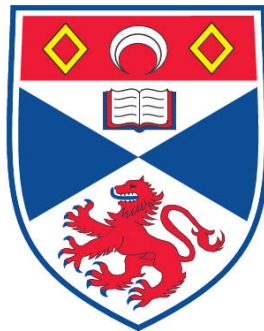


**SHADES OF JEWISHNESS: THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE
OF A LIBERAL JEWISH COMMUNITY IN POST-SHOAH
GERMANY**

Daniela Kranz

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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Shades of Jewishness:

The creation and maintenance of a liberal Jewish community in post-Shoah Germany

Daniela Kranz

PhD thesis

Submission date:

Abstract

This PhD thesis focuses on the creation and maintenance of the liberal Jewish community in present day Cologne, Germany. The community has the telling name *Gescher LaMassoret*, which translates into ‘Bridge to Tradition.’ The name gives away that this specific community, its individual members and its struggles cannot be understood without the socio-historic context of Germany and the Holocaust. Although this Jewish community is not a community of Holocaust survivors, the dichotomy Jewish-German takes various shapes within the community and surfaces in the narratives of the individual members. These narratives reflect the uniqueness of each individual in the community. While this is a truism, this individual uniqueness is a key element in *Gescher LaMassoret*, whose membership consists of people from various countries who have various native languages. Furthermore, the community comprises members of Jewish descent as well as Jews of conversion who are of German, non-Jewish parentage. Due to the aftermaths of the Holocaust and the fact that *Gescher LaMassoret* houses a vast internal diversity, the creation of this community which lacks any tradition happens through mixing and meshing the life-stories and other narratives of the members, which flow into the collective narrative of the community. On the surface, the narratives of the individual members seem in conflict, they even contradict each other, which means that the narrative of the community is in constant tension. However, under the dissimilarities on the surface of the individual narratives hide similarities in terms of shared values and attitudes, which allow for enough overlaps to create a community by way of braiding a collective narrative, which offers the members to experience a ‘felt ethnicity.’

Declaration

I, Daniela Kranz, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in previous applications for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in January 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in January 2004; the higher study for which this is a record carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2009.

Date:

Signature of candidate:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolutions and Regulations appropriate of the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application of that degree.

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Shades of Jewishness

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Introduction

At its core this work is concerned with the creation and maintenance of a liberal Jewish community in Germany, and the discussions which arise in the community setting about being and ‘doing’ Jewish. In order to understand these discussions, it is key to understand that the members of the community spend only a very limited amount of time with each other, and that most of their time is spent outside of the community, apart from each other, among a non-Jewish majority. This individually spent time finds repercussions in the discussions about expressions of Jewishness, Jewish practice, and boundaries, which take place in the collective of the community. Outside and inside of the community are at constant interplay through the movements of the members. Inspirations of being and doing Jewish are taken from inside and outside. This work seeks to analyse the dynamic interplay between being and doing Jewish in the community, and individually lived out ideas about being Jewish outside of the community. The liberal community as well as each individual member are embedded in a highly complex web of Jewish and non-Jewish structures; neither the community, nor any of its members is an island.

The workings of the liberal Jewish community cannot be understood without understanding Jewish life in Germany post-*Shoah*,¹² and in Cologne specifically. The rabbi of the liberal community told me that “what you find here is pretty much an example of a liberal community in Germany.” This might well be the case. Through contacts with other liberal Jewish communities in the country I learned that some issues are recurring. Others are more specific to Cologne as a locale. In as much, this work depicts the development of a specific community in a specific locale, at a specific time. However, at the same time that it depicts this specific community, it shows the more universal struggle of a group of people to create a space for themselves and form a community. In Cologne, the struggle of a number of Jews led to the creation of a liberal Jewish community; a “Jewish home” of their liking that was created, and is being maintained by combining the agential forces of a number of like-minded individuals. But in how far are these individuals like-minded? And how far does the like-

mindedness go? Where does it come from? When do conflicts arise? What lies at the root of wanting and needing this specific community?

In order to elaborate on the common ground, but as well to elucidate the areas of conflict of the liberal community, it is crucial to understand the input of the individual members. Their input is strongly influenced by their beyond-the-community-lives where key events in their lives occur and their personal Jewishness takes shape. This *being* Jewish takes different forms and shapes for each individual: it might lean most towards an ethnic, a social, cultural, historical identity, or it might be a religious identity; expressions of *doing* Jewish are thus diverse. In its personalised form, the Jewish identity of the members of the community often reflects a mixture of all of these features, with individual emphases. It is through these individual emphases or biases that conflict in the community arises, and *the* boundary that encapsulates what is supposed to be Jewish becomes an assembly of crossing, diverging, or even parallel lines, which in their totality reflecting a matrix of different shades of Jewishness. How does the community then function, if each single members bring different ideas about Jewishness into the community? In other words, how can these individually shaped notions of Jewishness be put, and held together in a community? What is the common ground, if there is any, and if not, how can it be created?

At the beginning of my research I had conceptualised the liberal Jewish community in terms of an ethnic group. Jewish status according to the Jewish religious law, the *Halacha*, is passed on matrilineally, or can be achieved through *Giyur* (conversion). This definition seemed to fit with what Barth (1969/1998) had outlined for ethnic groups in general, and for the Pathan in particular. According to Barth a non-Pathan could become a Pathan. Thus, a person who was born a non-ethnic Pathan could become, or assimilate into, being a Pathan over time³. This idea rang true for the persons who underwent *Giyur*. After a minimum period of time of one year, though mostly after a longer period of time a non-Jew could undergo *Giyur* and become a Jew. It was explained to me in conversations that this long time was needed to learn to be a Jew, but more so to feel like a Jew. As this dissertation will show, being, doing, and

feeling like a Jew is an individually shaped notion, which is experienced differently between individuals.

The realisation of the individually coloured ‘Jewishnesses’ of the participants invited the use of the theory of ethnicity presented by Barth. Barth approached ethnicity as a group affiliation that is based on subjective and objective criteria. This means that the members of the ethnic group identify themselves *and* they are being identified by others as belonging to a specific ethnic group. This notion of ethnic belonging implies that it is not superimposed by an anthropological observer (R. Cohen 1978; Moerman 1965). This theoretical stance makes the approach participant-centred, while it does not lose sight of the context and the inter-ethnic relationships of the ethnic group in question.

Approaches to ethnicity besides Barth, while having their own merit, did not fit with the reality of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne. For example, Abner Cohen’s (1974) idea of ethnicity is based on a fundamental sameness, which in turn is based on descent. Aspects of A. Cohen’s sameness are shared values and a shared language. While shared values will reappear in this dissertation as ‘homophilous values’ (cf. Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001) these should not be equated with shared values based on a shared historical ethnicity of descent. The shared homophilous values of the liberal community in Cologne stem from somewhere else, as this work will show. A. Cohen (1974) claims that the sameness of ethnically based values and other similarities creates trust and leads to the organisation of interest groups. These interest groups focus on economic benefits for their members. With this underlying logic, A. Cohen’s theory explains that what is often described as ‘ethnic conflicts’, tends to be underpinned by economic reasons as well. One might think of Kashmir, which is a source of water for India and Pakistan, or the Golan Heights, which hold water for Israel and Syria, or the historical conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. However, his theory of ethnic interest groups does not hold for (liberal or orthodox) Jews in Cologne. Being a member of a Jewish community in Cologne is economically neutral.⁴

The approach to ethnicity of Ronald Cohen (1978) did not work with the liberal Jews in Cologne either (nor with the overall Jewish population of the city for that matter). R. Cohen argues that ethnicity is a “*series* of nesting dichotomizations of exclusiveness and inclusiveness” (R. Cohen 1978: 387, emphasis in original), and furthermore that ethnicity is underpinned by “diacritical markers” (ibid). The more similar these diacritical markers are between individuals the more likely they are to be part of the same ethnic group. According to R. Cohen, ethnicity is situational and flexible, the ‘other’ acts as mirror of one’s own ethnicity. While I agree with some of his theory, I found his notion of diacritical markers highly problematic. The data generated from the liberal Jewish community did not agree with the diacritical markers of R. Cohen, because the similarities between members most often were not based on kinship. According to Williams (1989) the idea of segmentary lineage underpins R. Cohen’s notion of ethnicity. Segmentary lineage does not apply to the liberal Jewish community, and has very limited applicability to Jews in Cologne in general. Cologne’s Jewry is extremely diverse in terms of countries of origin, native languages and mixed-Jewish descent, the ‘backgrounds’ of the Jewish individuals are too different to allow for a straight-forward, kinship based idea to apply. Furthermore, R. Cohen’s idea of ethnicity as being “situational” (R. Cohen 1978: 388) did not apply to the Cologne data. Certainly, ethnic saliences have situational features. The Cologne data shows these saliences in the problematic encounters between Jews and non-Jews. But does this mean that Jewishness is merely situational for the Jews under research? As the data will show, this is not the case. The Jewishness of the members of the community under research is not situational, it is a core and constant part of the identity of the members.

Barth’s theory of ethnicity allows for the elaboration of the development of the Jewish identities of this dissertation in their particularities. Barth’s idea pushes forward the idea of ethnicity as procedural (cf. Keefe 1992; Nagel 1994) and not as a fixed and timeless entity of a “cultunit” (cf. Cohen 1978: 382). This quality of Barth’s theory allows for the capturing of the ethnicity of Jews in a territory that is uncharted for them. Historical sources are not accessible as an inspiration (Appadurai 1981; Fischer 1986) because this new Jewish ethnicity develops in German post-*Shoah* and with Jews of widely different backgrounds. A kinship based Jewish ethnicity cannot be taken for granted with the

Jews in Cologne, neither can access to shared, if ambiguous symbols (cf. Talai 1989) of Jewishness. In other words, the current developments of this Jewish ethnicity lie beyond anything that is contained in whatever Jewish knowledge reservoir, the current developments are new. Given these issues of the Jews of Cologne, it makes sense to see the development and changes of ethnicity as contextual and depending on a multitude of factors. Barth's approach seemed to me the most viable to accommodate these features. His idea allows for expansion through further work, because it allows for flexibility. Ethnicity, as Barth realised rightly is not static in terms of ethnic group membership. It is at their boundary to other ethnic groups that an ethnic group gives away the collective idea of the underlying ethnic belonging. It is the construction of this boundary that is a constant issues with the liberal Jewish community.

Yet, Barth's definition of ethnicity is not unproblematic either. Before I delve into this problematic notion, I want to quote Barth, whose idea inspired me throughout. Barth's theory will serve as the starting point to develop a new theory of ethnicity. This new theory will venture beyond Barth's to understand a group of people which operationalises some ethnic features that its members share as a vehicle to create a categorical belonging (Handelman 1977), and fill this belonging with meaning.

In his seminal essay on ethnicity, Barth (1969/1998) defined an ethnic group as:

[...] a population which:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in an overt unity in cultural forms
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. has a membership, which identifies itself, and identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

(Barth 1969/1998: 11)

At the same time Barth argues that “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses” (ibid: 15) is key to understanding an ethnic group. These two statements beg the questions, which I have posed above. Even if the members of the Jewish community agree on being Jewish as having a definite ethnic feature (descent or conversion), they still have widely differing attitudes to this ethnicity, and do challenge the notion of Jewish ethnicity as the *Halacha* outlines it. What is it that holds them together, as on top of their widely diverging ideas on Jewishness all of Barth’s four key features are either not fulfilled at all, or only partially? The only fraction of Barth’s definition that holds for all members of the liberal community is that the community “has a membership, which identifies itself” (ibid). Yet, the ideas about being and doing Jewish are diverse amongst the membership. With these widely diverging ideas, how is a boundary created? Is it not that the “cultural stuff” needs to be defined by the members of a given group to agree on, create, maintain, and manage a boundary? In order to tackle these research questions, this work will part from Barth’s definition of ethnicity, and venture beyond it to open up a new approach to ethnicity.

Barth’s definition though formulated at the end of the 1960s still informs or underlies much work concerning ethnicities, ranging from Talai (1989) who quotes him explicitly to Noy (2005, 2007: 4, 61) who does not quote or use him. Noy presupposes that his Israeli respondents share ways of narrative-telling by virtue of their shared Israeliness

which is based on having been socialised and enculturated in Israel as Jewish Israelis, and especially by having served in the army (ibid: 61). While the Jewish community under research does not share the ‘born-into-ethnic-bond’ of Talai’s and Noy’s research participants, they show as to why ethnicity is such a key feature of the creation and maintenance of this community. Paraphrasing Magat (1999) Jewish ethnicity holds an eternal feature, because it is an ethnicity that is based on the covenant between the Jewish god (YHVH) and the Jewish people. This feature of a connection of the human and the divine sphere allows for a very high level of resilience (cf. Berger 1967). At the same time, Jewish ethnicity is procedural like any other ethnicity. It is defined by its difference to other ethnic groups. In this research, the feature of difference is very pronounced, because the other ethnic group that surrounds all Jews in Germany is the non-Jewish German majority. This pronounced difference is based on the *Shoah* and the traumata of the Jewish population, which strengthen its boundary to the non-Jewish outside (Grünberg 1988, 2000, 2007a, 2007b; Kranz 2007b, 2007c; Kugelmann 1996; Kushner 1977 amongst others). It is therefore important to appreciate the specific ethnicity formation of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne as well as that of Jews in Germany within this context.

This dissertation will delve into the territory of narrative theory to understand the creation of the liberal Jewish community, its maintenance, and the individual approaches to being Jewish within, and beyond the community. It will offer a different approach to understanding a post-modern (voluntary) group, which implements the *Halacha* to establish an ingroup status, and thus retains features of an ethnic Jewish group. Yet, unlike an ethnic Jewish group which fulfils all four of Barth’s points, this specific Jewish group cannot fall back on a shared reservoir of symbols and stories of Jewishness but has to create shared meanings in a constant dynamic in the community, which in turn is in a constant dynamic interplay with the outside of the community. This means that the ambiguity of the meanings of symbols, which Talai (1989: 2) found with her Armenian participants in London concerning Armenianness, did not exist for the members of the liberal community in Cologne. Many of them had not grown up with symbols of Jewishness but had in many cases to first learn about the symbols to reach the stage of ambiguity towards them.

Narrative approaches to identity offer a way of understanding individual identities, and the creation and cohesion of personal identities, and of the communities that people belong to. These approaches offer a theoretical tool to capture the dynamic between individuals and their surroundings (Collins 2004). Linde (1993) outlined that individuals desire to create coherence in their life-story narratives, and through these narratives in their whole lives. Bruner (1987) argues that these (coherent life-story) narratives need to be seen in context with the narratives of other people, narratives create bridges between individuals and work like glue that forms, shapes and holds a community together through creating shared meanings, and thus cohesion (Noy 2007). Looking at narratives and analysing human behaviour through narrative explanations offers a way to appreciate human agency in the actions of the single individual (Collins 2003: 248), and offers a route to understand how individuals design their life-projects (Giddens 1991) and how narrative and action influence each other (Bruner 1987; 1998). Furthermore, narratives add to understanding how individuals reflect on social structures, and creatively move beyond them (Rapport 2003), while their narratives offer a link between the individual and social structure (Andrews 2004; Angrosino 1989; Linde 1993). Then, narratives offer an insight into how individuals create new social structures, which accommodate them because they have been built with like-minded people, through meshing (Bruner 1987: 21) life-stories and/or narratives (Noy 2007). Drawing on his work amongst Quakers in Britain, Collins (2002b) mentions that

[...] it was certainly the case that she [Gina] had found a group that accepted her pacifist ideas (along with self-narratives) with complete equanimity, and who provided an opportunity for her both to air these idea and to frame them (make them meaningful) *within a wider tradition*. Gina used the ‘coming home’ metaphor regularly, comparing the Quaker meeting with the familiarity of home.

Collins 2002b: 157; italicised emphasis added

Coming home, or creating a home was a metaphor that the members of liberal community in Cologne used regularly to refer to the creation, and maintenance of their

community, despite their different ways into the community, and varying views of being and doing Jewish. However different the viewpoints of the members of the liberal community concerning their Jewishness and their community might be, one feature underpins their narratives. This is the very feature Collins hints at in the quote above. The feature consists of two key qualities. The first is the acceptance of others in their individuality. The second is a fundamental like-mindedness in regard to this shared value of acceptance. Sociologists refer to this feature as 'value homophily' (cf. McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). This term infers that people who hold similar values cluster in voluntary organisations or friendship groups (Carrier 1999; J. M. Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983) because they are attracted to each others' like-mindedness. The concept of homophily was first put forward by sociologists in the 1920s to understand the formation of friendships and networks in urban neighbourhoods (cf. review article by Freeman 1996). In this pioneering work it was established that socio-demographics and ethnicity are the two major distinguishing factors in Western societies, which underpin the creation of human relationships, which in turn are underpinned by propinquity.

From this early research, sociologists have moved on to research why within ethnic groups individuals are friends with some but not with other co-ethnics. The anthropologist James G. Carrier poses this question as well in a chapter in *The Anthropology of Friendship* (1999). Carrier as well as the sociologists Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) arrive at the conclusion that the configuration of our self leads us to seek up specific people we want to be friends with. In the words of the anthropologist boyd (2008) these are people who extend our identities because we share homophilous values with them. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) give religion, education, occupation or behavioural patterns as underpinning homophilous values. Yet, for voluntary groups another homophilous value needs to be added to the list. This value is a shared ideology that underpins the attitude and behaviour of all members concerning the group. This value is in particular pronounced with people who form voluntary groups (McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; Popielarz 1999). A voluntary community, as the sociologist Andrew Rigby (1974) had stated in his work on communities in Britain,

needs to be engineered. This engineering is only possible, if the members share enough values with each other and their ideology concerning their community is compatible. This means that the homophily in regard to the ideology of the community needs to be more pronounced with members of voluntary communities than within non-voluntary groups.

This means that in this dissertation homophily refers to underlying ideological values that support the voluntary community 'liberal Jewish community.' The key homophilous values lie in the ideological stance of acceptance of individuals in their uniqueness, the wish to rise beyond categorical essentialisms and to maintain a community that is based on democracy. This homophily of specific values will show through the ethnographic data and in chapter five, where three members of the liberal community speak for themselves in interviews. All members share specific homophilous values that enable a community with the diversity of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne to sustain itself.

The interview excerpts will show that a shared ethnicity of descent, where it exists, is not enough to hold the liberal Jewish community in Cologne together. This community is based on shared homophilous values that are not necessarily related to Jewish ethnicity (cf. Furman 1987). This is crucial for the workings of the liberal Jewish community. This community gains its resilience through connecting shared homophilous values with the notion of a 'felt' Jewish ethnicity. This connection of homophilous values and the 'felt' ethnicity happens via actions and can be found in narratives. By looking closely at the narratives of the members of the community, it can be explained how this small community can maintain itself in its diversity and develop resilient ethnic features.

This resilience should not be mistaken as synonymous with 'free of conflict' or 'peaceful.' The Jewish liberal community was not and is not free of tensions; the experienced reality of the community differs widely for each individual (Rapport 1993: 190). To put the shared homophilous value of acceptance into action is often easier said than done. Collins noted these tensions for the Quakers he researched too (2003: 255-

256, 2004: 103). However, without wanting to disparage the tensions in the Quakers' meeting house, it seems to me that for three reasons the tensions within the liberal community were of a different nature and not just reflections of different opinions.

First, on an inner Jewish level, the liberal community was created in opposition to the existing Jewish community structures in the locale. The relationship with this other community, the orthodox practicing synagogue of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Unified Community) can be described as acrimonious. Second, on an inner-Jewish-inner-liberal-community level, the liberal community consists of descendants of *Shoah* survivor Jews, Jews who returned from abroad, those who immigrated to Germany but have no direct *Shoah* relation, and persons who converted. Descendants of survivors and non-Jewish Germans are two groups who were brought up with a Jewish *Shoah* or a German post-WWII narrative. Atina Grossmann (2007) demonstrated that these two 'narrative traditions' stand in a binary opposition. This means that while (some) narrative streaks within these discrete, and often mutually exclusive groups, are collectively owned by the respective members of the collective, the members of the liberal community as such often do not 'own' the same narratives even if they can agree on shared values. Furthermore, the 'Jews' in the community have too many different backgrounds to develop a community narrative easily. They come from different narrative (Jewish) communities.

The third level of tension arises from the fact that the liberal community is surrounded by a non-Jewish German society, and in (uneasy) dialogue with it. This very being in Germany goes hand in hand with constant reminders of the country's gruesome past (Ben-Amos & Weissberg 1999; Freeman 2002), and a constant, or at least regular assessment about why one is in Germany. The last two features led to the creation of the liberal community: it goes not only against the structures of the existing Jewish community post-*Shoah*, but it seeks as well a new way of living in Germany, however problematic and contentious this might be. This means that there are not one, but two boundaries around the liberal community: one inner Jewish, and one to the non-Jewish German surrounding. How these two boundaries are related will be discussed in chapter two. The *Shoah*, an often unspoken horror in the community, strongly influenced my

fieldwork, and the effectively defined my own access into both Jewish communities in Cologne. The *Shoah* is the uncanny undercurrent of Jewish life in Germany, however much individuals wish to go beyond it, and however much it was my blind spot pre-fieldwork. My pre-fieldwork proposal clearly outlined that I was interested in Jewish life in Germany post-*Shoah*, and more so beyond the *Shoah*.

In order to capture the dynamic of being Jewish within, and beyond the liberal community this work includes an excursus of doing fieldwork amongst Jews in Cologne in chapter one. This way, it captures various different Jewish gatherings and social spaces in Cologne, all of which are loosely interconnected by the movement of individuals between them (Kranz 2007b); the spaces influence each other. There is also a steady creation of new spaces, while old spaces become defunct (cf. Talai 1989). This bears witness to the vitality of Jewish life and the different expressions of it. Jewish Cologne offers Jews a parallel structure in Cologne. I learned during my fieldwork that Jewish Cologne offers permissive spaces with soft boundaries, but as well spaces with imperative boundaries that have Jews on the inside, and non-Jews on the outside (Kranz 2007b). Only two of those spaces are easy to locate for incomers, Jews and non-Jews alike: the orthodox *Einheitsgemeinde*, and the liberal Jewish community, both come up in a simple web search, and can be found in the phone book. More so, the synagogue of the orthodox community lies at a major road in a location of central Cologne: it is difficult to overlook as a landmark in the city. All other spaces are accessible to insiders only: knowledge about them is transferred selectively between individuals. However, Jewish Cologne and its multiple spaces is not understandable without the context of Jewish life in Germany post-*Shoah*.

Structure of the thesis

To make the field accessible, chapter one is a literature review about the context of Jewish life in post-*Shoah* Germany. Without this background, understanding the multiple influences and the intricate matrix of which the liberal Jewish community under research is part, its creation, maintenance and conflicts, and neither those of its members make much sense. It is the context of the past, the present, national,

international as well local events, immigration and emigration, official history and personal stories that find their expression in the liberal Jewish community.

The community and the individuals in it are concerned as much with expression of being as well as with doing Jewish. After this background information that locates the field at the centre of this research, I will describe my own entrance into the field in chapter two. This entrance gives a feeling of the reception of the incoming researcher who joined from the outside. My reception, and categorisation reveals underlying attitudes towards living in Germany, and the different takes on this matter, by the members of the different Jewish communities, and gatherings.

Then, I will move to depiction of the liberal Jewish community in chapter three. This focus will be on the different groups of individuals in the community, which are present at any service or other gathering. The chapter will analyse how members, guests, non-members and ‘others’ interact in the community, how they influence each other, and how they move within the confines of the space ‘liberal synagogue.’ The physical movement in the community reflects the relationship of individuals to each other, and of groups of individuals: spatial arrangements are a metaphor that reifies social organisation. Especially the ‘other’ reflects the workings of the community, and attempts to manage boundaries, much in the sense of Simmel’s *Stranger* (1908/1971) who mirrored the developments of the host society. After delineating the internal movements of the liberal community, I will move to look at what being liberal Jewish means within the community in the fourth chapter. What meaning does the idea of being and doing liberal Jewish take for the individual members of the community, and how do they negotiate what is liberal, what not? How do they put their ideas together, and attempt to interweave their different narrative threads to a braid (Collins 2002b, 2004) that creates the future focused basis of the liberal community? This chapter will not so much engage with the liberal form of the religious service, which is a rather non-contentious⁵ issue with the members of the community, it will engage with food, and the recurring debate concerns what counts as kosher. Much like Buckser (1999) found for Jews in Copenhagen, within a Jewish setting food is a major means to express being through doing Jewish. Food in the community setting, and the dealing with non-Jews

from the chapter before, are by far the most contentious issues which show conflicts about dealing with the non-Jewish surrounding, the German past, and being in Germany.

After these depictions of the inside of the liberal community, I will, in chapter five, move to the depictions of parts of the lives of some of the members outside of the community, which they incorporated in narrative life-stories. By structuring the dissertation in this way, I am moving along the chronological order of the fieldwork. I started the fieldwork in the community settings of the liberal community. From there I gained access to individual members, guests, non-members, and ‘others.’ These individuals then would give me access to their non-community lives, and show me sources of their identity that lay beyond the liberal community. By this route I gained insights into their very personal and lived-in ideas of being and doing Jewish. The chapter will focus on the personal narratives that I was offered by individuals who took part in the life of the liberal Jewish community. These narratives give a highly interesting insight into the narrative construction of the identities of the individuals and their communities. In this specific case the analysis focuses on the constant dynamic interplay between the individuals and the workings of their liberal Jewish community, and this way shows (competing) ideas about their community. As Jerome Bruner (1991a, 1991b) would have it, narratives offer routes to the very core of our being, and a possible alley into the very constructions of our selves. This chapter will as well show the connection between the value homophily (boyd 2008; J. M. Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Popielarz 1999; Verbrugge 1977, 1979) of the individual members of the liberal Jewish community and the creation and maintenance of their community. Underlying, homophilous values run through all three narratives and works as ‘glue’ to hold the individuals together as a community. The conclusion will then offer a final analysis of the data presented. It will show how a community that houses widely different individuals functions, how it is being maintained, and what compromises and constructive efforts are needed to construct this very community, which can neither rely on a naturalised nor shared ethnicity, nor tradition, nor on a shared narrative. The

conclusion depicts how the constant state of community creation feeds into the development of a ‘felt ethnicity.’

Issues, which are not covered in this dissertation, and issues of position

This dissertation limits itself to focus on the creation and maintenance of the liberal Jewish community. While it gives background information on Jewish life post-*Shoah* in Germany, and Cologne more specifically, it does not and cannot offer an overview over Jewish life in Germany *per se*. Like the work of Lynn Rapaport (1997) this dissertation focuses on a certain locale at a certain time, and with this shows Jewish identities at a certain point in time. *Being Jewish in the New Germany* by Jeffrey M. Peck, published in 2006 offers an overview over Jewish life in Germany in general. The volume *The New Jewry in the German Context* (2008), edited Y. Michal Bodemann, offers an overview over the various facets of Germany’s current Jewry (cf. Kranz 2009a). Both books describe the dynamic of Jewish life in present Germany, and its underpinnings of the past. With the vast influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union, and an enhanced mobility of EU citizens, plus moves back and forth to Israel and the US mainly, the Jewish population in Germany is anything but static, or stuck. Yet the different Jewish groups show very different attitudes to being in Germany, and relating to being Jewish (Becker 2001, for Russians; Kranz 2007c, for Israelis).

Changes in the specific locale have occurred during the more than six years since I first entered the liberal Jewish community in Cologne. However, recurrent contentions concern the boundary management of the community, food, conversion, mixed marriage, and as an undercurrent the *Shoah*. The constant presence of the *Shoah* reflects in discussions about these topics in the synagogue, all of which pertain to the issue about how much non-Jewish-Germanness is allowed in a space which is defined as Jewish. Eva Hoffman (2004) treats the presence of the *Shoah* in the lives of those who survived in great detail in *After Such Knowledge*. Her careful analysis establishes that the past is part of the present:

It is necessary to separate the past from the present and to judge the present in its own light. ... But if we do not want to betray the past – if we want to remain ethical beings and honor our covenant with those who suffered – then moral passion needs to be supplanted by moral thought, by an incorporation of memory into our consciousness of the world.

