Thobias (J.m.) emphasizes his *individual form of Jewish spirituality*: “I also have my own spirituality. For that, I don’t necessarily need these traditional religious rites. I have *my own connection* to God. He is fond of me as I am, without my having to celebrate it by means of Shabbat. You don’t have to build a temple to express religious devotion. That’s something you arrange with yourself in your heart.”

Kira (J.f.) tells how she transformed her knowledge of kosher cuisine into her free-lance work as a vegan cook. She herself is not a vegan. But she liked to bake, and through the Jewish community she gained a great deal of experience with *pareve*⁶ baking and making *pareve* desserts. Then she “*simply tried to go from pareve to vegan.*”

The narrative of Denis (J.m., R.) shows the tendency to *reserve Jewishness for the protected domestic/private space*. On the one hand, Denis “outs” himself and his mother as Jews only in certain situations. For example, he would be afraid to go to a pro-Israel demonstration,

⁶ Pareve: Term referring to food classification in kashrut, used for non-dairy and non-meat products.

because his colleagues could see him there and hold it against him, as something they view negatively. On the other hand, he and his father stay closely informed about events in the Jewish community or in Israel by reading Jewish newspapers.

In these examples (of Denis, Thobias, and Kiril) (and in many others as well), we are dealing with interviewees who are halachically Jewish, who construct their Jewish identity on an individual basis, and for whom *the above-mentioned logic—being born of a Jewish mother means being “totally/unequivocally/most of all Jewish”—apparently does not apply to all spheres of everyday life.*

The combination of one Jewish parent and one *non-Jewish parent, coupled with a migration experience*, which in itself is often associated with identity crises, makes the question of identity far more complex. For 23 interviewees, this exact experience is part of their life stories. Migration affects the perception and understanding of the self; identity is no longer something that is unquestioned and taken for granted. Therefore, social support and social affiliation, as symbolic resources, take on special significance. Thus, migration experience can take priority and Jewish affiliation can remain a marginal issue for some time. When Artem (J.m., R.) first came to Germany, everything Jewish was strange and unfamiliar to him. As he expresses it, he was “simply a foreigner.”

4.3 Symbolic Jewishness

For many interviewees, intensive engagement with the migration experience occurs as a result of their immigration status as “Jewish quota refugees.” Thus, the interviewees place Jewishness in a wider context and present it, in various phases of life, as ranging from central to completely irrelevant.

Sveta (J.m., R.) is active in one of the Jewish communities. She says that the Russian language and her Russian hometown were the major criteria for putting together her group of friends: “For a time in my youth, it was important that my friends come from Moscow or St. Petersburg. It was a closed group, and people who didn’t come from one of these two cities were not admitted. Whether the person was Jewish or not was immaterial.” At the same time, she talks about the important role of her secular Jewish identity, which had its origin during her adolescence, even before she emigrated, in regular *meetings IN FRONT OF* (not inside!) *the Moscow Choral Synagogue* and then gained in strength. The synagogue, as a *common place* (Boym 2002), represented to her a symbolic Jewish social meeting place in the sense of a Jewish “*symbolic ethnicity*” (Gans 1979). Her friends “spent all the holidays there, but only in front of the synagogue, they never went in.” They “simply met there on Jewish occasions” and stood outside of the synagogue to chat.

Many of the interviewees from the former Soviet Union learned only after emigrating about the positive features and cultural practices of Jewish affiliation. Denis (J.m., R.) was raised with an international perspective and had no Jewish friends in Belarus. Not until he came to Germany did he find Jewish friends and develop, as he expressed it, “a special affinity for Jewish identity.” Paradoxically, the most important thing (the “social glue,” in Durkheim’s term) binding him and his Jewish friends together is, as in Sveta’s case, the Russian language. *The Russian mother tongue has a binding, symbolic function* within the Jewish group, and at the same time it represents a personal biographical resource. For many, the Russian language is also a bridge to knowledge about Jewish history and religion (such as the lessons offered by Rabbi Kushner on the Internet).

The use of material culture and “*Jewish*” *objects* is an additional component of symbolic

Jewishness: T-shirts with the words “don’t worry, be Jewish,” items or clothing with Israeli symbols, as well as wearing the Magen David or a necklace with the Hebrew letters for *Chai* and putting *menorot* in a place of importance in the living room—that is, practices through which the symbolic manifestation of the Jewish connection becomes visible. Other forms of Jewish symbolic ethnicity find their expression through *individual practices that create identity*, such as subscribing to the *Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung* or the *Deutsche Proisraelische Zeitung*, reading books by Jewish authors or books on Jewish history and National Socialism, biographies of Jewish individuals, or Jewish comics, and watching films that deal with these subjects, as well as learning sports like Krav Maga, a self-defense system developed in the Israeli military.

Some interviewees celebrate only a few holidays (such as Rosh Hashanah or Pesach). Many regard holidays as an occasion for getting together socially, while others attend synagogue only once a year, on Yom Kippur.

Mila (J.m., R.) does not feel Jewish in most areas of her life, but she does visit *Jewish museums or Jewish sites* when she travels (for example, in Prague or in Berlin). She feels a responsibility for conveying the history of the Holocaust, especially in the future, when she will teach in schools. “Maybe it’s an important issue of identity. To what extent do I have a responsibility? I immigrated to Germany, so to what extent must I bear responsibility for the Holocaust? I don’t have to; I’m not German. But similarly, then the other 20-year-olds don’t have responsibility either, because they’re just 20. But I’ll have come to closer grips with this when I’m teaching.”

Another example of *Jewish symbolic ethnicity* is *giving a Jewish name* to one’s own child, if the parents decide to give the child a German first name and a Jewish second name (for example, Katja-Rivka, Alex-Aron, Matthias-Reuven). Here, one sees the situative use of interviewees’ Jewish names only in the context of Jewish practices and in circles associated with Judaism, “off stage” or “behind the scenes.” This tendency often indicates that some interviewees *seek to conceal their Jewish identity in public*, as the first, publicly used, name signals membership in the dominant, normative social group.

In some cases, an interesting increase in this tendency or a more extreme form of symbolic ethnicity was apparent. Some interviewees asserted that Jewish names should be used only by certain people—those who self-identify as Jews and feel Jewish. For example, Esther (J.f.), who also deals extensively with the topic in her professional life, says that she is annoyed that non-Jewish German parents give their children biblical Jewish names: “it [is] ‘historical amnesia’ and tasteless when this generation decides to name its children ‘Sarah’ and ‘David’...” She understands that these people now belong to the third and fourth generations. Esther: “But how can they take these ‘biblical’ names, as they call them. They’re taking our names away from us! That is a piece of [our] identity.”

5. Model: Searching for One’s Identity through Experiences of Foreignness and Turning to Jewish Traditions and History

The search for creative individual ways of being Jewish, as well as the intensive engagement with issues of identity, frequently begins in *adolescence*. During this phase, many interviewees went through intense self-questioning, trying to determine what the components of their multiple identities were and what implications all this had for their

everyday lives and actions. It is also the time at which many of the participants immigrated or started to attend Jewish organizations.

Alescha (J.m., R.), too, during his adolescence developed first an interest in and then *an intellectual attitude toward Jewish history and religion*. In his opinion, one has to have knowledge about Judaism in order to decide whether to observe the religious precepts: “For what purpose [did, *author’s note*] our ancestors die?! To what end did they have to suffer?!” Alescha began to take an interest in Jewish history and gradually made the decision “*to be observant*” [*nadosobliudat’*, надособлюдать]. Interestingly, in his interview Alescha described “being observant” without using the words “religion,” “mitzvot,” and “commandments.” The rather formal “being observant” means for him, in the social sense, symbolically designating collective Jewish affiliation as something “right and proper to do” in order to be more aware of “who you are.” At the same time, he refuses to be described as a religious person. He describes his Jewish identity as follows: “A Jew is not somebody who runs around with a gigantic *Magen David* and shouts ‘I’m Jewish,’ but rather somebody who honors and respects his ancestors, somebody who understands what religion is. Whether he complies with the precepts is a different issue, but he is at home in the subject. People have to know who they are.” At the same time, he wants the communities to accept only individuals born to a Jewish mother, because “only Orthodox Judaism [guarantees, *author’s note*] that Jewry will survive.” This is a wish we do not find in this form among the interviewees of only patrilineal Jewish descent.

