

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Meso-Level and Micro-Level Factors in Jewish Verification and Identification

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0gh1p1w7>

Author

Fields, Benjamin

Publication Date

2021

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Meso-Level and Micro-Level Factors in Jewish Verification and Identification

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

by

Benjamin C. Fields

June 2021

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Jan E. Stets, Chairperson

Dr. Amy Kroska

Dr. Michael Alexander

Copyright by
Benjamin C. Fields
2021

The Thesis of Benjamin C. Fields is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Meso-Level and Micro-Level Factors in Jewish Verification and Identification

by

Benjamin C. Fields

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Sociology

University of California, Riverside, June 2021

Dr. Jan E. Stets, Chairperson

Abstract: Jews have faced increasing levels of anti-Semitism in the past five years both in the United States and abroad. Given this increase, it has become increasingly important to understand the factors that may impact Jewish identity. Recent work in social psychology has posited that the identity process exists within an embedded social structure and that factors at all three levels of this structure – macro, meso, and micro – likely impact identity. This research investigates meso-level and micro-level factors in Jewish identity verification and identification. Results show that factors at both of these levels are related to both Jewish identity verification and identification. The data show that community support at the meso-level is positively related to both Jewish identity verification and identification. Similarly, the proportion of Jews in one's close others is important in both of these identity processes. Anti-Semitism is shown to relate to increases in Jewish identity verification and identification.

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Introduction..... | Page 1 |
| Theory..... | Page 3 |
| Method..... | Page 21 |
| Results..... | Page 33 |
| Discussion..... | Page 45 |
| References..... | Page 51 |

List of Tables

Table 1. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Religious and Ethnic Identity Prominence.....Page 24

Table 2. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Religious and Ethnic Identity Salience Page 26

Table 3. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Jewish Identification.....Page 29

Table 4. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Community Response..... Page 31

Table 5. Summary Statistics of Variables..... Page 35

Table 6. Correlations among the Variables..... Page 39

Table 7. Standardized Estimates for Jewish Verification..... Page 41

Table 8. Standardized Estimates for Jewish Identification..... Page 43

List of Figures

Figure 1. Model of Jewish Identity..... Page 20

Figure 2. Distribution of Jewish Identification..... Page 37

The United States is facing growing partisanship, sectarianism, and racial division. This has manifested itself in rising rates of hate crimes and violence. From neo-Nazi rallies to mass shootings, to the casual comment, the racism and prejudice that remained relatively hidden for many years is now in the open. The Anti-Defamation League reports that incidents of hate crimes have risen in four of the past five years. Importantly, they note that, despite declining in 2018, religious-based hate crimes rose by seven percent in 2019 (ADL 2020). While these hate crimes reflect the changing dynamics of the United States, they are just one example of bias-related incidents.

Sociologists and psychologists have posited several explanations for the existence of hate crimes and the rationale behind bias-related attacks. Research has shown that attacks are often motivated by attempts at establishing positive social identities among the attacking group while simultaneously reacting to perceived threats to privileged status (Quillian 1995). According to group threat theory, those who belong to privileged groups in society will seek to maintain that status. Unfortunately, this often manifests itself in violence and prejudice such as hate crimes (Hutchison et al. 2006). While this research has pointed to the rationale behind the attacks, it often leaves out the effects that bias-related crimes have on the attacked groups.

There has been some research into understanding the effects that these incidents have on social and group identities. Although social and group identities are similar, there are important differences between the two. While social identities are those defined by categorical memberships to which people belong such as racial or ethnic identities, group identities are defined by the sense of belonging to a group of similar others with whom

one interacts frequently (Stets and Serpe 2013). Importantly, much of this research has noted that, when a bias-related crime occurs against one member of a group, all members of the group feel some amount of that threat. Indeed, those members of the group feel a greater sense of threat if they belong to a marginalized group (Walters et al. 2020). Not only does a hate crime act as a threat against the members of the group closest to the crime, but it also affects the entire group, acting as a reminder that any of them are vulnerable (Craig 2002).

The current research seeks to understand the processes of Jewish identification in the context of anti-Semitism. While Jews likely see themselves as belonging to both a social category and a group, this work centers on an understanding of the Jewish identity as a group identity. Because Jews have both individual and communal identities and meanings, this research approaches verification and identification of the Jewish identity from an understanding that these two identity processes are influenced by both positive and negative social interactions within the social structure. Despite the fact that Jews have enjoyed a relatively privileged and safe space in American society since World War II, anti-Semitic crimes increased 14 percent from 2018-2019 and amount to 63 percent of the religion-based hate crimes reported in the United States (Cohen 2010; ADL 2020). While some research has studied the effects of these anti-Semitic attacks on Jews, and the perceptions that Jews have of anti-Semitism, little research has examined the relationship between anti-Semitism and the Jewish identity (Cohen 2010; Saxe et al. 2015).

Jews occupy an important place in research on prejudice as it is an opportunity to understand two different aspects of their identity: the religious and ethnic. Previous

research has investigated the effects of bias against religious groups (Walters et al. 2020) and against ethnic groups (Hutchison et al. 2006; Quillian 1995), but rarely has research examined an identity that has both a religious and an ethnic dimension. I incorporate these dimensions into this research on the Jewish identity.

Previous research has shown that group members tend to gravitate more toward their group when they feel threatened (Branscombe et al. 1993). Studying the effects that threats have on identities, some have found that the religious identities tend to increase following an attack both on the group or broader social networks such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman 2010). However, the Jewish identity is unique in that it can be considered as having both religious and ethnic aspects, and we must consider both dimensions in one's identity.

Drawing on identity theory, I examine the role that meso and micro-level social structural processes have on the Jewish identity in the context of anti-Semitism. Using a sample of roughly 600 Jews recruited through Amazon's MTurk platform, I investigate the relationship between anti-Semitism, the Jewish community, and the Jewish identity. This research begins to understand the relationships between threats to an identity group as experienced by individuals at the micro level, and the embeddedness of those threats in meso-level processes and outcomes.

THEORY

Identity Theory

In identity theory, an identity is a set of meanings that describes individuals. These identities have three bases: person, social and group, and role identities. A person

identity describes a person's unique attributes, such as being moral or hardworking. A social identity describes a person's categorical membership to a social group rather than interaction with others in the group (Stets and Serpe 2013). A group identity describes a person's interaction in a particular social group, such as being Jewish. Finally, a role identity describes the roles a person occupies, such as teacher or father (Burke and Stets 2009). To understand these identities, we must first understand the meanings that comprise them.

Meanings emerge when we perceive social stimuli and respond to it. These stimuli can be both from the self, as in thinking of ourselves in terms of our identities, or from situations, as in when a specific social situation causes us to enact an identity. When the self is the stimulus, our identity meanings characterize who we are. For example, a person may describe herself as pious in her religious identity. The meanings make up the identity standard, guiding how she enacts that identity in situations. When the situation is the stimulus, the meanings that we understand in that situation influence which identity or identities we activate. We seek to have our identity meanings match the situational meanings. For example, when some enter a classroom, the student identity that includes the meaning of being "studious" should be enacted (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets et al. forthcoming).

Which identity a person activates in a situation also is influenced by the salience or prominence of the identity. Identities are rank ordered in the self, structured around these two concepts. Identity salience is how likely a person is to enact an identity in a situation (Burke and Stets 2009). Identity prominence is the importance or centrality of

an identity. Studies have shown that identity prominence can influence the salience of an identity (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014). Often, a more prominent identity is more likely to be activated in more situations. However, at times, this may not be true. For example, a highly prominent identity might not be activated if it does not match the meanings of the situation, whereas a salient identity may match those meanings and be played out even if it is not highly important (Stets et al. forthcoming).

The key difference between the two concepts is that prominence is an internal process, that is, how a person internally ranks their identities, whereas salience is an external process, that is how likely a person is to act according to the meanings of an identity (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets and Fares 2019).

Two other processes that are relevant in identity identification are private self-regard, or how proud individuals are of an identity, and public self-regard, or perceptions of how much people think others respect an identity (Stets 2018; Stets and Fares 2019; Wiley, Perkins, and Deaux 2008). Identification is the strength to which people feel that they embody an identity. By understanding not only its prominence and salience, but also the level of pride and respect a person has, we have a more comprehensive understanding of the level of identification.

