

- 17 Bukhara is not only the name of one of Central Asia's best-known cities, but was also the name of an important emirate (loosely governed territory) that was home to most of the region's Jews. The emir of Bukhara was deposed and its boundaries were carved up by the Soviets when the region was incorporated into the USSR.
- 18 Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry Since World War II: Population and Social Structure* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).
- 19 Central Asian Jews regarded a child born to a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father to be Jewish. A child born to a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father, on the other hand, was not regarded as Jewish.
- 20 This was in response to pressure exerted on Jerusalem's Central Asian Jews to donate money to the existing Sephardic institutions, rather than channeling funding into their own private community organizations. See Alanna Cooper, "Negotiating Identity," 149–57.
- 21 According to demographic statistics gathered by the Jewish Agency for Israel, the population of Ashkenazi Jews in Uzbekistan in 1989 numbered 60,000. They were concentrated in Uzbekistan's most populous cities; most lived in Tashkent. In Samarkand there were 7,000 Ashkenazi Jews, according to M. Zubin, "The Jews of Samarkand in the Year 1979—A Statistical Survey," *Pe'amim: Studies in the Cultural Heritage of Oriental Jewry*, 35 (1987), 170–77; fewer lived in Bukhara (personal communications with Ashkenazi and Central Asian Jewish residents in Bukhara, as well as local community leaders).
- 22 Although official statistics on intermarriage between Central Asian Jews and Ashkenazi Jews are unavailable, during the course of five months of ethnographic research in Samarkand, I learned of six cases of Central Asian Jews in Samarkand who had married non-Jews and only two cases of Central Asian Jews in Samarkand who had married Ashkenazi Jews.
- 23 Although the section that follows is written in the ethnographic present, information was collected in 1997 and changes have occurred since then.
- 24 Their missionary work is only with Jews.
- 25 Five respondents were between the ages of 17 and 22, six between the ages of 41 and 49, and five between the ages of 50 and 63 (information on one is lacking). Among them were eleven women and six men.
- 26 Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey*, 40.

## CHAPTER 11

## Jewish Groups and Identity Strategies in Post-Communist Hungary

András Kovács

### BEYOND THE CONCEPT OF ASSIMILATION

Accounts of the history of the European Jewish Diaspora in the modern era usually concentrate on the dramatic changes in the relationship between Jews and the societies surrounding them. After the collapse of the walls of the medieval ghettos, the Jews of Europe rapidly established new forms of coexistence and contact with the adjacent societies as the latter moved towards modernization. These forms of contact were primarily dependent upon the specific characteristics and modernization potential of the majority society in each of the European countries. In countries where the feudal order was replaced by modern capitalism after the French Revolution, and where the emancipation of the Jews was realized as a stage in this process, the breakup or transformation of traditional Jewish communities was soon under way. As Viktor Karády's analyses have shown,<sup>1</sup> as part of this process, the social and cultural capital accumulated by Jewish communities in the course of their former ghetto existence—capital that had previously been of value only within the community itself—suddenly appreciated in value. This development provided Jews with exceptional opportunities for mobility in the new meritocratic society.

The new network of relationships between Jews and non-Jews that arose as a result of modernization, as well as changes in these relationships, are usually described in terms of assimilation. This category indicates, on the one hand, a process that affects various dimensions of society, resulting in an increase in social interaction between Jews and non-Jews and a substantial reduction in the social and cultural distance separating the Jewish community from its immediate environment. Based on statistical data, social historians have elaborated a whole series of indicators that may be used to measure the extent of the reduction in the social distance between the two groups.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the term "assimilation" is not merely descriptive, for it also embodies the characteristic political and moral expectations of the era of the nation-states. The liberal politicians of the 19th century, a group that produced some of the staunchest supporters of Jewish emancipation, expected that the dismantling of the ghetto walls and the granting of political equality to Jews would lead to the disappearance not only of the bad "Jewish characteristics" that were condemned by opponents of emancipation (see the various pamphlets on the "improvement of the Jews") but also of the Jews themselves, who would be swallowed up by the communities surrounding them. This expectation, however, was never realised. As Jacob Katz, the celebrated historian of the transformation of Jewish societies in the 19th century, has argued, the traditional Jewish societies broke up, indeed, because they took advantage of the possibilities offered by emancipation and submitted to the pressures of assimilation. Nonetheless, even though Jews became a part of the modern European world, they accomplished this without dissolving into the surrounding society. "The Jews entered new European society, without becoming absorbed in it. Instead, they became a new and unique social entity, a changed but recognisable version of the traditional Jewish community. In terms of its internal structure and appearance, this version differed fundamentally from what the supporters of the integration of Jews imagined. Instead of becoming a new religious community integrated into the surrounding society, they became a new social sub-group."<sup>3</sup>

According to Katz, the process of modernization dismantled many of the boundaries that had once separated Jewish communities from external society. Still, some of the factors that had formed the basis of the group continued to exist: e.g., the adherence to Judaism, a concentration of Jews in certain professions, a high level of endogamy, and a network of relationships stretching across national boundaries. While such factors were indeed characteristic of Jews in Western Europe in the mid-19th century, various processes began to weaken them in the last third of the century. Such processes included secularization, apostasy, and an increasing number of mixed marriages.

One of the most influential theories of assimilation has taught that the processes observable from the end of the 19th century must lead inexorably to full assimilation. According to the American sociologist Milton Gordon,<sup>4</sup> there are seven phases of assimilation. Gordon calls the first phase *cultural assimilation* or acculturation. In this phase

the minority learns the language of the majority and becomes acquainted with its culture and rules of behavior. According to Gordon, assimilation may stop at this point, providing perhaps a sufficient basis for a regulated coexistence between majority and minority, as in the case of several of the national, religious and racial minorities of the United States. However, if the assimilation process continues and reaches the second phase, which Gordon called *structural assimilation*, complete assimilation will take place. Structural assimilation amounts to the regularization of interactions between majority and minority within the institutions and civil networks of society at the level of the primary groups. If assimilation reaches this level, a substantial increase in mixed marriages, *marital assimilation*, is an immediate consequence. This development leads in turn to *identificational assimilation*, i.e., an expressed feeling of belonging to the same people. Thereafter discrimination ceases to exist and prejudices disappear. This final phase of assimilation sees a brushing aside of all value conflicts and power conflicts between one-time majority and minority.

The authors of modern historical works about the assimilation of the Jews of Hungary are agreed that the assimilation of the country's Jews definitely reached stage three or even stage four on the Gordon scale, i.e., "identificational assimilation." What happened after that, however, failed to confirm the predictions of Gordon's theory. Instead, Katz's diagnosis continued to hold, that is, a demonstrable reduction in social distance was not followed by full assimilation. Despite fundamental changes, the Jews continued to comprise a recognizable (and identifiable) sub-group in Hungarian society. According to Viktor Karády,<sup>5</sup> there were three basic reasons for this: a continuity of historical memory preserving an awareness of difference, a subconscious transmission of certain mental and cultural attributes in the course of socialization, and finally the fact that in many instances assimilation took place in the most modern minority segments of majority society.

Nevertheless, on its own all of this would have been insufficient to maintain the social distance between Jews and their environment as well as their minority consciousness. There had also to be changes over the decades in the political-ideological environment surrounding the long-term and spontaneous processes. The political climate in Western Europe in the 19th century was generally favorable from the perspective of the social and cultural integration of the Jews. In the era of the liberal nation-state, acculturation (i.e. the adoption of the

majority language and culture), identification with the political nation, and a reform of religion removing obstacles to day-to-day interaction and communication, appeared to be leading irreversibly to social integration, within the given favorable circumstances.<sup>6</sup> The Gordon theory also implicitly presupposes the presence of favorable socio-political conditions: its predictions can be valid only where there is a stable socio-political climate permitting an acceptance of minorities. In the case of the Jews of Hungary, the deadlock in the assimilation process is linked to the increasingly defensive position of 19th-century Hungarian liberalism and its crisis at the beginning of the 20th century, when liberalism in Hungary, which was once open for inclusion of Jews into Hungarian society and even campaigned for assimilation, suffered a decisive and conclusive political defeat.