6. Model: Becoming Religious (only the father is Jewish): “If I’m going to be religious, then I’ll be Orthodox”

As in the research done by Madeleine Dreyfus (2012), *latent acceptance of the superiority of Orthodox Judaism* among the participants can be extrapolated and confirmed as a finding. The superiority of Orthodoxy, says Dreyfus, following the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, has passed through a naturalization process and is frequently perceived as a self-evident state of affairs, so that *giyur*, or formal conversion to Judaism according to Orthodox rules, is accepted as the only possible way of becoming Jewish.

Karl (J.f., R.) has affiliated himself with what he views as the only “right” form of Judaism by means of *giyur*: “Religious Jews are Orthodox. All the others are not religious.”

Most interviewees are annoyed that it is taken for granted that the only route to acceptance by the communities as a Jew is through religion. Artem (J.v., R.) sees himself as Jewish in a more cultural and secular sense: “Orthodox Jews have a monopoly in the communities and, moreover, are politically right-wing and capitalistic, but the community needs to be more liberal.”

7. Model: Jewish/German as a Contradiction

Precisely in the German context, a Jewish/Christian background seems to be a special challenge for children in mixed families. Further, many are overwhelmed when they try to combine the familiar perpetrator and victim narratives in a single identity. Mathias (J.m.): “You can’t live in Germany and have German as a native language and accept everything here but also try to deny the German side of the family.... My great-grandfather on my mother’s side worked for the Reichsbahn, so it certainly can be said that some of my relatives transported the others.”

Katja's (J.m.) father, too, comes from a Nazi family. She describes her Jewish mother as a very fearful and depressive person, not really capable of living on her own, and damaged by the Holocaust. Katja: "It's totally clear that if my grandfathers had met during the 1930s, one of them would have put the other in a concentration camp."

German history represents a special context for mixed German/Jewish marriages. The non-Jewish German parents of the interviewees are generally sensitive and make an effort to support the Jewish parents by celebrating the Jewish holidays, visiting Israel, learning Hebrew, playing a part in the community, and demonstrating initiative, for example, by organizing trips to Israel or Jewish events, or reading books about the conflict in the Middle East. Some even consider converting. For example, Esther (J.f.) reports that her German mother has become the "Israel expert" for her village.

The state of affairs brought about by the Holocaust makes the existence of multiple identities (German and Jewish) or the logic of "either—or" or dichotomous thinking seem appropriate; "German" and "Jewish" are juxtaposed in opposition. It becomes all the more difficult to unite the opposite poles of interviewees from such mixed families. Some feel obligated by their personal history to champion any and every minority, combat racism of any kind in public, sensitize people to inequalities, become politically active, or advocate humanism and "human qualities" as the highest value. This becomes apparent in Tina's (J.f.) rejection of national pride: "I don't think it's appropriate for a country where such things happened to have such national pride. I think it's strange anyway to be proud of a country. But I also realize that many people see it differently, especially after the FIFA World Cup."

On the other hand, some interviewees speak of a relationship of tension between their Jewishness and a life in Germany as soon as they focus more on Jewish identity. (One example is Alex (J.m.), who started studying the Torah and "keeping the Torah.") At times they find it difficult to continue living in Germany.

8. The Jewish/Christian Contradiction: Family Compositions, Family Conflicts

In which instances does Jewish identity appear to be conflict-laden? What is the relationship between identity and family composition?

Interviewees speak of mixed, open socialization in many families. Frequently, however, there was an absence of space for talking about Jewish identity, if one parent belonged to a dominant group whose culture the child also internalized in other institutions of society and perceived as something to be taken for granted. Thus, the seemingly cosmopolitan atmosphere proves less fruitful for the unfolding of Jewish identity, in comparison with an upbringing in which the Jewish elements are explicitly integrated into the everyday life of the family and are filled with positive content. In some cases, however, the interviewees' turn toward the life of a religious Jew is perceived by their parents, who have given their children a seemingly neutral upbringing (but in fact often a Christian one), as fanaticism or as threatening. Dima (J.f., R.) says, "Many Russian-speaking members know far more about Christianity than about Judaism and believe in humanistic ideas, but these humanistic ideas are really more Christian ones."

A strongly positive atmosphere and a sense of happiness and well-being [*blagopoluchie*, благополучия] on the part of family members who are seen as *significant others* play a

central role for the positive interpretation and acting out of Jewish identity, particularly if Judaism, as a part of the beloved Jewish relatives, is experienced with positive emotions and linked with the feeling of home.

Thus, Jewish identity from a grandmother on the father's side (as in the case of Vova (J.f., R.), who grew up in his grandmother's home), can cause the child to feel primarily Jewish. In another case, the person can be halachically Jewish yet have an assimilated identity or even regard him/herself as not being Jewish at all.

Great sensitivity on the part of the non-Jewish members of the family is a prerequisite for the success of a mixed marriage and the free development of Jewish identity. Unfortunately, it was established in many interviews that family members with a non-Jewish background touch upon prejudices quite openly in the family association and thus have made it difficult for interviewees to find and live out their identity or integrity. Here are a few examples:

The great-aunt of Wadim (J.f., R.) went to his non-Jewish mother and demanded that she "leave [Wadim's father] alone, because he [the father, *author's note*] will marry only a Jewish woman." Later, when Wadim was 12, the Ukrainian aunt (his mother's sister) "collared" him and took him to church. For him, that was a trauma; he remembers with dread how he was forced to go to church with his aunt. It was something he neither enjoyed nor understood. Artem (J.f., R.) was baptized by his non-Jewish grandmother, without his parents' permission.

Esther (J.f.) also tells about the pressure from both sides of the family. Neither side sees her as part of "its" group: "My [Jewish, *author's note*] grandmother could never reconcile herself to the fact that her son married a German woman." She often grumbled and even called her granddaughter [the interviewee] a "cripple." At the same time, she was subjected to antisemitism in her own family, on the part of her non-Jewish German grandparents. When Esther's parents married in 1961, the entire village came to see "Dori get married to the Jew." Her maternal grandparents also told their daughter, "Don't bring that Jew into my house."

The example of Rachel is an especially clear illustration of the contradictions involved in her inner conflicts.

Rachel (J.m.): Her father's mother was very suspicious of the alliance with her Jewish daughter-in-law, wondering "whether he will get tired of it." After all the propaganda alleging that "the Jews are our misfortune," her son's marriage to a Jewish woman took quite a bit of getting used to on her part. Rachel's father also made a lot of demands. Christmas had to be celebrated in a very specific course of events, and if the Christmas decorations on the tree didn't hang the right way, "then there was a real, substantial Christmas fight, as in every 'Christian family.'" Her father's birthday came shortly after Christmas, and he insisted that roast wild boar always be served. For her mother, who is a very small, slim person, "that definitely involved some reluctance and disgust at times, but this wild boar simply had to be on the menu." Once, when friends were visiting, Rachel said during the conversation (this was shortly before she went to Israel), "I'm a Jew," and then her father said, in front of everyone, "No, you're a half-Jew." She was terribly hurt, because she had struggled to reach that point and realized that her father did not accept it. She recalls, however, that her mother had a bad conscience at the time and kept saying to her, "You can take part in everything, but when Jesus is being discussed, just skip it." Rachel knew all the Protestant hymns. "I just had to leave out the word Jesus." Later, she says, when she had decided in favor of Jewish identity, her father was afraid she would

drop him or disown him. Until her father's death, she always celebrated Christmas. Now Pesach is a very important occasion. Rachel leads the Seder. ... Now, after her father's death, her mother has also stopped celebrating Christmas. Pesach has replaced the Christmas festival. Yet at the same time, living out her Jewish identity is something that remains possible for Rachel only in a protected private space. Rachel and her (non-Jewish) husband try to avoid pork. But at the daycare center, on the other hand, she doesn't want her children to be served something different (from the other children's meals). She thinks it is embarrassing to ask for something different for her children. But she doesn't want to attract attention. Rachel is also familiar with the [German Jewish] expression *Riches machen*. Her grandmother used to say, *nur keinen Riches machen* ["just don't provoke any antisemitism"; more commonly *Risches machen*]. She tried wearing the Star of David, but feels very uncomfortable doing so.

In some cases, the family conflict was caused initially by the return to religion. The problems begin, for example, on family holidays, when Karl's sister or mother invites them. Karl (J.f., R.) and his girlfriend attend such get-togethers, but it is very difficult, because the food is not kosher... Karl doesn't want to offend his mother or his sister, but in the event of a *giyur* the *beit din*, the rabbinical court, will ask him whether he eats in his mother's home or not... He really does not wish to insult his mother and sister, who put so much effort into cooking for Karl and his girlfriend (they prepare fish, no meat, they always try to ask what is acceptable and what is not, and so forth). Karl: "And apart from that, it will get even more difficult if we have children." Even now, Karl wonders, "Then how can you explain to a child that in his or her grandparents' home, it's all right to eat some things and not at all okay to eat others?"