(Hoffman 2004, quoted in Waterston & Rylko-Bauer 2006: 397)

At the same time that this dissertation looks at the issue of how much Germanness is allowed in the synagogue it looks at Germanness as it perceived by members and the members-to-be of the liberal Jewish community. This work is not meant to explain the ideas surrounding the German identity of non-Jewish Germans who are not part of the realm of the liberal community. Thus, the non-Jews in this work are a very specific group of Germans with an interest in Judaism, Jews, and/or Israel; they are not exemplary for the German population *per se*. The vast majority of Germans are not interested in either of these topics. This majority is reflected in the attitudes of the participants of this research. This non-Jewish German majority acts like a mirror that reflects what my participants did not want to be, what they did not understand, and what on occasion drove them crazy. However, this majority exemplified as well who some of my participants sought a dialogue with in the hope to create a mutual understanding. This is to say that the participants of this research, which in Henri Tajfel's (1978, 1981, 1982) terminology form an ingroup, often explained their ingroup identity by what they are not, while the 'what we are' is a contentious issue.

The latter concerns matters which lie at the interface of the sacred and the profane in the synagogue: the major issue of contention is food. Now, the Jewish food law, the *Kashrut*, is part of the holy scripts, and therefore part of the sacred, yet as food consumption is an everyday activity in and beyond the synagogue, there is a constant interplay between sacred and profane (Sered 1988, 1992). My analysis of the food issue is not meant as a critique of the praxis of the members of the liberal community or Jews beyond it; the opinions voiced are those of my participants, and not mine. I do not wish to judge their religious practice in any way, and believe a judgement does not behave

me. This dissertation is not part of the anthropology of religion, because Jewish religion formed only one part of the life in the synagogue and beyond it. The *Halacha* and the *Kashrut* were on occasion implemented to keep non-Jews at bay and often fulfilled specific functions. They could become means of social exclusion and became disconnected from their religious meaning. This particular issue, of the functional implementation of religious law to exclude non-Jews will become clear in chapter one and two, which looks at the foundation of the liberal community in its socio-historic context as well as the other Jewish groups and spaces in the locale. It is important to bear in mind that ‘synagogue’ or ‘Jewish community’ in Germany must not be equated with ‘Jewish religious space’ but with ‘ideally Jewish dominated space, and a place to retreat from non-Jews.’

Jewish religion is only one ingredient in the mix of the Jewish space, and as the interviews in chapter five will show, Jewish religion is not necessarily the anchor of the Jewish identities for the members of the community, who are often non- or little observant, or struggling with the idea of religion as such. Hence, my focus does not lie on analysing Jewish religion or symbols, as a dissertation with a focus on the anthropology of religion would, but on the Jewish identities as my participants created them for themselves. These identities were often beyond religious practice, and made use of specific Jewish symbols, which have secular meanings, such as the Star of David. It adorns the Israeli flag as well as the jewellery worn by my participants (Heilman 1988). Wearing this Star was connected to an assertive Jewishness, to survival in the face of danger and near annihilation, and Jewish self-determination; the connection to Jewish religion was rather tenuous, and indeed rarely mentioned in any conversation or interview. Thus, being part of a Jewish community as a person of Jewish descent needs to be understood in the socio-historic context of Germany; this way the upset that converts (can) cause becomes clear too.

The social function of inclusion and exclusion is one that seeps through this dissertation. To illuminate this issue, I depict and analyse my role as a researcher in the process and how I was categorised by participants. Their categorisations of me do not necessarily overlap with my own. I was different things to different people during my

fieldwork. I, as well as the German surrounding, acted like a mirror. I was an incomer into a Jewish space. I was not neutral in the sense that I was present as an incomer who was undertaking research work, but I was not neutral either in who I was as a person, and where I come from. The latter issue I had not considered when embarking on this research. I had not set out to conduct an auto-ethnography. I still do not see this work as a piece of auto-ethnography. Yet my access, or non-access to specific Jewish spaces and my reception in them reflected attitudes of individual Jews and/or Jewish collectives towards their Jewish and non-Jewish surrounding. Through the reaction of my participants and my friends I was forced to confront my own family history, my own mixedness, my belongings and non-belongings. For more than twenty-five years I had not talked about my own family history, and avoided it as much as I could. In hindsight I think this was based on multiple factors. There is the taboo of the German past; there is the enormous pain in those who survived camps and persecution; there is the problem of not belonging without being able to put a finger on it. I have not grown up in contact with Jewish structures; I had no idea of what *halachic* Jewish descent meant; I was out of the means that would allow me to align to a –hegemonic– Jewish discourse in Germany. Through my participants and friends I gained access to their discourse, which for me means that I now have the ability to put (some) of what I heard at home, some of my belongings, and emotions into a form that relates me to a wider community. I had to realise that I shared more with my participants than I had initially expected, indeed I had no idea I would share so much with them. This sharing of a similar relation to specific socio-historic events made this research highly emotional, it made it both draining and incredibly satisfying. What it led to as well was that I entered a territory of non-neutrality, emotionally I feel more alienated from mainstream German society than before this research. I am still not sure how to incorporate this issue in this work besides being brutally honest about it, and to describe my own positionalities (those given to me as well as the self-ascribed and felt ones) as thickly (Geertz 1973) and reflexively (Collins 1994: 37) as I can. The term “intimate ethnography” coined by Alisse Waterston and Barbara Rylko-Bauer (2006) probably best expresses my own stance and role in this work. It was work in a context I am inextricably linked to, and which I am a part of even when I am not researching (cf. Heilman 1980). I was always present as a person with belongings, I was never neutral, and I am partial (Collins 1994: 29) but then

I think it is completely impossible to be neutral while working with Jews in Germany: this is not a neutral territory.

The relationship to the idea of anthropology at home in this research is a difficult one. I do not think of it in terms of anthropology at home, because I have not lived in Cologne since I left school in 1995. Furthermore, I worked with a very specific minority in Cologne, one of which I had little knowledge before I started this work. I think it is more appropriate to say that I happened to work in the hometown (locale) of my childhood and youth. My grasp of Cologne local history existed prior to my fieldwork, I have a fair grasp of the layout of the city. I am able to speak both German and the local dialect as a native speaker. Yet, the people I was working with were, besides a few exceptions, non-Colognians and often non-Germans. This means that my own knowledge regarding the local languages was only of limited use in my fieldwork, while my knowledge of English was very useful.

I am working with narratives in order to show the relationship between the community and the individual, and will focus on their content: the narratives give an insight into ideas about community, and being an individual in it, and beyond it. However, while I am focussing on the content, this is not an ethnography of speech or linguistic anthropology. The narratives of the interviews fulfil the function in this work of understanding the workings of the community better by considering where the members, and members-to-be come from. The interviews have been translated from German into English. The issue of translation poses already the question of what was lost in translation, furthermore, two of the three interviews presented in chapter five were conducted with multi-lingual individuals who were hard-pressed to tell me what their native language was. Stavans (2003) argues in her paper 'Bilinguals as Narrators' that individuals who are bilingual narrate the same story differently depending on the language they use. For monolinguals of the same two languages she found that they tell a story of an event yet differently again, because they only used the symbolisms of one speech community, they do not have the option to mix. Of course, there are differences in perceptions, and each individual is positioned uniquely. However, language, and access to language codes within a language community underpin the way of expression

and conveyance of meaning. These differences in meanings of words and idioms Rapport (1993, 1994) depicted for speakers of the same native language in the same locale. They enter a different level of complexity between speakers of different native languages even if they live in the same locale. Thus, the creation of shared narratives of the liberal Jewish community takes a different turn of complexity than say the narrative creation of the community of native Hebrew speaking Jewish Israelis travellers of Noy's (2007) work.

In relation to the issue of language, this dissertation touches on immigration, but is not an ethnography of immigration, or an immigrant community. It is true that the majority of Jews in Cologne now are from the states of the former Soviet Union. These Jews have their own groups and circles outside of both religious communities in Cologne. The majority of the Russian-speaking incomers are members of the local orthodox community. Only 40% of the membership of the liberal community come from the former USSR. Besides two or three exceptions all of these Russians speak German fluently, and work in jobs which require a university education. According to German popular discourse on immigration they have integrated well. This sets them apart from the Russians of the orthodox community, who in their majority are older, and poorer. Insiders estimated that at least half of the Russian-speakers of this community are on welfare.

The remaining 60% of the membership of the liberal Jewish community are Jews from Western European countries, descendants of German Jews, some Israelis (mostly descendants of German Jews), and US Americans, and very few Jews from DP⁶ (displaced person) families or from Eastern Europe (besides the former USSR). A significant number of persons in the liberal community have converted, either because they were not Jewish according to Jewish law because they had a Jewish father but a non-Jewish mother (non-*halachic* Jews), or they found their way into Judaism from completely non-Jewish families. The liberal community is thus a mix of individuals from all walks of life: immigrants, residents, and converts alike.

This strange mix *en pare* with the wish to create a (Jewish) home sets the liberal community as well apart from social movements in the sense of Prince and Riches (2000) or D'Andrea (2007). This work is thus not an ethnography of a social movement, although the overall Liberal Jewish Movement in Germany might be seen as one. Prince and Riches looked at the construction of a religious movement that is underpinned by a New Age philosophy. D'Andrea researched Western Europeans and Americans who sought refuge from their disenchanted home countries in places such as Ibiza and Goa. Both ethnographies indicate the search for an alternative (non-capitalist) lifestyle that fulfilled spiritual needs. The participants of the social movements that D'Andrea researched did not want to be part of their surrounding, while in the case of Princes and Riches they wanted to distance themselves from their surroundings to create a sound cosmology of their own. This is not the case with the liberal Jewish community. The only similarity lies in the distancing mechanism in terms of the boundary management in the liberal community towards the non-Jewish surrounding and the orthodox community. Yet the distancing from the German non-Jewish surrounding is only temporary because neither the liberal community, nor the orthodox community are holistic universes in themselves. Quite the opposite, they are an intrinsic part of the locale, as are their members. The idea of home and similarity in the liberal (but in the orthodox community too) is based on a similar family history, similar experiences, and the (assumption of) similar narratives of the individual, which underpin their individual life-projects and thus expressions of Jewishness. What sets the communities apart are the different emotions connected to these issues, which are underpinned by biographical differences of the membership. The orthodox community, pre-Russian immigration, was a *Shoah* survivor community, and the liberal community was not. The idea of a 'community of fate' that the pre-1991 Russian immigration members in the orthodox community can agree on is highly contentious amongst the members of the liberal community, whose proximity to the *Shoah* is often less immediate. This proximity to the *Shoah* in the orthodox community makes for an uneasy relationship with the Russian incomers, whose boundary management to the German society is yet different. Similar conflicts arise with incoming Israelis, and with American, British or French Jews whose relationship to the German surrounding runs along different lines.

To go back to what this dissertation is about, in a nutshell, it describes and analyses the creation and maintenance of a liberal Jewish community in a major city in Germany, and seeks to depict the dynamic interplay between the life in the community and its surroundings. The narratives of three members are used to exemplify particular recurring issues in the community, show the connection to the wider socio-cultural and historical surrounding, and individual ideas of being and doing Jewish; they underpin the different *Shades of Jewishness* of the title of this dissertation, which are a constant matter of contention and all feed into the braid of the narrative of the community. However, this is my take on the liberal community in Cologne, and how I interpreted it. The above notions of what the dissertation is and what not might have been differently decided by another researcher, my choices and emphases certainly reflect myself as much as my omissions and blind spots.

1. The liberal community in its historical, local, and present setting

Works on Jews in Germany after 1945: The immediate post-*Shoah* period

According to the studies of Maor (1961), Burgauer (1992), and Brenner (1995) about 500,000 Jews lived on German territories at the beginning of the Nazi rule⁷. According to Burgauer (1992:1), anti-Semitism started to intensify after the Nazis rose to power, it was enshrined in Nazi policy, and acted upon. In consequence, a significant number of Jews fled Germany. By 1935, just before the edict of the Nuremburg Laws (*Nürnberger Gesetze*), a number of those who had left Germany had returned, as things seemed to have calmed down (ibid: 3). The Nuremburg Laws proved that this was not the case, and their implementation led to a new wave of Jewish refugees from Germany. By 1938, the number of those persons defined as Jewish by Nazi law had dropped to 234,000 (ibid); in 1942 80,000 (ibid) of those defined as Jewish were still present in Germany.

In 1945, after the liberation May 8, about 2,000 German Jews (Peck 2006: 9) returned to Berlin from concentration camps. Others had survived through mixed marriages, and were joined by those who emerged from hiding. In Cologne, sixty to seventy Jews had survived (Ginzel & Güntner 1998: 95). How many there were nobody really knows: papers had been burned by the Nazis, and Jews had destroyed them to survive, and for obvious reasons did not want to self-identify. The most accurate answer is that very few Jews had survived. Beside the 2,000 German Jews in Berlin, 10,000 to 20,000 German Jews (Geis 2000: 15) who had survived work and/or death camps went to the American and British occupied Zones. In these Zones they were joined by a substantially higher number of survivors from Eastern Europe of between 200,000 (Peck 2006: 9) to 250,000 (Geis 2000: 16). The latter, who were called Displaced Persons (DP) had lived in Eastern Europe prior to the *Shoah*. After the *Shoah* they found their former settlements, the *Shtetls* destroyed, and those from cities had found their homes either destroyed or repossessed. The Eastern European Jews who were still strong enough to do so left the camps after liberation in the hope to find their families and friends, but most lingered in the very camps they had been interned in (Geller 2005: 46). For those

who tried to find friends and family, it turned out that the hope had been in vain. Furthermore, the survivors from Eastern Europe found that their former home countries were still strongly anti-Semitic (ibid). This meant that in early 1946, the Allies had to recognise that these Jews could not be repatriated. This recognition came before the pogrom of Kielce (Poland) in 1946, which left 37 out of 200 Jewish residents dead, and led to a wave of refugees of another 100,000 Jews from Eastern Europe, who mainly fled to the American zone in the south of Germany. In particular they fled to what was to become Western Germany in 1949. Their hope was based on the knowledge that this part of Germany was occupied by the US, Britain and France, which were perceived as favourable to Jewish pleas. The fleeing Jews did not come to this part of Germany with the intention to settle, they wanted to transit through Germany as quickly as possible to leave for the US and Palestine/Israel (Brenner 1995; Geller 2005; Jacobmeyer 1988; Königseder & Wetzel 1994; Kugelmann 1988a; Quast 2001; Strathmann 2003).

However, leaving Germany turned out to be a longer process than many had planned, as the US had strict immigration quotas, and Israel as a state did not exist prior to 1948. Britain, which held the mandate over what was to become Israel, had an interest in curbing Jewish immigration to Palestine. The situation between Jewish and Arab residents was already tense, and Jews had formed armed groups to defend themselves against Arabs, and to fight for their land. These armed groups grew into the Jewish resistance forces *Haganah*, *Palmach*, *Lehi*, and *Irgun/Etsel*, which were dangerous to the British colonial power. The *Irgun* bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946 clearly demonstrated this. Having more Jewish fighters who were strong enough and very willing to fight for a country of their own was not in the interest of Britain at all, which gave up its mandate over Palestine to the UN, yet maintained a strategic interest in the region.

The DPs were placed in camps until they left Germany. These camps were often former work camps, which indicates how trapped the DPs were: they could not repatriate to their former homes, and were stuck amongst Germans in Germany. With the foundation of the State of Israel and the change in US immigration law in 1948 the camps emptied out quickly (Brenner 1995; Geller 2005; Königseder & Wetzel 1994; Kugelmann

1988a). The number of DPs dropped from more than 200,000 in 1948 to 20,000 in 1956, when the last camp closed (Königseder & Wetzel 1994). Some of the DPs had meanwhile slipped away to the cities and started to make a living there (Geis 2000; Geller 2005). From 1946 onwards the DP camps had been exclusively Jewish in the American Zone (Geller 2005). Before this, Jewish DPs had found themselves in the situation of living in the same camp with former collaborators (ibid).

Königseder & Wetzel (1994) describe impressively that these camps developed a rich cultural life. They showed for the last time the multi-layered life of the Eastern European *Shtetl* (ibid). Yiddish was widely spoken, and newspapers were published, paper supplies allowing, in Yiddish written in Hebrew script (ibid). Theatre groups performed, and orchestras played for their audience (ibid). However, it would be fallacious to regard these transit camps with any kind of nostalgia. Many of the survivors lingered more than they lived, and were too traumatised to function outside of a camp. Kugelman (1996) describes how the survivors of camps showed patterns of behaviour that were regarded as “asocial” (ibid: 71) by allied soldiers and humanitarian aid workers alike. After years under constant terror, things which are deemed important in civil society were completely lost on the survivors (ibid). It was not uncommon for the local German population to regard the camp ‘residents’ with suspicion (Geller 2005; Königseder & Wetzel 1994). Besides asocial behaviour, a lack of hygiene is mentioned by Geller (2005) and Kugelman (1988a, 1996) in regard to the perception of the DPs by Allied soldiers, humanitarian aid workers and local Germans. At the same time the persons in transit camps had higher allowances for food supplies than the Germans outside the camps. Instead of considering the fate that the survivors had suffered, the Germans reacted with “envy” (Geller 2005: 12). Based on their past experiences with Germans, the present tensions, and the inability of many survivors to communicate in German, contact between the local population and the DPs remained beset by suspicion and focused on the necessary. The DPs preferred Allied policing if necessary, though they did most policing themselves (Königseder & Wetzel 1994). German police could not be deployed in DP camps (ibid; Geller 2005).

Cilly Kugelman (1988a, 1996) outlines that the identity and ideology of DPs and German Jews was notably different. Geis (2000) and Geller (2005) confirm this point with their research, although they take different angles. Kugelman focuses on DPs overall, whereas Geller's emphasis lies on institutional structures, and Geis's focus lies on German Jews. All three come to similar conclusions.⁸ Kugelman found that the identity of DPs was first and foremost defined by their experience as survivors, and the complete destruction of their communities in Eastern Europe. These communities were orthodox in their practice, and differed strongly from those of their German counterparts.⁹ In Germany, the majority of Jews had been assimilated and liberal in practice.¹⁰

After the *Shoah* when German Jews found themselves in the minority, differences in practice prevailed. These differences, combined with differences of language, living situation, and resident status led initially to a two-tier system: Geller found that the DPs founded different institutions from the German Jews. It was to take until 1950 to unify both groups so far that the Central Council of the Jews of Germany (*Zentralrat der Juden Deutschlands*) could be founded. The Central Council was to chair the synagogues of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Unified Community), and represent it to the general public. Before this foundation, German Jews, who had knowledge of the country and its culture, would use pre-Nazi contacts to re-establish themselves and preferred to communicate needs to German authorities, whereas DPs addressed the Allied occupiers (Brenner 1995; Geller 2005; Kugelman 1988a). Geller outlined that those German Jews who had survived were often married to non-Jews and had been rather marginal in the pre-1933 communities.¹¹ Others had been non-practicing and "so assimilated that they could happily pass as Germans" as one rabbi told me. Furthermore, Germany had been the birthplace of liberal Judaism,¹² and how far German Jews were Zionists is a matter of contention. Geller (2005), Kugelman (1996) and Meng (2005) outline that Zionism was the *modus operandi* for DPs, while German Jews still had a connection to Germany: before 1933, they had been "German by culture and citizenship" (Geller 2005: 17).

One of my participants told me that his German grandparents, who never “really learned Hebrew” would have “never left Germany, if they didn’t have to.” His Eastern European grandparents on the other hand, were ardent Zionists. Unlike his German grandparents, they changed their name to a Hebrew name in Israel. Another of my participants told me, shaking her head, of her former German mother-in-law “...a proper *Yecke*.¹³ She was so angry when her son married a woman of Polish descent, because that woman would not eat *Nüsschen* [very expensive part of the pig].” The same lady held her annual *Skat* tournament [German card game] every year on *Yom Kippur*¹⁴ in full view of the synagogue with her “*Yecke* friends.”

The incoming DPs were often more religious, according to Geller and Kugelman.¹⁵ By virtue of the strong segregation of Jews from the local populations in pre-*Shoah* Eastern Europe, mixed marriage there was uncommon, and Jews remained amongst themselves (cf. Furman 1987). The differences between Eastern European Jews and German Jews had already been an issue when Jews from Eastern Europe fled to Germany from pogroms in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century (Geller 2005). German Jews would look down on these Yiddish speaking incomers, and were not shy to call them derisively *Ostjuden* (East Jews).

The disparity between German Jews and DPs would persist, even after the *Shoah*. Indeed, as I learned from a German Jew who knew about my research, in London in 2002: “What kind of Jews are you working with? Those aren’t German Jews! That’s DPs.” She, born after the *Shoah* to German Jewish parents in Frankfurt, still distinguished between German and DP Jews. In Cologne, more than sixty years after the *Shoah*, Ron,¹⁶ a member of the liberal community, told me in regard to the orthodox community: “It’s very Eastern European in there. They have such a *Shtetl* mentality. They live in their own mental ghetto!” To him, an Israeli of German descent, this made the place un-homely.

Kugelman claims that the immediate post-war period was to set the pace of the development of the official Jewish community, the *Einheitsgemeinde*, in Germany. Internal differences, be it in regard to practice or in regard to dealing with the German,

non-Jewish environment were going to be a constant point of contention. Kugelmann (1996) argues that especially those who had survived Nazi camps were unable to embrace the diversity, heterogeneity, and non-unifiedness of pre-*Shoah* Jewish life in Germany, which ranged from non-religious assimilated Jews to orthodox practising ones. Survivors who now formed the majority of Jews in Germany wished to stand united against the non-Jewish surrounding (ibid).

Geller casts doubt on this assertion. His analysis of the time immediately after the *Shoah* until the German-Israeli restitution treaty in 1953 revealed that German Jews were infighting, and DPs were a less unified or homogenous group (Geller 2005) than Kugelmann claimed. Internal differences within the groups and individual differences were easy to overlook by virtue of the total shadow that the *Shoah* cast on all Jews. The historian Jürgen Zieher (2005) supports the claim of Geller (2005) in regard to the communities in Düsseldorf, Dortmund und Cologne. The infighting in the different Jewish groups can be seen as an indication of attempts to re-create a community to last and not a temporary structure that would be discarded in due time (Geis 1996). The new Jewish community should offer a space for different Jewish identities (cf. Buckser 2000).

It is unclear how far any of the information concerning the reestablishment was deliberately kept as insider knowledge to project a unified front to the Jewish surrounding (Kugelmann 1988a, 1996) or if the non-Jewish population did not want to know any details about the remaining Jews. From my own observations in the field it is probably a mixture of both, and I predict that in a time closer to the *Shoah* Jews were more of taboo topic than they are now, when dealings with them are just fraught. I will come back to this in the next chapter.

Jael Geis¹⁷ (1996, 2000) whose work focuses on German Jews in the British and American occupied zones in the years 1945 to 1949 found that German Jews immediately after the liberation of Germany had been thinking about how to re-establish Jewish communities. With her findings, which are based on documents that became accessible only recently, she discards the idea of the re-established community as a *Liquidationsgemeinde* (liquidation community). Until the mid-1980s the notion that

the official post-*Shoah* community was supposed to serve only for the old and sick, who could not immigrate had been widely held. Moshe Zimmermann (2008) referred to this notion with the term *Lebenslüge* (lifetime lie). By this he means that Jews in Germany pretended to themselves and others that they were not in Germany out of choice, but had been fated to get stuck there. Admitting to living in Germany out of choice would have put them in the (impossible) situation to admit to themselves, to their children, to their families abroad and to other Jews that remaining in Germany was an act of agency, whatever this agency might be based on.¹⁸ The first public discarding of this *Lebenslüge* by (then) secretary general of the Central Council, Ignatz Bubis, in the mid-1980s was shocking to all those Jews who claimed that they were living with packed suitcases.¹⁹ Indeed, speaking of the Jewish community in Germany as more than a temporary asylum for the sick and traumatised, who just happened to be alive was a taboo (Bodemann 1996a; Geis 1996, 2000; Zuckermann 2008). The notion to re-establish Jewish life in Germany became a publicly held debate much later, in the 1990s, when Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated in large numbers to Germany (Becker 2001). Before I turn to the life of Jews in the decades up to the present I will describe the structure of the official *Einheitsgemeinde*. This official structure, which was the outcome of the immediate post war period, set the tone for the official representation, and in many cases actual religious Jewish life, until the present. The Central Council of the Jews of Germany was founded in 1950, with the task to represent all Jews living in Germany. Its initial members were mainly German Jews (and not DPs), a bias that was going to prevail.

Structure of the official Jewish community after 1945

With the foundation of the Central Council of the Jews of Germany (*Zentralrat der Juden von Deutschland*), the official post-*Shoah* Jewish community, called *Einheitsgemeinde* (Unified Community), began to take shape. It is a foundation under public law (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*), and partly funded by the German federal state.²⁰ In 2003, a state treaty between the (then) chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the (then) secretary general of the Central Council Paul Spiegel was signed. It guaranteed the Unified Community annual funding of €3 million, which it uses to

further the religious, cultural and social life of its members, and support the work of its associations, communities, and social services. Similar contracts exist for other state recognised religious communities too.

The Central Council of the Jews of Germany is based on a tripartite structure of the *Ratsversammlung* (advisory committee), *Direktorium* (directorate), and the *Präsidium* (chair). The advisory committee consists of members of all *Landesverbände* (state associations) and single *Großgemeinden* (big communities: Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt and Cologne), one representative per 1,000 members is sent to the annual meeting of the advisory committee, where the chair is elected. The directorate, which consists of one representative per 5,000 members elects the secretary general, and his or her deputy. The latter two are the official face of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. The secretary general and their deputy act representatively for the *Einheitsgemeinde* on official occasions.

The official membership of the synagogues of the *Einheitsgemeinde* stood at 105,000 at the time of writing. The members are spread amongst 104 communities throughout the country, each of which has a synagogue, and is chaired by one or more rabbis for spiritual and religious matters, and a locale advisory board that deals with secular issues. By virtue of the size of the membership, Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt and Cologne are not members of the *Landesverbände* (state associations), but are counted separately to reflect their size of membership. The *Landesverbände* reflect the *Länder* (states) of the German federation, with the exemptions of North-Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg, which house two *Landesverbände* each. The split in these two states mirrors that both states were put together from formerly separate regions by the Allies post-WWII.

Membership in the *Einheitsgemeinde* is not compulsory, and only open to *halachic* Jews: that is the child of a Jewish mother or a person who underwent orthodox *Giyur* (conversion). The form of religious practice is orthodox.²¹ However, a person telling the local registry²² that they are Jewish, will automatically be categorised as a member of the local Jewish community by German administration and fiscal offices, and pay cult tax²³ to the local *Einheitsgemeinde*. Depending on the state, this can be a liberal or

orthodox community. In the case of Cologne, the orthodox led *Einheitsgemeinde* was until June 2007 the only officially recognised Jewish community, which received state funding and taxes. In 2007 a court ruling stated that both communities, liberal and orthodox, are eligible for state funding. How the allocation of the funds is supposed to happen is yet unclear, and also whether funds will be paid retrospectively from the orthodox to the liberal community. The court ruling occurred after years of legal action from both sides, and an increasing acrimony. Where this acrimony stems from I will come to later in this chapter and in the next. This acrimony deterred as well the merger of both communities, which was an on-off item of discussion of several meetings between the orthodox and liberal communities during and after my fieldwork.

