Christian Privilege: Do Jewish students feel marginalized in U.S. public schools?

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Christian privilege: Do Jewish students feel marginalized in public schools?

by

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to illustrate instances of Jewish students feeling marginalized in public schools. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 12 Jewish students attending public schools in a medium sized Midwestern city and a small Midwestern town. The results indicated the public school students felt marginalized when absent from school to observe Jewish holidays and during the Christian holiday season. These same students also felt pressured by teachers to be a spokesperson for their religion, and believed that because they are a minority, do not deserve equal rights and privileges. Students attending the Jewish day school never felt marginalized. All of their school breaks corresponded to the Jewish holidays and never with the Christian holidays.
“Because a public school is a governmental agency, its conduct is circumscribed by precedents of public administrative law” (Alexander & Alexander, 1998, p. 1)

On October 1, 2008 Presidential hopeful and U.S. Senator John McCain, in an interview with Dan Gilgoff for Beliefnet, was asked what he thought about a recent poll in which 55 percent of Americans believe the U.S. Constitution establishes this country as a Christian nation. McCain stated:

I would probably have to say yes, that the Constitution established the United States of America as a Christian nation. But I say that in the broadest sense. The lady that holds her lamp beside the golden door doesn't say, ‘I only welcome Christians.’ We welcome the poor, the tired, and the huddled masses. But when they come here they know that they are in a nation founded on Christian principles.

Gilgoff went on to ask of McCain, “A lot of Republican activists say the separation of church and state is a myth. What do you think?”

McCain replied, “Our Founding Fathers believed in separation of church and state and they stated it unequivocally. But, they also continued to emphasize the Christian principle.”

The First Amendment of the United States constitution states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment prohibits the establishment of a national religion by Congress or the preference of one religion over another, or religion over non-religion.

In looking at modern interpretations of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, under the endorsement approach, favored by Justice O’Connor, “Direct
government action endorsing...religious practices is invalid...because it ‘ sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the community’” (Witte, 2000, p.159).

It is likely many schools do not follow the laws of the Constitution with regard to the first amendment. In addition, if this is true, it would be possible to believe this is problematic for students who are not of the majority faith.

The literature review of this study begins with describing the history of the founding of what is now called the United States of America. It is often taught in the mainstream American Public school Curriculum that Christopher Columbus “discovered” America. However, as time goes on and multicultural theorists are enjoying a stronger position in influencing public school curriculum with an inclusive view of many perspectives, children today also learn that America wasn’t really “discovered” by Columbus (Colom). Children in most U.S. public schools learn that an Indigenous group of people had been living on this land for at least a millennium before it was “discovered” by Columbus (Colom) and his crew.

Many historical researchers (Amler, 1993; Baer, 1961; Birmingham, 1971; Lebeson, 1949, 1975; Minkin, 1938; Morison, 1940, 1942; Roth, 1932; Rusconi, 1997; Sachar, 1992; Segal, 1991; Wiesenthal, 1973) have records indicating Christopher Columbus (Colom) had Jewish roots, and it is believed by these same scholars that Christopher Colombus’ (Colom) true motive behind his travel expeditions were to save the Jewish people from the Spanish Inquisition.
During the Spanish Inquisition, which lasted for approximately 5 years, people who would not convert to Christianity were generally burned at the stake. The Spanish Inquisition culminated with the signing of an order at end of March in 1492, in which the King and Queen of Spain declared that everyone of the Jewish faith from their country who would not convert to Christianity was to be expelled and their possessions were to be given to the King and Queen of Spain by August 3, 1492. Exactly one day after the final expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the court had enough money to fund an expedition requested by a man named Christopher Columbus (Colom).

The literature review next presents the history of politics, religion, and education in North America as influenced by Europe from both protestant and Jewish perspectives. One theme discusses how U.S. Public schools have unfolded through the theme of religion starting with the colonial curriculum progressing through the progressive school era. Examples are provided of internalized oppression with respect to the power of the school system related to specific experiences of Jewish Americans from the late 19th century to the present.

One result of internalized oppression is shame and the disowning of one’s individual cultural reality through the process of deculturalization (Spring, 2004) as perpetuated by the public school curriculum and laws causing feelings of marginalization to those who are not members of the agent groups (i.e., those who are not of the Christian faith).

Schlosser (2003) coined the term Christian Privilege to explain how there are certain privileges and advantages one has when belonging to the dominant religious group of the United States, which often goes unnoticed by its’ members. This study seeks to illustrate
some of these advantages surrounding the public school experience from the perspective of Jewish students attending public schools, the dissertation is only the written portion.

Students of minority groups often find themselves the targets of derogatory remarks and other forms of racism and discrimination (Nieto, 1995; Olneck, 1995; Pang, 1995; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994.) The literature review will discuss the social and psychological consequences related to feelings of marginalization and the results of the research will illustrate such phenomena.

**Criteria Review**

This study also reveals that not only did American schooling unfold through the theme of religion, but also, that public schools are run so that *Christian Privilege* (Schlosser, 2003) prevails, and is not a romantic notion of the past. As a consequence, many students in the American public school system, who are not of the Christian faith, experience feelings of marginalization which, in turn, has proven negative consequences on their academic performance (Allport, 1954; Aronson & Salinas, 2006; Aronson & Steele, 2005, 1995; Banks, 2005; Daly, 2004; Dawson, 1957; Dinnerstein, 1994; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Hewstone, 1983; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Maddi, Kobasa, & Hoover, 1979; Mann, 1838; Marcus, 2006, 2007; Slomczynski, 1981; Steele, 1997; Watkins, Lewis, & Chou, 2001).
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review presents an abbreviated history of the founding of what is now called the United States of America. Topics covered are politics, religion, and education.

In the Beginning

It is often taught in the mainstream American public school curriculum that Christopher Columbus “discovered” America. However, as time goes on and multicultural theorists are enjoying a stronger position in influencing the public school curriculum with an inclusive view of many perspectives, children today also learn that America wasn’t really “discovered” by Columbus (Colom). Children in most U.S. public schools learn that an indigenous group of people had been living on this land for at least a millennium before it was “discovered” by Columbus (Colom) and his crew.

Spring (2004) referred to this period as “the English invasion of North America.” The native people of this land were believed to be Asiatic and came to this land tens of thousands of years ago.

During the year of 1992, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Spanish arrival to what is now called North America, groups across the United States wrote formal documents calling on the nation to recognize dueling perspectives of this holiday. For instance, the National Council of Churches called on Christians to refrain from celebrating the Columbus quincentennial, saying, “What represented newness of freedom, hope, and opportunity for some was the occasion for oppression, degradation and genocide for others” (A Faithful
Response to the 500th Anniversary of the Arrival of Christopher Columbus in A Resolution of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, paragraph 1).

The reader should keep in mind there are many perspectives to the same event. For example, children or adults looking at the same inkblot or, for that matter, the seemingly same event, will “see” different things due to our individual difference and life paradigms. What we “see” is based on many factors including our temperament, personality, values, and life experiences.

It is important for us to consider this idea of differing perspective, and/or cultural bias, when referring to history. Often times, history is taught from the perspective of the dominating power, which seeks to perpetuate this point of view to future generations through curriculum and text books as well as the use of teachers who represent the dominant culture (Banks, 2005; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Spring, 2004; Steele, 1997).

Jewish beginnings in what is now called America

At the end of March, 1492, the King and Queen of Spain signed an order expelling all Jews from their country who would not convert to Christianity within the coming four months. Those who would not convert and “chose” to leave were expected to leave behind their wealth and property to the King and Queen. Records indicate that during the year to come, Jewish property had been auctioned off for a recorded sum of six million maravedis (Sachar, 1992).

As a direct result of the confiscation of Jewish property and wealth, Queen Isabella finally had enough money to fund a proposed expedition to the East en route of the West. The expedition would be led by a man from Genoa, named Christopher Columbus (Colom).
Numerous historical researchers (Amler, 1993; Baer, 1961; Birmingham, 1971; Lebeson, 1949, 1975; Minkin, 1938; Morison, 1940, 1942; Roth, 1932; Rusconi, 1997; Sachar, 1992; Segal, 1991; Wiesenthal, 1973) have found records indicating Christopher Columbus (Colom) had Jewish roots. The name Colom is Hebraic in origin and a name used by many Jews who fled to Italian City States from the 1391 massacre in Spanish Catalonia. Records show that Columbus spoke and wrote in Castilian, the language of Cantalonian Jews. It is believed Columbus’ family was forced to become Conversos, meaning “new Christians;” however, in everyday common speech of the Spaniards, they were known as Marranos, which meant “pig” in Spanish. Despite their outward pledge to Christianity, many of the Conversos continued to practice Jewish rituals in secret (Amler, 1993; Baer, 1961; Birmingham, 1971; Lebeson, 1949, 1975; Levitan, 1996; Minkin, 1938; Morison, 1940, 1942; Roth, 1932; Rusconi, 1997; Sachar, 1992; Segal, 1991).

Some of the Jewish people not willing to convert were burnt at the stake while their children and other members of the family were forced to watch. The name of one of the families who perished in this way was named Colom, from the town of Catalonia in 1489. It is further believed by Amler (1993) and Sachar (1992), from supporting documentation, that a member of this family who was forced to watch fled to Genoa and changed his name to Christopher Columbus.

On August 3, 1492, exactly one day after the final expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Christopher Colom (Columbus) and his crew of 90 men set off on their voyage. Among these 90 men were five Conversos. Bernal and Marco were physicians, Luis de Torres a linguist, and Luis Sangel and Gabriel Sanchez, were the Queen’s former ministers. These last two
were sent back to Spain with the first reports from Columbus (Colom) about the “New World.” It should be noted that these last two men helped Columbus plead his case to the Queen and even contributed their own money for the first voyage (Amler, 1992; Levitan, 1996; Sachar, 1993).

Soon Spanish and Portuguese Jews/Conversos were among the earliest settlers of Iberia’s New World territories. Nevertheless, once again, two hundred years later, the Jewish settlers in Iberia’s new World territories were persecuted by the Portuguese in Brazil. In September of 1654, twenty-three of these penniless refugees sailed into the port of New Amsterdam and established the first permanent Jewish community in what is now called the United States. It is estimated that thousands of present-day Texans are actually descendants of Jewish ancestry (Levitan, 1996).

To date, this much abbreviated story of the “discovery and founding of America” is not found in any history books in the United States public schools. However, this information can be accessed in most Jewish libraries. *This is one of the ways the Christian majority has perpetuated feelings of superiority and ownership to this land and the Constitution.*

**Politics, Religion, and Education in North America as Influenced by Europe**

**A Protestant perspective**

The founding fathers of the American Constitution were fleeing religious persecution and demands in Europe as well, where only one brand of Christianity was recognized and those who were not followers of the chosen faith were often persecuted and stripped of rights and liberties (Witte, 2005). Between the dates of 1050 C.E. and 1150 C.E., masses of clergy
united under the Bishop of Rome to form an independent polity, separate from state authorities, and they wrote a revolutionary manifesto proclaiming “emperors and kings had no authority over the church” (Witte, 2000, p. 12). Eventually, the church controlled nearly one-third of the land of Western Europe. The church also claimed jurisdiction over laws, including but not limited to personal jurisdiction “over clerics, pilgrims, students, heretics, Jews, and Muslims” (Witte, 2000, p.12). Later, the church also claimed jurisdiction over education, marriage, inheritance, moral crimes, and even oral promises.

For example, in the 1570s the Spanish monarch Philip II ordered an inquisition against Dutch Protestants, many who had fled to Holland from other European inquisitions in search of religious freedom. During those times, the Netherlands was a haven for anyone fleeing religious prosecution. In 1581 the Dutch confederacy issued a Constitution of Independence, invoking “the law of nature.” From 1620 onward, the Netherlands was a common point of departure to the Americas, including the Mayflower Pilgrims (Witte, 2000).

Comparing the American Constitution and the Dutch Constitution of Independence, John Adams wrote: “The originals of the two republics are so much alike, that the history of one seems but a transcript of that of the other” (New England Magazine, as cited in Witte, 2000, p.18).

The major difference between Europe and North America was a millennium-old assumption that “one form of Christianity must be established in a community and the state must protect and support it against other religions” (Witte, 2000, p.1). The framers broke with European tradition and opened public office in the federal government to people of any
faith and no faith by establishing that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States” (Witte, 2005, p. 42).

**First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America**

In September 24, 1789 the final wording of the First Amendment was agreed upon, and the next day it was approved by the Senate in the House resolution draft of the Bill of Rights, including a religious clause, which was sent to President George Washington for final approval. Washington then sent the draft, with his approval, to the states for ratification. The final vote was issued nearly two years later, and on December 15, 1791, the First Amendment became effective.

“Congress shall make no Law respecting an establishment of Religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” These sixteen words have caused nearly two centuries of debate when trying to interpret exactly what conduct the framers were trying to prescribe and proscribe. Today, it is still left open for debate regarding the interpretation by both federal courts and supreme court.