9. Antisemitism as a Significant Category

In a great deal of interviews, mention was made of antisemitism of various kinds.

9.1 Antisemitism Passed Down by Parents

A large number of interviewees from the former Soviet Union said that their Jewish parents or they themselves suffered greatly from antisemitism in their society of origin.

As a common reason for immigration to Germany, many interviewees mentioned the wish to escape from antisemitism in the CIS countries. Thus, this motive represents an important part of the family biography, a part that contextualizes the identity of children from mixed families. This is a typical statement from the interviews: "As a child, Alexander knew that he was a Jew, without knowing exactly what that meant." Thus, the parents' experience of antisemitism shaped the tradition of the vague concept "Jewish," though the tradition now was divested of its content.

Antisemitism and the approach "What do you think, as a Jew?" are not limited to the Russian-speaking context. Moris (J.m.) says in this regard, following Sartre: "The antisemite makes the Jew." The creation of the Jew through the external perspective is something he reflected on in school only with the benefit of hindsight, he says. Moris speaks about the large numbers of TV crews that constantly came to the *Jüdische Oberschule* (JOS, Jewish Secondary School): "The question 'Do you feel at ease in Germany?' is not one you would put to a German child. When you get asked that question five times, then you know that you don't belong there." In his dissertation, Mathias (J.f.) dealt with the topic of antisemitism and made this key assumption: "Antisemitism has always been a form of European socialization. If you want to dominate, then you have to be antisemitic."

9.2 Antisemitism at School

Antisemitism is mentioned most of all in the context of school as an institution. At school, Esther (J.f.) was the only Jew. She can still remember that in her school, certain phrases were common: *Wir haben gestern Mathe gelernt bis zu Vergasung* ["Yesterday we learned math till we were gassed" (that is, ad nauseam, to a sickening or excessive degree)]. She can clearly recall that a sentence from Bertolt Brecht's *Woyzeck* was repeatedly heard at her comprehensive school: *Laßt uns noch übers Kreuz pissen, damit ein Jud stirbt!* ["Let us piss upon the cross, so that a Jew will die. "] At the age of 15, Esther stood up and threw the video projector out of the window; it had become unbearable for her that a sentence which illustrated antisemitism appeared in every class. After that, such sentences were no longer used in class. "But simultaneously I also identified myself with these loathsome Jews," she thinks today. It was painful for her that the Jews were hated, and at the same time she was a part of this group.

Susanne (J.m.) speaks in detail about the atmosphere:

The most difficult phase was Grade 10, when World War II was studied. It was a time when the word "Jew" was used as an insult in the schoolyard. Susanne was never unpopular, but she was not part of a clique, either. Many of her fellow classmates were insensitive. She remembers that a classmate once told a Jewish joke, and one of her girlfriends said, "Stop it, why are you saying that? Susanne is standing right next to you, you know." And the classmate turned around to face her and said, "Oh, Susanne is cool, it doesn't bother her." She recalls: "That was so mean, because it did bother me, but I couldn't have said that it bothered me—because I didn't want them to think I was not cool. That was really horrible." Then a good friend persuaded her to go to the teacher and say that "Jew" was being used as an insult by her schoolmates and that it upset her: "It was a relatively popular teacher, and he didn't react at all. He did nothing." He didn't even give Susanne the feeling that he had taken note of her complaint and her request at all. Susanne also had a (male) classmate who always wanted to sit next to her, until Grade 7, and after a girl in the same class told him that Susanne was Jewish, he didn't want to sit next to her anymore. After that, this boy also "used antisemitic sayings" more often and expressed the opinion that Jews themselves were to blame if antisemites hated them: "What really mattered was not that it was said, but that I was the only person who was hurt by these comments. Nobody sensed how wrong that was and how much it hurt me." The very frequent, hateful comments in history class that denigrated Jews often reduced her to tears. Later she decided to change her name, replacing her father's distinctly German surname with her mother's obviously Jewish one.

In some cases, antisemitism resulted in an internalization of the category "Jewish" as a stigma (linked to racist notions of "exaggerated gloominess"). Rachel (J.m.): "I still remember very clearly that in elementary school, I didn't want people to know that I was Jewish. I perceived it as a defect." In Grade 3, when her best girlfriend told her she had heard that Rachel was Jewish, she denied it, "because I noticed that it was somehow strange." "At that time in Bonn, curls were already a problem. Nobody had dark curls. There was no hairdresser, either, who could deal with them, and Sarah also was a name that was out of the ordinary. Everybody asked about it, and it was awkward for me. I kept having to explain my name. Most of all, I wanted to be blonde and named Petra. My father always said: 100 strokes of the comb every day. I always had to comb my hair for a long time to smooth out the curls."

9.3 Other Forms and Contexts of Antisemitism

Wadim (J.f., R.) tells of an incident when he was identified on the street as a Jew, on the basis of his external appearance. Here it is important to mention that the non-Jewish members of the family, too, are affected by antisemitism. Wadim's mother, who is not Jewish, was involved in antisemitic incidents because she was the wife of a Jew.

Kira (J.f.) was living in a Turkish neighborhood when she heard someone say to someone else, "You Jew," *intending it as an insult*. Interestingly, she accompanies this story with the statement that she had never had any experiences with antisemitism.

Alice (J.m.) was forced to listen to "Jewish jokes" in a bar. She describes her feelings as "turned to stone inside." "I say nothing, it's like I'm muzzled, I'm not responsive at all."

Tina (J.f.) tells about an incident *in the subway*: There were a lot of soccer fans in the car, who sang antisemitic songs the entire time. After some time, Tina got up from her seat and said (as she expresses it) "something"; then it got very quiet, and she was very upset. Then the soccer fans laughed at her and made fun of her, but the songs were over. One passenger thanked her, but the others said, "Oh, forget it, it's no use anyway." Tina: "And then I thought, exactly, that kind of attitude is the first step, when you shrug it off and say it's not important. It totally irritated me, that reaction."

Daniel (J.m.), a third-generation Shoah survivor on his mother's side and a third-generation descendant of perpetrators on his father's side, speaks about his experiences **at the university** (studying business administration), where he was subjected to the term "Jew" as an insult. That bothered Daniel a great deal, and as a result he decided to spend more time in Jewish circles. Later, Daniel decided to switch his major from business administration to history.

Some interviewees tell of *new forms of antisemitism*. Alice (J.m.) is considering emigration to Israel for that very reason: "In general, I have the feeling that all this antisemitism is becoming so transformed, so 'Günter Grass,' so literary, that people who aren't affected by it don't even realize that it is harmful and hurtful. It is becoming so strange, so underhanded and sly."

Helga (J.f.): "Modern antisemitism is anti-Zionism, *anti-Israel sentiment*." She has sensed that all along, because she always was the go-to person for everybody who wanted to talk about this topic. "Being a little ambassador for Israel" is her second identity—admittedly, one that also is mirrored and imposed from outside. "I have perceived many things about myself only in the way the outside world has perceived me. I put up with this conflict, it exists, but I have never tried to resolve it."

Some interviewees—interestingly, regardless of which parent is Jewish—internalized even antisemitic rhetoric and use it (unconsciously?) in the interview. Sveta (J.m., R.) laughs and says to her circle of friends that she "[doesn't] feel like seeing any more Jews..." She wants her child "to know that he is Jewish, but without any exaggeration..."

10. The Role of Israel as an Emotional and “Portable Homeland”

For the absolute majority of the interviewees, Israel represents a kind of *portable fatherland* (Christina von Braun, 2012), an “**emotional homeland**” (Helga, J.f.), and an important *reference point* for the collective “we” and for *ethnic and national pride*.

Alesha (J.m., R.): “Israel is a component of Jewish identity, it is the ultimate linchpin, a key point in Jewish history. It is the state where the Jews are the people.”

Alice (J.m.): “If I balance the pros and cons, it’s better for my soul to live there [in Israel, *author’s note*]. Whenever I land there, I can *breathe freely*. I arrive, take the first step out of the plane and down the stairs, and think, yes, cool, here you can be **at ease** again about being Jewish *You don’t need to give any explanations at all*. And you don’t constantly have Holocaust Remembrance Day and November 9th [Kristallnacht] and Lea Rosh [Protestant journalist who lobbied for the controversial Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe] and stelae [featured in that memorial] and the circumcision debate.”