The identity process plays out in the correspondence between the identity meanings that persons claim and that are stored in their identity standard, and the meanings in the situation that call forth a particular identity. There must be correspondence between the identity meanings that persons hold and the meanings of their social actions; this links identity standard meanings with meanings implied by

behavior (Burke 1980). Among the identity processes, perhaps the most important is people's desire to be verified in their identities. Verification occurs when a person's identity meanings match their self-in-situation meanings (Burke and Stets 2009). Identity theory posits that verification occurs through a perceptual control process (Burke 1991). This process involves a feedback loop in which people work to control how they are perceived in situations to match the perceptions they hold in their identities.

The perceptual control process of an identity is made up of five components: 1) the identity standard, 2) input, 3) a comparator, 4) output, and 5) emotions. The identity standard is the set of meanings which define the identity. These meanings help us understand how we should behave while enacting that identity. The input is the perceptual aspect of the feedback loop. This is how individuals perceive themselves, how they think others perceive them, and the meanings that are implied by their behavior in the situation (Burke and Stets 2009). The feedback loop occurs when people compare self-in-situation meanings with the meanings in their identity standard. This is what the comparator in the identity model does.

When people perceive that their identity meanings match the meanings as to how they think others see them in a situation, their identity is verified. Once this occurs, they feel positive emotions, and they will continue to enact the identity in the same manner (Burke and Stets 2009). If a mismatch is perceived between the meanings in their identity standard and how individuals think others see them in the situation, their identity is not verified. In this case, individuals will work to modify their behavior, or output, to better match their identity standard with the self-in-situation meanings.

The identity process is immediately experienced at the micro level and influenced by other processes at the micro level, but it also is embedded within the meso and macro levels of social reality (Stets forthcoming). Social theorists have worked to define the micro, meso, and macro levels of social reality (see for example, Turner 2010a, b, 2012). The macro-level includes large institutions and systems of stratification, as well as the culture that exists within these institutions (Stets forthcoming). The meso-level includes corporate units such as groups and communities and categoric units divided along social lines such as race/ethnicity or religion (Turner 2012). These corporate units may be organized along social-emotional lines such as families or task-oriented lines such as sports teams. The categoric units, importantly place people into social categories which exist within the stratification of the macro-level. That is, some groups have higher prestige, power, and status than others (Stets forthcoming).

Finally, the micro-level is the most immediate level of experience. At this level, individuals interact with others and encounter forces which influence their interactions. There are seven forces which influence their interactions and encounters including: 1) ecological forces, 2) demographic forces, 3) status forces, 4) role forces, 5) cultural forces, 6) motivational forces, and 7) emotional forces (Stets forthcoming; Turner 2010b). In the identity process, motivational forces play the largest role. These are the social needs which drive the social behaviors we enact, such as the desire to be included in groups or have our identities verified (Stets forthcoming).

In this work, I focus on the Jewish identity as it is experienced and influenced by other processes at the micro level, as well as how it is embedded in the meso level of

society. When a threat occurs at the meso-level such as an attack on a Jewish community, the effect of that attack may influence micro-level processes such as the degree to which Jewish individuals experience verification of their identity. Stets (forthcoming) argues that we cannot understand identity processes without understanding the embedded nature of those identities.

The Jewish identity is an example of the embedded nature of identities. The Jewish identity, unlike purely religious identities such as the Catholic identity, includes both a religious and an ethnic aspect. This identity then can be seen as existing within the social structure, as an institution of religious believers or a culture of ethnic practices at the macro-level, Jewish communities at the meso-level, and personal experiences of one's Jewish identity at the micro-level. In this paper, I focus on the latter two-levels of society: processes at the meso and micro levels. Jewish communities and personal experiences of one's Jewish identity are embedded in the social structure and are presumed to be affected both directly and indirectly by macro-level processes that are left unmeasured in this analysis. In the following sections, I first turn to understandings of the Jewish identity, then the meso-level events and processes, followed by the micro-level events and processes.

Jewish Identity

When discussing the Jewish identity, it is crucial to understand both the historical roots of the identity, and modern Jews' conceptualization of their identities. Jews have been subjected to various forms of persecution and marginalization throughout history. More recently, throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, Jews concentrated in Europe

experienced persecution as both an ethnic and a religious group. The Jewish ethnic identity was largely created through this persecution, and the meanings associated with that identity – and the religious identity – partially stem from various forms of persecution (Alexander 2018; Schama 2013, 2017).

Recent research has broadly understood two distinct aspects of the Jewish identity: the religious and ethnic. The religious identity is typically distinguished by several key characteristics: connection to religious institutions such as synagogues and temples; a personal belief in, and connection to, God; participation in religious holidays and rites; and identification as belonging to a worldwide religion (Hartman and Sheskin 2012). The ethnic identity is somewhat more challenging to identify and is often seen as a lack of religious identity. In other words, ethnic Jews are people who identify as Jewish but say that they do not believe in God or have a connection to a religion (Phillips 2010). Research also has pointed to the imprecise nature of ethnic identity as Jews may experience different ethnic identities depending on the community in which they live or how they were raised. However, this ethnic identity can be broadly understood as the shared meanings, traditions, language, and sense of belonging to a group united not by shared religious beliefs but by societal divisions (Dollinger 2003; Macdonald-Dennis 2006).

Trends in the Jewish identity have shown increasing levels of secular Judaism, often measured by asking respondents if they believe in God, or if they attend religious services (Phillips and Kelner 2006). Other studies have shown that Jews may think of themselves as having four different Jewish identities: communal religious, private

religious, communal ethnic, and private ethnic (Hartman and Sheskin 2011). In this study, I investigate the Jewish identity as religious and ethnic.

Meso-Level Experiences

The meso-level exists between the macro and micro levels of society. At this level, we see groups that organize together either according to task-orientation or more social-emotional orientation. The Jewish community exists as a categoric unit, but this community also has a culture. At this level, we expect to see Jewish community-level, or meso-level experience, influencing individuals' Jewish identities.

Community Experiences of Anti-Semitism. In instances of hate crimes, those who are direct victims of an attack are not the only ones who experience the effects of the attack. Research has shown that members of minority groups actually experience similar levels of threat regardless of whether or not they actually are attacked (Hutchison et al. 2006; McGrath, Arrow, and Berdahl 2000). This experience may come from two different processes. First, individuals may feel a sense of solidarity and support for those being attacked, and therefore feelings of empathy lead them to also feel attacked (McGrath et al. 2000). Or they may experience a "ripple effect" from the attack (Walters et al. 2020: 145). This effect causes those within the group to experience the attack as if it was against them, simply by virtue of belonging to that group.

When group members feel that their group has been attacked, they may feel that they lose a certain amount of power or prestige. They then may band together to strengthen the bonds and create a buffer against negative perceptions. When a group experiences threat, members may strengthen their ties to other group members and draw

clearer distinctions between themselves and others (Hutchinson et al. 2006). By creating this boundary, they turn inward to other group members who understand the same meanings of their identity. This mutual support that emerges following an attack may be experienced as a form of identity verification. Each understands the meanings of the other's identity and may protect it against harm by affirming its value. As group members act toward each other in this manner, confirming one another's identity, it produces a mutual verification context (Burke and Stets 1999).

An additional and unique aspect of the Jewish identity may influence the relationship between anti-Semitism and verification. Jews have had a long history of experiencing anti-Semitism and have maintained a strong identity in spite of it. The Jewish history can be traced back to the plight of the ancient Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians (Schama 2013). Throughout the last several hundred years, as anti-Semitism has increased, Jews have understood this as part of what it means to be Jewish (Alexander 2018). Simply by being attacked then, a Jew understands that the attacker is seeing them as Jewish. Attacks against a person's Jewish community will then trickle down to imply to individuals that they are being seen as Jewish by their attacker. The fact that they are being called out because they are Jewish as well as the above process of bonding with other Jews should increase the feeling of being verified.

Thus, I propose my first hypothesis:

H1_A: Incidents of anti-Semitism against the Jewish community will increase Jewish identity verification.

Not only does an attack on one's community influence verification, but it also plays a role in the strength of identification to that identity. As individuals gravitate toward those in their group, group members may buffer their negative experiences. Thus, when Jews experience the ripple effect of an incident of anti-Semitism against their community, they may identify more strongly with their Jewish identity as they have in the past. Additionally, the attack should directly increase identification with being Jewish because others are recognizing who they are and are attacking them because of it. Thus, while the attack might harm their well-being, it should strengthen their identification. Therefore, I propose my next hypothesis:

H1_B: Incidents of anti-Semitism against the Jewish community will increase Jewish identification.

