

---

THE HADASSAH  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
ON JEWISH WOMEN

**JEWISH WOMEN 2000:**

CONFERENCE PAPERS

FROM THE HRIJW

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY

EXCHANGES 1997-1998

EDITED BY HELEN EPSTEIN



WORKING PAPER 6 / NOVEMBER 1999

---

.....

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS .....	1
EDITOR'S NOTE .....	7
<i>by Helen Epstein</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES. ....	13
<i>by Riv-Ellen Prell</i>	
WOMEN AND RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN ISRAEL. ....	21
<i>by Hanna Herzog</i>	
ITALY .....	31
<i>by Micaela Procaccia</i>	
LATIN AMERICAN JEWS. ....	39
<i>by Judith Laikin Elkin</i>	
IRANIAN JEWISH DIASPORA WOMEN .....	49
<i>by G.B.</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA .....	59
<i>by Ana Lebl</i>	
BEING A JEWISH WOMAN IN FRENCH SOCIETY .....	65
<i>by Regine Azria</i>	
SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH WOMEN .....	71
<i>by Sally Frankental</i>	
MIZRAHI WOMEN IN ISRAEL: THE DOUBLE ERASURE ...	79
<i>by Pnina Motzafi-Haller</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN MEXICO .....	97
<i>by Paulette Kershenovich</i>	
ISRAELI WOMEN AND HEALTH .....	109
<i>by Susan Sered</i>	
REPORT FROM LITHUANIA .....	117
<i>by Basia Nikiforova</i>	
CANADIAN, JEWISH AND FEMALE. ....	123
<i>by Norma Baumel Joseph</i>	
HOMING PIGEON: A SEPHARDIC JEW .....	129
<i>Ruth Knafo Setton</i>	

*continued*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS, *continued*

THE MOTHERS OF PASTEUR STREET: THE STRUGGLE FOR PLURALISM IN ARGENTINA . . . . .	137
<i>by Edna Aizenberg</i>	
IRANIAN JEWISH WOMEN DISCOVER THE POWER OF WORDS . . . . .	145
<i>by Farideh Dayanim Goldin</i>	
TESHUVAH AMONG FRENCH JEWISH WOMEN. . . . .	161
<i>by Laurence Podselver</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN CHILE . . . . .	169
<i>by Marjorie Agosin</i>	
ISRAELI WOMEN: COLLECTIVISM AND INDIVIDUALISM . . . . .	173
<i>by Eetta Prince Gibson</i>	
HUNGARY . . . . .	183
<i>by Katalin Taliygás</i>	
BOOKENDS. . . . .	187
<i>by Pamela S. Nadell</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN BRITAIN . . . . .	191
<i>by Marlena Schmool</i>	
GENDER AND LITERACY AMONG YOUNG ORTHODOX JEWISH WOMEN . . . . .	199
<i>By Tamar El-Or</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN LATVIA . . . . .	233
<i>By Ruta Marjasa</i>	



**BASIA NIKIFOROVA** was born in 1945, the first Jewish child born after the war in Volkovysk (Belarus). Her parents, who had lived out the war as Jewish partisans in the forests, moved the family to Grodno, where she finished secondary school. She is a graduate of the Philosophy Department in Moscow State University and taught ethics at Grodno Medical Institute before realizing her dream of moving to Vilnius. Only in 1990 did her father tell her about Lithuanian collaboration with the Nazis and that Latvian collaborationists murdered her mother's family. This information changed her scientific interests. Moving from the abstract idea of religious and ethnic tolerance, she began to focus on Christian-Jewish relations, and sources of anti-Semitism in the Eastern Europe, receiving grants from Harvard University and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. During 1997-1998 she was Fellow of the Center for Study of World Religions at Harvard University and Maria Salit-Gitelson Tell Fellow of YIVO. Her subject of research was "*Religious and National Tolerance / Intolerance in Lithuania: The Case of Lithuanian's Jews in the Twentieth Century.*"

**LAURENCE PODSELYER** is a researcher at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris at the Jewish Research Center. After many years dedicated to South American anthropology concerning Amerindians in Amazonia, she turned to Jewish culture and to the socio-anthropology of the Lubavitch community as well as a study of a Parisian suburb with an important Jewish population. Both fields focus on returning to religion as a new tendency of French Jews in the context of immigration and cultural change in France. She is a member of the editorial board of *Pardes* and the author of numerous publications.