The categorisation as ‘Jewish for tax purposes’ does not mean that a person is indeed a recognised member of a Jewish community. It is a self-elected category by the individual in question. For recognition as a member of the Jewish community the rabbi needs to define a person as Jewish. All rabbis working in Cologne apply the (orthodox) *Halacha*²⁴, the Jewish religious law, to grant a Jewish status. Only a child of a Jewish mother counts as Jewish, or a person who underwent a *Giyur* that the respective rabbi deems appropriate. Children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are not recognised as Jewish, and their status is problematic. According to my participants, some men who married non-Jewish women left the *Einheitsgemeinde* as they felt ostracised, others remained marginal members, in some cases the wife converted. Conversion has been and remains a major hot topic in Germany. According to my sources in the liberal community, the orthodox *Einheitsgemeinde* does not perform any conversions. Members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* told me that there is a conversion class in their community. The (then) rabbi of the *Einheitsgemeinde* told me he does perform conversions, but refused to answer any further questions as this “is an area too sensitive for the individuals and families concerned.” The second rabbi of this orthodox community who is part of the orthodox *Chabad Lubavitch* movement told me that he would refer individuals who want to convert to go to Frankfurt, which has a stronger Jewish infrastructure, but the ideal would be if they went to Israel. The liberal community in Cologne lets individuals convert, but the admission for conversion has changed during my fieldwork. The state of affairs (since summer 2007) is not to let

individuals convert who upon conversion would live in mixed marriages, although this ruling might be softened for non-*halachic* Jews who are partnered with non-Jews. In order to convert a person is expected to engage with Jewish religion, its traditions, and the scripts, as well as learn to read, if not partially speak, Hebrew. On a community level the person needs to be accepted by the members of the community, and the board needs to vote in favour of the person. To get to this stage takes at least one year. Only then, the rabbi can be approached about the conversion and decide if the reasons for the conversion of this person are valid. A person who converted within a liberal setting will not be granted a Jewish status by the orthodox led *Einheitsgemeinde*. The (then) rabbi of the local Cologne *Einheitsgemeinde* told me that “this creates two classes of Jews. A person who has converted liberally I do not recognise as a Jew. I will not perform any rituals for them.”

The last paragraph already taps into the current power struggle between the official *Einheitsgemeinde*, and the small liberal²⁵ communities that have sprung up since the mid 1990s. These communities came into being by virtue of a multitude of forces. There were dissatisfied members of the existing orthodox *Einheitsgemeinden*, incomers from the US, Britain, and Israel, as well as non-*halachic*, that is patrilineal, Jews and Jews of mixed descent who had no access to the orthodox communities. Having been turned away from these communities they sought for a kind of “Jewish home”, and felt more attracted by the US influenced liberal and reform movements. According to Geller (2005), in particular those German Jews survived who were married to non-Jews. For this reason, it is unsurprising that there are more Jews of German descent active in liberal communities in Germany. A significant number of them perceives of the current liberal communities as a historic continuation of their ancestors’ practice, and their openness to non-Jewish (German) society. For these members the current liberal movement takes up a German tradition of Judaism that orthodox Judaism is not. The orthodox practice, admitted one orthodox rabbi much to my surprise in a public paper “was never favoured by the majority of Jews in Germany.” The liberal movement consists of twenty-one communities across Germany (March 2009); figures for members do not exist. Some of the communities of the liberal movement are state

funded, others not. The funding depends completely on the state, and what orthodox and liberal communities agree on in a locale.

The structures of the *Einheitsgemeinde* were challenged with the creation of the liberal movement in 1996 for the first time since 1950. But what do these structures mean to Jews who live in Germany? The current power struggle hints at dissatisfaction with the public representation, and the prescribed normative orthodox practice. It furthermore hints at a Jewish life which lies outside and beyond the *Einheitsgemeinde*. But where is it, who drives it, and how is it lived out?

Works on the continuation of Jewish life after 1950

Y. Michal Bodemann (2006) writes of a Jewish renaissance in Germany, a Jewish life characterised by dynamism, which is future orientated, and in some cases beyond the *Shoah*. He also writes that for nearly fifty years Jewish life was confined to a cocoon, which consisted of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and very few Jewish intellectuals and public figures who dissented from the official stance of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. In the same year, 2006, a book that can be seen as a general overview over *Jewish life in the New Germany* (that is post-unification and post-Russian immigration Germany) was published by Jeffrey M. Peck. Peck and Bodemann are part of the very small anthropologically and sociologically minded group of academics who work on Jews in Germany. Overall, there is very little literature, which deals ethnographically or sociologically with Jewish life in Germany between 1950 and 1991 (Rapaport 1992; Bodemann 1996b). Literature since 1991 has been focused on ‘Russian Jews’ mainly. The lack of research reflects the anomaly of Jewish life post-*Shoah* in Germany, but also the issue of access to Jewish communities, and hand in hand with it the position of the researcher.

In regard to research conducted, three doctoral dissertations stand out. The first is the PhD dissertation of Harry Maor (1961). Maor looked at Jewish life in post-*Shoah* Germany holistically, his dissertation is called *Über den Wiederaufbau der jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland* (About the recreation of the Jewish communities in

Germany).²⁶ His work considers the official framework of Jewish life in the form of the communities of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, but gives voice to actual expressions of practice, and ideas about being in Germany as a Jew. Maor found that the official line of the *Einheitsgemeinde* and privately held opinions diverged regularly; Jews were not really practicing as orthodoxly as their surrounding might have thought. Furthermore, the children of DPs and German Jews alike showed strong ambiguity towards being in Germany, and a desire to leave the country for Israel or the US. Maor's work is until today considered to be the only empirically grounded work on the totality of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Germany, it is based on qualitative and quantitative social research methods. No follow up research on this scale has yet been conducted. Levinson (1988) and Bodemann (1996b) lament that there is overall a lack of academic work that appreciates Jewish life in Germany in its multi-facetedness. Both miss one crucial point, I think, or they choose to remain silent about it: that the lack of research in general, and the specifics of the researchers involved demonstrate the abnormality of Jewish life in Germany post-*Shoah*. I will come to this after introducing the works of Oppenheimer (1967) and Kuschner (1977), and go into depth about this issue in the next chapter.

Oppenheimer (1967) used his position as a youth worker in a Jewish community to conduct research on attitudes of Jewish children and teenagers. The children and teenagers he interviewed and surveyed were Jews of the so-called 'second generation', meaning that their parents were *Shoah* survivors or had returned from exile.²⁷ The focus of Oppenheimer's work, which surveyed more than hundred children and teenagers, lay on their attitudes to living in Germany, amongst Germans. The results of his work strongly indicated that the majority of the Jews of the second generation were anything but happy about their being in Germany. Indeed, it would be about ten years later, when books with titles such as *Fremd im eigenen Land* (Alien in One's Own Country), *Dies ist nicht mein Land* (This Is Not My Country) and *Wir lebende Tote dieses Landes* (We Living Dead of this Country) (all listed in Bodemann 1996b), amongst other similar books, would be published. All of these books are autobiographical, all are written, co-authored or edited by Jews of the second generation, all speak of a predicament of living in Germany at the most positive, or the inability to bear Germany at the most negative. These autobiographical accounts confirmed the findings of both Maor and

Oppenheimer. The desire to leave Germany had not changed in the ten years between Oppenheimer's and Kushner's research, nor in the nearly twenty years since Maor's groundbreaking work.

Prior to the autobiographical rush, Doris Kushner (1977), confirmed the finding of Maor and Oppenheimer. The wish to emigrate and leave Germany was widely spread amongst Jews regardless of generation; the overwhelming majority of her participants confirmed that they would like to leave.²⁸ Indeed, looking at her work, nothing much seemed to have changed in the regard to the attitudes of those growing up in Germany. When Kushner conducted her research, the generational break between the second and third generation had not occurred yet. Like Oppenheimer, she worked with youth she could access through the Jewish communities, which as she states in the introduction makes for a bias (ibid: 7). One person I interviewed and who would technically fit into her sample told me that: "there was no encouragement to stay in Germany [from the community]. The aim was to emigrate." A second person told me "We were told in the synagogue that we're not Germans. And we must not feel as Germans." A person of the first generation referred to the second generation as "the lost generation" because so many of them left.

On the other side two participants of my research, sisters who have grown up without contact to any Jewish community, feel very much like Germans, Germany is their home, the wish to leave based on their Jewish background was perceived of as a strange question from an anthropologist, but nothing that had crossed their minds. It seems that the attitudes Maor, Oppenheimer, and Kushner found are certainly valid for community members.²⁹ However, it seems to me that neither of these works pays enough attention to peer group pressure, and the very limited research surroundings. The significant number of Jews who do not want to be or cannot be part of the *Einheitsgemeinde* are not researched in any of these works. Little is known about these Jews, and only very few are reached through research projects regardless of generational cohort (cf. Grabowsky for the first generation, forthcoming).

A further point that is not made about these works, and the issue that Bodemann and Levinson overlook is that these works were written by insiders. Maor was part of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, as were Oppenheimer and Kushner. All were positioned as insiders, and perceived as such by the persons they worked with. Kushner reflects on her position and access to her interview partners. She mentions that although she is Jewish herself, access to survivors was most difficult, and only facilitated when Kushner gave away the information on her own father being a survivor (ibid: 9).³⁰ Furthermore, she mentions that those Jewish children and teenagers who had been born abroad were easiest to access, and most outspoken in their opinions (ibid). Issues like these would only be articulated in autobiographical works from 1979 onwards, and in academic literature written by Jewish intellectuals from the end-1980s onwards. These accounts rendered in-depth narratives about what Bodemann called “Jewish sensitivities in Germany” (Bodemann 1996b: 9-10). They give a rather unmitigated insight into the lived-in realities of the authors. Yet, these works are part of a public, yet inner-Jewish monologue, an issue that I will look at in depth in the next chapter.

The overarching feature that shows in all three research works is the highly fraught relationship of Jews to their German surrounding, and the feeling of alienation, of a negative ‘not-being-in-place’, and a basic mistrust towards (non-Jewish) Germans. In combination, these issues deter research work on Jews by non-Jews (cf. Frerker 1998), and offer a further explanation for the lack of more research work on Jews in Germany after the *Shoah*. The relationship between Germans and Jews was tense at its best and gaining access to a Jewish community was difficult (Bodemann 1996b), and of those who could easily gain access only a very limited number had any interest in pursuing this kind of research. Maor and Oppenheimer of the first generation are joined by Alphons Silbermann, a Cologne based sociologist who published on anti-Semitism (1982), and the self-image of Jews (1991) in Germany mainly. However, Silbermann conducted this research late in his life. He was born in 1909 (Blaschke, Fings & Lissner 1997: 168). According to members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne who knew him personally, he “had not had much of an interest in the community for most of his life”, and only became a member shortly before his death. This apparent disinterest in ‘the community’ was harshly criticised by them. In conversations with elderly members

(first generation) of the *Einheitsgemeinde* this behaviour was seen as close to treason, and as having switched sides to ‘the Germans.’ Whatever Silbermann’s motives were to conduct the research late in his life, I do not know, the forewords do not reveal it. Yet, the criticisms reveal several things about first generation members. If one was a Jew one was supposed to be a member of the community, and through the categorical membership stand by one’s Jewishness. One was part of a ‘community of fate’, where one’s fate was being Jewish, with whatever advantages and disadvantages that brought with it. This stance can be related to trauma and racialised superimposed identities of the Nazi era. This trauma also underpins the questioning of Silbermann’s late academic interest in Jews. One might ask: why should an academic who happens to be a Jew be interested in researching Jews? In other countries this question might be rather neutral, in Germany it is not. A Jew who is not interested in Jewish matters is perceived as an abnormality by other Jews. This in turn indicates that ‘Jew’ as a category was felt to be a total identity by these elderly survivors in particular.

More work from insiders would follow from the later 1970s onwards. As described above, the first of these publications were defined by their autobiographical nature, and spoke of an enormous pain, anger, and desperation with the German surrounding.³¹ It is indicative of these works that they form part of a (public) Jewish monologue, and that yet there was no scope for a dialogue between Jews and non-Jews in these works.

New Jewish voices – Jewish intellectuals

A key publication on Jewish life in Germany was published in 1988. The edited volume *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945* (Jewish life in Germany since 1945) sees Germany’s Jewish intellectual elite of the second generation reflect upon living, not sojourning in Germany. Of similar importance are the edited volumes by Uri R. Kaufmann (1994) and Monika Richarz (1982 and 1991).³² *Germans, Jews, and Memory*, edited by Y. Michal Bodemann was published in 1996. This volume can be described as a follow up to the 1988 volume, in which Bodemann was one of the contributors. The publications of these volumes hint at the coming of age of the second generation, and with that a generational change that manifested itself in first public

cracks in the –apparently- united front, cracks whose beginning had already been realised by Maor.

At the end of the 1980s those contributing to *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945* had settled in Germany, or were in the case of Bodemann engaging with Germany but lived abroad. Unlike their parents, these authors were openly engaging with being Jews in the country. Micha Brumlik (1988) and Sammy Speier (1988) wrote the most candid chapters on their personal states of mind. Dan Diner formulated his now classic hypothesis of the negative symbiosis of Jews and Germans after Auschwitz. Diner claims that Auschwitz became the originator of the identities of both Jews and Germans, and that Auschwitz was going to bind them together for generations to come. All authors acknowledged that they were indeed living to Germany, with unpacked suitcases, however difficult that was for them. To be living with packed suitcases or only sojourning was a myth that the first generation had created for themselves to avoid engaging with the fact that they were indeed living in Germany (Zuckermann 2008), an issue that they could neither grapple with rationally, nor emotionally (Kugelmann 1988a, 1988b). The acknowledgement to live with unpacked suitcases of Jewish intellectuals and academics resulted in an open engagement with the German surrounding. However, the chapters of the contributors in *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland nach 1945* (1988), and more so in *Reichspogromnacht* (Night of the Pogroms), published in the same year, spoke of pain and desperation, anger and fear, but showed at the same time an intellectual engagement with the persecution of Jews before, their murder during the *Shoah*, and with the failures of Germans to grapple with the trauma they had caused beyond the mere question of numbers, which stayed with survivors and which was transmitted to children and grandchildren.

The *Shoah* was a taboo topic in Germany, and it entered the public sphere only with the airing of the US TV series ‘Holocaust’ as late as 1979. Before that, the persisting trauma of survivors had been acknowledged as debilitating psychoses by experts. This trauma discourse was unknown to the vast majority of non-Jewish Germans. The first attempt to describe working with those who had suffered from Nazi persecution was published by three psychiatrists in 1964. This book, *Die Psychiatrie der Verfolgten* (The

Psychiatry of the Persecuted) bore witness to the fact that there had never been anything like the *Shoah* before, and psychiatrists saw themselves confronted by symptoms they had never seen before. Expert script lacked as much as survivors lacked a cultural script to express what had happened (cf. Grünberg 2007b; Linde 1993; Ochs & Capps 2001). The little that was said and published on survivors remained within the realm of experts and within the groups of victims, it did not feed into a more general public discourse. The interactions between Jews and non-Jews were disastrous, and beset by suspicions, stereotypes, hatred and other negative feelings. On the Jewish side, survivors were still alive and trying to deal with being in Germany. Yet, the issue as to why one was in Germany was heavily glossed over (Kranz 2008c). On the German side, perpetrators were still alive, and often still part of the establishment (Geller 2005). The distance from the *Shoah* was too small, and the boundary of interaction between Jews and Germans seemed impenetrable. Kugelman (1988b) verbalises this most clearly in her assessment of the failure to find appropriate ways to mourn for and with Jews: the mere presence of non-Jews could already cause offence, and in some cases re-traumatisation.

Beyond literature

The increasing number of publications since the 1990s by Jewish scholars and contributions by non-Jews to Jewish topics alike, indicated that the ‘Jewish space’³³ had gained a new dynamic, a dynamic not seen since 1933. Publications had become more diverse with opinion pieces on various topics, ranging from the German past to the state of the State of Israel since the end of the 1980s. The consensus of standing united as Jews against the non-Jewish surrounding (Kugelman 1996) had collapsed on the surface. One particular event had strongly influenced this dynamic. Its aftermaths are still tangible in the Jewish space today. This event was the first Lebanon war in 1982. Its justification was rejected by large parts of the German population and left-wing Jews of the second generation. More so, the massacres perpetrated by Lebanese Phalangist Militia on Palestinian refugees without the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) intervening caused a huge uproar against the conduct of the IDF in Israel³⁴, and sent shockwaves through Germany’s official Jewish community. The *Einheitsgemeinde* had always been supportive of Israel, and defended Israeli actions to the German public. The event of the

massacres led left-wing Jews of the second generation to criticise Israel foreign policy publicly. However, these Jewish left-wingers had to realise very quickly that their public criticism of Israel fed into anti-Semitic propaganda as voiced by the non-Jewish left-wingers in Germany (Khasani 2005; Kranz 2007b). In consequence, left-wing Jews of the second generation suffered the experience that publically voiced criticism of Israel put them at risk to being abused for the wrong purposes, as Mayan a member of the liberal community in Cologne told me.

Cracks in the façade

The cracks in the apparently homogenous national Jewish façade had repercussions on a very local level. The formation of the groups in Cologne can be seen as indicative for the group formation of Jews of the second generation in Germany. According to Jews in Cologne, different opinions on the Lebanon war, and being Jewish in Germany, were voiced. The opinions within the *Einheitsgemeinde* and between Jews as such diverged so much that those critical of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, the war, and concerned about being Jews in Germany formed a new group, where the people in it would be like-minded Jews. This was the first group that formed outside of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and for Cologne, it was a harbinger of things to come.

Mayan, who was at that point in time in her early thirties, told me that she went to a protest against the war in Lebanon with her best friend, a non-Jewish German, and her son. The protest took place after the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla. To her shock she heard members of the German left shout: “Israel perpetrates a Holocaust against the Palestinians”, and: “Sharon is Israel’s Hitler.” Hearing this she felt unable to stay in the demonstration, and went home with her friend to explain what so deeply upset her. “I talked to her the whole night. I explained to her, how this is not a Holocaust, how Sharon is not Hitler. I talked and talked. She did not understand me. By the end of the night, I had lost my best friend.” She and other left-wing Jews in Germany felt that they needed a space where “one can be amongst ourselves”, a space where she felt she did not need to explain herself, a space based on and defined by similarities. These similarities can be described as being experiences of being Jewish in Germany, and more precisely as being secular, left-wing and Jewish in Germany, and not in tune with the hegemonic “autocratic” *Einheitsgemeinde* (Bodemann 1996b: 24). The space can be described as well as – nearly - exclusively Jewish, with boundaries that were very strictly managed. Persons with a left political view and a critical acceptance of Israel and its policies were allowed in, everybody else was excluded. The group of persons who gathered locally did not set up any official club; they gathered in what was referred to as *Jüdische Gruppe* (singular: Jewish Group). These groups existed in all major towns in Western Germany, with Frankfurt and Berlin having the most influential of

these Jewish Groups. Lena Inowlocki, a Frankfurt-based sociologist, recounts that in the Frankfurt group, left-wing Jews from all walks of life came together, including persons “where we didn’t actually know that they had Jewish parents” (personal communication, 2006). These Jews had not grown up in any of the Jewish communities, yet they still related to Jewish concerns, and in particular matters touching on Israel. The *Jüdischen Gruppen* (plural: Jewish Groups) can be seen as a first expression of a secular Jewish identity in Germany that lay outside the hegemony of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and which was critical, but still supportive of Israel (Kranz 2007b).

Cologne had a Jewish group too, albeit it a rather small one. Yet, while the development of the *Jüdische Gruppe* to the foundation of the liberal synagogue took fifteen years, the city had the first post-*Shoah* liberal community in Germany, which underlines just how agentially the founding father, and the others involved acted. Mayan and Ron, two key members of the liberal Jewish community were part of this earlier Jewish Group. Other members of this Jewish Group have meanwhile left Cologne, or are part of secular developments that succeeded the Jewish Group but are not members of any of the two religious communities. I will engage with these follow-ups in the section of the foundation of the liberal community.

Despite the small number of Jews in Germany, the developments of the 1980s and 1990s indicated a new dynamic of Jewish life in Germany. Membership of the *Einheitsgemeinde* stood consistently at 30,000 members. Bodemann estimates that only 40% to 60% of all Jews in Berlin were members (personal communication, 2005). In Cologne it might have been 70% of all those who could be members, because the synagogue of the *Einheitsgemeinde* was the only permanent Jewish space in town. The dynamic that had developed in the 1980s, changed with the large-scale arrival of Jews from countries of the former Soviet Union, which was made possible through the Humanitarian Law (*Human Gesetz*) of the Federal Republic. These Jews had yet a different relationship to Germany, the *Shoah*, and their Jewishness than the existing Jewish fractions in Germany (Becker 2001). Also, they had a different idea about what a Jewish community should be, and what it should be there for.

The breakdown of the communist bloc and its effects on the Jewish community in Germany

In 1989 the communist bloc collapsed and with it the Berlin wall. Within a year Germany would be reunited. The reunification meant that the law of the Federal Republic of Germany, the former West Germany, applied now to both parts of the country. Part of this legal framework is the so-called *Human Gesetz*, a law that allows persons persecuted in their native countries to apply for refugee status and asylum in Germany.

Already before the formal reunification, a number of Jews from the former USSR had left for the still existing GDR, which had invited them to immigrate due to the increasing anti-Semitism that went hand in hand with the collapse of the USSR (Becker 2001: 44). The last resolution of the parliament of the GDR was to ensure that the Russian Jewish immigration would not be stopped with the reunification of the two Germanies. West Germany had initially rejected this proposal, and gave in after a huge public outcry (ibid: 45-46). The outcome of the negotiations about the Russian Jewish immigration led to the creation of the so-called quota-refugee law (*Kontingentenflüchtlingsgesetz*).

The *Kontingentenflüchtlingsgesetz*, which was passed in 1991, distributes refugees and asylum seekers, or in this case Jews from the former USSR, to the different German states, and within the state to different counties (*Bezirke*). The measurement applied for the distribution is the so-called *Königsteiner Schlüssel*,³⁵ an indexing measurement laid out in line with the *Human Gesetz*. The quota-refugee law is an amendment of the *Human Gesetz*.

While the indexing measure was not developed with Jewish refugees in mind, ideally the communities in the *Bezirke* should have a Jewish community, but as it turned out, some Jewish communities were only founded through Jews from the USSR. The liberal community in Bad Pyrmont in Lower Saxony is one such community. Bad Pyrmont had

not had any Jewish community before the arrival of the Russian speakers since the destruction of the then German Jewish community by the Nazis.

The number of Jews from the former USSR, commonly referred to as Russian Jews, who immigrated to Germany by far exceeded the expectation of the German state, and the *Einheitsgemeinde*. The *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* (BAMF, Ministry for Migration and Refugees) estimated that between 220,000 and 170,000 persons who are either Jewish or married to a person who is Jewish have arrived in Germany.³⁶ The *Einheitsgemeinde* has reached nearly 105,000 members, of whom only 30,000 are not from the former USSR. The disparity between the number of Russian Jews in the *Einheitsgemeinde* and the BAMF figure is based on two main factors. First, USSR law treated Jews as a nationality. This nationality could be passed on by either parent. The *Einheitsgemeinde* applies the orthodox *halachic* definition to establish a Jewish status. Also problematic in this regard is that Jews in the former USSR were discriminated against, and that this led to the scenario that some obliterated any trace of their Jewishness (Becker 2001). Others had not had papers since the *Shoah*, but in Germany needed them to be acknowledged as Jews by the *Einheitsgemeinde*. The anthropologist Marina Sapritsky, who works on movements of Jews between the former USSR and Israel and spent her childhood in Russia was clear on the ‘loss’ of papers: “Who wanted to be Jewish in Russia?” (personal communication, 2008)

The strict application of the *Halacha* as the sole criterion to define a Jewish status led to a number of persons being excluded from the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and bitterness amongst some Russian incomers. As much as *halachic* Jews they had experienced anti-Semitism in their native countries, and now they did not qualify as Jews anymore.³⁷ The Master’s thesis (1995) and the article based on this thesis by Anette Vesper (1998), as well as an essay by Alphons Silbermann (1999) engage exclusively with Russian Jews in Cologne. Vesper found that the approaches to being Jewish amongst Russian incomers were strongly influenced by two factors: being *halachically* Jewish, and the state-favoured atheism of the former USSR. *Halachic* Jews and those with two Jewish parents had a stronger attachment to being Jewish. These persons had been recognised as Jews by the Jewish communities in their native countries too. Children of mixed marriages showed

overall a lesser attachment as a consequence of the fact that already the Jewish parent had a lesser attachment to Judaism.³⁸ Given the small size of Vesper's sample I am not sure if these findings hold on a larger scale. Furthermore, as she states, her sample was approached through the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Vesper 1995: 20), which makes for a bias. Children of mixed marriages had and have a difficult standing in the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and the non-inclusion of the non-Jewish parent did not help to make them feel homely. Indeed, the difficult stance of these persons led to a double alienation: they were immigrants in the German host society, and strangers in the Jewish communities.

Ivan, a Russian Jewish incomer, terminated his membership of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne. He told me that his children who are non-*halachic* Jews were told by the leader of the youth group that they were not wanted because "you are not Jews."

The local *Chabad* rabbi mentioned to me that he believes that some of the "Russians will learn proper [orthodox] practising" and that some of them showed a huge interest in Jewish religion, and a Jewish way of life. The main rabbi of the community only answered vaguely with "this [community] is a living organism" to the question how the integration of Russian works, and if there were problems.

The article of Silbermann on the participation of Russian incomers was published in 1999. Silbermann found that the majority of Jews coming from the former Soviet Union left for two reasons. Elderly people left for fear of anti-Semitism, younger ones for economic reasons (Silbermann 1999: 67). The option to practice their religion freely ranked only fifth amongst the reasons for immigration to Germany (ibid). Overall, the Jewish community was needed as a bridge to German authorities, and a means to integrate by the majority of the Russian Jews (ibid). In other words, the social functions of the community were of major importance to the immigrants. This attitude resembles the attitude of Jews in Germany in 1945. Ginzel (1984) as well as Grübel & Möllich (2005) outline that the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne initially had the key function to help Jews with their problems in a non-Jewish surrounding. By the time the Russian Jews arrived the community had redefined itself as a religious community primarily. Its social functions of the immediate post-*Shoah* period were not needed by its membership

anymore. The members were all settled in Germany, and did not require much attention from the office of social affairs. As Silbermann (1999) outlines, the different perception of what the Jewish community should be there for led to problems amongst those who had been in residence and the Russian speaking incomers, a consensus can only be reached “if both groups accept each other [in their difference],” (Silbermann 1999: 63). If and in how far this has taken place I do not know from official sources; the main rabbi of the Cologne community did not answer my question. Internal sources indicate that the two groups exist at a distance to each other. Problematic is the issue that Becker raised for Russians (2001) and that Kranz (2007c) analysed for Israelis: incoming Jews always beg the question for resident Jews as to why they are in Germany. The ambiguity of the resident Jews, and the difficult relationship to being in Germany is reflected and displaced on the incomers.

Jews from the former USSR have become the majority of the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and in a number of liberal communities. This means that on a macro-structural level the ratio of the majority of members has changed for a third time since 1933. Before 1933, German Jews had the majority position, between 1945 and 1991, DPs and their descendants formed the majority, now Russian speakers make up the majority of all Jews registered, if not overall in Germany.

From the *Jüdische Gruppe* to *Jüdisches Forum* to the Bridge to Tradition

It would be fallacious to relate the foundation of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne to the influx of Russian speaking Jews. Its key drivers consisted of birth Jews of the second generation who were dissatisfied with Israeli foreign policy, and the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and felt the need to discuss these matters, they felt misunderstood or not understood by non-Jews. But more than the feeling of not being understood, these Jews had to come to the realisation that their criticisms of the 1982 Lebanon war would be taken out of context and effectively fed into anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli discourses in Germany (Khasani 2005; Kranz 2007b). This overarching problem led to those Jews looking for like-minded people, as Mayan and Ron told me. This like-mindedness was based on individual opinions regarding politics, but at the same time underpinned by

biographical similarities. The key similarity was the Jewish background, and the experience of being Jewish in Germany. This background was lived out and interpreted differently by the participants of the group, though for all participants their Jewishness lay beyond the confines of the *Halacha*.

On an individual level, a significant number of the founding members of the liberal community were non-*halachic* Jews who had no access to the orthodox community or who had non-Jewish partners. These persons had a very difficult standing in the orthodox practicing *Einheitsgemeinde*, which was made up of survivors and their descendants. Non-*halachic* Jews were excluded, and persons married to non-Jews suffered a “marginal status” according to one former member. Ron, a founding member of the *Jüdisches Forum* (Jewish Forum) and the liberal Jewish community repeatedly described the *Einheitsgemeinde* as insular, and unwilling to engage with its German surrounding. Mayan, a patrilineal Jew, described the orthodox community to me as “awful.” She found the non-acceptance of children of Jewish fathers, and the rejection of the non-Jewish spouses, appalling.