Community Support. Individuals' immediate Jewish community may be a source of support both in terms of verifying their Jewish identity and strengthening their identification with their Jewish identity. By feeling that their community is supporting them in the face of anti-Semitism, Jews may experience a sense of shared meanings across this community. Rather than feeling alone, they understand that their community has a shared understanding of what it means to be Jewish, and how that meaning is influenced by experiences with anti-Semitism (Schama 2017).

Recent work in identity theory has argued that individuals sort themselves into groups with those who have similar understandings of their identity meanings. Thus, Jews will gravitate toward those whom they feel share the meanings of being Jewish, and who they feel will support them in the face of anti-Semitism. At the meso-level, this

sorting may be due to either status homophily, a sense of shared similarities based on status characteristics (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001), or value homophily, a sense of shared cultural orientation (Stets et al. forthcoming). Supportive Jewish communities act as both status homophily in that Jews feel a similar evaluation of their group and as value homophily in the shared values and meanings of their Jewish identity. Especially when facing attacks, it is important for Jews to understand their local Jewish community as having the same values and understandings of what it means to be Jewish.

Value homophily is key in understanding the verification process. It occurs when we are surrounded by those who share our cultural orientation, including attitudes and identities (Stets et al. forthcoming). When Jews perceive that their local Jewish community is supporting them in the event of anti-Semitism, they understand a sense of shared meanings around what it is to be Jewish and how to relate to the world as a Jew. This homophily benefits individuals through social support and interaction, buffering experiences of threat and strengthening verification and identification (Stets et al. forthcoming).

When immersed in a group such as a community, experiences of support are important when attacks emerge. Research suggests that support from others within one's community are important to preserve positive feelings toward one's group when experiencing instances of hate (Hutchinson et al. 2006; Walters et al. 2020). This buffering effect is powerful to maintain positive evaluations of the group to which people belong. If homophily facilitates support, and by extension verification and identification with the Jewish identity, these identity processes also may increase homophily (Stets et

al. forthcoming). This latter effect acknowledges that the relationship between community support and identity processes is bi-directional. Nevertheless, given the above, I propose the following two hypotheses:

H2_A: Greater perceptions of community support will increase Jewish identity verification.

H2_B: Greater perceptions of community support will increase Jewish identification.

While these meso-level processes play an important role in the identity process, the micro-level processes and experiences of anti-Semitism also are important to examine. These processes are embedded in the meso-level processes.

Micro-Level Experiences

The micro-level is the most proximate level for individuals. This includes the daily interactions we have with others, our intimate relationships and personal experiences (Stets et al. forthcoming; Turner 2016). It also is at this level that the identity verification and identification processes take place. Relationships are created and strengthened through shared understandings of identity meanings. Relationships and interactions also foster greater homophily within groups (Stets et al. forthcoming). In considering the effects of the Jewish identity at the micro level, I investigate three distinct, but related phenomena: personal experiences of anti-Semitism, close other experiences of anti-Semitism, and the proportion of Jewish others in one's close relationships (friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family).

Personal Experiences of Anti-Semitism. When experiencing an attack against themselves, persons often seek to understand the reason for that attack (Janoff-Bulman and Frieze 1983). By reporting it as anti-Semitism, Jews are describing it specifically as an attack against them because they are Jewish. In doing so, the attack acts as a way of verifying a person's Jewish identity. Not only is the person being seen by others as being Jewish, but they are being singled out for that identity. If we return to the idea that Jewish meanings include experiences of anti-Semitism of the past, being attacked for being a Jew is consistent with the meaning of being Jewish. Thus, they will feel more verified in their identity upon experiencing an attack.

Just as being seen as Jewish in the event of an attack will lead to greater verification, it should have a similar effect upon identification. In understanding that they are attacked because of their Jewish identity, those persons who have been attacked will feel a heightened awareness of their Jewish identity. While this could lead to hiding their identity, research has shown that Jews who are attacked tend to gravitate more toward acting Jewish rather than seeking to distance themselves (Sharot 2011). Thus, I offer my next set of hypotheses:

H3_A: Personal experiences of anti-Semitism will increase Jewish identity verification.

H3_B: Personal experiences of anti-Semitism will increase Jewish identification.

Close Others' Experiences of Threat. Close others may involve a friend, family member, neighbor, or even coworker. At issue is how their experiences of threat impact one's identity. I anticipate that close others' experiences of a threat may spill over to the

individual, registering a similar effect of a personal threat. Like personal instances of anti-Semitism, having a close other attacked for being Jewish acts to verify a person's identity, it is just that the attack is indirect rather than direct. Someone close to the person who is seen as similar is being attacked. If close others also are members of the same group, when seeing another group member attacked, it acts to verify one's identity because the person feels the identity attack as well.

Essentially, when close others experience anti-Semitism, Jews, like other attacked minorities, feel a sense of shared solidarity and empathy when others experience anti-Semitism (Walters et al. 2020). The result is that it will lead to similar processes occurring as those that occur when a person directly experiences anti-Semitism.

Therefore, I propose this fourth set of hypotheses:

H4_A: Close other's experiences of anti-Semitism will increase Jewish identity verification.

H4_B: Close other's experiences of anti-Semitism will increase Jewish identification.

Proportion of Jewish Others. Previous research has indicated connections between the density of a person's network and identity verification and identification. Some of this work has drawn on social network analysis to show a relationship between the density of a person's network and verification (Markowski forthcoming). In that study, density referred to the proportion of a person's social contacts who are connected to each other. However, in this research, I investigate the proportion of a person's close

social contacts – friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers – who share the Jewish identity.

Understanding the proportion of Jews within a person’s network is important because it helps to understand the micro-level social structure in which they interact. Being surrounded by others who share the same identity is indicative of homophily (Stets et al. forthcoming). This homophily then acts to increase the likelihood of being verified. Similarly, the shared meanings in these interactions create mutual verification contexts. By interacting with a high proportion of Jews, individuals will have greater opportunities to enact their identity and will be more likely to be verified when enacting that identity.

The homophily that occurs when surrounded by a high proportion of Jewish others will likely also have an effect on identification. By interacting with a higher proportion of Jewish others, individuals are more likely to enact their Jewish identity. It is as if an echo chamber has developed, and this may produce a strengthening of the Jewish identity.

Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

H5_A: Greater proportions of Jewish others will increase Jewish identity verification.

H5_B: Greater proportions of Jewish others will increase Jewish identification.

Identity Verification. While each meso and micro level process has an effect on both identity verification and identification, perhaps the most important process in identification is verification itself. When a person is verified in their identity, they feel good. These positive emotions are part of the identity feedback process. By feeling better,

people will then want to play out the identity more often, (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets 2006; Stets et al. 2020).

To that end, I offer my final hypothesis:

H6: Jewish identity verification will increase Jewish identification.

Background Factors in Identity Verification and Identification

Several aspects of one's background likely play roles in identity verification and identification. First, religiosity, in the form of belonging to the more religious sects of Judaism – Orthodox and Conservative versus Reform – may act to increase verification and identification. Research has shown that those in more religious Jewish sects feel a greater connection to their Jewish identity than less religious or non-religious Jews (Sharot 2011). Therefore, more Jews who belong to more religious Jewish sects may experience greater verification in their Jewish identity and identify more strongly with that identity. Similarly, being married and having children have both been shown to strengthen a person's Jewish identification. Marriage, particularly marriage to another Jew, and fostering Jewish values on one's offspring should increase Jewish identification (Friedman et al. 2005) as well as verification of the Jewish identity.