**RIV-ELLEN PRELL**, an anthropologist, is Associate Professor of American Studies and an adjunct member of the faculties of Jewish Studies and Women's Studies at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of the forthcoming *Fighting to Become Americans: Jewish Women and Men in Conflict in the 20th Century*; *Prayer and Community: the Havurah in American Life*; and co-editor of *Interpreting Women's Lives: Personal Narratives and Feminist Theory*. Prell has published a number of articles on American Judaism in the late twentieth century, how gender shapes our understanding of American Jewish culture and Jewish/Black relations in the United States. She has served on the editorial boards of the Encyclopedia of Jewish Women in America and the feminist journal SIGNS. She teaches about American Jewish women, Jews and popular culture and religion and culture.

**EETA PRINCE-GIBSON**, an Israel-based academic and writer, is working on her doctorate through the Hebrew University on women settlers in the West Bank and Gaza.

## EDITOR'S NOTE



**F**OR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW, I have been editing the papers of 24 women working in different fields and in different places throughout the world. These women also come from very different parts of the Jewish community and work in a variety of settings: some are academics; some are writers; some are social workers. All originally presented papers in 1997 and 1998 at the Hadassah Research Institute on Jewish Women located at Brandeis University. Reading their work, thinking about their ideas, and sometimes struggling to translate them into English has been an unexpectedly absorbing experience for me and I've wondered what it is, exactly, that I find so rewarding. I've concluded that spending time in the company of an international, interdisciplinary group of Jewish women begins to fill a most basic and persistent need in me: the need of human beings to see themselves sympathetically represented and reflected in their culture.

As a Jewish woman growing up in post-war America, I rarely saw any semblance of my reflection in the mainstream culture. Although I grew up in the middle of New York City where almost everybody in my immediate world was Jewish, representations of Jews were absent from the museums I visited, the movies I saw, or the books I read in school. Except for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which I consider problematic reading for a young Jewish girl, there was no Jewish heroine in the books of my childhood. I identified with active, adventurous girls like Jo March, Nancy Drew or Cherry Ames and liked reading about the dramatic lives of European and English queens. I didn't then notice that none of the women I was reading about were Jewish, or that Archie and Veronica seemed to have no Jewish friends; that there were no Jewish Mouseketeers; or that there were no Jewish girls in *American Girl* or *Seventeen*.

I was in my forties and listening to West Indian writer Jamaica Kincaid speaking at the Isabella Gardner Museum in Boston, when I suddenly perceived their absence (like Pnina Motzafi-Haller in her essay about *mizrahi* women in Israel, I applied the insight of an African-American woman to my own life). Jamaica Kincaid had done a brilliant and audacious thing: invited to choose her favorite painting at the museum and speak to a large audience about the reasons for her choice, she had beamed an old snapshot of her mother on the museum's large screen and talked about it.



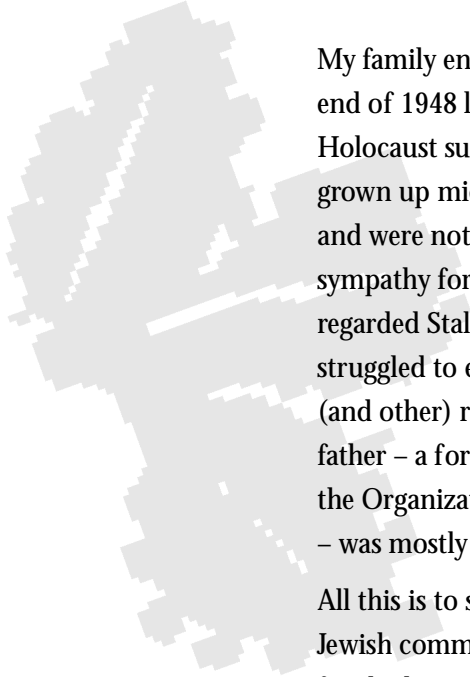
All of us in the audience, of course, had been accustomed to viewing the parade of art history on such a screen – from the Greeks to the Renaissance masters to the Impressionists and Abstract Expressionists. We were accustomed to oil portraits and elaborately framed photographs. The effect of Kinkaid's snapshot was shocking and made the author's point more forcefully than her words: Had we ever seen the image of an ordinary West Indian woman on the walls of a museum? Had we ever contemplated her face? Her body? Her surroundings? Her life? How did we ascribe value to this snapshot when it was viewed in a private photo album, in a newspaper, or here, in the context of other portraits in the museum? We had all read or at least heard of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, but what about the invisible woman? In this case, what about an entire sub-culture usually hidden by the majority African-American minority culture?

