PARENTING PRACTICES AND THE TRANSMISSION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

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Three years after being interviewed, a nonrandom, purposeful subsample of 14 Jewish families from a larger sample of 48 families living in Central New York was reinterviewed. The primary aim of this follow-up study was to develop a descriptive understanding of parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity. Semistructured family interviews were conducted and coded using grounded-theory techniques, in particular the constant comparative method of analysis. Four main qualitative categories emerged from this study: Individual differences in teenagers, stages of ethnic identity development, parenting practices, and parental role models. Findings suggest that clear expectations, a type of authoritative parenting, could be associated with the positive transmission of Jewish ethnic identity. This type of parenting style was direct as parents expressed clear expectations for participation in Jewish activities both at home and in the community.

Although assertions about how to best promote a positive and strong ethnic identity in families have been made, little research has been done that details how the transmission of ethnic identity to the next generation occurs (Chesire, 2001; Marshall, 1995; Okagaki & Moore, 2000; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Quintana & Vera, 1999). For example, little is known about what types of parenting practices best cultivate and reinforce the transmission of ethnic identity to children and to teenagers. In an earlier multimethod study, we used qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the ways in which a certain type of ethnic identity, Jewish identity, might affect family dynamics and children’s self esteem. Our findings suggested that there are many ways that Jewish ethnic identity can influence family dynamics, for example parenting styles and communication. The adolescents in this earlier study also stated that they like being Jewish because it makes them feel “special” and unique; it appears to be an important part of their identity (Davey, Stone Fish, & Robila, 2001; Semans & Stone Fish, 2000). Although we learned a great deal about Jewish ethnic identity from this larger sample of families, research questions about parenting practices and the
transmission of ethnic identity emerged from our original study (Semans & Stone Fish, 2000).

Three years after the original study was conducted, we reinterviewed a subsample of 14 families (from the original 48 families interviewed) in which at least one of the teenagers had matured to middle or late adolescence (14 and older). We conducted this follow-up study to qualitatively explore how this particular minority ethnic group, White Jewish families, cultivate and transmit ethnic identity to the next generation. Although extant literature has informed some of our thinking and coding of the qualitative data, we conducted the follow-up interviews before reading the extant literature in depth. Our primary goal was not to develop a full grounded theory, but to develop a descriptive understanding of parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity, therefore, we used techniques and principles from grounded theory to code the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity has been defined as a complex construct including: (a) a commitment and sense of belonging to one’s ethnic group; (b) positive evaluation of the group; (c) interest in and knowledge about the group; and (d) involvement in activities and traditions of the group (Phinney, 1996). According to Phinney and her colleagues (Phinney, 1993, 1996; Phinney & Chavira, 1992), the formation of ethnic identity may be thought of as a process similar to ego identity formation, as people explore and make decisions about the role of ethnicity in their lives. We briefly review Marcia’s (1980) ego identity research to fully describe the stages of ethnic identity that Phinney (1996) and her colleagues have reported.

Marcia (1980) conceptualized four ego identity statuses based on the presence or absence of identity search and commitment. He has suggested identity statuses are not necessarily developmental stages through which individuals move in a fixed progression; rather, they are part of a developmental process leading, ideally, to identity achievement. The four identity statuses are: (a) diffusion, characterized by the absence of both search and commitment; (b) foreclosure, characterized by a commitment without a search; (c) moratorium, indicated by current involvement in identity search; and (d) identity achievement, demonstrated by a clear commitment that followed a search for identity.

Building explicitly on Marcia’s (1980) four ego identity statuses, Phinney (1993) interviewed adolescents from four different ethnic groups (Asian American, African American, Mexican American, and European American), to examine the applicability of Marcia’s (1980) ego identity model to ethnic identity. The adolescents studied are from diverse ethnic backgrounds but also represent different racial groups; however, Phinney (1993) focused on ethnic identity development rather than racial identity development in her study. She found clear evidence of ethnic identity achievement, defined as a secure commitment to one’s group, based on knowledge and understanding obtained through an active exploration of one’s cultural background, and of moratorium, indicated by current involvement in an exploration of one’s ethnicity. However, ethnic identity diffusion and foreclosure could not be reliably distinguished and were combined into a category characterized by a lack of interest in or knowledge about one’s ethnic or racial background, referred to as an “unexamined” ethnic identity. At the unexamined stage, attitudes toward one’s group membership could be positive or negative, but these views tended to be passively received from parents or from society rather than reached independently. Although Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) stated that a positive ethnic identity is most likely nurtured in the context of a “supportive family,” very little research has explored parents’ influence on the development of children and adolescents’ ethnic identity.

