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In Search of a New Approach to Strictness Theory: Social Identity and the Growth of Jewish Denominations in the United States

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The needs of religious consumers are ingrained in the functioning of religious organisations. According to the theory of secularisation, dominant in sociology in the 1960s and 1970s, the modern denominations that are adjusted to the needs of contemporary people and capable of functioning in a modernised society should be the most successful.[1] A corresponding theory was the status theory, developed at the same time in American academic circles. The authors associated with the latter theory assumed that individuals search for religious affiliations that guarantee them a high status in society. According to this theory, so-called mainstream denominations should gain in popularity.[2] However, these assumptions were questioned in the early 1970s, when Dean M. Kelley suggested that in contemporary American society conservative denominations were the ones that flourished the most.[3] Two decades later, the concept was taken up again by authors associated with the economic paradigm.[4] Kelley's conclusion inspired them to develop the theory of strictness. According to this theory, the driving factor behind the development of conservative denominations is strict regulations, i.e. costly norms that govern the behaviour of believers and at the same time distinguish a community on the religious market.

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1 Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Random House 1967; Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982.

2 Charles Y. Glock – Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, Chicago: Rand McNally Company 1965.

3 Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion*, Macon: Mercer University Press 1972.

4 See Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong", *American Journal of Sociology* 99/5, 1994, 1180-1211; Pedro P. Barros – Nuno M. Garoupa, "An Economic Theory of Church Strictness", *Economic Journal* 112/481, 2002, 559-576.

This theory is discussed in this article. I believe that strictness is worth analysing from a broader perspective, in this case represented by the theory of social identity. In such a context, strict regulations are norms, internalised by individuals and treated by them as part of their self-concept, that highlight similarities between members of a given group and distinguish it from other social groups. Having assumed this perspective, I focused on strict regulations identifiable in Judaism. Thus, in an attempt to verify the basic assumptions of the theory of strictness, I analysed data concerning the American Jewish community, relating, among other things, to the religious affiliation of its members.

I start my deliberations with theoretical issues. Then, I move on to methodological assumptions and formulate two hypotheses and a research question. Next, I present the results of my analysis and their interpretations.

The theory of strictness

In 1972, Kelley published a book titled *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*. He observed that the trend in the United States since the 1950s for mainstream Protestant churches had been to lose their members, while the number of members of conservative denominations had been growing. According to Kelley, the source of the latter's success lay in the demands they imposed on the faithful. Liberal churches are characterised by pluralism of opinions and attitudes, openness to dialogue and tolerance of human weaknesses. Conservative denominations, on the other hand, are characterised as dogmatic by Kelley. These churches condemn any deviation from orthodoxy and their members avoid non-members. Typically, conservative denominations feature some "eccentric" traits, which Kelley called strict regulations, concerning, among others, their diet, appearance, clothes or even speech. These traits single out the members of a given denomination from the society, or even isolate them from their environment. According to Kelley, this is what makes conservative denominations "strong churches". He asserts that strict regulations result in a growing level of religious engagement among the members of a given congregation.[5]

Kelley's publication triggered heated discussion. On one hand, it was appreciated by conservatively oriented researchers and religious activists.[6]

5 D. M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*..., 79-84.

6 See Peter C. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*, Glendale: Regal Books 1977; George G. Hunter, *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1979; Lyle E. Schaller, *Effective Church Planning*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1979.

On the other hand, there were voices questioning Kelley's conclusions.[7] Critics claimed that empirical data did not prove the strictness hypothesis. However, their analyses focused only on individual denominations. They analysed whether particular more conservative congregations experienced greater growth in the number of members than the less strict ones. Critics also highlighted other factors that, in their opinion, discredited Kelley's concept. It was suggested that the growing number of believers in conservative churches resulted from a high birth rate among their members.[8] Others claimed that the main factor influencing the development of strict denominations was theology that placed emphasis on involvement and evangelisation.[9]

Kelley's conclusions were also the focal point for Laurence Iannaccone. From the perspective of rational choice theory, they were paradoxical. Indeed, conservative denominations enjoyed popularity even though belonging to them was associated with major costs. In an attempt to solve this dilemma, Iannaccone came to the conclusion that satisfaction in the practice of a religion depended on the engagement of both the individual and the entire community of the faithful. However, the externalisation of the benefits of such practice was somewhat problematic. Beneficiaries of religious commitment are not only those who contribute to the creation of religious experiences and emotions to the largest extent by participating regularly in religious services, but also irregularly practising people who are interested in experiencing religious satisfaction without larger contribution of their own. As a result, the activity of those who commit themselves the most to a community of believers gradually diminishes. Churches can prevent this by introducing strict regulations. The basic role