Of course, the change in political conditions—though in the long term of considerable effect on the changes in Jewish society—did not immediately halt socio-cultural processes that were already under way or cancel the results of these processes. In Hungary, the cultural assimilation of the Jews continued even after World War I; intermarriages became more frequent and, with changes in the social climate, there was an increase in Jewish apostasy.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as earlier, during this era, too, Jewish national ideology, or Zionism, was still incapable of attracting the support of the more numerous groups.

Nonetheless, the change in the political-ideological environment did alter the system of measuring and evaluating the “achievements” of assimilation. Whereas anti-Semitism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire had considered the “caftan Jews”, i.e. Jews who were reluctant to become part of mainstream society and who resisted assimilation, to be the main threat and adversary, the anti-Semitic ideology of the post-1918 period focused its hostility on assimilated Jews, those who had “disguised themselves” as Hungarians and sought to form the Hungarian society in their own image. Thus, for example, the significance of baptism was not the same after 1918 as it had been before; the “Jewish laws” after 1938 subsequently expressed this formally. Whereas earlier a mixed marriage had increased the public moral capital of the Jewish partner, after World War I it merely decreased the public moral capital of the non-Jewish partner. There was little to be gained from a reduction in the distance between Jews and non-Jews, arising out of a greater intimacy in their relationship towards Hungarian culture, if overall the ruling ideology stigmatized that segment of Hungarian cul-

ture in which the rapprochement was made. The change in the fundamental conditions thus separated the *meaning* of the term assimilation from the factors with which it had been linked in earlier periods. The new ideologies viewed assimilation in a different light or even considered it to be impossible: e.g. the “race theory.”

This upset and disoriented those people who believed they had gone the whole way towards assimilation. The loss of orientation led to forms of behavior that may be seen as reactions to the new situation, e.g. efforts to design “behavior strategies” to conceal one’s original background completely. Such forms of behavior had nothing at all to do with the original identity of the group, but became nevertheless a means of group identification.<sup>8</sup> In the decades after World War II, the identification of the Jews’ social sub-group did not take place (primarily) on the basis of how Jews spoke the Hungarian language, which festivals they celebrated, which churches they attended, and which names they bore. After the Shoah, the boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish groups were marked by Jewish identity strategies that are impossible to analyze by any category of assimilation. A more suitable conceptual framework for the analysis of such identity strategies appears to be provided by Henri Tajfel’s theory of minority behavioral strategies.<sup>9</sup>

Tajfel defines minorities as groups with group consciousness that are stigmatized by the environment, and suffer social disadvantages as a result. The behavioral strategies of such groups are aimed at eliminating or counterbalancing the economic, social, symbolic and psychological disadvantages associated with the minority condition. These strategies are based either upon a *rejection of the minority condition* or upon an *acceptance of it*, depending on which strategy seems to be more realizable at the given time. An obvious example of the *acceptance strategy* is the establishment of a closed community and the strict defense of its boundaries, as in the case of ultra-Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish groups. In such cases, the group acknowledges its stigmatization by the outside world, but considers the stigmatizing norms—like anything else originating in the outside world—to be irrelevant and invalid. Meanwhile, the psychological disadvantages suffered by the group are counterbalanced by mechanisms based on exceptionally strong group cohesion. Among other groups, the consequences of the minority stigma may be counterbalanced by minority ethnocentrism or the development or strengthening of national minority (or national) conscious-

ness—modern Jewish history offers several examples of such strategies. The strategy of acceptance, however, does not exclude the possibility of processes arising within the group that are normally considered to be indicators of assimilation. The increasing use of Hungarian by the Hasidic Jews of Szatmár or the rapid instrumental adaptation to modern civilization and culture of the Lubavitcher Hasidic groups, are cases of adaptation rather than assimilation. Indeed one of the functions of such strategies is sustaining the group through a reduction in the interaction tension with the environment.

The strategies associated with a *rejection* of the minority status are similarly diverse. One sub-strategy is assimilation, the final stage of which is complete absorption into the majority group. In certain cases, neither the receiving community nor the emitting community prevents this from happening; indeed they even support the process: e.g., the history of Armenians and Poles who were Hungarianized. Complete absorption may be possible even where a departure from the minority group meets with the resistance of the recipient community or indeed the resistance of the minority community. Tajfel has called this phenomenon illegitimate assimilation, because it is often accompanied by dissimulation, that is, an effort to conceal one's real background. Illegitimate assimilation may be successful in individual cases, but even where the new identity is over-compensated for in a spectacular manner, the possibility of exposure remains a danger for several generations—for example, the case of the extreme right-wing Hungarian prime minister, Béla Imrédy.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, more often than not the former members of the minority may take part in the interactions of their new group without limitation. Still, in the eyes of other members of the group, under certain circumstances they may still appear to be representatives of their old stigmatized group. Continued acculturation or "rapprochement" cannot change this, because the group boundary is a symbolic construction established and maintained by the majority. When, for a variety of reasons, the majority has a vested interest in the continued existence of the symbolically constructed boundary, the societal processes described as assimilation no longer offer an escape from the minority stigma, even if they do continue to exist. Indeed the significance of such processes also changes. Thus, for instance, the passing of anti-Semitic legislation changed the significance of the assimilation processes and gestures that had previously held sway.

Under such circumstances, members of the minority group face difficult decisions concerning their identity strategies. The task is not to decide whether or not to continue assimilation. In any case, forms of behavior previously considered assimilatory may no longer count as such or may be of no significance when it comes to marking out the symbolic boundaries of stigma. Under such circumstances, members of the minority group must determine which dimension of their status is stigmatizing and whether or not they wish to alter their position within this dimension. If the stigmatizing factor is religious adherence, an abandonment of religious ties may promote a release from the stigma. This may even be regarded as a continuation of assimilation. On the other hand, a strategic decision may be the demonstrative expression of religious ties coupled with efforts to change the stigmatizing evaluation. In Hungarian Jewish politics, examples of such attempts are the reception movement, which campaigned for the legal equality of the Jewish religious community, and the policy of Jewish cultural autonomism in Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century.

In general, two factors determined the behavioral strategies of the various sub-groups of Jews. The first was clearly the change in the external circumstances, while the second was the social position reached under the strategy pursued in the previous period and its significance under the new circumstances. In the 20th century, the Jews of Hungary experienced several historical turning points that radically altered the local value of the previous identity options: after 1918, at the time of the Shoah, during the decades of Communist rule, and finally in the course of the change of political system in 1990. After 1918, the former paradigm of assimilation was badly shaken. During the years of persecution and immediately afterwards, the whole issue of Jews' relationship with the Hungarian nation was raised as a dramatic question, and assimilation came to be seen as a tragic offence. The shared fate of members of the community promoted a homogenization of identity. Identity options arose that had hardly attracted Hungarian Jews before, e.g., Zionism. Subsequently, after the Communist takeover, the framework of conditions changed yet again: the release from Jewish stigma that was promised by Communist ideology appeared to permit a continuation of the previous behavioral forms of "rejection" without forcing an interpretation of them within the compromised conceptual framework of "assimilation into the nation."<sup>11</sup> Later on, in the years before and after the change of political system, these forms

of behavior became questionable once again, because many realized that they are incapable of eradicating the stigma. Under democracy and at a time of renewed ethnic awareness throughout the world, this realization encouraged various Jewish groups to apply a strategy of "acceptance and reevaluation," i.e. the rediscovery of the various interpretations of Jewish consciousness. These great historical changes thus prompted those involved to develop new identity strategies, but their choices of strategy were clearly dependent on earlier identities and the extent to which they had moved away from traditional Jewishness.