It is important to discuss the First Amendment in conjunction with this research, to gain a greater understanding of how Jewish students feel their constitutional rights are not being met in the state-funded institutions of public schools. The findings section will reveal how the self-esteem of a child can be shattered when (s)he is not treated with equal protection under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America. When these students are marginalized in publicly funded settings, such as the school, (s)he begins to feel her/his status as an American citizen is of lesser value than that of her/his peers.
The Establishment Clause

The Establishment Clause was intended to prohibit the federal government from declaring and financially supporting a national religion. This has been interpreted as the prohibition of the establishment of a national religion by Congress, and also the prohibition of preference of one religion over another or of religion over non-religious philosophies in general.

Separationist v. Accomodationist

Two interpretations of the Establishment Clause are known as the “separationsist,” or “no aid” interpretation, and the “non-preferentialist,” or “accomodationsist,” interpretation. Historically speaking, the separationist interpretation prohibits Congress from aiding religion in any way even if such aid is made without regard to denomination. The accommodationist interpretation prohibits Congress from preferring one religion over another, but does not prohibit the government's entry into the religious domain to make accommodations in order to achieve the purposes of the Free Exercise Clause (Witte, 2000).

Free Exercise Clause

The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment has been interpreted to include two freedoms: the freedom to believe, and the freedom to act. The freedom to believe is interpreted by most as an absolute right. The freedom to act is usually under consideration of state restrictions. The founders had the idea of an “ecclesiastical liberty,” for the “equal liberty of one sect…with another” (Witte, 2005, p. 43).
During the 17th century, America pluralism was mostly Protestant. Today, America is home to approximately 3,000 religious groups (Jelen, 2002). Americans of so many faiths live together as citizens of one nation and often attend the same public schools. How can one ensure Freedom of Liberty and also Free Exercise to every student attending public school?

**How does the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution apply directly to public schools?**

Public schools act as an agency of the government. The government hopes to educate children to hold a certain set of beliefs and become productive, loyal, taxpaying citizens for the indoctrinating country; thus perpetuating the ideology and standards of said society (Plato, 2007).

American public schools are governed by a diverse system of authority and hierarchies when considering how the schools will operate, select appropriate curriculum, as well as managing the rights and restrictions of students and teachers alike. U.S. public schools are governed at a State, as opposed to national, level. Each State holds specific laws, which are then distributed to individual school districts to interpret and uphold. All of these laws are essentially derived from the United States Constitution and left open for interpretation by each state, and school district. “Both the state and federal constitutions serve as restraints to protect the people from unwarranted denial of basic constitutional rights and freedoms” (Alexander & Alexander, 1998, p. 2).
Does having holiday celebrations in public schools cause the establishment clause and free exercise clause of the First Amendment to conflict with one another and is this a violation of the First Amendment?

According to the exact wording of the First Amendment, the argument can be made that Congress has never made a law requiring the celebration of holidays in public schools and Congress does not have the right to prohibit the free exercise of holiday celebration in public schools either. However, the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause need to be considered when answering the question regarding whether holiday celebrations in public schools are a violation of the First Amendment.

Once we address the legalities of this issue, we can then focus on how the breaking of constitutional rights affects individual children attending public schools. The findings of this research will shed light on the notion that when a constitutional right is being violated, and a student is not given guaranteed equality, the message of marginalization and nothingness is even stronger than if the student felt marginalized in an environment that did not guarantee constitutional equality.

**Supreme Court cases**

The first case to come before the Supreme Court for interpretation of the Free Exercise Clause was in 1878 – Reynolds v. United States, in which Mormons tried to defend their rights to polygamy. The court decided against Reynolds and stated if constitutional protection was provided for these religious beliefs (polygamy), then it should also protect the religious beliefs such as those of extreme cases of human sacrifice, and the court was not
willing to do so. The Court said, “Laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious beliefs and opinions, they may with practices.”

The Supreme Court, under the same rationale as Reynolds v. United States, could ban all religious practices and celebrations in relation to the various faiths as sponsored by the public schools, outside of a social studies context. In this case, the court would not be interfering with religious beliefs, only with the practices. While some may argue singing songs about Santa Claus or a dreidel are “harmless” and “secular,” this may be true for the individuals for whose faith these songs celebrate; however, it is psychologically and socially harmful to public school students of a minority faith who “choose” not to participate, or participate with great discomfort (Garland, 2006. 2007; Steele, 2007).

According to Supreme Court decision in Everson v. Board of Education (1947) Justice Black delivered the opinion of the court, in part, that “No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion…” (Reynolds v. United States, 98 U.S. at page 164, 25 L. Ed. 244). Nevertheless, anecdotal personal evidence has shown that public schools commonly use State and Federal funds to buy Christmas decorations and pay the salary of music teachers to teach children how to sing Christmas songs, and pay art teachers to show children how to make Christmas and Easter decorations.

**Endorsement approach**

Under the *endorsement approach*, favored by Justice O’Connor, “Direct government action endorsing...religious practices is invalid ...because it ‘sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an
accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the community” (Witte, 2000, p.159).

**Coercion**

Another approach from the modern disestablishment law is that of *coercion*. According to this approach, favored by Justice Kennedy, “government may not coerce anyone to support or participate in any religion or its exercise; and it may not, in the guise of avoiding hostility or callous indifference, give direct benefits to religion in such a degree that it in fact ‘establishes a religion or religious faith, or tends to do so’” (Witte, 2000, p. 160).

Children whose religious celebrations observed at home are compatible with those celebrated in the public school are given direct benefits by being accepted and favored members of the community. It is very likely these students will benefit from higher self-esteem than those of the nonadherents and, therefore, according to Maslow (1943), Steele (1995, 1997), and Salinas (2003), will perform better in school.

**How U.S. Public Schools Have Unfolded through the Theme of Religion**

Although we no longer use the Christian Bible as a classroom reader or to teach lessons in morality, there is still a highly problematic theme of *Christian Privilege* (Scholsser, 2003) throughout public schools. In their book *American education: A history*, Urban and Wagoner (2004) stated, “…not only did American schooling unfold through the theme of religion, schooling is a direct result of the desire to civilize and Christianize children of the indigenous peoples by the Euro-Americans as they established villages in their ‘newly discovered’ land” (p. 6). Christopher Columbus wrote in his journal, dated 1492,
“the indigenous people of the land are well mannered, even though they run naked...Your Highness should feel great joy, because presently they will be Christians, and instructed in the good manners of your realms.”

**Missionary schools**

By the early 1600s, the Spanish Catholics began spreading missionary schools and James I instructed the leaders of the 1606 expedition to “carry the Christian religion to the Infidels and Savages” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 16), referring to the Indigenous people of this land. In an early attempt to establish schools in Virginia and improve relations with the natives, a college was to be built for the Indian boys in Henrico City to “educate in true religion and the principles of civilized life” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 19). Before the college could be built, in a coordinated effort, the Indigenous peoples of the land fought back and the foundations of the college were torched. This delayed the *deculutralization* (Spring, 2004) of the Indigenous peoples way of life. Unfortunately, this was only a minor postponement of the inevitably forced assimilation to the norms of a *WASP* (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) society by way of the “reservation day schools” established around the 1860s (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p.166).

The dawn of the 18th century saw Jesuits and Franciscans joining the ranks in spreading mission schools as well (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p.7). In the middle of that same century, Quakers, Moravians, German Reformed, and Presbyterian Calvinists settled in the Piedmont region and lived their lives and ran schools by the teachings of their strong religious views (Urban & Wagon, 2004, p.20).
However, there was another group in this region rejecting the teachings of the aforementioned groups. They called themselves “Nothingarians” and complained of being “eaten up by Teachers and Preachers” spreading unwelcomed versions of Christianity (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 20). One of the Anglican missionaries described these “Nothingarians” as “the lowest vilest Scum of Mankind, a people plainly beyond the reach of the gospel” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 21). How unfortunate for anyone who was not of their brand of the Christian faith to be seen as the “lowest vilest Scum of Mankind.”

Originally taken from the book, *Education and the forming of American society*, Bernard Bailyn (1960) believed “fear was the energizing force behind the education laws and concerns for literacy among the puritans” (as cited in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 38). Bailyn asserted that the people in Virginia were concerned that “unless bold measures were taken to provide for education, the present and coming generations would succumb to the savage environment” (as cited in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 38).

**Secular Laws Influence the School**

One of the “first acts of the Virginia General Assembly in 1619 required colonists to attend church services twice on Sunday” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 24). Virginia was not the only state to hold such laws. In 1642, the Massachusetts law “compelled heads of households to provide occupational training and ensure that their children learned to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 40). If parents did not adhere to this law, they could be fined and have their children removed from the household and placed under the care of more diligent guardians. Similar laws were passed in Connecticut in 1650, New Haven in 1655, New York in 1665, Plymouth in 1671, and Pennsylvania in 1683 (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 40). The “Old Deluder Satan
"Act" was passed in 1647, asserting “Satan, master of deception, was keeping people from true knowledge of the Scriptures.” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 42). This law required towns with 50 or more families to provide for instruction in reading and writing with the ultimate goal of being able to read, understand, and adhere to the writings of the Scriptures. One is left to wonder what happened to people who were not of the Christian faith, as they did exist in America during that time period.

Colonial curriculum

For Protestants, the primary purpose of learning how to read was to have access to the scriptures, and Hornbooks were an important teaching aid. They presented the alphabet, a few non-sense words to learn the skill of combining vowels and consonants, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, and some other biblical lesson. The Bible, devotional texts, catechisms, psalters (collections of psalms) and primers were also used for reading instruction (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 44). Initially, primers were used in conjunction with worship. The following is an example of “An Alphabet of Lessons for Youth,” The New England Primer first published in 1689 (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 44):

A Wise Son makes a glad Father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.
B etter is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.
C ome unto CHRIST all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest.

During the 1700s, more than eighty schoolmasters devoted themselves to teaching charity school children to read and write. These schoolmasters distributed Bibles, prayer books, and sermons, printed in English, French, German, Dutch, and various Indian dialects (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 25). Becoming literate and “memorizing passages from religious texts was clearly the norm” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 45).
The first person of the Jewish faith, Judah Monis, received a degree from an American College/University in 1720. Although Monis received an M.A from Harvard, he was not allowed to teach until he converted to Christianity. At this time and until 1871, persons of the Jewish faith were excluded from teaching in the University (Levitan 1996, pp. 20-21). In March of 1722, Monis was baptized in Cambridge and appointed Instructor in Hebrew at Harvard, a position he maintained until 1760.

The first book on pedagogy was written in 1770 by Christopher Dock, called *School Management*. Dock “instructed schoolmasters to be sensitive to individual differences and....managed to deal with children from various religious persuasions without exciting sectarian controversy” (as cited in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 54).

Finally, the age of educating backed by the teaching philosophies of Enlightenment (1776-1830) is embraced. The ideas of enlightenment are in contradiction to the traditional ideas of Christian cosmology that a better life awaits after death. The “Enlightenment ideology promised a state in which all would be happy in this world—and within the near future” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 65). John Locke, one of the founding fathers of the Enlightenment movement, proposed the idea of *tabula rasa*, or “blank slate.” This idea purports humans are not born evil, and man is not born from sin—as expressed in the teaching of Christianity. The Enlightenment ideology teaches that if we do evil “it is not because of our nature to do so...the experiences and environmental influences have shaped us...” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 65).
The tide is turning away from teaching on a strictly Christian/Protestant ideology. However, some people push to keep the status quo, and one of those people is Benjamin Rush.

In 1786, Rush presented a document titled *A Plan for Establishment of Public Schools and the Diffusion of knowledge in Pennsylvania*. Rush asserted, the “republican education and citizenship must be grounded in religion...and Christianity was best suited to promote happiness in society” (as cited in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 76).

**Common and Progressive school era**

The McGuffey reader was introduced in the 1830s. Although religious content still remained, however, there was a greater shift in the content of the readers to be more inclusive of a secular perspective. Unfortunately, the “histories, geographies, readers, and companion books offered a view of the world that consistently celebrated the assumed superiority of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 82).

**Common**

During the Common School era (1820-1860), Horace Mann was one of the biggest promoters of the common school for the common man. Mann believed the same curriculum should be used by everyone to create equality. Unfortunately, this did not include black children or white children with “strange” religious beliefs (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 95). Scholars have described the ideology of Mann as Protestant Republicanism. The Protestant Republicans “supported the assimilation of groups with different moral creeds and values into the Protestant Republic mainstream” (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 99). However, the
idea of using Protestant Bibles was refused by the Irish Catholic minority of New York City. Eventually, schools in Catholic neighborhoods were allowed to use a Catholic “flavor” in the classroom (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 112). During 19th century, Catholics began to build their own private schools.

**Progressive**

The Progressive era (1890-1915) was characterized by a mass wave of immigrants from unfamiliar countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, and this prompted many reforms in the school system (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 194). However, in meeting the needs of the new immigrants to be successful in America, underlying message were still enforced that to be American meant to assimilate to WASP mainstream thinking and way of life and leave the “old country” behind (Berrol, 1993; Brodkin, 2000; Brumberg, 1986; Karp, 1976; Katz & Frommer, 1995; Marcus, 2006; Meltzer, 1982, Olneck, 1995; Pilch, 1969; Sachar, 1992).