Effective Parenting Styles

Baumrind (1971, 1972) has developed four classifications of parenting styles that describe how parents negotiate the needs of children for both nurturance and limit setting. These four styles of parenting are authoritative parents, who are both demanding and responsive using supportive rather than punitive disciplinary methods; permissive, or nondirective parents, who are more responsive than they are demanding tending to be lenient and avoid confrontation; authoritarian parents, who are demanding and directive but not responsive, expecting their orders to be obeyed without explanation; and, rejecting—neglecting or disengaged parents, who are neither demanding nor responsive—they do not structure or monitor and are not supportive.
Baumrind (1971, 1991) investigated how these four parenting styles differentially affect and shape child and adolescent competence. According to Baumrind (1991), offspring from authoritative homes have consistently been found to be more competent, communal, and cognitively competent than other children and adolescents. At the other extreme, offspring from rejecting-neglecting homes tended to be the least competent. Children and adolescents from permissive homes tended to be less self-assertive as compared with those from authoritative homes, and, finally, offspring from authoritarian homes seemed to fare worse as compared with those from either the authoritative or permissive homes. “In sum, adolescents’ developmental progress is held back by directive, officious, or unengaged practices and facilitated by reciprocal, balanced interaction” (Baumrind, 1991, p. 753).

Some researchers have begun to challenge the ethnocentric nature of Baumrind’s (1971) parenting styles, because they are based solely on samples of European American families. For example, Chinese parenting has been described by Chao (1994) as “restrictive, controlling, and authoritarian . . . while these styles of parenting have been found to be associated with poor school achievement in European American samples, many Asian students, including the Chinese, have been performing well in school, even above European American students” (p. 1111). Chao’s (1994) study reveals that Baumrind’s (1971) typology does not fully capture the important features of Chinese child rearing, suggesting that parents from different cultures may be using other types of effective parenting styles that do not fall under Baumrind’s (1971) parenting typologies.

Parenting Practices and the Transmission of Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is to a large extent defined and shaped by interpersonal contexts (Taylor & Wang, 1997). The family has been highlighted as a primary context in which children and teenagers develop their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1996). There has been some exploration of the parenting styles or socialization practices of parents that might be linked to the transmission of ethnic identity in children and adolescents (Cheshire, 2001; Marshall, 1995; Okagaki & Moore, 2000; Quintana & Vera, 1999). Some researchers have begun to explore the difference in socialization patterns among ethnic groups and how these patterns might affect child rearing (Cheshire, 2001; Lin & Fu, 1990; Marshall, 1995; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Quintana & Vera, 1999; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992) and school performance (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Although researchers have begun to explore the role of ethnicity in the socialization of children and adolescents, there has been little research identifying what specific types of parenting practices optimally cultivate and transmit ethnic identity to the next generation for particular ethnic groups (Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

Jewish Ethnic Identity

To date, little research has been done on the ethnic identity development in White groups (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). Models of White ethnic identity and racial minority ethnic identity are expected to be different because of the power differential and the history of relationships between Whites and non-Whites in this country. Exploration of ethnic identity development in White Jewish families and their adolescents can help to further establish stages of ethnic identity development and can additionally provide comparisons and contrasts of ethnic identity development in White minority versus non-White minority ethnic groups.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a descriptive understanding of parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity. Throughout the study, we used grounded-theory techniques to stay close to the “reality” of these families and to “develop concepts derived from the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). Although grounded theorists should refrain from biasing findings toward one theory or another, “familiarity with relevant literature can enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in data . . . a researcher does not want to enter the field with an entire list of concepts, however, some concepts might turn up over and over again in the literature and also appear in the data and, thus, might seem significant” (Strauss
& Corbin, 1998, p. 49). Therefore, we reviewed the extant literature (e.g., Baumrind, 1991; Phinney, 1993) after conducting the interviews and doing some preliminary open coding to “make comparisons of the data to concepts derived from the literature” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 49).

Overall, the findings from this study are based on the parents’ and teenagers’ own words and also from the extant literature (Baumrind, 1991; Phinney, 1993) when descriptions the participants gave matched the extant literature reviewed. Drawing from the findings and research questions that emerged from our first study (Davey et al., 2001; Semans & Stone Fish, 2000), we explored possible stages of ethnic identity development, as well as parenting practices that shape or influence the transmission of ethnic identity.

METHOD

Participants

The 48 families from the first phase of the study were chosen using snowball sampling from a small Jewish population in the central New York area. As the perspectives of our participants are described, we must be mindful of the ways in which Jewish ethnic identity may or may not be shaped by their particular regional-geographic and community context. The original sample of 48 families who qualified for the first phase of this study (see Semans & Stone Fish, 2000) fit the following criteria: At least one parent self-identified as Jewish, and there was at least one child between the ages of 11 and 18.

For this study, a nonrandom, purposeful sample of families who participated in the study by Semans and Stone Fish (2000) were contacted by telephone to arrange a follow-up interview for Spring, 1999. Merriam (1998) stated that, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 61). Each of the families had been interviewed 3 years prior to this follow-up interview. Of the 48 families that initially participated, 20 families were contacted because at least one of their teenagers had matured from being a young adolescent (11 to 13) to a middle or late adolescent (14 and older). After calling the 20 families, only 14 family interviews were scheduled because some families had members who were away or had scheduling conflicts.