Some *discovered their Jewish identity only when they visited Israel*. Mark (J.m.) was not raised as Jewish and is not a member of the community. He feels Jewish, also thanks to Israel. On his first visit to Israel, he went to the Wailing Wall. He wanted to pray, but all he knew was the *Shema Yisrael...* Then Chabad-Lubavitch people suddenly came over to him. One of them was almost 6 feet 6 inches tall and looked like an Anglo-Saxon. He addressed Mark as “Brother” and helped him put on *tefillin*. Mark was very moved by this friendly acceptance. It was a key event. Even in those days, Mark was drawn to Judaism, but this meeting further reinforced his wish. He sums it up this way: “*The State of Israel gives security to all the Jews in the world.*”

Ewelina (J.m., R.) addresses an additional component of responsibility for Israel: “It’s a place where many of ‘us’ live, it has to have our support.” Many feel *responsible for Israel, and responsible for supporting the country*, “because it is publicly presented in such an incredibly distorted way” (Helga, J.f.). For many, it remains a vacationland, or a “country for family visits.” Israel as an identity-strengthening place is consistently *viewed from a distance*. Sveta (J.m., R.): “Israel is perfect for travel, but not as a place for me to live. Too Oriental. I’m too much of a Westerner to live there. Besides, Israel is too small.”

All the interviewees who (on the basis of their statements) are interested in politics frequently point out that they have a special interest in German *foreign policy toward the State of Israel* or in Israeli politics as well. The political affinities of many interviewees depend strongly on the attitudes of certain parties toward Israel. Mark (J.m.), for instance, says that he votes for the SPD, but at the same time he is concerned that the dominant opinions on the left tend to be critical of Israel. Moris (J.m.) (SPD member) says that for him, social democracy is “a terrific German invention with some Jewish spice added in.”

Alexandra (J.m.), too, is more apt to vote for a left-wing candidate. She describes a dilemma: Jewish circles tend to be left-wing, but on account of foreign policy they almost have to vote right-wing, because the CDU is much better on Israel-related issues: “But the question is also, why is the CDU so friendly toward Israel? Then constructive criticism at the same eye level is preferable after all.”

At election time, Aron (J.m.) also pays attention to the foreign policy of the parties, and an anti-Israel policy would be a “no go” for him. “I myself am very tolerant, and I want the country I live in to be tolerant too. And especially with respect to Israel, because really, Israel already has a hard enough time of it in the world.”

The interviewees often are *addressed as representatives of Israel* as soon as they mention that they are Jews. This approach can be both irritating and stereotyping, and it causes many interviewees to come to grips with the country and to deal with it in a more nuanced manner. Whenever Alena (J.m.) says that she is Jewish, people immediately ask, "What are you people doing there in Israel?" Then she always has to justify herself and work at giving explanations.

Many of the interviewees engage in *criticism of Israel only within Jewish circles*. Karl (J.f., R.): "Jews are allowed to criticize Israel as well, but only inside the Jewish group. To the outside world, we have to stand up for Israel, because if even we Jews criticize Israel to outsiders, then who would stand up for Israel?"

The conflict in the Near East is a very important, though also controversial, point in terms of Jewish identity. Esther (J.m.) is very pro-Israel. She always is aware that this country saved her family and her entire people, and for that it deserves "credit."

When Kiril (J.m., R.) saw the cover of the *Spiegel* issue dealing with Israel in the Lebanon War—"What makes this country so aggressive?"—he wanted to know as much as possible about Israel. Since that time, Israel has become a large part of his Jewish identity, and he takes a great interest in the country. Sometimes, "even more than I myself wish..." Kiril says. He is learning Hebrew, but more in order to feel less of a tourist in Israel; because of his family, however, he cannot emigrate to Israel.

10.1 Critical Attitude toward the State of Israel

The State of Israel is not simply idealized in every case, however. Some interviewees are disillusioned about Israel or even disappointed:

Ilona (J.m.): "It's really pretty rough," she says, and points to the poverty and the difficult circumstances of life.

Michael (J.f.) "Israel has really hurt me. I was really sad and angry. I think I truly believed that it was a better country. All the cynicism, and the racism. It was like being betrayed by someone you love... I think I also went to Israel to find out whether it could be my home. I came back, and I know that Israel is not my home; instead, I know that I'm a German Jew. It became clear to me that the conflicts in Israel are not my conflicts, and that I live in this language [German, author's note] and that I have no other place than this one [Germany]."

Moris (J.m.) expresses similar thoughts: "I'm a Central European. For a long time I tried to persuade myself that the Promised Land is located near Beer Sheva, but all you need is to be in a fjord in Norway just one time, and then you know what the promised land is." He would have "had to violate my brain to convince myself that as a Jew, I ought to live in the Middle East." Should it someday no longer be possible to live as a Jew in Germany, then he would "have no desire to keep on living anyway. If it means going through this entire nightmare of the twentieth century once again, then I'd rather fight here [in Germany]."

11. Comparison: Children with Only a Jewish Mother and Children with Only a Jewish Father

The feelings of identity and the institutional requirements of interviewees with only a Jewish mother and interviewees with only a Jewish father differ in important ways.

11.1 Biological Jewishness

Many interviewees born to Jewish mothers see themselves, in contrast to their friends and acquaintances who have Jewish fathers but non-Jewish mothers, as “real Jews,” or they perceive their Jewishness as something to be taken for granted or as a kind of *biological Jewishness*, a primordial given or fundamental state of being. They were born Jewish, they are already Jewish, and they can instill content in the concept and create identity—but need not do so in order to be Jewish. To the extent that they are interested, they have easier access to Jewish institutions and to Jewish life.

The idea of *biological Jewishness* was especially pronounced among (all) Russian-speaking interviewees (whether of matrilineal or patrilineal Jewish descent). Behind this attitude lies the perceptual phenomenon of the “one drop rule”—even one drop of blood makes the person Jewish. This corresponds to the widespread understanding in the Soviet Union that Jewishness is an ethnic subcategory of “race,” under the heading of nationality. This understanding also gives rise to the idea that a Jew can be recognized by certain physiognomic traits or cues.

At school, no one knew that Denis (J.m., R.) was Jewish. He says, “I don’t look like a Jew.” Only when he said that his grandmother’s name was Rosa did the children begin to wonder. “Something doesn’t add up if his grandmother is named Rosa, because Denis certainly doesn’t look Jewish.”

Many interviewees with a Jewish mother support the halachical definition of Jewishness through matrilineal descent. In their opinion, descent based on *Halacha* should be a prerequisite for membership in the communities, and the community must draw a line and refuse to accept people who have only a Jewish father. Most of the interviewees with a Jewish mother (in contrast with those with only a Jewish father) said nothing about discrimination with respect to institutional requirements for qualifying as a Jew. However, some of the interviewees of matrilineal Jewish descent regard the *giyur*, as a pathway to Judaism for people of only patrilineal Jewish descent, as being excessive. Ewelina (J.m., R.) says, “But there are no ideal solutions for the children of Jewish fathers. I don’t know ... But you also can’t tell them they should comply with all the rules that even the halachic Jews don’t comply with.”

Even though some participants with a Jewish mother have been raised outside of Judaism or come from an assimilated family in which Judaism played no role, the process of Jewish discovery (in the cultural, religious, or psychological sense) appears to be made far easier by fulfillment (from the outset) of the halachical requirements in institutional terms.

11.2 What does it mean to have only a Jewish father?

The situation is different among children of Jewish fathers. Children of only patrilineal Jewish descent are not Jewish, on the basis of halachical law. Even if they already feel Jewish, they have to prove their membership in the group, their Jewishness, and seek an alternative institutional space for this purpose. They are *subjected to multiple social pressures by virtue of the understanding of patrilineal Christian identity and matrilineal Jewish identity*. They *never feel Jewish enough, however hard they may try*. The narratives of children of Jewish fathers make clear how difficult it is to fit into the acceptable (often unequivocal or one-dimensional) categories. Whenever Karl (J.f., R.) introduces himself, he says that he’s a Jew, but then he feels obligated to add that only his father is Jewish. As a result, he next has to explain what Halacha is, and that Jews regard as Jewish only someone born

to a Jewish mother. Then he explains that he himself does not have a Jewish mother, and that the Jewish community therefore does not accept him, but that he still feels Jewish... Often a long conversation ensues, with many stories about "his being Jewish," which is burdensome for him.

Artem (J.f., R.) talks about his experience in Israel, when he was asked whether he was a Jew. Artem started his reply with the words *ze kashe* ("That's hard"—Hebr.): He does indeed feel Jewish and thinks he is a Jew, but the Jews do not regard him as Jewish because he was not born to a Jewish mother... The Israelis concluded the discussion with the words, "Then you're certainly a Jew." The people he was talking to were secular, and for them, as for Artem as well, it "goes without saying that he's a Jew... But that's not the case for everybody."