I viewed many of these working papers as such snapshots that raised some of these and many other questions.

In addition to experiencing a kind of invisibility as a Jewish girl in America, I also felt an invisibility in the Jewish community as the daughter of Czech Jews (of *ashkenazi* descent on my mother's side; *sephardi* on my father's). We lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where there were many Jewish refugees from Central Europe but where the definition of Jewish culture was determined by people who, like the majority of American Jews, were of Russian and Polish descent.

This particular group, I later learned, had jettisoned their working-class, Yiddish-speaking parents (as well as their working-class culture) in the Bronx, or Brooklyn, or Queens, or the Lower East Side. They were West Siders now, middle-class, highly educated, new Jews, who frequented the American – not Yiddish-language – theater and Lincoln Center, collected art, read the cultural sections of the *Times* and the *New Yorker*. The men worked as professionals; the women were delighted to be full-time homemakers in the image of Betty Crocker. Most were political liberals who had flirted with Communism or Socialism in college; they had friends or acquaintances who were blacklisted and were deeply affected by McCarthyism. They had also been deeply affected by the events of the second world war and were in every way invested in a prototypically 1950s American mainstream lifestyle.

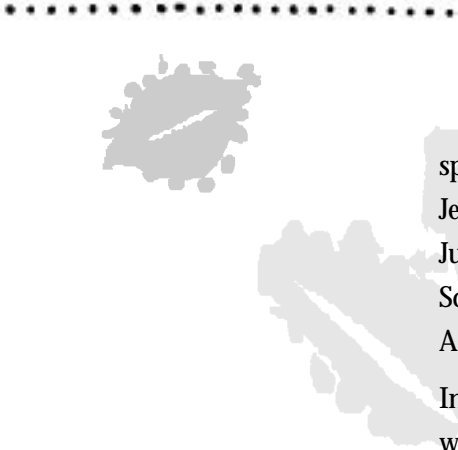
.....



My family entered this Upper West Side Jewish milieu towards the end of 1948 like creatures from another planet. My parents were *both* Holocaust survivors and political exiles from Communism. They had grown up middle-class, did not speak Yiddish, had never seen a bagel, and were not especially interested in Israel. Although they had no sympathy for McCarthyism, they were staunch anti-Communists who regarded Stalin as another version of Hitler. During the 1950s, they struggled to earn money and to adjust to America. Like many Jewish (and other) refugee women, my mother supported the family. My father – a former Olympic water polo player and sometimes officer of the Organization of Czech Sportsmen in-Exile-in-the Western World – was mostly unemployed until I was ten years old.

All this is to say that, as I was growing up, I felt as invisible in the Jewish community as I did in the American one. And when I had finished growing up, although I was counted as an American Jew, I still did not feel like American Jewish culture included me. G.B. could have been describing the Epsteins when she writes “Iranian Jews do not easily mesh with the majority Jewish culture. Those who live in North America feel marginalized: their experience has been that American Jews know nothing about them... The Iranian Jewish diaspora is triggering a re-examination of hegemonic notions of American Jewish identity. Iranian Jews with their own ethnic and cultural tradition are challenging the American Jewish culture that was brought from Eastern Europe and that is presumed to apply to all arriving Jews regardless of their background. This ashkenazi standard for Jews is similar to the WASP standard for assimilation to North American society.”

