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Narrative routes to Jewish religious pluralistic identities

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Abstract

This paper addresses the relation between various elements of Jewish religious identity, in the sense of the narratives Jews create about their religiosity, and stances they hold towards those whom they consider "others". These stances range from prejudice, via tolerance, to pluralism. The first part of the paper lays the theoretical foundations for the claim that multiple identities might foster open-mindedness among religious individuals. This is done first by describing the empirical link between prejudice and religious identity and reflecting on some of its causes; then by questioning the ubiquity of that link by demonstrating the connection between openness to others and religiosity in other studies, and offering some explanations for the contextual differences between the two sets of findings. One variable which is highlighted is the complex and multiple personal identity structure of certain believers and religious communities. Possible reasons for the mediating role of complex identity on the religion-pluralism link are offered. The second part of the paper demonstrates this claim through narrative excerpts taken from two qualitative studies of religious Jews: Israeli religious psychoanalytic therapists managing their religious and professional identities, and California Bay Area Jews who narrate their religious life-story and discuss the way they relate to outgroups. The studies identify two strategies frequently used by participants to uphold a committed Jewish religious identity and simultaneously adhere to a pluralistic world-view. I term these strategies "Principled cognitive pluralism" and "Transformative identity narratives." I explain how each strategy

supports the mutual enhancement of Jewish religious identity and pluralistic thought, and discuss some of the educational implications of these findings.

Keywords: Religious identity, Pluralism, Multiple identities, Religious commitment, Prejudice

Jewish educators who are committed to fostering strong Jewish religious identities while concurrently promoting values of pluralism and openness towards others may at times sense a conflict between these two goals. As many social psychologists argue, group identities in general and religious identities in particular tend to invoke in-group favoritism rather than openness to others (Aaronson, 2011; Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The role of religion in fostering universal brotherhood is typically seen as offset by its role in rejecting the "other". As Gordon Allport argued, "The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice. . . The sublimity of religious ideals is offset by the horrors of persecution in the name of these same ideals." (1954, p. 444)

For psychologists, one of the keys to understanding prejudice lies in how individuals construe their identity. Put in narrative terms, this means deciphering the ongoing and ever-changing story that people tell about who they are and how they relate to others. The question I will be addressing in this paper is that of the relation between Jewish religious identity, in the sense of the narratives Jews create about their religiosity, and stances they hold towards those they consider outsiders or "others".

Recent developments in identity research have brought to the fore theories of multiple identities, which posit that different elements of identity coexist non-integratively and fragmentarily in the individual psyche (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; Gergen, 1991; Lifton, 1993; Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Schachter, 2004), contrary to Erikson's earlier Integrated Identity theory (1968). In this paper I will argue that for perplexed Jewish educators, the concept of multiple identities may hold an important key towards realizing the dual goal of a committed and pluralistic Jewish religious identity. The first part of the paper will offer an analytical framework for considering pluralistic thought through the lens of multiple identity theory. The second part of the paper will describe two psychological mechanisms which I identify as being narratively utilized by religious Jews who are staunch pluralists. In so doing, I will draw upon excerpts taken from two case-studies, involving

qualitative interviews with such individuals.

At the Multiple Identities in Jewish Education conference (January 2009) keynote speaker Lee Shulman called for pursuing "pedagogies of multiple identity formation" in Jewish education, explaining: "The more identities you can inhabit with integrity, the higher the probability… that you can achieve your goals as a human being." This paper is an attempt to heed that call from a social and individual perspective.

An analytic framework of pluralistic religious identities

Let us begin with the problem: Pluralism is not a natural bed-fellow of monotheistic religions. In fact, it lies at the heart of the shift from a religiously-centered culture to a secular one (Yovel, 2007, p. 18). It signifies that a multiplicity of values in meaning-systems is possible, weakening religion's power as an absolute source of meaning and authority. The secular consideration of individuals as autonomous agents of choice leads to a culture in which the need to be recognized by others is seen as morally obligating, a core element of pluralistic thought. This would seem to indicate that an authentic Jewish religious pluralist identity is an unlikely combination.

There are two directions from which to query the viability of being a religious pluralist. First, can one be truly religious without risking one's pluralism? Second, can one be truly pluralistic without compromising one's religious commitment? In this part of the paper, I will first review the general link between group identities and outgroup bias and the more specific link between religiosity and prejudice. Next, I will discuss the psychological difficulty of upholding a committed religious identity while thinking pluralistically. Finally, I will apply the concept of multiple identities as a lens through which to explore how pluralistic religiosity can be maintained despite these challenges.

Identity, religious identity, and Jewish identity as fostering exclusivism

As noted, there are reasons to suspect Jewish identity of being positively correlated with negative attitudes (such as prejudice, intolerance, exclusivism and ingroup favoritism) towards those who are religiously, ethnically or otherwise "different." This may stem from either half of the phrase "Jewish identity."

To begin with the latter, any social identity which defines who we are has the inevitable effect of demarcating who we are *not*. As social

psychologists have long documented, thinking in terms of ingroups means relegating others to outgroups, which may lead to a host of negative attitudes towards their members. Social Identity Theory (SIT) argues that individuals maintain a positive social identity by belonging to groups, and increase their self-esteem by comparing themselves favorably to members of relevant outgroups (Brown, 2000; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Studies have shown that even when randomly assigned to minimally meaningful groups, people will favor ingroup members in a variety of ways (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Researchers have pointed to the developmental and evolutionary sense that such a mechanism makes, since the human need "to identify some people as allies and others as enemies…evolves from the individual's efforts to protect his sense of self, which is intertwined with his experiences of ethnicity, nationality, and other identifying circumstances" (Volkan, 1985, p. 219).