7 See Reginald W. Bibby, "Why Conservative Churches Really Are Growing: Kelley Revisited", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17/2, 1978, 129-137; Gary D. Bouma, "The Real Reason One Conservative Church Grew", *Review of Religious Research* 20/2, 1979, 127-137; Dean R. Hoge – David A. Roozen, *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978*, New York: Pilgrim Press 1979; Everett L. Perry – Dean R. Hoge, "Faith Priorities of Pastor and Laity as a Factor in the Growth or Decline of Presbyterian Congregations", *Review of Religious Research* 22/3, 1981, 221-232; Reginald W. Bibby – Martin Brinkerhoff, "Circulation of Saints Revisited: A Longitudinal Look at Conservative Church Growth", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22/3, 1983, 253-262; William McKinney – Dean R. Hoge, "Community and Congregational Factors in the Growth and Decline of Protestant Churches", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22/1, 1983, 51-66.

8 See Jeremy N. Thomas – David V. A. Olson, "Testing the Strictness Thesis and Competing Theories of Congregational Growth", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49/4, 2010, 619-639.

9 Penny Long Marler – C. Kirk Hadaway, "New Church Development and Denominational Growth (1950-1988): Symptom or Cause?", in: David A. Roozen – C. Kirk Hadaway (eds.), *Church and Denominational Growth*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1993, 47-86.

in this process is played by prohibitions concerning alternative activities in terms of religion. Thus, strict regulations function as a kind of entry fee. On one hand, they discourage those not seriously interested in membership in a community. On the other, such restrictions strengthen the bonds within a congregation and increase the engagement of believers and the level of religious satisfaction they experience. However, Iannaccone observed that strictness had its limits. Excessive demands could prove too difficult to fulfil.[10] In an article entitled "Religion Resources and Church Growth" (1995), Iannaccone, Daniel V. A. Olson and Rodney Stark stated that the exclusion of "free riders" (i.e. those who use the resources and products of the religious community in spite of their lack of commitment to the community) results in a surplus of resources, particularly financial resources, and time spent by believers for the benefit of the Church. These resources are used in developing programmes addressed to the members of a community or for evangelising activities focused on attracting new followers.[11]

Meanwhile, Stark and Roger Finke, in a book entitled *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (2000), observed that the denominations existing on the religious market formed a kind of continuum; their position along the continuum depended on the level of tension with the surrounding environment. On one end of the continuum were ultra-liberal; on the other, ultra-strict denominations. The space between them was occupied by liberal, moderate, conservative, and strict denominations. This positioning was linked with the demand for specific denominations. The most popular were the religions in the centre of the continuum (moderate and conservative). The lowest demand existed for denominations located on the extremes (ultra-liberal and ultra-strict).[12] By manipulating the tensions between themselves and the surrounding environment, churches moved to other market niches. This process involved, among others, strict regulations. Their implementation caused mainstream denominations to lose their liberal character. This was accompanied by the increasing engagement of believers and growth in the number of members of a particular church. Researchers studied this phenomenon using the example of American Methodism.[13] The structure of the religious market and its impact on the development of a given denomination was also analysed by

10 L. R. Iannaccone, *Why Strict Churches*..., 1201-1203.

11 Laurence R. Iannaccone – Daniel V. A. Olson – Rodney Stark, "Religious Resources and Church Growth", *Social Forces* 74/2, 1995, 705-731.

12 Rodney Stark – Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press 2000.

13 Roger Finke – Rodney Stark, "The New Holy Clubs: Resting Church-to-Sect Propositions", *Sociology of Religion* 62/2, 2001, 175-189.

Todd W. Ferguson. He noted that denominations wishing to increase the number of their members should manage strict regulations in such a way that the costs of observing them were neither too low nor too high. Based on the conclusions of his analysis, Ferguson described an optimal level of strictness. It enables a given denomination to access the largest market niche comprising believers whose expectations as to strict regulations are moderate.[14]

The theory of strictness, developed by representatives of the economic approach, was criticised by some authors. Its basic assumptions were not confirmed by empirical research conducted by Joseph B. Tamney and Steven D. Johnson[15] or by Tamney, Johnson, Kevin McElmurry, and George Saunders.[16] A correlation between costly demands made on the faithful and the development of church structures was observed only in the case of conservative working-class congregations. Tamney, who interviewed some of their representatives, suggested, however, that their popularity was not due as much to their strictness as to the ambience of church services.[17] Michael McBride even claimed that certain denominations needed so-called free riders.[18] On the other hand, Jeremy N. Thomas and Daniel V. A. Olson empirically verified the theory in question as well as opinions critical of it, according to which the reasons behind the growth of a congregation are, for example, demographic factors or evangelical theology.[19] Their analysis, nevertheless, suggests that strictness has a positive and direct impact on congregational strength and growth.[20]

14 Todd W. Ferguson, "The Optimal Level of Strictness and Congregational Growth", *Religions* 5/3, 2014, 703-719.

15 Joseph B. Tamney – Stephen D. Johnson, "A Research Note on the Free-Ride Issue", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36/1, 1997, 104-108.