The teenagers in the 14 families participating in this study ranged from 14 to 18 years of age. There were 9 teenaged males and 12 teenaged females. Represented in this sample are 6 cultural, 4 religious, and 4 self-identified mixed Jewish families. Each family self-identified as White Jews in a demographic survey previously administered in the first phase of the study. In our original study (Semans & Stone Fish, 2000), families were categorized as cultural, religious, or mixed Jewish families by coding their responses. Cultural Jews defined themselves as connected to the Jewish people and were supportive of Jewish causes, whereas religious Jews (who were also culturally identified) also kept kosher, incorporated Jewish prayer as a part of their daily lives, and practiced many of the religious rituals. Finally, mixed families had only one parent who self-identified as Jewish, and in these homes two different religious practices were often observed (for example, Passover and Easter). See Table 1 for a description of the 14 families.

Procedure

The first and second authors formulated follow-up questions as they emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews done 3 years ago with these families (Davey et al., 2001). The first author conducted all of the follow-up interviews, which were videotaped in the families’ homes and took approximately one hour to complete. Parents and their teenagers were given the option of either being interviewed together as a family or individually; all families chose to be interviewed together with both parents present as well as their teenagers. Each family was asked five key questions about parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity: (1) To teenagers: Now that you are older, how do you feel about being Jewish?; (2) To parents: Do you see changes in your teenagers?; (3) To parents: How do you think you influence their ethnic/Jewish identity?; (4) To parents and teenagers: Is there a parenting style that you think shapes or influences the transmission of Jewish/ethnic identity in adolescents?; (5) To parents and teenagers: For Jewish couples with children, what would you recommend to them?
Table 1
Description of the Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family ID</th>
<th>Jewish type</th>
<th>Number of teenagers</th>
<th>Current age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Parenting style</th>
<th>Stage of ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Moratorium</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Moratorium</td>
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<tr>
<td>003</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bargain</td>
<td>Unexamined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lenient</td>
<td>Unexamined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Moratorium</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Moratorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Bargain</td>
<td>Low-moratorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Clear</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
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<td>028</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lenient</td>
<td>Unexamined</td>
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<tr>
<td>031</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Lenient</td>
<td>Low-Moratorium</td>
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<td>033</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lenient</td>
<td>Moratorium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Techniques and principles from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), rather than pure grounded theory, were used to help develop a descriptive understanding of parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity. More specifically, the constant comparative method of analysis, which represents the "staple feature of grounded theory methodology" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 78), was used to discover meanings of experience as understood and told by the families. After each of the 14 follow-up interviews, the first author kept notes that she reviewed with the second author. Patterns or themes emerged during the interview process that guided probing for more specifics of particular questions for the next family being interviewed. The first author also kept an informal, reflexive journal as well as an audit trail. A reflexive journal is a record of observations and thoughts written after each interview is conducted; an audit trail is a record of the process and progress of the research. In particular, memos were kept regarding possible categories, subcategories, concepts, and interrelated categories. These memos are kept so that other researchers can scrutinize the research process, and, ultimately, conduct the same research study and come to similar conclusions.

The first and second authors are both married, Jewish, female family therapy professors. The third author is a graduate student from England, who self identifies as a White female with no particular religious affiliation. The fourth author is the second author's graduate student in upstate New York who self identifies as a White, Romanian Catholic. To check for inherent biases in the first and second authors because of their self-identification as Jews, it was invaluable to have outsiders' perspectives to reflect on, contribute to, and challenge the themes and patterns that were emerging from the data.

Coauthors reviewed the transcripts, first individually and later collectively, comparing codes and themes on several occasions. All kept theoretical memos and had an open discussion about emerging biases.
as they individually coded the transcripts. For example, the first and second authors initially missed some salient codes about Jewish parenting practices that the third and fourth authors were able to highlight, thus reducing bias and increasing validity of the coding. This process allowed the research team to address their own theoretical and personal biases and to compare emergent patterns and themes that they perceived in individuals as well as any common to all or most of the participants. Open coding techniques from grounded-theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used to compare observations and to open up new ideas by grouping together participants’ comments according to similar or contrasting themes. In addition, a check-coding process was used to clarify definitions and enhance intercoder agreement on the developed themes.

The next stage was to group the codes into higher-level clusters called categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories were distinguished from one another, and subcategories were developed. Then axial coding began, which involved, “relating categories to their subcategories termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). The goal of axial coding is to relate categories to each other, looking for relationships between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After axial coding was completed, dense and well-developed categories were related to each other in a conceptual scheme.

Categories and codes were primarily derived from the 14 families’ own words; however some of the labels used to name categories and codes (e.g., stages of ethnic identity development and parenting practices) were informed by the extant literature (Baumrind, 1991; Phinney, 1993). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), “literature can be used to confirm findings and just the reverse, findings can be used to illustrate where the literature is incorrect, or only partially explains a phenomena . . . bringing the literature into the writing allows for extending, validating, and refining knowledge in the field” (pp. 51–52). Although for many of the emerging codes and categories, the parents’ and teenagers’ statements seemed to be in agreement, there were instances in which the teenagers’ responses did not match the parents’ and parents’ statements from the same family were not in agreement. For the purpose of coding, we chose several consistent approaches across all families in order to resolve these disagreements in statements.