The issue of cultural hegemony is addressed in an even more dramatic way by South African Sally Frankental. “It is a truism to note that all Jewish communities, in all times and places, reflect the context in which they are located,” she writes. “In the South African case, the segregationist policies of the colonial authorities, the Boer republics, and the Union, followed by the apartheid system of the past fifty years, form the inescapable frame for all who live in South Africa... the disproportionate numbers who arrived from one region, Lithuania, gave the community an unusual degree of homogeneity relative to other diaspora communities. This was reflected in the virtual absence of Hasidism (until the 1970s), in the particular form of Yiddish



spoken, and in a variety of foods and customs particular to Lithuanian Jewry. In addition, the east Europeans' lack of exposure to Reform Judaism meant that Reform or Progressive Judaism was established in South Africa only in 1933, far later than in most diaspora communities." All this, of course, shaped the lives of South African Jewish women.

In reading these papers, I was struck by how many kinds of Jewish women there are, how profoundly we are influenced by our country of origin and the continuity or discontinuity of Jewish life within its borders, and by our experience of such factors as entitlement, dislocation, prejudice and outsider status. History, particularly this century's history, has not treated all Jewish women equally. In writing their papers, some authors – like Katalin Talyigas of Hungary – was reconnecting to and reconstructing the history of Jews in their country for the first time. Others, like Micaela Procaccia, who lives in Rome, is steeped in her history and writes with the surety of long immersion in the past: "In the year 1537, a Roman Jewish working class girl named Lariccia cried for days because of an unwanted match," begins her paper. "The day before the *qiddushin*, or betrothal, a washerwoman named Clemenza heard Lariccia saying to her father: "I do not like this man, nor do I desire him. I refuse him and reject him, nor do I want him." She declared herself to be "the unhappiest of all women," and on the next Shabbat, she told her father that she would not agree to let "the *qiddushin* become *nissu'in*.' Her father then hit her with the butt of a knife."

The biographical section of this volume itself makes for fascinating reading – as much for the wide geographical spectrum represented as for the facts each woman deemed important to include. As different as each woman is, I find much in common with her. It was easy for me to enter into her world.

Although this first HRIJW collection of writing by Jewish women around the world is inevitably uneven and incomplete, it is a respectable beginning. The authors represented here are, in some countries, part of a larger scholarly and cultural project of researching and writing about women's lives; in others, they are pioneers – the first of their kind. In some countries, they have been able to draw on a large body of data and literature; in others, they are themselves creating that data and literature. Ana Lebl from Split (now in Croatia) lives in an aging and relatively poor community of only 100 Jews





with scarce resources; Americans Riv- Ellen Prell and Pamela Nadell enjoy the support of Jewish Studies as well as Women's Studies departments at major American universities. Our Israeli and Latin American contributors bring both these realities into yet another perspective.

Some of the authors chose to spend time reworking their original presentations; others were content to have published what they originally presented. Many have struggled to express themselves in English – their second or third or fourth language. As a writer who has often had to communicate in foreign languages, I admire their pluck; as editor, I hope they forgive my journalistic bias, my many questions, and my inadvertent mistakes. Parts of all their work – even where it represents a starting point – moved and inspired me. I hope it will move and inspire you.

**Helen Epstein**

*October, 1999*

.....

## REPORT FROM LITHUANIA

by *Basia Nikiforova*

write of a very small and shrinking Jewish community. Today there are only 5,500 Lithuanian Jews who constitute less than 0.2% of the Lithuanian population.



The history of Jews in Lithuania is intimately connected to the special geo-political and national-religious environment in Lithuania, which changed substantially over the past 50 years. During the 20th century, Lithuania lost its status as an independent state by its inclusion as a national-geographical unit of the

Soviet Union. It regained its independence less than a decade ago. Today we have a generation, which in its childhood felt itself as the national-religious majority (Lithuanians-Catholics), in its maturity lived in a state where it felt itself as the national-religious minority, and in its old age it has returned to its initial position as the majority.

As a result of this history, Lithuanians – along with Latvians and Estonians – are people whose self-perception and self-consciousness encompass the mentality of both a majority and minority culture. These nations stood the test of colonial cultural policies: the facade of privileges in the development of the national culture combined with Russification.