Research also points to ways that race, gender, and class affect how Jews understand their identity. This work reveals that higher class Jews often feel that they are living up to expectations around being Jewish. Because modern Jews are often wealthier and more educated, it may be that the meanings of the Jewish identity have incorporated wealth and educational achievement. Thus, by having higher income or education, Jews may be verified in their Jewish identity. Similarly, they may be able to enact certain

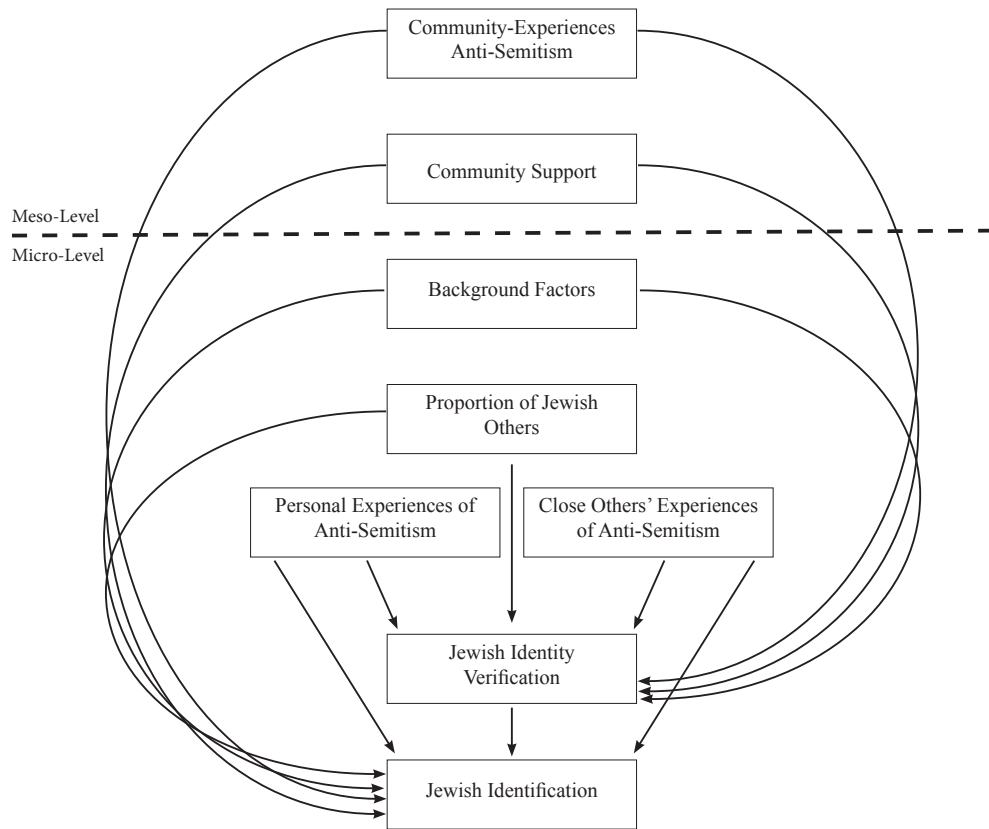
aspects of the Jewish religious identity, such as donating to charity or reserving seats at synagogue, which increases their identification (Friedman et al. 2005). Black Jews have been shown to feel that, because they look different than most Jews, they need to legitimize their Jewish identity more frequently. To do so, they enact their Jewish identity more frequently and often gravitate toward more religious organizations within Judaism (Haynes 2018). This process may lead Black and other nonwhite Jews to have stronger Jewish identity verification and identification.

While some research has shown that gender has relatively little impact on the strength of Jews identity (Hartman and Hartman 2010), other research has shown that women tend to have stronger religious identities (Renzetti and Curren 2005). Research also has shown that men may spend more time with other Jews and are socialized to express their Jewish identity more often (Hartman and Hartman 2010). Thus, men may experience stronger Jewish identity verification, while women may reveal stronger Jewish identification. Finally, age also may be a factor in Jewish identification and verification as older Jews are more likely to live in Jewish neighborhoods or have deeper Jewish networks, influencing both identification and verification (Kakhnovets and Wolf 2011).

SUMMARY

Figure 1 depicts the proposed theoretical relationships. This shows how the micro-level is embedded within the meso-level. In the current study, I am interested in understanding the relationships between processes at both levels, but particularly how they all influence Jewish identity verification and identification.

Figure 1. Model of Jewish Identity



The goal of this research is to understand the ways in which anti-Semitism, a challenging experience to one's Jewish identity, and one's Jewish community, a supporting experience, influence the verification and strength of one's Jewish identity. Jews exist in a world in which they experience threats at the macro, meso, and micro level. I examine the meso and micro level effects on one's identity.

Although each process in the model may influence Jews to identify more strongly with their Jewish identity, it also is possible that this relationship is bi-directional. Those who have stronger Jewish identities may be cognizant of more incidents of anti-Semitism, and they may be more likely to select themselves into Jewish communities. I am unable to identify the causal ordering because my data is cross-sectional. What is important is that the meso and micro level experiences of anti-Semitism and support likely are related to both verification and the strength of the Jewish identity.

METHOD

Sample

To reach Jews across the United States, respondents were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (MTurk).¹ Participants were first screened to ensure that they met three key requirements for this study. They: 1) lived in the United States, 2) were over the age of 18, and 3) identified as Jewish. Because this study asked sensitive questions about anti-Semitism and individuals' responses to anti-Semitic events, participants needed to identify as being Jewish, but they did not need to identify as being

¹ Research has shown that MTurk is a convenient way to reach populations that may be difficult to reach such as minority or marginalized groups (Smith et al. 2015).

religious Jews. Thus, recruiting through MTurk allowed me to reach Jews who might not be affiliated with the Jewish religion or specific synagogues or temples.

I recruited participants through MTurk in two ways. First, participants were asked a screening question to determine if they identified as Jewish, and then, using MTurk's qualification function, were placed into a pool of possible participants. This method created a pool of 212 possible participants, all of whom were invited to take the survey. The second method added the qualification question at the beginning of the survey, which all workers on MTurk had access. Prior to taking the survey, participants received the following statement and question, "In order to participate in this survey, you must consider yourself to be Jewish, either belonging to the Jewish ethnicity or religion, or both. Please answer this question honestly and only proceed with the study if you identify as Jewish." They were then given the options "I identify as a Jew and would like to proceed with the study," or "I do not identify as a Jew." Only those who selected the first option continued with the survey. Using these two methods, I recruited 640 participants, 617 of whom completed the full survey.

Measures

Jewish identity verification. This measures the degree to which individuals think that others see them in the same way that they see themselves. It is operationalized for both the religious and ethnic components of the identity through a one-item question asking respondents to think of *how* they see themselves as either religious or ethnic Jews, and then respond to how much they think their close friends see them in this way. These questions are coded from 1-6 with 1 being "not at all" and 6 being "extremely." Thus,

higher scores represent greater levels of verification regardless of the strength of the identification.

Jewish identification. Ethnic and religious identification are measured using identical questions along the dimensions of prominence, salience, private self-regard or pride, and public self-regard or respect (Stets and Fares 2019). These measures are derived from previous studies as well as the identity module of the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS). Previous research has shown that these create a reliable measure of identification (Stets and Fares).

Identity prominence or how important an identity is to a person is measured using two four-item scales asking how much respondents agree with each statement with respect to their ethnic and religious identities. It is operationalized using a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 4 being “strongly agree.” Respondents are asked how much they agree that: 1) “Being an ethnic Jew or a religious Jew is an important part of how I see myself,” 2) “Being an ethnic Jew or a religious Jew is an important reflection of who I am,” 3) I think of myself as an ethnic Jew or as a religious Jew,” and 4) “I have a strong sense of belonging to a community of ethnic Jews or religious Jews.” The items are summed with a higher score representing a higher sense of importance for respondents’ Jewish identities. Factor analyses show that these four questions create reliable scales for measuring identity prominence with omega values of .72 for religious prominence and .63 for ethnic prominence. These factor analyses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Religious and Ethnic Identity Prominence (N=617)

| | Loadings |
|---|----------|
| 1. Being a religious Jew is an important part of how I see myself. | .75 |
| 2. Being a religious Jew is an important reflection of who I am. | .68 |
| 3. I think of myself as a religious Jew. | .74 |
| 4. I have a strong sense of belonging to a community of religious Jews. | .73 |
| 5. Being an ethnic Jew is an important part of how I see myself. | .69 |
| 6. Being an ethnic Jew is an important reflection of who I am. | .66 |
| 7. I think of myself as an ethnic Jew. | .67 |
| 8. I have a strong sense of belonging to a community of ethnic Jews. | .73 |