Shifting our focus to the religious sphere, reviews of empirical studies have underscored the positive correlation between a strong religious identity and prejudice. To cite some of the most extensive reviews, Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis (1993) showed that 37 of 47 studies published between 1940 and 1990 found religiosity to be positively associated with prejudice, with only two studies finding the two to be negatively associated. This finding holds even when religious individuals are distinguished by orientation: Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) reviewed 16 studies from 1992-2003 that distinguished the Intrinsically religious from the Extrinsic, Quest and Religious-Fundamentalist (RF) oriented[1]. Religious individuals belonging to all but the Quest orientation evidenced prejudice towards groups whose "otherness" was non-proscribed by their religious establishment at

1 The religious orientation scales have become commonplace in the empirical psychology of religion since Allport & Ross (1967) distinguished between Extrinsic and Intrinsic religious motivations (although the two were later found to be orthogonal): Extrinsically religious individuals practice religion as a means to other ends, which are usually social goals. Theirs is an externalized, consensual, utilitarian orientation to religion. Intrinsically religious individuals see religiosity as a goal in itself, and base their religiosity on internalized, sincere faith (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Batson (1993) later added the Quest orientation: Religious individuals characterized as high on Quest orientation consider themselves seekers rather than knowers, and their religious approach tends to be searching, skeptical, open, and flexible. The fourth orientation is termed Religious Fundamentalist (RF), and it entails a certainty of belief and sense of absolute truth usually based on literal understanding of sacred texts (See Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009 for a review and critiques; see Cohen and Hill, 2007 for a critique of applying the religious orientations schema to Judaism).

the time of the study (e.g. gays, lesbians, and atheists) and many also expressed prejudice towards groups whose "otherness" was at that time proscribed by their religion (e.g. racial minorities). A meta-analysis of 61 studies conducted by Whitley (2009) regarding attitudes of religious individuals towards gays and lesbians found significant negative effects for Intrinsically oriented and RF religious individuals, indicating that for those groups higher levels of religiosity were related to more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Hood, Hill, & Spilka (2009), in a review of the topic, concluded that "As a broad generalization, the more religious a person is, the more prejudiced that person is" (p. 411), noting that religious group membership per se can contribute to negative attitudes and intolerance towards religious outgroup members (p. 426). Finally, a recent meta-analysis of 55 studies pertaining to the link between religion and racism found that a strong religious ingroup identity was associated with a disparagement of racial outgroups (Hall, Matz, &Wood, 2010). Taken together, these reviews indicate that the religion-prejudice link, as pertains to both individuals and groups, is robust. It also indicates that this link is not inescapable; religious individuals of a Quest orientation, for example, seem to evade it.

The "Jewish" aspect of the term "Jewish identity" can be considered on three levels: as a world-view, as a religious praxis, and as an historical-ethnic category. Judaism as a world-view might conceivably contribute to a rejection of others by being a monotheistic religion, and by presenting itself as a religion of "the chosen people." The basic ideal of monotheism signifies a single set of truths bearing witness to a single God. Historically, monotheism has often relegated other religions or beliefs to the category of "mistakes to be tolerated" at best or to "abominations to be eradicated" at worst. While examples can be found of polytheistic societies demonstrating religious intolerance, monotheism seems far more susceptible to it, due to the singular truth-value attached to it (Armstrong, 2000; Assman, 2008; Harari, 2011; Kirsch, 2004).

Additionally, many traditional renditions of Judaism include a component of particularism, which mark the Jews as God's chosen people, set apart from and different than all other people. This can be evidenced in multiple religious praxes keeping Jews separate from non-Jews, from rules regarding wine preparation and joint eating, to a strict policy against intermarriage. Moreover, the route towards believing that Jews are also *better* than other people and preferred by God has

been traversed in Jewish thought, and at times, set political policy.[2] This ideological tendency was probably fueled by the lived experience of Diaspora Jews over millennia, many of whose encounters with non-Jews involved anti-Semitic persecution. A key decree, "Zakhor," has commanded the Jews since biblical times to actively remember their history of persecution (Yerushalmi, 1982); sociologists and psychologists considering contemporary Jewish Israeli society are often struck by the predominant tendency of Israelis to reject "others" and attribute this, among other factors, to deep-seated Jewish collective memory codes of rejecting the non-Jewish persecutor (Bar-On, 1999; Bar-Tal, 2007; Yair, 2011; Zerubavel, 1995).

However, for every thinker who emphasized the supremacy of the Jews over other nations, another can be found who underscored the common brotherhood of humanity. Both positions are rooted in ancient Jewish sources, with Talmudic sayings such as "you [Israel] are called man and the gentiles are not called man" (Bavli, Bava Metzia 114b) or "A Gentile who studies Torah is punishable by death" (Bavli, Sanhedrin 59a) offset by others such as "'Beloved is man for he is created in [God's] image' (Mishnah Avot 3:17)" or "Even a gentile who engages in the study of Torah is like a Jewish high priest" (Bavli, Avodh Zarah 3a). Rather than equating Judaism with exclusivism, it would be more accurate to say that Judaism evidences a dialectic relationship between particularistic and universalistic trends (Goldberg, 1997).

An appraisal of diverse Jewish communities will also show that empirically there is diversity in attitudes towards "others". Studies of religious Jews in Israel point to a strong positive correlation between the level of religiosity and the level of prejudice (Arian et al., 2010; Guttman study, 2009), above and beyond the general tendency of many

2 This has been done to the extent of considering the Jews a separate and superior genus to the rest of mankind. One example is Rabbi A.Y.H. Kook's text: "The difference between the Jewish soul, in all its independence, inner desires, longings, character and standing, and the soul of all the gentiles, on all of their levels, is greater and deeper than the difference between the soul of a man and the soul of an animal, for the difference in the latter case is one of quantity, while the difference in the first case is one of essential quality" (Orot Yisrael chapter 5, article 10). Radical contemporary ramifications of this line of thought can be found in in Y. Shapira and Y. Elitzur's Halachic treatise "Law of the King" (2009), which includes such statements as "from our perspective, we are separated from the gentiles by a thousand thousands of grades and there is no reason that prohibitions applying to them should apply to us" (p.33) or "The life of a non-Jew foreign resident ["Ger Toshav"] is superseded by the life of a Jew ("Yisrael") and it is permitted to kill a foreign resident in order to save the life of a Jew" (p.161).