One of the key differences between the orthodox and liberal community in Cologne is the engagement with the German (as in non-Jewish) society, which is reflected in the acceptance of non-Jewish spouses, and the encouragement to bring non-*halachically* Jewish children along and acquaint them with Jewish religion. This does not mean that the engagement with the German, non-Jewish surrounding is easy or free of tensions. Despite the problems, according to the members of the liberal community they seek for a future orientated approach to being Jewish in Germany, while they deem the approach of the *Einheitsgemeinde* as backward looking.

The differences in approaches to being Jewish in Germany have been manifesting themselves in the creation of new Jewish groups since the late 1970s. Chronologically, at first Jewish intellectuals organised themselves loosely in the *Jüdischen Gruppen*. The groups were run locally but connected nationally (Kranz 2007b). They offered a space where Jews who were critical of Israeli foreign policy and the *Einheitsgemeinde* could be critical, while they still remained amongst themselves (Grünberg 2000; Khasani

2005; Kranz 2007b; Rapaport 1997). The reason underlying the exclusive Jewish setting was explained to me by Mayan: “you were with people who understood. You didn’t have to explain yourself.” This quotation offers an insight in the essential misunderstanding she felt was inherent in communication with non-Jews in Germany. As mentioned earlier, she lost her best friend over a protest against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The *Jüdische Gruppe* in Cologne was small, and after a couple of years in the mid-1980s changed in focus. Mayan described this change of focus as a fizzling out (Kranz 2007b), whereas Ron described it as a change in the nature of the group. Politics were now only one issue, while the leaning of the group was more towards Jewish culture in its widest sense. However, this change in focus led as well to a change of the participants of the group, individuals who had been in it for mere political reasons left, while others joined. When I asked Mayan and Ron about the other members of the *Jüdische Gruppe* of Cologne they could recall a number of names. To some of the names they could put a place of current residence, while the majority resembled hazy shades of the past.

Then, in 1991 the first Gulf War occurred. Vast parts of the German left opposed this war, and protested it publicly. The *Einheitsgemeinde* did not protest it. Its stance was that Israel was under threat, and thus the actions of the US-led military operation were justified. A number of members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne, in particular those leaning to the political left did not share the stance of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. As in 1982, the 1991 war had consequences. It deepened existing rifts within the *Einheitsgemeinden*, and in Cologne it would lead to the momentum that was needed to re-create the energy that had led to the initial foundation of the *Jüdische Gruppe*. This time around the momentum would be greater, and lead to the creation of a lasting ‘Jewish space’ (Pinto 2002) outside of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne. This ‘space’ would be called *Jüdisches Forum* (Jewish Forum) or short *Forum*. The first event of the *Forum* ran two days after the war in Iraq started, and attracted an audience so big that the room could not accommodate everybody. This event, and the *Forum* had been the brainchild of Ron, who had been part of the *Jüdische Gruppe*. Ron had tried his luck as the Head of Cultural Affairs in the *Einheitsgemeinde*, but given up enervatedly: “all that would have changed would have been me growing a stomach ulcer.” He told me that his

agenda was far too open for the *Einheitsgemeinde* “at that point in time.” In 1991 the openness, and the outreach to non-Jews to further an understanding between Jews and non-Jews in Germany was too much for the majority of the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, a community made up of traumatised survivors and their descendants. Ron as an Israeli of German descent did not feel like erecting walls between himself and his non-Jewish surrounding, he wanted to invite non-Jews in to understand him, as well as other Jews. The majority of these other Jews did not want to invite non-Jews in, they wanted to be shielded behind physical and mental walls, and feel in a safe and secluded space when they were in the synagogue. Ron had to realise this and gave up his post in the community though it seemed to me he never quite grappled with the underlying trauma of the *Shoah* that made for their stance. Over the years I heard him repeatedly rage about the *Einheitsgemeinde*, although he concedes that now, nearly twenty years after the first Gulf war: “they’ve changed. There are other people in power now.” In 1991 those people were not in the majority, or simply still too young to have a say.

The 1991 foundation of the *Forum* can be seen as another attempt to create a space for like-minded Jews to discuss politics, and beyond that engage with the non-Jewish surrounding in a productive way. The key to the idea of the *Forum* is to understand Ron’s stance to seek interaction with his non-Jewish surrounding, and to argue about issues such as politics, Germany, and Israel from his point of view as a Jew, and seek an understanding for his own –unapologetic– positionality as an Israeli Jew in Cologne: “I don’t hide that I am a Jew or an Israeli.” And as such, Ron seeks to communicate with his non-Jewish and non-Israeli environment. But it was not only Ron who sought this kind of dialogue. Mayan who had been active in the Jewish Group did too, as did Jonathan and James, who are respectively the first head of the liberal-community to be, and the founding father of it. Besides these people and some more Jews, the *Forum* attracted a following of non-Jews. These sought for a dialogue with Jews and had as much an interest in interaction. Furthermore, these non-Jews were politically leaning to the left too, but unlike much of the German left were not anti-Israel in their attitudes (Kloke 1990, 2007; Kranz 2007b; Kraushaar 2005). The common ground, and above all the wish to interact across the German-Jewish divide, made for an instant success of the

Forum. The success was rather short-lived, however. An unbridgeable divide between Jews and non-Jews opened up once more, which led in turn to the foundation of *Gescher LaMassoret*³⁹, the liberal Jewish community. What had happened in the *Forum* to cause this development?

James felt that the *Forum* was becoming anti-Israeli in its focus, and that again misunderstandings between Jews and non-Jews were too big to bridge. Discussions about politics could become so heated that members walked out to not return. Jewish members felt again in the same predicament as they had felt in the German left before. On top of that, the wish for a religious service arose amongst some of the birth Jewish⁴⁰ members, and some of the non-Jewish members. These religious services ran initially once per month, and followed the idea of a liberal service: men and women were equals, vernacular language was included in the service, and the services were rather short. Some of the Jewish members were appalled by this religious turn. One elderly lady, Sarah, told me that: “I stopped going when it started. That wasn’t for me anymore, I’m not religious.” Sarah is a long-term member of the *Einheitsgemeinde* where she does not attend services. Another synagogue was of really no interest to her. A non-Jewish member, Monika, held an opinion similar to Sarah: “it turned more and more religious, that wasn’t for me anymore. It was like some people wanted to be Jews, and some of the Jews wanted a service, the intellectual debate died at that point.” What bothered Monika most was that “it really annoyed me that I was treated differently because I am very good friend with one of the Israelis. That was really sick.” Monika felt that her friend’s Israeliness was something that made him essentially desirable to others in the group, and that his Israeliness rubbed up on her.

What was going on in this *Forum*, a presumably secular intellectual gathering ground for dissenting Jews and non-Jews alike? James claimed it became anti-Israeli, Sarah complained it became too religious, and Monika felt that besides its religious leaning, the *Forum* favoured Israelis. All three hint at a development that was taking place in the *Forum*, which was that it became more religious in its outlook, and that especially the Jewish members were feeling they were in a minority situation similar to that in the

German left again. The 'religious' turn was to become a means to create a boundary, by imperatively invoking the *Halacha* to create certainty.

James expressed this wish most openly. He wanted to found a liberal Jewish community where Jews only could be members, and where subsequently those non-Jews who felt Jewish enough would need to convert. James wished for a community where boundaries were clearly defined, with non-Jews on the outside and Jews on the inside but that would be liberal and not like the *Einheitsgemeinde*. He wanted what Mayan had described as "a Jewish home" a home that neither of them could realise in the *Jüdisches Forum*. As Lynn Rapaport (1992, 1997) and Kurt Grünberg (2000) have demonstrated in their research work on Jews of the second generation in Germany these reactions could not be understood without reference to the *Shoah*. I do not mean this in the sense that they had total or "lethal *Shoah* identities" as Mayan once called them, I mean it in the sense that the loss of family and trauma were constantly present, as were unsettling moves between countries, and multiple break points in one's own biography.

The more pronounced openness towards the non-Jewish surrounding led the dissenters to seek out like-minded people to form a social circle. It turned out that the like-mindedness and similarities between Jews and non-Jews, and moderately religious Jews and Jewish atheists were not enough. The ideas and values of the people in the *Forum* were not homophilous enough to hold the group together (Burt 2000; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). The members showed even too little homophily if they fitted into the same ethnic category (Handelman 1977). For those who did not fit within the same ethnic category, the homophily stopped short at different life-experiences, different narratives that underpinned their (biographical) sense of self (Bruner 1987; Giddens 1991; McAdams 1993). These vast internal differences disabled any clear focus of the *Forum*. The members were simply too different on too many levels which led to the disintegration of the *Forum* (Burt 2000) and the creation of a more focussed space in form of the liberal Jewish community in consequence.

Practically, the lack of focus led to different expectations in the *Forum*, which led to disappointments. To some of the non-religious Jews without immediate *Shoah* contact

the presence of German non-Jews was unproblematic, for others with immediate *Shoah* contact it was a huge problem, for yet others a loose community without any unifying anchor, in this case the *Halacha*, offered too little. For the Jews who sought for a community with stronger moorings, implementing the *Halacha* seemed a good option: it acts decisive on categorising people as Jews or as non-Jews, and gives Jews specific categorical rights (Handelman 1977).

The differences led the dissenting Jewish to want to build a “Jewish home” (Mayan) with birth Jews, and those willing to convert thus creating a social circle with a strong boundary (Eidheim 1969; Handelman 1977). It should have definite permissions for membership, a stronger sense of similarity, in other words it should be a closed Jewish circle that was based on ethnic homogeneity and homophilous values.

How criticism against Israel was voiced was probably the most obvious difference between Israelis and Jews on one side and non-Jews on the other in the *Forum*. The *Shoah* at least for the second generation remained a constant reference point, even though this was not verbalised by all dissenting Jews, and some reject the claim. For them the experience of anti-Israelism was a stronger personal experience than the *Shoah*, with which some of them had no first hand experience through survivor parents or grandparents.

While Mayan, Ron, James, and some others went on to create a liberal Jewish community, and thus deprive the *Forum* of its key drivers, a substantial number of non-religious Jews did not join the liberal community. They either remained non-practicing members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, or refused to be members of any *Verein* (club), such as Stefan who declared that: “I don’t want to be member of any German club.” A club, including the *Einheitsgemeinde*, or social circle based on definite entry criteria and a rigid boundary was not to his liking at all. Stefan will reappear again in this chapter, because despite refusing membership in any club, he is very present in Jewish life in Cologne.

Despite all of its internal problems from its foundation in 1991 until the foundation of the liberal Jewish community in 1996 the *Jüdisches Forum* offered a space to birth Jews and interested non-Jews to gather, discuss, exchange ideas, and find a home for the Jewish parts of their identities. For Jews, *halachic* or not, the interest in the *Forum* already indicated that they had an interest in satisfying their craving for a Jewish space with other, like-minded Jews. For the non-Jews, the involvement had different reasons. According to a long-term observer of Jewish life in Cologne a number of the non-Jews in the *Forum* wanted “to do Jewish on occasion. They wanted to be Jewish without actually being Jews.” Indeed, some of the early non-Jewish members of the *Forum* had developed such a strong connection to *being* Jewish that they converted. Simone was amongst those who converted. She has meanwhile made *Aliyah*⁴¹ and lives in Israel. Heinz and Rachel who had spent time in Israel with *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Atonement)⁴² converted too. They are now members of the liberal community. Other non-Jews who were or are members came to join not with the underlying agenda to convert, but out of interest in a German-Jewish dialogue or through friends. Yet others, Jews and non-Jews alike who were interested in an intellectual debate felt completely alienated from the development and left.

Within a relatively short period of time of about two years the wish of the Jewish members to introduce religious components into the intellectually biased *Forum* had grown to the point that an *Erev Shabbat* (Friday Evening) service was run once a month. The introduction of a regular religious component into the previously secular *Forum* led to a first construction of a social boundary within the *Forum*. The majority of the Jewish members aligned themselves with the idea to introduce a service, and to establish more religious activities than just for the most important holidays. However, Jews and non-Jews could participate in the religious service. Non-Jews were allowed to read psalms, a ruling that in the liberal community would become one of the strongest boundaries between Jews and non-Jews: only *halachically* recognised Jews are allowed to take an active role in the service.

***Gescher LaMassoret* – Bridge to Tradition**

James is widely acknowledged as the founding father of *Gescher*, as the liberal Jewish community is called colloquially. He functionally employed the *Halacha* in the foundation of the *Gescher* although he privately rejects the idea that only a child of a Jewish mother is Jewish: “I was brought up with the notion that I am part of the people of Israel. I’ve been to Israel, my family is there, and my family has fought for this country!” James’s motives to push for the creation of the liberal Jewish community were certainly not religious: “I’m an atheist. I found the conversion was a very negative experience.”

James told me that he pushed for *Gescher* in order “to destroy the *Forum*”, which he felt “had become anti-Semitic and especially anti-Israeli.” He felt that the criticism of Israeli foreign policy eerily echoed the arguments “often heard in Germany, which are more in favour of Palestinian suffering than of Israel.” When he told me this, James became visibly enraged. Israel, and the safety of the state of Israel is a matter close to his heart. As a secular Jew, or atheist as he refers to himself, Israel as a secular home for Jews beyond Jewish religion is the anchoring point for his identity. In the *Jüdisches Forum* he felt that not only was this part of his identity under threat but that indeed the State of Israel was not supported but vilified. At the same time that he is a Jewish atheist James identifies himself as part of the Jewish people: “I am part of the *B’nei Yisrael* (sons of Israel).” Within the highly charged *Forum* he, a patrilineal Jew, found himself –again– out of a space that could function as a Jewish home. With this impending threat he decided to become active, and wrote a pamphlet lobbying for the foundation of a liberal Jewish community. This community would be liberal in practice and allow for an intellectual exchange about Israel, but it would be strictly regulated in its membership, and only allow *halachic* Jews to be members.

James conveyed this idea to Jonathan, Ron, and Mayan, as well as the other birth Jewish members of the *Forum*. Mayan did not need much convincing from James, Ron and Jonathan needed “quite some convincing.” Mayan’s situation was very similar to James. As a patrilineal Jew she had not been able to access the *Einheitsgemeinde*, while at the

same time she was very interested in a critical approach towards Israel that would nevertheless support the country. She agreed to participate in the liberal community to be.

James had been very careful to set up boundaries for membership in the community he had lobbied for. The membership would include Jews only. However, James learned quickly that to set up a Jewish community, an affiliation to some Jewish umbrella organisation was needed to obtain ideological and infrastructural help. The organisation of choice was the *World Union of Progressive Judaism (WUJP)*, which helps with the building of communities, development of leadership, youth work, and various other issues that arise; it helps as well with international ties, and runs conferences and workshops. This organisation would grant the nascent liberal Jewish community official recognition, and let it appear as more than just a loose gathering such as the *Jüdische Gruppe* or the *Jüdische Forum*; the *WUJP* would link it to the wider Jewish world.

The *WUJP* sets out certain rules for the membership of a community. One of them James and Mayan had so far whole-heartedly rejected for themselves: matrilineal descent. Mayan and James had resisted conversion so far, but the knowledge that they would be able to set up a community, their community, if they underwent conversion proved enough of an incentive to just do that. In the process of the creation of *Gescher LaMassoret*, the Bridge to Tradition as James named the community, James, Mayan, and James's late wife underwent the process of *Giyur*. These three, plus Jonathan, Ron, and ten or so others set up *Gescher LaMassoret* in 1996 when "twenty-five members... were our dream!"

By 2008 the community has grown to nearly 100 members. All of its services attract guests, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. While the policy of the community is of openness towards the non-Jewish visitors, their presence creates the problem of boundaries, while it leads to constant tensions. Metaphorically speaking these non-Jews invade a Jewish space for some of the members who wish to be amongst themselves, and on the occasion feel observed "like in a Jew zoo." An underlying problem is that any event of *Gescher* is characterised by enormous transience, only a very limited number of

individuals are regulars. This means that it is difficult to figure out who is a Jew and who is a non-Jew at the service. In consequence the similarity of biographical backgrounds and values which was supposed to underpin this setting cannot be taken as a given. The presence of non-Jews and the issue of conversion of persons from completely non-Jewish families have been creating problems that resurface in members' meetings, and that have been hotly and vitriolically debated. The ordinary members' meetings are held annually, in case of urgent matters a meeting can be called at any time. Decisions are taken by democratic majority vote in the meetings. In order to insure the smooth running of the community and deal with the regular affairs the board meets monthly. In the spirit of the democratic nature of the liberal community the board, which consists of five people who are elected at the ordinary annual meeting, cannot make 'policies' for the community. All policies need to be decided by majority vote in the members' meetings. For urgent matters extraordinary members' meetings or *Diskussionsrunden* (discussion rounds) are called. This process of decision-making will become clear in the 'food discussion' of chapter four.

Recurrent issues that the board has to deal with and which are discussed at the members' meeting centre around the management of the boundary on two levels. On a first level, it is the boundary to non-Jewish Germans in general. On a second level it is the boundary to how much Germanness is allowed into the Jewish space through the conversion of individuals with completely non-Jewish families who bring with them different experiences to being in Germany and life-stories which have no similarities to those of birth Jews (even if the similarities of the life-stories of the latter are tenuous, or assumed). I will delve into the problematic nature of non-Jewish presence in the next chapter, where I will outline that despite their best intentions members of both Cologne communities wish for a retreat from their non-Jewish surrounding however different their reasons might be.

Other Jewish spaces

With the creation of *Gescher*, the *Forum* became more or less defunct, as one of the current chairpersons, Yitzhak, told me: "the people who pushed all went into *Gescher*."

The *Forum* had become more or less reduced to “a mailing list and a monthly newsletter”, which was also discarded in the summer of 2007. “There’s just no real interest in it”, Ursula and Yitzhak, both current chairpersons told me. The *Forum* does not have a webpage, nor does it seek to recruit members, it just lingers. Some of the members who were very active or interested in it refused to join *Gescher* as they are non-religious, others lost any interest in Jewish matters after the serious infighting in the creation process of *Gescher*, yet others set up new Jewish spaces that were more to their liking.

One such space is *A Groisse Liebe* (Yiddish: A Big Love). Set up in May 2005, it seeks to attract all those Jews, and interested non-Jews, who cherish a debate about Israel, Judaism, films, or music in a completely secular setting. The location of *A Groisse Liebe* has been moved several times, but it has always taken place in a freely accessibly bistro pub in the centre of Cologne. Information about *A Groisse Liebe* can be accessed via its webpage, and any person who wishes to do so can join the mailing list via the webpage. However, I did not come across *A Groisse Liebe* via its webpage, but because a member of the liberal community, Laura, told me “there’s a new thing. You should have a look into it.” Curiously, I checked the webpage and contacted the founders of *A Groisse Liebe*, Stefan and Roland. About Stefan I had heard before; Roland I had never heard of. I approached them about obtaining some information on the gathering, and asked for access. Both were granted.

Upon arriving at *A Groisse Liebe*, I learned quickly that the attendees were mostly second generation Jews who were also members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. Hardly any first and no third generation Jews were around. Some of the non-Jewish spouses attended the gathering too: “most of us are married to non-Jews.”⁴³ As it turned out most of the attendees are living in mixed marriages, and are non-religious or little religious, the founders of *A Groisse Liebe* attest to being “Jewish atheists.” However, unlike James, who felt that a boundary to non-Jews in form of an instrumentalisation of the *Halacha* was needed, Stefan and Roland were interested in creating an “open space, where any Jew can come and bring their non-Jewish spouses and mixed children.” The majority of the non-practising attendees were members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* because

they had grown up in the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and were descendants of survivors. They had known each other from childhood and sought the proximity to other Jews with similar experiences in a social space. Unreligious as they were, they still needed their membership in the *Einheitsgemeinde*, to maintain at least some connection to their Jewishness as in a symbolic form (Gans 1979; Grünberg 2007a). Most often because they saw themselves as being part of a ‘community of fate.’ This ‘community of fate’, or *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, referred directly to the fate suffered by their families during the *Shoah*.

In the opinion of these members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* overstepping the *Halacha*, marrying a non-Jew or eating non-kosher food was permissible within the parameters they had defined for themselves. Openly opposing the *Einheitsgemeinde* was a step too far though. This was deemed to weaken the Jewish community, undermine the unwritten law of categorical Jewish cohesion and erode the boundary to the categorical ‘other’. In this line of thought, another Jew was defined as helpful, while a non-Jew was defined by the horrors of the past (Mitchell 1988). Non-Jewish spouses and intimate friends were *de-Goyified*, they entered a special category (Rapaport 1992, 1997). Problematically, this strategy brought these members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in too close a proximity with their German non-Jewish surrounding: if they did not practice, and did not care actively about “the community”, in how far were they still Jews? A complete assimilation was not desired by them and is impossible because of the *Shoah*. Their membership in a *religious* community, where also their parents had been members and that distinguishes clearly between Jews and non-Jews was a means to be secular Jewish, without betraying their Jewish belonging. Furthermore, it insured a symbolic Jewish continuity to the living and the dead (cf. Grünberg 2007a), which is key to descendants of survivors. It was indeed this categorical belonging that enabled them to overstep the *Halacha* and sustain their Jewishness.

From the point of view of the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* at the gathering, the step too far consisted of two particular steps. The first one was public opposition to the politics of the *Einheitsgemeinde* and public criticism of Israel. The second step pertained to the wish of the liberal communities to break down boundaries to the

German surrounding and live in dialogue with this surrounding. This attempted breakdown of categories within the realm of a Jewish community was too much for the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, while it is a key homophilous value of the founding members of *Gescher LaMassoret*.

The biographical differences, which are underpinned by the proximity or distance to the *Shoah* set the two religious communities in Cologne apart. The liberal community (majority non-survivors) the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (majority survivors) found unpalatable: “those are the self-hating Jews” was one opinion. This means that religion has rather little to do with the differences of the two Cologne communities. Some certainly preferred the form of orthodox praxis if they practiced, because they had grown up in it. Only very few of the attendees of *A Grosse Liebe* were members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* for practical reasons, such as access to the Jewish kindergarten or school. The Israelis who attended *A Grosse Liebe* were often non-members. They sought the proximity to fellow secular Israelis, the Israelis in the religious communities were too religious for their liking. To these Israelis, the discussion between the liberal and orthodox communities seemed strange, and nothing they related too (Kranz 2007c).

Whereas the foundation of *Gescher* was about setting a boundary, *A Grosse Liebe* was about breaking it down. So far, the concept seems to work because the pressure that was on the *Forum* did not apply to *A Grosse Liebe* because of the existence of *Gescher*. The critical Jews who wished to practice now had their own community. The secular Jews had their own group in the shape of the *Forum* if they were closer to *Gescher*, or in the shape of *A Grosse Liebe*, if they were closer to the *Einheitsgemeinde*. Debates around the tables of *A Grosse Liebe* can get heated too although less so than in the *Forum* which was much more intellectual in its approach. *A Grosse Liebe* is meant to offer a “social space where Jews are in the majority but non-Jews can participate” according to its founders. If this is indeed the case is of course as questionable as the openness of the *Forum*.

Despite its openness *A Grosse Liebe* does neither attract third generation Jews, nor Russian immigrants. The Russian-speaking immigrants have their own groups, most

prominently *Nash Dom* (Our House) a gathering of Russian pensioners. Younger Russian speakers gather privately, much like younger Jews who were born and grew up in Cologne. Both of these groups have set up loose social groups, but so far no lasting ones that resemble communities. Israelis in Cologne form a loose Israeli Group, which gathers in private spaces. Much as with Russian speakers, this group is inaccessible to non-Israelis: lingua franca is Hebrew, and the point of the gathering is “to be less homesick for Israel.” Membership in these groups is based on personal likes, and regulated accordingly.

Another space was *Yachad* (Hebrew: together), the gathering of gay and lesbian Jews, which is now defunct. Vered Amit Talai (1989) had observed similar patterns with Armenians in London. Armenians showed a strong dynamic in the creation and discarding of social spaces, and structures. The Armenian Church and the Armenian Cultural Centre remained the only constant focal points, everything else was in constant flux.

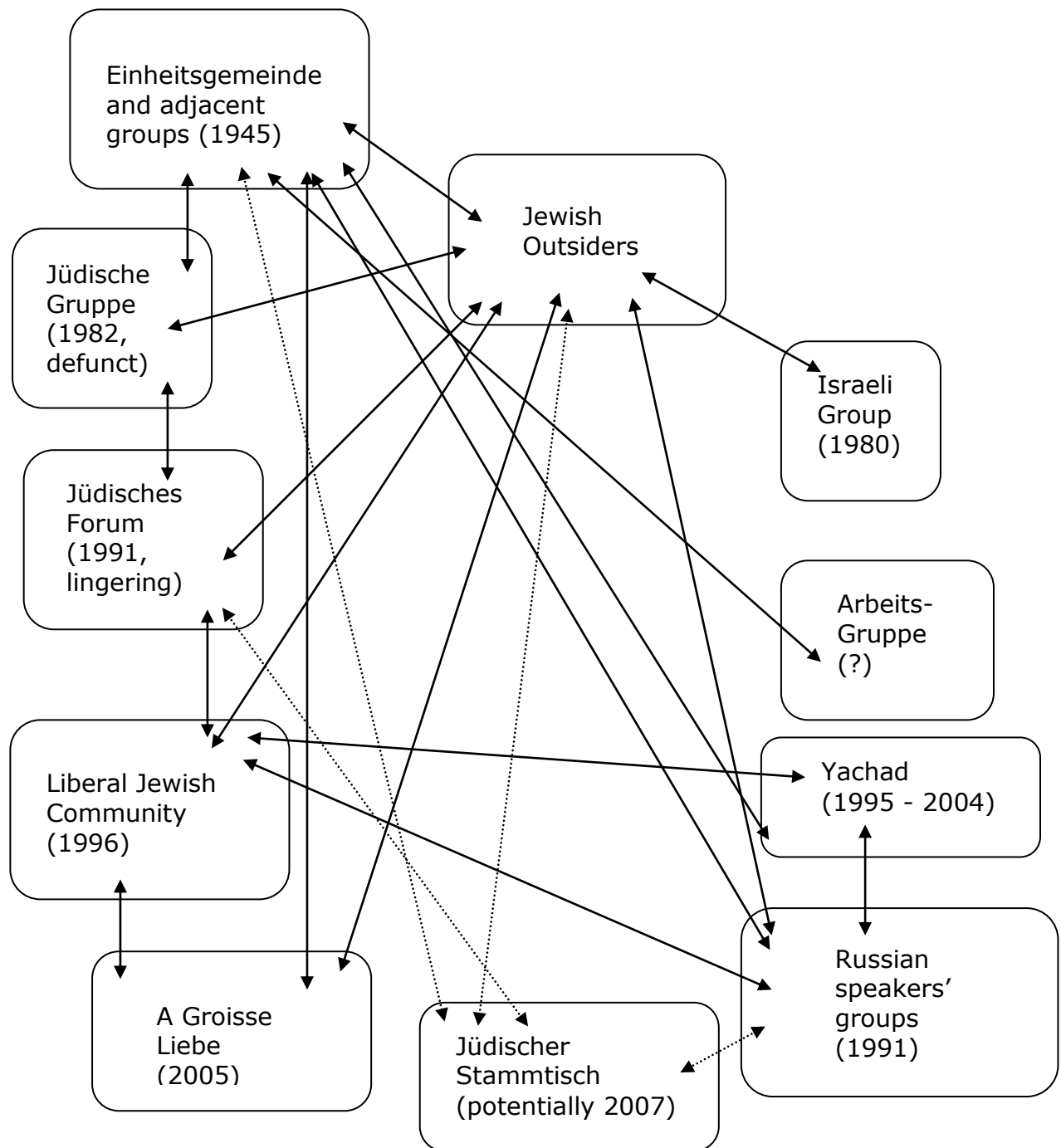
Conclusion: Jewish spaces in Cologne post-*Shoah*

Since its reopening in 1959 the orthodox synagogue of the *Einheitsgemeinde* was the centre point of Jewish life in Cologne, loved by some, ignored by others, derided by yet others. In the 1980s with the coming of the second generation of post-*Shoah* Jews in Germany this community which not only metaphorically has strong walls but ideologically too became too small for a number of members. These members met with like-minded *halachic* and non-*halachic* Jews to form the very politically informed *Jüdische Gruppen*. In Cologne the *Jüdische Gruppe* developed into the *Jüdische Forum*, and from the *Forum* grew *Gescher LaMassoret*. The near death of the *Forum* created as well the need for a more open secular space again, which led to the creation of *A Grosse Liebe*. These developments show that the boundaries to the non-Jewish surrounding are constantly being negotiated by Jews in Cologne. At the same time it shows that the different experiences that individual Jews bring with them, lead to the creation of new Jewish spaces. Identifications of individual Jews, which stem from individual experiences are multiple, and within groups show some overlaps. Jews who were critical of Israel and the *Einheitsgemeinde* and/or wanted to practice liberally needed *Gescher*. Others, who are technically members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* but who are not religious yet more careful in their criticism of Israel and descendants of survivors needed *A Grosse Liebe* for the secular part of their identities. Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals keep the *Forum* barely alive, and travel to exhibitions together. The nuances which seem small to an outside observer are crucial within Jewish Cologne, where being Jewish is anything but neutral, and where the different expressions of Jewishness need to be carefully negotiated. Some of the group memberships or rejections of groups are based on individual likes or dislikes too. These were in turn based on different biographical experiences, which manifested in different attitudes, and grudges or rejections of specific people could go back decades.