Religious Identity: $\Omega = .71$, Ethnic Identity: $\Omega = .63$

Identity salience or the likelihood a person will enact an identity in a situation is operationalized through two measures for both the ethnic and religious components of their Jewish identity. The first is a two four-item scales asking respondents to think about how often they identify themselves as either a religious or an ethnic Jew in different contexts. Respondents think about how certain they would be to tell the following people that they are an ethnic or religious Jew, respectively: 1) “A person of the same sex,” 2) “A friend of a close friend,” 3) “A friend of a family member,” or 4) “A stranger.” The items are coded from 1-4 with 1 being “almost certainly would not” and 4 being “almost certainly would.” The items are summed with a higher score representing respondents having a higher religious or ethnic identity salience. Factor analyses show that these scales are reliable with omega values of .72 for religious identity salience and .73 for ethnic identity salience. These factor analyses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Religious and Ethnic Identity Salience (N=617)

| How likely would you be to tell ___ that you are a religious Jew? | Loadings |
|--|----------|
| 1. A person of the same sex as you. | .75 |
| 2. A friend of a close friend. | .72 |
| 3. A friend of a family member. | .73 |
| 4. A stranger. | .76 |
| <hr/> | |
| How likely would you be to tell ___ that you are an ethnic Jew? | |
| 1. A person of the same sex as you. | .77 |
| 2. A friend of a close friend. | .70 |
| 3. A friend of a family member. | .72 |
| 4. A stranger. | .77 |
| <hr/> | |
| Religious Identity: $\Omega = .73$, Ethnic Identity: $\Omega = .73$ | |

Salience is also measured with two one-item measures asking respondents, “In general, how much do you find that being a religious Jew influences or guides how you behave,” and “In general, how much do you find that being an ethnic Jew influences or guides how you behave?” These questions are coded from 1-6 with 1 being “not at all” and 6 being “extremely.” To create a full measure of both ethnic and religious identity salience, the four-item scale and one-item measure were standardized and summed with an alpha reliability of .64 for religious salience and .65 for ethnic salience.

Private regard or how favorably a person feels toward their Jewish identity is measured for both the ethnic and religious identity using two one-item questions asking: “How proud are you to be an ethnic Jew?” and “How proud are you to be a religious Jew?” These coded 1-6 with 1 being “not at all” and 6 being “completely.” Public regard, or respect, is measured for both the ethnic and religious identity using two one-item questions that ask: “How much do you think people in the United States respect ethnic Jews?” and “How much do you think people in the United States respect religious Jews?” These are coded 1-6 with 1 being “not at all” and 6 being “completely.”

Together the four identity dimensions are summed to create a measure of identification. Because the measures did not share the same scale, each component was standardized prior to creating identification scales for both the religious and ethnic identity. Initial factor analyses showed that both identities loaded together well. The religious identity loaded together with all factors above .68 and an omega value of .88. The ethnic identity loaded together with all factors above .7 and an omega value of .88 as well. While theoretically these two identities appear to be distinct, after creating the

scales, it was clear that the religious and ethnic identification measures were highly correlated ($r = .82$). Given this correlation, I conducted a factor analysis with all ten measures of Jewish identity, that is both religious and ethnic prominence, salience, verification, pride, and respect. These ten-items form a single factor with an omega reliability of .93 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Principal Components Factor Analysis
of Jewish Identification (N=617)

| | Loadings |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. Religious Prominence | .77 |
| 2. Religious Saliency | .88 |
| 3. Religious Pride | .72 |
| 4. Religious Respect | .76 |
| 5. Ethnic Prominence | .75 |
| 6. Ethnic Saliency | .90 |
| 7. Ethnic Pride | .75 |
| 8. Ethnic Respect | .74 |

$\Omega = .91$

While the previous research on Jewish identity points to the importance of measuring both a religious and an ethnic identity, this factor analysis shows that respondents are unlikely to be able to distinguish the two aspects of identity. Thus, given the results of this analysis, the single factor of Jewish identification is used.

Community Experiences of Anti-Semitism. I use a single item to measure community-level anti-Semitism. This question asks respondents how many incidents of anti-Semitism affecting their local Jewish community are they aware of happening in the last year. This is collected using an open-ended response for the total number of events.²

Community Support. This is operationalized through a scale measuring respondents' perceptions of the local community's response to anti-Semitism. This is a five-item scale asking respondents how much they agree with the following statements: 1) "The response from my local community is timely," 2) "My local Jewish community leaders encourage open dialogue," 3) "The response from my local Jewish community makes me feel safer," 4) "I feel emotionally supported by my local Jewish community," and 5) "I feel emotional support from others in my local Jewish community." This is measured on a four-point scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 4 being "strongly agree." These five-items are averaged to create a single measure of perceived local response. Factor analysis showed that these items create a single factor with an omega value of .63. This analysis is presented in Table 4.

² Respondents are not asked the types or severity of these incidents, which may play a role in understanding the meso-level effects of anti-Semitism.

Table 4. Principal Components Factor Analysis
of Community Response (N=617)

| | Loadings |
|---|----------|
| 1. The response from my local Jewish community is timely. | .63 |
| 2. My local Jewish community leader encourage open dialogue. | .56 |
| 3. The response from my local Jewish community makes me feel safer. | .61 |
| 4. I feel emotionally supported by my local Jewish community. | .63 |
| 5. I feel emotionally supported by others in my local Jewish community. | .72 |

$\Omega = .63$

Personal Experiences of Anti-Semitism. I use a single item to measure personal experiences of anti-Semitism. This measure is measured as a binary variable with 1 being “yes” and 0 being “no”.³

Close Others’ Experiences of Anti-Semitism. I measure this by asking respondents if anyone close to them experienced an anti-Semitic incident targeted towards them. This is measured as a binary variable with 1 being “yes” and 0 being “no.”⁴

Proportion of Jewish Others. This measure is created using a four-item question asking respondents: “In your estimation, what percentage of your neighbors, friends, family, and coworkers are Jewish?” This is measured in percentages from 0 to 100. The four items are averaged to create a measure of the percentage of Jewish others a person is surrounded by.

Background Factors. I use two items to measure respondents’ religiosity. These ask if respondents belong to a specific sect of Judaism. Judaism is typically broken into three different sects: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Orthodox is the most religious, followed by Conservative, and then Reform. The sect of Judaism to which respondents belong has two binary measures. The first controls for those who identify as Orthodox, with 1 being Orthodox and 0 being not Orthodox. The second controls for

³ Data also are collected as to the nature of the incident with the following five categories: verbal harassment, physical assault, property vandalism, discrimination from a business or service, and other. Analyses showed that the nature of the incident had no significant effects in the models.

⁴ Data also are collected as to the proximity of the close other. Respondents are asked who experienced the anti-Semitic incident with the options: spouse/partner, your child/children, a sibling, someone within your extended family, a friend, a coworker, or other. Analyses showed that the specific other did not have significant effects in the models.

those who identify as Conservative, with 1 being Conservative and 0 being not Conservative. I leave Reform as the reference category.

Whether respondents are married is a binary measure with 1 being married and 0 being not married. Gender is measured with 1 for male and 0 for female. Race is measured with 1 for non-white and 0 for white. Age is measured in years. Education is measured using the following categories: “Less than high school,” “High school graduate,” “Some college,” “2-year degree,” “4-year degree,” “Professional degree,” and “Doctorate” (coded 1-7). Average family income is measured using the following categories: “less than \$10,000,” “\$10,000-\$24,999,” “\$25,000-\$39,999,” “\$40,000-\$54,999,” “\$55,000-\$69,999,” “\$70,000-\$84,999,” “\$85,000-\$99,999,” “\$100,000-\$149,999,” and “more than \$150,000” (coded 1-9). Parent is a binary measure with 1 if a respondent has children and 0 if the respondent does not.

I use ordinary least squares regression to estimate relationships. The first model investigates the relationship between meso and micro-level factors and verification while the second model investigate the relationship between meso and micro-level factors and identification.

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the variables in the analysis are presented in Table 5. Respondents report experiencing an average of roughly four community anti-Semitic incidents in the past year, with 80 percent reporting that they experienced at least one incident of anti-Semitism in the last year and 66 percent reporting having a close other experience an anti-Semitic incident. On average, respondents report having roughly

62 percent of their close others identifying as Jewish. Respondents also report high levels of community support. The sample is skewed toward Jews identifying as Conservative (67%), although there is still some Orthodox (21%) and Reform (12%) Jews.