16 Joseph B. Tamney – Stephen D. Johnson – Kevin McElmurry – George Saunders, "Strictness and Congregational Growth in Middletown", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42/3, 2003, 363-375.

17 Joseph B. Tamney, "Does Strictness Explain the Appeal of Working Class Conservative Protestant Congregations?", *Sociology of Religion* 66/3, 2005, 283-302.

18 Michael McBride, "Club Mormon: Free-Riders, Monitoring and Exclusion in the LDS Church", *Rationality and Society* 19/4, 2007, 395-424.

19 Jeremy N. Thomas – Daniel V. A. Olson, "Testing the Strictness Thesis and Competing Theories of Congregational Growth", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49/4, 2010, 619-639.

20 By congregational strength, the authors mean its ability to accumulate resources. When measuring this particular variable, they analysed the number of hours members spent on voluntary work for their congregation as well as the amount of money they donated to it. Congregational growth means, according to the authors, growth in the number of members. They measured the latter variable based on data concerning the number of persons regularly attending worship services. See J. N. Thomas – D. V. A. Olson, "Testing the Strictness Thesis…", 627-628.

To sum up discussions on the above-mentioned theory, it seems that two issues are rarely discussed. First of all, an in-depth analysis of what strictness is, is lacking. Most authors only list the regulations that distinguish a given religious community. Secondly, the focus of attention is on the strictness characterising, mainly, particular Protestant denominations. What is the situation then with other religious traditions? Both these issues are the starting point for the analysis whose results are presented in this article. I focused on Judaism, which seems interesting in the context of deliberations on strictness at least for two reasons: besides being a tradition different from Protestantism, it also – similar to Protestant denominations – operates on the pluralistic American religious market, where different streams of Judaism compete with one another for members.[21] In addition, I decided to look at the phenomenon of strictness from the perspective of social identity theory. Although the literature on the subject refers to the role of identity in the growth of denominations, both issues of identity and strictness have rarely been considered together[22] and the aforementioned theory has not been used in these analyses so far. Hence, I would like to begin my considerations with an explanation of what strictness is and what function it fulfils in the sphere of Judaism, or more broadly within the Jewish community, and with a presentation of the primary methodological assumptions of my analysis.

Methodological assumptions

The starting point for deliberations on what strictness is and what function it has is the theory of social identity developed by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner.[23] This theory assumes that the determinant of the behaviour of an individual, including his or her willingness to observe strict regulations, is social identity developed as a result of the individual's affiliation with a social group.[24] Michael A. Hogg and Scott A. Reid, when

21 In other words, a given Jewish denomination competes with other Jewish denominations for Jewish religious consumers.

22 Christian Smith provided an interpretation of strictness in connection to the identity theory. According to him, thanks to the strict beliefs and practices, American evangelicalism has created a subcultural identity, which is the key for understanding its growing importance on the American religious market. See Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998.

23 Henri Tajfel – John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", in: William G. Austin – Stephen Worchel (eds.), *Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey: Brooks – Cole 1979, 33-47; Henri Tajfel – John C. Turner, "The Social Identity of Intergroup Relations", in: Stephen Worchel – William G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Chicago: Nelson Hall 1986, 7-24.

24 See H. Tajfel – J. C. Turner, "The Social Identity of Intergroup Relations…", 15.

analysing the process, note that self-concept is developed as a result of internalisation of a certain group prototype created by individuals who perceive themselves as members of the same social category.[25] The prototype is a blurred set, rather than an organised list of properties defining a group and distinguishing it from other groups. It constitutes cognitive representation of a given social category. The process of identity development is made possible by the fact that a group prototype enables categorisation of self, which segments and organises the social environment in which an individual functions. The prototype, if shared by members of a given social category, comprises cognitive representations of group norms that highlight similarities between members of the group and distinguish it from other social categories. Internalised by an individual, group norms are no longer considered to be external to self, becoming a part of one's social identity. Strongly connected with self-concept, such group norms are prescriptive in nature, as they define, determine and evaluate who we are. The prescriptive force of a prototype and its constituent group norms becomes stronger the more important an in-group is for an individual, the stronger the individual identifies him- or herself with it, and the more he or she wants to be accepted by its members.[26] Turner, Margaret S. Wetherell and Hogg note that behaviour is also affected by out-group norms which may imply in-group norms within a group prototype.[27]