In *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (Kleibard, 2004), a great deal of information is learned about Ellwood P. Cubberly, as he played a great role in shaping the American curriculum in the decades surrounding the 1930s. Kleibard also referred to Cubberly as one of the “educational luminaries.”

However, there is a niggling quote by Cubberly in his book, *Changing Conception of Education* (1909), which is omitted from current, modern teachings of this great man. For Cubberly, the great American school was “to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Angle-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order...” (Kleibard, 2004, p. 15).

Let us ponder on the thoughts and feelings of the Asian immigrants, those who are Buddhist or Hindu. Imagine these immigrants are being told that their mediation practices to
inner peace and fulfillment, which affects how they act as citizens regarding law and order, are inferior to those of the Anglo-Saxon concepts of righteousness, law, and order. In saying this, the reader should keep in mind how people were persuaded to become Christian during the times of the crusades and practices following many of these same practices among the native tribes of North America.

**An Example of Internalized Oppression and the Power of the School System**

Julia Richman became the first female District Superintendent in 1898. A product of the American schools and curriculum, Julia was also Jewish. Born in America to a family of German Jewish ancestry, Richman worked to “Americanize” her immigrant students into the mainstream culture. Julia became a part of the school reform efforts in New York City, believing schooling could lead children out of poverty, enabling them to become prosperous and proper citizens (Berrol, 1993).

Julia received her education from a Normal School and began teaching in 1872. By 1884, she had been made principal, and in 1898, was appointed the District Superintendent for the Lower East Side, which was predominately a Jewish immigrant neighborhood.

**Lower East Side**

In *Going to America, Going to School*, Steven Brumberg (1986) estimated the Jewish population (predominately of German descent) in New York City and Brooklyn, 1880, was approximately 73,000 or 4% of the population. By 1920, as a result of the Russian Pogroms, over 1.5 million East European Jews immigrated to America. By this time, the New York population was 5.6 million, which meant the Jewish population accounted for 27% of the
New York population. By 1914, it was estimated that nearly 277,000 Jewish children were attending the City’s elementary schools, or over 37% of the total population. In 1910, an estimated 46% of the borough’s public elementary school population in Manhattan was Jewish (Journal, 1914, pp. 1,980-82). By 1918, at the high school level, Jewish student enrollment was approximately 85,000 students or 53% (Tagblatt, Feb. 12, 1918).

Julia Richman was deeply committed to Jewish education and relief work, and saw the public schools as the most important vehicle of socialization. English-language immersion, vocational training and lessons in hygiene and culture, were part of the socialization process for Julia. She provided “special” services for her students if they reverted to speaking their native languages; she would wash their mouths out with soap. Julia Richman clearly displayed signs of internalized oppression.

External oppression is the unjust exercise of authority and power by one group over another. It includes imposing one group’s belief system, values and life ways over another group. External oppression becomes internalized oppression when we come to believe and act as if the oppressor's beliefs system, values, and life way is reality. Internalized oppression means the oppressor doesn't have to exert any more pressure, because we now do it to ourselves and each other. The result of internalized oppression is shame and the disowning of our individual and cultural reality (http://www.letswrap.com/nadvinfo/internal.htm).

A series on notable Schoolhouse Pioneers was presented by the Public Broadcasting System, in which Julia Richman was featured. In a section on the webpage called In Her Own Words, Richman is quoted as saying:

Ours is a nation of immigrants. The citizen voter of today was yesterday an immigrant child. Tomorrow he may be a political leader. Between the alien of today and the citizen of tomorrow stands the school, and upon the influence exerted by the school depends the kind of citizen the immigrant will become.”
"What is the mission of the public schools?...To transform a heterogeneous mass of untrained children, often the offspring of an interminable line of untrained parents, into a great nation of men and women. Now we are engaged in a great civic struggle testing whether the influence of the school is strong enough to combat those adverse forces, born of immigration, economic conditions, parental neglect, municipal corruption and industrial inequalities which tend to degrade the standards of American citizenship.

(http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/richman.html).

Julia achieved nationwide respect as an authority on Americanization and progressive education. The fact that this woman, being of Jewish heritage and faith, held and perpetuated this attitude of deculturalization towards the Jewish immigrants demonstrates how strong the social pressures and influence of the school curriculum are in shaping an entire society.

**School Experience of Jewish Americans: Late 19th Century to Present**

David Tyack, a Professor of Education from Stanford University, commented on turn-of-the-century America by stating:

_Americanization became a new national religion. A lot of influential people became very afraid of immigrants and of the effect of immigrants on this country and we used the power of the state to try to eradicate ethnicity. And one of the main instruments for doing that was the public school. A lot of the teachers in immigrant cities like New York were themselves second-generation immigrants. Many of them felt a duty to Americanize, so for a long time – certainly from 1890 through World War I into the 1920s – the official policy was to use the power of the state through the schools to Americanize._

(http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/richman.html).

For the Jewish students who did not succumb to the pressures of total deculturalization demanded by society and the school, their Jewish education was supplemented by the _cheder_, meaning room in Hebrew, but in this instance, refers to the Yiddish use of the word meaning traditional Jewish school. Many Jewish immigrant students
attended this school for approximately two hours on a daily basis after their time in public school (Brumberg, 1986). These are the same children Richman referred to as a “heterogeneous mass of untrained children, often the offspring of an interminable line of untrained parents” (http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/richman.html).

The status of Jewish citizenship and respect for cultural identity has improved twofold since the turn of the century, but America’s public schools still have a considerable way to go before students of the Jewish faith will feel a real sense of belonging, and not viewed as an outsider for her/his religious and cultural practices. The next section will review the literature in relation to anti-Semitism, marginalization, and the social and psychological effects it can have on a student, in particular, students of the Jewish faith. This section will also report the findings of pilot studies (Garland, 2006, 2007) in discovering if Jewish students feel marginalized in U.S. public schools.

**Current Definitions of Terms**

**Anti-Semitism**

The term *anti-Semitism* is a fairly new word, coined by Wilhelm Marr, in the 1870s, to describe “a hatred of Jews and Judaism that was based upon social, economic, political, and racial stereotypes rather than on the earlier religious grounds.” However, the Jewish people have been hated and persecuted for nearly 3,000 years, starting in ancient Egypt. Lerner (1992) has perceived the phenomena of hating the Jewish people as “the oldest and most continuous form of racism in the Western and Islamic worlds.”
For the purpose of this study, anti-Semitism will be defined as, a *hostile* tendency (covert or overt) of Gentiles to exclude anyone of the Jewish faith from groups to which the Gentiles belong and enjoy privilege as well as the (covert or overt) discrimination against Jewish culture and religious heritage and practices. “Hostility does not refer directly to subjective feelings of hatred, or dislike, though these feelings of course might be present, but to do something which has the effect of depriving Jews of satisfactions or opportunities they wish to have: this is, the tendency to segregate, exclude, or discriminate against them” (Morse & Allport, 1988, p. 187).

**Marginalization**

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, marginalization is defined as “to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.”

**Deculturalization**

Deculturalization is “the educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (Spring, 2004). This researcher believes this has happened and is still happening in public schools to children of the Jewish faith, and has explored how this groups’ religious practices, culture, and language have been deculturalized by the American public school system with regard to curriculum and socialization practices.

**Christian privilege**

The process of Christian privilege is quite similar to the way in which whites and males continue to (consciously and unconsciously) ensure the privilege of their racial and gender groups (McIntosh, 1998). In a similar fashion, Christian religious dogmatism
contributes to persons from minority religious groups feeling that their religious identity is not valued, and, subsequently, they feel discrimination and oppression because of their religious group membership.

**Social and Psychological Consequences of the “zations and the isms”**

Social psychology is the scientific study of how people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. The question this study sought to address in greater depth is: If Jewish students feel marginalized in U.S. public school, and if so, what is the anticipated psychological outcome of feelings of marginalization, and does this have an effect on the student’s academic performance as well as social interactions?

Students of minority groups often find themselves the targets of “derogatory remarks and other forms of racism and discrimination” (Nieto, 1995; Olneck, 1995; Pang, 1995; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994.) The person(s) making the derogatory remark(s) is/are the aggressor(s) and “aggressive behavior is an action intentionally taken to hurt another person either physically or psychologically….and relational aggression are actions such as ostracizing a peer or spreading rumors, which can adversely affect friendship and other interpersonal relationships” (Crick, Grotpete, & Bigbee, 2002; French, Jansen, & Pidada, 2002; Pellegrini, 2002). In general, aggression seems to decline over the course of childhood and seems to be at its highest, for a short time, during the junior high years.

Accordingly, junior high is a time when friends begin to form cliques, which are moderately stable groups of friends who provide situations for informal social interactions. These groups also establish who is considered to be “in” or “out” and “membership in
various cliques often affects students social status” (Wigfield et al., 1996). Quite often, during these years feelings of belonging or rejection by peers are established, and according to Maslow, positive recognition from others directly relates to a person’s self-esteem and directly influences motivation and the ability to achieve self-actualization; becoming all one can be (Jordan & Porath, 2006, p. 246-247). However, in his book *Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport (1954), a leader in the social sciences, noted, “As early as the age of five, a child is capable of understanding that he is a member of various groups,” and is also capable of having a “sense of ethnic identification” (p. 29).

**Self-worth and relatedness**

Most psychologists agree that most, if not all human beings have a basic need to believe in their own sense of self-worth, or sense of confidence in one’s self. One social theorist, Covington (1992), believed one of people’s highest priorities is protecting their sense of self-worth. Most psychologists also believe another top component for humans is to have a “basic need to interact with other people—that is a need for relatedness” (Ormrod, 2006, p. 370), which is the need to feel socially connected with others, which includes feeling loved and respected by others. Many theorists believe this social need applies to people of all ages (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). “Students are more likely to be academically motivated and successful – and more likely to stay in school rather than drop out – when they believe that their teachers and peers like and respect them and when they feel that they belong to a classroom community” (Goodenow, 1993; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Hymel et Al., 1996; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).
Reactive aggression

When teachers and administration are unwilling to respond to acts of bullying and taunting by peers, sometimes the student being bullied may manifest reactive aggression, which is an aggressive response to frustration and provocation, which often leads in a downward spiral for the bullied or harassed student. For example, a second grader arriving from Israel was taunted and bullied by peers for looking different than everyone else. This boy wore the traditional kippah, or head covering, had the long side burns, called peyote, and also wore tzit-tzis, that are the long strings which hang on the front and back sides of a boy’s waist. When this child was taunted and teased by peers, his teacher did nothing to prevent the other children from bullying this child, and as a matter of fact, the teacher thought it would be better for the child to lose his traditional way of dress as a way to better fit into his new surroundings and environment. While the teacher may have felt she had this child’s best interest in mind, she was clearly sending a message to the seven-year-old boy that his culture and religious practices were not valued, and as long as he looked different he would always be considered an outsider.

When this particular student was taunted and bullied by peers, he manifested reactive aggression by beating up any students that tried to bully him. This caused further problems with the teacher and principal of the schools, reportedly making it more difficult for this child to adjust to his new environment.

Four years later, the child has friends, adjusted to the new environment and is doing well academically. However, the child refuses ever to wear a kippah and tzit tzit to school for fear of being teased and bullied.
Another response of the student being bullied or marginalized may be that of lowered self esteem. According to Maslow, positive recognition from others directly relates to a person’s self-esteem and directly influences motivation and the ability to achieve self-actualization, or becoming all one can be (Jordan & Porath, 2006, p. 246-247).

Maslow believed humans have certain needs, which have to be met within a certain order before and individual can progress to the higher level, thus creating the hierarchy of needs (Figure 1). For example, if a child comes to school hungry or does not have friends or does not feel safe, (s)he will not be able to focus clearly on academics, because these lower physiological, safety, and love/belonging needs are not being met. Once those needs are met, the student is free to focus on academics, because the lower needs have been met.

Once we are able to reach the higher levels of the hierarchy, such as self-actualization, it is possible to temporarily regress to the lower needs, and once those needs are satisfied to immediately return to the level at which one was performing before the lower

Figure 1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (www.bpsoutdoor.com/blog/?m=200807)
needs had to be satisfied. Hunger or the needs for urination are good examples of how this works. Let us suppose one is at the self-actualization level and is creating a work piece of artwork, but can no longer focus because (s)he has to use the bathroom. As soon as this lower need is met, said person does not need to go through the entire hierarchy to get back to the mode of creativity and self-actualization, rather once this type of lower level need is met, one can quickly re-establish her/himself in the position of the hierarchy where (s)he had been performing.

However, if something such as a fire occurs, leaving this same person without a home, then that person would not pick up the paintbrush and start creating as soon as the fire is over. Instead, this person will be thrown back to the basic physiological need of having food to eat, a home to live in, etc. The importance of these basic needs will force the person to abandon self-actualization and creativity until the basic physiological needs are once again in place.