Table 5. Summary Statistics of Variables (N=617)

| | Mean | SD |
|--|-------|-------|
| Jewish Identification | .05 | 6.18 |
| Jewish Verification | 8.64 | 2.32 |
| Community Experiences of Anti-Semitism | 4.31 | 4.53 |
| Community Support | 3.16 | .45 |
| Personal Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .80 | .40 |
| Close Other Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .66 | .47 |
| Proportion of Jewish Others | 61.69 | 24.05 |
| Orthodox | .21 | .41 |
| Conservative | .67 | .47 |
| Married | .81 | .40 |
| Male | .58 | .49 |
| Non-White | .26 | .44 |
| Age | 37.78 | 11.34 |
| Education | 5.01 | .91 |
| Income | 4.70 | 1.84 |
| Parent | .75 | .43 |

There are slightly more men (58%) than women (42%) in the sample. Most respondents are married (81%). Respondents are overwhelmingly white (74%), but this is more diverse than the American Jewish population, which is roughly 89% white (AJPP 2019). Similarly, respondents report above average education and income, which is representative of Jews in the United States. The average age of respondents is roughly 38, and the majority identify as being parents.

Both Jewish identity verification and identification have slightly negative skew. Jewish identity verification has a mean of roughly 8.6 with a -1.07 skew, with a greater number of respondents reporting higher levels of identity verification. Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents' Jewish identification. There is a slight negative skew (-1.09), with a greater number of respondents reporting higher levels of Jewish identification.

Figure 2. Distribution of Jewish Identification

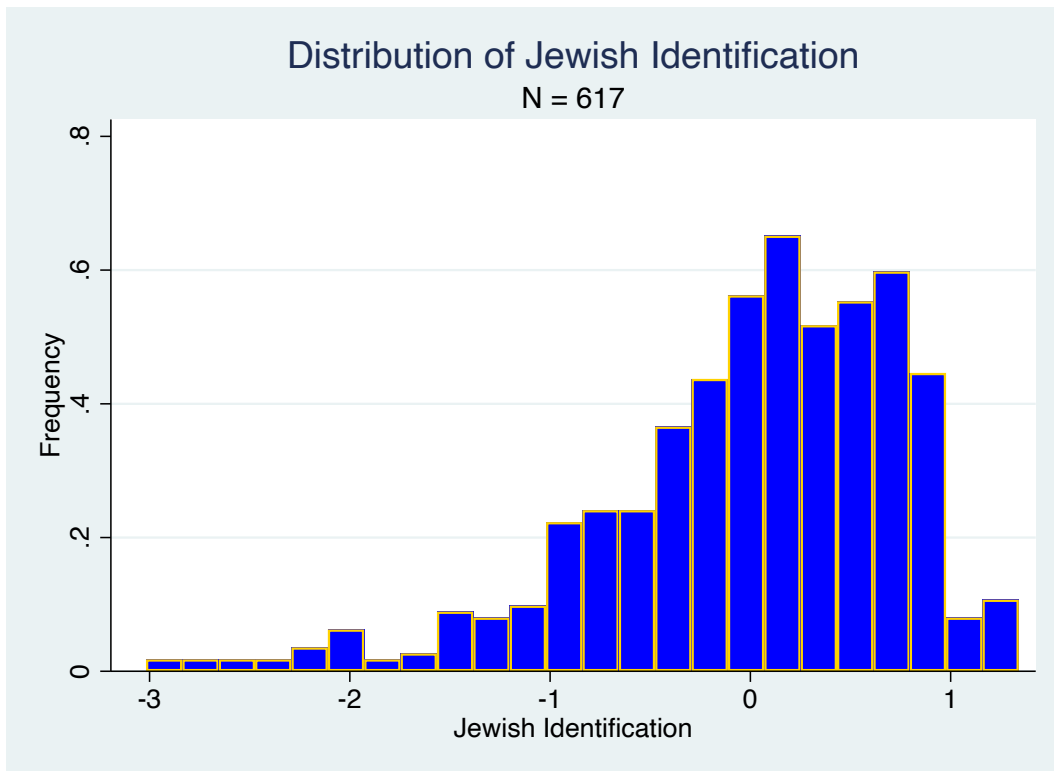


Table 6 provides the correlations of the variables in my model. Jewish identity verification and identification are highly correlated ($r = .80$), however variance inflation factor tests revealed that this did not overly influence the final model. Both meso-level factors relate positively to both verification and identification. Great numbers of community experiences of anti-Semitism relate to stronger Jewish identity verification ($r = .21$) and identification ($r = .25$). Similarly, community support relates positively to both Jewish identity verification ($r = .44$) and identification ($r = .58$).

Table 6. Correlations among the Variables (N=617)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 1) Jewish Identification | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2) Jewish Verification | .80** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3) Community A-S | .25** | .21** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4) Community Support | .58** | .43** | .08* | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5) Personal A-S | .42** | .34** | .42** | .14** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6) Close Other A-S | .40** | .33** | .42** | .13** | .59** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7) Proportion of Jews | .66** | .57** | .27** | .33** | .41** | .43** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| 8) Orthodox | -.02 | -.01 | -.04 | -.02 | -.08 | -.08* | -.07* | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 9) Conservative | .22** | .19** | .05 | .05 | .19* | .14* | .25** | -.74** | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 10) Married | .34** | .31** | .18** | .15** | .27** | .30** | .37** | -.13** | .19** | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 11) Male | .04 | .03 | .07 | .00 | .08* | -.05 | .07 | -.01 | .04 | -.00 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 12) Non-White | .21** | .20** | .13** | .11** | .16* | .09 | .19** | -.08* | .13** | .03 | .12** | 1.00 | | | | |
| 13) Age | .13** | .12** | .03 | .11** | -.01 | .09* | .14** | -.11** | .07 | .28** | .03 | -.07 | 1.00 | | | |
| 14) Education | .21** | .14** | .13** | .18** | .09* | .13** | .23** | -.04 | .04 | .24** | .04 | .13** | .07 | 1.00 | | |
| 15) Income | -.00 | .01 | .02 | .09* | -.10* | -.06 | .03 | -.01 | -.00 | .14** | -.01 | -.07 | .07 | .24** | 1.00 | |
| 16) Parent | .35** | .28** | .18** | .12** | .29** | .33** | .42** | -.13** | .18** | .71** | .01 | .07 | .29** | .21** | .06 | 1.00 |

Note: A-S is an abbreviation for anti-Semitism.

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

Micro-level factors also correlate with stronger Jewish identity verification and identification. Those who report experiencing at least one anti-Semitic event against themselves report stronger Jewish identity verification ($r = .34$) and identification ($r = .42$). Having a close other experience an incident of anti-Semitism is also related to higher Jewish identity verification ($r = .33$) and identification ($r = .40$). Higher proportions of Jewish others increase both Jewish identity verification ($r = .57$) and identification ($r = .66$).

Several control variables also relate to increased Jewish identity verification and identification. Conservative Jews have stronger Jewish identity verification ($r = .19$) and identification ($r = .22$) than Reform Jews. Older ($r = .12, r = .13$), more educated ($r = .14, r = .21$), nonwhite ($r = .20, r = .21$), and married ($r = .31, r = .34$) respondents also report stronger Jewish identity verification and identification, respectively.

Table 7 presents the standardized estimates from the first model. In this model, Jewish verification is the outcome variable. At the meso-level, while community experiences of anti-Semitism are not significantly related to verification of the Jewish identity, community support is positively related to verification of the Jewish identity ($\beta = .27$). These results do not support hypothesis 1A but do support hypothesis 2A. At the micro-level, personal anti-Semitism is positively related to Jewish identity verification ($\beta = .09$), however, close others' experience of anti-Semitism is not significantly related to Jewish identity verification. This supports hypothesis 3A but does not support hypothesis 4A. Higher proportions of Jewish others is positively related to Jewish identity verification ($\beta = .36$). This supports hypothesis 5A.

Table 7. Standardized Estimates
for Jewish Verification (N=617)

| Independent Variables | β |
|--|---------|
| Community Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .00 |
| Community Support | .27** |
| Personal Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .09* |
| Close Other Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .06 |
| Proportion of Jewish Others | .36** |
| Orthodox | .19** |
| Conservative | .18** |
| Married | .11** |
| Male | -.03 |
| Non-White | .08* |
| Age | .04 |
| Education | -.04 |
| Income | -.02 |
| Parent | -.05 |
| R^2 | .44 |

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

Several background factors are also positively related to identity verification. Orthodox ($\beta = .19$) and Conservative ($\beta = .18$) are related to stronger Jewish identity verification than Reform. Married is positively related ($\beta = .11$), as is non-white ($\beta = .08$).

