

Jewish Society  
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## 1. American-Jewish Current Culture

When reading about the Jewish culture in America, I found it very interesting to find that many of the American Jews practice more of a reformed religion. Barkai and fellow authors (1999) write that many new form Jews, or those that are established in America, intermarry, ceased to practice their religion, and adapted the ways of their neighbors. Jewish Immigrants who have left their country to come to America are assimilating into the American culture and taking on the norms and values of the culture. More specifically, Barkai and fellow others (1999) talk about two groups. The German Jewish Immigrants and the Eastern Europe Jewish immigrants. The German Jewish immigrants are the ones who have come into American culture and have found great happiness in assimilating their culture into their own. The Eastern European Jewish immigrants are the ones who placed great importance on their traditions and values. What is meant by assimilating is the learning of different American norms and values and bringing them into their own views. This variation in intensity of the Jewish religion can mean that each intensity of the Jewish religion could have their own values. From the above quote, it can already be seen that to one Jewish individual, intermarrying might not be a bad option. However, to another more intense Jewish individual, this could be unheard of and disappointing. Tradition plays a huge part in the identity of the more intense Jewish individuals. They feel that it is the only way to keep their way of life alive. Barkai and fellow authors also right that when these Eastern Europe immigrants came over, they gathered in neighborhoods together to keep their community alive. This is evidence that community is another huge part for

these Jewish individuals. Especially if they feel that the American Jewish way of life is dying through intermarrying. In these close communities, they can make sure that these individuals stick close to what is truly important to the Jewish society, as well as stick close to those who practice the specific ways.

In the counseling process, knowledge will be the ultimate barrier. Each side will believe they have the right way of life, especially if this is counseling group session. It is in the counselor's best interest to admit that they do not know the correct way of life. The counselor should try to instill in the counselors to accept each other's ways of life. This will not happen in the first few sessions, especially with those clients who have been practicing intensely for a while.

In today's society, an important part of a life for those who are sticking to the core of the religion is Zionism. According to Cohen and Fein (1985), Zionism refers to Jewish individual's connectedness to the homeland of Israel. This is what they turned when encountering anti-Semitism. Zionism acted as a way of grounding themselves to the Jewish religion and way of life. It helped them identify as Jewish individual and allowed them to stay on their Jewish pathway. Again, not all Jewish individuals practiced this. This "reform" Jewish individuals who assimilated much of America's culture into their way of life most likely did not practice this. When applying this to the counseling process, counselors will need to educate themselves in the history of their homeland. By showing the client this attempt at learning their culture, the client might open more and really start to share their thoughts. When looking at the

subgroups of Jewish society, there is also reform Judaism, conservative Judaism, and Orthodox Judaism.

Interestingly enough, Rosner, Gardner and Hong (2011) find that a Judaism is a religion of descent. Meaning, to be Jewish, one must come from Jewish lineage. A huge part of a Jewish identity is being born into Judaism. Therefore, what they find makes up a Jewish Identity in America is the religion, or choice, and the ethnicity, or biological decent. Another interesting part of the Jewish identification is the term orthogonal. What this means is that the identity of Judaism and the identity of American are separate entities. An individual can say they are both American and Jewish, neither, or either one of them (Rosner, Gardner, Hong, 2011). This way, when they try to assimilate the American values, rather they are just adding a new set of values. As a counselor, this could be difficult to tackle. The first barrier that would have to be jumped over is which side the individual sides with the most. Then, after knowing this, the counselor will be able to focus on a certain aspect of that individual and move forward with it.

## **2. Salient Historical Points in American Jewish History**

As mentioned in the previous question, the first immigration of Jewish individuals to America was in the 1900's. During this time, the German and Eastern European Jews both immigrated over. The Germans were first, then the Eastern European's were second. In terms of identity, the Eastern Europeans did not adjust like the Germans did. The Germans assimilated the American culture easily and willingly, while the Eastern Europeans sat back and became angry with them for giving in so easily and not following the Jewish way. According to Markel, those Jewish immigrants who lived in Russia left due to the famine, epidemics, revolution, and war.