In understanding how Maslow’s hierarchy works, one can see the importance of students feeling comfortable in the classroom. For a Jewish student who is sitting in the classroom without any other Jewish peers, this student may not feel connected with other students, or that (s)he is a part of the group, but exists as an outsider, especially during the holiday season. When this occurs, it is quite likely the student, along with feeling marginalized and even not safe, will not perform as well in academics.

One example is of a Jewish student whose safety needs were not met during the holiday season when this Jewish child chose to not participate in the school holiday/Christmas concert. By being placed in the position of having to choose whether or not to participate in the Christmas/holiday pageant, this child inadvertently drew attention to
himself and the fact that he was Jewish. Shortly afterward, the young boy started to be physically assaulted on the playground and also called a Christ killer.

According to Maslow’s hierarchy, when this child is being physically assaulted by peers, his safety, love/belonging, and esteem needs are not being met, it would be appropriate to conclude this child would not able to perform well at the higher level when these lower needs are being forced upon him in such a stressful manner. In this instance, the child would not be able to re-establish himself quickly at the higher level, simply because recess is finished and he will not be physically assaulted in the classroom.

This incident is not the same as the example given previously of the person who needs to use the bathroom, and once that need has been met, can quickly and promptly re-establish her/himself where (s)he had been previously performing. Teachers and administration need to be aware of and understand the traumatic impact holiday celebrations in public schools actually have on students who are not of the majority religion.

Recent Research Regarding Social Psychology of Religious Minority Students in Public Schools

A study entitled “Dealing with Religious Differences in December: A School Counselor’s Role,” (Ribak-Rosenthal & Russell, 1994) assessed 222 children in grades four, five, and six, to discover the effects of Christmas holiday celebrations and programs in public schools. The researchers assessed Christian and non-Christian students (Baha’i, Buddhist, Jewish, and Sikh) and found that in December, “Non-Christian children had lower self-concepts and more negative perceptions of their classroom social environment than did Christian children” (p. 295).
A more recent study, “On Being Jewish: A Qualitative Study of Identity among British Jews in Emerging Adulthood,” (2005) was comprised of eighteen in-depth interviews focusing on the participants developmental history and current experience of being Jewish in Britain in the 21st century, which focused on: (a) early influences on Jewish identity; (b) the impact of attending university on Jewish identity; and (c) friendships, relationships, and marriage. The finding of this study allowed for a greater understanding of how it feels to be different as an emerging adult member of a religious minority group.

No other articles were found on studies of the marginalization of Jewish students in public schools. However, this author did locate a dissertation entitled, *Constructing Jewish Identity in a Southern Community* (Cutler, 2003), in which Jewish adult singles, some of whom attended the local university, were interviewed. Cutler examined how members of this particular Jewish community constructed meaning of and enact their Jewish identities while living in an environment they often viewed as hostile and structured by Christian Privilege.

In America, many seem to believe that, because people of the Jewish faith are not gassed, gunned down, hung, burned in ovens, or having civil liberties revoked, they are enjoying equal opportunities and do not experience random acts of anti-Semitism. However, they are when viewed according to the definition of anti-Semitism in this research and the previously mentioned research.

**Pilot Studies**

Preliminary qualitative research was conducted in conjunction with an assignment for the course, Research and Evaluation for Qualitative Researchers (Garland, 2006). The major findings of the qualitative research were:
• Jewish students from small towns were recipients of the most harassment—from peers as well as the teachers and administration.

• Jewish students from liberal college towns reported being harassed by peers sometimes. Each occurrence was an isolated incident, when other peers were not present.

• Jewish students from large cities (Chicago and San Diego) and their suburbs never felt discriminated against or heard racial slurs from peers as they were growing up and did not feel a sense of marginalization until they began to attend a Midwestern University.

• One common finding among all participants was the feeling of distress due to all public schools and universities in which participants attended, holding classes and scheduling exams on the Jewish holidays.

The second pilot study was conducted as a quantitative research analysis for Research and Evaluation of Basic Educational Statistics (Garland, 2007). In keeping with the theme of determining if Jewish students feel marginalized in public schools, the following research was conducted to ascertain if the information learned from participants currently attending schools in Iowa (Garland, 2006) would hold true for Jewish students attending schools across the U.S.

The majority of the participants (n= 136) perceived some level of discomfort when participating in school activities which revolved around the Christian holidays. Half (50%) thought holidays should and should not be celebrated in public schools. Sixty percent (60%) thought K-12 should limit holiday exposure, from all faiths, to a social studies context only
and not part of the cultural norm of the school, and ninety-seven percent (97%) of the participants thought it was important to learn about holidays from many cultures and faiths.

On the whole, if one considers the definition of anti-Semitism to include “exclusion of anyone of the Jewish faith from groups to which the Gentiles belongs and enjoy privilege as well as the (covert or overt) discrimination against Jewish culture and religious heritage and practices”, the research conducted by Garland (2007) revealed that anti-Semitism is a problem which needs to be address in U.S. Public Schools.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

Due to the effects of a democratic society wherein the majority rules, it is often assumed majority rule is equal to being correct. There was a time when the American majority and persons of ruling power believed in slavery and did not give citizenship, the right to own land, vote, or the right to something as basic as receiving an education to the African American populations. There was also a time when the ruling powers forced an unwanted education on the indigenous people of this land. Policy called for a complete deculturalization [process of cultural genocide] of the Indigenous way of life, which forced the indigenous children to be taken from their homes and families to attend boarding schools. The purpose of these schools was to destroy their culture and replace it with a Eurocentric Christian culture.

People of the Jewish faith have also been forced to deculturalize—to give up their native tongues, daily religious practices, and even manner of dress, as a way to fit in and be accepted in mainstream white Anglo Saxon protestant American society. In recent years, many U.S. laws have been made to include non-discrimination statements, to include several minority statuses, one of which includes the protection of discrimination based on religion. The Midwestern state in which the interviews for this research took place also endorsed a non-discrimination policy for students and teachers within the public schools which included religion.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to understand the perceptions and feelings of the public school experience of a minority group of people in the United States, namely those of the Jewish faith.

Assumption

This study assumed there are feelings of marginalization with respect to curriculum practices and social interactions among Jewish students attending Iowa public schools that are not present with Jewish students attending a private Jewish day school in Iowa.

Overview

The following research design was employed to explain how the research will be conducted and analyzed to determine if Jewish students feel marginalized in public schools.

Research Question

Are Jewish students made to feel marginalized in public schools?

Hypothesis

Despite Iowa Code, section 256.11 (2001) chapter 17A, which states, “Both federal and state laws require that there be no discrimination in educational programs… on the basis of…religion…” Jewish students experience feelings of marginalization and discrimination in Iowa public schools, and especially in schools in which a substantial presence of Christian hegemony is present in the curriculum and culture of the school.
Participant Information

Group A

Group A consisted of three females and three male ninth graders attending public schools in Midwestern city, with a population of approximately 250,000.

Group B

Group B consisted of three females and three males in the ninth grade attending the only Jewish school in the same Midwestern state.

According to the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau, this city had a total population of 2,314, and in 2006, approximately 800 of them were of the Jewish faith. It should also be noted that males and females attend classes in same gender classrooms only. By the ninth grade, these classes are held in two entirely separate buildings in the town, a few blocks from one another. Due to a tragic incident in the spring of 2008, this town suffered a huge loss of the Jewish community. In 2008, there were approximately 90 Jewish families. At present, it is estimated there are close to 50 remaining families. Each family is usually comprised of a mother and father, and anywhere from 3-14 children per household. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Enrollment and demographics of the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>F/R Lunch</th>
<th>ELL</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>1,654</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: F/R Lunch = free or reduced lunch cost); ELL = English Language Learner; SE = Special Education.
Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects

The treatment of all subjects were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Office of Research Assurances at Iowa State University. Prior to conducting the study, the research was submitted and approved. The research was originally approved in 2008. A copy of the Human Subjects approval for the extension is shown in Appendix A. Both forms are the same, with the exception of the date. In addition, copies of the consent forms are also presented in Appendix A.

Research participants were interviewed in semi-structured private, one-on-one sessions. Before starting the interview, each participant was informed (s)he does not have to answer any questions and can stop the interview at any time. Then the research proceeded by asking the first of eleven structured questions.

To allow for the semi-structured section of the interview to occur, participants were allowed to elaborate and talk for any length of time on all questions. The researcher was also allowed to ask clarifying questions when necessary. The list of interview questions and transcripts of interviews are provided in Appendix B.

Instruments

The only instruments used in the study were the set of questions (see Appendix B), a writing utensil, pad of paper, and a recording device.
Limitations

The study was limited to a convenience sample of Jewish students in only one Midwestern town, since the town housed the only Jewish day school that exists in this particular state.

A second limitation was the small sample size. Therefore, these results should not be interpreted as being true for all Jewish students attending schools in other Midwestern towns and cities.

A final and very important limitation was the insider status of the researcher who shares a very similar religious identification with the participants of this study. According to Hellawell (2006), when the researcher has insider status, the researcher will reflect on her/his own beliefs and values, when interpreting data as well as choosing which research methodology to employ.

There are advantages and cautions associated with insider research. Robert Merton (1972) who defined an “insider” as “an individual who processes a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members” (quoted in Hellawell, 2006). One potential difficulty with insider research is over-rapport between researcher and informant. Gunasekaia (2007) warned that the “informed perspective” of the interviewer may influence both observations and interpretations. Upon reflection of this last statement, there were times during the interviews where the participant would start to describe a phenomenon and then say “you know what I mean,” in which the researcher would shake her head “yes” in empathy. This was limiting to the research because the researcher sometimes did not hear the full details of that participants unique story.
However, the converse also applied. At times the researcher had prior experiences similar to a phenomenon a participant was reluctant to explain, and drawing from previous knowledge the researcher knew to ask further probing questions. Hockey (1993) believed insiders do not have to deal with culture shock, enjoy enhanced rapport with the subjects, and are seen by the research participants as empathetic.

To maintain neutrality, the researcher tried to keep all personal comments as limited as possible. Focus was centered on asking many clarifying questions, even when the probability of the answer was already known.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Interview Questions and Answers with Selected Commentary

The interview questions were generated to answer the research question: Are Jewish students made to feel marginalized in public schools?

**Question 1: What does being Jewish mean to you and how would you ‘label’ your level of observance?**

The researcher asked this first question to get an idea of the participants’ background in Judaism and the level of observance in their life to discover if there were any correlations between their religious observance and feelings of marginalization. For example, if a student is from a less observant family, or mixed marriage, or one that does not go to synagogue or is not very involved in the Jewish community; perhaps that child is not as affected by feelings of marginalization in the school as one who comes from a very religious family.

The majority of the participants from Group A, the public school, group identified as belonging to the Reform branch of Judaism, and one student labeled herself as being “Conservadox” which seems to indicate following Orthodox customs and traditions with the exception of egalitarianism in most of the rituals as well as the woman not covering her head as a sign of modesty for her husband, and females wearing only skirts past the knees and blouses with sleeves past the elbows as well as a high neck lines in the clothing.

With the exception of the student from the public school group who labeled herself as “Conservadox,” the students described being Jewish meant to them, as belonging to a long history, learning about their ancestors, belonging to a little group, following customs and
going to temple, and following beliefs and ideas that have been passed on throughout the
generations.

All of the participants from Group B, the Jewish school, identified as being Orthodox
and Chasidic, and predominately of the Chabad group of Chasidism. This group of
participants answered the first question the same across the board, that Judaism is their entire
life as they lovingly with fervent passion, commitment, and dedication allow Halakha
(Jewish law) to dictate how they live their entire lives.

Halakha tells one exactly how to dress, what should and should not be said, what can
and cannot be eaten, who one can and cannot marry, sexual relations between a husband and
wife, what prayers should be said and at what times of the day and special events throughout
the year following the cycle of the moon. Most follow halakha according to the customs
outlined in the Shulcan Oruach. Jewish people whose lives are guided by halakha view the
world in an entirely different level than what is known as the status quo of Western
civilization.

**Question 2: Does the “Jewish you” act the same or different at school?**

The participants from group B, the Jewish school, answered this question in two
ways. The most dominant answer was they “act Jewish” all day every day, because it is a
way of life and it doesn’t matter where they are or who they are with. However, two of the
students said they tended to act even more “Jewish” at school than when they are at home,
because school in general is somewhat competitive, and at their school it is important to see
who can be the most observing of halakha.
The public school participants answered differently. The three students who attended Roosevelt said they mostly just hung out with their Jewish friends, and they don’t act any different with non-Jewish friends.

Other than Aish, who said she only has Jewish friends and if she is not with them then she is by herself, the public school participants felt they could not completely be themselves, as Jewish individuals, only because their friends wouldn’t know what they were talking about most of the time; for instance if they were referring to Jewish rituals, holidays, foods, customs, or anything that had to do with the Hebrew or Yiddish language, they would just avoid the conversation all together.