What are strict regulations then? In light of what has been presented above, they should be understood as standards governing the behaviour of representatives of the given ingroup and, at the same time, setting them apart from members of reference groups important to them (outgroups). In other words, in the social identity formation process it becomes necessary to define common characteristics of members of the given group that also set it apart from its social environment. Restrictions can play an important role here by establishing clear borders between the ingroup and outgroups.

Four things should be explained with reference to this definition. First of all, strict regulations that an individual is obliged to observe may differentiate him or her permanently, if such norms concern everyday (or sufficiently frequent) activities, or are performed occasionally (e.g. during holiday celebrations). Secondly, norms depend on the context. They re-

25 Michael E. Hogg – Scott A. Reid, "Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and the Communication of Group Norms", *Communication Theory* 16/1, 2006, 7-30. See also John C. Turner – Michael E. Hogg – Penelope J. Oakes – Stephen D. Reicher – Margaret S. Wetherell, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell 1987, 42-67.

26 M. E. Hogg – S. A. Reid, "Social Identity, Self-Categorization…", 11-13.

27 John C. Turner – Margaret S. Wetherell – Michael A. Hogg, "Referent informational influence and group polarization", *British Journal of Social Psychology* 28/2, 1989, 135-147.

main strict regulations for as long as the outgroups that a given group interacts with do not pay attention to them or observe them in a direct way. Thirdly, such norms need not be religious in nature. For example, a strict regulation is the obligation to use specific language by members of certain gangs. Such language emphasises their membership in a criminal group and at the same time distinguishes the group from the rest of the society. Fourthly, respecting norms obviously depends on how strongly an individual identifies him or herself with a given community (if it is a salient group for him or her), and to some extent also on how the need to observe them is justified.

When relating these deliberations to Judaism, it should be noted that this is a religious tradition cultivated by a single nation. Ethnic and religious identities are strongly linked here, though they do not always coincide.[28] In this case, strict regulations are religious norms that clearly differentiate Jews from non-Jews. They include, among other things, rules concerning kosher food and observance of the Sabbath (such as not travelling or touching money), fasting on Yom Kippur, etc.[29] In this context, the contemporary Jewish community consists of a number of subcategories constituting a continuum. On one end are Secular Jews, who usually reject or only occasionally observe these norms. Then, there are progressive denominations, including Liberal, Reconstructionist and Reform Jews. Next to them is moderate, Conservative Judaism. On the other end of the continuum are ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox denominations that are the most insistent on their members observing strict norms.

The problem of strictness in Judaism or – more broadly – in the Jewish community, inspired me to identify three areas of interest. My deliberations on them directly correspond to the theory of strictness and it seems that they enable verification of the theory. First of all, I focused on the relationship between the feeling of being Jewish and membership in a strict, Orthodox denomination. In this case, I decided to make the following hypothesis:

28 Most of the American Jewish community are Secular Jews who sometimes feel cultural affiliation with Judaism but most often define their identity in ethnic categories. See Pew Research Center, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews" [online], <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-full-report-for-web.pdf>, 1 October 2013 [22 June 2017], 8-9, 23.

29 Some of these norms also concern language. Orthodox circles tend to use Yiddish or a specific slang combining English and Yiddish words. See Sarah B. Benor, "*Mensch, Bentsh*, and *Balagan*: Variation in the American Jewish Linguistic Repertoire", *Language and Communication* 31/2, 2011, 141-154.

Hypothesis I: Individuals who are members of a strict (Orthodox) denomination more strongly identify themselves with their Jewishness than representatives of non-strict denominations or Secular Jews.

The second problem that seemed important to me in the context of these deliberations is what factors actually drive an individual to invest his or her resources in the group he or she identifies with. In this case, I decided to formulate the following research question:

Research question I: Does the willingness to support various organisations of the Jewish society, including religious ones, result more from the fact that an individual identifies him or herself with Jewishness or rather from belonging to a specific (strict or non-strict) denomination?