Closed spaces with strong boundaries such as the *Einheitsgemeinde* and *Gescher* are needed as much as open spaces like the *Forum* and *A Grosse Liebe*, and spaces, which speak to language communities such as Russians and Israelis. With all the dynamics of the Jewish space in Cologne it is important to understand that a couple of red threads

run through the different communities, groups and gatherings, and that individuals attend more than one of these groups and spaces, and express in them different parts of their Jewish identities. The major threads are age, intra-ethnic subcategory, native language, country of birth and youth, as well as general life-style choices such as preference for a specific form of Jewish practice, marriage choices, and *halachic* or non-*halachic* descent. This means that features of homogeneity and homophily run through the groups that maintain themselves. The homogeneity refers to intra-ethnic subcategory, native language and country of birth and youth. The homophily refers to life-style choices and the attitudes that underpin them. All of these threads feed into the identity of each of the individuals I met over the years, and form a matrix from which a unique identity is formed: it is here where the social and personal component of the Jewish identity of each person meet. This matrix of different threads of identities found their reflection as well in the reaction towards me, the researcher, and allowed for, or forbade access to groups, spaces, and individuals.

Jewish spaces in Cologne



↔ Connection via individuals, existence of friendships, exchange of news, gossip

⋯↔ Potential connection via individuals

The Jüdischer Stammtisch, planned as a secular gathering for those under 35 has not been realised yet.

2. Working in a fraught territory

Unlike anthropology abroad, fieldwork at home is not a matter of memorizing a new vocabulary; only slowly did I realise that I had to learn another language in the words of my mother tongue. I unlearned my boarding school accent, changed clothing and body movements. [...] In the company of Travellers I did experience abuse as a Gypsy at garden gates and in shops, and was chased away where previously I would have been welcome.

(Judith Okely. *Ethnography in the Home Counties*. *RAIN*, 1984, 61: 4)

Upon returning to Israel [from Russia], I mentioned the teenagers' remarks about my soulful eyes to some of my colleagues. One immediately exclaimed "You have Semitic eyes!" That's probably so, but then I wondered "Why hadn't my Russian Jewish friends in New York read my eyes that way?" To be honest, I never thought of my eyes as Semitic, nor did my family; we just referred to them as "our droopy eyes."

(Fran Markowitz. *Blood, Soul, Race, and Suffering*. *Anthropology and Humanism*, 2006, 31 (1): 48)

In an attempt to bridge the gap between us, I focused on our patch of common turf: We were all Jews.

(Alison Kahn. *Listen While I tell you*. 1987: 6)

That what was strange is now familiar, the familiar has a startling newness.

(Ibid: 183)

The turn inward, it seems, has catapulted me to the other side, so I cannot longer assume my own native status. If the risk for strangers is to "go native," the danger for natives who try to look at things as would a

stranger seems that they will “go stranger,” no longer able to count on their acceptance, as natives by other natives.

(Samuel C. Heilman. Jewish Sociologist. *The American Sociologist*, 1980, 15: 106)

[...] this minority [Jews in the Federal Republic] leans towards creating a strong external boundary, stays amongst themselves, and avoids interaction with outsiders. [...] The vast majority of the Jews in the Federal Republic belong to the group of the racially persecuted amongst the Nazis. [...] If at all, this group tends to talk amongst themselves about this topic, and is particularly on the guard vis-à-vis non-Jews. [...] The ‘entry ticket’ of the interviewer [who is Jewish herself] into this circle was the fact that her father was interned in a death camp.

(Doris Kushner. *Die jüdische Minderheit in der Bundesrepublik*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. University of Cologne, 1977: 7-8)

We were all aware that Jeff’s Jewishness placed him in an unusual special position in Germany.

(John Borneman and Jeffrey M. Peck. *Sojourners*. 1995: 26)

As a Jewish American scholar who focuses on Germany, I have been repeatedly asked, or even reproached, by Americans, especially Jewish Americans, about my intellectual interests and academic career that now lasted for over twenty years. Questions such as Why are you interested in Germany? or How can you live in this country? have pursued me as I studied the language, literature, and culture of the country that perpetrated crimes against the Jewish people.

(Jeffrey M. Peck. *Being Jewish in the New Germany*. 2006: IX)

I learned something my Jewish informants and their families had known for centuries: how it feels to be a dangerous outsider.

(William E. Mitchell. *The Goy in the Ghetto*. 1988: 243)

If at all, a somehow “neutral” interview would only have been possible to be conducted by a non-Jewish, non-German interviewer. And even then the interview would have been influenced by factors such as [...] the positionality of the interviewer’s native country during the Second World War.

(Kathryn Frerker. *Jungen Juden in Deutschland*. Unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Cologne. 1998: 51)

This area of conflict shows [...] that Russian Jewish immigration is a highly fraught and politicised field, which offers two discourses which are structured as a binary: either philosemitically or antisemitically.

(Franziska Becker. *Ankommen in Deutschland*. 2001: 84)

I had set out to conduct research on the creation and maintenance of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne. Much like Chaim Noy (2003) I realised during fieldwork, and even more so when I analysed my data, that the actual outcome of my research work was something different than I had in mind when I wrote my pre-fieldwork proposal. In this proposal I had stressed that my work was *not* going to focus on the *Shoah*, but that I wanted to understand how a community that is completely built on voluntarism works; my interest was in individual and social agency. How would individuals combine their individual agencies to create a voluntary community and by this token become agents of a shared social agency?

I had completely misjudged what being Jewish in Germany meant, the presence of the past, and the persistent divide between Jews and non-Jews. Through my encounters in the liberal community initially and then beyond it with other Jewish groups, circles, and Jewish individuals outside of the community, in short through applying multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) I learned to perceive the non-Jewish surrounding differently, and gained an understanding of what it meant to hear with Jewish ears (Lustig 2006) and see with Jewish eyes. My own perception changed to incorporate a

new awareness context (Strauss 1959; Strauss & Glaser 1968, 1971), which I had not known, or I had been ignorant of.

I also realised that without venturing outside of the liberal community, I would not understand its internal working and problems; I would have to learn and experience the interconnectedness of the Jewish groups and circles on a local, national, and international level to be able to refocus again on the liberal community. I needed to learn the matrices of contexts and grasp influences.

My participants and friends introduced me to a Cologne that has social structures geared up for Jews. Some of those were set up to shut non-Jews out. My entrance into this world was by no means easy. It took years to create trust between me and Jews both inside and outside of the communities. Becker (2001) states in her book *Ankommen in Deutschland* (Arriving in Germany) that she became a “quasi-official” (Becker 2001: 225) for the Russian Jewish immigrants who off tape were very interested in discussing with her their highly problematic position in the German ‘host’ society, and within the Jewish community. Both social categories, Jews and Germans carry strong categorical meanings in Germany (Becker 2001; Peck 2006) they are not only nominal categories, they are fraught with implicit meanings. Jews as victims of the Nazi terror and Germans as perpetrators are positioned in a binary opposition, the lingering effects of the past can be found in current misunderstandings and misgivings between Jews and non-Jews in Germany in general, and show in the problems that led to the creation, dissolution, and maintenance of the *Jüdische Gruppe*, *Jüdisches Forum*, *Gescher*, and other Jewish groups in Cologne.

The Russian incomers experienced themselves as winners of WWII on the one hand, and primarily as having been subjected to Soviet anti-Semitism on the other hand. Unlike with resident Jews of the communities in Germany, the *Shoah* played a much lesser role in their personal identities, and family histories (Schütze 1997). While trying to explore the problems that the positioning of Jews in Germany by other Jews and by Germans caused the Russian incomers, Becker (2001) was warned that an overt criticism of the immigration praxis and the problems within the Jewish community

could be perceived of as anti-Semitic, while blanking out problematic findings about the immigration of Russian Jews would be perceived as overtly “philo-Semitic” (ibid: 84). In short, Becker was presented with a Catch-22 situation, which, I claim, represents the very anomaly of German-Jewish relations post-*Shoah*: work with Jews in Germany is anything but neutral, and it is in this light not surprising that anthropologists stay away. If they approach working with Jews, like Becker, who describes herself as being part of the non-Jewish German society (Becker 2001: 90), they tend to work with Russian Jews. Work on non-Russian Jews, that is survivors, their children, and grandchildren who formed the vast majority of the pre-1991 Jewish residents, is to date rarely conducted by German non-Jews. The trust that is needed to conduct such ethnographic work is often lacking, and access to the Jewish communities is difficult to obtain (Bodemann 1996a: 9; Kuschner 1977: 6-9). Scholars such as the sociologist Lynn Rapaport (1992; 1997) and the psychoanalyst Kurt Grünberg (various from 1988 onwards) proved empirically the effects of the *Shoah* on second generation Jews; Rosenthal, Völter & Gilad (1999), Bar-On, Brendler & Hare (1997) and Kidron (2004) amongst others drew attention to the transgenerational transmission of *Shoah* induced trauma to persons of the third generation. The effects of the trauma are still lasting, and Diner’s (1988) assertion of the *Shoah* as being the defining point for Jews and Germans for generations to come holds sadly true.⁴⁴ Bearing this in mind social research work by outsiders within a Jewish community setting are problematic, because as I indicated in the previous chapter the Jewish communities are a place of retreat for Jews.

Like Becker, I am part of German society, and perceived accordingly by others. Jeffrey M. Peck (2006) describes in detail the perception of himself as an American Jew who conducts research in Germany. The research process and my reflections in it are a key feature that hints at issues that run in the undercurrent of my work: they function like a magnifying glass of German-Jewish relationships on a micro level. German-Jewish relationships found their repercussions in the community settings and in Jewish groups outside of the communities; some will surface in the interviews, or my multiple positionalities. The following part will chronicle my own way into the multi-sited fieldwork in Cologne, and capture the work of a native anthropologist, and her struggles

with categorical belongings, home, and understanding the ‘other.’ Besides a deeper understanding of my field, I hope to convey the emotional challenges to the reader.

Doing research in Cologne

Cologne is the hometown of my childhood and youth, I know the geography of the city and its landmarks as a native; as an interested native I know as well Cologne local history. I have grown up bilingually; my father’s mother comes from a Cologne family who communicates in *Kölsch*, the local dialect, a mixture of middle high German, Dutch, and Yiddish; I speak *Kölsch* with my father and high-German with my mother and her family. Already as a child I learned the importance of code switching to be able to act appropriately in a social situation.

I only had official knowledge of the Jewish community in Cologne when I was growing up, and that community was the *Einheitsgemeinde*, the orthodox community that effectively I would gain access to only after years of fieldwork. Also, I expect that knowledge about me travelled between the different Jewish circles and groups, although this was never openly conveyed to me. Knowledge was certainly transferred that I come from a mixed family background, and on occasion I was surprised what people knew about me: community gossip, I learned, travels fast.

I am not ‘only’ German but by descent German, French and Polish; I hold dual German and British citizenship. I have a partly Jewish family, but little knowledge about them. From a number of my participants I learned that it is normal to know names but not faces of Jewish family members. From a number of my ‘ethnically’ mixed participants I learned that unawareness of one’s own Jewish roots, yet a sense of otherness in Germany is normal too.

I have not grown up with any active knowledge of Jewish ritual or tradition, I only recognised some parts of what we did at home as being disconnected expressions of Jewish ritual during my research. Little did I know what *Kharoset*⁴⁵ meant although I knew the dish. I had never thought much about our Christmas tree-free Christmas and

the masses of candles we lit. My explanation for this odd behaviour was that my family had integrated non-German ritual into Christmas (Kessel 2000). Despite this non-knowledge of Jewish ritual, I had been aware that my father's father was a camp survivor; through his narrative I felt alienated from the German master narrative (Andrews 2004). One of my best friends grew up with a survivor grandmother. She was the only person I knew with this family history. Neither of us talked about this family history until we were adults.

By the time I started my research in June 2004 I had lived in Britain for more than six years; I had internalised another language to the extent that occasionally my German was littered with mistakes of English speakers, my mannerisms were perceived of as British by some of my participants (though never by my British friends), yet others would classify me as behaving like an Israeli or as a Jew, in any case I was not behaving like a German (Kranz 2007a). Apparently, I am too lively to be a German, and I use my hands too much, and on occasion I engage in the bad habit to overtalk (Mitchell 1988: 235), or be overtly brash, which can be reinterpreted as having chutzpah.

Unlike the straight "non-Jewish" hair of Fran Markowitz (Markowitz 2006: 47) my hair is red-brown and wavy "Jewish hair", on occasion also called "Jewfro" by some of my Jewish friends. Unlike Markowitz's nose, which goes up, mine is straight, I have high cheekbones; I learned that I look "Eastern European" or "Jewish" but not German. I learned that comments on my looks and manners were serious business, and held essentialised notions of Jewishness, and its opposite, Germanness.

I am imperatively in favour of the existence of Israel, while at the same time I am in favour of a two-state solution, and a peaceful living together of Israelis and Palestinians, which will not happen without compromises on either side. I have voiced criticism against specific political decisions and actions of the State of Israel, and embraced others. I have expressed my rejection of right-wing politics, racism, and anti-Semitism openly, and expressed my left-liberal stance not any less openly. I have taken part in protests since I was a teenager, often joined by friends or either of my parents. My mother's father had opposed the Nazi regime and helped to hide children, her uncle is a

camp survivor who once dug his own grave. My mother's mother comes from a German Polish family and took pride in her (maternal) Jewish grandmother, a Polish lady who apparently married a German. We have no idea of her name or where she came from, nor did we have any idea of our own *halachic* descent prior to my fieldwork.

These pieces of information about myself are not by accident disjointed, neither are the quotes at the beginning of the chapter. It is my intention to demonstrate the conflicts that I encountered personally and professionally during my fieldwork, and how these interlink with the field, and methodology. Researching Jews in Germany does not work without looking at the non-Jewish surrounding, and it does not work without looking at the past. As a non-member of any of the Jewish communities in town, and mixed person, I was a reflection of the outside world.

In the beginning

In the preparation to the fieldwork, I had unsuccessfully tried to obtain access to the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne. During my research on secondary sources of Jews in Germany I had come across the phenomenon that the absolute majority of researchers who conduct research with Jews in the areas of sociology and anthropology were Jews (Mayer 1973; Mitchell 1988; Peck 2006). Anthropological sources on Jews in Germany were rare to say the least (Rapaport 1992; Hauschild 1997; Fleermann 2006; Kranz & Fleermann, current project). Despite their much shorter presence in Germany, more publications on Russian Jews exist than on those Jews who had formed the communities between 1945 and 1991, let alone those who were unaffiliated.

By focusing on my Cologne research, I will unfold the sensitive nature of research with Jews in Germany. When I am talking in this chapter of Jews, I refer specifically to the descendants of German Jews and DPs who were the majority of my participants. Despite their inner-Jewish minority situation (Russian Jews are the majority), these Jews still hold the positions of power in *Einheitsgemeinde*, a significant number of liberal communities, and in a number of social spaces outside the communities. They are perceived of as 'the Jews' by the surrounding society which gives them power

beyond numbers. Encounters and problems with Russian speaking Jews will be highlighted where they occurred.

As mentioned before I only had official knowledge about ‘the’ Jewish community in Cologne, the *Einheitsgemeinde*, before starting on this research. I only found out about the liberal community when I specifically looked for all sort of things Jewish in Cologne. My friend who comes from a mixed family background was the only other mixed person I grew up with, neither of us talked about this issue. It was only through my research that I realised that this silence and non-sharing (Kuschner 1977) or its opposite, an overt sharing (Grünberg 1988) are characteristics that ran through family histories, and the narratives of my participants. Yet, again, this was an issue I learned about while doing research, I had not conceptualised it before. I was rather clueless, or should I say ignorant by choice about being Jewish in Germany, which resulted in a lot of surprises at the beginning of my research. Like Mitchell (1988) I had dwelled on an ideology where ethnocentrism (Mitchell 1988: 233) can be overcome, an ideology that had been conveyed to me by my parents and my grandparents: it was not important where somebody was from, the colour of their skin, their religion, or if they adhered to a different set of cultural practices, these were differences between human beings but none which made one person superior to the other. My parents in particular conveyed to me that my freedom ends where the freedom of somebody else begins. Another ideology I had been brought up with was to “protect the feelings of the other person” (Mitchell 1988: 235). The idea of avoiding open disagreements with relative strangers was lost on me, my father referred to it as “you’re definite in what you say and do, and undiplomatic”, a trait of my personality which can be perceived of as rude amongst Germans. I had no idea that this directness could be reinterpreted as chutzpah amongst my Jewish participants. However, going back to my initial naivety, I approached both Jewish communities with my project. My first encounter with a high-ranking person from the *Einheitsgemeinde* caught me completely off guard.

Official: So you’re an anthropologist. Aren’t you the race people? The ones who work with chimps?

Dani: No, that's primatologists. I am an anthropologist. A social anthropologist. I work with human beings.

Official: Ah... but what do you want from us? Do you want access to our membership files or what?

Dani: No, not really. I am interested in how Jews live in Cologne, how they realise being Jewish, and what it means to them. I am not really interested in numerical data.

Official: Aha. Well, let me talk to the board about it. I am now less hostile towards your project than before.

The tone of the conversation was harsh, and the tone of the voice of the official defensive, I felt cornered, and did not know how to react. I had had no idea that me asking to conduct research amongst Jews would be intrinsically connected to the *Shoah* (ibid: 232), or that I could be perceived of as a dangerous outsider (ibid: 237). It was initially only through the liberal community that I would learn more about the orthodox community. My greeting in the latter community was different, and it was conveyed to me that the liberal community is what the orthodox community is not. What those differences actually are, is at the core of the working of the liberal community: it is the idea of being positively Jewish in Germany.

I had no knowledge of the Jewish spaces and groups beyond the two communities upon starting fieldwork (Kranz 2007b). This insider knowledge I would only gain over years of research, through people who had got to know me and who would trust me enough to share their insider knowledge with me. Upon arriving in the liberal synagogue I did not raise eyebrows, and the persons present made little of the fact that I was interested in them anthropologically. It took me a while to understand this apparent indifference. Interest in my work increased over the years, when members asked me what I made of the liberal community, and what I saw in it, or how I analysed them. In my early fieldnotes my surprise is evident concerning just how little the members wanted to know about my research when I arrived. I had been made aware that my proposal had been discussed in the members' meeting after it had gained an initial approval by the board, and had found approval in the members' meeting too.⁴⁶ There was furthermore

no questioning concerning whether I was Jewish. Why I was asked so little I only understood after learning more about this specific liberal community, its members, their biographical backgrounds, and their ideological stances.

The liberal community was founded by individuals who could or would not be members of the orthodox *Einheitsgemeinde*, and those who had fallen out with the *Einheitsgemeinde*. All of the founding members were either Israelis of German descent or Western Europeans, and two were child survivors from Cologne. DPs, descendants of DPs or people who had survived work or death camps were not part of this community. Individuals of this background like Yitzhak and Iris (both are children of camp survivors from Eastern Europe) would join the liberal community much later. Yet, again, both were either non-members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, or marginal; both were or are married to non-Jews. Two of the founding members of the liberal community were non-*halachic* Jews, that is children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. They felt rejected and alienated from the orthodox *Einheitsgemeinde*, which can be seen from this snippet. James, the founding father of *Gescher*, asked me: “You don’t have papers Dani? But it’s a female line, right?” Dani: “Yes, as far as I know.” James: “Then you’re more of a Jew than I am!” While rejecting matrilineality privately, James switched discourses and thus revealed how much his ‘non-status’ amongst orthodox Jews is still present for him. The other founding member who was a non-*halachic* Jew, Mayan, never mentioned her *Giyur* to me.

Ron whom James talked into joining the liberal community had clashed with established members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* in particular on the matter of dealing with the non-Jewish surrounding, and the penetrability of the boundary to the non-Jewish outside. Ron wanted Jews and non-Jews alike to take part in a *Shoah* memorial service within the confines of the orthodox synagogue, at a time which he admits now, nearly twenty years later, might have been too early for many of the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*.⁴⁷ A well-established member rejected Ron’s idea vociferously: “I don’t want to see any *Goyim* in the synagogue [...] I am surrounded by them.” This person wanted the synagogue to be an imperatively Jewish place. Ron completely disagreed with this. He did so publicly in his politics when he was active in the

Einheitsgemeinde in the mid 1980s. Privately, he rejected this exclusive boundary-management too. He married a German non-Jew who converted immediately after the birth of their first child. Still, upon marrying his wife, she was a non-Jew, a German, an individual situated at the other side of the divide, a divide that Ron rejected as having validity for him (Kranz 2007b), while it was highly valid for “many others in this community [*Einheitsgemeinde*].”

This imperative boundary was experienced by Mitchell (1988) too, and conveyed to him clearly by his New York Jewish participants of Eastern European background:

As Leo Rosten pointed out in his discussion of the term [*goy*] centuries of Jewish persecution have left a legacy of bitter sayings about the *goyim*; for example “*Dos ken nor a goy!*” translated from the Yiddish means “That, only a *goy* would do!” Or the exclamation “*A goy!*” is used when “endurance is exhausted, kindness depleted, the effort to understand useless” (Rosten 1970: 142). It was during my research that I first became aware of the Jewish view of a distinct Jewish-Gentile cultural dichotomy characterized by the *goy* as a symbol of callousness and danger; the kind of person one tried to avoid if possible.

(Mitchell 1988: 229)

It is important to remember that Mitchell is referring to Jews in New York, which is to say Jews who live in a country that did not perpetrate a genocide against the Jewish people, and he himself is a Kansas native (ibid: 225, 237). My research was based in Germany, the perpetrating country, and I am a German native; considering the small number of Jews, and the small number of persons of mixed Jewish descent, the probability that I was a descendant of perpetrators was overwhelming. To state the obvious, my mixed background does not ‘show.’ And yet, it was found in my conduct by a number of my participants, for whom it was crucial that I was physically of their side (Markowitz 2006). Others, like the official mentioned above, placed me on the German side of the divide without asking me any personal questions. Interestingly,

these superimposed categories allowed me to shift categories situationally. This gave me a truly rare insight on four levels: on a first one, I gained an insight as a perceived outsider amongst Jews, on a second level I gained insight as a perceived Jew amongst Jews. I learned how the non-Jewish surrounding reacts to Jews on a third level; by virtue of my research topic I was perceived of as a Jew by non-Jews (cf. Okely 1984). When I mentioned my work my non-Jewish interlocutors assumed that I was a Jew, and only very few, three to be exact, asked me if I was Jewish. On the fourth level, I experienced how as a native German I became increasingly alienated from German society, and emotionally moved from native to stranger (Heilman 1980) even more than at the beginning of my research. Especially the latter issue I found emotionally stressful, and as having a lasting, if not irreversible, effect on my view of Germany, Jews and Israel. I truly learned more things on a professional level than I could imagine beforehand, whereas on a personal level I experienced an unsettlement that I had not bargained for at all.

Before going into a detailed analysis of these situatednesses, I will take one step back, to the liberal community, and analyse the underlying reasons why I was not asked direct questions about my interest in Jews, nor my family background.

According to Ron, the distinction between Jews and non-Jews, and inside and outside was clear in the orthodox community. I found this imperative distinction confirmed in fieldwork I conducted with some of members of this community outside the actual synagogue, while other members were privately very relaxed about their relationships with non-Jews. In official community politics, however, this definite distinction had meant that mixed marriage (that is, marriage to a non-Jew) led to discrimination, the non-Jewish spouse was not welcome. As one person called it: “They were treated like pariahs”; another one referred to it as: “I felt like I was only a half-Jew myself”; and a third person mentioned that: “My children were told not to come back to the youth group, because their mother is a non-Jew.” These persons either left the orthodox community, or became members of the liberal community; others gather in secular Jewish groups (Kranz 2007b); yet others became completely alienated and cut all ties. The ones who joined the liberal community, and in particular those who founded it

were, like Ron, interested in creating a space that would give Jews definite rights, yet due to their own family histories and attitudes this community would not discriminate against non-Jews *per se*. As guests, non-Jews would still be welcome. The official ideology in the liberal community can be described as welcoming Jews who want to practice, regardless of whether they are married to non-Jews, or are of mixed descent; personal styles of practice are accepted and form a corner-stone of the liberalism of this community, while of course they lead to discussion, disagreements and quarrels (cf. Furman 1987), and resurfacing problems about how to manage boundaries. Boundaries are negotiated on a constant basis; they are less clear than the officially enforced Jewish-Gentile dichotomy of the orthodox community.

However, the boundary of the orthodox community is not only informed by the *Halacha*, but probably even more so by the *Shoah*. Through the *Shoah*, non-Jewish Germans and Jews in Germany are located on two diametrically opposed sides of an abyss (Brumlik & Kunik 1988; Diner 1988; Rapaport 1997; amongst others). To date, individuals of either side of the divide talk to each other candidly only in very private encounters, with trusted friends or family (Kuschner 1977; Grünberg 2007a). Often, Jews share their stories and family histories with other Jews if it is a personal narrative;⁴⁸ non-personal general statements will be shared with non-Jews too; while non-Jewish Germans more often than not do not know their family history, or do not want to know it (cf. Keval 1999; Longerich 2006; Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall 2002). This aspect of sharing or non-sharing begs the question who will be included in the official Jewish boundary, and is expressed in a categorical trust of Jews, and mistrust towards non-Jews⁴⁹. Unfortunately, this trust issue does not stop at the *Shoah*, but continued with discussions about Israel and the continuation of anti-Semitism. Khasani (2005) and Kranz (2007b) showed with their data that Jews who criticised Israel and the stance of the official Jewish community publicly found themselves in the situation of being abused for anti-Semitic and anti-Israel purposes by non-Jews who used them to justify their own criticisms against Israel, and perpetuate anti-Semitic stereotypes.

Problematically, the boundary in post-*Shoah* Germany included only *halachic* Jews, non-*halachic* Jews were excluded from the official Jewish community

(*Einheitsgemeinde*).⁵⁰ This does not reflect the place that non-*halachic* Jews gave themselves: often they saw themselves imperatively on the Jewish side, and expressed strong Jewish identities (Kranz 2007b). Like their *halachic* counterparts, the past of their families was conveyed to them. This led those non-*halachic* Jews to feel similarly alienated from the category ‘Germans.’

The foundation process of the liberal community in Cologne shows this. It was thus not the *Halacha*, which was decisive for being Jewish, but socio-historic events that underlay feeling Jewish. As it was to turn out, the nascent liberal community needed to submit to the *halachic* rule of matrilineality or *Giyur* to gain access to the *WUJP* (see chapter two). This meant for James and others that they had to convert. Like the other founding members he privately recognises “children of Jewish fathers and mothers alike as being Jews.” This privately held ideology is shared by the majority of the members of the liberal community, and appears in the following statement on the webpage of the community:

Unsere Aufgabe ist es, eine "Brücke zur Tradition" [Gescher LaMassoret] zu sein. Wir wollen eine Umgebung schaffen, in der allen Jüdinnen und Juden die Möglichkeit geboten wird, eine jüdische Heimat zu finden.