Also, these Jewish immigrants left due to a vast anti-Semitic view (Barkai et. al., 1999). With the Holocaust coming in the near future, it makes sense that these views started at this time.

Another huge reason for the immigration, Barkai and fellow authors write (1999), is to avoid partaking in military services. In fact, these Jewish citizens that did immigrate during this time represented a mere 4 percent of the 5.5 million German immigrants that traveled to the United States at the time. Clearly just from this statistic, the German culture was going through a change that few citizens wanted to be a part of. Since there was so many immigrating at this time, the German Jewish individuals fit in quite nicely to American culture. After hearing about the United States and the land of opportunity, it is no wonder why they came over in such a mass population. The events that follow are the reasons why this is the first salient history point in American Jewish History.

Specifically, a short time later, Barkai and fellow authors (1999) write that nearly 2 million eastern European Jewish individuals immigrated over to America. The problem was these new Jewish individuals did not merge in with Americans well. In fact, when the Eastern European Jewish individuals found jobs, a lot of the times, German Jewish individuals would be their managers and supervisors. According to Barkai and fellow others (1999), these Jewish individuals resembled the look and feel of those Jewish individuals that were hated and mistreated back in Germany. They valued the old ways, speaking a different language and dressing against the culture. These German Jewish individuals were afraid the newly immigrated Jewish individuals would make a bad name for them. Because of this, these two groups did not get along.

The next salient part in American Jewish history is the Holocaust. During the Holocaust, or Shoah, more than 6 million men, women and children were killed in inhumane ways (Sue and Sue). However, Germany was not the only place that Jewish Individuals were getting discriminated against. The United States views on Jewish individuals consisted of not wanting them in their country. No, they did not go as far as to try and eliminate them. But, they did discriminate against them in ways to try and prevent them from immigrating or causing them to leave the country. This seemed to be the opposite of how the United States viewed Anti-Semitism. Berger (2010) states that between 63-80 percent of Americans did not want Jewish refugees immigrating to the United States, regardless of the situation they were in. Also, 15 to 24 percent of the American society thought the Jewish individuals were a menace to American society. Jewish individuals who are coming into America are getting shamed and verbally abused by these American citizens. Although these American citizens are against the actions taken in WWII, they still do not feel strongly about the new immigrants coming into the country.

### **3. Impacts of Salient Historical Events**

When looking at the big immigration during the 1900's, I think Jewish individuals changed a lot when settling in their new home of America. More specifically, Barkai and fellow authors (1999) mention the assimilation done by the German Jewish individuals coming into the country. To smoothly fit in with the American's, Jewish individuals took in many American norms and values and made them their own. These Jewish immigrants even did away with many of their rituals to fit in with the current society they are in. Barkai and fellow authors (1999) write that by the time these German immigrants all came in, only about 20% of them belonged to

a religious or Ethnic Jewish group. A whole 80% of these immigrants were fully immersed in American culture. This must have been due to the Ant-Semitic discrimination that the German Jewish immigrants were facing in Germany. These people wanted to get away from it all and never have to face that kind of terror again. In their minds, this meant changing their ways of life to fit in to a normal cultural setting in their current society.

When faced with the challenge of discrimination, clients might be quick to judge the counselor. The client might feel that because the counselor did not experience any discrimination, they will not be able to help the case. This challenge will come up quite frankly with Jewish clients. Also, Identity crisis might come up when attending to Jewish clients. As mentioned before, these individuals are coming all the way over from another country to live in the United States and be able to fit in well with their people. This means putting all their values behind. It is possible that Identity confusion might take place here because of this. They might think they are Jewish but act completely like an American. Sue, Gallardo, and Neville (2014) write that we as counselors must be aware of Jewish individuals who believe they are Jewish from the heart but practicing from a place of cultural awareness and competence. This problem did not involve only the early Jewish immigrants but Jewish immigrants in everyday society. Although in today's world we are still able to practice freely, and citizens are aware of their religious surroundings, the Jewish people still are struggling with practicing all together as a community.