The last area of my interest is the changes taking place in the respective subcategories of the Jewish community. According to the theory of strictness, those strict denominations that not only more effectively remove "free riders" from religious communities but also more successfully encourage their members to donate their resources (time or money) should be highly attractive on the religious market. However, such a view seems doubtful. Looking at the problem from the perspective of the theory of social identity, it should be noted that some people tend to strongly identify themselves with a specific group and consequently categorise the social world only on the basis of its prototypes (ingroup and outgroups), whereas others belong to many different communities.[30] In a situation of functional diversity of the social system, where people play many different social roles, it is very unlikely that many individuals will decide to belong to strict groups that strongly categorise their perception of the world and determine their behaviour to such a large extent. Thus, the following hypothesis seems justified:

Hypothesis II: The Orthodox denomination is not very attractive for non-Orthodox Jews. The percentage of new members in Orthodox denominations is lower than in more liberal denominations.

In order to verify both hypotheses and answer my question, I used the data collected by Pew Research in the survey "A Portrait of Jewish Americans", conducted in 2013 by means of a computer assisted telephone

30 Obviously, there are certain social factors that may determine the choice of a specific strategy. For example, if the existence of an individual or one of the groups he or she belongs to is threatened, then the individual tends to more strongly identify him- or herself with the group. See Niels P. Christensen – Hank Rothgerber – Wendy Wood – David C. Matz, "Social Norms and Identity Relevance: A Motivational Approach to Normative Behavior", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, 2004, 1295-1309; Renate Ysseldyk – Kimberly Matheson – Hymie Anisman, "Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion from Social Identity Perspective", *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14/1, 2010, 60-71.

interview.[31] The objects of the survey were the attitudes, views, beliefs, practices, and experiences of members of the Jewish community in the United States. In total, 4,745 respondents were interviewed. It should be noted that I excluded answers given by: (a) ethnic Jews of different religious affiliations than Judaism (e.g. Christianity);[32] (b) persons who identified themselves as Messianic Jews.[33] In addition, I excluded those Jews whom I could not directly associate with any of the subcategories defined by me (Reform, Conservative or Orthodox denominations, or Secular Jews). In the end, I analysed the answers of 4,283 respondents.[34]

Results and the verification of the hypotheses

At the beginning, I focused on my first hypothesis. In order to test it, I developed a scale to measure the intensity of respondents' identification with their Jewishness on the basis of three questions included in the survey. In the first of these questions (QE9), respondents were asked to comment on the following statements: (a) "I am proud to be Jewish"; (b) "I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people", (c) "I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world". The respondents could choose one of the following options: "agree", "disa-

31 For more information, see the website of Pew Research Center, especially <http://www.pewforum.org/datasets/> and <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

32 The status of such individuals is ambiguous. For example, according to the Israeli Law of Return, a Jew is a person whose mother is or was Jewish or who converted to Judaism and does not practise any other religion (Article 4b, Amendment 5730/1970 to the Law of Return). This definition partly coincides with the approach adopted in this research.

33 This movement triggers strong emotions in the context of Judaism. However, most authors who deal with this issue claim that this movement is actually closer to Protestantism. See Pauline Kollontai, "Messianic Jews and Jewish Identity", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3, 2004, 195-205; ead., "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Case of Messianic Jews", *Journal of Religion and Society* 8, 2006, 1-9; Faydra L. Shapiro, "The Messiah and Rabbi Jesus: Policing the Jewish-Christian Border in Christian Zionism", *Journal of Culture and Religion* 12/4, 2011, 463-477.

34 The study did not cover respondents who defined their religious affiliation in the following manner: "Moderate" (N=3), "Contemporary/Open minded" (N=5), "Sephardic" (N=2), "Kabballah" (N=2), "African Hebrew Israelite" (N=3), "Observant" (N=2), "Traditional" (N=14), "Mix Conservative/Reform" (N=9), "Mix Conservative/Orthodox" (N=6), "Mix Conservative/Reform/Traditional" (N=1), "Other mix of Jewish denominations" (N=1), "Messianic Jew" (N=37), "Other Christian" (N=130), "Mix of Christianity/non-Christian faith" (N=10), "Unitarian" (N=7), "Pagan" (N=3), "Buddhist" (N=3), "Muslim" (N=3), "Other non-Jewish, non-Christian religion" (N=6), "Mix of non-Christian religions" (N=6), "Mix of non-Christian faith and Judaism" (N=1), "Other" (N=116), "Not Jewish" (N=5), "Don't know/refused" (N=87).

gree" (or "don't know"). The second question (QH5b) was "How important is being Jewish in your life?" with the following answers: "very important", "somewhat important", "not too important", "not at all important" (or "don't know"). The third question (QE11) was: "How many of your close friends are Jewish?" In this case, respondents were offered the following answers: "all of them", "most of them", "some of them", "hardly any of them" (or options disregarded by the pollster, i.e. "none of them", "don't know"). Based on these three questions, I created a two-level scale. Each of the respondents' answers was coded either as 0, when the respondent's identification with being Jewish was low or moderate, or as 1, when the identification was strong.[35] The resulting scale proved to be reliable (the value of Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.710$). The average value that a respondent could obtain ranged from 0 to 1.