When the statements of teenagers and their parents were not in agreement regarding particular categories of development related most directly to the teenagers’ experience (e.g., stage of ethnic identity or individual differences), we relied on the teenagers’ statements to code the data. Similarly, when the statements of parents and their teenagers were not in agreement regarding parenting practices or parental role models, we relied on the parents’ statements because these categories referred to parental behaviors. When one or both parents gave responses that might have been placed in different categories, we relied on consensus among the four researchers. Initially, there was a list of 30 codes under eight main categories; a final list of codes and categories emerged after the first author consulted with her three coauthors and reached consensus. The final number of codes was 14 under four main categories.

**FINDINGS**

The final four main categories are as follows: (a) individual differences in teenagers, (b) stages of ethnic identity development, (c) parenting practices, and (d) parental role models. Under these four main categories are 14 final codes, which are described below.

*Individual Differences in Teenagers*

This general category, individual differences in teenagers, highlights the within-person qualities of the teenagers that seem to influence and shape ethnic identity development in this small sample of Jewish teenagers. Under this main category are three additional subcodes: (a) affinity for Judaism; (b) siblings, and (c) gender.

*Affinity for Judaism.* The teenagers in this study have different feelings or views about their Jewish identity. Some still like being Jewish, others are indifferent, a few teenagers are bored with Jewish activities, whereas others would rather spend time with their non-Jewish friends, because they feel they have more in common with them. “I still like being Jewish; Judaism is still an important part of my life . . . and it’s part
of who I am” (007 Cultural 16-year-old female). “I like being Jewish because I can identify with my friends” (009 Mixed 14-year-old male). “I consider Judaism an ethnic tie, not a religious one” (003 Religious 16-year-old female). “I seem to have more in common with people who aren’t Jewish . . . I don’t know about my Jewish beliefs” (020 Religious 17-year-old male).

It is interesting to note that the type of parental ethnic identification (cultural, religious, or mixed) did not seem to be related to the level of affinity these teenagers have for Jewish practices. Of the 21 teenagers interviewed in this study, 10 said they still like being Jewish, often to an even greater degree than the first time they were interviewed. Eight teenagers said they would rather spend time with non-Jewish friends, and the remaining 3 teenagers stated that although they still like being Jewish, they are confused about some of their Jewish beliefs.

siblings. There seemed to be differences in ethnic identity and the level of affinity for Jewish practices between siblings within the same family. This is possibly another indication that within-person qualities are important variables to consider when studying ethnic identity development in teenagers. For example, a mother who identifies as a cultural Jew openly discussed the differences she perceives in her two teenaged daughters. “Both kids have pretty intense Jewish identity in their own different ways . . . my older daughter is more ritually Jewish and my younger daughter is more culturally Jewish” (008 Cultural, mother talking about her 2 teenaged daughters, ages 18 and 14). Another example of this is cited below as two brothers within the same family discuss how being Jewish affects them in different ways. “I don’t really like going to Temple or anything . . . I don’t really understand Hebrew or what they are saying in Hebrew and I’m not having a Bar Mitzvah” (033 Mixed, 14-year-old male). His older brother said, “I feel good about being Jewish, I am going to confirmation class and I did have a Bar Mitzvah” (033 Mixed, 15-year-old male).

Gender. The teenaged daughters in our study appeared to continue their affiliation with Jewish practices and to begin examining their beliefs at a deeper level than their male counterparts. “I believe that God is always there for me no matter if I’m in Temple, at school, or at home. I pray every night before I go to sleep” (027 Cultural, 16-year-old female), said one young woman, a sentiment frequently expressed by most young women in our sample. The teenaged sons seemed to be more involved with their non-Jewish peers and to generally not think as deeply about their evolving Jewish ethnic identity. “I don’t go to Temple anymore, because I don’t think I get anything out of it . . . they’re not people I can identify with . . . I don’t know about my Jewish beliefs” (020 Religious, 17-year-old male).

Nine male teenagers and 12 female teenagers participated in this study. Of the 9 teenaged boys who participated in the study, 6 did not seem to be fully exploring their ethnic identity, nor did they appear to desire to be part of Jewish activities. Of the 12 teenaged girls who participated in this study, 8 still liked being Jewish, 2 were examining and questioning their ethnic identity, whereas only 2 did not seem to desire to participate in Jewish activities or to affiliate with their Jewish peers.

Stages of Ethnic Identity Development

This category refers to possible stages of ethnic identity development that these teenagers seem to traverse as they begin to question and explore their evolving Jewish ethnic identity. Under this main category are four subcodes: (a) independence, (b) unexamined, (c) moratorium, and (d) multiethnic.

Independence. All the parents in this study referred to teenagers establishing their independence as a normative milestone. Many stated that rejecting parts of Judaism is “normal,” and that their hope for their children is that the foundation they have created will be enough to help the teenagers maintain their Jewish ethnic identity as they mature and begin to question their beliefs. One father stated, “My son is not as involved in Jewish activities; he doesn’t go to services as much because he thinks it’s boring . . . I think it’s a normal part of being a teenager his age” (005 Religious father about his 16-year-old son). Another mother reported, “The boys are trying to declare their independence . . . they insist upon doing their own thing . . . we allow them more leeway; if they can give me a good reason to stay home from Jewish activities, then I go with what they want” (033 Mixed mother about her two teenaged sons, ages 14 and 15).