Helga (J.f. from Iran, who speaks Persian) tries to completely avoid answering the question, "Are you a Jew?" "If it's a Jew asking the question, I know that for him I'll never be Jewish enough; if it's a Persian asking, I know that for him I'll never be Persian enough; if it's a German asking, I know that for him I'll never be German enough. At the same time, even though I'm seen by everybody as an alien element, I feel that I belong everywhere. I have a trilateral identity conflict, which I don't describe, however, when I'm asked what I am. That's why I'm very reluctant to answer the question." "If a German asks, 'Are you Jewish?' then first of all, it's none of his business, because which category is he asking about, the one based on the Nuremberg Laws or the one based on Halacha? I don't place any importance at all on the way other people assess it." For her, going through the *giyur* procedure was never an issue: "Even for myself, I would never be Jewish enough." Therefore, several interviewees of patrilineal Jewish descent feel compelled in the German context *to be more traditional, more religiously observant, or at least more Jewish through symbols* in everyday life than their friends who are children of Jewish mothers. That has an influence on cultural and traditional Jewishness. Thus, it can be the case that people with a Jewish father, owing to culturally Jewish socialization, may be far better acquainted with the history and religious traditions than people who are non-members of the community or are Jews according to Halacha. Artem (J.f., R.) can't become a member of the Jewish community. But when he goes to synagogue, for example, he has to explain to many members there why turning off the light switch is forbidden on Shabbat. In this way, some interviewees, as a result of their engagement in the community, became "not-quite-Jews who are tolerated."

In the following material, the term "psychological Jews," which originated with Freud, is employed. It is often linked to the term "culturally Jewish." Wadim (J.f., R.) doesn't "want to be a second-class Jew"; he wants "to belong completely" at last. "You always have the feeling that you're 'not right.'" He feels doubted with respect to his wholeness and integrity and doesn't know how to take it when other people see him as not Jewish enough. Instances of antisemitic discrimination, however, sometimes make Wadim, like many other interviewees (of patrilineal Jewish descent), involuntarily Jewish—because many are Jewish enough to experience discrimination, but not Jewish enough to be accepted by other Jews. Thus, inclusion in the Jewish people is symbolically "reserved" exclusively for negative experiences, but not acknowledged by halachic Jews in the case of positive experiences (such as holidays or trips to Israel for community members). On account of antisemitism in Ukraine, Wadim has an intense feeling of being Jewish. In Germany, however, he has almost developed a hang-up, and no longer knows whether he can call himself Jewish, because the Jews don't accept him as a Jew. He says that he identifies himself as Jewish only when dealing with people who want to discriminate

against him as a Jew, but not when he is dealing with halachic Jews, because he fears that they will question his Jewishness or break off contact with him. He even sees it as a challenge or a provocation to call himself Jewish, too, when he is among “the real Jews.”

By contrast, Denis, a halachic Jew (R.), does not feel Jewish at all. He doesn't go to demonstrations, because he thinks that if someone from work were to see him there, this person would immediately have a negative opinion of him. Denis doesn't feel Jewish; he feels he is a Belarusian. He would not visit any “Jewish” places when he travels, assuming he had any idea of their existence. For lack of interest, he would not go to a Jewish museum, either. The words “Shabbat” and “Magen David” are unfamiliar to Denis, and he does not know what these terms mean. This example makes it clear that halachical requirements are not an adequate prerequisite for subjective self-definition as a Jew. In certain cases, people with a Jewish mother can feel substantially less Jewish than people with a Jewish father. The effect of the institutional requirements on the latter group, then, is all the more dramatic.

Most interviewees with Jewish fathers *perceive their lack of acknowledgment* as Jews in the communities as an injustice and an affront to their identity, or *as discrimination* because often these individuals feel that they are Jews.

An example of the way a person who feels Jewish is made into a non-Jew is the “benchmark case” of Leon (J.f., R.). When the family came to Germany, the parents turned to the Jewish community. The entire family attended events in the community. Leon's mother, who is not Jewish, said that the family had come as Jewish emigrants and hence the children ought to go to synagogue. She brought her two sons regularly to events in the community, and the entire family went to the community center for Shabbat and the holidays. For two or three years, the family lived in this way in city X. Then the family moved to city Y. There, the family was distinctly rejected by the Jewish community because Leon's mother was not a Jew. Even when his mother appealed to the Jewish community because she needed help with Leon's brother, she was told that her son was not a Jew, and that the Jewish community did not provide help for non-Jews. The mother was deeply offended and, after this incident, never went to the community again. Leon and his brother and father also stopped going to the community, because it had always been the mother who prompted them to attend the synagogue. In city X, Leon had a very highly developed Jewish life from the age of 11 or 12 until the age of 13 or 14. That stopped when the family moved to Y. He now was about 15 and could not take part in any Jewish events, because he was not permitted to join the Y Community. Leon bade farewell to Jewish life, no longer had any Jewish friends, and lost all contact with Jewish organizations. Now he has married a Ukrainian woman. He describes his Jewish identity as a tragedy. Leon had the feeling that he “was walking around the community center and looking for the doors, and these doors had been closed from the inside, from the side of the community.” The conflict at the structural and institutional level carried over to the family level. When Leon's Jewish father saw his alienation from Judaism, he tried to convince Leon that “we Jews” should not marry non-Jews. His father did everything within his power to prevent Leon's marriage to the Ukrainian. For Leon and his then-girlfriend (now wife), that was “terror.” His father enrolled as a member of the Jewish community. Now he goes to synagogue and complies with some precepts, so that he can show his son that he does come from a Jewish family after all. The conflict continues to escalate. Leon reads books about Jews, and previously he had subscribed to a Jewish calendar, in which there was something about Jews or Jewish culture for every day of the year. He stopped subscribing to this calendar because the conflict with his father was so intense, and his father consistently tried to emphasize

the Jewish aspect of every single issue. Leon calls himself and other Russian-speakers with Jewish fathers a “lost generation.”

A *giyur*, too, is seen by many interviewees as an insulting demonstration that they were not Jews previously, even though they felt Jewish.

To the children of Jewish fathers, the institutional connection to Jewish organizations (the communities, as well as schools and kindergartens) is especially important, in terms of Jewish awareness and the further fostering of Jewishness in everyday life. Some choose the path of the *giyur* as a way of affiliating themselves with the community, while others create their own pathway. In both cases, there has to be a space in which complex identities and independent positioning in society can be discussed. This space is often provided by significant persons (such as rabbis) or by alternative institutional Jewish frameworks, such as seminars or workshops and projects. For many, it is also difficult to talk to non-Jews about the set of problems in Germany.

12. Jewish Identity of the Children in the Future

Many interviewees want to pass on to their children a positive Jewish identity, as well as cultural knowledge. That wish is also shared by those who do not have Jewish spouses. In this case, it seems especially important to the participants to secure a framework for the further upbringing of the children. Ilona (J.m.): “The older I get, the more Jewish I am, and the more I notice the difference from the non-Jewish outside world. Things get difficult at all the focal points, and then you’re thrown back on your family, and I can’t re-educate my family. Basically, I have to construct my own Jewish family for myself.”

Kiril (J.m., R.) would like to hand down the following values: “Jewish identity, positive attitude toward religion, but the child won’t necessarily go out on the street with a *kippah* and *tzitzit*. The children should be familiar with the secular culture too.” The most important thing for him would be for his children to have a strong bond with the State of Israel; that would matter more to him than having them put on *tefillin* every morning.

Esther (J.f.) talks about an affiliation for herself and for the children. “I’m trying to connect right now. And now the affiliation would be through the children. It would be nice to have events for children—events that are open to welcoming such a family.” Esther wants to feel that she belongs there.

Antja (J.m., grew up in the GDR in a completely secular environment) wants her children to have a relaxed and open relationship with Judaism. For her and her mother as well, it was a struggle for a long time “simply to stick with it and say: I’m Jewish. It shouldn’t be a closed club, and they should be able to take it in stride.”

Many of the interviewees emphasize their desire to combine universal democratic, open-minded, humanistic values with a Jewish education. Paul (J.f.) wishes his children to have “an international education with a Jewish component.”

13. Institutional Connection. Alternative Spaces and Scenes for the Practice of Jewish Identity and for Collective Social Affiliation

The absolute majority of the participants think that institutional connection is an important component of Jewish identity. Jewish communities play a central role as a supportive, stabilizing framework. Alescha (J.m., R.): “Even if you don’t go to the community, you need it.” Here the community clearly becomes a kind of support for connection to the Jewish community, the *imagined community* in the sense of Benedict Anderson.