Bob felt it was important to express his Judaism to his non-Jewish friends because people were always curious and asking questions, and he felt it was important to educate people about Judaism.

Fred, the other Jewish student attending high school A felt that he was always the same person, but sometimes his friends’ actions about him being Jewish would cause a change in his behavior. For example, sometimes his friends would tell jokes making fun of people of the Jewish faith…and at times Fred reported their jokes would go a little too far and he would start to become defensive. Fred said it depended on who was telling the joke, and how far the joke would go, but most of the time he would just tell his friends to “knock it off” or would say “that isn’t cool dude.” However, if the person making the anti-Semitic comments or jokes was not a friend, but a random person “came up to me and made fun of my religion, I would be pretty mad and would have to, [pause] I don’t know…[pause] beat them up, depends…but if it is a friend that is just joking I tend to be more lenient.”
Fred was asked to give an example of a joke or situation that was upsetting to him in the past, to get an idea of his threshold for when he decided he needed to “beat up the person or be lenient,” the following is part of a transcription of the interview.

Participant: I think the other people around me make me act different. How they act kinda makes me act different cuz they might...if they act different saying stuff about me in an offensive way, I have to act different. If no one is staying stuff to me, I am like a normal person at school.

Researcher: Could you give an example of something that bothered you?

Participant: They are all messing around but, sometimes they can go a little too far, with jokes that they, people who aren’t Jewish think they are being funny, but they really aren’t. There is this one car joke that I really didn’t like, it’s about like, how do you put a hundred Jews in a car, and they said you put 95 in the ash tray and three in the back seat. I was pretty ticked off about that. There are some other ones with, I don’t remember the whole joke but it has to do with, like, the oven and, I don’t like anyone saying anything about my religion because I tend to get ticked off pretty easy. I make it clear when people are making fun of my religion, so...

Researcher: How do you respond?

Participant: Ummmm, I just say...ummm. Like, you know ‘that’s not cool, so you gotta just leave me alone, cuz that’s not a cool thing to joke about.’ I don’t know if the other kids talked to you about this, but if some random person came up to me and made fun of my religion, I would be pretty mad and would have to, I don’t know....beat them, depends.....but if it is a friend who is just joking, then I tend to be more lenient, so...

**Question 3: Are you comfortable letting your friends and teachers know you are Jewish?**

The participants from Group B, the Jewish school, were stumped by this question because it seemed so odd and strange for anyone to ask. All of their friends and teachers are Jewish. The kids do have some friends in the town that aren’t Jewish, but those friends conform to the standards of the Jewish community, other than vice versa....as it is with the Jewish public school students.
For example, when a non Jewish teenager came over to the house of one of the students from the Jewish school, out of respect to the Jewish family, the non-Jewish teenager put a kippah on his head. This is a stark contrast from the Jewish students in Group A, attending the public schools, who said they would not feel comfortable wearing a kippah to school. One student, Gary, thought he wouldn’t feel comfortable wearing a kippah to school because he thought his friends might grab it off of his head and throw it onto the ground, or toss it around, or pull on the strings of tzit-tzit and it would be a desecration of sacred objects, which he didn’t think his friends wouldn’t understand to respect.

The public school students all felt comfortable letting their friends know they were Jewish, and Bob even made it a point to say that when he gets into a new classroom and they hold introductions and are asked to tell something about themselves, he always says his name and that he is Jewish. Apparently, according to Bob and Diana, when their friends learn that they are Jewish they will say something like, “oh my gosh...”

Considering the fact that the Jewish population in Iowa is .02%, it is not uncommon for Iowan’s to go through their entire lives never meeting anyone of the Jewish faith. For some Iowans, the researcher has discovered that meeting someone Jewish is a rare and interesting occurrence for them.

Question 4: Have any of your teachers, intentionally or unintentionally, ever made you feel uncomfortable for being Jewish? If yes, please describe what happened and how you felt.

Again, this question was not applicable to the students attending the Jewish day school. All of the teachers and students are Jewish and the school curriculum teaches about Judaism and holiday breaks revolve around the Jewish holidays only.
Only one of the public school participants, Rose, said her teachers always made her feel comfortable. However, the interview with Aish revealed that in eighth grade, Rose received a letter from another student stating “Don’t be Jewish, you will burn in hell.” This happened at a junior high school with a 35% minority population and appears to have a curriculum and community that embraces cultural diversity. According to Aish, Rose took the letter to her teacher, said who had given it to her, and the teacher responded by having a conferences with the students responsible for the letter. According to Aish, apparently the girls responsible for the letter gave a tearful apology, which the researcher assumes was accepted by Rosa since she did not mention this incident during her interview. However, Aish indicated nobody believed the girls responsible were really sorry, and from Aish’s point of view, the teacher did not handle the situation well.

The three public school students attending public high school B had incidents to share with the researcher. Three reported the teacher unintentionally made them feel uncomfortable, such as calling on the student to help with pronunciation of Hebrew or Yiddish words and explaining context; two examples were derived from reading books with Jewish content.

For example, Gary reported:

*just this past semester in an English class we read a book about a Jewish kid and so he was referring to me a lot and he kind of relied on me a lot, and there were times that I sorta felt uncomfortable because I didn’t always know. And I sort of felt pressured, like I was sort of obligated to know, in a way. But other than that, that is about it.*
Diana reported similar situations, stating, “they kinda of just make you teach part of the class, kind of, so that people can understand it better, that is really the only thing that they do. I was fine with it.”

Bob felt like he was put on the spot when one of his teachers would always ask him what he felt about certain issues or topics to get the “Jewish perspective.”

Aish felt that “if they [teachers] make it too public, then it is like ‘stop staring at me’ and it draws too much attention to me too. It is like, ‘ok, I am the Jew in the class, stop staring at me.’” Aish also felt uncomfortable when the teachers would bring non-kosher foods to class, but added that if teachers were aware that she keeps kosher they would usually make an effort to provide a kosher option.

Unfortunately, the two boys from the high school A, which is the Southside of this particular city, have experienced what they felt as blatant hostility, from teachers. Fred had a memory from the fifth grade of feeling that the teacher went “too far” when discussing Jewish people. Bob felt the same on a couple of occasions during his time at junior high school and even went so far as to claim that he felt one of his teachers was anti-Semitic:

Yeah, like I didn’t feel uncomfortable being Jewish but the situation was uncomfortable, because a teacher in the 7th grade didn’t like me because I am Jewish… Then we were talking and she was giving lessons about the Holocaust and she was very careful about how she worded it, but, she was not that fond of Jews and said a lot of stereotypical things.

Researcher: Could you give some examples of things that she said that made you feel like they were anti-Semitic?

Bob: Yeah well, she straight up said, like um, talking about the 1940s and the time of the Holocaust and how the Jews would like, stab you in the back…yeahhhh had a few kind words for her.

Researcher: Any other examples?
Bob: *Talking about how they [Jews] manage money, you know, like the stereotypical things to say ‘they’re rich, they’re cheap, they always want to handle their money.’* yeah, we didn’t get along too good.

Researcher: How did it make you feel when she said that?

Bob: *Angry, but proud to be Jewish, you know, cuz it kinda gives me that like, you’re just jealous kind of thing.*

**Question 5: Does your school celebrate any holidays? What kind of Holidays? In what ways are they celebrated? How does this make you feel?**

This question examines the responses concerning celebration of holidays in public schools. Again, starting with the easiest responses, the students from Group B, attending the Jewish day school do celebrate all of the Jewish holidays at their school, as well as spending class time learning about the upcoming holidays to be celebrated in great depth. In the winter, there is never a decorated pine bush at the school or red and white colored candy canes, nor are there any displays of colored eggs in the spring...as are often found in the public school arena as secular symbols of the “season.”

Surprisingly, the most common theme to appear for this question with Group A, the public school students, was concern over school vacations coinciding with Christian holidays. Some of the students noted when they missed school for Jewish holidays, they believed it was not an excused absence because some teachers did not give the child an excused absence or allowed them to make up missed work or lost points. In fact, Public School policy 500:503 section C of this Midwestern city states:

Students are encouraged to attend school daily. However, students may not be subject to disciplinary action for failure to attend school if lack of attendance is beyond the control of the student. A student may be excused by a parent for a valid reason. Other reasons for which a student’s absence from school will be excused are: sub paragraph six states “religious holidays requiring absence from school.”
After the list of ten officially recognized excused absences, the policy goes on to state:

*School work missed because of absence must be made up. Students will be given two days for each day missed to make up work. Make up time may not exceed six school days following the student's return. The time allowed for makeup work may be extended at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Full credit will be given for school work made up because of absences.*

Most Jewish students attending public schools have expressed the difficulty in getting work made up after holiday absences, on top of the daily work and homework they need to do on their return days back to school. During the fall, there are four major holidays within the same month: Yom Kippur, two days of Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah. If one needs time for travel to be with family, that could almost create 10 missed days of classes for the student, in which it becomes exceedingly difficult to make up the work, and almost has a snowball effect.

Moving beyond the complaint of school never being closed for Jewish holidays, and realistically it never will be in this Midwestern state, the second most common grievance was participating in the “holiday” programs at school even if they felt uncomfortable. Diana said her school did have holiday parties and programs, but added that “holiday” usually meant Christmas. The researcher then asked Diana if she had the choice to decline participation, to which she answered yes and further explained her reasoning for not refraining from the Christmas activities, “*because I didn’t want to just sit there and be bored, watching everybody else doing things, and my friends were doing it, so...I just jumped in*” [small uncomfortable laugh].

Bob responded to this question by stating there were Christmas songs and Christmas trees in elementary and junior high school, and he believed there should have been some
Jewish symbols as part of the decorations as well, such as a menorah. In elementary school he did sing Christmas songs for the holiday concert and felt uncomfortable and also felt uncomfortable asking the teacher to abstain from the activity.

Gary recalled participating in Christian based holiday programs and making Christmas tree ornaments but said he was not bothered by it because his mom is Christian and they celebrate Christmas in his home anyway, so “it wasn’t a big deal.”

Aish had a different experience than the other five public school participants. Aish described singing Christmas songs, and the Dreidel song to represent Chanukkah, but then went on to say “it always got to me, it was like, (participant starts to sing) ‘we wish you a Merry Christmas, we Wish you a happy Chanukkah, we wish you a happy Kwanzaa’….so where is the Ramadan?’” Aish was concerned that her Muslim peers were feeling marginalized during the holiday season and felt she needed to speak out for their rights as well.

Aish indicated they were never forced to participate in the holiday programs, but felt it was always implied that they should and described the procedure for the holiday programs:

*They gathered everybody from the whole school and brought them into the gym and if you weren’t singing, you were sitting by yourself staring off into space while everybody else around you is carling.*

Researcher: Did you choose to participate or not?

Aish: Depends. *If we were singing something about baby Jesus, then I am like “la, la, la,” to myself. But if it was like Rudolf the red-nosed-reindeer, usually I would join in on those. They also sang silent Night.*

Researcher: How did it make you feel?

Aish: *Alone and I wished they didn’t sing those kind of songs, I always felt uncomfortable but I wanted to be a part of the group.*
Question 6: Would you feel comfortable asking administration to support a secular version of a Jewish celebration at school?

Gary said there were a few teachers he would feel comfortable asking, but personally, he didn’t think it was a problem that they didn’t celebrate anything for the Jewish holidays, but continues to say that if it was a problem for some of his friends, then yes, he would be willing to say something. Fred, whose mother is also Christian said he “could care less” and had never really thought about it before.

Diana, on the other hand, felt it was inappropriate to ask the administration to include Jewish themes for the holidays because, “I don’t think we should do either, Christian or Jewish holidays at school.”

Question 7: Do you feel comfortable wearing a Star of David Necklace or kippah/yarmulke, or tzit-tzits to school?

When asking this question of the boys from Group B, the Jewish day school, they looked at the researcher as if she had lost her mind and couldn’t believe such a silly question was even being asked. For them, nobody would even think about walking around without a kippah or tzitz tzits. However, they did say it was not customary for men from their sect of Judaism, Chabad, to wear jewelry. With regard to the aspect of the question referring to the Star of David necklace, they said they would not wear one or feel comfortable doing so, but only because it was customary for the men not to wear any jewelry at all. If so, Zevi commented they would all be wearing them.

Fred also said he wouldn’t really feel very comfortable wearing a Star of David necklace unless he could tuck it under his shirt, then he would feel comfortable wearing it and would do so with great pride (as long as it is hiding under his shirt). Fred also believed if
he wore a kippah to school his friends would act different towards him, that it might make them feel awkward.

Bob, who attended the same school as Fred, said he always wears his Star of David necklace to school, many people enquire about its symbolism and he is more than happy to tell them about it.

As mentioned previously, Gary would only feel comfortable wearing the necklace:

*I could go with a Star of David necklace, but not the tzit tzits, because it seems like that is something really holy and I’m not sure if there as many people as I can trust at high school anymore and I just wouldn’t feel comfortable wearing it. I feel like they could ruin it and stuff, by messing with the fringes, or with a kippah, I feel like they might take it off and stuff, some people…to joke around and maybe a few people to do it in a mean way, but mostly joking.*

The three female students attending the public school said they do wear a Star of David necklace to school every day and feel comfortable doing so.