(<http://gescherlamassoret.de/grundsatz.html>, accessed November 12, 2007)

(It is our task to be a “bridge to tradition.” We want to create an environment, which offers all Jewesses and Jews the opportunity to find a Jewish home).

Having said that the next point is the following:

Jüdin oder Jude ist, wer von einer jüdischen Mutter abstammt oder zum Judentum übergetreten ist.

(ibid)

(A Jewess or a Jew is a person, who descends from a Jewish mother, or who converted to Judaism.)

This point conflicts with the attitude of the members of *Gescher*, who acknowledge that Jewishness lies beyond the confines of the *Halacha*:

[...] However, we have experienced cases in which this prerequisite [of *halachic* descent] is not fulfilled. In cases where the background of a person's religious engagement and their family traditions have led to a very clear Jewish identity, the conversion process takes on the character of a formal acknowledgement of their identities and acts as a correction between rules and reality.

(http://gescherlamassoret.de/en/geschichte2_en.html, accessed March 25, 2009)

Children of Jewish fathers are welcome in the community and encouraged to convert, the upholding of matrilineality is seen as mere functionalism, to be able to be part of the *WUJP* by the founding members. At the same time, a small, but significant minority see it as part of Jewish tradition, whereas the majority reject the rule and put forward a socio-historic construct concerning Jewishness that can be passed on by either parent. Matrilineal Jewish descent is perceived as being only one part of being a Jew by the majority of the members of *Gescher*. Similarly, being part of a community of fate, or suffering, is only one part, and the majority of this community wishes to rise beyond the past. Yet, the members are aware that their rabbi does not grant Jewish status to patrilineal Jews. That the membership does not challenge him on this notion, and accepts it, albeit in some cases grudgingly, can only be understood in relation to the experiences with the *Forum*. The wish to have a safely enclosed Jewish space with a strong boundary makes the members of the second generation who are currently in power submit to his stance. Maybe, underlying, there is the reasoning that a person who is willing to confirm their status through conversion is really serious about where they stand: imperatively and categorically on the Jewish side. However, admitting this

attitude would be highly problematic for most members of *Gescher*, as it contradicts their basic ideology.

It is questionable if the third generation will still find a stance like the rabbi's acceptable once they are in power. Jana, who set up *Jung und Jüdisch* (Young and Jewish), the national organisation of young Jews, and Jonah who was active with her, accept matrilineal and patrilineal Jews alike⁵¹. Both have international experiences with liberal communities who welcome children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. The statutes of *Jung und Jüdisch* outline that membership is open to matrilineal and patrilineal Jews, and that it lobbies for the inclusion of patrilineal Jews in the existing (liberal) communities.⁵²

During my fieldwork it was on several occasions by several members mentioned to me that the liberal community is not about “living a mental ghetto” (Ron), and looking into the past, the aim is to “create a living Judaism that looks forward” (Yaron). This ideology is laid down clearly in the basic tenants of *Gescher LaMassoret*, and as clearly in the tenants of the *Union der Progressiven Juden Deutschlands* (Union of Progressive Jews of Germany), the national liberal organisation, of which *Gescher* is part.⁵³ More so than my family background that would become of key importance with some members of the orthodox community, with the members of *Gescher* personal convictions were imperative (Kalir 2006).

Furman (1987) found in her research on a Reform synagogue in the US that the belief in liberalism, moral convictions, individualism, and what I would call the creation of social agency from individual agencies were crucial to understanding the common ground of the members. These issues were highly appreciated by the members of the synagogue she called *Temple Shalom*, and they are highly appreciated by the members of *Gescher LaMassoret*. Key to understanding the liberal community is to appreciate the stance to accept “others in their practice and how they are”, a statement made by various members to me repeatedly over the years. This attitude reflects the key homophilous value of the community that unites the members in their difference. This acceptance of others, and not a normative prescription of a specific form of practice put

Gescher again in a binary opposition to the local *Einheitsgemeinde*. However, this “cult of uniqueness” (Furman 1987: 99) was more than a mechanism to distinguish *Gescher* positively from the orthodox community. It created a positive “ingroup identity” (Tajfel 1978, 1981, 1982) despite internal and infrastructural problems.

While the homophilous values that underpin the characteristics were imperative, some members of *Gescher* employed strategies to establish if a person was Jewish or of Jewish descent by using more *Yiddishisms* or *Hebrewisms* in their language. If and how far a person could follow these figures of speech was then a decisive moment to decide if the individual was at least socially a Jew. This social status could diverge from the *halachic* status, but in the everyday was of key importance to create an immediate bridge to reach common ground. Take for example the following conversation between James and Laura:

James: Are you going to the annual conference of the Progressive Jews in Berlin?

Laura: Yes, I think so...

James: I used to like them. But now it's too much *Ruach* (Hebrew, spirit in the religious sense).

or between Laura and I:

Dani: Who is the *Tsadakah* (Hebrew, charity, donations collected on *Yom Kippur*) going to this year?

Laura: To a Palestinian-Israeli doctors' cooperative.

or

Nora: *Ja, ja, mit einer deutschen Schwiegermutter auszukommen ist nicht einfach. Aber Du weißt ja wie das ist, mit der Mischpokhe* (Yiddish, family).

(Yes, yes, getting along with a German mother-in-law isn't easy. But you know how it is with the *Mishpoche*).

The conversations between James and Laura were in English; I used as well English to talk to Laura. Nora on the other hand spoke German in the original. In either English or German, two languages constantly in use in the synagogue it was of importance that the language would be littered with specific terms concerning Judaism or terms that had a cultural connotation to convey an ingroup status. Much as Yiddish was used to create a boundary between Jews and non-Jews in the research of Peltz (1998) in Philadelphia, some members of the liberal community in Cologne used a more subtle way to create a boundary, and attempt to classify incomers. However, the classification worked on more than this subtle layer. There was as well the issue of bilingualism, or multilingualism, and dual or multiple nationalities. Due to the vast scale of displacements of Jews through the *Shoah*, bi- or multilingualism is common. Laura for example was born in Germany, raised in South Africa, her native language is German, her schooling was in English, and she made *Aliyah* to Israel. She is trilingual and holds two passports. Iris is multilingual too; she grew up speaking German, Hungarian and Romanian, she did not take on Israeli citizenship because she did not want to serve in the IDF but acquired German citizenship along the way, and held on to her Israeli identity card. Ron who holds German and Israeli nationalities mentioned that he is hard-pressed to say what his native tongue is; James holds four nationalities; some of the younger members like Jonah are trilingual too; or hold dual citizenships like Jana, who was born in the US and returned to Germany as a child. While she is bi-lingual in German and English, she does not speak Polish, which is her mother's native language.⁵⁴ Living between and in different countries, going abroad from wherever to leave for good, or return for a while was a completely normal affair in the liberal Jewish community; being completely rooted in one country or one city on seemed odd to the birth Jews, which shows a major contrast to German converts from completely non-Jewish families.

Thus, when the community learned that I was born and raised in Cologne but had left for London this was perceived of as normal. That I too hold dual citizenship, and make mistakes when I speak German because it is not the language of my education, but just

my mother tongue, was not strange either. On this matter unlike Judith Okely (1984) I did not have to relearn my mother tongue, nor change my personal conduct like Mitchell (1988). Linguistically and through my own family background I could pass as an ingroup member amongst Jews; by virtue of my personality I could pass as a non-German. What I had to master was to mix my German or English with more *Yiddishisms*, which I picked up quickly because Yiddish is easy to understand for a speaker of *Kölsch*, and on occasion with Hebrew terms concerning Jewish practice. All of these Hebrew terms I had to learn, and had to ask what they meant. Interestingly, this was not held against me: “There are many people like you, who don’t know better.” I had to learn to listen to the exact phrases being used, when English was spoken and with whom, and when codes were switched to incorporate more Yiddish or Hebrew. And furthermore, when was the term *Goy* used as opposed to non-Jew?

I learned that the vast majority of the members of the liberal community would never use the term *Goy*. By virtue of their own experiences with the *Einheitsgemeinde*, mixed marriages, patrilineality, and conversion, and potentially having been treated like “unwanted *Goyim*”, the vast majority of the members of *Gescher* would not use the term at all. They found it offensive and contrary to their own ideological and political beliefs about how the community should be run. Indeed, I only heard the term *Goy* used in the synagogue by two people who have by now either left the community or become completely marginalised, because their politics clashed with the majority of the members’.

Anger against non-Jewish Germans was expressed more frequently. Most often this anger referred to feeling misunderstood by German non-Jewish interlocutors, on issues such as Israeli politics, feelings of being forced to explain one’s own residence in Germany, being placed in the victim category, or dealing with German administration, in short, when one was felt to be on the defensive. All of these issues are underpinned by the problematic communication between Jews and non-Jews in Germany. The private narratives that Jews and non-Jews have grown up with create an abyss in public discourse; there is little understanding on a public level between the two sides (Kranz 2007a, b, c). Personal encounters with Jews are not part of the everyday for Germans,

because of the extremely small number of Jews in Germany, which is estimated to be 200,000 to 250,000.⁵⁵ This is miniscule compared to a total of 82 million inhabitants. In percentage terms, this is less than 0.3% of the total population. This absolute minority situation strengthens the preconception of the 'Jewish other' as Becker (2001), Bodemann (1996a) and Weissberg (2003) outlined. Ironically, it strengthens the interest in the annihilated (Eastern European) Jewish world of the past (*Shtetl* and *Klezmer*), and through stereotypical depiction of *Yiddishkeit* makes the Jewishness of the living Jews in the country even more inaccessible to non-Jews.

Anger against non-Jewish Germans was often demonstrated by using examples. German administration and embassy personnel were overwhelmingly seen as unhelpful and annoying, and: "[...] lacking any understanding. It's like a skirmish against the victims all over!" It was in these situations that some of my Jewish participants would add four letter words to German in private conversations, but then I think that this should not be over interpreted. I know from conversations with German non-Jews that administrative offices do not enjoy a better perception amongst them. This is to say that the term *Goy* was used very rarely by members of *Gescher LaMassoret*, and expresses an ideological stance that the members did not subscribe to. Scathing remarks about Germans were specified, and most often in regard to problems with the administration, or specific experiences. Essentialisms concerning Germans were hardly expressed.

Insensitivities and ill-communication

Insensitivities of non-Jewish Germans towards Israel and the *Shoah* were unfortunately more common than I had expected at the beginning of my research. German media and German public discourse tend to show Palestinian suffering more sympathetically, Palestinians tend to come across as individual human beings, whereas Israelis come across as uniformed soldiers. Israel is depicted as strong, and aggressive, whereas Palestinians have nothing but stones to defend themselves.⁵⁶ Amongst others Kloeke (1990, 2007) and Kraushaar (2005) outlined that Israel is perceived of rather negatively amongst Germans, as unforgiving and retaliatory in its policies and actions (Joffe 2008: 5; Peck 2006). Iris told me that she was approached during the Lebanon war of the

summer of 2006 with the words “What are you Jews up to down there again?”, by a person she had known for a long time. She was puzzled: “I didn’t know what to say.” Other members of *Gescher* had similar stories to tell, and felt trapped between their allegiance and support for Israel as a country, their personal convictions against war, being in favour of peaceful solutions with Israel’s neighbouring states as well as with Palestinians; a mix of attitudes, which often mixed uneasily, especially as there was the very real worry concerning loved ones. Particularly difficult for the members of *Gescher* was the repeated experience of feeling unable to talk to non-Jews openly about their nuanced opinions on Israel, they felt that one particular part of their attitude, the critical stance towards Israel could be high-jacked (Khasani 2005; Kranz 2007b), which led to a wish to retreat to Jewish spaces. It was in these moments of crisis that my own opinions on current affairs became important, and my attitudes towards Israel key to identify where I was standing. Kalir (2006) concerning his work with illegal immigrants in Israel, writes that:

On a conscious level I was clearly biased in favour of undocumented immigrants. [...] Yet having a bias on a conscious level was a necessary but not sufficient condition for successfully doing this fieldwork. For as I have shown, the tactical management of a critical situation and the close proximity to informants did not just result in my conscious calculations of sympathy with migrants. If my reactions had not emanated from my deep-seated dispositions, my habitus, there was little chance that I could consistently acted in a way that was strategic for my fieldwork.

(Kalir 2006: 244)

This certainly holds true in regard to my own fieldwork too. I could not have acted on a constant basis sympathetically towards my participants and empathised with them if I had not been genuine in my convictions. These convictions concerned Israel and the *Shoah* on one level, and on another level pertained to issues specific to this community. These reflect ideological stances that its founding members cherish deeply. Ron and Mayan stand politically very much on the left, as does Jonathan who became the

religious leader of the community. James leans left too, but is more influenced by *realpolitik*, and voices his opinions candidly. This is to say that the community is overwhelming left-liberal, and that issues such as the equality of men and women are a key component of the morals of *Gescher*. Many of the moral issues that concern the members of *Gescher* are universalistic and independent of Judaism.

Furman (1987) had found this in the Reform synagogue in the USA where she conducted research too. Temple Shalom stresses its uniqueness, while it simultaneously embraces universalism in regard to ethics and morals, which are not specific to Judaism, because “proximate ethnic values” would lead to the loss of “ultimate values” (Furman 1987: 124). This gives members enough space to practice their own style of Judaism, which according to Furman allows individualism to merge with the American ethos of “particularism [of an ethnic group]” (ibid: 121), and thus positively identifies “Judaism with Western liberalism and humanism” (ibid: 46). I do not think that this is necessarily American: it is an expression of individual agency in late or post-modern democratic societies, which allow for non-prescriptive life-styles, and the pursuit of individual life-projects. Theoretically speaking, Temple Shalom and *Gescher LaMassoret* consist of people who harbour homophilous value and attitudes. These homophilous values will resurface in the narratives in chapter six in particular.

One such issue is animal welfare: the number of vegetarians is high amongst the members of the Cologne liberal community. *Pesach* (Passover) 2004 saw a debate concerning whether the lamb should be organic or kosher. In the end kosher was chosen, by a small margin, which made a number of members very unhappy. This debate ramified into the sphere of rituals: was it really important that the meat was kosher, or was it more important that the social part of the ritual would be supported wholeheartedly, and that the animal had been raised and treated well? This debate is recurring, and opinions diverge, as the recurring ‘buffet debate’ will show in the next chapter. Privately, the majority of the members believe that it is more important to fill the tradition with meaning than to uphold it in a ritualistically pure sense:

Tanja: It doesn't really matter what meat it is on the table Friday night. It matters that you do it wholeheartedly; that you're committed, that it's not some practice devoid of meaning.

Jürgen: Yes, I agree. Through Tanja I realised the meaning of the actual ritual... it's about commitment. Not that you do it to the point.

Commitment to being as opposed to just performing doing Jewish were key in this community; commitment overall, for personal and not superimposed reasons were seen as a key tenants of liberal Judaism. Yitzhak conceptualised this issue as follows:

I think quite some people come here Friday nights not to pray, it's about being social with each other. There's community. There's commitment.

I think it was on that matter that, as a person without traditional knowledge of ritual and custom, and as a non-believer, I blended in rather easily. With most politics of the community I was not at odds either. Blending into this specific community came much to my surprise easily on an "emotional" (cf. Heilman 1980: 104) and ideological level; I have really been enjoying fieldwork amongst liberal Jews. Now, however, I will return to the rather more problematic issue of fieldwork beyond the liberal community, in Jewish spaces, which I found more difficult to manoeuvre, and which felt strange.

Spaces outside the liberal synagogue

On the very first evening in the liberal community I learned about the acrimonious relationship with the orthodox community. The *Einheitsgemeinde* was referred to as having a "ghetto mentality", being "Eastern European", "bigoted", and "cold", it was furthermore outlined to me that the orthodox community was seen as intellectually not stimulating, that rituals were performed perfunctorily (cf. Furman 1987) and that there was not the commitment of the members of *Gescher*. The orthodox community was perceived of as more of a reaction to the overwhelming non-Jewish majority, than in an active dialogue with it. In short, *Gescher* is what the orthodox community is not in the self-definition of especially the founding members.

My first encounter with the official from the orthodox synagogue and the narratives of the members of the liberal synagogue in regard to the latter had raised my trepidations to conduct any research with the orthodox community. I had failed to gain access, and I felt I was likely to remain an unwanted outsider at best. At this point in time I did not understand the hostility of the official, and later the late secretary who I contacted too; I had no idea on an emotional level how to interpret the reactions.

In regard to my anthropological work failure to gain access to the *Einheitsgemeinde* bothered me for the reason that I felt that in order to conduct a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) I should see for myself what this community was about, and not dwell on secondary, and very opinionated accounts. When I was refused access I had not realised that the problem to access the *Einheitsgemeinde* was actually very important in regard to strategies of this community to deal with the non-Jewish surrounding, and the high barriers for unknown incomers. The latter I was: I was not related to anybody, or known to the members of the community as one of their own, I had not much of an idea about Judaism, yet I have an oddly Jewish name. The other person in Germany with my name, Dani Kranz, is a former welfare officer with the Central Council for Welfare Affairs of the Jews of Germany (*Zentrale Wohlfahrtsstelle der Juden Deutschlands*, *ZWSt*), my name created some confusion to individuals who had been researching Jews or who were acquainted with the structures of the official community.

In any event I was an unknown who came from the outside (cf. Mitchell 1988). The high-ranking person of the *Einheitsgemeinde* had told me in our fraught conversation that I was going to find “a particular kind of Jew in *Gescher*” but not “the majority [of Jews in Germany⁵⁷]”, and that the liberal practice of the liberal community was not at the heart of the problem with the community but “the people who set it up.”

Fallaciously, I had interpreted these statements as interpersonal clashes. Over the course of my fieldwork I understood that something else was at issue that lay beyond non-*halachic* descent and mixed marriage. The uncanny issue that the official did not mention was the *Shoah*.

Observations outside of the liberal community: the examples of *Yom HaShoah* and *Reichskristallnacht*

Mourning and commemoration of the *Shoah* remain major issues in both communities. Interestingly, the liberal community only incorporates *Yom HaShoah*, the Israeli *Shoah* memorial day, in its calendar. November 9th, the anniversary of *Reichskristallnacht* (night of the pogroms) is seen as a “German thing, that’s what the Germans do.” The orthodox community incorporates both memorial days, probably because it was the sole official community until the mid-1990s. In the orthodox community, I was told, *Yom HaShoah* is an internal affair, whereas November 9th is a cross-religion event.

This cross-religion mourning is not unproblematic though. *Reichskristallnacht* 2005 in the *Einheitsgemeinde* I attended with my (then) boyfriend Dan, who was born and raised in Israel. Much to my surprise the separation of men and women had been lifted for the day, and I joined Dan in the men’s section of the synagogue. The synagogue was full and we stood at the back. The memorial service started with the singing of the cantor, then a psalm was read in Hebrew. I realised Dan was getting increasingly uncomfortable during the reading, and I understood bits and pieces such as “kill” and “*Goyim*.” Dan mentioned that he thought he had heard that psalm before: during his army service. The German version of the psalm, which was read after the Hebrew version, was less bellicose. Unable to locate the psalm, I asked the liberal rabbi for help, after several emails to the orthodox rabbi had not garnered any reply. The liberal rabbi replied immediately and surprised “That is psalm 94,⁵⁸ the Cry for Revenge. Where did you hear that?” Yet, he asserted that one should expect to hear of anger from the Jewish side at such an event (personal email, November 2005).

I think that the use of this psalm epitomises the feelings of some of the congregants of the orthodox community: a world beset by the horrors of the *Shoah*. Even if the trauma is not verbalised in the everyday, it is certainly never forgotten (Bar On, Brendler & Hare 1997; Hill 1991; Keilson 1979/2005; Kidron 2004; Rosenthal, Völter & Gilad 1999), and returns in highly condensed scenes⁵⁹ (Grünberg 2007a; Kranz 2007c). Thus, any incomer is perceived as an intruder to what Ginzel & Güntner (1998) called the

“island of happiness” (Ginzel & Güntner 1998: 104). Despite their much more lenient stance, the wish to be “amongst ourselves” was voiced amongst members of the liberal community too. The need for a more strictly enforced boundary arose amongst the members of the liberal community in times of crisis in particular. These crises arose usually during times of warfare in Israel, and referred to specific events, whereas for members of the orthodox community the state of crisis had been a constant since the *Shoah*. This means that the discourses of the *Shoah* that underlie the relationships between Jews and non-Jews of either community are different, and ramify into seemingly unrelated issues.

Spaces beyond the (religious) communities

With the two religious communities, Cologne has two permanent Jewish spaces, which are protected by German law. Yet, these two religious spaces are not enough for the Jewish residents of Cologne area: the majority is little observant, and quite a number seek different outlets for their Jewishness. They create, and meet in Jewish spaces outside of the communities, which are privately administered, and which do not have rules for membership, or charge fees. These spaces are temporary, and turn a random place, such as café, into a Jewish space by the mere virtue of the presence of Jews who might to a degree focus on Jewish topics. What counts as a Jewish topic for the officials of the *Einheitsgemeinde* might cause problems, as the former organiser of the regulars’ table (*Stammtisch*) for young people of the *Einheitsgemeinde* had to realise. She had organised a *Stammtisch* where people could meet, the first drink was “on the community.” There was no particular focus on Jewish topics; but, as she asserted: “[...] a Jewish space is where Jews meet. How can it not be a Jewish space?” This line of reasoning was not enough for *Einheitsgemeinde*, and funding was pulled; the *Stammtisch* died out. To establish a new *Stammtisch* or similar outside-of-all-community-structures is an on-going discussion, and in the summer of 2007 it looked as if one was going to be founded. This was not the case.

The most pertinent reason for the non-foundation of a new *Stammtisch* was the emergence of social networking sites (SNS), which rapidly spread across Germany

rapidly since the summer of 2007. The person who ran the *Stammtisch* and other young Jews discovered the use of SNS for their purpose, first and foremost the US product *Facebook*, and its German counterpart *StudiVZ/MeinVZ*. These two web-based applications enable individuals to be friends, exchange information, create groups, networks and post events regardless of location. Via SNS, users can immediately connect to the people they like (friends) and set up events online and link them to actual times and places. These events (online and actual) can be posted as open or hidden events. Open events can be found via simple key word searches, while hidden ones necessitate an invitation from the organiser. The preference for this SNS as opposed to a webpage to disseminate information indicates not only a different use of technology between the generations (second generation Jews use webpages or email lists), but hints as well at increasingly individualised Jewish identity configurations of Jews of the 'third generation.' The *Shoah* and its aftermaths are part of the identity of only some of the young Jews in the locale, who are now in the minority. Young Russian Jews who came to Germany as children have by now settled and are the majority; young Americans and Israelis as well as other incomers are growing in their presence. Overall the concept 'generation' is difficult to apply to this age cohort. This 'generation' shares very little with each other besides a similar age, and the categorical belonging to an ethno-religion.

The differences in the group formation between the second and the 'third generation' bear witness to the burgeoning of a new Jewishness in Germany. For the second generation the *Shoah* had such a profound presence that permanent Jewish spaces were needed. Ideally, these should be homophilous in terms of shared values and attitudes. Practically, the shared fate of people of ethnic Jewish descent was at least initially enough to bring them together to form ethnically homogenous groups (Khasani 2005), even if those, due to a lack of homophily were often rather short-lived. As can be seen from the fate of the different Cologne groups, this 'ethnic fate bond' did not necessarily last for long, neither did the mere value homophily of mixed-ethnic groups. The ethnic bond never vanished, but morphed into the direction of homophilous ethnic groups. With the second generation there was the wish that these groups should be permanent.

So far, the groups the ‘third generation’ formed outside of the communities are temporary and serve a specific purpose, such as an event or a party. Jews of the ‘third generation’ have access to different sources to further their identities. They tend to form temporary collectives that serve a specific, typically short-term, purpose but they do not form groups that aim at permanence. SNS as mentioned above are key, as are email, VoIP (Internet phone applications) and instant messenger applications. The ‘third generation’ identities are more complex, they are based on more possible identification; they are more international and more confident. The *Shoah* is only a direct and personal issue in the lives of the descendants of survivors. For these descendants, who are numerically the absolute minority in their generation, the religious communities with their strong boundaries remain key features. For the numerical majority of their contemporaries, be they Russians, Israelis, Americans and other incomers, the wish for permanent Jewish groups based on a mere categorical Jewishness is not desirable. Of course, numerically speaking in the second generation too, descendants of survivors are the minority. However, Jews who technically fit with the second generation age cohort but who are not descendants of survivors immigrated to Germany so late in their lives that they gather with those co-ethnics who are closest to them in regard to native country and native language. Examples for this are the Israeli Group and the Russian *Nash Dom* of chapter two. Jews who fit with generational cohort third generation but who are not descendants of survivors have commonly immigrated with their parents early in their lives. They tend to seek immediate homogeneous co-ethnics much less than their parents. This means that for the majority of the third generation the importance of homophily that underpins group formation has increased, while the categorical Jewishness has decreased in importance. Furthermore, due to their multiple identifications and the wish to act out the different facets of their Jewishnesses, social groups tend to be much less stable and as described above defined by short-term functionalities.

Unsurprisingly, a significant number of the third generation Jews who are survivors leave Germany (Kranz 2008c). Yet, much as they stuck together in Germany, they stick together in the countries and cities where they immigrate to, and are overall driven to immigrate where other Jews from Germany are: “Why would you want to immigrate

where you don't know anybody?" Much like their parents' (second) generation, they still need Jewish spaces where they can be amongst themselves. At the same time, their identifications and trauma-induced *Shoah* identities are now only one option of identifying as Jewish in Germany. This multiplicity of options is the underlying reason why there is to date no permanent Jewish space for Jews of this 'generation' outside of the religious communities. Identifications for this 'generation' are multiple, and make for networks of friends and acquaintances who in different combinations meet in different (temporary), and potentially more diverse Jewish spaces. It is unlikely that there will ever be Jewish spaces for this generation like those of Jews of the second generation. The current development of the 'third generation' indicates that there is a change: a potential 'Jewish renaissance' (Bodemann 2006, 2008) is underway.

Anthropology and Jews in Germany

"Mengele was an anthropologist too. Did you know that? He did his PhD on the human ear!" I had admittedly not known that, as I did not regard the concept of science of the Nazis as science but as a perversion. But this was not about how I felt about the Nazis and what they did, this was about how my Jewish participants felt about them, and how they perceived anthropology. Anthropology as such was perceived of as ambiguous, because of its past in Germany, and its focus on the 'other.' "Why is this not a sociological study? Anthropology is abroad, isn't it?", a reaction Mitchell (1988) encountered too. Some of my participants deeply appreciated anthropology and perceived of "Nazi anthropology" as a perversion and not as anthropology too. Others made a direct connection between the Nazis and the *Shoah* and anthropologist, me. This connection and the problem to gain access to the Jewish communities from the outside is reflected in the kind of research that has been conducted on Jews in Germany. By far, the statements of Egon Mayer (1973) and Lynn Rapaport (1992) of the beginning chapter hold true, but they need to be amended by the Germany specific feature that there is an "unmanageable plethora of publications on anti-Semitism, while research on *current* Jewish life is missing" (Becker 2001: 16-17, emphasis added).