Today in Hungary, one end of the spectrum is filled by groups that continue to observe strictly Jewish religious traditions and whose ways of life are determined by tradition. At the other end of the spectrum, there are those for whom Jewish background is at most a fact of origin stored in the backroom of family memory and possessing no public significance and little personal relevance. The majority of Jews living in the country are to be found somewhere between the two extremes. The content of their identity may be the preservation of tradition at some level or other, or it may be a secular or ethnic-national consciousness of identity, or it may even be the preserving of the memory of forebears, ties with Jewish culture, or the feeling of being at home and of protection in a Jewish environment within Hungarian society. Jews who preserve traditions are clearly following the strategy of acceptance, while those at the other end of the spectrum have chosen the strategy of rejection. Between the two extremes, both strategies are present, and positions are dynamic: in this group it is possible to observe strategies providing a release from the stigma of the Jews as well as strategies providing a rescue from the stigma. Often these strategies are employed alternately by successive generations. The aim of our survey was to chart these identity strategies.

Our basic supposition was that generation has a great influence on identity strategies. In the course of the examination, we divided the four generations of Jews living in Hungary today into separate groups. The first group comprised the generation born before 1930, who were already adults at the time of the Shoah. The second group was the generation born between 1930 and 1944, whose life-forming experiences came during the era of Stalinist Communism. The third group comprised those born between 1945 and 1965, i.e. the generation that grew up under consolidated Communist rule and Kádárism.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the fourth group comprised those born after 1966, whose most powerful experiences as a generation may have been the disintegration and collapse of the Communist system. First, we shall examine the extent to which each of the various generations has moved away from the Jewish community. Second, we shall examine the presence of Jewish religious-cultural tradition in the different Jewish groups.<sup>13</sup>

### ETHNIC HOMOGENEITY AND RELIGIOUS TIES

Almost all definitions of Jewish identity start out with Jewish ancestry and adherence to Jewish religious community. Definitions emphasizing other factors—for example, that whoever professes to be a Jew is a Jew—arose as a reaction to the reduction in ethnic homogeneity and an end to the self-evident nature of adherence to the organizations of the Jewish religious community. Thus, in the course of our survey, our first aim was to form an impression of ethnic and religious background.

Given the subject of the survey, almost all of the survey participants were of Jewish descent, except ten people who were followers of Judaism but were not Jews by descent. However, only 65 percent of the sample considered themselves to be adherents of Judaism. Eight percent of survey participants indicated adherence to some other religion, while the others belonged to no religious denomination. Adherence to Judaism does not mean that two-thirds of Hungary's Jews are currently members of Jewish congregations: indeed only 26 percent of survey participants stated that they are such.<sup>14</sup> For purposes of our research, the religious ties of survey participants were determined on the basis of their response to the question concerning adherence to Judaism rather than their response to the question concerning membership in a Jewish congregation.

Those interviewed were asked whether or not six immediate forebears (two parents and four grandparents) had been of Jewish descent and followers of Judaism.<sup>15</sup> We developed a religious-ethnic homogeneity index based on the data for the four grandparents. Respondents whose four grandparents were considered (by survey participants) to be Jewish in terms of both descent and religious adherence, were placed in the "homogeneous group." Respondents with one non-Jewish grandparent (in terms of descent or religion) were placed in the "partially homogeneous" group. Finally, a group of "mixed descent" was formed comprising respondents with at most two Jewish grandparents. Based

on the index established in this manner, *Table 11.1* below presents data for the whole sample and the various age groups.

*Table 11.1 a) Religious-ethnic Homogeneity in the Total Sample and According to Age Group: Four Age Groups (In percent)*

	Sample	18-34	35-54	55-69	Over 70
Homogeneous	72	39	69	85	89
Partially homogeneous	6	12	8	3	2
Mixed descent	22	49	23	12	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

*Table 11.1 b) Religious-ethnic Homogeneity in the Total Sample and According to Age Group: Seven Age Groups*

	Sample	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	Over75
Homogeneous	72	40	39	56	79	84	88	89
Partially homogeneous	6	11	13	10	5	5	1	3
Mixed descent	22	50	48	34	15	11	11	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

As *Table 11.1* shows, almost three-quarters of the population belong to the "homogeneous" group. Nevertheless, there are large generation differences. The ratio is considerably higher among the older age groups and significantly lower among the younger age groups, particularly from the age of 50 down. It seems that the breakthrough occurred in the generation born after 1955: the ratio of respondents with homogeneous backgrounds falls only a little among those born in the first decade after the war, but it is already considerably lower among those born after 1955. Among the groups aged under 35, the proportions of completely homogeneous, partially homogeneous, and mixed descent backgrounds are almost identical. This demonstrates that the trend has failed to accelerate among the youngest age groups.

The great change observable after 1955 is explained by the development of the ratio of mixed marriages. As *Table 11.2* indicates, the proportion of mixed marriages among the 56 to 75 age group—i.e., among the parents of most of the 36 to 45 age group—is about 20 percent higher than among the previous generation.

*Table 11.2 Marital Homogamy in the Parents' Generation, among Married Couples, the Development of Homogamy by Gender and Age Group<sup>16</sup> (In percent)*

	Homogamic	Non-homogamic	Total
Parents' family	79	21	100
Married	51	49	100
Male	44	56	100
Female	58	42	100
18-25	48	52	100
26-35	37	63	100
36-45	44	56	100
46-55	48	52	100
56-65	44	56	100
66-75	51	49	100
Over 75	70	30	100

The data presented so far also indicate the existence of significant generational differences among the surveyed population in ethnic background and religious adherence. But it is also clear that the average figures applying to the whole population conceal more subtle structures. It is obvious that the positions of the older generations significantly influence the indicators for the following generation. If one generation sets out on the path towards assimilation, then it may be supposed that the next generation will proceed down this path, perhaps at even greater speed. Thus, we may suppose that the chance of a mixed marriage or loss of religious bonds is higher among respondents whose families have seen mixed marriages or apostasy in the parents' generation. In order to explore these more delicate structures, we established generational indicators based on data concerning the ethnic background and religious adherence of respondents' parents and grandparents. Our goal was to reconstruct characteristic family backgrounds.<sup>17</sup>

*Table 11.3* presents the breakdown of survey participants based on the ethnic and religious backgrounds of respondents' parents. Thus, the homogeneous group comprises respondents with two parents of both Jewish descent and religion. The secular group contains respon-

dents with two parents of Jewish descent, at least one of whom declared being "without denomination." In the "converted" group, at least one parent has converted to another religion; while in the "mixed" group at least one parent is of non-Jewish descent. Finally, in the "assimilating" group, one parent is of non-Jewish descent, while the other parent has converted to another faith or has no allegiance to any denomination.

Table 11.3 *Ethnic and Religious Background of Parents, by Age Group*  
(In percent)

	Sample	18-34	35-54	55-69	Over 70
Jewish homogeneous	70	34	63	85	90
Secularized	7	12	9	4	2
Converted	3	5	6	2	1
Mixed	13	27	14	8	7
Assimilating	7	22	8	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The assimilation gradient is clearly shown by the table: the homogeneous Jewish group comprises about 70 percent in both generations, but the differences among the various age groups are considerable: in the youngest age group, the proportion of those with a homogeneous family background is only slightly greater than one-third of the population. The data also clearly indicate that where the process of assimilation began in the grandparents' generation, it accelerated in the parents' generation. As many as 16 percent of the children of secularized grandparents are to be found in the "converted" group, 11 percent in the "mixed" group, and 4 percent in the "assimilating" group. Furthermore, 71 percent of the children of grandparents in "mixed" families have non-Jewish spouses, and 19 percent of them are to be found in the "assimilating" group. And more than three-quarters of the children of "converted and non-Jewish" grandparents belong in this group.