When verifying hypothesis I, I decided to apply the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). I assumed that the level of identification with Jewishness would be higher among members of the Orthodox denomination than among Secular Jews or Jews belonging to non-strict denominations (Reform or Conservative). The results of this analysis confirmed hypothesis I. A statistically significant effect of respondents' affiliation with a specific denomination was obtained:[36] $F(3,4279) = 563.734$ ($p<0.001$). The average level of identification with being Jewish is higher among representatives of the Orthodox denomination (MD = 0.9427) than among Secular Jews (MD = 0.4611), representatives of the Reform denomination (MD=0.6352), or the Conservative denomination (MD=0.7346). Detailed data concerning this issue are presented in Table 1.

Denomination	N	Mean	SD	Standard error	95% confidence intervals	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Conservative Jews	862	0.7346	0.24686	0.00841	0.7181	0.7511
Orthodox Jews	569	0.9427	0.14249	0.00597	0.9310	0.9544
Reform Jews	1396	0.6352	0.25695	0.00688	0.6218	0.6487
Secular Jews	1456	0.4611	0.27888	0.00731	0.4468	0.4755

Tab. 1. Average level of identification with being Jewish among members of respective denominations and Secular Jews.

35 Responses were coded as 1, if respondents chose the following options: (a) "agree" in the case of question E9; (b) "very important" in the case of question H5b; (c) "all of them" and "most of them" in the case of question E11.

36 In the analysis, respondents describing themselves as Secular Jews were treated as representatives of a separate "denomination".

Next, I focused on answering the research question. I analysed factors that determined whether an individual donated resources to a synagogue or Jewish organisation. Since the survey contained only one question concerning this issue, relating to financial resources, I limited my analysis to this particular area. The question (QE10) was as follows: "In 2012, did you make a financial donation to any Jewish charity or cause, such as synagogue, Jewish school, or a group supporting Israel?" Respondents could choose one of the following options: "yes" or "no" (or "don't know").

Based on this question, I created a dependent variable in the regression equation. The following two values were assumed: 0 – if the respondent did not make a financial donation to any of the organisations listed in the question in the year 2012, and 1 – if the respondent did make such a donation in 2012. Also, I included four explanatory variables in the equation. In the context of the above problem, the most important of them are *belonging to a restrictive denomination* and *identifying oneself with being Jewish.* The first variable had two values: 0 – if the respondent was a Secular Jew or declared affiliation with a Reform or Conservative denomination; 1 – if the respondent was a member of the Orthodox denomination. In the second case, I used the above-mentioned scale. Value 0 meant low or moderate identification of the respondent with Jewishness, whereas 1 stood for a strong identification. The other explanatory variables used in the analysis included age and income. The regression equation looked as follows:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4, \text{ where:}$$

y – financial donation in 2012 to a synagogue, Jewish school, or a group supporting Israel;
x_1 – membership in a strict denomination;
x_2 – identification with being Jewish;
x_3 – age;
x_4 – income.

In the analysis, I decided that the final model may only contain the explanatory variables that have a major impact on the response variable. Thus, I applied the backward elimination method. The results of analysis are presented in Table 2.

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant variable	- 0.264	0.039	–	- 6.813	0.001
Membership in a strict denomination	0.068	0.023	0.060	2.958	0.003
Identification with being Jewish	0.817	0.033	0.483	25.059	0.001
Age	0.003	0.000	0.136	7.486	0.001
Income	0.033	0.003	0.183	10.368	0.001

Tab. 2. Results of multiple regression analysis for financial donation as the response variable.

As the table suggests, all the explanatory variables used in the regression equation proved predictive of the response variable. The value of the determination factor was $R^2 = 0.297$. This means that the level of model adjustment to the data is average.[37] If we include the respective factors in the equation, it looks as follows:

$$y = -0.264 + 0.068x_1 + 0.817x_2 + 0.003x_3 + 0.033x_4$$

If the object of our analysis is the value of the beta coefficient, then we will see that the response variable is mainly affected by the level of respondent's identification with being Jewish. This leads to a conclusion that is at the same time a response to the question posed in this analysis. Out of the two analysed factors, financial donations to a synagogue, Jewish school, or a group supporting Israel depend mainly on the respondent's identification with being Jewish rather than his or her membership in a strict denomination.