For this reason these nations are very sensitive to the problem of tolerance/intolerance.

The Baltic States during the Soviet period had their own specific experience with Soviet colonialism. This included the deportation of part the native population of (the so-called “bourgeois” part) to Siberia and North Russia, and of much resettlement of ethnic Russians on Lithuanian territory. The result is that Latvians and Estonians scarcely constitute a majority in their own states (only around 62% are ethnic Estonians, 52% are Latvians). By contrast, Lithuania has been for many centuries the epicenter and the point of intersection for different national and religious cultures. But at the moment of statehood’s restoration, Lithuania was very close to being an unicultural state. In comparison with Latvia and Estonia, 81.4% of Lithuania’s population are ethnic Lithuanians, and 98% of believers are Catholics. The national minorities in Lithuania make up only 18.6%: they include 8.3% Russians, 6.9% Poles, 1.5% Byelorussians, 1.0% Ukrainians, and 0.2% Jews.

The situation in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania has influenced the formation of each country’s legislative principles and practices concerning tolerance issues. Lithuania, alone among the Baltic States, from the first months of independence decided in favor of the so-called “zero variant” for citizenship acquisition. “Zero variant,” means that everybody who lived in the territory of Lithuania until 1989 (the restoration of Lithuanian independence) has the right to be a Lithuanian citizen. During the first two years after independence, everybody had time to choose Lithuanian citizenship or other variants. After that, acquisition of citizenship became a process with some conditions (time of stay in Lithuania, the knowledge of the state language, etc.). This decision was the result of the democratization process, tolerance, and political pragmatism, which created the juridical basis for a decline of potential tensions between the national majority and minorities. The legislative separation of church and state (which in practice is not complete) became the juridical basis of equal rights under the law for registration and functioning for all faiths in

Lithuania. Lithuania's Jewish community has had a long and distinguished history. In the mid-nineteenth century, the territory which may be termed "historic Lithuania" included a large part of Poland, Belarus, Russia and encompassed about 2.5 million Jews, who comprised about 15% of the total population. As a result of World War One, Lithuania became more homogeneous and Jews comprised about 9% of its population.

Jews were already settled in Lithuania by the 1500s and were accorded a considerable degree of tolerance and goodwill. Their relatively favorable situation over the next three centuries drew additional Jewish migrants from other parts of Europe. At the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Great Duchy of Lithuania was relatively tolerant and afforded possibilities for development of economical and spiritual Jewish life. As a result, the influx of a heterogeneous Jewish population contributed to the evolution of a distinctly Lithuanian Jew. The *Litwak* was differentiated from the Polish Jew and developed a different community, even though Polish and Lithuanian Jewry were subsumed under the same political entity, the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, during two centuries. In fact, by the seventeenth century, a Jewish Council of Lithuania was able to promulgate a series of laws that established a large degree of autonomy for the Jewish community. A network of schools and social institutions was in place by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The fortunes of the Jewish community were largely determined by the ruling powers and by events in the national and religious majority. M. J. Rosman's book *The Lords' Jews* is a good source for Jewish history in this period and its legal framework.

From the seventeenth century on, Lithuanian Jewry attained worldwide prominence. Rabbinical leadership, including most prominently Elijah ben Judah Solomon Zalman – the Vilna *Gaon* – established a series of distinguished *yeshivot* and the rise of Lithuania's reputation as a center of Jewish scholarship. An international conference was held in Vilnius last year to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the *Gaon's* death.

During the nineteenth century in Lithuania there existed number of competing movements: the *Mitnagdim*, *Hasidim*, *Musar*, and *Zionism*. These competing movements created many conflicts and tensions but at the same time produced many famous leaders, including women who played a important role in Jewish political, social and cultural life. Among them were Helena Chackel, Alta Sudarskij, Anna Rozental, Roza Shabat-Gavrajaska, Sofia Gurevich, Elena Chackis and many others. They were teachers, political activists, social workers and writers. Their presence was felt in the every sphere of Jewish life, not only in Vilnius and Kaunas, but in every little *shtetl*.