In order to demonstrate the generational structure, we established a bi-generational model. Families were considered to be *stable Jewish* where both parents and grandparents belonged in the homogeneous Jewish group. Nearly 70 percent of the population fell into this cate-

gory. Families in which either or both parents no longer belonged to any denomination or had been converted were referred to as *secularizing*, while families in which a detachment from Jewish religious life could be observed among both grandparents and parents were considered *stable secular*. The *stable mixed* category comprised those families that had seen mixed marriages both among grandparents and parents. The *assimilated* category included families in which mixed marriage and conversion had taken place among grandparents, and in which one parent was non-Jewish and the other parent a converted Jew. Finally, the *reverting group* indicated those families in which parents were followers of Judaism, even though one or more of the grandparents had rejected religion.

Table 11.4 *The Bi-Generational Model: Grandparents-Parents, by Age Group* (In percent)

	Sample	18-34	35-54	55-69	Over 70
Stable Jewish	69	30	63	84	91
Secularizing	8	14	10	4	2
Stable secular	5	11	8	2	1
Stable mixed	10	22	11	7	5
Assimilated	5	16	5	1	0
Reverting	3	7	3	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The generational differences are clearly visible in Table 11.4. The bi-generational model demonstrates that more than two-thirds of the current Jewish population have homogeneous Jewish family backgrounds, but this applies to less than one-third of the younger generation. Moreover, predecessor generations that have begun to assimilate completely and rapidly are most characteristic of this age group. In the "stable mixed" group, at least one grandparent on both sides of the family was non-Jewish, and thus much of this group, together with the "assimilated" group, will probably be swallowed up by non-Jewish society. At the same time, the largest proportion of "reverts," i.e. those who revert to Judaism, is to be found among the parents of the youngest age group.

## THE PRESENCE OF RELIGIOUS-CULTURAL TRADITION

Thus, on the basis of ethnic and religious belonging, a differentiation may be made between groups stably embedded in the Jewish ethno-religious community; secularized Jewish groups; and groups which seem to have begun to separate off irreversibly from the Jewish community. Obviously, these groups, which have been established on the basis of ethnic and religious adherence, exhibit characteristic differences in their relationship towards Jewish religious and cultural traditions. Still, despite the obvious connection, this dimension of the acceptance or rejection of belonging to the group is clearly different from a categorization based on purely formal or institutional attributes. Even among families with homogeneous backgrounds, there may be differences in the extent to which traditions are practised and followed, and religious and cultural traditions may be strongly present even in families with mixed backgrounds. Therefore, we continued our analysis with an examination of attitudes toward tradition.

The questionnaire included questions about ten customs rooted in Jewish religious and cultural tradition. We were curious to find out whether or not these customs were present in the parental families or current families of respondents.

A comparison of the childhood (parental) and current family samples clearly indicates a weakening of Jewish religious and cultural customs in Hungary over the last 50 years. At the same time, the right side of the above table, comparison by age groups, permits a more subtle impression to be formed. The table shows that processes of secularization were the strongest in what are now the older age groups. Here there are sharp differences between childhood and current family practices. In the older age groups (56 years and above) the erosion trend is very noticeable in childhood but since then it has become more moderate. The currently middle-aged, those aged between approximately 40 and 55, met already with little religious tradition even in their parental families, and reached the period of religious and cultural renewal at an age when people are less open to such changes. The youngest age groups, however, exhibit clear signs of a return to tradition: religious and cultural traditions occur more frequently in respondents' current families than in their childhood families; they are more commonly practised than among the older age groups.

In the next part of our survey, using nine elements of the above

Table 11.5 *Religious and Cultural Traditions in Respondents' Childhood and Current Families for the Whole Sample and for Various Age Groups*<sup>18</sup> (In percent)

	Sample		18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	Over 75	
	Child- hood family	Current family	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f. C. f.	Ch. f.	C. f.
Observing <i>Shabbat</i>	30	14	8 11	6 18	11 14	20 14	38 10	49 14	58	19
Fasting on Yom Kippur	52	34	33 44	14 34	23 33	41 38	60 26	80 27	84	40
Observing <i>seder</i>	41	29	24 37	13 35	20 34	33 35	46 24	61 21	49	24
Kosher food	20	8	5 13	6 14	10 9	13 8	19 5	32 3	42	10
Cooking <i>sholet</i>	59	38	44 50	40 31	50 38	57 43	64 38	73 34	77	35
Mezuzah	37	21	25 31	13 26	17 25	24 26	37 11	59 13	66	22
Observing Bar Mitzvah for boys	36	15	20 25	10 12	16 17	21 16	37 11	59 13	69	16
Burial in Jewish cemetery	64	44	58 51	46 41	58 44	59 50	68 34	79 40	80	45
Circumcising boys	41	17	21 23	13 18	19 17	29 12	47 13	65 15	72	22
Observing Hanukkah	43	32	27 39	13 41	22 38	33 36	47 26	67 23	69	28
Average (nos.)	4.27	2.48	2.56 3.19	1.78 2.61	2.25 2.62	3.30 2.71	4.56 1.94	6.15 2.01	6.73	2.54

questions (the cooking of *sholet* was excluded), we constructed a bi-generational model. According to the answers, in 26 percent of parental families and 45 percent of current families, none of the nine traditions was present. At the other end of the scale, in 17 percent of parental families and 4 percent of current families, eight or nine elements of religious and cultural tradition were retained—i.e. these families may be considered strict observers of tradition. Between the two extremes we find families with only very weak ties to tradition (in most of these families, the only customs observed are Jewish burial and the celebration of an odd annual



festival, i.e., 1–2 items) as well as families that ignore the day-to-day rules of tradition (observance of *Shabbat*, kosher food) but whose lives exhibit elements of tradition (such as the celebration of major holidays and having a mezuzah), serving as symbolic expressions of Jewish identity.

By combining the data for the two generations, we formed the groups that are shown in Table 11.6. Eighteen percent of the total sample fell into a group in which neither the parental family nor the current family exhibited any elements of tradition at all. In the case of 11 percent of respondents, traditions were observed by both generations (at least five traditions were present). In the group abandoning traditions (28%), although parents still observed traditions, the respondents themselves indicated the presence of at most two traditions. The “secularizing” category that was breaking away from tradition (15%) comprised the group whose parents observed traditions and who celebrated festivals. In the “symbolic tradition-preserving group” (15%), both generations were characterized by the symbolic expression of tradition. In the “reverting” group (13%), Jewish traditions were stronger in the current family than they had been in the parental family.

*Table 11.6 The Relationship of Parents and Respondents to Tradition: Bi-Generational Model (In percent)*

	Sample	18–34	35–54	55–69	Over 70
No tradition	18	27	24	16	6
Abandonment of tradition	28	17	18	35	41
Secularizing	15	3	9	20	27
Tradition as symbol	15	23	19	14	6
Reverting	13	20	21	7	4
Preserving traditions	11	10	9	8	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100

A graphic impression may be formed on the basis of the data: the loss of tradition and the abandonment of tradition were the most far-reaching among the generations between 55 and 70. Thus, in comparison with the oldest generation, the proportion of families in which both generations exhibited an observance of religious traditions

declined considerably. But the data also show the development of an opposing trend among those who were born after World War II. On the one hand, there was an increase in the number of those who sought to “symbolically preserve tradition,” i.e. those who, rather than proceeding down the path of detachment, preserved—as an expression of their identification with Jews—the traditions they had inherited from their parents. On the other hand, the group of those reverting to tradition is largest in these two generations.