The final step in my research was verification of hypothesis II. According to the theory discussed in this article, strict denominations are attractive for other participants in the religious market chiefly because they ensure gratifications that rarely or never happen in other religious communities. This is because strict denominations have substantial resources donated by their members (mainly time and money). Is this true, though?

37 Average in terms of social sciences, where data forecasting is more difficult.

Is the inflow of new members to strict denominations higher than elsewhere?

In order to answer this question, I conducted two analyses. First, I compared data concerning denominational affiliation collected in a survey conducted in 2013 by Pew Research with the National Jewish Population Survey of 1990.[38] Table 3 presents the results of the analysis.

Years	Denominational affiliation			
	Conservative	Orthodox	Reform	Secular
1990	37.8	6.0	41.7	14.5
2013	20.1	13.3	32.6	34.0
Change (percentage points)	-17.7	7.3	-9.1	19.5

Tab. 3. Denominational affiliation of American Jews in 1990 and 2013 (percentage rates).

Next, I reviewed the declarations of respondents concerning their denominational affiliation now (in 2013) and in childhood. Detailed data concerning this issue are presented in Table 4.

38 In 1988, the Council of Jewish Federations made a decision to conduct a study concerning the American Jewish community. The last survey of this kind took place in the years 1970-1971. Since then, however, the social, demographic and religious structure of the American Jewish community has changed considerably. Thus, it became necessary to conduct a new study. Its first stage took place in April 1989. At that time, a group of households was randomly selected where at least one person considered him- or herself to be Jewish or was related to the American Jewish community through his or her upbringing and parents. In the process of selection of these households, the following four questions were used: (a) "What is your religion?"; (b) "Do you or anyone else in the household consider themselves Jewish?"; (c) "Were you or anyone else in the household raised Jewish?"; (d) "Do you or anyone else in the household have a Jewish parent?". In 1990, the main study was carried out, covering respondents from 2,441 households. Altogether, information about 6,514 inhabitants of these households was collected as a result of the survey. However, the study itself was criticised. For example, it suggested that the rate of mixed marriages is 52 per cent, which largely contrasted not only with previous surveys, but also with studies conducted by other researchers. See Steven Cohen, "Why Intermarriage May Not Threaten Jewish Continuity", *Moment Magazine* 19/6, 1994, 54-56, 89, 95. Moreover, some methodological errors committed during the survey were not eliminated in the subsequent study that took place in the years 2000-2001. See Sergio Della Pergola, "Was It the Demography? A Reassessment of U.S. Jewish Population Estimates, 1945-2001", *Contemporary Jewry* 25/1, 2005, 85-131.

Present denominational affiliation	Denominational affiliation in childhood				
	Conservative	Orthodox	Reform	Secular	Other
Conservative	**66.1**	15.4	8.6	8.2	1.6
Orthodox	7.9	**81.5**	3.5	6.8	0.4
Reform	27.3	6.4	**56.2**	9.4	0.6
Secular	16.4	6.7	19.0	**54.5**	3.4

$p<0.05$

Tab. 4. Denominational affiliation of respondents now and in childhood (percentage rates).

The data presented in these tables led to two conclusions. First, the percentage of persons declaring affiliation with the Orthodox denomination grew between the years 1990 and 2013. The increase was in contrast to the trends characterising non-strict denominations, where the rate of respondents declaring affiliation dropped. Meanwhile, the largest growth was reported in the Secular Jews category. Secondly, the inflow of new members to the Orthodox denomination is low. In the survey of 2013, as many as 81.5 percent of respondents in this category declared that they had belonged to the same Orthodox denomination as children. Thus, it can be assumed that the growth in the number of members of the strict denomination was for demographic reasons. Such an interpretation is confirmed by the results of the 2013 survey. According to the declarations of respondents belonging to the Orthodox denomination, they have on average four children under the age of 18 living in their households, whereas respondents affiliated with non-strict denominations and Secular Jews have two.[39] Considering the results, I conclude that hypothesis II has been confirmed. The Orthodox denomination is not very attractive for non-Orthodox members of the American Jewish community. The growth in the number of members is due to the fact that on average, Orthodox families are larger than non-Orthodox.

39 The data on that subject were collected by analysing the distribution of answers to the following question: "How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?" See Pew Research Center, "2013 Survey of U.S. Jews: Final Questionnaire" [online], <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/Pew-Research-Jewish-American-Questionnaire-2013.pdf>, 15 February 2013 [22 June 2017], 33.