Israeli Jews to suspect "others". However, studies conducted in other Jewish communities, such as in the U.S., show that Jews tend to be more tolerant and express less prejudice than other denominations, often at the level of non-religious individuals (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Beatty & Walter, 1984; Gay & Ellison, 1993). One study even found that the more religious American Jews were, the less prejudiced they were (Ruttenberg, Zea, & Seligman, 1996). Such data highlights the importance of contextual variables in moderating the religiosity-prejudice link.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) presented above may shed some light on why the Jewish case is so context-dependent in terms of ingroup bias. First, group boundary permeability has been shown to lower ingroup favoring bias (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Judaism in this sense has changed from an impermeable identity category up until the mid-20th century to a much more fluid one in recent years. Second, minority status has been shown to be inversely correlated with ingroup bias; people who belong to low-status and/or minority groups will generally be less susceptible to outgroup denigration than those who belong to a high-status or dominant group (Ellemers, 1993). Whereas Jews in most places in the world are a minority, the Jewish Israeli community is a dominant majority, and this may have a strong influence on the way outgroups are perceived. Therefore, the question of which attitude prevails is largely a function of context: How threatened is a particular Jewish community by outside forces? What are the external influences to which it is permeable and how resistant is it to them? (Sagi, Schwartz, & Stern, 1999; Yuval, 2006).

Indeed, the importance of context prevails in *any* assessment of the link between religiosity and prejudice. Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) conclude that:

> *The social context in which religiosity exists may determine the role religion plays in prejudice, in addition to (or interacting with) the specific content or form of religiosity; religions can uphold legitimizing myths that explain and sustain problems such as inequality (e.g., conservative and heritage values), but may also sometimes promote and sustain traditions intended to support diversity and tolerance (e.g., multiculturalism). (p. 818)*

To recap, religiosity and prejudice often go hand in hand, possibly as a special case of the tendency of any group-identity to foster ingroup favoritism, but this tendency is moderated by context and by individual

preference, allowing for a real possibility that under certain circumstances the two might part ways.

Does pluralism weaken the committed religious identity?

Let us now turn to a stance quite the opposite of prejudice: pluralism. There are various terms connoting openness and goodwill to others, ranging from reluctant tolerance to celebratory multiculturalism (Sagi, 1999). I will focus on value pluralism, defined, following Isaiah Berlin, as a cognitively-directed valuing of multiplicity. Value pluralism is not a rights-based willingness to tolerate others but the positive embracement of a "value about values," claiming that multiplicity is fundamental to human experience (Berlin, 1990). Value pluralism is rooted in a cognitive form of pluralistic thought and may express itself behaviorally in cultural pluralism. As a subtle and sometimes counter-intuitive notion, cognitive pluralism entails such socio-cognitive abilities as ambiguity-tolerance, complex thinking and empathic capacity (Novis-Deutsch, 2003; Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996). It is articulated in the stance that two opposing claims, values, or beliefs can be “true” or “real” simultaneously. I see it as a prerequisite for cultural pluralism, which involves a positive moral/relational stance towards others. Elsewhere I have argued that without a cognitive basis that considers “truth” to be multifaceted or elusive, openness to others can only go so far, and might easily crumble in situations of perceived inter-group conflict (Novis-Deutsch, 2010). Just as prejudice can be understood in evolutionary terms as reflecting a preference for those with a shared gene-pool by rejecting strangers, so can pluralism be understood as a way of coping with the many forms of cognitive dissonance forced upon us by culture (Harari, 2011); instead of being explained away or ignored, they are embraced. This raises the question of what happens when our biological and cultural layers come into conflict. Will cognitive pluralism override our suspicion towards outgroups? This seems likely to happen only if cognitive pluralism has taken root as a core part of our personal identity.

For religious individuals, this entails some theological and psychic coping, and as I will argue in the second part of the paper, one way to approach the challenge involves multiple identity management strategies. However, we have one further difficulty to consider first in evaluating the option of a religious pluralist identity.

Committed identities reflect long term behavioral obligations inspired by values, maintained even under difficult circumstances, and

upheld by the sense of a freely-chosen duty to it (Nisan, 2006). One of the concerns voiced by religious educators is that people's commitment to their religious identity will be weakened by embracing pluralism, or that being pluralistic is a reflection of their weak and uncommitted religious identity in the first place.

Social Identity Theory supports this concern by demonstrating repeatedly that the stronger the ingroup identification, the more negative the outgroup attitudes (Brown, 2000). High identifiers also engage in more stereotyping behavior towards others (Spears & Doosje, 1997). If so, would it not make sense to conclude that more positive outgroup attitudes must reflect weaker ingroup identification?