At the same time, it must also be emphasized that “institution” can refer not only to Jewish communities but also to several other organizations.

For participants with a Jewish mother, this connection (as desired) can come about primarily through involvement in and use of the offerings available in the Jewish community and can be supplemented or replaced by other, alternative institutional connections. By complying with the dictates of Halacha, they can freely decide about these connections in their social practice. For participants with only a Jewish father, the situation is far more complicated. Matrilineal Jewish descent is a kind of *gatekeeper* (Gofmann) for access to community activities, or is a state of affairs that is sensed to be unjust. In this case, the participants have several possibilities: either they accept the categorical “superiority of Orthodox Judaism” (Dreyfus 2012) and go through the *giyur* process, or they look for a different institutional connection. In particular, the interviews with participants who have Jewish fathers make especially clear the importance of an institutional connection for the development of one’s own Jewish awareness. Thus, even highly assimilated participants with a Jewish father who also have a non-Jewish spouse emphasize that they want their children to attend a Jewish school, so that they can become familiar with the Jewish tradition as something positive with respect to their identity. An institution also appears to be important as a framework, to provide a Jewish environment as a supportive resource. Rachel (J.m.): “You need Jewishness in everyday life, too, especially Jewish friends.”

Most participants with a Jewish father and many with a Jewish mother emphasized alternative institutions and offerings that have helped them to discover their Jewish identity, invest it with content, act it out, and strengthen it, or to find a Jewish partner—a task that many see as very difficult because of the small number of Jews in Germany. The diversity of the following contexts and practices is indicative of a great interest in Jewish organizations in a variety of spheres, and of an intention to actively lead a Jewish life.

JDC has a *special role* in this regard. Not only was the Baminim program for young families with small children mentioned repeatedly and roundly praised, but this project also had a special significance, particularly for interviewees of patrilineal Jewish descent⁷. Katja Nudelman, an interviewer, says, “Because they are, more often than not, not welcome as members of the Jewish organizations and have access to Jewish events only occasionally, in roundabout ways or through friends, the interviews by JDC (that is, by a Jewish organization) were enormously important to them. For many, it often was the first opportunity to speak to a Jewish organization and express their thoughts openly and honestly. For the first time, they were listened to by the Jewish organization (although not by the community). For the migrants from the former Soviet Union, it was in some cases a kind of return to their old identity (one is acknowledged again as being Jewish or at least as good enough for a conversation, which quite often was denied by the communities!).”

⁷ www.baminim-berlin.de

For all of them, not only the migrants, the interviews were important as vehicles of hope—‘maybe somebody from the Jewish circles will listen to us someday’—and maybe communities will adjust to the existing reality.”

The university is an additional important framework for the development of Jewish identity or for the formation of alternative Jewish organizations for young people. Artem (J.f., R.) went to Freiburg to study East European history and archeology. One day he was walking through the university and saw a sheet of standard letter-size paper with a notice in German, English, and Hebrew, saying that the group was organizing a get-together for Jewish students, not a religion, not a community, but just a get-together in the bar. Artem read the announcement and kept walking... “No time, no interest.” But the notice continued to be posted there, and he saw it again and again. Some time later, he decided to drop by after all. Half of the students he met there, like him, knew little about Judaism and about their Jewish identity. He is still friends with many members of this group. Many have participated actively in the *Jewish student movement or student associations* or become involved in Jewish student get-togethers at various universities; some have even *organized a Jewish student organization* (with events for young Jewish adults). In general, youth congresses and projects were mentioned as a very important point of reference in various interviews. Denis (J.m.) is active in the Jewish scholarship organization, Studienwerk Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich (ELES), which in recent times has developed to such a degree that he sees it as the center of his life. Some participants have founded a *Jewish cultural association*. The interviewees frequently mention the *Bundesverband der jüdischen Studenten* (Federal Association of Jewish Students) as an organization that does especially good work.

Seminars held by the Israeli Embassy for youth in Germany performed an important service for some of the interviewees. Karl (J.f., R.) himself has even organized such a seminar. It was concerned with the question, “How can we here in Germany defend Israel in conversations and discussions?”

Many, like Kurt (J.m.), get involved in the *German-Israel Society*. He is also active in the *Hamburg für Israel* organization, which does educational work regarding Israel.

Artem (J.f., R.) has taken part in the archeological excavations in Israel, and he (like many others) mentioned these as well: *Taglit, Limmud, and the Morasha program*. Some attended *JuBuK seminars or language courses at the Jüdische Volkshochschule*. Some interviewees mention religious organizations such as *Ahim Tora* (with *shiurim* or celebration of Shabbat), which enabled them to experience Judaism. It is important, they say, not only to learn *Halachot* but also to experience how these rules are applied in everyday life. Kiril (J.m., R.) says he thinks it would be great if such organizations would work in other cities too. Interestingly, liberal communities were mentioned in almost none of the interviews. In one interview, *doppel:halb* (double:half), an association for people of partly Jewish descent, was mentioned.

Moreover, virtual Internet environments or *Internet platforms* (including Jewish newspapers) were mentioned in the interviews, along with the Internet portals of Jewish communities, as sources for information and (virtual?) affiliation with the Jewish social group. Moris (J.m.) was in a Chabad setting and organized *Torah hikes*. He writes the Jewdysee *Yiddish Lifestyle Blog*, the “most-read Jewish blog in Germany.” He would like Reform Judaism to be perceived as a serious alternative, and says, “As a liberal Jew, you’re not taking the easy way out. People should be encouraged not to abandon critical thinking, even in times of crisis.” Antja (J.m.), together with a girlfriend, publishes the

Jewish family magazine *Familienmentsch*.

Interestingly, for many Russian-speaking participants, *Russian-language Jewish newspapers*, as well as intensive contacts with other Russian-speaking Jewish migrants, are important sources of information and identity. Russian-speaking rabbis and their books (books by Rabbi Teluschkin) also have helped some find their own path to their Jewish identity.

Some, like Kiril (J.f., R.), went to a youth club. At a youth club, young adults who feel the same way as Kiril come together and meet: young adults from families in which the parents have university degrees, who come from the former Soviet Union, speak Russian very fluently, and have a Jewish, but not a religious, identity. The group meets for discussions, for joint trips, or even for political campaigns. On occasion they have celebrated Jewish holidays. The group has found premises privately, most often made available by German organizations. The Jewish community of city X has never invited this group. Most participants were Jews (Kiril doesn't know whether they were halachic Jews or not). Here, it would be very useful to arrange for certain seminars on Jewish history and tradition to be given in Russian.

Many have taken part in the *Jewish film festival*, the *Jewish Culture Days*, and *Israel Day*, or in *pro-Israel demonstrations*.

13.1 Recommendations for Jewish Organizations in Germany

The question of social recognition as well as social affiliation plays a central role as the first necessary step for participation by people from "mixed families" in the cultural and religious life of Jewish communities. Special needs of this heterogeneous group should be further researched and identified in order to develop special programs for this group. On the basis of the research, it becomes clear that the Jewish community, first and foremost, is viewed as an important social scene. The quality of the contacts and experiences in this context influences the development of further Jewish connections. For Jewish holidays, for example, the community, in the opinion of Sveta (J.m., R.), could organize certain events to which all (regardless of membership in the community) can come, "because they can make up their own table there with their friends, and they know what to talk about."

In many interviews, the necessity of making changes in the communities is addressed. Alena (J.m.): "The communities must find a solution quite urgently. There are so many young Jewish people who are so intelligent, well educated, they have the potential to accomplish something in German society. And incredibly, the Jewish communities are throwing this potential away. A father also can hand down a great many Jewish values, and therefore it is unfair to simply push these children away like this." The interviewees desire not only offerings related to religion, but also an interesting **cultural program** that could attract the interest of different age groups, **projects for children, intellectual projects, music, literature**, discussions of books and *films*, so that everyone can find something—and something of high quality at that—for him/herself. Alena (J.m.): "Then you're also willing to invest your own money in it, as in the United States, and build a strong community, and actually only then will the children perhaps be willing to make a *giyur*, if they see what it's for. But if, as is the case today, you often find only unprofessional people (who know only a little about Judaism) and no interesting offerings in the community, then nobody will opt for *giyur*, just to become members of a community of that sort." Antja (J.m., raised in the GDR) addresses the need for *offerings for people who have been socialized in a completely atheistic environment and have little knowledge of Jewish traditions*.