The proportion of Jewish others explain the largest amount of the variation in Jewish verification. Wald tests reveal that it is significantly different from all other coefficients ($p \leq .05$) except community support ($p = .11$). Community support is significantly different from close other experiences of anti-Semitism, married, and non-white ($p \leq .01$), however it is not significantly different from Orthodox ($p = .14$) or Conservative ($p = .16$).

Table 8 presents the standardized estimate from the second model. In this model, identification with the Jewish identity is the outcome variable. At the meso-level, once again community experiences of anti-Semitism are not significantly related to identification. However, community support is positively related to Jewish identification ($\beta = .26$).⁵ Thus, while hypothesis 1B is not supported, the data do support hypothesis 2B.

⁵ I also investigated the effects of an interaction between community support and verification on identification understand if there is a greater effect when a meso-level process, community support, interacts with a micro-level process, verification. No significant results emerged from this analysis.

Table 8. Standardized Estimates
for Jewish Identification (N=617)

| Independent Variables | β |
|--|---------|
| Jewish Identity Verification | .50** |
| Community Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .02 |
| Community Support | .26** |
| Personal Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .08** |
| Close Other Experiences of Anti-Semitism | .03 |
| Proportion of Jewish Others | .20** |
| Orthodox | .09** |
| Conservative | .09** |
| Married | .00 |
| Male | -.00 |
| Non-White | .03 |
| Age | -.00 |
| Education | .02 |
| Income | -.03 |
| Parent | .05 |
| R^2 | .78 |

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

At the micro-level, personal anti-Semitism is significantly related to increases in Jewish identification ($\beta = .08$), but close others' experience of anti-Semitism is not significantly related to increases in Jewish identification. This supports hypothesis 3B, but not hypothesis 4B. The proportion of Jewish others is also significantly related to increases in identification. A one standard deviation increase in the proportion of Jewish others is related to a .2 standard deviation increase in Jewish identification. This supports hypothesis 5B. Finally, Jewish identity verification is the most significant factor increasing Jewish identification. A one standard deviation increase in Jewish identity verification relates to a .50 increase in Jewish identification. This supports hypothesis 6.

Wald tests indicate that verification has the greatest effect on identification. Verification is significantly different from the other variables ($p \leq .01$). Community support also is significantly different from all the other variables ($p \leq .01$) except proportion of Jewish others ($p = .07$).

Three background factors are also significantly related to Jewish identification. Both measures of religiosity are positively related to identification. Being Orthodox ($\beta = .09$) or Conservative ($\beta = .09$) rather than Reform is associated with an increase in Jewish identification.

Taken together, these results demonstrate the embedded nature of the micro-processes involved in Jewish identity verification and identification. Controlling for both background factors and micro-level factors, community support in the face of anti-Semitism is significantly related to both Jewish identity verification and identification. While incidences of anti-Semitism at the meso-level do not significantly relate to either

process, at the micro-level, anti-Semitism relates to both Jewish identity verification and Jewish identification. These results show that verification is quite important in the process of Jewish identification.

It is important to note that the cross-sectional nature of these data make it impossible to point to directionality. It may be that the micro-level processes of identity cause individuals to be more sensitive to anti-Semitism with respect to themselves or others and are more likely to seek out situations in which they are around other Jews. While this model estimates a unidirectional effect, it would be reasonable to assume that there is a feedback loop between Jewish identity verification and identification and several of the micro-level variables such as density of Jewish others and anti-Semitism.

DISCUSSION

In this study, I investigated the meso-level and micro-level factors in Jewish identity verification and identification. I use identity theory to inform my understanding of the factors which influence these two aspects of one's identity. This work sought to understand how identity confirming processes such as community support and a person's proportion of Jewish others act to strengthen both verification and identification, while also investigating the effects of threats to the identity group in the form of anti-Semitism. Past research indicates that all of these processes should act to strengthen both verification and identification. Importantly, while many of these meso-level and micro-level factors have direct effects on identification, they also have indirect effects through influencing verification.

Results show that one meso-level factor relates positively to Jewish identity verification and identification. Jews who perceive greater levels of community support when facing anti-Semitism experience higher levels of Jewish identity verification and identification. The support that people feel from their community in these situations likely leads to a sense of “value homophily.” That is, by feeling that others share the same attitudes and identities, people are more likely to be verified in their identity. This study advances an understanding of the bidirectional nature of homophily. Some have proposed that verification will lead to homophily (Stets et al. forthcoming), but these results point to an important relationship between homophily and verification.

Similarly, the experience of support likely acts as a buffer against negative feelings generated from an attack against oneself or a person’s community. The support that is facilitated through homophily helps Jews feel that they are safe in enacting their identity. Therefore, through community support, we see that Jews may increase their level of Jewish identification. Interestingly, although this support may not be through direct interaction, it has an effect on identity verification. This helps to advance an understanding that identity verification and identification are not solely impacted by micro-level factors. Although this relationship does point to the embedded nature of these micro-level processes, not all meso-level factors are significant in their relationship with identity verification and identification.

While previous research points to a theoretical relationship between community level anti-Semitism and Jewish identity verification, the data do not support this. Although previous work on hate crimes shows that individuals experience similar levels

of threat whether it happens to them or to their community (Hutchison et al. 2006; McGrath et al. 2000), it may be that when Jews experience community threats, it is too remote to influence their Jewish identity. Because Jewish identity meanings include experiencing anti-Semitism, there may not be the same level of group threat that often occurs when other minorities experience threats to their group. This lack of threat may make it less likely for Jews to band together in the same way that other minorities do, and thus they will not create the same form of mutual support.

However, while there is no support for a relationship between the number of community level experiences of anti-Semitism and both Jewish identity verification and identification, several unobserved aspects of community anti-Semitism may have an impact. In this study, I do not investigate the nature or the severity of these instances. Jews who belong to communities that experience very severe incidents of anti-Semitism such as a synagogue shooting may experience this anti-Semitism as more of a threat. With these experiences, Jews likely will turn toward each other and may create a mutual verification context. Although, at the meso-level anti-Semitism does not relate positively to either verification or identification, at the micro-level, there is support for these relationships.

Micro-level anti-Semitism relates positively to both Jewish identity verification and identification. Personal experiences of anti-Semitism are significantly related to Jewish identity verification, while close other experiences of anti-Semitism are not significantly related. These results show that personal experiences likely act to verify one's identity more so than if a close other is attacked because it is directly confirming

that aspect one's identity meaning. Similarly, people may identify more strongly with their Jewish identity if they are attacked because they feel the need to preserve their identity and do not feel the same effect when a close other is attacked. While close other experiences with anti-Semitism are still important to study, these results point toward effects on identity being stronger when a person is personally attacked rather than when they experience anti-Semitism more indirectly through others or their community.

Personal experiences of anti-Semitism relate positively to Jewish identification. By understanding attacks against oneself as happening because of one's Jewish identity, individuals are more likely to identify with their Jewish identity. This increased identification may be due to a heightened sense of Jewish identity caused by the sense of threats. It may also stem from the shared solidarity and empathy that is evoked from experiences of anti-Semitism. It is likely when Jews are attacked that they will turn to other Jews and find community, in this case, the proportion of Jews they interact with may increase and then have an effect upon their Jewish identity verification and identification.

These results point to the importance of homophily in both identity verification and identification. By surrounding themselves with Jewish others in the form of family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, Jews likely create more opportunities and increase the likelihood of identity verification. Importantly, these data support the idea that homophily is important for identity processes (Stets et al. forthcoming). By showing that a higher proportion of Jewish others are related to both identity verification and identification, these results point to the importance of having similar others around who understand the

meanings of one's identity. Shared identity meanings allow Jews to feel that they can enact their identity without fear of reprisal or concern for non-verification.

Finally, the data show that verification relates strongly to identification. This supports many of the concepts from the identity control model (Burke and Stets 2009). As Jews feel more positive for being verified in their identity, they may be more likely to identify with that identity.