If we examine these same trends in a detailed breakdown by age group, it becomes apparent that detachment from tradition and the abandonment of tradition were most frequent among the 65 to 67 year-olds (27 and 43%), i.e. among the young survivors of the Shoah who were born between 1924 and 1933. This is the age group that, remaining in Hungary after the period of persecution, experimented with new and radical means of exiting the Jewish community (see Kovács, 1988) and was most exposed to the anti-religious policies of the Communist regime. The complete lack of tradition is particularly characteristic of the children of this generation, who were born between 1954 and 1974 (31%). But this same age group, which experienced the collapse of Communism, aged between 15 and 35, has the highest proportion of reverts to tradition (24%). This trend is well demonstrated by the fact that the proportion of re-discoverers of tradition is far higher among the younger age groups than among the older age groups. Indeed, if we include those who continuously have preserved tradition and those who adhere to the symbolic forms of expression of belonging to the Jewish community, we may state that a majority of those aged between 18 and 54 have a conscious attachment to Jewish tradition, compared with just one-third of the older generation.

This places the relationship between family background and the observance of traditions in an interesting light. As we have seen, respondents with homogeneous Jewish family backgrounds comprise about three-quarters (72%) of the whole sample, but this figure is far lower among the younger age group than among the older age group. On the other hand, we have seen that the conscious fostering of tradition is more common among the younger age groups. Table 11.5 shows that the trend was reversed among groups aged less than 45 years: in these groups the average number of traditional customs is higher in the current family than in the parental family, whereas among the older age groups this situation is the reverse. Table 11.7 demonstrates a divi-

sion of families into those with homogeneous and with non-homogeneous Jewish family backgrounds, in accordance with the models of adherence to and detachment from tradition.

Table 11.7 *Background Homogeneity and the Relationship to Tradition: Tri-Generational Model, by Age (In percent)*

	Sample	18-34	35-54	55-69	Over 70
Homogeneous traditional	18	15	21	13	19
	25	38	30	25	21
Homogeneous secular	24	12	23	30	30
	33	31	33	35	34
Homogeneous without traditions	30	12	25	42	40
	42	31	36	50	45
	100	100	100	100	100
Non-homogeneous traditional	7	15	9.00	2.00	1
	25	25	29	13	10
Non-homogeneous secular	6	14	6	4	3
	21	23	19	27	27
Non-homogeneous without traditions	15	32	16	9	7
	54	53	52	60	63
	100	100	100	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100	100

A homogeneous family background clearly slows down the process of abandonment of traditions: while a complete absence of traditions characterizes more than one-half of non-homogeneous families, the corresponding figure is 42 percent in the case of homogeneous families. Since the proportion of tradition-preservers is 25 percent in both groups, this discrepancy is rooted in a considerable difference in the proportion of symbolic followers of tradition (the "secular" group): this latter group comprises one-third of respondents with homogeneous family backgrounds but less than one-quarter of respondents with non-homogeneous family backgrounds.

Here too, the generational data show that in the homogeneous families the abandonment of traditions was quickest among the over-55 age groups. In the generation aged 35 to 54, the proportions of followers of tradition were the same in both the heterogeneous and the homogeneous family groups. A possible explanation is that the end-

ing of a homogeneous family background was not accompanied by an immediate abandonment of traditions. The other reason is obviously a return to the observance of traditions. Although there was no substantial increase in detachment from traditions among young people (aged 18-34) from non-homogeneous families, a return to the observance of traditions was nevertheless more common among those with homogeneous family backgrounds. Overall, we may state that the influence of family background on the relationship towards tradition is weaker among the younger generations than among the older generations, but that among the very youngest age groups a homogeneous family background does tend to promote a rediscovery of tradition.

Each of the six groups taking shape under the tri-generational model (see Table 11.6) exhibits a distinct impression—particularly if generational differences are taken into account. The impression gained of the various groups, including the various generations, may be used to describe the processes underlying the observed structure.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen, the *first group* (18%) is characterized by a *complete absence of tradition* among both the parents of respondents and respondents themselves. Almost two-thirds of this group belong to the younger generations and one-third to the older generations. The most striking characteristic of this group is the rapid increase in educational mobility among predecessor generations—this applies primarily to the younger age group. In this age group, most parents have a university education; the leap in mobility took place between the grandparents' generation and the parents' generation. In addition, most respondents in this group also have a university education. As regards employment, intellectual professions are characteristic of the whole group. Older members of the group tend to hold management positions or are public servants, while younger group members tend to be independent entrepreneurs. Thirty-eight percent of the older members of the group are former members of the HSWP (Hungarian Socialist Workers Party = Communist Party), while just 9 percent of the younger members are former members of the party. A gradual breaking away from Jewish identity is well demonstrated in the choices of identity characterizing the group as a whole, as well as the various age groups within the group. On the "Hungarian-Jewish" continuum, members of the group typically choose the identities of "Hungarian" and "first and foremost Hungarian." When they were classified into a constructed

identity model among the options of “strong—traditional—moderate—aggrieved—assimilated,”<sup>20</sup> young members of the group tended to opt for “assimilated.” Older members of the group, on the other hand, sometimes chose the “aggrieved” or “moderate” categories of identity. The whole group is characterized by a heterogeneous and open network of social relations, and this is particularly true of younger members of the group: a large number of other Jews, either in the neighborhood or in their personal relations, is not characteristic.

As shown by the data, the nature of this group is determined by members of the generation that was born after the war and whose parents—fathers—made up for the disadvantages of mobility suffered in the 1930s and 1940s during the decades that followed the era of persecution. Still, the compensatory mobility of the first decades of Communist rule—e.g., obtaining a university education, progress in the employment hierarchy, or even making a career in the political organizations—could be realized only at the cost of a rapid abandonment of Jewish identity. Rapid progress along the mobility path was facilitated by identification with party ideology as a new type of assimilation ideology.<sup>21</sup> Previous analysis has indicated that the most extreme form of assimilation, i.e. dissimulation, or a denial of Jewish identity, was most frequent in this generation. In the course of research carried out in the early 1980s, we discovered that one-quarter of those interviewed had found out that they were Jews from non-family members, while one-fifth had become aware of their parents’ secret only as adults. This group was clearly dominated by children of the Communist “cadre generation.”<sup>22</sup> This phenomenon is characteristic of the group currently under examination: significantly few members (43%) of the group that had broken off from tradition as early as the fathers’ generation found out in “natural” circumstances that they were Jews, and significant numbers of them (12%) became aware of their background only as adults. In this group, the proportion of respondents answering questions about their relationship towards the Jewish community and Jewish identity in terms of rejection is significantly higher than average: they grant little or no significance to their Jewish backgrounds, and consider it desirable that Jews should assimilate into society as completely as possible. They have either no feelings about Israel or negative ones. The group contains the fewest numbers of those who would like to live in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods, whose friends are mostly Jews, and who think that Jews are better at sticking together

than other groups. All things considered, it seems likely that a significant part of this group is following an identity strategy of “rejection” and is moving towards a permanent exit from the Jewish community and full assimilation into adjacent society.

Jewish tradition is also absent in the *second group* (28%) that we have identified. Still, in this group the *abandonment of tradition* has taken place in the last two generations—the respondents’ generation and their parents’ generation. Two-thirds of this group belong to the older age groups and one-third to the younger age group. Mobility in this group was rapid, but took place later than in the previous group. In this group, the fathers’ generation of younger respondents does not usually have a university education. Upward mobility began among the fathers and continues among the respondents. Among the older members of the group, both fathers’ and grandfathers’ generations are not highly educated. Several items suggest that many of those in the sub-group of older respondents who have abandoned tradition broke away from Jewish tradition because of changes in their conditions of life, rather than rapid mobility. We found in this sub-group relatively large numbers of poor people living in small country settlements and having little education, who, unlike the obviously “assimilated” younger members of the group, tend to fit into the “moderate” or “aggrieved” identity types. Many members of this group were obviously induced to abandon tradition by the disappearance of the local Jewish environment. The proportion of former party members is also high in this old age group. Indeed, it is the highest among the older age groups (45%).