To recap the gist of chapter two, the 1970s saw very few publications on living Jews. Since the end of the 1970s Jews of the second generation started to speak out about being Jewish in Germany. Many of the Jews who published were critical of the existing *Einheitsgemeinden*, and were to become part of Germany's intellectual elite. Non-Jewish authors and researchers, and especially anthropologists, did not research or publish on living Jews, they dealt with Jewish (ethno-) history. In my searches of the holdings of the *Germania Judaica* in Cologne, a specialist library, I found one article by an anthropologist on Sephardi Jews in the Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute (1974), and a note in the same publication about an ethnography that focused on the perception of Russian Jews by East Germans (*Angst und Ordnung*, Fear and Orderliness, Spülbeck 1997), but not on the Russian Jews themselves. The Russian incomers work like a smoke screen and reflect East German post-reunification anxieties. *Ankommen in Deutschland* (2001, Arriving in Germany) from the cultural anthropologist Franziska Becker I did not find in this library, a fellow researcher recommended it to me. This ethnography is an amazing engagement with social and immigration policy in Germany, and the highly charged categories created through the quota refugee law, popular discourse, and the ghosts of the past. It is by far the best work in regard to the incredibly difficult living together of Jews and Germans in Germany on an ethnographic micro-level. Yet, according to the person who recommended it to me, Becker had run into so much trouble with her work that she left anthropology and Germany. Besides Becker's book, there are three other anthropological sources, which focus on Jews in Germany. The first one is *Sojourners* (1995) co-authored by John Borneman and Jeffrey M. Peck. It focuses solely on German Jewish returnees to Berlin, and is the only anthropological source that deals with non-Russian Jews in Germany post-1991. Yet, it is restricted to German Jews, and takes their individual life-stories at its focus. What makes this work so valuable is its impressive demonstration how life-histories shed "light on the details of large-scale historical events, as well as the individual personality" (Angrosino 1989: 103). This work does not focus on the dynamic interplay the boundary management of the communities with their non-Jewish surrounding, or inner-Jewish differences. The latest works on contemporary Jewish life in Germany in general come from Jeffrey M. Peck (2006) and Y. Michal Bodemann (2008). *Being Jewish in the New Germany* by Peck considers Jewish life in Germany holistically, and shed light on the life of Jews in

their internal difference in Germany. *The New German Jewry and the European Context*, edited by Bodemann deals with different facets of Jewish life in Germany in depth in its chapters. Previous works of Y. Michal Bodemann (1996a, 1996b, 2002) are overviews over the official community life in Germany, German-Jewish relationships, and the politics of memory. A final ethnography on Jews in Germany concerns again Russian Jews. *Gelebte Selbstbilder* (2008, Lived Images of the Self) by Victoria Hegner focuses on Russian Jews and their 'communities' in Berlin and Chicago.

Besides Spülbeck's, Becker's, Borneman's and Peck's and Hegner's research, which were all missing in this major collection in Cologne, I found one historical ethnographical work called *Die Anderen Juden* (The Other Jews) on persons of mixed Jewish descent after the *Shoah* by Andrea Zielinski (Zielinski 2002). Zielinski mentions in the foreword that she is Jewish but does not make much of this in her ethnography. The final anthropological work I retrieved from this specialist library is the master's thesis of Annette Vesper (1995) who does not mention if she is Jewish or not. Vesper worked with Russian speaking Jews, who, as she admits, saw working with her as "gaining in status" (Vesper 1995: 22).⁶⁰

What is it now that deters especially German anthropologists from working with Jews, especially pre-1991 residents in Germany? On the one hand there is the terrible history of anthropology under the Nazis, but then there is as well the fact that even before, anthropologists stayed away from Jews as Hauschild (1997) and Fleermann (2006) outlined. Jews were neither part of *Völkerkunde* nor of *Volkskunde*. The former deals with peoples abroad, the latter with Christian Germans in Germany (Hauschild 1997). Besides the Nazi horrors and the structural disregard of Jews as a group of people to study there are the issues of access (Bodemann 1996b), and of politically fraught territory (Becker 2001). The *Shoah* remains the uneasy undercurrent in the lives of pre-1991 residents, who define the public and hegemonic discourse about Jews in Germany, and who to date are in the positions of power in the communities. The effects of trauma or transmitted trauma find multiple expressions and ramifications, which reflect in any kind research work with Jews in Germany, be it Russian Jews (Becker 2001; Hegner 2008), Israelis (Kranz 2007c), or any other 'Jewish non-resident' group. Denial of

access or mistrust towards incomers are only two expressions of the aftermath of the *Shoah*.

Even when access is gained, this work is far from easy (cf. Peck 2006). It is incredibly rewarding to gain a completely different perspective, it can be emotionally draining to listen to what Jews in Germany have to say about their being in Germany and their families, and to see individuals in pain while knowing that there is no way that his pain will ever cease to exist (Grünberg 2007a). Also, I found it incredibly difficult, and painful to repeat my own family history time and again, a family history I rather not talk about, and had to the point of this research been silent about. Yet, I realised through my own pain that what I was hoping to gain from participants were incredibly sensitive data, and for them no less difficult to voice than for me. However, unlike my participants, I had left Germany and engaged in an avoidance strategy on multiple levels. Some issues that I had keenly avoided so far were brought back to me with an unmitigated force, and as I stated at the beginning of this chapter changed my perception beyond that of a professional anthropologist.

Anthropology at home?

That I conducted ethnographic research in the city I perceive of as the hometown of my childhood and youth is true; true is too that I conducted research with a minority that is very difficult to access, and it is equally true that this research has certainly changed my attitudes towards non-Jewish Germans and Jews in Germany alike. I had grown up with some knowledge about my grandparent's sufferings and their descent, but had no access to a discourse that would allow me to grapple with what I had heard. The mere knowledge had created an ambiguity towards Germany, which finds its strongest manifestation in me leaving the country, adopting another citizenship, and later working with 'the other' *per se* (Weissberg 2003). Yet, being amongst 'the others' was not natural to me either. Heilman (1980) outlines how his research amongst his own orthodox Jewish community catapulted him to the outside of his own community (Heilman 1980). My own research with Jews in Germany alienated me from the German mainstream discourse, and furthered my rejection of German practices of

restitution and dealings with Jews in Germany. At the same time, because I worked in the city where I have grown up, and where my parents and friends still are, it was not that I came to the field and left. To the contrary, I commute between Cologne and London.

The constant back and forth, and re confrontation with the field that is my home too has certainly enhanced the emotional impact that my shift in perception brought with it. The issues of restitution, ignorance, anti-Semitism, and anti-Israelism continue to appal me, they hit me on an emotional level and I think it would be a blunt lie to claim that I was, or am, neutral. I do not want to infer that I was neutral pre-fieldwork; the reflexive turn in anthropology of the 1980s indicates clearly that anthropologists are by no means neutral. This is to say that beyond my non-neutrality, my fieldwork got to me. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, through participant observation, conversations, and the narratives of my participants I learned to see Germany through Jewish eyes, and listen with Jewish ears, sometimes in agreement, at other times in disagreement. Yet, I learned that some things sound different to Jewish ears, as Lustig (2006) outlined in regard to the *Walser/Bubis*⁶¹ debate of the winter of 1998/99. As did Okely (1984) I picked up on issues that concerned my participants by the mere fact of their categorical belonging, be it self-elected or superimposed. Much like my participants, I encountered strange reactions because persons who had not previously known me assumed by virtue of my research topic that I must be Jewish. One such person looked at me startled, and asked in a subdued voice: “Do you have any surviving family?” The person in question had not asked me if I was Jewish, it seemed beyond him to comprehend that I might just be interested in Jewish life in Germany. Situations like these were not uncommon during my fieldwork encounters with non-Jewish Germans (cf. Frerker 1998). Those encounters struck me on an emotional level as outrageous. What right did that person have to ask me such a thing?, I wondered, after I had angrily answered back. I felt for myself how it feels to be abnormal, and a stranger, although my abnormality and stranger status do not compare to those of my participants. Unlike one of my Jewish friends, until then I had never thought about whether I look Jewish, and discarded the idea at the beginning of my research until I understood that this is a highly potent expression of otherness amongst Jews in Germany.

There were also those encounters where non-Jewish interlocutors were curious about my work, and felt a sense of relief that they could ask me various questions they had been unsure how to ask. This of course shows again the abnormality of German Jewish relationships. While on one level this put me in an uneasy position when asked to explain the views of my participants, it showed as well an honest interest from the side of non-Jews to learn more about Jews. Whenever possible, and when friends and participants allowed me to do so, I referred interested persons directly to them. This is to say that while German-Jewish relationships are fraught, yet there are individuals on both sides who are able and willing to seek an open dialogue. Furthermore, the effects of the immigration of Russian Jews, incoming Israelis and US Americans will certainly lead to another reassessment of being Jewish in Germany, which will have lasting effects on the positionality of Jews, and their relationship to the non-Jewish surrounding. First effects of this are already visible with the age cohort 'third generation' who because of their wildly different experiences do not share much beyond being part of the same age cohort. The idea of 'generation' as a common ground is fallacious with them, their identifications are multiple (Kranz 2008c). From this multitude of possible identifications follows a challenge for the hegemonic discourse concerning Jews for both Jews and non-Jews alike. Maybe there will be disharmonious cacophony of competing discourses, or a discourse structure which resembles the changing mixtures of individuals at events posted via SNS. However, it will take time to see the changes in the positionality and (public) discourse: so far the *Shoah* creates the eerie common ground.

Yet again, on a less individual and more public level I realised the connection between the anti-Israel discourse of the mainstream,⁶² and the wish of many Germans to "not hear about Auschwitz again", to just move on. I found that my Jewish friends and participants wished not to hear about Auschwitz either, but the trauma of the loss of family and that, "My own neighbours turned against us. Our own neighbours!" were memories which remained present more than sixty years after the *Shoah*, and which had been passed on. The knowledge about their suffering and the realisation of the incomprehension of the majority of non-Jewish Germans was by far the most alienating

experience of my fieldwork. I found myself unable to understand the emotional ignorance of the majority of non-Jews concerning the past suffering of Jews, the trauma that still exists, and the unwillingness to try to understand the position of Jews by vast parts of the non-Jewish population. Unfortunately, what Frank Stern had put forward in *Im Anfang war Auschwitz* (1991)⁶³ seemed more true than I had dared to think: that the official philo-Semitism of non-Jewish Germans was at times superimposed, and privately anti-Semitic stereotypes lived on in various nuances. Where they did not live on, I realised that there was still a lack of comprehension of how Jews live in Germany, and fear about what to do if a person is Jewish. Trauma deters communication, while the non-understanding, and the highly problematic legal framework of Germany concerning restitution does not help either. Candour would be the only way to learn about a person who belongs to the 'other' category, and until there exists the level of candour that is needed to communicate successfully, Jews and non-Jews in Germany, with very few exceptions, will continue to talk past each other. The failure of the *Jüdische Forum* in Cologne and the establishment of both *Gescher LaMassoret* and *A Grosse Liebe* bear impressive, and eerie, witness to this. However, the current developments with the 'third generation' show that change is under way.

3. Members, guests, non-members, and the other in the community

The creation of the liberal community was defined by the wish to create a space in which Jews are the dominant majority, where Jews have categorical rights (Handelman 1977), yet where non-Jews would be welcomed as guests. The community was to embrace the individual walks of life of the Jewish members in individual nuances of practice and life-style decisions. Part of those decisions was the marriage to a non-Jew, or a Jewish status that was the outcome of a *Giyur*. In other words, the identity of the community needed and needs to be created on a constant basis, there is no pool of shared narratives and metaphors that the members can rely on, there is no shared narrative of the sufferings of the past, there is no social bond that can be activated based on belonging to the same ethnic group (Talai 1989: 158) or that can be essentialised to draw an easy boundary (Barth 1969: 15).

Furthermore, although James had been keen on establishing a space dominated by Jews, non-Jews were present in the liberal community from day one. They existed in the form of non-Jewish spouses, (non-*halachic*) children, friends of members, non-Jewish members of the *Forum* who might attend services or other activities, and persons who appeared on occasion. While their presence was an outcome of the ideological stance of the liberal community, their presence has never been unproblematic.

In order to approach the internal workings and the boundary management to the outside of the community, I will in a first step describe and in a second analyse the relationship of the different groups within the confined microcosm of the community. In the next chapter, as a second step I will again first describe and then analyse how the liberal community struggles to set collective boundaries given its very individualistic nature. I will look at what is deemed to be liberal, and what is seen as too liberal. To do this, I will start with my first contact with the liberal community.

The initial contact with the *Jüdische Liberale Gemeinde (JLG, Jewish liberal community, or Gescher LaMassoret)* was not quick. I sent several faxes to the *JLG*; when they were not being replied to I thought I was being ignored, or worse, denied

access as with the orthodox community. Messages on the answering machine seemed to suffer the same fate. So, much to my surprise on the afternoon of *Karnevalssonntag*⁶⁴ 2003 (carnival Sunday) the (then) person for PR of the JLG rang. The phone call caught me by surprise, as on *Karnevalssonntag* I did not expect any official calls. After a short conversation, in which the PR person asked about my research, and the reason for my interest in this research, she invited me for the service the coming Friday night. During the conversation Mrs Thal-Klein, the PR person, had told me that she was from Hungary originally. Having said that, I was less surprised that she had rung me that specific day. *Karneval* is a huge local festival with bacchanalian features; a person who grew up locally, however much they might despise the festival, would have been very unlikely to ring. Mrs Thal-Klein, though, had not been out partying or taking part in the festivities, unlike myself.

Towards the end of our conversation she told me that my conducting research in the liberal community had been discussed by the board, and after the board's approval had been passed on to the members. In the members' meeting it had been okayed too. To inform all members of my proposal, and presence, a notification had been published in the monthly newsletter. At the end of our conversation, she provided me with the address and time of the service, information that is not available online but can only be obtained from insiders.

Initial impressions

As agreed with Mrs Thal-Klein, I showed up for the Friday evening service the week after. I was early, too early, as I learned in the course of the research, and I was very surprised by the location of the synagogue, which is in the basement of the Protestant church in a leafy suburb north of the centre of Cologne. She explained to me that: "When you see the big cross you know you found the Jews!" The basement location was the second surprise and commented on by one member as: "Earlier on, Christians were sitting in the basement, now the Jews are sitting there", thus referring to early Christianity, when Christians used the catacombs as a hide out. The reference also referred to the standing of the liberal community vis-à-vis the orthodox community, as

was to become clear through the elaborations of another member after the religious service. I was greeted normally, like everybody else, with “*Shabbat Shalom*”, and not asked any questions by the individuals present as to why I was there. I talked to Mrs Thal-Klein briefly, but she took little notice of me; she did not introduce me to the persons present, or ask me any further questions about my research.

It was only later in my research that I was going to realise that the hardly existing introduction and the ‘normal’ greeting, which I had noted as ignorance or disinterest in my early fieldnotes was based on the transience of the community, where only fifteen to twenty members attend services regularly, and the remaining eighty show up more or less a few times per year. I learned over the next months that not every person present is Jewish or a member of the community. Indeed not all individuals present know each other. Furthermore, not inquiring directly about the individual’s ‘background’ was part of the unwritten law of the liberal community. Moreover, having a new face around was not out of the ordinary. I tried to introduce myself to people according to the etiquette of the community, in as much as I understood it, and mentioned briefly my research and my reason for being there.

Some things struck me as strange, or at least very uncommon in Germany. The people present not only used their first names to address each other, but most of them invited me to use first names immediately. This is uncommon in Germany, where the distinction between first and last name is pronounced, and only in my generation has become more relaxed. Now, there were only three individuals present who were of the same generation as me. The majority were forty-five years of age or over. It is uncommon to use the first name of a person of this generation immediately upon encountering them; this is only the case amongst ingroup members, or groups which stress their ‘relaxed’ attitude.

That night, in line with what I had learned about the ethics of research, I tried to explain succinctly to the people I talked to what I wanted to research. Some of my interlocutors showed more, others less interest; there was definitely no quizzing of me being an anthropologist or about me personally (Furman 1987; Markowitz 2006; Mitchell 1988).

This non-quizzing I learned also through my research is typical for the conduct of the community, it is indeed a means to figure out what category an individual belongs to, if they are a Jew or non-Jew, without giving them the feeling of being cornered. I will come back to this later in the chapter.

The underlying assumption of the individuals present at the service about the new face is that they will be “ok”, as at least the PR person had interviewed the new arrival on the phone about what they want and who they are. Thus, whoever shows up is deemed to be ‘safe.’ Being safe is not to be equated with being Jewish, as I will also show in this chapter.

A notion that I immediately picked up on during the conversations after the religious service was the acrimonious relationship with the local orthodox community of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. This other community was frequently mentioned in a negative light, which seemed to be an attitude common amongst the people present. Ron, who I mentioned in the previous chapter, was quick to tell me that the board of the orthodox community had convinced the city council of a city adjacent to Cologne to refuse the liberal community continued access to a (defunct) synagogue. This synagogue usually functions as a public art gallery but for high holidays the liberal community used it for its religious services. Ron continued that he had talked to the city council and mentioned to them that the orthodox community did not communicate with the liberal community, and asked the city council to help. The outcome was that the orthodox community backed down, and the liberal community was allowed to use the synagogue again. I was struck by the candour with which Ron told me the story, as I was just an incoming anthropologist.

However, Ron had used local geographical terminology, and referred to the orthodox community by mentioning the name of the street of the synagogue. For a person with local knowledge it was immediately clear that this is the street of the orthodox synagogue. Ron also referred to the synagogue-cum-art-gallery by mentioning the name of the borough of the city. To place the borough, local knowledge was needed; to know of the old synagogue knowledge of Rhinelandian Jews. This way of communicating by

using names and places known to locals aims at placing the interlocutor, in this case me, without actually asking me personal and direct questions. After our conversation it had already become clear that I was a person with local knowledge, my Cologne accent gave away that I am Colognian, and my knowledge of local Jewish life hinted at either a strong interest in Jewish life in the area or of at least partial Jewish descent. I will come back to this feature of obtaining information about a person after describing my first *Erev Shabbat* (Friday Night) service with *Gescher LaMassoret*.

Impressions from the first *Erev Shabbat* service, and questions that arose through them

The number of people present at this Friday night service in February 2003 numbered about twelve. That means that a *Minyan* existed. A *Minyan* is needed to conduct a service and say high prayers. It is specific to liberal practice that men and women who are adults according to the *Halacha*, the Jewish religious law, count towards the *Minyan*.⁶⁵ Whether the *Minyan* rule of a minimum of ten adults this needs to be complied with has been a subject of debate in private discussions, though not publicly at members' meetings. The service, which lasted for about one hour was held adhering to the standards of the *Union liberaler Juden der Schweiz, Österreichs, und Deutschlands*,⁶⁶ which means men and women are seen as equals, they sit mixed, and the languages used in service are Hebrew, German, plus the native languages of individuals who read out the psalms. The *Siddur*, the book of prayers is available at the entrance to the area for religious services, alongside skulls caps⁶⁷ for those men who did not bring their own. The *Siddur* was put together by the founding members of the liberal community. Their names adorn the cover under the line "*Siddur der Jüdischen Liberalen Gemeinde Gescher LaMassoret*" (*Siddur* of the Jewish liberal community *Gescher LaMassoret*). The *Siddur* has Hebrew script on the right hand side, and Latin transliterations and German translations on the left hand side of each double page.

The *Bimah*, the lectern for the reading of the *Torah* is in the middle of two rows of chairs, which form a U. This U is open at the top and bottom to let people in and out. The space used for the religious service is partitioned off by movable partitions from the

space used for social activities. The religious space takes up about one third of the total space the liberal community has at its disposal.

After the service there is a *Kiddush*, the ritual sanctification of bread and wine, which is followed by a buffet. For *Kiddush* every adult drinks a small glass of sweet kosher wine, children are served grape juice, and every person eats a piece of *Challah*. *Challah* is a sweet white bread that is braided and often covered with poppy seeds. The *Kiddush* serves as the bridge between the religious and the social component of the Friday night gathering. While most of the individuals present are still standing, they have already moved to the tables in the social area.

Directly after the *Kiddush* booklets with songs are handed out. These songs are either traditional songs of the Jewish resistance groups *Lehi*, *Haganah*, *Etsel/Irgun*, and *Palmach* that existed before the Israeli war of independence (1948) and/or part of Israeli folklore. The language of the lyrics of those songs is Hebrew, never Yiddish or German. Russian songs have been added to the repertoire recently, after my fieldwork stay. These songs are not in the booklet but known to Russian speakers, as they are part of Russian folklore. The number and choice of songs depends on the individuals present. Yitzhak is known to love singing, whereas Ron is known to say: “*B’té Avon!*” (Hebrew: Bon appetite) rather quickly, to indicate the end of the singing. The Hebrew *B’té Avon* is commonly used to indicate that one has had enough of singing, and wishes for food. At the first service I attended, the individuals present quickly agreed to open the buffet, and the singing was cut short.

The buffet is vegetarian, although it may contain kosher fish. In order to keep the *Kashrut* of the community, the Jewish food law, meat is not allowed. This has two reasons: kosher meat is difficult to obtain in Cologne,⁶⁸ and in order to have a kosher buffet with meat and milk, two sets of dishes and silverware, plus two sets of sinks, cabinets to accommodate the different dishes, and two fridges would be needed. The community does not have the space, or money, for this. Furthermore, introducing meat in the community would lead to irreconcilable differences between the members. A substantial number of the members of the community are vegetarians. Animal welfare is

perceived of as part of living a moral life by a number of the members of the community (cf. Collins 2002b; Furman 1987). Over the buffet socialising takes place.

In this first service it struck me that there were very few young people present. Two were the children of one of the board members present. The other one was a young man who wished to convert and who only a few months later was to leave Germany for Israel. The strong age bias aside, there were various nationalities present, which goes hand in hand with saying that the people present had different native languages and different upbringings. Nationalities present were German, Israeli, British, US American, and various nationalities/ethnicities from the countries of the former Soviet Union. German was *lingua franca*, but with fellow native speakers, individuals would speak their native languages.

Since my first encounter with the community in February 2003, I attended services whenever I was present in Cologne, and when in the UK kept in touch with the community via email. Through the community newsletter, which I received monthly via email, I was always roughly up to date about the publicly debated events in the community.

Moving to the field

I left St Andrews in June 2004 to start a period of fieldwork of about eighteen months. Initially I had planned to stay twelve months but realised that the nature of the community and my own need to hold down a job throughout my PhD (Kranz 2008a) begged for a longer stay. Like me, the members of the community had fulltime jobs, and would only gather in their leisure time, some would attend services regularly, others not, some never. Those who never attended services I met by word of mouth connections, others by serendipity in social situations outside of the community, I guess that at least ten to twenty members I have never seen or met. Getting to know people, and building up sufficient trust on their side, and sufficient knowledge to conduct interviews on mine, took time.

During these eighteen months, I attended *Erev Shabbat* services as often as possible, the monthly Shabbat morning services for about nine months very regularly, and the various occasional meetings on topics of interest to the Jewish community. I also attended social gatherings and groups beyond the liberal community as became clear in the previous chapters, furthermore workshops or papers on Jewish topics with members of the community outside the service, socialised with members of the liberal Jewish community, and Jews of either community who I happened to come across. These individuals I met through acquaintances from the liberal community, were initially all part of my generation or age group ('third generation', see chapter three). Social groups and gatherings of Jews of the first and second generation post-*Shoah* were more difficult to access (cf. Kushner 1977). Effectively, I only gained access to them towards the end of my fieldwork stay (October 2005) and have visited them since and stayed in touch via phone or email.

In this chapter I will focus on the mixture of individuals at any service or gathering in the liberal community. I had learned that non-Jews were always present and that Jews were not always in the majority at services or gatherings; and that not every Jew who was present was a member of the community. The variety of individuals was somewhat unexpected to me. While I had known that a significant number of Jews that lived in Germany prior to the vast influx of Russian speaking Jews were married to non-Jews and had thus non-Jewish family, I had not expected the number of non-Jewish non-related guests to be that high at a Jewish religious service. Equally, I had not expected that conversion played such a central role in the liberal Jewish community. The presence of German non-Jews begged the question how much Germanness was allowed in the Jewish space of the liberal community; the issue of conversion ran even deeper and posed the uneasy question to many birth Jews as to what being Jewish was to them personally. Sometimes belongings were concealed, and performative elements used to demonstrate a belonging, or an inclination to belong.

Observing the services and gatherings

The religious services of the liberal community form the heart of the community life. The service runs every Friday night unless stated otherwise in the community newsletter, every third Shabbat⁶⁹ morning, and on all Jewish high holidays. The number of attendees varies between five and twenty-five. Who comes is unpredictable, and depends on other commitments, (school) holiday seasons, work, or the presence of the rabbi. The rabbi of the liberal community is not present at all services; according to my fieldnotes he comes about every eight weeks to hold an *Erev Shabbat*, and a Shabbat morning service. This usually means that the Friday night service is well attended, whereas the Shabbat morning service garners attendance from individuals who were busy Friday night, who are very religious, board members, and those who just have, or those who want to, convert. The Saturday morning service is religiously biased by virtue of its length of more than two hours and the discussion of the Torah portion of the week. Due to the smaller number of attendees, mostly regulars, it is also more intimate, whereas the Friday night service is inherently more social.

Announcements are made before the last anthem, *Adon Olam* (Lord of the World), on Friday nights in order to reach those who are not staying afterwards for the social components. The Shabbat morning service includes the *Torah* reading, a sermon from the rabbi, and reading of Psalms, and the weekly portion of the *Torah* (*Parashat HaShavuah*). The service starts at 10 AM and lasts until 12.30 or 1 PM. After the service there is a brunch buffet. It follows the same food rules as the Friday buffet though the foodstuff brought along is more brunch-like: croissants or rolls are usually part of the buffet. Guests I have only very rarely seen in Saturday morning services; the Shabbat morning services is an inside affair.

This feature shows strongly in the conversations that the individuals present have over food on Shabbat. These conversations commonly show knowledge of the other person, and indicate friendship relationships that go way beyond the confines of the liberal community in both space and time. The Saturday morning service can be conceptualised as a closed stage (Eidheim 1969). Eidheim conducted research in a fjord community in

northern Norway, focussing on issues of Lappish identity, and how it is acted out. Only in certain situations, and most often when “trusted” (ibid 1969: 44) others (read: Lapps) were “involved” this Lappish identity was acted out. This behaviour Eidheim conceptualised as a closed stage on which Lapps were acting out their Lappishness and did not attempt to perform Norwegianness. Conversations on this Lappish stage differed from those of the public, Norwegian dominated, or the mixed stages. In Cologne, a similar pattern of communication could be observed on Saturday mornings, when only a very limited number of individuals were present, who formed the core of the liberal community, or had access to it. The conversations were notably more intimate, and individuals would not lower their voices to keep the content of the conversation private. Heinz, for example, would talk with Sarah, his wife, and Mayan about various people they knew, and comment on them. The three would as well exchange information about their private lives. Similarly, Mayan would bring her non-Jewish husband to the service. Friday nights I have hardly seen him attend with her, even if she led the service. This might sound surprising as he is a non-Jew. His kinship relationship and the time he has known the members of the community overruled this categorical belonging; he forms part of the ingroup of the Shabbat morning, an intimate through his wife. Tanja and Jürgen would as well share much more of their thoughts with others. Helga, if she attended would be most cordially greeted, and asked about her wellbeing. This was particularly the case since her husband left her and their two teenage children, for a woman who is also a member of the community.⁷⁰

Opinions on matters that were close to the hearts of the individuals would be voiced candidly. This referred to private topics as well as discussions on Israel, Turkey’s EU membership, right-wing extremism in Germany or matters about the future of the liberal community. The Shabbat morning service had a very cosy, family-like atmosphere. There was hardly any transience in the attendance. It is dominated by members at the core of the community, and those who have access to the core due to long-standing relationships with core members. An underlying reason for the attendance of core members lies also in the structure of the non-Jewish surrounding. Shabbat morning, that is Saturday, is the first day of the weekend in Germany. Mentioned one member “I’m so tired from the week, honestly, Shabbat morning means for me relaxing and sleeping.”

This means that persons with less strong contacts to the core members, those who are less religious, or less interested in the community do not attend this service. This keeps the core separate from other members while it enhances the power of the core members in the community, and facilitates communication between them.

Non-core members at the Shabbat morning services

During my fieldwork stay, Sandra, Nora and Thomas,⁷¹ who wish to convert, became regulars at the Saturday morning services. Thomas was regularly accompanied by his girlfriend Nadine. Dotan, a very busy father of two young sons, attended the Saturday service more or less regularly, whereas Friday nights he was rarely present. Anna was a regular as was Ina. The two of them were usually the only Russian speakers present. Jonathan was a regular presence on Saturdays, as were Sarah and Heinz. Besides the three conversion candidates, the two Russian speakers Anna and Ina, and Laura who had moved to Cologne from Israel, all other individuals had known each other for years, their friendships often went back as long as the *Jüdische Gruppe* or *Jüdisches Forum*; in the case of Mayan and Jürgen it went back to their childhood. However, what notably sets all attendees of the Shabbat morning services apart from the non-attendees is that all of them were or are active in community work. The conversion candidates, who as non-Jews cannot hold any office, are very involved in practical matters, which ensure the smooth-running of the social bits of community life. Thomas and Nadine for example regularly donate crates of mineral water; Sandra helps run members to and from services.