The significant background factors point to some additional influences on the Jewish identity. While recent surveys show that there is an increasing number of non-religious Jews (Pew 2021), clearly religion continues to be important for both Jewish identity verification and identification. Interestingly, younger Jews report being less religious than older Jews (Pew 2021). Given this, future research should continue to understand the effects of religion on Jewish identity. It is likely that married Jews feel greater verification because they are married to other Jews and interact more frequently with another Jew who can verify them in their identity. These results also support the idea that non-White Jews seek out more opportunities to be verified because they may feel that if they do not do so, they are not connected to the identity.

This research came out of a desire to understand the persistence of the Jewish identity despite thousands of years of persecution and anti-Semitism. The findings support the idea that, because Jews understand their history as involving anti-Semitism, rather than acting as a threat to the identity, anti-Semitism may strengthen the Jewish identity. These results also point to Jews surrounding themselves with similar others to foster greater levels of verification and identification. This may help to understand how

Jewish enclaves continue to exist even when increased densities of Jews make them more of a target for anti-Semitism.

This research shows the embedded nature of the micro-level processes of identity within the social structure. While this study identified several factors at the meso-level and micro-level which are related to Jewish identity verification and identification, several unexplored factors may also have an effect on these two processes. This research did not address the severity of the instances of anti-Semitism at either meso-level or the micro-level. It may be that more severe instances of anti-Semitism have stronger effects on Jewish identity verification and identification. Future work also should address the role that macro-level factors may play. Jews exist in a complicated political world in which they feel pulled in several directions by political whims, Middle Eastern conflicts, and other macro-level institutional factors (Schama 2017). It may be that when Israel is involved in conflict, that Jews feel higher level of identification.

This work clearly demonstrates that Jewish identity is a rich area for future research. Given the cross-sectional nature of this data, I am unable to make a causal argument. However, future research may be able to address this issue through experimental designs or using longitudinal data. Given that a majority of Jews feel that anti-Semitism is rising and that they are less safe today than they were five years ago (Pew 2021), it is important to continue to understand the effects of anti-Semitism on the Jewish identity.

References

- Anti-Defamation League. 2020. *Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2019*.
- Alexander, Michael S. 2018. "The Exilic Imperative of American Jewry." *Religions* 9(12):412.
- Branscombe, Nyla R., Daniel L. Wann, Jeffrey G. Noel, and Jason Coleman. 1993. "In-Group or Out-Group Extremity: Importance of the Threatened Social Identity." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 19 (4):381-388.
- Brenner, Philip S., Richard T. Serpe, and Sheldon Stryker. 2014. "The Causal Ordering of Prominence and Salience in Identity Theory: An Empirical Examination." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77(3):231-252.
- Burke, Peter J. 1991. "Identity Processes and Social Stress." *American Sociological Review* 56(6): 836-849.
- Burke, Peter J. and Jan E. Stets. 1999. "Trust and Commitment through Self-Verification." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62:347-366.
- Burke, Peter J. and Jan E. Stets. 2009. *Identity Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2010. "Perceptions of Anti-Semitism among American Jews, 2000-05, A Survey Analysis." *Political Psychology* 31(1):85-107.
- Craig, Kellina M. 2002. "Examining Hate-Motivated Aggression: A Review of the Social Psychological Literature on Hate Crimes as a Distinct Form of Aggression." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 7(1):85-101.
- Dollinger, Marc. 2003. "Jewish Identities in 20th Century America." *Contemporary Jewry* 24(1):9-28.
- Friedman, Michelle L., Myrna L. Friedlander, and David L. Blustein. 2005. "Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52(1):77-83.
- Hartman, Harriet and Moshe Hartman. 2010. "Gender and Jewish Identity." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 18(1):37-60.
- Hartman, Harriet and Ira M. Sheskin. 2012. "The Relationship of Jewish Community Contexts and Jewish Identity: A 22-Community Study." *Contemporary Jewry* 32(3):237-83.

- Haynes, Bruce D. 2018. *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hutchison, Paul, Jolanda Jetten, Julie Christian, and Emma Haycraft. 2006. "Protecting Threatened Identity: Sticking With the Group by Emphasizing Ingroup Heterogeneity." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32(12):1620-1632
- Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie and Irene Hanson Frieze. 1983. "A Theoretical Perspective for Understanding Reactions to Victimization." *Journal of Social Issues* 39(2):1-17.
- Kakhnovets, Regina and Lily Wolf. 2011. "An Investigation of Jewish Ethnic Identity and Jewish Affiliation for American Jews." *North American Journal of Psychology* 13(3):501-8.
- Kaufman, Debra Renee. 1999. "Embedded Categories: Identity Among Jewish Young Adults in the U.S." *Race, Gender, & Class* 6(4):76-87.
- Markowski, Kelly L. Forthcoming. "The Structure of Friendship: How Network Density Influences Identity Verification." in *Identities in Action: New Developments in Identity Theory*, edited by P.S. Brenner, J.E. Stets, and R.T. Serpe. New York: Springer.
- MacDonald-Dennis, Christopher. 2006. "Understanding Anti-Semitism and its Impact: A New Framework for Conceptualizing Jewish Identity." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 39(3):267-278.
- McGrath, Joseph E., Holly Arrow, and Jennifer L. Berdahl. 2000. "The Study of Groups: Past, Present, and Future." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4(1):95-105.
- McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415-444.
- Pew. 2021. "Jewish Americans in 2020." Pew Research Center.
- Phillips, Bruce A. 2010. "Accounting for Jewish Secularism: Is a New Cultural Identity Emerging?" *Contemporary Jewry* 30(1):63-85.
- Renzetti, Claire and Daniel Curren. 1995. *Women, Men and Society*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Saxe, Leonard, Theodore Sasson, Graham Wright, and Shahar Hecht. 2015. *Antisemitism and the College Campus: Perceptions and Realities*. Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies Report. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University.

- Schama, Simon. 2013. *The Story of the Jews: Finding the Words 1000 BC-1492 AD*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Schama, Simon. 2017. *Belonging: The Story of the Jews 1492-1900*. London, UK. Penguin Random House.
- Sharot, Stephen. 2011. *Comparative Perspectives on Judaisms and Jewish Identities*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Smith, Nicholas A., Isaac E. Sabat, Larry R. Martinez, Kayla Weaver, and Shi Xu. 2015. "A Convenient Solution: Using MTurk To Sample From Hard-To-Reach Populations." *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 8 (2):220-228.
- Stets, Jan E. 2018. "Identity Theory." Pp. 81-111 in *Contemporary Social Psychological Theories*, edited by P.J. Burke. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Stets, Jan E. Forthcoming. "Micro, Meso, and Macro Processes in Identity Change: The 2020 Cooley-Mead Award Address." *Social Psychology Quarterly*.
- Stets, Jan E., John Aldecoa, Quinn Bloom, and Joel Winegar. Forthcoming. "Using Identity Theory to Understand Homophily in Groups," in *Identities in Action: New Developments in Identity Theory*, edited by P.S. Brenner, J.E. Stets, and R.T. Serpe. New York: Springer.
- Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 2000. "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63(3):224.
- Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 2005. "New Directions in Identity Control Theory." Pp. 43-64 in *Social Identification in Groups (Advances in Group Processes, Vol. 22)*, edited by S.R. Thye and E.J. Lawler. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Stets, Jan E. and Phoenicia Fares. 2019. "The Effects of Race/Ethnicity and Racial/Ethnic Identification on General Trust." *Social Science Research* 80:1-14.
- Stets, Jan E. and Richard T. Serpe. 2013. "Identity Theory." Pp. 31-60 in *Handbook of Social Psychology* edited by J. DeLamater and A. Ward. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2010a. *Theoretical Principles of Sociology, Volume 1: Macrodynamics*. New York: Springer.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2010b. *Theoretical Principles of Sociology, Volume 2: Microdynamics*. New York: Springer.

- Turner, Jonathan H. 2012. *Theoretical Principles of Sociology, Volume 3: Mesodynamics*. New York: Springer.
- Walters, Mark, Jenny L. Paterson, Liz McDonnell, and Rupert Brown. 2020. "Group Identity, Empathy, and Shared Suffering: Understanding the 'Community' Impacts of anti-LGBT and Islamophobic Hate Crimes." *International Review of Victimology* 26 (2):143-162.
- Wiley, Shaun, Krystal Perkins, and Kay Deaux. 2008. "Through the Looking Glass: Ethnic and Generational Patterns of Immigrant Identity." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32 (5):385-398.
- Ysseldyk, Renate, Kimberly Matheson, and Hymie Anisman. 2010. "Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14 (1):60-71.