The nature of this group is determined by the parents’ generation of those belonging in the previous group. The older age group that comprises the core of this group is one whose members took advantage of the opportunities for mobility that arose after 1945 and who, adjusting to the conditions, broke away from Jewish tradition. The descendants of the sub-group of “rejecters” from rural areas are also present in this group (we found a greater than average number of people from rural areas in this group). The combined effect of the two factors, mobility and a detachment from the Jewish environment, appears to have accelerated the process of breaking away and the development of the strategy of rejection. In this group, despite a higher than average number of people who consider their Jewish identity insignificant, there are more people with an affinity towards Jews and Israel and with mostly Jewish friends than in the previous group. But this

may be explained by higher age. The responses to questions concerning assimilation and separation clearly identify this social environment as one in which an abandonment of tradition became a life strategy: in this group, the number of people who think that Jews still have to do more to fit in and who would advise young people to "choose assimilation rather than anything else" is significantly greater than average. The position of a significant (relative) majority of the group on mixed marriages is characteristic: they consider more such marriages to be desirable, even though they do not reject in large numbers the statement that such marriages "threaten the survival of Jewish community." Thus, the majority of the group may be categorized as following the strategy of rejection.

The *third group* comprises those who no longer strictly follow tradition but have yet to break away completely. We called this group, which accounts for 15 percent of the sample and which is composed of one-quarter younger people and three-quarters older people, the *secularizing group*. There are considerable differences between the younger and older members of this group. Many of the young people are university or college educated, and members of the group are noticeably more educated than their fathers. Large numbers live in Budapest and are relatively wealthy business people. Nevertheless, the older people determine the image of the group. They, like their parents, are less educated, and there has been little mobility in this subgroup. A larger than average number of them are minor government officials and skilled workers. More than a third are former party members. The whole group is characterized by "strong" identity. The identity models of the younger members of the group do not differ from those of the whole population, but among older members of the group, "traditional" identity is more frequent than on average. Still, it is the younger members of the group who sense disturbances in their relations with the non-Jewish environment.

Most of this group belongs to the same generation as the majority of the previous group. The difference between them is that members of this group took less advantage of the opportunities for mobility that arose after World War II than members of the group abandoning tradition. Accelerated mobility tends to be characteristic of the younger generation within the group. The group mainly comprises those survivors who remained "small Jews" even after the war. They have a relatively strong emotional affinity for Jews and the Jewish state. Most

live in a Jewish environment since more than half have mostly Jewish friends.

In the *fourth group*, comprising 15 percent of the population, in which *tradition is present as symbol*, the first stage of secularization, i.e., abandonment of strict tradition, took place already in the parents' generation but it then ground to a halt: respondents in this group therefore continue to maintain and practice certain elements of tradition. Older people make up a third of this group and younger people two-thirds. Most members of the group live in Budapest, although among the older age groups the proportion of rural dwellers is greater than average. In the younger age group, the great mobility leap was taken by the grandfathers' and fathers' generations. Thus, both parents of many respondents in the group are college or university educated. Office work is the characteristic form of employment among the older age groups, whereas younger members of the group tend to be independent entrepreneurs. In this group, the younger age group enjoys higher living standards than the older age group. Among the older age groups, a "traditional" identity is more frequent than average, while young people in the group experience a greater than average number of communication difficulties with the non-Jewish environment.

In certain respects, this group resembles the first one: it includes primarily members of the generation born after the war whose parents have already taken the first mobility leap, acquiring a university degree. The basic difference from the first group, which has completely broken away from tradition, is that in this group traditions were much more alive among the parental generation than in the first group. Although a lack of tradition characterizes much of both groups—obviously due to age—the difference between the two is still rather considerable. Thus, whereas in the first group a "Jewish atmosphere" was completely lacking in 62 percent of childhood families and partially lacking in a further 22 percent of childhood families, in the group symbolically preserving tradition only 20 percent of childhood families were "not characterized by a Jewish atmosphere" (and 30% less so).

The *fifth group* is those who have reverted to tradition (13%). This is a young group—four out of five in the group belong to the younger age groups. This is the first group in which the gender ratio differs from the average: the proportion of women in the group is higher than in other groups. The return to tradition is a Budapest phenomenon. Usually, the parents of members of the group are university or college

educated, and the mobility leap occurred between the grandparents' generation and the parents' generation. Members of the group generally live in favorable circumstances. The employment structure of the group includes significantly more academic professions than that of the other groups. Members of the group move in closed Jewish circles and their identity on the Hungarian-Jewish continuum is "Jewish" and "traditional." They do not sense any difficulties in their relationship with their environment.

This young group emerged during the era of the disintegration and collapse of the Communist system. Although the group's Jewish identity is undoubtedly strong, it is an acquired identity. The family background of young intellectuals belonging to this group is very similar to that of the younger members of the first group (i.e., the group that has broken away from tradition completely): tradition was absent already in the parental family. It is characteristic of the group that 15 percent were already adults when they discovered they were Jews, while only 49 percent found out "naturally" and from family members. In the families of a significant majority of the group, Jews "were almost never mentioned." Still, "reverting to tradition" does not mean the revival of all religious traditions. Just 10 percent of members of the group strictly observe religious tradition and 41 percent observe major holidays only. Other members of the group interpret their Jewish identity in different ways. In general, members of the group oppose assimilation and strongly sympathize with Israel. A significant proportion of the group opposes mixed marriages, and although many (69%) have mainly or exclusively Jewish friends, they would still prefer to live in an environment where there are more Jews. This group is the group of "voluntary Jews"<sup>23</sup>; the possibility of "exit" had been open to them, but instead of "rejection" they chose the strategy of "acceptance."

Finally, we have the *sixth group* or *tradition-preserving group*. Constituting 11 percent of the total sample, half of this group are younger people and half are older. Compared with the total population, the social status of this group is relatively low: older members of the group tend to have primary education only, and even younger members of the group tend to have no more than secondary education. The parents of respondents are also generally poorly educated: a significant part of the group comes from families that are stagnating in educational mobility. The group includes higher than average numbers of people living either outside Budapest or in the poorer districts of the

city. Among the older age groups, physical forms of work as well as unskilled work performed in the family enterprise and homemakers are more frequent than average. The standard of living of members of the group, reflecting the indicators of social status, is far more modest than average. Both older and younger generations tend to exhibit "traditional" and "strong" Jewish identity—the latter is particularly characteristic of younger members of the group. Young members of the group live in a more closed Jewish environment than do the old. This implies that they are more isolated within their age group than the previous generation. None of the age groups have any communication problems with their environment.

This group is the remnant of the religious Jewish community within Hungarian Jewish society. One-quarter of the group is religious in a strict sense, while more than half observe Jewish festivals. The group, which forms a closed network, is characterized by low social status and limited mobility—at least in comparison with the other groups.

If we examine the groups and their employment of identity strategies of both "rejection" and "acceptance," it becomes apparent that three factors have a special role in the selection of strategy: *age, mobility within the family*, and *strength of Jewish tradition at the time of generational changes*. The effect of marital heterogamy appears to be dependent upon these variables. The mobility that took place between the grandfathers' generation and the fathers' generation was accompanied by an increase in the frequency of mixed marriages: in upwardly mobile families, mixed marriages are significantly more frequent than average. This, however, is not characteristic of those families in which the mobility leap took place between the fathers' generation and the respondents' generation.