Conclusions

The results of the analyses I have presented in this article lead to some interesting conclusions. At the beginning, it is worth considering certain theoretical and methodological aspects. As far as theory is concerned, it seems that social identity theory is a valuable addition to the strictness theory. Strict norms that make members of a given religious community stand out in their social surroundings are created or become important as a result of the social categorisation process. They nurture the feeling of being different and strengthen one's identification with a specific religious group, increasing the probability of getting involved in aid of this group. Complementing strictness theory with a perspective typical for social identity theory would allow the indicated issues to be brought to their roots. When we look closely at Kelley's concept we notice that he devoted a lot of attention to those issues that are directly connected with the religious identity of people belonging to strict denominations.

There are certain methodological comments that should be appended to the results I have presented in this article. Because the Pew Research survey lacks the right question on how much time the respondents devoted to their religious communities, or in a wider sense to Jewish organisations, one of the engagement aspects discussed in strictness theory was omitted from my analysis. Moreover, another limitation that makes simple generalisation of the research results for other populations difficult is the fact that in the Jewish community there are two often overlapping identities: religious and ethnic.

Let us now proceed to discussing results. For one thing, the analysis shows that the readiness of an individual to sacrifice his or her financial resources for the benefit of the synagogue or, more broadly, Jewish organisations, is influenced more by strong identification with Jewishness than by affiliation with a restrictive denomination. In an attempt to answer the research question, it is worth noticing that restrictions play an important role in the categorisation of the social world and the creation of a clear border between "us" and "them", although they are not a necessary element in this process. Restrictions can influence the formation of social identity, which consists of representations (shared by members of the group) of what the group is, what characterises its representatives and what differentiates it from its social environment. The importance of restrictions seems to increase when the group wants its members to identify with it strongly. Only then can the group maintain its distinctness and, consequently, its tradition, internal coherence, or solidarity. It is, therefore, not surprising that members of Orthodox denominations showed stronger identification with Jewishness. This does not mean that such a situation is

impossible for members of less restrictive Jewish movements or among Secular Jews. However, we must admit – and results of the analysis confirm this – that strong identification with Jewishness is considerably less frequent in such cases. Maybe members of non-restrictive Jewish movements and Secular Jews must reconsider borders between "us" and "them" (others), when restrictions distinguishing them clearly from other members of American society are often rejected. The more an individual is left on his or her own and devoid of support from the group in this process of categorisation of the social world, the more difficult this seems to be. Thus, when answering the research question, I must state that financial commitment to the synagogue or any other organisation is influenced more by strong identification with Jewishness than by affiliation with a restrictive denomination, but strong identification with Jewishness is also built by restrictions, which reinforce a sense of distinctness in an individual.

The analysis indicates also that the attractiveness of the Orthodox denomination turned out to be limited. The influx of believers was insignificant. More than 80 percent of its members declared being an Orthodox Jew in their childhood and now. The interpretation of this result should be associated with social identity theory. Orthodox Jews could treat their identity as salient in the sense that it is their main cognitive mechanism which helps them categorise their social world. It should be considered, though, that at present, in a functionally diversified society, the majority of people will assume different social identities and none of these will be as important for them. A certain increase in the percentage of American Jews belonging to an Orthodox denomination could be noticed, of course, but this increase was connected with a demographic factor – Orthodox families are usually larger than non-Orthodox families.

SUMMARY

In Search of a New Approach to Strictness Theory: Social Identity and the Growth of Jewish Denominations in the United States

In the 1970s, a theory called the "strictness theory" was formed in the US, according to which mainly conservative denominations gain in importance. This position was in contradiction to secularisation theory, which assumed that the popularity of liberal churches should increase. An important role in the success of conservative denominations was to be played by restrictive regulations that set their members apart from the social environment and concentrated their believers' attention on matters concerning the religious community. In the 1990s, researchers representing the economic paradigm referred to the strictness theory again. In their opinion, restrictive regulations reduce the problem of "free riders". In this way, they increase not only the religious commitment of believers, but also their willingness to appropriate their assets for the religious community. As a result, conservative denominations having resources at their disposal are able to compete successfully with liberal churches.

These restrictive regulations are the subject matter of this text. It is assumed, however, that their primary goal is to shape clear borders between members of a given religious community and its reference groups. In this sense, strict norms derive from the social categorisation process going on within the community, which contributes to the formation of social identity. The considerations are based on data concerning the American Jewish community collected by a Pew Research survey in 2013. The main question asked during the analysis of these data was what has a bigger influence on the fact that members of the Jewish community are more willing to give their resources to Jewish organisations: their strong identification with Jewishness or their affiliation with a restrictive denomination?

Keywords: strictness theory; strict regulations; social identity; Judaism; Jewish denominations in the United States.

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