She wants adults to be taught something too, just as children are supervised during the religious service... "Currently I have to impart [to my children] knowledge that I myself don't possess." Therefore, she is delighted about the increase in her children's circle of Jewish friends, and about her children's opportunities to celebrate holidays with other Jewish children.

Some interviewees claim that there are too few *events for the "sandwich generation" and the young adults* in the communities. Natascha (J.f., R.; has been through the *giyur* process): "Today the community is a 'gathering place for the people at the margins.' If somebody goes to the community today, then somehow he is either out of work or a Russian pensioner or an employee of the community. The children from mixed families who are not halachic Jews are allowed to take part in the Jewish Agency's events—that should be an example for the communities, too."

Many interviewees want contact with the community to include *personal/individual attention* with "human warmth and support" (the community in Wuppertal, for example, is mentioned as such a place). The personality of the rabbi, as a *Jewish significant person of reference* who can speak sensitively and open-mindedly about the subject and thus fill Jewish identity with cultural, traditional, and historical content, was mentioned many times (in particular, interviewees made positive comments about the rabbi in Dortmund and the *Bambinim* program).

Out of feelings of loyalty, some Jewish parents stopped going to the community when they felt offended because their non-Jewish spouses and children (in the case of non-Jewish wives) were not accepted by the community. In these cases, they felt they were not accepted as a whole, or they made reference to discrimination. Moris (J.m.) reports that the Jewish community refused to bury his father in the Jewish cemetery because he was not a member of the community. "It was my father's last wish, and they refused to grant it to him." As a result, Moris bears a huge grudge against the community and wants nothing to do with the community as an institution.

Artem (J.f., R.) says that in the community it was explained to him that even though his father is indeed a Jew, his wife is not, and therefore the children are not Jews either. Thus, if there is a death in the family, only Artem's father will be buried in the Jewish cemetery. Artem's father could not accept the idea that he is not permitted to rest beside his beloved wife, so he has distanced himself from the community.

On a related note, there is also a certain danger for people who are needy or people with migration experience. These people need support, and it may be that they seek help from alternative organizations or from sects involved in missionary work (such as Jews for Jesus).

In several cases, however, there are exceptions of a positive kind as well, when mixed families have been allowed to participate in the communities. Favorable mention was made of the fact the Düsseldorf Community permits children born to Jewish fathers to attend the same internal events as children born to Jewish mothers. It was also reported that in Karlsruhe, it is possible to register as a family member of someone who is halachically Jewish, and thus to connect with Jewish life.

13.2 Intercultural Openness

It seems very difficult *to do justice to Jewish heterogeneity* through the offerings in the communities. The frequently mentioned opinion that there is a *lack of diversity-focused*

professionalism on the part of employees in various communities can be summed up as follows: “The future of the Jewish community lies in professionalism!”

Artem (J.f., R.): “The communities need to be made up of employees who have a great deal of knowledge and can make decisions. For example, in Judaism there are many solutions to difficult questions; for instance, you can even arrange for burial of non-Jewish partners in the Jewish cemetery... So they [the community personnel] immediately say, ‘No, that’s impossible,’ and turn away many members, often in situations that could very well be resolved.”

The composition of the Jewish communities in Germany has been significantly changed by the immigration of Russian-speaking Jews. Often, small communities in Germany were overwhelmed by the massive immigration from the former Soviet Union. They needed support from outside to put new structures in place. Many interviewees with migration experience were annoyed after their initial contact with the communities: They saw the community, first and foremost, as a social assistance center, a place to obtain help in the challenging circumstances of emigration and immigration, and they expected *support that was oriented to migration requirements*. These support benefits were denied to mixed families, whose members sometimes were directly told, “We won’t help fill out your papers, because you’re not a Jew,” although these interviewees immigrated with the status of Jewish quota refugees.

With around 95% in the communities (100,000 members) and around 100,000 mixed families that are not members of Jewish communities, Russian-speaking Jews constitute the majority of the Jews in Germany and call for new cultural pathways that make Jewish life more attractive and more accessible for this group (Haug and Schimany, 2005).

Lena (J.f., R.) describes her path to *giyur*. To her, *the availability of Russian-speaking, trained professionals (familiar with Jewish cultural practices)* seemed very important. At a workshop in Berlin, Lena attended *shiurim* offered in Russian by Rav Asher Kushnir. “I just figured it out: This is it! It was a kind of epiphany for me. In one hour, he explained the meaning of life. That sounds impossible, but it was so good and was simply right, and I sensed that either I could just keep on that way now or ... I no longer was able, it was clear to me that now I had to actively do something. And so I learned more and more and more.”

Karl (J.f., R.) also went through the *giyur* process. Today he describes himself as religious. He says, “they shouldn’t put so many obstacles in our way. As our rabbi once said, if somebody has a Jewish father, such people shouldn’t be immediately sent away; instead, someone should explain to them that it is difficult, but not immediately send them away. I’d be glad, of course, if the rabbis would be a little gentler and kinder in dealing with those who already have some knowledge about Judaism... When I had my first conversation with the rabbi and told him that I wanted to follow the process of conversion, I even came out of his office with tears in my eyes.”

In conclusion, it seems important to mention the need for the Jewish institutions to *accept multiple identities, not Jewish identity alone, as legitimate*. Boris (J.f., R.): “Many young adults want to have contact with the Jewish world, but also with the non-Jewish world. But if they become as religious as the communities demand that they be, then they practically have to abandon all contacts with the non-Jewish outside world, and many of them are unwilling to do that, of course.”

14. Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal a strong tendency among participants to *pass on the “mixed families” model* in their own families. Only 19 of the 45 interviewees married a Jewish partner (with a Jewish mother or father). Fewer than half of the interviewees with a Jewish mother have a Jewish spouse. *Exogamy does not necessarily trigger assimilative processes*. Most of the male interviewees with a Jewish spouse have a Jewish mother, which implies that they construct their own family with the intention of having the children be halachically Jewish. Of all the interviewees with a Jewish mother, the absolute majority (22 out of 26) did not marry a Jewish partner. This is not necessarily a sign of assimilation, but rather of acceptance of the halachic definition of Jewish identity, because their children will be Jewish according to this definition, whether the father is Jewish or not.

Among the interviewees with a Jewish father, about half married Jewish partners (7 out of 19), and of these 7 interviewees, more than half (4 out of 7) were male. This suggests that about one-fifth of the interviewees with Jewish fathers ensure that their children will have a Jewish identity in terms of Halacha.

It is important to mention the finding that most of the interviewees maintain their *multiple identities*. Socialization within the mixed families quite often entailed a kind of open (ranging all the way to cosmopolitan) atmosphere, in which tolerance toward different religions was a basis for successful life together within the family. Tolerance, commitment to human values, and sensitivity to social inequalities and discrimination were explicitly addressed by many interviewees, who want to pass on these important values to their children as well. In most cases, however, Jewish identity was a topic addressed in the life stories of the interviewees.

Interestingly, more than half of the interviewees, evenly divided between Jewish father and mother, said that they *wanted to convey and pass on to their children a Jewish identity linked to cultural and traditional practices*.

The nature of this Jewish identity depends heavily, in each case, on the family set-up, influences of *significant others* in the immediate environment, peer group views, and experiences with antisemitism and with institutional influences to which interviewees were subject in the course of their socialization. It is important to emphasize that the climate in the home or unstable family circumstances, as well as conflicts between the parents regarding the practice of different religious rituals, lead to a conflict-laden identity or a conflict-laden way of coping with multiple identities among the children (the interviewees).

Most of the interviewees with a Jewish mother see their Jewish affiliation in terms of halachical rules or accept their identity as a fact established by birth. In our report, this was termed *“biological Jewishness.”* This interpretation provides a basis on which a culturally Jewish identity can—but need not necessarily—develop later on; it is simply not a sufficient condition. By contrast, interviewees with a Jewish father only rarely champion the idea of biological Jewishness. The only interviewees who do accept this notion came from the former Soviet Union and acquired their understanding in a context in which Jewishness was represented and used as an ethnic category, one that was innate and unchangeable (Bernstein 2010). Therefore, most interviewees with a Jewish father have a much stronger cultural understanding of Jewish identity than interviewees with a Jewish mother, who regard this identity as a given.

Thus, it can be asserted that there is no single correct or homogeneous form of Jewishness. Post-modern trends with regard to people's perceptions or images of themselves are mirrored in *special individual ways of comprehending Jewishness*. Most interviewees have an individual *cultural and psychological connection to their Jewish identity*. This connection usually has been activated and developed during adolescence, through certain family rituals and through various activities related to institutions. This category of cultural and psychological Jewishness also includes two additional special types: *situative Jewishness* (that is, self-presentation as Jewish that is dependent on social constellation and interaction, and therefore fragmentary) and *symbolic Jewishness* (that is, selective self-presentation as Jewish by means of certain symbols or practices). Both situative Jewishness and symbolic Jewishness illustrate the concept of *kaleidoscopic Jewish identity*. In some cases, Jewish identity takes center stage as a result of *professional involvement with topics related to Judaism* or because of Jewish public activity.