**Question 8: Does your school have classes and/or schedule exams on Jewish holidays when you need to be gone from school to attend your place of worship? Have you been penalized for missing classes on Jewish holidays? Have you ever had to choose between going to class or observing your holiday? How does this make you feel?**

As mentioned previously, this aspect of being Jewish and attending public schools was reported as the most challenging obstacle to the students. Even when teachers are cooperative, it is still difficult it get work made up after missing a few days of school.

Diana, a student of high school C, reported her marching band had something special on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, which she had to miss, but usually her teachers avoid scheduling exams on Jewish holidays. The band director was supportive, but
Diana felt bad that she couldn’t be a part of the big activity for which she had worked so hard.

Rose noted having to miss a choir retreat for the same holiday, and Aish said one year a dance was planned during Passover as well as an important State test on educational development being scheduled on the first day of Passover. For someone of the Jewish faith following Jewish law, that person would not travel in a car, use electricity, tear paper, or even write with a pencil on the first day of Passover.

Gary felt his teachers had always been very reasonable in providing accommodations when he had to miss school for Jewish holiday observances. As a matter of fact, Gary reported that one year the coach of a team he was on even asked if anyone on the team was Jewish so he could schedule practices around the Jewish holidays.

Fred had never really felt any conflict between choosing to observe Jewish holidays or school activities because he rarely, if ever, attended synagogue. As a matter of fact, when trying to describe to the researcher the one holiday he would sometimes attend, he could not even remember the names of the major ceremonial objects. The researcher has observed these same ritual objects easily recognized by two years olds in the community of the private Jewish school, from Research Group B.

Bob, who also attends the same school as Fred, noted that exams have been scheduled on Jewish holidays, but with the exception of the one teacher that had always given him problems, whom he accused of being anti-Semitic, Bob reported all other teacher have been very understanding and allowed for him to make up exams the next day.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In summary, the interviews seemed to reveal the Jewish public school students felt most of their peers and teachers were trying to be respectful of their religious minority status, with the exception of a few isolated incidents. These interviews were a stark contrast from the interviews conducted with the Jewish public school students during the pilot studies. Four major themes emerged from the interviews:

1. The public school students reported the schools excused absences for holiday observance, yet still planned major activities and exams on Jewish holidays and often it was difficult to make up all work properly. The students attending the Jewish day school never had to deal with this issue, because the Jewish day school was always closed for all Jewish holidays.

2. All but one of the public school students felt marginalized in school during the Christian holiday seasons. None of the students attending the Jewish day school ever felt marginalized during the Christian holiday season because there was nothing in their school that even closely resembled even secular symbols or representations of the Christian holidays.

3. The public school students often felt they had to be a spokesperson for their religion since they were often the only Jewish student in the public school classroom setting.

4. This is a Christian nation, and the Jewish students are a minority, therefore they do not feel they have the right to equal protection and treatment with regard to the Constitution.
What is Christian Privilege?

Christian Privilege: Breaking a Sacred Taboo is a landmark article written by Lewis Shlosser (2003) using the theoretical framework of male privilege and white privilege (McIntosh, 1998) for grounding his theory that there are certain privileges and advantages one has belonging to the dominant religious group of the United States, Christianity, that often goes unnoticed by its members.

Non Christian religious groups are a numerical minority, and when added together, still do not equal that of the Christian majority who have enjoyed superiority and long standing political positions which have influenced the laws and culture of the United States. Members of these minority religious groups often feel marginalized based solely on their group membership. “Christian religious dogmatism contributes to persons from minority religious groups feeling that their religious identity is not valued, and, subsequently, they feel discrimination and oppression because of their religious group membership” (2003, p. 47).

One possible explanation for the existence of Christian privilege is the notion of a “nonconscious ideology” (Bem & Bem, 1970, p. 89), which describes how implicit beliefs and attitudes are used to maintain the status quo, via the analogy of a fish being last to notice the pervasiveness of the water. In other words, when we are surrounding by our privilege (the water) and swimming around in it all day, we do not realize another world exists outside of the water. The persons looking into the “fishbowl” would be those of the minority group, whose natural environment is “outside of the fishbowl.” However, in order to survive, these minority groups have had to learn to hold their breath and swim with the fish. These people minority members have learned to survive in both worlds are trying to show the fish there is
an equally validating life that exists outside of the fishbowl, and what the air breathing fish need to more comfortably survive in the realm of the fish bowl and also to ask some of the fish to learn how to survive outside of the water.

“In a similar fashion, Christians are not likely to know (or believe) that the environment is oppressive, because that environment has never been oppressive to them for being Christian. Thus, Christian privilege is likely to be a result of Christianity being the nonconscious ideology (in terms of religious group membership) of the United States. Even if this is a valid explanation for the existence of Christian privilege, because Christians are the dominant religious group in the United States, it is their responsibility to recognize their power and the accompanying privileges” (Schlosser, 2003, p. 47).

Shlosser gave 40 examples of what could be labeled as aspects of Christian privilege. Following are just a few of the examples:

- It is likely that state and federal holidays coincide with my religious practices, thereby having little to no impact on my job and/or education.
- I can openly display my religious symbol(s) on my person or property without fear of disapproval, violence, and/or vandalism.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence and importance of my religion.
- I am never asked to speak on behalf of all Christians.
- I am likely not judged by the improper actions of others in my religious group.
- It is likely that I can find items to buy that represent my religious norms and holidays with relative ease (e.g., food, decorations, greeting cards, etc.).
• I am probably unencumbered by having to explain why I am or am not doing things related to my religious norms on a daily basis.

• I can talk openly about my religious practices without concern for how it will be received by others.

Schlosser’s article (2003) enables persons from the majority religion of this country to understand they actually receive and benefit from privileges not afforded to persons of minority religions. The purpose of this research gives pragmatic diagnosis of the phenomena which Schlosser described, and proposes future researchable solutions to rectify the problem.

**Examples of internalized beliefs validating Christian privilege**

The participants were never asked if they believed that America is a Christian nation, or if they felt their constitutional rights were being violated. Nevertheless, in every interview with the Jewish public school students, this became a prevalent theme which is now discussed in further detail.

The following statements were extracted from the transcripts of the interviews to demonstrate that even some of the Jewish students falsely believe they should not have equal constitutional rights because they are they are a minority, and in a democratic society, the belief is perpetuated onto all instances that majority rules.

Rose: *In 2007 my choir had a retreat over Yom Kippur, but I don’t think she knew, and I am the only Jewish kid in the choir...*

Bob: *They schedule the soccer games around the Christian holidays, but never around the Jewish holidays. I mean we are a minority, I mean especially on the south side, we really are (pause) so I don’t think they really pay much attention, so I have to choose...I usually choose to observe the Jewish holiday.*
Diana felt she wouldn’t feel comfortable asking the administration to include teaching about Jewish traditions in the curriculum because “the majority of the class isn’t Jewish and they wouldn’t really get it, or have fun maybe.”

When Fred was asked if he would ever feel comfortable asking administration to support secular versions of Jewish holidays at schools, he responded by stating “I could…but I haven’t really thought about that...”

Aish expressed the opinion there should not be any holiday celebrations in the public schools and another student believed the holiday celebrations should include more information for several minority faiths, “I feel like there should be more teaching of all religions, I think if people were better educated, there would be a lot less problems. My Muslim friends are teased too.”

The previous examples illustrate how the public school participants felt. Because they are a minority, they feel they do not have the right to ask for the Constitutional guarantee to be treated with the same equality as those afforded to their Christian peers within the public school setting.

Illustrations of Jewish students feeling marginalized in the public schools with respect to the calendar following Christian holidays

Events are often scheduled on Saturdays but rarely on Sundays, because Sunday is considered “church day” in America. As a matter of fact, there used to be laws that prohibited stores from being open on Sundays. These were called “Blue laws.” In addition, during the 1700s and 1800s, a person could be arrested if caught observing Sabbath participation rituals on Saturday. Thankfully, these laws no longer exist, but there is still very
much an unspoken “law” of Sunday being church day; therefore, events are not scheduled on this day and are usually scheduled for Saturdays instead.

Extracurricular school activities would be included as part of the “unspoken law” that Sunday is church day. For instance, high school sports games often take place on a Friday or Saturday night, but never on a Sunday. The same is true for various academic clubs, including the debate team as well as the concert choirs to the math club. For the Jewish student who is observant of the orthodox laws surrounding the Sabbath, (s)he would automatically be eliminated from full participation in such extracurricular school activities, thus causing the student to feel marginalized due to their religious minority status. This is also an example of Christian privilege. For instance, some students who participate and excel in extracurricular activities such as debate or sports are often offered scholarship to college to be on the same extracurricular teams in college.

The Jewish student who is observant of the Sabbath and cannot participate in Friday night games or Saturday debate tournaments, the opportunity of the college scholarship is taken away, thus allowing a perpetuation of Christian privilege to affect the next generation. This is one of the ways in which the religious majority must be made aware of the privilege they are given by the unspoken law of Sunday being church day and the fact that extracurricular school activities are never schedule on this day of the week.

Aish was a part of the school’s math team and many of the competitions were scheduled on Saturdays and she reported her “*math teacher couldn’t figure out why I wouldn’t give up shabbos so I could go to some of the math competitions.*”
On a positive note, Gary mentioned one year his coach asked if there were any Jewish students on the team, Gary did not finish his sentence, but it appeared he was trying to indicate that the coach would try to schedule practices around the Jewish holidays.

**Feelings of marginalization due to absence from school for observance of religious holidays**

Although students are allowed to make up exams the day after an excused absence, this was not a good situation for Aish when the educational development tests for her State were scheduled on the first day of Passover. The reader should be made to realize that taking an exam on the first day of Passover is equivalent to taking an exam on January 1, after a big New Years Eve party. The first night of Passover a Sedar is conducted, and it is “commanded” to drink 4 glasses of wine as part of the ceremony. The meal starts after sundown, which is usually about 7:30 pm, and usually takes approximately three hours from beginning to end. Most people attending a sedar do not get home until well after midnight, and, if one is over the age of 13, they are usually allowed to drink wine as well. In light of this, it is easy to understand how it would be very inconvenient for a student to take an exam such as these on the first day of Passover and why the student should not be expected to take the exam on that day even if attending school.

The next example is derived from the public high school C policies regarding school absences in relation to the semester Exams. As the reader shall see, even though an absence will be excused for religious observances, the student will not have the same opportunities and privilege of options for taking the semester exam (see Table 2). This is a prime example of Christian Privilege.
Table 2. Public high school policy for exams

SEMESTER EXAMS
The semester test schedule will be established based upon the official school calendar. Each exam will be 85 minutes in length. The semester final exam will be no more than 1/5 (20%) of the semester grade.

Should a student fail to take a semester final, the student will receive a failing grade for the course because the student did not complete the requirements for the course.

SEMESTER EXAM WAIVER
A semester Test waiver is being used as a positive reinforcement to all students who have outstanding attendance. A student who misses 4 or fewer days during a semester may have the option of not taking two of their finals providing that the student adheres to the following provisions:

1. A student who has four or less excused absences may waive two semester tests in classes which he/she has met the attendance requirements. The following will not be counted against the 4 excused absences a student is allowed per class/per semester:
   (a.) Participating in a school sponsored activity
   (b.) A student may have 2 days for post-secondary planning during the semester.
   (c.) Death in the family
   (d.) Observation of a religious holiday

To verify the visit, the student must provide a signature on official letterhead from the organization he/she visited.

If a student has more than ten (10) excused absences in a class, for whatever reason, including any of the above, he/she will take the final exam in that class. (Retrieved June 18, 2009)
The Jewish student who is observant of halakhah could potentially miss two days of school for Rosh Hashanah, one day for Yom Kippur, and one day for Simchat Torah during the fall semester. If we give one day for travel to join family for these most important holidays of the Jewish year, and one day to travel home, then we have a total of 10 missed days of school. As the public school calendar is now, school is always dismissed with enough time for people to have time to travel to be with family on Christmas.

As one can see, this is an example of Christian Privilege as described by Schlosser (2003). The Christian students will not have to worry about their holiday observance interfering with qualification of exemptions for final exams.

**Feelings of marginalization in relation to holiday celebrations within the public school**

Aish: *They gathered everybody from the whole school and brought them into the gym and if you weren’t singing, you were sitting by yourself staring off into space while everybody else around you is caroling.*

Researcher: How did it make you feel?

Aish: *Alone and I wished they didn’t sing those kind of songs, I always felt uncomfortable but I wanted to be a part of the group.*

Diana also mentioned the winter concerts would include songs that related to Christmas, and that she also felt alone and isolated when given the choice to participate or not, but always participated so she could be a part of the group. This corresponds to Maslow’s hierarchy of belonging and wanting to feel as part of the group in order to be able to do well and focus on academics. In addition, Erik Erikson defined adolescence as a time when peer relations are most important and also when the adolescent is shaping their identity of who they are, which includes identifying with a particular religion. Erickson further
defined this stage as identity versus role confusion, and it is very difficult for the teenager of a minority religious status to define who (s)he is when (s)he is constantly feeling marginalized at school and among peers.