The holocaust created many problems on all fronts of the war for Jewish Individuals. For American Jewish individuals, it initially caused discrimination, which was noted in the previous

salient point. However, with this second wave of immigration of Jewish individuals coming in, the holocaust created more discriminatory behavior throughout the United States. With this resting on their shoulders Sue and Sue (2014) write that these individuals have struggled with trust and family problems because of all the stress and trauma going on, parenting styles will be much different. They either have a permissive style because they do not have time to care for the, or they have an authoritarian type of parenting where they are strict and need everything done exactly how they should. Also, the traumatic stress that is experienced by these individuals from learning about all these deaths in their homeland is extremely difficult. A lot of Jewish families were related to those that passes in the Holocaust. Making the stress unbearable at times

Clients coming in with having the Holocaust in their history might not take the counselor seriously. They may feel that since the Jewish population was one of the only populations to go through a mass genocide like this, no one will know how it feels. Also, as mentioned before, parenting styles might come into play. This is difficult because the parents need to be addressed about the situation. The problem with parents is they always think they are in the right think they are doing what's best for their child. It is hard for them to listen to outside resources occasionally because it is their own child.

#### **4. Statistics (From Pew Research)**

In the United States alone, according to Pew Research, there are about 5 million Jewish citizens living in the society. According to Pew Research, 44 percent of these citizens make over 100 thousand dollars. 24 percent of these citizens make in between 50 thousand to 99 thousand dollars. 15 percent of these Jewish citizens make and average of 30 thousand to 49 thousand



dollars. Finally, only 16 percent earned less than 30 thousand a year. This data confirms that Jewish citizens excel from the economic standpoint in the United States.

The demographic information of Jewish Individuals starts with the age distribution. According to Pew Research, the age distributions are similar. 22 percent of the population are between the ages of 18 to 29. 27 percent of Jewish population are between the ages of 30 to 49. 26 percent of Jewish individuals are between the ages of 50 to 64. Finally, 26 percent of the Jewish population are over the age of 65. When looking at gender, 52 percent of the population is considered males and 48 percent of the population are considered women. Most all (90 percent) are considered to be white while the black and Asian ethnicities are both at 2 percent. The immigration status of the Jews is down and is set at 12 percent while the second-generation Jewish population is up at 22 percent. In the area of education, college and post graduate degrees within the American Jewish population are both higher, 29 percent and 31 percent, than the Jewish population who completed some college or just their high school diploma (22 percent and 19 percent). Finally, the married Jewish population make up 56 percent while the living with a partner and divorced/separated make up 6 percent and 9 percent of the population.

When looking at the Jewish population through a political standpoint, 21 percent are conservative, 33 percent are moderate, and 43 percent are liberal. Therefore, a little under half of the American Jewish population is liberal. Also, 53 percent of American Jewish individuals would want a bigger government than compared to the 40 percent of American Jewish individuals who would like a small government.

As said before, there is about 5 million Jewish citizens in the United states. This makes up about 2 percent of the population according to Pew research. However, focusing in more, Massachusetts in 2014 contained about 3 percent of the United States population of Jewish citizens. Focusing into smaller group, the south eastern district of Massachusetts contains around 3 percent of the Jewish population in Massachusetts.

The biggest problems for the American Jewish population in the United states is their identity problem. The first factor contributing to this identity problem is the different forms of Judaism that one can practice. In a broad sense, 78 percent of Jewish individuals do not practice religion. The other 22 percent of individuals do practice religion. Now to go little deeper, there are many groups of practicing Judaism. Of the Jewish population, 35 percent are reform Jewish individuals, 18 percent are conservative individuals, 10 percent are orthodox individuals, 6 percent are other, and finally 30 percent are no denomination. The last statistic that contributes to the identity of the individual is the survey asking what it meant to be Jewish. In the survey, 73 percent said that remembering the Holocaust is what it meant to be Jewish. About 56 percent of Jewish individuals said that working for justice/equality is what it means to be Jewish. Also, about 40 percent say caring for Israel and having a good sense of humor makes them Jewish. These all are interesting aspects of the Meaning of Judaism. However, these add to the identity problem of Judaism because each person agrees with aa different meaning.