Although logically this conclusion needn't follow, it makes "identity sense." People search for certainty, and religion provides it, whereas pluralism interjects a certain level of uncertainty. Van den Bos et al. (2006) showed that casting uncertainty on a person's religious identity leads them to react by defensively denigrating others. It would seem that there is something about the pluralistic stance that goes against the grain of religiosity. Rabbi David Wolpe eloquently described the underlying psychological mechanism linking commitment to a non-pluralistic attitude:

> *A fundamental conflict exists within the soul of every human being – […] the conflict between passion and pluralism. […] You find, by and large, that the more passionate someone is about his faith, the less pluralistic they tend to be. And the truth is that there is this clash between passion - that is, willing to believe something deeply and profoundly, willing to live for it and willing to die for it - and being pluralistic. And thinking that someone else might have an opposite opinion that is actually worthy, and not just foolish and depraved. […] The people who tend to be more pluralistic are the people who tend not to be as passionate. And they don't understand why can't everybody (sic) just practice whatever they want. But if you really believe that the author of the universe said: "Do this" then it reduces your tolerance for people who do that. (Talk at Temple Sinai, LA, July 17, 2010)*

Wolpe's observation raises a challenge: can this pattern be transformed in such a way that highly committed religious individuals embrace pluralism, perhaps even as an integral part of their religious outlook? Some argue that such a reversal not only makes sense, it is ethically necessary. Nisan (2006) contends that in order to be fully committed to one's identity, a person must paradoxically maintain

a sense of uncertainty and to be aware of other legitimate and viable identity options, since the element of choice is crucial in fostering real commitment. But then, why commit in the first place? Nisan explains that a sense of commitment is invaluable to identity:

> *When commitment defines a person it gives their life meaning and purpose. In doing this, commitment elevates a person. By committing to one's identity out of free choice, people establish themselves as autonomous beings who direct their life by the goals and boundaries they set for themselves. (ibid. p. 25)*

This sort of commitment actually contains within it the seeds of openness to others. A person's awareness that other identity choices are possible leaves him or her open to other beliefs and identities as alternatives which may not have been chosen but are nevertheless recognized as valid. This is reminiscent of Berlin's definition of value pluralism as "the conception that there are many different ends that people may seek and still be fully rational, capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving delight from each other" (1990, p. 11). Moreover, Nisan suggests that when a person is aware of his commitment having been made without complete certainty, both the anxiety which derives from fear concerning the absolute value of one's faith, and the ensuing emotional rigidity, dissipate.

A questioning sense of commitment can be contrasted to what Sagi (1996) calls a "strict perception of loyalty" in which the conviction that other options are false is believed to be a necessary condition for value loyalty. Here, cognitively negating the "other" is a form of expressing one's religious pathos, a full commitment to one's God. Sagi juxtaposes this with a minority position of some believers who view commitment as entailing choice of a particular way of life despite the existence of other worthy options. The relative validity of one's faith is acknowledged, without impacting the level of commitment to it.

Glaser (2008) contends that for Modern Orthodox Jews, religious commitment is actually dependent upon their ability to construe their identity pluralistically as one form of identity amongst others. In Western culture, which emphasizes humanism and pluralism, questions of identity authenticity and integrity become crucial. In order to be committed to both Western and Jewish identity, religiosity must be combined with a pluralistic outlook.

To sum up, although pluralism is not a natural companion to religiosity, there are ways of thought that enable a religious person to be

fully committed to his or her religious identity while harboring a sense of openness, uncertainty, and pluralism. In fact, this very pluralism fuels their commitment. Such a path is reminiscent of the Quest orientation discussed above (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991), which provides empirical support for the existence of pluralistic religiosity, especially in ideological surroundings that promote pluralism.

Relating to the "other" framed through Multiple Identity theories

The social identity I have been discussing thus far lies at the interface of the personal and the collective. However, in Western cultures, individuals are seen as sites of personal identity, drawing together the ways they are like *all* others, *some* others, and *no* others (Murray and Cluckhohn, 1953). For this reason, the issue of personal identity integration is prominent among identity researchers and has led to at least three distinct approaches.

Integrative approaches claim that a mature identity is coherent and well-integrated. According to Erikson (1968), starting with a set of childhood identifications, the adolescent begins a process of organizing these disparate identifications into a unified self-perception. Integrated identity is seen not only as an account of the kind of identity status achieved by many adults (Marcia, 1980) but also as an identity-ideal. Among the extolled virtues of an integrated identity are a sense of agency (Blasi, 1988), an internal coherence that allow for commitment (Marcia, 1980), and an inner sense of purpose and meaning (McAdams, 1997).

Identity fragmentation approaches espouse a non-integrative principle at the core of human identity. Two variants are the post-modern approach which claims that in contemporary societies individuals have come to prefer fluid, fractured, and choice-directed identities to integrated ones (Lifton, 1993), and the cross-cultural approach which argues that contrary to Western thought patterns, most of the world's cultures are not as constrained by the concept of logical contradiction, and are therefore not committed to identity integration (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Both approaches share the idea that individuals neither integrate their identifications into a coherent unity, nor feel a need to do so.

A third option is that individuals may feel a need to integrate their identities and yet refrain from doing so for various reasons. This approach may be termed the "complex identity" approach and its roots can be traced back to the writings of James (1890/1981, 1907/2010) and Freud (1933) on the self. It has been taken up more recently by cognitive

knowledge organization theories and by social psychologists. Sketched broadly, this approach claims that people are emotionally drawn towards integration, especially when the alternative is a sense of fragmentation. However, due to the tremendously complex nature of the multi-level human consciousness, behavior, and social settings, actual integration is impossible and so individuals end up with multiple identities that don't coagulate. Instead, they manage their identities in various ways, some of which have been documented by researchers (Benet-Martinez, Lee & Leu, 2006; Nisan, 1993; Reid & Deaux, 1996; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Rather than seeing integrative, fragmented, and complex identity theories as competing, Schachter (2004) usefully suggested that they be considered coexisting identity configurations. Instead of arguing that all people do or should integrate their identifications, or countering that in today's world "no one integrates anymore," why not accept a plurality of motivations? Some people are driven to integrate their identity, while others celebrate their ability to express different selves at different times. Still others yearn for integration, which eludes them, or for principled reasons reject integration despite its emotional pull. I would like to focus on this latter group, those with complex, multiple identities that call out to be managed in one way or another.

To clarify the link between the three configurations and various identity integration or management strategies, consider the following table.