Unexamined. Some teenagers seemed to be in an unexamined stage of ethnic identity development. Unexamined refers to teenagers who tend to have a lack of interest in or knowledge about their ethnic identity. Attitudes toward one’s ethnic group membership could be positive or negative, but these views
tended to be passively received from parents or from society rather than individually evaluated. “I definitely see that they are becoming more independent, breaking away from us, trying not to believe in what we believe in. They’d rather be with their friends and not be referred to as Jewish so they can fit in with their peers at school” (003 Religious mother about her two teenaged daughters, ages 14 and 16). “I disagree with mom, that it’s a normal part of being a teenager. . . . I prefer my non-Jewish friends because I have more in common with them” (003 Religious, 16-year-old female). Of the 21 teenagers interviewed, 6 of the teenaged boys seemed to be in the unexamined stage and 2 of the teenaged girls were in the unexamined stage of ethnic identity development, again highlighting a possible gender difference in ethnic identity development for this particular sample of teenagers.

**Moratorium.** Moratorium refers to a current involvement in an exploration of one’s ethnic identity. Many of the teenagers were exploring and questioning their Jewish beliefs. The parents as well as the teenagers in this sample openly discussed this active exploration and the differences in teenagers’ ethnic identity 3 years after they were initially interviewed. A mother stated, “I do see a difference in her Jewish identity as she gets older. When she was in the sixth grade, she didn’t question or challenge me as much . . . now she is becoming more independent and asking questions about Judaism” (002 Cultural mother about her 14-year-old daughter). A daughter from another family stated, “Judaism is still a very important part of my life and it’s part of who I am. My parents brought me up to love being Jewish and I respect them. Everyday I use parts of it, making decisions, and I have begun to think more about why I believe what I believe” (007 Cultural, 16-year-old female).

Overall, 3 of the 9 teenaged boys seem to be in this stage of active exploration, whereas 8 of the 12 teenaged girls appear to be in moratorium. In addition, 2 of the teenaged girls seem to be questioning their Jewish beliefs but are more ambivalent about what they believe in (we refer to them as low moratorium; see Table 1). There seem to be different levels of exploration in this sample of Jewish teenagers, with some maintaining a stronger affinity for Judaism, whereas others seem less certain about what being Jewish means to them.

**Multiethnic.** Another category emerged from the data as the mixed Jewish families and their teenagers seemed to have different ways of making sense of their evolving ethnic identity. One girl stated, “I am multiethnic, all different, French, English, Irish, Russian, and Jewish . . . I am a mixture . . . I do like Judaism, I go to Hebrew school, Temple, but I can choose my own religion, like Buddhism, Catholicism or whatever I want” (009 Mixed, 15-year-old female). A boy from another family said, “I don’t know what it means for me to be Jewish . . . I don’t know what I believe in . . . I am a human and I don’t like to label myself because I like to be open to all beliefs” (028 Mixed, 16-year-old male).

Seven of the 21 teenagers described themselves as mixed or multiethnic. What they all seem to share in common is either a need to be identified as “multiethnic” or identified as a “human being” without a specific label. There seems to be an attitude of tolerance and acceptance of people with different ethnic backgrounds as well as of different faiths. The parents in these mixed families, who have different ethnic backgrounds as well as different religious practices, seem to feel that there is an overlap of common values between them that is the most important way to socialize their teenagers. An example of this is what many of the parents referred to as “being a good person.” Like their parents, the teenagers in these mixed families seem to adopt a similar way of making sense of their evolving ethnic identity—“multiethnic” as a way to negotiate being the offspring of two parents with different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

**Parenting Practices**

Parenting practices is another major category that refers to possible styles of parenting that appear to shape ethnic identity development in teenagers. Under this main category were four subcodes: (a) clear expectations, (b) bargaining, (c) verbal hints, and (d) lenient.

**Clear expectations.** Baumrind’s (1991) parenting typologies provide a lens with which to make sense of some of the parental practices we observed in our study. The first subcode, which we have labeled clear expectations, refers to an authoritative style of parenting. Parents who seem to fit into this subcode had clear rules or expectations about Jewish practices but were also responsive to their teenagers’ needs. One father reported, “We state clearly our expectations as parents . . . we don’t worry about being too intrusive . . . we
continue to act in a way so that they know it’s important, stay involved in Jewish activities . . . they know I have expectations for them . . . It’s got to be ‘push-pull’ so they know it’s very important” (007 Cultural father about his two teenaged daughters, ages 16 and 15). Another mother stated, “We have clear expectations for the girls . . . they know we have Shabbat dinner on Friday night and that they are expected to go to Temple on the Sabbath; there are certain family rituals we will not compromise on because we feel it’s the best way to raise our girls with a strong Jewish identity” (025 Religious mother about raising her daughters Jewish, oldest is now 14).

Of the 14 families in this study, 4 seemed to frequently use this style of parenting; 3 cultural families and one religious family had clear expectations for their teenagers. Therefore, 4 teenaged daughters and one teenaged son (5 teenagers out of the total 21) had parents who used this style. What is most intriguing about this style of Jewish parenting is that these five teenagers seem to have the highest affinity for Judaism and appeared to be in the moratorium stage of ethnic identity development.