## **5. Agencies/Organizations**

Jewish Big Brother Big Sister is a non-profit organization that aims to help build peer-mentor relationships for Jewish children in Newton, Massachusetts. Additionally, this

organization connects adults who possess disabilities to friends in their community that are willing to be there for them. Jewish Big Brother Big Sister was founded on 1919 and began as a war-era initiative for those American Jewish children that were struggling s the war went on. This organization was also used for children who either lacked access or excluded from social services. What is most interesting about this program is how far it reaches across the sea. Specifically, they have served hundreds of boys and girls who are in the Israel and Ukraine. One can reach this agency by dialing 617-965-7055. Or, one can use their website at [www.jbbs.org](http://www.jbbs.org).

Jewish Federation of central Massachusetts is an organization that aims to protect and enhance the well-being of Jewish individuals in the community and in the world. This federation is in Worcester, Massachusetts. Part of the reason this is located in Worcester is because of the high immigrant population there. More specifically, this is where many Eastern European Jewish individuals came to reside. The federation looks to help Jewish individuals in three areas. The first being to strengthen the sense of community. The second, helping those Jewish individuals who are facing hardship and are in a time of need. Finally, the organization offers educational and cultural teaching-s to build up the Jewish communities. The phone number for this organization is 508-756-1543. If more information was needed, one can always go to their website at [jewishcentralmass.org](http://jewishcentralmass.org).

Jewish family and children services is an organization, in Waltham Massachusetts, that aims to improve people lives that are guided by the Jewish way of life. Like the other three organizations, this helps individuals at all stages of life. However, it mainly focuses on those children and adults who are living a disadvantaged life. This consists of everything from

disabilities, new mothers, hunger, domestic abuse, and even those experiencing financial crisis.

This organization was started 150 years ago and is still going strong today. If one wanted to reach them, their phone number is 781-647-5327. Or one can go to their website at [www.jfcsboston.org](http://www.jfcsboston.org).

Of course, when American Jewish individuals encounter stressful social/emotional problems, counselors are always there to help them. Also, Sue and Sue write that American Jewish individuals have a strong importance to their family and the community. When these individuals are experiencing problems, they can certainly feel comfortable looking into the community or family for help, especially because of their close relationship.

### **6A Ways of Counseling**

In the Multicultural book by Sue and Sue (2014), they give a list of counseling skills to work on when helping American Jewish clients. It is important to be respectful of the Jewish clients that come into the office. Since there is not one specific identity that defines an American Jewish individual, it would be a good idea to find out how they are tied to the ethnicity/religion first. Other factors that could determine the client's Jewish identity is language (Hebrew, Ladino, Yiddish), diet, political orientation, interested in literature and art, as well as many more.

Another important factor that should be learned about the individual is his religious orientation.

Sue and Sue write that the counselor should try and figure out where the client's faith lies.

Meaning, are they practicing religion or are they non-religious Jewish individual. In the first session, some researching should be done to see where this individual really sides. Also, by getting to know the individual this way, it will be possible to create good rapport with him.

An important step in all counseling, especially in American Jewish counseling, is evaluating one's own values and biases. Microaggressions can be very common from counselors when they do not even realize they are saying it. Therefore, the counselor should explore their thoughts and feelings about Judaism and the Jewish way of life. If this is not evaluated, then serious harm can come to the client and the counselor. The client may feel uncomfortable and want to discontinue the sessions. Or, the counselor could make a bad name for himself and potentially ruin any other American Jewish clients.

When American Jewish individuals come into the office, it is important for the counselor to recognize the different paranoia's. Specifically, Schlosser identifies a healthy paranoia and actual or clinical paranoia. Schlosser also writes that because of the Jewish populations past, many American Jewish individuals feel insecure about themselves. This could have been from the Holocaust, the vast ant-Semitism in the United States, or even knowing that they are a part of a minority in the United States. All these factors contribute to the American Jewish population no feeling safe. Therefore, with these weights riding on their shoulders, it is important to identify the underlying cause of the problem at hand and find out if the paranoia they are feeling is healthy or clinical.