Table 1: Identity configurations and identity management strategies

A. Is internal inconsistency/conflict experienced as uncomfortable?		
No	Yes	
	B. Is an effort made to minimize this state?	
	Yes	No
Fragmented identity: **No identity management:** Concept of conflict deemed culturally irrelevant or post-modernly 'celebrated'.	*Integrated identity:* **Integration strategies:** Attempt to "resolve" conflicts, discard unfitting identities, or synthesize via an overarching unifying principle.	*Complex identity:* **Management strategies:** balancing identities, compartmentalizing, ranking, social hyphenation strategies, emotional distancing, or principled pluralism.

As table 1 demonstrates, identity configurations differ according to how they address two key questions: Is internal inconsistency perceived as problematic? If so, is an effort made to minimize this state? Note the distinction between the experience of conflict and the intent to act upon it.

Fragmentary models of identity do not require strategies of coping with identity conflict, since conflict in these models is not a problem: it is either a cultural "given" or a cause for celebration. Only when internal dissonance, conflict, or inconsistency are experienced as uncomfortable is some sort of coping strategy called for. Integration models call for a possible rejection of some identifications and synthesis of others. Complex identity configurations call for non-integrative management strategies such as defensive distancing from the conflict, social strategies of joining forces with other similarily hyphenated-identity individuals, or by balancing or compartmentalizing identifications. A conflict may also be experienced as uncomfortable, and yet remain unresolved by choice. This is expressed as a "principled pluralism" coping strategy.

Several study-sets have found connections between complex identities and openess to others. Here are several examples: Benet-Martínez & Haritatos (2005) demonstrated that the tendency of bi-cultural individuals (e.g., Asian-Americans) to switch between two frames of reference is related to higher cognitive complexity. It has also been found to relate to open-mindedness and acceptance of others. In studies conducted by Roccas & Brewer (2002), social identity complexity (the degree of overlap perceived to exist between groups of which a person is simultaneously a member), has been found to relate to an identity structure that is both inclusive of others and complex. Brewer and Pierce (2005) found that social identity complexity was associated with both political and affective tolerance to outgroups. Brewer described a possible mechanism for the link between complex identity and pluralism using the concept of "cross-cutting identity structures"; when people hold multiple identifications, they are more likely to find something in common with other people, thus leading to what is effectively a more pluralistic stance towards others.

What these studies and theories indicate is that complex identity structures may be more likely to promote pluralism than others, through a willingness to accept the challenge of multiple identities. Benet-Martínez's bi-cultural identity and Brewer and Roccas' complex identity are identity formations that base themselves on a sense that there is more than one way to live a good life. This carries over to the religious identity

sphere as well. Maalouf (2000) writes:

> *when one sees one's own identity as made up of a number of allegiances […] some linked to a religious tradition and others not, then one enters into a different relationship both with other people and with one's own 'tribe.' It's no longer just a question of 'them' and 'us'.... (p. 31)*

Cohen (2010) notes that studies of Jewish identity indicate that such multiple identities are especially pertinent to Jews: "In this regard [the prevalence of multiple identities– N.], Jews were "ahead of the curve," having been forced to negotiate overlapping identities as they struggled to maintain a distinct group identity while adapting to the various cultures in which they lived" (p. 14). He goes on to cite scholars who posit that multiplicity of identity is a defining characteristic of Jews in the Diaspora, and can be considered a strength rather than a burden. Similarly, Glaser (2008) notes that for Western religious Jews, value-plurality and multiple commitments are part and parcel of their complex self-system. This includes value tensions and internal identity juxtapositions that needn't harm their sense of integrity if internal plurality is recognized from the beginning as fundamental to this form of life.

Case studies of Jewish religious identity and pluralistic thought

In the second part of the paper, I will turn to some of my own research to describe two identity-management strategies that I identified in narrative studies of pluralist religious Jews: principled pluralism and narratives of on-going religious transformation.

Case study 1: Religious therapists and their identity conflicts

Psychoanalysis and Judaism have been alternately portrayed as conflicting and as complementary. The historical link between Judaism and psychoanalysis, with its plethora of Jewish analysts and clients as well as its founder earned it the title of "the Jewish science" (Yerushalmi, 1993), while Freud's analysis of religion as a deep cultural illusion (1927) led to its portrayal as a complete antithesis to Jewish religiosity (Gay, 1987). It is this duality that made it an ideal test-case for studying intra-psychic management of multiple identity components among individuals committed to both ideological spheres. How do they manage points of conflict and intersection between these two identities?

In this study, I interviewed 15 psychoanalysts and psychodynamic clinical psychologists who were either Religious Zionist or Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Each participant was asked to discuss his or her religious and professional identity and the interactions between them. A grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to analyze the interviews, with additional category-form and holistic-content analyses (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

Analysis of the interviews revealed six styles of coping, which were a function of the intersection between the perception of closeness/dissonance between the fields and the level of personal involvement in the encounter between them. While some of the participants perceived religious Judaism and psychoanalysis as complementary, others felt they clashed. Likewise, some participants devoted much of their time and energy to dealing with the interaction between psychology and Judaism, while others seldom considered this interaction. The full details of the identity styles and coping mechanisms with identity conflicts are reported elsewhere (Novis Deutsch, 2010), but in this paper I would like to highlight one which was very salient and is pertinent to our topic of principled pluralism.