One can delve even further into this typical phenomena happening in the school surrounding the holiday celebrations, which are supposed to be secular but, indeed, are not. Diana’s music teacher said if anyone had any objections to any of the holiday songs, they should say something and she would take them out.

Although the teacher thought (s)he was being sensitive and caring, (s)he actually put the minority students in a very awkward position. Diana felt since the majority of the school consisted of people from the Christian faith; she should just go along with the majority and not call attention to herself or voice any objections she might have.

At this point, the principal as well as the music teacher had the ability to consider the discomfort of a Jewish student singing celebratory songs commemorating the birth of an alien:

G-d (Jesus) belonging to a polytheistic religion (Christianity) contradicting the monotheistic beliefs of this child’s religion. Accordingly, what is considered “normal” participation in a societal practice can also be considered an abhorrent practice to an individual navigating through this very same society.

One should also keep in mind that, should there be even a single student in the class that does not belong to the majority faith, which is more often than not Christianity, having holiday parties and school concerts is a direct violation of Code Section 256.11 (2001) of this particular Mid-Western State.

Equity Education: Both federal and state laws require that there be no discrimination in educational programs or in school hiring practices on the basis of race, national origin, color, religion, creed, gender, disability,
age and marital status. Districts are required to implement multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the entire educational program. The Department of Education has the legal responsibility to monitor compliance with these equity-related requirements in school districts receiving federal and state funding.

Parents and students should not be put in the position to oversee the implementation of school laws. When this occurs, the student is often bullied and harassed by peers as well as teachers and administration alike, as was the case with the children of Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Therefore, the holiday celebrations when celebrated as a norm of the society and not as an isolated lesson within the social sciences curriculum will inadvertently cause the minority child stress and susceptibility to being ridiculed, bullied and taunted by peers if they are not allowed to have holiday celebrations because of this one student.

It is the job of the public school to implement a non discriminatory curriculum for all students, and when this is not accomplished, students become prone to prejudice and fall prey to stereotypes of minority students with whom they have no interaction and begin to manifest internalized oppression or believe something is wrong with them. This ideology was observed when Rachel, from the pilot study, felt such hostility from peers and teachers about being Jewish, that she chose to hide her Jewish identity. Rachel fell victim to harassment from peers once it was somehow discovered by her peers during her senior year that she was actually Jewish.

The aforementioned phenomenon is similar to a scenario in a South Park Episode, 110 aired on December 17, 1997 (http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.Individual &VideoID=17685933). In this episode, the mother of the only Jewish student in the school objects to the nativity scene being performed for the winter holiday program and
takes her concerns to the mayor, who is obligated to uphold the law. As a result of the Jewish mother speaking with the mayor to implement the law, the music teacher is told they cannot have anything in the winter music program having to do with Christmas. The music teacher is stumped as to what they could do and asks the children for song suggestions. One child suggests that they sing a song called “Kyle’s mom is a Big Fat Bitch” in D minor.

Although no child would actually suggest this to a music teacher, and a music teacher would never say to the students they are not allowed to sing Christmas songs because of a minority student, all of the children and the teacher would know why the changes happened. It is also very likely there would be consequences to that minority student and her/his family.

Why has it taken 12 years for someone in the academic field to document the same illustrations that were aired as a satire on a silly cartoon? Could it be cartoon producers are actually better informed of the social happening in the public schools than the Department of Education? It is very distressing, indeed, that only now this phenomenon will be brought to the attention of academic world.

Final Conclusions

When stating final conclusions one needs to be reminded the definition of marginalization from the Merriam Webster’s dictionary: “to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.” By and large, the final conclusion of the researcher, with consideration to the pilot studies as well, is that Jewish students do, indeed, feel marginalized in the public schools as a result of the curriculum and instruction of the institutions. However, Jewish students tend to feel less marginalized when attending schools with populations that include other Jewish students as well.
These same feelings of marginalization for being Jewish are not felt by Jewish students attending a Jewish day school, or schools with very large Jewish populations (Garland 2006, 2007). To illustrate this conclusion, students from the pilot study attending schools in Chicago and San Diego described they never felt marginalized and never had a negative experience with peers and teachers. These students also reported that their teachers expected them to be gone for Jewish holidays. Students in the current study, who attended the public schools in the C district and also in the public school B districts of this town, also felt rather comfortable at school, had Jewish peers, and also reported that most of the marginalization they felt was inadvertent. However, the public school students in the A school district did have teachers they viewed as anti-Semitic and also dealt with a few anti-Semitic comments and behaviors from peers as well.

Students attending the public schools from the pilot studies also reported several instances of peer harassment. Nearly every student surveyed reported being harassed by peers when alone in an isolated hallway at the schools, but never by a group of students. They felt comfortable with teachers, but felt uncomfortable with the holiday atmosphere at the schools, especially when Christmas music was played over the loud speaker in the mornings.

The students from the pilot studies attending schools in rural Midwestern towns had miserable experiences and were treated unfairly by peers, teachers, and administration alike. One student was harassed by teachers and peers so badly, he manifested acute physical symptoms of stress from the bullying he had experienced, such as being blamed for killing Jesus, the principal of the school not allowing him to wear a kippah during a Christmas
program, and the teacher even telling the student he wouldn’t be punished in school if he was Christian and didn’t miss school to observe his Jewish holidays. The child developed severe diarrhea and vomited each morning before having to go to school until he was finally taken out and home schooled.

However, the worst case scenario was described by a girl who moved from one small town in Iowa to another, and decided in the second town to hide that she was Jewish because “she knew what people thought of Jews.” Her identity was discovered during her senior year. When her identity became known, people who had once been her friends were no longer friends, and random people in the hallways started to make ethnic jokes whenever she would pass.

The only instance in which the researcher discovered a positive Jewish schooling experience in small town Iowa was from the Jewish students from Research Group B who attended the Jewish day school. In summary, the smaller the town with little exposure to people of the Jewish faith, the worse the conditions were for students of the Jewish faith who attended public schools.

As educators and policy makers, we must ask of ourselves “Is it ok to let a few students feel marginalized in public schools or should we train teachers to support a multicultural curriculum that embraces people of all faiths, nationalities, and races, even if there are not students in the school system which represent these identities?”

According to a website from a Midwestern Department of Education, those associated with the institution believe “The wide range of diversities in the United States is one of our national treasures, and [our] schools reflect that rich diversity. Information about diverse
learners is used by teachers to create a democratic and humane environment where all students are seen as individuals, who are respected and valued for their diversity” (Retrieved June 30, 2009).

Without a doubt, there are several Jewish students attending public schools in this Midwestern city who are not in a democratic and humane environment where all students are seen as individuals. Several of the Jewish students have felt disrespected and not valued for their minority status by the students, teachers, and administration alike. Jewish students from Group A predominately felt they were unintentionally marginalized by the public school’s policies and curriculum.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was conducted with a very small sample population. A much larger sample size and a critical ethnography should be conducted to understand this phenomenon in greater depth. The critical ethnographer is interested in systematically unveiling social injustice and feelings of marginalization by individuals and groups of people in hope of creating social change. “Critical ethnographers aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding. They also share with interpretivist ethnographers the view that the cultural informant’s perceptions of social reality are themselves theoretical constructs” (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). It is important for the reader to keep in mind the individual participant is not completely representative of the group. Nevertheless, “how a key actor weaves a personal story tells much about the fabric of the social group”
APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL AND INFORMED CONSENT

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

DATE: 22 May 2009

TO: Steven Dwight Schulz
    906 N. Grant Road, Carroll, IA 51401

CC: Larry Ebbers
    N225A Lagomarcino

FROM: Jan Canny, IRB Administrator
      Office of Research Assurances

TITLE: Iowa Community College Adjunct Faculty Survey

IRB ID: 09-200

Approval Date: 21 May 2009
Date for Continuing Review: 20 May 2010

The Chair of Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University has reviewed and approved the modification of this project. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use the documents with the IRB approval stamp** in your research.
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by completing the “Continuing Review and/or Modification” form.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.**
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office of Research Assurances website [www.compliance.iastate.edu](http://www.compliance.iastate.edu) or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.
Consent Forms

Title of Study: Christian Privilege: Do Jewish Students in Public Schools Feel Marginalized?

Investigator: Michelle Garland, PhD Candidate

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as being of the Jewish faith and are attending a public school.

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of a Jewish adult or child’s experiences as a student in a public school setting. The research is being conducted to gain a greater understanding with regard to the following questions:

How do you feel during the celebration of Christian holidays? Have you encountered any difficulties due to leaving school for observation of the Jewish holidays, or is the school closed on these days? Have you ever felt “different,” like an outsider, or a part of the group. Have your peers or teachers ever made any derogatory comments based on the fact that you are Jewish? Do you believe the school atmosphere and curriculum contributed to your feelings of self worth?

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for about a half an hour, possibly longer depending on how much information you wish to share. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will be asked to complete a survey regarding your level of religious observance, age, where you attend(ed) school(s) and your attitudes towards Christian privilege in public schools. Following the survey, open ended questions will be asked of you, the participant.

I would like to use audio and/or visual recordings during the interview, but will not do so without your permission and written consent. These recording will be for my eyes and ears only. Should a need arise for these recordings to be viewed by another person(s), I will not do so before obtaining your written consent, and of course you have the right to reject my request. For the survey and questionnaire, you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable. You may also choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time you wish, and/or request at a later date the information you shared should not be used in my study and video/audio recording should be destroyed.

RISKS

While participating in this study you may experience the following risks: Emotional pain of past experiences, should you have had any.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study, I do not foresee any direct benefits towards you, unless a change of school policy should occur as a result of my study, and this would somehow affect you. It is hoped the information gained in this study will benefit society by allowing policy makers to gain insight of the psychological experiences endured by Jewish students in public schools with regard to celebration of holidays and Jewish presence, or lack of, within the curriculum.
COSTS AND COMPENSATION
You will not have any costs, nor will you receive any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, the IRB - Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: subjects will be assigned a unique code and letter, found at the top of this paper in red marker, which will be used on all other forms instead of your name. Only I will have access to study your records. Should I receive notice from the IRB committee to inspect my records for quality assurance and data analysis, they will only be able to identify you by your assigned code. Should you choose to allow videotaping of our interview, members of the IRB would be able to recognize your physical identity, but will not have access to your name. At this point in time, I do not have any plans to destroy the data by a specified date. If the results of this research are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, you may contact one or both of my major co-advisors:

Dr. Gary Phye                                          Dr. Ellen Fairchild
515-294-1962                                          515-294-8767
gdphye@iastate.edu                                   efair@iastate.edu

My contact information is:
Michelle Garland
515-294-5927
mgarland@iastate.edu

If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, jcs1959@iastate.edu, or Diane Ament, Director, Office of Research Assurances (515) 294-3115, dament@iastate.edu.
PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name (printed) 

(Participant’s Signature) (Date)

[Include the Parent/Guardian/Legally Authorized Representative signature line only if applicable to your study.]

(Signature of Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative) (Date)

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

(Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent) (Date)
APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

1. What does being Jewish mean to you?

2. If you had to label your religious observance, would you consider yourself to be secular, reform, conservative, reconstructionist, modern-orthodox, orthodox, or ultra-orthodox (Chasidim).

3. Does the “Jewish you” act the same or different at school?

4. Are you comfortable letting your friends and teachers know you are Jewish?

5. Have any of your teachers ever made you feel uncomfortable for being Jewish? If yes, could you say a little about what happened and how you felt?

6. Does your school celebrate any holidays? What kind of holidays? In what ways? How does this make you feel?

7. Do you have to participate in the making of Christmas decorations or singing of Christmas songs? Did anything happen because of this? How did this make you feel?

8. Would you feel comfortable asking administration to support a secular version of a Jewish celebration at school?

9. Do you feel comfortable wearing a Star of David necklace or kippah/yarmulke, tzitzit to school?

10. Does your school have classes and/or schedule exams on Jewish holidays when you need to be gone from school to attend your place of worship? Have you been penalized for missing classes on Jewish holidays? Have you ever had to choose between going to class or observing your holiday? How does this make you feel?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share?
Transcripts of Interviews

BOB-Attends school A, His mother is Jewish his father is Christian.

1. To be involved in the Jewish community and being active
2. Reform
3. Yeah, b/c there aren’t that many Jews, just me and one other person who is Jewish at that school, and a lot of people always ask questions, so I think that its important, you know, to express your Judaism, and I do that at school too. You know, just when it happens.
4. About 3,000 at the school and two Jewish students
5. Yeah, for sure. When they always go around the room and introduce yourself, you know, for an ice breaker, and like say something about yourself, I’ll always say my name, and then I am Jewish.
6. Yeah, like I didn’t feel uncomfortable being Jewish but the situation was uncomfortable, b/c a teacher in the 7th grade didn’t like me b/c I am Jewish. She would always put me on the spot with things, and kinda be like ‘well what do you think about this?’ you know, or just, she would give me detention and stuff for things that I did that other students were doing. Like before class we can talk, and I was talking and so was everybody else, and she was like, you know you have detention, and I was like. Then we were talking and she was giving lessons about the Holocaust and she was very careful about how she worded it, but, she was not that fond of Jews and said a lot of stereotypical things.