In the "old" groups (groups 2 and 3), mobility is clearly the strongest underlying factor. Indeed, it was the mobility of three generations that directed members of the group towards the strategy of "rejection." The extent of their progression down this path—i.e., whether they completely abandoned tradition or retained certain symbolic elements—depended from which social status the parents' generation departed, for in this generation tradition was present in equal strength in both groups.

In the "young groups" (groups 1 and 4) mobility had merely an indirect effect: in both groups higher social status was characteristic

even of the parents' generation. The main factor influencing the first group to choose a strategy of complete rejection and the second group to choose a strategy of "symbolic acceptance" appears to have been the extent to which Jewish tradition was still alive in the family after the path of mobility had been closed off. Obviously, this was also linked to many other factors—for example, whether or not the grandparents were living with the family.

The fifth and sixth groups cannot be accommodated within this explanatory model, because in "reverting to tradition" the strategy of acceptance is a conscious choice rather than the consequence of characteristic family variables. Nevertheless, perhaps one may state that, with regard to the youngest generation, the probability of a symbolic affinity for tradition or a return to certain elements of tradition is greatest where family mobility reached its highest point in the parents' generation.

#### SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

As a result of several peculiar features of Hungary's historical development, from the early 19th century conditions in Hungary greatly favored the social integration of Jews, most of whom belonged to the "Western Jews." This process led to the famous "Jewish-Hungarian" symbiosis.<sup>24</sup> This symbiosis was shattered by the changes after World War I, as a result of which "a country [that had been] previously 'good for the Jews' is transformed, almost overnight, into a country... permeated with anti-Semitic hysteria," and by the Hungarian Holocaust.<sup>25</sup> It was apparent that the inter-war years and the events of the Shoah were bringing about a radical change in the identity strategies of significant numbers of Hungarian Jews. The Zionist movements which had been hovering on the margins of Hungarian Jewish public life for some decades became accepted by a substantial part of the survivors. According to data at our disposal, in 1948 the Zionist parties may have had between 11,000 and 15,000 members, and the Zionists collected more than 58,000 shekels; that is, about one in four survivors supported a political movement that offered a secular and modern version of the rejection strategy.<sup>26</sup>

The development of a new acceptance strategy, that is, the possibility of a national-secular reconstruction of Jewish identity, was nipped in the bud by the Communist takeover. In the years after 1948 the

Communists pursued a policy of ruthless suppression of national and ethnic ambitions. Within the framework of their anti-religious policy, the Communist authorities then restricted the work of the Jewish religious institutions to such a degree that even the traditional option of religious self-identification, the second alternative of the acceptance strategy, became highly restricted. This repression, and the simultaneous lure of full assimilation, resulted in the image of the generation born between 1935 and 1950 that our survey demonstrates. Members of this generation, especially those who had moved up the social ladder, went further than any other generation group along the path towards a rejection of Jewish identity.

This fading away of Jewish identity considerably influenced the next generation's relationship to the Jewish community, but it did not prevent the resurgence of the demand for a redefinition of the substance of Jewish identity, especially among those born after 1970. As our study has shown, about 40 percent of the 18 to 34 age group come from homogeneous families and 30 percent adhere to traditions. In the 35 to 54 age group the share of homogeneous families is 69 percent and about 30 percent adhere to traditions. On the other hand, in the older age groups more than 85 percent are from homogeneous families, but only 20 percent have preserved tradition to any extent. The giving up of tradition is not therefore as rapid as the growth in the proportion of people from mixed marriages. In sum, some elements of Jewish tradition are present substantially or symbolically in the families of about half of all those aged between 18 and 34.

The process whereby Jewish identity was reconstructed began among the younger generation as early as the late 1980s and accelerated after the collapse of the Communist system. One reason for the resurgence of Jewish identity is a general strengthening of the demand for ethnic and religious identities. This is a natural phenomenon at a time of great social change which generally plunges acquired social identities into a crisis. This search for identity was enhanced by the growing acceptance of multiculturalist orientations. Finally, the choice of the "acceptance" strategy was facilitated by the opening of borders and above all by rapidly developing relations with Israel and Jews in the United States. But, as I have shown elsewhere,<sup>27</sup> the main motive behind the new identity strategy has been the desire to throw off the stigmatized identity of the older generation. There are many Jews in Hungary who consider themselves Jewish only when faced with anti-

Semitism. They feel that the boundaries separating them from others are externally defined; however, this definition, that is, the stigma, infiltrates their thinking and behavior. As Erving Goffman has analyzed it, stigmatized individuals, even if they think that their stigmatization has no real foundations, try to develop behavior patterns and communicational rules that make it easier to live with the stigma.<sup>28</sup> As a result, they also draw, often involuntarily, boundaries between their own group and others. They are afraid—and in this respect it is unimportant whether with good reason or not—of social conflicts, political phenomena and rhetoric that do not invoke fear in others. They behave and communicate differently and assign different meaning to certain gestures, words and behavior within the group and outside it. Consequently, it is easy for members of both the in-group and out-group to identify this behavior developed in order to cope with the stigma. Identification in this case, however, develops into identity and this identity is often a painful and burdensome one. For the young generation of Jews who in the last ten years have lived without the political restrictions placed upon their parents in the Communist system such identity has been not simply unattractive but absolutely unbearable.

Thus, the majority of those who search for a new identity are not subject to the same pressures to assimilate that once bore down upon their predecessors. Their social mobility may be considered to be complete and the expectations of the world around them have changed considerably. The changing circumstances have important consequences: it seems likely that, for the foreseeable future, a relatively large number of Hungarian Jews will retain an identity that expresses itself through Jewish tradition.

Similar developments may be observed among the Jewish populations of the other former Communist countries of East Central Europe. Nevertheless, in an extremely important respect, the situation of the Hungarian Jews differs from that of the Czech, Slovak or Polish Jews. In Hungary, where according to various types of estimates there are between 80,000 and 140,000 Jews, the size of groups searching for a new acceptance strategy probably exceeds the critical point that is indispensable if change is going to occur in the attitudes of the whole Jewish population. In the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, owing to the small size of the Jewish communities, "revival movements" seem unable to prevent the gradual disappearance of the Jewish Diasporas.

In Hungary, however, they are strong enough to slow down or even counterbalance the process of attrition at the margins.

Nevertheless, a complete revival of religious tradition affecting all aspects of life will probably be the new identity strategy of only a small number of groups. Just as in the Swedish<sup>29</sup> or French case ("Judaism à la carte"), the elements of tradition seem destined to serve as the group identity token of ethnic group consciousness. Ethnic groups have primarily a political function. Their political aims perhaps include the struggle against discrimination, the attainment of better positions during the division of social goods, but first and foremost the securing of conditions necessary for the self-maintenance of the group as an important social identity source. The stability and strength of the ethnic group depends upon its level of institutionalization as well as the ability of its institutions to focus in the course of their work on the problems considered by the group they represent to be its own problems, or the ability of these institutions to convince members of the group that the pursued goals are also important to the group.<sup>30</sup> Unless a strong emigration wave occurs due to a dramatic deterioration in external conditions, it is these factors that shall determine the extent to which Hungarian Jews develop an ethnic group consciousness and identity.