Each of the participants could recall times where they had to cope with issues of intra-psychic dissonance between their religious and psychoanalytic identifications. These might have had to do with treating homosexual clients, dealing with clients' religious doubts, debating the role of individualism versus community, or wondering which values should inform their personal or therapeutic goals. Overall, fifteen mechanisms of conflict management were identified in the narratives. By far the most widespread of these, utilized by 13 of the 15 participants, involved recognition of dissonance and a refusal to 'resolve' it, out of a pluralistic stance or a wish to preserve the authenticity of a complex identity. This principled pluralism involved a choice to preserve different identifications, assuming that such 'messiness' reflects the irreducibility of human reality to a single principle. This stance was evident even among those who saw Judaism and psychology as harmonious, but still recognized areas where the two were at conflict. For example, Na'ama[3], a therapist who was highly invested in compartmentalizing her identities, described various points of contention between psychology and religious Judaism regarding the stance towards homosexuals:

I'm not scared of this. I can live with these conflicts. With things that

3 All names and identifying details in the two studies I cite have been changed.

don't fit between psychology and religion. For example, how to treat homosexuals, I choose what I go with and that's it. So in this case I'll go with psychology's point of view. It's not breaking the [Jewish religious] law, in my eyes.

When contemplating how they managed experiences of conflict between their religious and psychodynamic identity, many participants noted their pluralistic world-view. They did this even though the question of pluralism was not broached by the interviewer at any time in the interviews. Pluralism was a grounded category stemming directly from the participants' self-construal. Here are some examples:

*Gideon**:** I am a pluralist to my very soul. I mean, I can't describe to you one person who is ideal for humanity. I really believe that people, who are so different, are complete human beings. Religious people, secular people, total atheists, it really doesn't…I couldn't say that the religious one is the ideal one at all… I am really a pluralist through and through. Not as an ideology, but because this is how I experience reality. I meet people who are so different from each other and I can say of them – wow, this is good, this is the way it should be, this is beautiful. And they are totally different from one another.*

Yitzhak: I have to say, both in religion and in psychoanalysis, if a person says to me: "I own the truth - this to me is a red light. Someone who says to me that God wants us to - whatever, I keep on asking myself: "How do you know? Because you talked to Him last night? Was there a phone call?" Same thing in psychology: Someone will say to me: "Freud discovered the truth," or the Relationals, or Object Relations – psychoanalysis too has internal wars that are almost wars of religion, not of science. So there too I always ask myself, if not sometimes out loud: "When have you last done an x-ray of that person's soul that you are so certain that's what it is?" In both cases I have a very hard time with "I know" and "This is the truth."

Note that Yitzhak, a National-Religious psychoanalyst, affirms the monistic tendency of both his belief systems, but this is something that upsets him, a feeling that he keeps largely to himself, as it would not go over well in either his religious or his professional communities.

Aryeh: In that sense my pluralism doesn't fit the religious mode of thought. Because the religious thinking just assumes, and here, it's just that here I feel I don't quite measure up to what is required of me religiously. If I were to take religious thought to its logical conclusion,

> *I'd believe that it's the right way. And not only for myself. That it's the right way because God commanded all Jews to do it, and all Jews who happened to decide not to do it – well, there is a right way. I think I'd have had more of a will to convince them for their own sakes, to do the right thing. And I have no such will. No such need, no such wish.*

Despite Aryeh's concern that not wishing to proselytize his clients may mean his religiosity is lacking, he is in fact a deeply observant man, firmly rooted in his religious community, but also set apart from it by his religious pluralism.

These excerpts delineate a psychic mechanism stemming from a situation of multiple identities, whereby the very existence of identity-multiplicity is taken as a reflection of the complex nature of reality and therefore maintained and extoled as a value in itself – the value of pluralism. Even from just the few passages quoted above, the connection between pluralism as an epistemological stance and pluralism as a form of inclusiveness and openness to others becomes evident.

Case Study 2: Religious Jews of the Bay Area in California

Religious psychotherapists are an anomalous (and small) sample, characterized by ongoing introspection and reflectivity. How might a broader sample of Jews reflect on their religious identities? And what happens when we shift cultural contexts? I searched for a sample of religious Jews who could be expected to consider pluralism an important value by virtue of their ideological surroundings, and found the religious Jewish community of the Bay Area of San Francisco to be such a group. California is dubbed "America's largest laboratory of democracy" and the Bay Area seems to be at the heart of its multicultural endeavor, where, as one participant put it, "we get open-mindedness in our tap water." The Bay Area is home to around half a million Jews. It is vibrant and diverse in practice and activities, characterized by innovative forms of Jewish worship, low rates of congregational affiliation, acceptance of diversity in race and sexual preference, and a high rate of intermarriage. The result is a Jewish community that practices radical pluralism and understanding. To cite one example of the religious pluralism in this area, for the past 15 years all of Berkeley's Jewish communities have been holding a joint "Tikkun" study evening on Shavuot where is possible to see a Hassidic male rabbi teaching alongside a Reform female rabbi. At the same time, this type of pluralism can stretch the boundaries of the Bay Area Jewish community with regard to identity, practice, and beliefs.

I began with an in-depth study of the area's Jewish communities, meeting with the religious and lay leadership and ethnographically immersing myself in various community activities. Next, I conducted 40 in-depth interviews with post college Bay Area adults, equally divided by gender, who self-define as religiously observant Jews. In the interviews, I invited the participants to reflect upon their life story, with a focus on their religious identity. I avoided use of the term "pluralism." After a full narrative life-story was elicited, I asked participants to elaborate on their God concepts and stance towards various "others".

Through the interviews I conducted, I met very different religious Jews, of diverse Jewish denominations (although all defined themselves as religiously observant in order to qualify for this study). Nearly all of them expressed sincere openness and acceptance to every kind of "other" I asked about – gay and lesbian, atheists, Christians and Muslims, and Jews of other denominations. The pluralist narrative was far more common than the tolerant one. I also found that very few of the participants, including the most religiously observant, subscribed to 'standard' traditional Jewish narratives about God. Many expressed their theological grappling with the conflict between elements of Orthodox Jewish exclusivism and the Bay Area inclusivist spirit by generating pluralistic renditions of revelation, commandments, and sacred text. At the same time, most participants expressed a deep commitment to their religious Jewish identity in a multitude of behaviors. Many also shared a great passion for their Judaism (which was supposedly part of what induced them to be interviewed for the study in the first place).