Examples of things that she said that made you feel like they were anti-Semitic?
Yeah well, she straight up said, like um, talking about the 1940s and the time of the Holocaust and how the Jews would like, stab you in the back…yeahhhh had a few kind words for her.
Any other examples?
Talking about how they [Jews] manage money, you know, like the stereotypical things to say ‘they’re rich, they’re cheap, they always want to handle their money.’ yeah, we didn’t get along too good.
How did it make you feel when she said that?
Angry, but proud to be Jewish, you know, cuz it kinda gives me that like, you’re just jealous kind of thing.
7. Yeah, but not any Jewish holidays. Like, you know how you get Christmas and Easter off, but not Chanukah or Rosh Hashanah….I don’t think they are excused absences. Because I went to services last year for Rosh Hashanah and the teachers did give me any excused absence and I told her the reason, but she didn’t give me one.
8. There is but they try to keep it, like, low, because you know, of the separation of church and state.
Do you feel there is a separation of church and state?
Yeah, but you can tell the majority is Christian and Catholic and I always think we need to put some menorahs up there too, with the other decorations.
9. Yeah, in elementary school for Christmas songs (he had to participate) and Christmas trees in junior high
Were you forced to do that, or could you choose not to?
Uh, I didn’t really say anything, so…I don’t know.
Did you feel uncomfortable?
No, not really
He would also feel comfortable asking to have secular Jewish decorations included.
“oh yeah, for sure I would”
10. I always wear my Star of David necklace to school. People always ask me what it is and I tell them, about like, Judaism also, and that’s one of the Jewish symbols.

11. Yeah, they schedule exams on Jewish holidays, but all of the teachers understand, except for that one teacher, but the other teachers understand so they will let me make it up the next day. They schedule the soccer games around the Christian holidays, but never around the Jewish holidays. I mean we are a minority, I mean especially on the south side, we really are…so I don’t think they really pay much attention, so I do have to choose. I usually choose to observe the Jewish holiday.

**Diana- Attends School C**

1. You don’t have to be good just to get into heaven, you just be good because you want to.

2. Reform

3. Here [Wed classes] we have more in depth conversations, we still goof off, but we have different conversations. I just don’t think my friends at school would understand these same conversations.

4. Yeah, they kind of go like, Oh my gosh…kind of thing

5. No, they kinda of just make you teach part of the class, kind of, so that people can understand it better, that is really the only thing that they do. I was fine with it.

6. Yeah, we have holiday parties, but usually holiday meant Christmas, so… And how would you know that, if they said holidays, what made you believe that it was Christmas?

   Because in like the holiday parties that they threw, they always had activities that involved like, around Christmas trees and I didn’t know what was going on! (laugh)

   How did it make you feel?
   I didn’t really understand anything, but it was nice to take a break from class. They did tell me that I didn’t have to do it, but, I didn’t want to just sit there, so I didn’t really mind.

   Did you feel uncomfortable while you were doing it?
   Not usually, (slight sigh)

   What was your reasoning for not wanting to not participate?
   Because I didn’t want to just sit there and be bored, watching everybody else doing things, and my friends were doing it, so….I just jumped in. (small laugh)

   Did you feel you were betraying your religion when you did that?
   No, b/c I wasn’t changing my beliefs, I was just doing an activity

7. Songs? 8th grade show choir, the winter concert is usually made up of Santa Clause songs, but she said that if we had any objections of it, because there were a lot of Jewish people in it, there were like two in each grade, which is a lot for that school, and so we just had to talk to her, but we didn’t really do anything.

8. Not sure, kinda depends on the attitude of the activities because the majority of the class is not Jewish and they wouldn’t really get it, or have fun maybe.

   I don’t think we should do either (not Jewish or Christian based holiday celebrations) but it usually happens that way.

9. I wear it (Star of David necklace) every single day, because I got it in Israel and I just wear it.

10. Usually, they usually don’t schedule tests, but they might have an occasional quiz, but they don’t penalize for it, so… Had to choose between extra curricular activity and observance of holiday?
Yeah, every year the band marches on Yom Kippur, every single year, so we always have to choose on whether we want to skip out on services or go. I usually just go to services and my teacher didn’t do anything, he just said ‘ok’.

Did you feel bad that you had to miss your band?
Kind of, but…I don’t know (uncomfortable laugh)

Fred – Attends School A, his Father is Jewish and his mother is Christian
1. Means that it is important to me b/c I like learning about my past and my ancestors and history of the Jewish people, there is a lot to it, and this question could go on forever, and there are like a hundred reasons, but….like I said, I like learning about my ancestors, their history, what they have been through, I like just enjoying learning about that and…that’s pretty much just it. Like I said there is a lot more but….I haven’t really thought about that a lot…but umm…if someone else should ask me about that question and I could think….
2. Reform
3. I think the other people around me make me act different. How they act kinda makes me act different cuz they might….i mean, how I act, I act the same, but they, um….kind of, if they act different saying stuff about me in an offensive way, I have to act different. If no one is staying stuff to me, I am like a normal person at school. I feel a little bit more comfortable here because we are all Jewish and we bond, but at my school, I bond with people ok, but, you just have to pick the right people.

Examples
They are all messing around but, sometimes they can go a little too far, with jokes that they, people who aren’t Jewish think they are being funny, but they really aren’t. There is this one car joke that I really didn’t like , it’s about like , how do you put a hundred Jews in a car, and they said you put 97 in the ash tray and three in the back seat and two in the front seat. I was pretty ticked off about that. There are some other ones with, I don’t remember the whole joke but it has to do with, like, the oven and, I don’t like anyone saying anything about my religion b/c I tend to get ticked off pretty easy. I make it clear when people are making fun of my religion, so…

How do you respond?
Ummmm, I just say….ummmm. Like, you know ‘that’s not cool, so you gotta just leave me alone, cuz that’s not a cool thing to joke about’ I don’t know if the other kids talked to you about this, but if some random person came up to me and made fun of my religion, I would be pretty mad and would have to, I don’t know….beat them, depends…..but if it is a friend who is just joking, then I tend to be more lenient, so…
4. Yeah, in like 5th grade, um…I don’t remember anything, but like they were trying to make a point about Jewish people and they just went too far and uh….
5. No they don’t celebrate any holidays, school wide, but some classrooms have decorations, like Christmas. Yeah, there is stuff in the hallways, just here and there….but mostly just in the classrooms. Doesn’t bother me because I celebrate Christmas and Chanukah, we just get presents…no religious, doesn’t really matter to me.
6. Never had to participate
7. I could but I haven’t really thought about that….I could but….I could care less at school
8. With a kippah, they would act different, how they will react would be kind of awkward….star of David necklace, don’t have one of those right now, but if I did I would wear it with pride,
so…they don’t really show, because I could put it under, but if I could maybe I would put it out so everyone could see. I mean, I am not ashamed of being Jewish, but , ummm….

9. No I haven’t really had to make a choice…no not really.
Do you come to synagogue for Jewish holidays?
No not really, not as much as I should, but like here and there
What holiday do you come for?
Come to hear the…..sh…. (couldn’t think of the name of any holiday or the name for shofar… which he was trying to say) I’ve done Yom Kippur in the past, I don’t come a lot.

**AISH – Attends School B, Both parents are Jewish**

1. It depends, if you are talking about my schedule, it means weekly Hebrew school, Shabbat, a night at temple once a month… totally boggles the minds of my Christian friends who can’t figure out why I don’t have Jesus in my heart (laugh) and ….um, I don’t know. It is my connection with G-D.

2. Conservadox

3. Not the only Jewish person in my class. I have been in the same math class with Miriam and Rosa since the third grade and also another Jewish kid, so there are four of us in that one class. In science class, I have Gal. If I am not with Rosa and Miriam, I am usually just by myself.

4. In public school it is all about image and what people think of you, so I try to be a martyr sort of thing, but in Hebrew school everybody already knows who I am b/c I have been in class with them for so long and we all know each other very well, so (laugh) I act out more at Hebrew school! I have the same friends here as I do at school.

5. Well, um….my math teacher couldn’t figure out why I wouldn’t give up shabbos so I could go to some of the math competitions. But I think that it is the current English teacher, we recently read the chosen, and he would ask me how to pronounce things.
If teachers bring non-kosher foods to class, then they inadvertently make me feel uncomfortable.
If they make it too public, then it is like “stop staring at me” and it draws too much attention to me too. It is like, ok, I am the Jew in the class, stop staring at me.

6. We have winter break over Christmas, ….

7. Every year there was a holiday party, and we would sing Christmas song, maybe the driedle song, didn’t do any Ramadan. It always got to me, it was like (singing) we wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a happy Chanukah, we wish you a happy Kwanzaa…so where is the Ramadan?

8. Never forced to participate, but always implied you should.
What do you mean by that?
They gathered everybody from the whole school and brought then into the gym and if you weren’t singing, you were sitting by yourself staring off into space while everybody else around you is caroling.

Did you choose to participate or not?
Depends. If we were singing something about baby Jesus, then I am like (makes lips rolling sound) and la, la, la, la to myself. But if it was like Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer, usually I would join in on those.

They sang silent night
How did it make you feel?
Alone, wished they didn’t sing those kind of songs
Feels uncomfortable but participates to be a part of the group
9. It is high school, they don’t do much decorating.
Usually snow men…as far as I remember
10. Feels comfortable wearing a star of David necklace
11. Conflict – On Passover they are doing ITEDS, well, it ended up being the day of….and Central dance is during Passover…so I guess it is like, no coke for us.
12. I think I am not picked on because I am hard to touch, but Rosa on the other hand is quite easy to bug and irritate, she once got a letter that said “Don’t be Jewish, you will burn in Hell” and they gave it to her…..in middle school, 8th grade. She got the teachers to bring in the people responsible to give a very tearful apology, which no one believes. The teachers didn’t handle it well.

**Gary - School B, Father is Jewish Mother is Christian**
1. Following the Jewish religion as best as I can, the beliefs and ideas that have been passed on, and the best worshipper and follower that I can be
2. Reform
3. Pretty much the same, most everyone I hang out with or talk to know I am Jewish, so they don’t really have to hide anything, I guess, but pretty much the same. Haven’t had any problems in the past so I am pretty comfortable with it.
4. Teachers – just this past semester in an English class we read a book about a Jewish kid and so he was referring to me a lot and he kind of relied on me a lot, and there were times that I sorta felt uncomfortable because I didn’t always know. And I sort of felt pressured, like I was sort of obligated to know, in a way. But other than that, that is about it
5. Easter but no Jewish holidays. We made Christmas ornaments once, but there wasn’t too much. I was really young, so I didn’t realize what it was, and my mom is Christian so we celebrate Christmas too, so it really wasn’t a big deal.
6. Asking admin- there are a couple of teachers I would feel comfortable bringing it up to, but personally isn’t the biggest problem if we don’t celebrate the jewish faith, but I mean, if there were some other people that were concerned, I would be willing to talk to other teachers as well.
7. I could go with a Star of David necklace, but not the tzitzit, because it seems like that is something really holy and I’m not sure if there as a many people as I can trust at high school anymore and I just wouldn’t feel comfortable wearing it. I feel like they could ruin it and stuff, by messing with the fringes, or with a kippah, I feel like they might take it off and stuff, some people…to joke around and maybe a few people to do it in a mean way, but mostly joking.
8. Been reasonable and asked ahead of time if anyone on the team is Jewish, so I just let them know and they let me make up the assignments.
9. I feel like there should be more teaching of all religions, I think if people were better educated, there would be a lot less problems. My Muslim friends are teased too.

**Rose – School B**
1. Following Jewish customs and going to temple and belonging to my little group of Jewish friends.
2. Reform- we go for most major holidays and once in a while for Shabbat, but not regularly, we don’t do much at home.
3. I don’t think I act differently b/c I am mostly with Jewish people and I don’t act any differently with my non-Jewish friends.
4. Comfortable
5. Always felt comfortable
6. Holidays and in what ways? We have winter break over Christmas, but that isn’t really celebrating the holiday….
   Arts and crafts or songs –
   I think we learned some Christmas carols, but I don’t really remember which ones…can’t really remember.
7. There isn’t much that is related to holidays at schools
8. Feels comfortable wearing a Star of David necklace
9. Planned tests over holidays and conferences over Yom Kippur, 2007 my choir had a retreat over Yom Kippur, but I don’t think she knew and I am the only Jewish kid in the choir, so I don’t think she was really aware of the Jewish holidays, and I had just joined. Making up the tests and stuff you have to come in after school, but it is the same thing if you were sick from school. The only thing that was annoying was when they planned conferences on Yom Kippur and we couldn’t make it up.
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