#### NOTES

- 1 Viktor Karády, *Zsidóság Európában a modern korban* [Jews in Europe in the modern era] (Budapest: Uj Mandátum), 191–242.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 249–286.
- 3 Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 216–217.
- 4 Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Ch. 3.
- 5 Viktor Karády, *op.cit.*, 255–257.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 257.
- 7 Viktor Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárság.* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi), 132–150.
- 8 András Kovács, "Identitás és etnicitás. Zsidó identitásproblémák a háború utáni Magyarországon" [Identity and ethnicity. Jewish identity problems in post-war Hungary], in Ferenc Erős, Yichak M. Kashti, Mária M. Kovács, eds., *Zsidóság, történelem, identitás* (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1992); in English: "Anti-Semitism



- and Jewish Identity in Post-Communist Hungary," in Randolph L. Braham, *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- 9 Henri Tajfel, "The Social Psychology of Minorities," in *Human Groups and Social Categories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), ch. 15, 309–344.
- 10 Imréd, who was the head of government when the second series of anti-Semitic laws were passed in Hungary, had to resign because it turned out that he had Jewish ancestors.
- 11 See András Kovács, "A zsidókérdés a mai magyar társadalomban," in *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon* (Paris: Magyar Füzetek). In English: "The 'Jewish Question' in Contemporary Hungary," in R. L. Braham, B. Vago, eds., *The Hungarian Holocaust. Forty Years Later* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). See also András Kovács, "Asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus, identitás. A zsidóság a modern magyar társadalomban" [Assimilation, anti-Semitism, and identity. Jews in modern Hungarian society], in Mónika Vig, ed., *Hogyan éljük túl a XX. századot?* (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1992).
- 12 János Kádár was the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party from 1957 to the late 1980s and, beginning in 1961, introduced economic and, to a lesser extent, political reforms.
- 13 Between November 1999 and July 2000 we conducted personal interviews with 2,015 individuals. The group surveyed consisted of members of the Hungarian Jewish population aged over 18 years. The survey was carried out by the Institute for Minority Research at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. It was sponsored by the Alliance of Hungarian Jewish Communities, the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Lauder Foundation and the American Jewish Committee.
- 14 Even this proportion appears to be exaggerated. Owing to the circumstances of the survey—subjects were contacted by interviewers in a letter that was signed by the religious community and mentioned that the results of the survey might be used by Jewish organizations in matters of compensation—some non-members of the religious community may have stated that they were members.
- 15 As regards the Jewish descent of parents and grandparents, negative responses and doubtful cases (thus mixed descent) were placed in the "other" category. As regards religious adherence, in addition to the answer "yes," the questionnaire permitted the following responses: "other faith," "non-denominational," and in cases of dispute "other." The question concerning conversion included the responses "yes" and "no" as well as the supplementary category of "other."
- 16 The table takes account only of those parents (mothers and fathers) who are considered Jewish. We regard marriages as "homogamic" where the partner is considered Jewish in either an ethnic or a religious sense. We took no notice at this point of whether or not the Jewish respondent was also possibly of partly

- mixed descent. From the present generation, the respondents placed in the groups on the table were those who were currently married (or had previously been married). Where there have been several marriages, it is the last one that counts.
- 17 This reconstruction, however, is not flawless, because, first, the subjects of the interview do not always have sufficient information about earlier generations and, second, the layout of the questionnaire meant that we had to ignore such factors as forced conversion or the age at which forebears changed their religion.
- 18 The index scores are based on the simple adding of the occurrence of 10–10 practice. In both cases, the maximum score is 10 and the minimum score is 0.
- 19 In the course of the following analysis, we applied a model comprising two age groups: we compared those born before 1945 with those born after 1945.
- 20 On the basis of their answers to several questions the respondents were classified in five identity groups. The ground for classification was whether in the identity of a person "positive" identity factors like religion, tradition, historical memory, etc., or mainly the fear of anti-Semitism were salient. In cases in which both factors were strongly present we speak of *strong* identity; in which the positive and traditional factors are salient; of *traditional* identity; if both are weakly but observably present we speak of *moderate* identity; if anti-Semitism is the main determinant of identity then we call it *aggrieved* identity; and if none of the identity factors were salient we speak of *assimilated* identity.
- 21 See Viktor Karády, "Szociológiai kísérlet a magyar zsidóság 1945 és 1956 közötti helyzetének elemzésére" [A sociological analysis of the situation of Hungarian Jews between 1945 and 1956], in *Zsidóság az 1945 utáni Magyarországon*, op. cit., 110–121; András Kovács, "A zsidókérdés a mai magyar társadalomban," in *ibid.* In English: "The 'Jewish Question' in Contemporary Hungary," in *The Hungarian Holocaust. Forty Years Later*, op. cit.
- 22 See Ferenc Erős, "A zsidó identitás szerkezete Magyarországon a nyolcvanas években" [The structure of Jewish identity in Hungary in the 1980s], in Ferenc Erős, Yichak M. Kashti, Mária M. Kovács, eds., *Zsidóság, történelem, identitás*, op. cit., especially 89–93. Ferenc Erős, András Kovács, Katalin Lévai, "Hogyan jöttem rá, hogy zsidó vagyok?" *Medvetánc*, 1985, no. 2–3, 129–145. In English: "How did I find out that I was a Jew?" *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 3. (1987). András Kovács, "Identitás és etnicitás. Zsidó identitásproblémák a háború utáni Magyarországon," [Identity and ethnicity. Jewish identity problems in post-war Hungary] in Erős, Kashti, and Kovács, eds., *Zsidóság, történelem, identitás*, op. cit. In English: "Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity in Post-Communist Hungary," in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Post Communist Eastern Europe*. Op. cit., especially 101–104.
- 23 Diana Pinto, "The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity," in András Kovács, ed., *Jewish Studies at the Central European University. Public Lectures 1996–1999* (Budapest: Central European University), 188–189.



- 24 For a vivid description of the process, see Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 84–129, esp. 87–99.
- 25 Mendelsohn, *ibid.*, 98.
- 26 See Attila Novák, *Átmenetben. A cionista mozgalom négy éve Magyarországon* [In Transition. Four Years of the Zionist Movement in Hungary] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő Kiadó, 2000), 43, 151.
- 27 András Kovács, “Jewish identity and Jewish politics in modern Hungary,” in Kovács, ed., *Jewish Studies at the Central European University. Public Lectures 1996–1999*, op.cit., 105–114.
- 28 Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), especially 57–128.
- 29 See the analysis of Lars Dencik in this volume.
- 30 For the effect of these factors both in general and specifically—e.g., in the case of Polish Jews—see in this volume, Claire A. Rosenson, “Polish Jewish Institutions in Transition: Personalities over Process.”

## CHAPTER 12

## Particularizing the Universal: New Polish Jewish Identities and a New Framework of Analysis

*Mariusz Gudonis*

### INTRODUCTION

Jews have always been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by their surroundings; how for instance could one explain modern movements in Judaism like the Reform and Conservative without reference to the European Enlightenment? And when Jews constitute a tiny minority characterized by both a physical break in the transmission of Jewishness (the Shoah) as well as a cultural one (Stalinist Polonization), it becomes more important than ever to recognize and investigate how general societal processes affect the construction of emerging Jewish identities. These identities are different both in scope and content from those expressed in the Communist period, not to mention those in evidence before World War II.

Due to the absence of so-called thick Jewish cultures, the differences in these identities are quite subtle. As a result, I have found the traditional dualistic framework that describes a Jewish identity solely in terms of the degree of its “ethnicity” and “religiosity” inadequate. In its place I propose an alternative conceptual framework in four dimensions. These more accurately reflect not only the diverse ways in which individuals understand their Jewishness, but also how recent social trends impact on identity construction. The trends that I believe are most influential in the new articulation of Jewishness in the post-Communist era are individualism and consumerism. Both trends are revealed in my research, which is comprised of 12 semi-structured interviews conducted in April 2000. I focused on the youngest generation of Polish Jews: eight of the twelve interviewees were born between 1970 and 1980 and thus have spent a large proportion of their lives in a free-market, liberal, democratic environment.