When meeting with Orthodox Jewish individuals, it is important to communicate with them and see where they stand on mental health issues within their community. To them, some mental health issues might not be relevant because they do not believe in the problem or it is not a part of their culture. Sue and Sue write that the counselor should look within the client's

framework and work out culturally adapted interventions that will help the client move forward with their problem.

### **6B Approaches to Counseling**

There are three traditional forces of school counseling. Psychoanalytic, Cognitive-Behavioral, and Existential-Humanistic. However, since each population of people is unique from each other, these forces must be used with caution. Each population's views differ from each other and they cannot be treated the same.

Psychoanalytic therapy focuses on the unconscious and the conscious mind. The therapy allows for deep introspection and eventually release all the repressed emotions that were bottled up. Psychoanalytic theory would be a good fit for some Jewish populations but not all. Specifically, it is found to do well with the Orthodox Jewish community. In fact, Freud, who was the creator of psychoanalytic therapy, wrote extensively on Jewish topics, married a Jewish woman, and said he would always remain Jewish (Margolese, 1998). In this sense, if a familiar Jewish psychologist created the theory, then there must be some skills tailored to the Jewish population. In Margolese's (1998) article, he writes that both psychoanalytic and Orthodox Judaism focus on increased self-awareness can then lead to increased self-esteem, which then leads to a mastery of impulses. Also, both Orthodox Judaism and Psychoanalytic focus on the relationship of student and teacher, creating a successful learning environment. However, the counselor should be aware of how the client identifies himself. For if he identifies himself as being non-religious and is only ethnically Jewish, then this approach will not work. This is because it is so heavily based off the religion and spiritual mind.

Cognitive-Behavioral therapy can be useful with Judaism as well. Both Cognitive-Behavioral and Judaism can be looked at as a religion which focuses on teaching. Because of this, the approach should work well with these clients. Margolese (1999) writes in his article that this approach allows them to achieve their goals of lessening certain behavior. These include anxiety and obsessive symptoms. Also, by using this approach, the skills do not challenge the beliefs of the Orthodox Jewish individual or any of the other Jewish sub groups. This approach might work better with the non-religious Jewish individuals as well due to it not being heavily religious. Rather it works off behaviors and thoughts that one can observe.

The final traditional approach used in Psychotherapy is humanistic-existential. Here, the psychotherapists focus on the here and now. Specifically, Krug (2009) writes that these psychotherapists look at humans as constructing their own physical, personal, and relational world through their own experience. Although there was no direct article sighting Judaism and Humanistic-existential perspective, I believe that this perspective can work well with some of the Jewish population, but not all. Orthodox Jewish individuals would do well with this approach due to the spiritual and emotional part of it. The client in this case focuses on self esteem and working on thinking in the present. The client, according to Krug (2009), is expected to make a deep connection with himself. However, I do not think this approach would fair for the non-religious groups of Judaism. This group would not be able to connect with the ways if existentialism because of their lack of spirituality.

## 7. Strengths

The first strength of American Jewish is their religious behavior and traditions. Sue and Sue write in their book that traditions, such as lighting shabbat candles, can be calming to those that partake. They remind Jewish individuals of the sense of community and the history that they all share together. Counselors can use this as support. If they can get the client to partake in these traditions with friends and family, it can serve as a sense of relaxation and a way to clear the mind if there was ever a stressful situation. Going along with this, the synagogue could be a place where clients and go and find peace. These can also be looked at as protective factors against discrimination.

Another strength that can be seen within the Jewish population is their sense of community. Jewish communities are close and rely on each other. According to Sue and Sue, American Jewish individuals have a strong emphasis on the importance of family. Counselors can use this strength by using that family as a support system. If the individual is going through a challenging situation, the counselor can involve the family as a type of support system for that child.

A final strength that can be seen in many individuals is their strong religious faith. According to Sue and Sue, higher levels of religious beliefs in Orthodox Jewish individuals are associated with positive mental health. These health benefits could be the consequence of such a strong bond with their respective god. This can be used to help those clients in the counselor setting. Maybe the client phased out of it or have stopped for other reasons. But, if counselors can talk to these individuals and allow them to talk up to the solution of finding a connection through religion again, it would give them great support in battling through their challenging situations they face.



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