Bargaining. We labeled the second subcode of parental behaviors that emerged from the data bargaining, which refers to parents who negotiate with their children to participate in Jewish activities. One mother stated, “I try not to be too forceful, you know I don’t say you have to do this but sometimes, I try to make deals, like if you’ll read from the Torah, then I’ll let you do this” (003 Religious mother about her two teenaged daughters, ages 14 and 16). Another mother reported, “my parenting has changed. . . . I’m not as inflexible . . . there are certain things we don’t negotiate on like that she has to be home for Shabbat on Friday nights and High Holy Days are not an option to miss . . . but with regular synagogue attendance I’ll negotiate with her, like if she goes this one week then she’ll get this” (011 Cultural mother about her 17-year-old daughter). Two families used this style of Jewish parenting, one religious and one cultural. There were 3 teenaged girls in these two families, and they appeared to have little affinity for Judaism; 2 of the 3 teenaged girls were categorized in the unexamined stage of ethnic identity development.

Verbal hints. The third subcode of parenting behavior is referred to as verbal hints. Parents who did not want to nag their children or turn them off from Jewish practices tended to give gentle verbal reminders to help keep their teenagers involved in Jewish activities. One daughter stated, “my parents verbally give me hints, to not stray from my Jewish roots . . . like attending United Synagogue Youth and going to Hebrew school. . . . I do still like being Jewish. . . . Although parents might push you in a direction, they cannot choose for you” (002 Cultural, 14-year-old female).

Four of the 14 families seemed to use this style of Jewish parenting. There were one religious, one mixed, and 2 cultural families including 3 female teenagers and 3 male teenagers whose parents used this style of parenting. What is interesting to note with this style of parenting is that all of the females and one male had a positive affinity for Jewish practices and were in the moratorium stage of development. Yet, two of the male teenagers were categorized in the unexamined stage, and both were actually from the one family that was religiously identified. Whether an adolescent’s gender is related to the effectiveness of this style of Jewish parenting in the transmission of ethnic identity still needs to be examined.

Lenient. Finally, this subcode of parenting behavior that we have labeled lenient most closely resembles Baumrind’s (1991) permissive or nondirective style of parenting. These parents were more responsive than demanding, were lenient and tended to avoid confrontation with their teenagers about Jewish practices. One father reported, “Right now it’s fun, sports, and school and my wife and I are okay with that . . . we encourage whatever participation he wants to have in Jewish activities, but we don’t push him. Our rule is once children learn Hebrew and do the Bar Mitzvah, then they can choose how they’d like to continue or discontinue Jewish activities” (005 Religious father about his 16-year-old son). Another father stated, “We do what’s best for our children. . . . We think the key thing is to be a good person and ceremonial things are less important than being a good person . . . we don’t put any pressure on our kids to do things they don’t want to do. . . . We’re much more relaxed with that than other families are” (033 Mixed father about his two sons, who are 14 and 15 years old).

This style of Jewish parenting could be associated with low levels of affinity for Jewish ethnic identity; however, a longitudinal study of these teenagers would need to be conducted in order to draw any conclusions because the ethnic identity development of the teenagers in this subsample is in transition. Of
the 14 families, 4 used this style of Jewish parenting. There were one religious and 3 mixed families who were categorized as lenient. Of the 6 teenagers in these families (5 boys and 1 girl), only one male teenager had a positive affinity for Judaism and was categorized in the moratorium stage. The other 4 teenagers all had low levels of affinity and were categorized in either the unexamined (3 of the teenagers) or in the moratorium stage.

Parental Role Models

The final category, parental role models, refers to the ways in which parents’ attitudes and behaviors differentially affect male and female teenagers’ ethnic identity development. Under this main category are three subcodes: (a) united parental front, (b) compromise, and (c) gender role models.

United parental front. Regardless of their ethnic affiliation (religious, cultural, mixed), this small sample of Jewish families appeared to agree that the optimal parental role model for the transmission of ethnic identity is one in which both parents display a united parental front, where Jewish practices both in the home and outside the home are done together. Parents who practice together, as well as many of the parents who do not, believe that this is the best way to ensure the positive transmission of Jewish ethnic identity. One father reported, “My wife and I go to Jewish activities together, it’s important to do so as a family and really live a Jewish life to run less risk of a child or teenager rejecting Judaism.” (007 Cultural father). Another father stated, “It’s easy to give the kids a Jewish identity . . . what’s difficult is for the parents to have the continuous knowledge and interest, because if Judaism doesn’t mean anything to both parents, it makes it much harder. . . . So if you want your kids to fully embrace Judaism, you have to both live a Jewish life” (011 Cultural father).

Some parents are both lenient in their Jewish parenting practices, whereas other families have one parent (typically the mother) who encourages Jewish ethnic identity and the other (typically the father) who models a lack of interest in Jewish practices. Of the 14 families interviewed, 10 parents displayed a united parental front in which both parents supported a common way of approaching Jewish practices. Out of those 10 sets of parents, 11 of their teenagers were in the moratorium stage of ethnic identity. Even though some of these parents were united in not encouraging Jewish practices inside and outside the home, this consistent and united parental front about Jewish ethnic identity could have a positive effect on ethnic identity development.