The interviews that I analyzed illuminate several identity management strategies. I would like to focus on one narrative route to religious pluralism, which was especially prevalent: narratives of on-going religious transformation. If narratives are analyzed in terms of their trajectory or the form of their time-lines, we recognize that different identity narratives take different forms: Some are narratives of continuity, with vectors of either no change (a straight monotonous line), of linear progress (an upward heading straight line) or of decline (a downwards heading straight line). Other time-line narratives are circular: a theme repeats itself in different variations. Finally, there are "narratives of transformation" that reflect changes in vector. For example, the plot line may begin by heading upwards, reach a peak, and then slope downwards (Zerubavel, 2003). Interestingly, whereas the identity narratives of the religious therapists in the Israeli study were almost all narratives of religious continuity (with a typical introduction to their

story being "My religiosity is pretty much the same as the one I practiced when growing up"), the narratives of the American religious Jews were overwhelmingly ones of transformation. Some of them included so many twists and turns in their plot as to make them suitable for soap-opera scripts. People started off as secular, as Ultra-Orthodox, as Christian Fundamentalists, or as atheists; they shifted in their faith, in their denomination, and in their practice; they moved from complete belief to complete atheism, married within the faith, married out of the faith, found their true gender identity and shifted religiously accordingly; they went through crises, converted, became totally uninvolved for years, rejoined, reinvented themselves, left, and returned. The one thing that all these Jews had in common was that at the time of interview, they were in a completely different place than the one in which they had started. Here are two brief examples:

Ruth, in her 50s, was born into an unaffiliated San Francisco family, and spent her childhood wondering about her roots:

> *My parents are both Jewish. I always knew we were Jewish but we didn't go to Temple. […]. Things got tangled, they got blocked. We did not go to Temple. Something was blocked and painful about their Judaism which I didn't understand. I kept trying in many, many ways to explore being Jewish. I only knew some things but I was still Jewish. I was thinking: "I'm Jewish, they're Jewish, how come they know this and I don't?" … It never made any sense to me. I had no idea about Shabbat, I had no knowledge. Zero, zero knowledge.*

As she grew up she went through periods of complete disengagement from her Jewish identity and through other periods of trying to learn and become a part of it all:

> *I kept trying and I couldn't quite figure out how to fit it. I went to different temples, nothing quite clicked. Once I went to services, and I didn't know any of the prayers. The music I knew somehow. I asked my mom how this could be and she said: I have no idea.*

A moment of transformation came when her parents began aging. Their mortality must have been on her mind at that stage:

> *Then I got a book by some Orthodox Rabbi, who talked about Kaddish. I thought: "I need to be able to say kaddish!" and that's what moved me. Then I thought: "I have to learn Hebrew! I want to say kaddish and know what I'm saying!" So I go to a class, I start learning, it's fantastic, I fall in love with Hebrew. The sound… it speaks to me so*

deeply. And it goes straight in and I fly. Now I realized: I need to really study. I want to be able to get my education!

She joined a synagogue and began a long journey to Jewish knowledge and into her family's heritage:

This excitement, this interest, and then pieces, pieces just came together. …And more stories came out of other people, stories that couldn't be talked about, couldn't be… pieces of history. I don't know exactly, places where people are snagged. It's a ripple and it keeps rippling in me personally too…

At the time of the interview, her narrative of religious transformation was far from complete: "I'm not quite… I'm wanting something more but I'm not…I'm still trying to figure out where I'll be … This is not about the past at all. It's a renewal."

As a second example, Jessie, in her 30's, tells of the religious changes she went through, beginning with an enlightening anecdote from her childhood:

For many years I never even knew that I was Jewish. I suppose my parents were but there was nothing in my house in particular. When I was about seven I became very close with a Mormon friend I had and started going with him to church because he's my friend…so my mom decided … that we would kind of explore, you might say. So, I was about seven and every Friday night we would go to one synagogue, every Saturday morning to another one, and Sunday we would go to church. And we went to every and any religious institution that was in an hour's radius from our house. So I went to the Hare Krishna, I went to the Moslem mosque, we hit everything…. After a year my mother held a meeting and she was like: "so, which religion did you like the best?" blank stares. So she was like: "Well, I guess we were born Jewish, we might as well be Jewish."

That was how Jessie's story begun. It evolved to include a religious period with a local Chabad community, a period of being Reform, marriage to a non-Jew, estrangement from Judaism, divorce and marriage to a secular Israeli, finally becoming member of the Conservative congregation of her town. Her path led her all the way to becoming a Jewish educator:

Today I consider myself Conservadox. [A hybrid of Conservative and Orthodox -N.] I feel like I can fit into many settings. […] and now I'm a Jewish educator, it's my profession. I teach in multiple places, Hebrew

> *classes, I prepare students for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. I myself never had a Bat Mitzvah myself. It was never a big deal to anybody else so I guess it wasn't to me. … In --- I was diagnosed with cancer and I decided: I'm not going to do stuff that I don't enjoy doing. … I decided: You know what? I really just love teaching. So that's what I'm going to do. And I love teaching B'nei Mitzva, I love the connection and I think there's a lot of beauty in Judaism. … I'm doing it because it brings me joy, because it makes me connected.*

Although several themes are evident in these two examples, including a strong element of individualistic religiosity (as described by Cohen & Eisen, 2000), a theme of shifting from a "black hole" of Jewish ignorance to finding Jewish knowledge (also found by Tickton Schuster, 2005), the predominant theme is one of on-going change. This pattern of religious transformation will not surprise scholars of American religion. Putnam (2010) found that transformations in religiosity characterize large segments of American adults, including high ratios of shifting between denominations. Cohen & Eisen found that increasing numbers of American Jewish adults are "explorers in Judaism, people in perpetual quest of Jewish meaning" (2000, p. 38). Their Jewish identities are not fixed, but undergo constant change.