In addition, there are the forms of Jewishness that are authorized by religious institutions. About half of the interviewees practice various elements of *traditional Jewish identity* (such as fasting on Yom Kippur, keeping a kosher kitchen, or observing Shabbat). These traditional forms of Jewishness, however, are individually interpreted, as, for example, when Shabbat is observed only occasionally, when a woman puts her knowledge of kashrut and *pareve* food to use in her work as a vegan cook, or when attending services at the synagogue and participating in prayers is viewed as meditation. Interestingly, comparison indicates that far more interviewees with a Jewish father feel a need to imbue their Jewish identity with components that are convincing for the individuals themselves and for their environment, and in this way to prove to society, too, that they are Jewish.

Out of the total of 45 interviewees, 10 described themselves as religious. They were more apt to be children of Jewish fathers than of Jewish mothers. The numbers seem to be relatively large (and therefore in need of explanation). Those who describe themselves as religious developed their religiousness during adolescence and later, but it did not come from their family of origin. Interestingly, all the participants who view themselves as *religious Jews* come from the former Soviet Union, where religion and Jewish tradition were severely restricted or even banned entirely for a large part of the twentieth century. All these participants were from atheist families, and they discovered and developed their religious identity only after perestroika and especially as a result of migration and the resulting identity crises. In the Soviet Union they were regarded as Jews, but through migration they became Russians in public perception and in the Jewish communities. It should be noted that once the Russian immigrants arrived in Germany, the Russian language and *intercultural skills in the communities and institutions* played a pivotal role in communicating Jewish traditions, religion, and history.

The connection to Jewish institutions seems to be important to the Jewish awareness of the majority of those interviewed. No interviewee with a Jewish father, owing to the dictates of Halacha, holds membership in the Jewish community. But on the other hand, only slightly more than half of the interviewees with Jewish mothers are members of the Jewish community. In many interviews, loyalty to the non-Jewish family members, who were not treated well in the communities, was cited as a reason for not joining the community. This phenomenon indicates that the communities, by excluding the non-Jewish spouses, run the risk of losing the halachic Jews as well. A great many of the interviewees consider themselves Jewish but are not recognized as Jews by the community. More than half of the interviewees make use of alternative Jewish institutional frameworks and offerings to live out their Jewish identity.

Almost half of the interviewees state that *political participation* is important to them. It is especially interesting that political affinity for a party and participation in the political process, in most cases, are heavily conditional on the *attitudes* of the particular German party *toward the State of Israel*. To the majority of the interviewees, the State of Israel represents an emotionally positive, significant, identity-establishing concept and place of reference, even though critical views with respect to the policies of the State of Israel also are expressed on occasion. Several mention that they feel obligated to stand up for Israel in the often negative, stereotype-filled discussions with non-Jews, or to make efforts to educate the public. This educational work, however, is not always done voluntarily. Many interviewees report that they react negatively to being perceived, on the basis of their identification as Jews (regardless of whether they have a Jewish mother or a Jewish father), as “representatives” of the State of Israel and to being forced to “perform” accordingly. Nevertheless, several even initiate discussions on the topic of Israel on Facebook.

Two additional phenomena are decisive factors for the interviewees’ feeling of being Jewish: the Holocaust and antisemitism.

The subject of the *Holocaust* was mentioned by almost one-third of the interviewees. Whether they were from the former Soviet Union or not, the interviewees consistently report that these topics were taboo, were not discussed by the participants in public and usually not at home either, and—in the case of the Russian emigrants—were engaged with only slowly and reluctantly, after migration (Bernstein 2010). Some interviewees without a migration background did not learn until adolescence, and after doing research on their own initiative, that their relatives had been killed in the Holocaust. Until then they had felt that the Holocaust did not affect them personally. Lena (J.f.): “For a long time, I thought that I hadn’t lost anybody during the Shoah, but then I did a little research and found out that I, too, had lost great-aunts in the war.”

All the interviewees who addressed the topic are children from mixed families in which one parent comes from a family of Shoah victims and the other parent is from a family that included perpetrators or a German family that was “on the other side” during the war. This particular family composition especially affects the identity of the interviewees in question and leads to conflicts of loyalty. These people feel compelled to maintain loyalties to both parents and to reconcile the frequently conflicting German and Jewish positions. In these cases, the importance of finding the Jewish identity (even though associated with ambivalent feelings) and the need for sensitivity are especially great. Many felt that discussion of the Holocaust in history class was unpleasant and burdensome, especially if the interviewee, as the only Jewish person in the class, was involuntarily pushed into a role (either as pitied victim or as an expert on the subject). Often the person, in comparison with his or her classmates, who did not take the subject personally, was emotionally overwhelmed in the situation. Some also addressed the tension between German, a language they love and in which they think and feel, and the burdensome history of certain German words and phrases (such as *Gas geben* (step on the gas), *Eisenbahn* (train), *schnell* (quick), *ich geh duschen* (I’m going to take a shower)). Michael (J.f.): “I can’t escape from this language, my brain is almost cut in two by this kind of painful ambivalence, speaking the language of extermination and not having any other language.”

These personal narratives, which were perceived as painful and associated with grief for the relatives who died or were affected, were told by almost one-third of the interviewees—a significant number. They point to the passing down of Holocaust narratives and their long-term implications even for the third and fourth generations.

Another phenomenon that strongly shapes the Jewish identity of most interviewees is *antisemitism*. Almost half of the interviewees mention their own experiences of antisemitism, situations in which they were witnesses, or stories handed down by their parents. This finding corresponds to the latest finding of the research done by Lars Riensman on the rise in antisemitism. Riensman states, with reference to antisemitism in Europe, “that in 2009 there was the largest number of antisemitic incidents since 1995” (Riensman 2012).

It is interesting that in the interviews, the interviewees with a Jewish father thematize their experiences with antisemitism more frequently than the interviewees who have a Jewish mother. One possible explanation for the more frequent discussion of antisemitism by the interviewees with Jewish fathers may lie in their identity dilemma: they are Jewish enough to experience antisemitism but not Jewish enough to satisfy institutional requirements for acceptance as Jews. Almost all those who were interviewed (with the exception of religious interviewees) think this policy is unfair or discriminatory. The most common context in which antisemitism occurs is the German institution of *Schule*, school (the finding corresponds to other studies, such as Stender 2010; Bernstein, Dern, Inowlocki, and Oberlies 2010). Other settings in which antisemitism was experienced were universities, the public street, the subway, the soccer field, the village, doctors’ offices, and the interviewees’ own families (remarks made by non-Jewish grandparents: “Don’t bring that Jew into my house.”) Mentioned as forms of antisemitism were primary antisemitism of the direct type, that is, expressed through verbal violence, ignorance, and exclusion from the group (for example, when a child who for years had wanted to sit next to a girl suddenly refuses to do so after learning that she is Jewish), teasing at school, use of the word “Jew” as an insult, as well as new types such as anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism, and antisemitism as a result of the conflict in the Middle East or resulting from provocative questions such as those put by a female history teacher to the only Jewish person in her class: “What difference is there between Shamir and Arafat, Mrs. Levin? Please tell us! Shamir is a terrorist too, surely.”

In broad terms, the interviewees employ two distinct strategies for coping with experiences of antisemitism or with lack of sensitivity in the dominant environment with regard to topics associated with Israel and the Holocaust (but also with circumcision, for example). The first strategy is to hide the Jewish identity in public—in this case, the children are not given Jewish names, no symbols are worn, and Jewishness is lived out only in a protected private space (if at all) or is suppressed, and the process of assimilation continues. The second coping strategy is to come to grips with the Jewish identity, invest it with positive content, look for a supportive setting (in the form of an institution), and seek to create an inner balance between the Jewish part and the other parts of the multiple identities. Precisely in this sense, it remains extremely important for Jewish institutions, which bear responsibility for the destinies of all Jews, to embrace diversity and provide offerings that do greater justice to mixed families as well.

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Paris

+33 1 56 59 79 79
(fax) +33 1 56 59 79 89

Oxford

+44 1 86 55 77 572

Buenos Aires

+54 11 48 27 75 53

Email

contact@jdc-iccd.org

Web

www.jdc-iccd.org