Four of the families did not display a united parental front. In these families the mother encouraged Jewish practices in their teenagers, but the father did not. Four of the teenagers from these families were in the unexamined stage and one teenager was in the low-moratorium stage. In one of these four families, the female teenager was in the moratorium stage but her brother, who was 12 years old and preparing for his Bar Mitzvah at the time of this second interview, was clearly in the unexamined stage.

Compromise. In the four families in which the mother encouraged Jewish practices but the father did not, the parents detailed a compromise they had arrived at in raising their children. A mother stated, “I take all the responsibility for maintaining a Jewish home, so I feel a lot of guilt when I don’t hear my son know how to express what it means for him to be Jewish. . . . I compromised with my husband and we agreed if it doesn’t mean something to him, he shouldn’t have to go to Temple with me” (027 Cultural mother about the responses from her 12-year-old son). Another mother stated, “It’s more of an intermarriage marriage is a compromise. . . . I’m much more traditional and I like all the Jewish holidays, I keep kosher and they (father and 2 teenaged boys) are ready to mutiny” (020 Religious mother).

Gender role models. Families in this study seem to agree that sons look to their fathers and daughters look toward their mothers as role models for ethnic identity. A mother stated, “I think the boys look more at their dad as their role model. . . . My sons were always thrilled that their dad was home to keep them company when they didn’t go to Temple on the high holidays. . . . He gave them an out. . . . I think if we had both gone to Temple, it would be different now with the boys” (020 Religious mother). A father reported, “I’m not that religious a person, so perhaps that’s why my younger son is not as tuned into Judaism. I don’t go with them to Temple every week. I think it definitely allowed my son to be less identified” (033 Mixed father about his 14-year-old son not doing his Bar Mitzvah). A daughter stated, “I
think it affects us . . . my mom is always trying to get us to go. On Yom Kippur, instead of staying in Temple and fasting all day, my father stays home with my brother. So that's how he affects us, my brother and me” (027 Cultural, 16-year-old daughter).

DISCUSSION

This follow-up qualitative study was specifically designed to develop a descriptive understanding of parenting practices and the transmission of ethnic identity. Because of the qualitative approach and theoretical sampling used in this study, it was never our intention to generalize these findings to other Jewish families and especially not to other ethnic groups. Because the first study was not specifically designed to address parenting practices (Semans & Stone Fish, 2000), a comparison of parenting practices over time could not be done with this particular subsample of Jewish teenagers from the first study. Therefore, the findings do not allow the researchers to make any assumptions about causality, as there is also a possibility that adolescents' evolving ethnic identity can shape parenting practices. For example, religiously identified parents might have children who are reluctant to participate in religious practices. These particular parents might have to adapt the way they parent to encourage their children's involvement, perhaps using more direct or clear parenting practices. Although there are limitations in the study, certain patterns or associations emerged from the data that are worthy of discussion and underscore fruitful avenues for future research.

This study lends some support to Phinney’s (1993) findings of ethnic identity development with White minority adolescents. All the parents and teenagers in this study stated that part of adolescent development is an assertion of independence as well as possibly questioning and rejecting parts of their Jewish heritage. This stage seems similar to Phinney’s (1993) moratorium stage of ethnic identity development. More than one-half of the teenagers in this study were categorized in the moratorium stage, as they appeared to be exploring and questioning their Jewish beliefs. In addition, eight of the teenagers in this sample represented the unexamined stage, given that they seemed to have a lack of interest in or knowledge about their ethnic identity. Finally, another category—multiethnic—also emerged from the data, as teenagers from mixed families seemed to have a different conceptualization of their evolving ethnic identity.

Although Phinney (1996) and many other identity researchers (e.g., Marcia, 1980) have asserted that the strongest identity, including ethnic identity, is that which emerges through an active search by the individual, this way of thinking is immersed in a Western understanding of identity. Although individuation is viewed as the optimal path to identity development in some cultures, this is ethnocentric and biased when viewed in the context of other cultures across the world. In many cultures, passive acceptance of ethnic identity can also lead to optimal identity development in members of those societies. Therefore, it is important to contextualize this study and others like it as being conducted with a more Eurocentric definition of identity development, so that alternative and more culturally sensitive definitions of attaining healthy ethnic identity are not ignored as possibilities.

This study also generated ideas about possible parenting practices that could influence the transmission of ethnic identity to teenagers (Baumrind, 1991). Clear expectations, a type of authoritative parenting, could be associated with the positive transmission of Jewish ethnic identity. This type of parenting style was direct, clear and more actively engaged in this sample of Jewish parents as they made it very clear to their teenagers their expectations for participation in Jewish activities both at home and in the community. These parents also spoke more often to their teenagers about the importance of Jewish practices throughout the interviews. As the findings revealed, 4 of the 14 families used this style of Jewish parenting and the five teenagers in these families seemed to have the highest affinity for Judaism as well as being in the moratorium stage of ethnic identity, an active exploration of one’s ethnicity.