The case of Helena Chackel is particularly interesting for us. She was born in Kaunas in the end of the nineteenth century. She was very well educated: a graduate of the Kaunas gymnasium, and the Saint-Petersburg Bestuzev Women's Courses. She was leader of the Jewish cultural, educational and social organizations in Kaunas, head of WIZO, the editor of the Jewish children's magazine, a writer and literature teacher in the Shalom Aleichem School.

Alta Sudarskij was born in Dwinsk (Belarus). Her family moved to Lithuania, where she very soon assumed an important place in the Jewish women's movement, and in the development of Yiddish language and literature. Her parents' home was a center of the Jewish public and cultural life. Some years before World War II, she and her husband Mendl Sudarskij emigrated to the USA, where they composed the book *Lita* about Jews in Lithuania. After the death of her husband, she published a second volume alone.

During the 1920s, the Jews were the largest minority group resident in the country, constituting 7.6% of the total population. Good times for Lithuanian Jewry ended on June 22, 1941. During the first two months of the Nazi occupation, most of Lithuania's provincial Jews were murdered. The first victims of Nazi and Lithuanian collaboration were the *shtetl* Jews. The next victims were Jews killed in ghettos when the ghettos were liquidated. Of the 250,000 Jews in Lithuania on the eve of World War II, only about 25,000 were still alive at war's end. The Jews of Lithuania and their physical institutions were destroyed almost completely, sometime with the help of Lithuanian collaborators.

The real post-war rebuilding of the Jewish community in Lithuania began only after its independence in 1990. At that time, there were about 12,400 Jews in Lithuania. The post-war Jewish exodus had started in the 1950s. During this decade, 24,672 Jews emigrated to Israel via Poland. In the 1970s, more than 15% of the Jewish population immigrated to Israel. In 1994, estimated the number of Jews living in the country to be only 6,500. The largest concentration – some 4,000 people – lived in Vilnius. Jews were attracted to Vilnius both by its historical reputation as a center of Jewish life and by its important role as the center of Lithuania's economic, educational, cultural, and political activities. Today only 5,500 Jews remain in the country.

Who is a Jew? Self-definition of nationality, official designation of nationality, or religious adherence can determine Jewish identity. 62% of those who identified as Jews were born in Lithuania. Females far outnumber males (only 83 males for every 100 females) compared to 90 males for every 100 females in the Lithuanian population as a whole. 43% of all Jewish women in Lithuania have a higher education. In the age group 25-44 55.6% have a higher education. This is a higher level of education in this gender and age group than in Lithuania as a whole.

The situation of Jewish woman is the following: 43% of Jewish women are retired; 36% are employed; 8% are unemployed; 3% are students; and 10% are in unspecified situations. Employed woman can be broken down by sector. The largest group (27.5%) are working as engineers or technicians. The second largest group (21%) is employed in education. Other intellectual professions employs 17.6% of Jewish women; 8.2% work in medicine; 9.7% as office workers; 7.3% as manual workers; 3% as service workers. The marital status of Jewish women in Lithuania is reported as follows: married – 60.9% are married; 8.1% are divorced; 17% are widowed; 14.0% are single.

Most Jewish woman (69.9%) have one or two children (33.6% and 36.3%) and are active in the recreation of Jewish life and the restoration of the Jewish tradition in Lithuania. They work in Jewish schools, kindergartens, mass media, and social organizations whose most important function is to help single old and ill Jews. WIZO head, Mrs. Rachel Kostenian, described the typical Jewish woman she encounters as retired, poor, active in the Vilnius Jewish Society's social and cultural life, originally from outside of Lithuania, interested in studying Jewish history, culture and traditions, often single and alone; her children having already emigrated to Israel.

There are Jewish women who are currently prominent in Lithuanian cultural, scientific and social life. Some are famous writers like Violetta Palchinskaite. Several generations of Lithuanian children have grown up hearing her tales and attending her plays for the Children's Theater. One of the leading Lithuanian graphics artists is A. Skliutauskaite and in painting, I. Bindler. Professor Irena Veisaite is a famous theater

critic and head of the Council of the Open Society Fund of Lithuania (the local Soros Foundation).