What I would like to suggest is that this transformative pattern also functions as a *narrative route for reconciling pluralism and religiosity*. The participants' pluralism was expressed not only by intersecting identifications but also by reinventing their personal religious identity temporally via a "transformative identity." This led to a sense of truth as incomplete or in progress, creating space for pluralistic thought. If a person was, along the way, a non-affiliated Jew, a Christian, and an Orthodox Jew, then he or she harbors an emotional sense of multiple legitimate ways of being religious. It is difficult to delegitimize the other if I *was* that other. Moreover, I may change again in future – so my religious identity must retain an element of uncertainly and openness. Religion, according to these sorts of narratives, is all about change.

Discussion

In this paper I posited that the very multiplicity of a religious Jew's identity can foster an internal sense of openness and humbleness regarding the absolute truth-value of Judaism vis-à-vis other identities and ideologies. This sense of multiplicity may shake a person's complete

certainty in their world-view, but it needn't disturb their commitment to the Jewish element of their identity. One of its benefits, on the other hand, may be the promotion of a sense of pluralism, which seems crucial in today's multicultural world, thus perhaps weakening the long-existing link between religiosity and prejudice.

My study of religious therapists was designed to examine cases in which a person becomes fully committed to two world-views, each on its own complete and monistic. I wondered whether people who are socialized with a double dose of ideological monism would be especially monistic or whether the very fact of their dual monism would steer them in other directions. The religious therapists I interviewed expressed high levels of pluralistic thought as an overarching 'value about values' which served them as a strategy for dealing with identity conflicts. This pluralism was upheld despite their own acknowledgment of the monistic nature of both their religious and professional socialization groups.

As regards the issue of commitment, the first study found that most participants utilized principled pluralism as a way of recognizing dissonance, and then consciously rejecting the temptation to 'resolve' it. Whether as a result of this or as its cause, and probably as a mixture of both, almost all participants expressed a deep commitment to value-pluralism, despite being committed to monistic ideologies. It would seem that among religious people who hold onto a second identity component with a potential for dissonance, identity can be organized around the principle of pluralism without diminishing the level of religious commitment by applying personal integrity to the process of identity formulation.

The second study of Bay Area Jews uncovered a narrative feature which social scholars of religion have been identifying among religious Americans for some time: that of transformative religiosity. Although questions of commitment surface more readily in this sort of identity, it is worth noting that it does seem to suit the American pluralistic climate admirably; it connotes the legitimacy of multiple identities not only contemporaneously but temporally.

It is important to note that both studies focused on small and/or unique communities. Religious psychotherapists in Israel number less than a thousand. Bay Area Jews, while more numerous, were chosen specifically because their cultural milieu is among the most ideologically multicultural in the entire United States. This might raise the question of the transferability and educational relevance of the research findings to other communities: Would the entire national-religious population

in Israel be able and willing to combine religious commitment with a pluralistic outlook? Would Orthodox Jews of the East Coast of the U.S. reflect the same preference for transformative religious identity? The short answer is that we won't know until we try. A more nuanced answer is that what we are considering here is not the probable but the possible. Once demonstrated that in some contexts (be they cultural or individual) individuals are cognitively and emotionally capable of building on their pluralism to strengthen their Jewish identity and of utilizing their Jewish worldview to support their pluralistic one, then the rest is up to education, that powerful set of tools capable (we hope) of turning "what ought to be" into "what is."

Studies of the religion-prejudice link often take the extra step of recommending strategies for reducing prejudice towards others among religious individuals. These include encouraging positive interactions with targets of prejudice (Allport, 1954), focusing on the universalistic messages of the religion (Batson & Stocks, 2005), and practicing mindfulness meditation (Polinska, 2009). This paper suggests that another way of reducing religious prejudice is by encouraging pluralistic thinking. Fostering pluralism needn't be done via the philosophical-cognitive route. It can be done by helping religious individuals realize that they themselves embody multiple identities, and that just as they are complex selves, and the world is a complex place, so is religious truth a complex terrain. This might help establish the idea that any single human version of the truth is bound to be partial or limited. It may also lead to acceptance that other religious narratives are just as integrity-filled as our own.

A complete description of educational efforts that might foster pluralistic thinking lies beyond the scope of this paper, but several headings can be listed, to await future elaboration: Ideally, pluralism in educational settings should be addressed as a cognitive style, an emotional ability, and an ideological stance, and each of these should include a strong experiential component as well as formal thought and knowledge acquisition elements.

Cognitively, pluralism can be promoted by teaching critical and complex thinking, by encouraging multiple-perspective-taking on various value conflicts and moral dilemmas, and by helping students recognize the myriad identities, lifestyles, and value systems that comprise the human world.

Emotionally, pluralism may be fostered by gradually increasing ambiguity tolerance, by encouraging role-taking and imaginative play

where multiple identities can be "tried on" and combined in creative ways, and by modeling empathy to students.

Ideologically (this part of the program would be the most heavily dependent on the initial values of the educational setting), religious pluralism can be promoted by exposing students to Jewish sources which highlight pluralism and to non-Jewish sources, myths, and faith systems. An inclusive educational climate, staffed with educators who exemplify the combination of a committed Jewish identity with a pluralistic stance towards others, would complete the picture.

Although there is doubtless something extremely compelling, to the Western mind at least, about the quest for unity, integration, and absolutism, educators can foster a parallel drive - the pluralistic motivation to recognize the complexity of life. And perhaps it is the paradoxical combination of the two which will lead the religious quester home.

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