Both the bargaining and the lenient styles (which resemble the permissive or nondirective style established by Baumrind) seemed to be the least effective in the transmission of Jewish ethnic identity in this small sample. Parents who used a bargaining style would allow their teenagers not to be part of Jewish activities if their teenagers had a good excuse and mentioned these Jewish-centered activities less during the interviews. Likewise, the lenient parents rarely mentioned Jewish activities to their teenagers in the interviews and appeared to let their teenagers choose what involvement they desired. These parents were
less direct and more passive in their communication with their teenagers.

Finally, the verbal hint style of Jewish parenting appeared to be somewhat effective for some of the teenagers, suggesting that particular teenagers might benefit from this style of Jewish parenting, whereas others might not. These parents seemed to be more direct and active than the bargaining or lenient parents, but less direct and less active than parents with clear expectations. It is interesting to note that the authoritarian style of parenting appears to be absent in our small sample of Jewish families, which may offer additional support for Chao’s (1994) critique of Baumrind’s typologies.

Although some interesting patterns emerged from the data, it is important to emphasize that these patterns were only demonstrated in this small sample of White Jewish families. White Jewish adolescents in our study and non-White Jewish teenagers in America will likely have different experiences regarding ethnic identity development. Non-White Jewish adolescents, because they may be readily identified by their physical appearance (i.e., dress or skin color), could experience discrimination more frequently than White Jewish adolescents because of the history of racism and power differentials in the United States. Other limitations in the study are due to not measuring some key parenting or family variables that might influence ethnic identity development and the transmission of ethnic identity from parents to teenagers. Variables such as quality of relationships among family members, affiliation, warmth, and the degree of marital harmony or conflict between parents could significantly influence how ethnic identity is transmitted to the next generation. Although this study cannot answer these salient questions, future studies should be conducted to explore the association between the quality of relationships in the family and ethnic identity development, and to gather information from other ethnic minority groups, both White and non-White.

Another major pattern that emerged from this study highlights having a united parental front and parental gender role modeling for the transmission of ethnic identity. The optimal parental role model for the transmission of Jewish ethnic identity could be one in which both of the parents display similar attitudes and behaviors about Jewish ethnic identity, in particular a strong Jewish ethnic identity and a sense of pride. In addition, the mothers in this study are more likely to be the “ethnic identity keepers” in these families. In those families in which the fathers did not model strong Jewish ethnic identity, the teenaged sons seemed to have a lower Jewish identification than those families in which the fathers were positive role models for participating in Jewish ethnic practices both at home and in the community.

Overall, this follow-up qualitative study suggests that a complex constellation of individual and interpersonal factors seem to intertwine in different ways that help shape and influence the development of ethnic identity in this sample of Jewish teenagers. These findings illustrate how the individual differences of Jewish teenagers in this sample (affinity for Judaism, siblings, gender), parents’ Jewish identification (united parental front, compromise, gender role models) and socialization practices (clear expectations, bargaining, verbal hints, lenient) might shape their evolving ethnic identity development (independence, unexamined, moratorium, multiethnic).

Clinical Implications

This study reminds us that when working with teenagers in therapy, individual differences remain crucial variables informing treatment. Because a child is raised in a family with a particular form of religious, cultural, or spiritual practice does not imply that the teenagers will have the same feelings about these influences as the rest of their family members. It might be important to ask all family members to share their perspectives on the significance of ethnicity in their lives. That boys and their fathers in our study are less likely to be involved in Jewish ritual and ethnic identification may also have clinical implications. Therapists could ask families who are searching for some common ground to explore ethnic ritual with an eye toward gender differences.

Using the findings from this study, therapists can also talk with clients about ways to engage their children in the process of ethnic identity through clear expectations as opposed to rigid adherence to unrealistic expectations or no expectations at all. Therapists can guide parents toward an exploration of the ways in which ethnicity, religion, and spirituality are resources in their own lives. They can then help parents have conversations in the family about ethnic practices that become ritualized in a clear and flexible way.
Future Research

Interesting patterns emerged from this qualitative study that are worthy of future research. The idea that specific parenting practices could encourage or inhibit ethnic identity has important child rearing implications. Researchers could identify other ethnic groups and ask similar questions. Research could also focus more extensively on Baumrind’s (1991) typology in Jewish families as well as other ethnic groups and assess, using a much larger sample, whether authoritative practices do, in fact, enhance the transmission of ethnic identity.

The trend toward gender role identification in ethnic identity development may also be a worthy research endeavor. In a larger study of Jewish families (Semans & Stone Fish, 2000), we found that mothers are more likely to determine Jewish practices in the family. If fathers are not involved in the dissemination of Jewish culture in the home, what impact does this have on Jewish males? A study that links gender modeling and ethnic identity, using a larger sample, would be a fruitful endeavor. It would also be interesting to compare different ethnic groups as we look at the different ways in which boys and girls may be influenced.

In summary, this qualitative study suggests that what parents do in the family seems to have an effect on the pride and positive feelings that these Jewish teenagers have about their ethnic identity. We have targeted a stage (middle-to-late adolescence) in which questioning identity, including ethnic identity, is most likely to occur. It remains to be seen and studied how particular types of parenting practices moderate subsequent ethnic identity in both non-White and White ethnic groups in this country.

REFERENCES