Mrs. Marina Zibuc is the head of publishing department of this Fund.

Intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews is now commonplace in Lithuania. This is the result of 50 years of Soviet strategy of secularization and internationalization and an indication of the integration of Jews into Lithuanian society. At the same time, it is evidence of the potential disappearance of Jews who choose to remain in Lithuania. Today the small Lithuanian Jewish community has a 41% rate of intermarriage and 56% of their children are born into families of mixed-origin. Only 42% of them identify themselves as Jewish.

The subject of my own current research is the role of Jewish women in the promotion of children's Jewish identity in the mixed family. To what extent Jews might disappear in Lithuania and how quickly that could occur depends on the current and future Jewish identity of children from mixed marriages. Our task is to identify which factors support or hinder a Jewish woman in her mission of transmitting Judaism in the domestic environment, to ascertain how influential these factors are and to determine how influential religious affiliation or the absence of non-Jewish parents are on the formation of children's Jewish identity.

Our first hypothesis assumes the existence of two groups of factors:

The factors supportive of a Jewish woman's mission include a communal spiritual atmosphere returning to national and religious identity; a governmental policy of tolerance sympathetic to the preservation of Jewish heritage; and growing Jewish self-consciousness in the post-Soviet era. These factors nurture the creation of a Jewish society and many Jewish organizations including a Jewish national school, close contacts with Israel and international Jewish organizations, an educational program for Jewish children from Lithuania in Israel, and a Catholic-Jewish dialogue supported by the Vatican and international Jewish organizations.

The negative factors hindering a Jewish woman's mission include several factors. First is the strong influence of secularization. For example, Jewish social and cultural life is very active in Lithuania. At the same time a Jewish women living in an intermarriage is usually far away from the synagogue. A second factor is a relic of the Soviet idea that the family is a "microenvironment for ethnic integration and natural assimilation." Other important factors are growing domestic nationalism and a concomitant low level of tolerance to "otherness" in interpersonal relationships; the absence of a Reform branch of Judaism, and the traditional anti-Judaism of Lithuanian and Polish Catholics.

Our second hypothesis will assume that the incidence of mixed marriages will grow in Lithuania. The reasons for this include the fact that the parents of the young generation are spiritual products of compulsory assimilation during the last 50 years and, as a result, have lost most of their Jewish heritage and religion. The Jewish community is very small and the possibility of finding a marriage partner within this small pool very limited. After the restoration of the Lithuanian State, contacts with Jews from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine have become more difficult. The new governmental requirements of visas and higher travel expenses limit the possibilities of choice. Jews who decided stay in Lithuania mostly aspire to integration and to adapt to Lithuanian culture and society.

The fact that our subject of research is the role of the Jewish woman in the creation of Jewish identity of the children doesn't mean that we are ignoring the Jewish man's part in this process. It only means that our subject is woman. We are very carefully analyzing the participation of both Jewish men and women in the creation of children's Jewish identity.

We propose that the role of the Jewish woman in the creation of her children's Jewish identity depends on many factors: her level of Jewish identity or her assimilation and secularization; her relations and contacts with her family, the Jewish environment, the reasons for which she decided to marry a non-Jew; and the national and religious status of the non-Jewish man she married. Jewish women must also depend on the general spiritual atmosphere of society, the level of tolerance, objective conditions for Jewish education; and their plans to remain in the country or to leave Lithuania in the future. The Lithuanian Catholic influence over the mixed family is more powerful than the Russian influence, which often has lost its own historical and cultural roots after the break-up of the Soviet Union and is no longer associated with the Orthodox church.

We are undertaking an ethnographic study, which will include interviews with Jewish mothers, interviews with children from mixed families where the mother or father is non-Jewish; and a content analysis of student essays from Jewish schools titled "How I understand my Jewish identity and who/what has an influence on this perception."

It is important to find out the real indicators of Jewish identity in a country where more than half of the Jewish population is not affiliated with a synagogue but simply feels "Jewish." In the case of the Lithuanian Jewish mixed family, our task is to find this list of indicators, which explore the personal Jewish expression of people who often unite their personal identity with ethnic, national and traditional issues rather than with religious issues.