Laura was a member of the board, and Anna is a member of the board, Ina is responsible for various issues related to the kitchen. Heinz was a board member, Mayan a founding member, Jonathan was the religious leader and head of community, an office Tanja took over from him in the summer of 2007. In other words, all persons present on Saturdays have a very strong commitment to the community. The atmosphere of the Saturday morning service gives the feeling of being in the core of the community. However, there are remarkable individual differences in this core group concerning the

way they obtained *halachic* Jewish status, and the ways they related to their Jewishness, which I will come back to.

The diverse *Erev Shabbat* service

Friday evenings the situation looks completely different. The community is teeming with life, on average twenty individuals are present. Conversations are difficult to uphold, and the patterns of interaction resemble those of social butterflies amongst the longer standing members, as well as the regular guests. I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that the community is characterised by transience. This holds particularly true for the Friday evening service. It is rare that the same people attend the service on two successive Fridays, some members turn up only irregularly, and if they do, have a lot of catching up to do. Catching up is the major activity of the social component of the service. Even for the more regular attendees there is always a lot of catching up to do, which is indicative of the limited time that is spent with fellow members outside the services. The reasons for this are multiple. On the one hand, there is the limited time that members have to meet each other in the community setting, and the transience of attendees. Then, there are structural issues: the catchment area of the liberal community is vast, as it is one of only two liberal communities in the state, which means that some members spend two or more hours to get to Cologne. All members and guests have other social and professional engagements. In this sense it is unsurprising that the core members live in or in direct proximity to Cologne.

The catching up starts right after the religious part of the Friday night service. Already during the service, individuals who have friendly relationships exchange smiles. The smiling greeting is of importance, as the individuals arrive at different times. Not every person present at the service turns at the start. This means that not everybody had the chance to greet their friends and acquaintances personally before the service. Travel times, distances and other commitments make for late arrivals. After the religious service, when individuals wish “*Shabbat Shalom*” to each other it is common that the ‘smile exchangers’ hug each other. The hugging is quite striking to incomers: “Why do they come here? To get hugged?” pondered one visitor. The very closeness, and

physical proximity that individuals shared had struck him as odd and very different to the religious services he had attended on the rare occasion in Israel. What this person had picked up on is strong personal affinity between some of the individuals present at the service. This is truly the case. But who are the individuals who hug, and who does not hug? And what does this express?

I have mentioned that it is very rare for the same group of individuals to be present on two consecutive Friday night services. However, when it comes to the greeting between the individuals who attend the service, relationships become tangible.

Becoming friends

Jürgen and Mayan have known each other since their teens. Mayan's parents had returned from Israel to Germany in 1959, Jürgen was born while his parents were in hiding. They returned to Cologne after the *Shoah*. When I interviewed Mayan towards the end of my fieldwork stay she told me that: "He is now one of my best friends. But when I came to Germany? No, I did not relate to him." Mayan described to me how "when we came to Germany, I did not relate to German Jews. They were so crooked. Not like we Israelis. We walk tall." Mayan performs this "walking tall." For her this works against a *Shoah*-defined victim identity, which she had to deal with in Germany.⁷² This identity, backward-looking and defined by suffering and annihilation "was destructive." This, Mayan rejects by walking tall and radiating a somewhat stereotypical Israeliness: open, outspoken, bordering on brash by German standards, but nevertheless friendly.

Jürgen is German, and has never lived anywhere else but Germany. He stands for Mayan as a positive example of a German Jew. Jürgen by no means walks small: he is outspoken, professionally he is well-known. Jürgen grew up as a part of the orthodox community in Cologne, a community Mayan has nothing nice to say about. Her criticism stems from ideological differences between her own take on Judaism and the official line of the orthodox community. Furthermore, Mayan was excluded from

membership in this community because she was, prior to her *Giyur*, a non-*halachic* Jew.⁷³

Jürgen had for a while had an official position in the orthodox community. As time went by he discovered that he was at odds with various other board members of the community, eventually he gave up his post, and retreated to practising Judaism privately. Publicly, he was and still is engaged with Jewish life in Cologne and Germany. Jürgen authored, edited, or co-edited several books on these topics, some of them with the woman who was to become his wife, Tanja. Tanja as much as Mayan is a patrilineal Jew and very much at odds with the orthodox community. Jürgen told me in regard to having an *Erev Shabbat* dinner at home that:

Through Tanja the rituals came to life. Before it was more the case you did them in a certain way because that is how it's supposed to be.

Through Tanja I learned it's not about the kind of meat that you eat, it's that you do it for a reason and that you do it with friends... wholeheartedly.

Jürgen was hinting at the sociality of the *Erev Shabbat* they were doing at home now when he and Tanja did not attend the services at *Gescher LaMassoret*.

The high regard for sociality he holds in common with Mayan and Tanja. Doing a Jewish ritual was not about upholding the ritual to an orthodox standard but having a deep emotional commitment to what they were doing. This idea was shared by other members of the liberal community. The focus for those members was the idea of sociality (Amit 2002: 104), of conducting a Jewish ritual with like-minded Jews, and thus dwelling on several levels of relatedness. Here again, the old issues of attitudes that first manifested in the Jewish Group, the differences that tore apart the *Forum*, and led to the foundation of *Gescher* find their reification. The relationships and social groups that are visible in the liberal community predate the liberal community, they influence the community to date, and still exist outside its confines in forms of participation in (public) social circles, and (private) friendships. These relationships follow a pattern

that has been widely recognised by sociologists and anthropologists. Friendships of adults, as McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001), Merton & Lazarsfeld (1954) as well as Verbrugge (1977, 1979, 1983) argue are based on similarities. Sociologists use the term homophily to describe similarities that allow for the creation and maintenance of friendships, social groups and networks. The homophily of values of the members of the liberal community has been mentioned in previous chapters. Homophilous values have also been mentioned in regard to other groups as well as the breakdown of social groups (Burt 2000) in chapter two. The specific homophily of values that underlies *Gescher LaMassoret* will become clearer with the ‘food discussion’ in the next chapter, and the narratives of individual members in chapter six. However, already in the snippets of conversation and the ethnography the similarities of the core members shine through. The core members are likeminded. They hold similar values and attitudes. For example, Mayan and Jürgen show similar attitudes concerning various issues of Jewish practice and the liberal Jewish community. They also have interests in common, which go beyond the liberal community. These attitudes and interests allow for a friendship between them that is independent of the liberal community. Yet, as the volume *The Anthropology of Friendship* (1999) shows, friendship is culturally specific. Carrier, for example, sees the relationship of the notion of the self to the idea of friendship in Western societies as part of the parcel of the “autonomous person who is capable of friendship” (Carrier 1999: 34). This person is presumed to be free to decide who they want to be friends with. This personal freedom applies to the members of the liberal community. It makes for the importance to consider sociological approaches to friendship, which look at Western societies in particular. These approaches allow for an analysis of homophilous features that underpin the friendships and friendly relationships of the members of *Gescher*. In the diversity of *Gescher* the homophilous features of the members are easy to overlook because the community has so many areas that are subject to negotiation. Yet, without these homophilous features in the undercurrent, *Gescher* would have never been created and it would be impossible to maintain. The features of fundamental similarities allow for differences and the attempt to appreciate them within the community. The differences of the shared abstract homophilous values will shine through with the different subgroups in the community, because levels of similarities will become visible within subgroups.

Core members and those who have access to the core

Heinz and Sarah also formed part of the “Shabbat Circle”⁷⁴ around Mayan, Jürgen and Tanja. The couple had converted in the very early stages of *Gescher LaMassoret* but unlike Tanja and Mayan had no Jewish parentage. Heinz and Sarah came in touch with Judaism through *Aktion Sühnezeichen*,⁷⁵ and lived for a period of time in Israel. They lived in Israel during the Six Day War in 1967, which Heinz referred to in Hebrew as *Milchemet Sheshet HaYamim*. As much as Tanja, Mayan, and Jürgen, they have been engaging in Jewish circles in Cologne for a significant time.

If all of them are present during the service they not only exchange smiles, but hugs, and sit with each other during the social part of the service. These three are often joined by Emmi, Hayley and Helga, if they are present at the service. Emmi was born and raised in Cologne, and is one of the few surviving Cologne Jews. Hayley who has a very rare presence at the services does not live in Cologne but in the surrounding area after spending substantial parts of her life abroad. Helga I mentioned before; she lives in the surrounding area and attends services occasionally with her two children. However, if Helga attends a service she is there with her whole heart, she shows an incredible engagement with the other persons present, and truly adheres to the German proverb, “*Liebe geht durch den Magen*” (Love travels through the stomach), and brings along an amazing variety of homemade Israeli dishes. Emmi, Hayley, and Helga are at the fringes of the Shabbat circle of Mayan, Jürgen, Tanja, Heinz and Sarah. They are permitted in the circle if they wish to participate.⁷⁶ The relationships of these individuals go beyond the confines of the community, and are upheld independently of it.

Jonathan participated in the Shabbat Circle too, and upholds cordial, if more distant relationships with the core members of the Shabbat Circle. He is not part of the hugging scene. However, his non-participation should not be interpreted as a sign of marginality. As the head of the community for almost ten years, Jonathan is very much at its centre. Hugging is just something that he does not engage in.

An eighth person who for a time was part of the Shabbat Circle was Laura. Unlike the other members of the Circle, Laura had only come to Germany recently. She was born in Germany and raised in South Africa. German was the language of choice that her parents spoke to her. As she told me in English: “I didn’t want to speak it. I had enough problems with this country.” Laura went to Israel aged seventeen for the first time, and made *Aliyah* in her early twenties. She remained in Israel for a good twenty years. Her mother and daughter are still in Israel, and on various occasions she told me that she wishes to go back to Israel, that she “will only stick it out here [Germany] as long as I have to.” She misses the liveliness of Israel, Cologne feels to her “like a cemetery. Dead.” At the same time she misses the quiet of an Israeli Shabbat. To cut a long story short, she misses being able to lead a Jewish life, without being forced to “plan. You have to plan everything here.” She misses the advantages of a Jewish superstructure that Israel offers.

Laura is in favour of reconciliation with Palestinians, and unhappy about the treatment of non-Jews in Israel, but she does not like living “amongst the *Goyim*.” Nor does she appreciate seeing them in large numbers in the synagogue. At one point she told one non-Jewish guest whom she particularly disliked that in order to attend the service, this person, Noor,⁷⁷ would need to ring the board in advance to give notice of her attendance. Noor, a regular guest without any wish to convert, reacted puzzled, and asked Laura if this was a decision of the board of the community. Laura did not tell me what she replied but she told me that Noor talked to one of her friends from within the community, Yitzhak, who then asked the board. This conduct of Laura’s triggered a fight on the board, and again raised the issue of boundaries. As an incomer from Israel and contrary to the long-term members, Laura’s identity is informed by parameters which are different from these long-standing Diaspora members. Laura went to Israel and made *Aliyah*, whereas the long-term members of *Gescher* chose to stay in the Diaspora, or if they were Israelis, move to the Diaspora. While watching a movie about a family of Diaspora Jews with me, Laura elaborated on the daughter of the family who makes *Aliyah*: “That’s the decision everybody in the Diaspora faces. The people who go to Israel have a different intensity about them.” This attitude ran contrary to that of the core members of *Gescher*, in other words it was not homophilous with their attitudes.

The issue of Noor's presence was the first official clash Laura caused in the community. It had repercussions within the Shabbat Circle, and the very established members. This Circle was decidedly more relaxed in its attitudes towards non-Jews present at the service. Indeed this Circle which is partly made up of founding members carries on the ideology on which *Gescher* was founded: non-Jews would be welcomed as guests and not treated like unwanted *Goyim*. This attitude was certainly underpinned by the fact that four of the members had converted themselves, and had by this token immediate, intimate, and constant contact to non-Jews. Mayan and Jonathan were married to non-Jews, which increased interaction across the divide, and made the distinction probably appear even more dubious. The experiences of the other members of the Shabbat Circle, and the attitudes that arose from them were so different from what Laura could relate to that her presence in the Shabbat Circle was rather short-lived. It was not only her presence in the Shabbat Circle that was short-lived, but also her sitting on the board of the liberal community, and thus at the centre of the *Gescher*.

Those with access to the core

As I have characterised these members of *Gescher LaMassoret* as the core or centre of the community, what other groups do exist? The Shabbat Circle consists of very early members of the liberal community, but not all of the early members are part of it. Ron for example is not part of the Shabbat Circle, nor is he on the board of the liberal community. At the same time, Ron is the person who disseminates the monthly newsletter of the community and of the *Forum* where he is still involved via email, and the one who designed the system that tapes and forwards incoming calls to the relevant persons in the liberal community. Ron is very active in the background, but keeps his distance to other individuals, including the Shabbat Circle. He mentioned to me that he prefers "to have Shabbat with my family." This does not mean that his relations to the core of the community are bad in any way, they are simply less important for him as he centres his attention on practicing with his children: "For me it's a family thing." He has his other own Shabbat Circle, so to say.

Yitzhak⁷⁸ shows a similar pattern of behaviour. He and his wife Ursula attended *Erev Shabbat* services more or less regularly, but centred their Jewish practice on their family. Especially the family of Yitzhak was important for this practice, because Ursula had converted into Judaism, and has no Jewish family. That Yitzhak and Ursula centred their attention on their own family did not mean that they had no involvement in the Jewish community. Yitzhak chaired the service occasionally, and together with Jürgen led the community *Seder* for *Pesach* twice. For the event of *Pesach* some members of Yitzhak's family in Israel came to visit him and Ursula in Cologne, and, with the two of them, participated in the *Seder* of the community. Yitzhak's and Ursula's involvement in the community is not as long-standing as for example Ron's, and strongly characterised by a philosophical approach to Judaism as opposed to a mere religious approach. This in turn the two of them share with Tanja and Jürgen, Mayan and Heinz and his wife Sarah, all of whom have a very vivid interest in Judaism as a philosophy. This philosophical approach was characterised as an "active engagement with Judaism, and what it means", and contrasted to a mere "unquestioning orthodox practice." All of them were regulars at the *Pirke Avot*⁷⁹ reading group, and debated the texts passionately in regard to their relevance to the current era.

The community is in its structure characterised by a core of about seven individuals who had been active in Jewish life in Cologne since the early 1980s. Those who had not been active in Jewish life had at least been in Cologne, or been active in an engagement with Judaism on a national and international level. Beside the longstanding involvement with Jewish life all members of the core group shared certain ideological stances (Furman 1987). They had a strong interest in engaging with their non-Jewish surrounding, which they attempted to decategorise. This attempt to see Germans as individual and decategorise them is a homophilous value of the founding members who rejected the stance of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. However, to apply this core value turned out to be problematic and a constant source of contention within the liberal community. Now, with a large number of converts from non-Jewish backgrounds, and a constant number of guests around, and an overall transience from the ranks of the members, how did these core members engage with the 'others' who were present?

Spatial structures

Some aspects of the relationship of the core-members to the non-core members and other individuals present can be seen in the seating arrangements during, and after the service. During the service, core members usually sat on the same chairs of the inner U of chairs each week, while incomers would sit at the back of the outer U. Core members were closer to the religious items of the ritual of the service; the *Bimah* was only an arm's length away. Usually, incomers waited for the core members to sit down first, they literally stood and waited. At the same time, their distance to the ritual and the religious items was further away. To the incomers, core members were visible through the way they interacted with one another; they clearly knew each other; while non-core members or incomers often did not know anybody. Thus, the interaction before the service demonstrated the position of each individual in the social circle (Simmel 1890) liberal community.

During the social part after any service, the core members always clustered at the top end of the same table, where they immediately moved after the religious service. The members, who have access to the core, might take seats with the core members. This access to the core is not restricted to Jews; non-Jewish spouses, non-*halachically* Jewish children, or friends are included in this group too. Thus, it is the actual or quasi-kinship to a core member that defines the closeness to the core, not the Jewish status of the individual; the Jewish core member was the gate opener, and gate keeper, in other words.

Non-core members take seats at the bottom of the table or at the second table. Unlike the core members or those with access to the core these individuals would linger and wait until the core and more established members have taken their seats. They would wait standing to see what was going on. However, the liminal period of *Kiddush* that links the religious service with the social component is on occasion enough for non-core members and incomers to make contact with a more established persons, and potentially sit next or close to them. Interestingly, this contact usually happened between speakers of the same language (especially English, Russian and Hebrew) and between young

people, but hardly ever with core members, but with members who were established, but not part of the core. The core itself takes more time and effort to reach. Throughout my fieldwork the core remained dominated by Jews of German descent. It is important to not confuse the board of the community with the core.

The core, although dominant in terms of board membership, does not equal the board. The latter is responsible for the day-to-day business of the community, but cannot decide on community matters without consultation of the members. For this purpose, a members' meeting is called. The ordinary members' meeting runs annually, extraordinary member's meetings for urgent issues are called whenever needed. All members of the community hold the right to vote. This means that non-core members stand a chance too to be elected, and that not only because a number of the core members do not want to run for any office. *Gescher LaMassoret* has the ethos that it is internally diverse, and the internal diversity needs to be reflected on the board. This belief is based on the positive homophilous value to accept individuals in their difference (cf. Furmann 1987), and on the negative to not repeat the autocratic structures of the local *Einheitsgemeinde*. In this community, the board of representatives was initially dominated by Jews of German descent (Zieher 2005) despite their numerical minority post-*Shoah*. Jews of Eastern European descent only entered the board in the mid-1950s (ibid). Russians, who are now in the majority, are underrepresented on the current board.⁸⁰ This is not the case with *Gescher*: Russian incomers, converts (non-*halachic* and from completely non-Jewish families alike), Jews of German and DP descent, Israelis and British immigrants were all part of the board during my fieldwork.

The seating structure has been one of the constant features of the social part of the *Erev Shabbat* service. Friday nights the seating arrangement is pronounced, and the different social groups find their reification in it. On Shabbat mornings fewer, and mostly core members, their intimates, or those with access to the core attend. People do not linger standing after the service but move swiftly to their (established) seats. Yet, again, core members sit at the top of the table, those who have access to the core, and conversion candidates, might sit amongst them, but are more likely to sit at the bottom of the table.

Thus, the social groups, which in their resilience seem more like social categories, persist even in the more intimate atmosphere of Shabbat mornings.

This persistence signifies the strength of the internal boundary of Jews to their non-Jewish surrounding. This means that the process of acceptance into the circle of Jews takes much longer than the theological approval of the rabbi and social approval of the board. Considering that core members form part of the board, and are regulars in the services, the conversion candidates need ‘core approval.’ Thus, the core, despite being not overrepresented on the board, holds significant power in the background. To get to the stage of being officially accepted as a conversion candidate, an individual must have been a regular guest in the liberal community for at least one whole year: if persons of the core disapprove of a person it is questionable if they will ever make it that far. If a person finds the approval, their longstanding presence shows a commitment strong enough to allow these to-be-Jews into the inner circles of the community, and close to the core; it allows for trust to grow, and allows for the re-categorisation to begin. After a year of constant presence at *Gescher* and interaction with its members, the people who make it that far are seen as trustworthy and genuine about their intentions; they are allowed into the Jewish ingroup. The growing closeness to the core is particularly visible through the spatial structures and movements of the individual at a Friday night service.

Movements towards the core

To elaborate on the point of the spatial features as a key marker of distinction, I will now introduce Iris, Sandra, Thomas and his girlfriend Nadine and Nora. All five came to the Jewish community during my fieldwork. Iris is the only *halachic* Jew of the five individuals. Both of her parents survived work camps during the *Shoah*. They kept their only child away from the Jewish community in the city where they moved to in Germany and did not pass on any knowledge of tradition and custom to her. “My mother knows all of these things. I don’t. Nobody taught me!”

Nora's Jewish father "was baptised. He was born in 1931. To keep the children safe and divert any attention from my grandmother, the children were baptised Protestant." Nora was baptised too. Her Jewish grandmother had died before she was born. Her interest in Judaism awoke during her teenage years. When she studied in London for a year she attended a reform synagogue regularly and made Jewish friends; back in Germany it took another nine years for her to come to a Jewish community with the wish to convert. She has not yet been admitted into the conversion course but has verbalised her wish to undergo *Giyur* to the rabbi and has made her intentions known to the community.

Thomas and Sandra want to convert too, but unlike Nora are already taking part in the conversion course. The girlfriend of Thomas, Nadine, attends services and the conversion course with him. It is prerequisite for any person wanting to convert who is in a relationship to ensure, and prove to the board and the rabbi, that their partner supports them in their wish to become Jewish, and that they will support them in leading a Jewish life. The rabbi holds the opinion that, "Jewish life is in the family"; in other words, the partner must be willing to accommodate the requirements of a moderately religious lifestyle as outlined by the rabbi. These are kosher food, Shabbat observance, and observance of Jewish holidays.⁸¹

Thomas had been a regular at the Friday services for about two years when he was finally admitted into the conversion course. His admission had been delayed because Nadine does not have the wish to convert. However, it was she who encouraged him to attend religious services at the liberal community. She has been present with Thomas throughout the time that it took him to get accepted onto the course; she is still attending the services with him, and Nadine is doing everything to accommodate the requirements of the lifestyle that Thomas chose:

There is one person at work who used to be my friend and she thinks that Thomas has brainwashed me into this. She was really mean about it and talked about it behind my back to other people in the sense of me complying with what he wants and being somehow... spineless. I do this with him because it matters so much to him, and I don't mind doing it. It

doesn't bother me. But I'm not sure I want to convert too. Sometimes I think about it.⁸²

When they first entered the community Thomas and Nadine sat at the end of the table, away from the core members, or at the second table if the service was very well attended. With time they migrated towards the core members, and engaged in conversations with them. As can be seen from the graph on page 140, they moved from the periphery of the seats to the more central areas, and now occasionally sit amongst the core members. They have a particularly close relationship to Heinz and Sarah who quite often act as bridgeheads between the persons who want to convert, and the core. Both of them have converted and have, to date, a huge interest and appreciation of other people who want to convert. They invite persons who want to convert to their home for private gatherings, and can open the doors to the Shabbat Circle too. Heinz and Sarah are gatekeepers for those who want to convert. A person who is welcome with them is unlikely to encounter much more resistance from the community.

Sandra's movement in the community followed a similar pattern, although as a single person she could more easily fit herself in on a seat at the core table. Indeed, I had noted in my fieldnotes that she sat at the core table early on, and socialised with the core members and Jewish non-members at a very early stage. She was very direct in her approach though not obtrusive: "I'm not a member here so I have to play by their rules." These rules she had figured out very quickly. She has a natural gift that enables her to intuitively grasp the rules of her surrounding. Through this grasp Sandra managed to get access to the core members very quickly; to some admittedly quicker than I did. By observing her movements, and through conversations with her, Sandra enabled me to see more clearly the spatial structures and the movement within the community because she moved across space so smoothly.

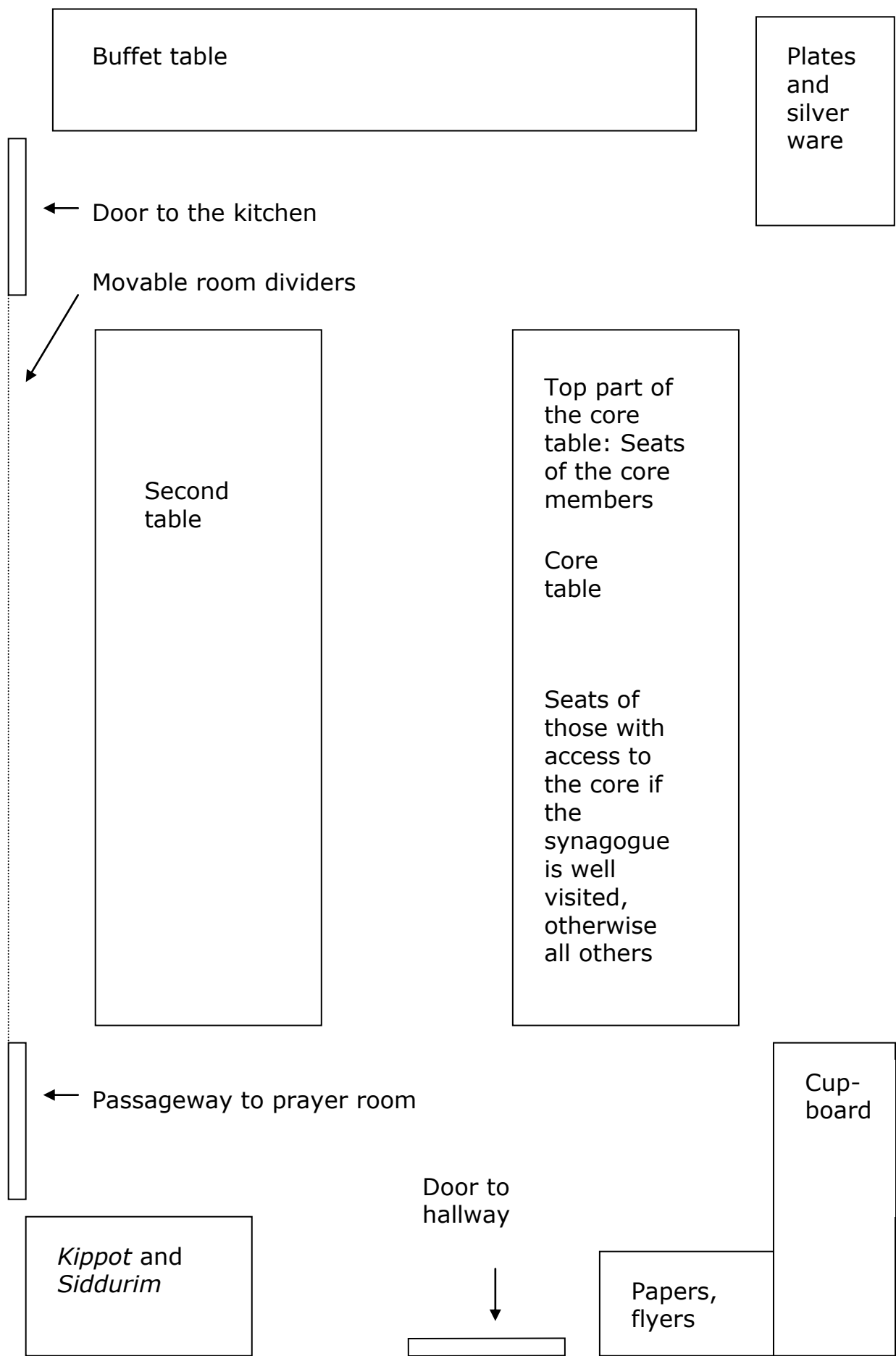
The same cannot be said about Nora. Whereas Sandra is a keen observer and uses these observational skills, Nora did not quite move as quickly and smoothly. Nora is an outspoken individual, she is quick to voice her opinion, and does so publicly and very audibly. While this might be interpreted as a refreshing candour by some, others opined

“She gets on my nerves. She is just so in your face and talks about *Gescher* as if it was her community. It’s not. She’s a guest.” It was felt that Nora was violating the boundary set for guests by voicing her opinion loudly, and on a constant basis. Nora moved between tables without any relation to the time that she had been present in the community. However, it would be fallacious to interpret Nora’s carelessness about the space as sheer social ineptness. I mentioned earlier that Nora’s father is a birth Jew who was baptised in order to keep him safe from Nazi persecution.⁸³ Nora sees herself as a (non-*halachic*) Jew by descent and her conversion as a confirmation of an existing Jewish identity. This self-definition enables her to cross spatial boundaries that according to her self-ascription she is allowed to cross. Not all members of the community, and especially not the persons in the process of conversion shared her point of view. In particular the persons who want to convert and who at times took years to be allowed on a conversion course found her behaviour outrageous.

Iris entered the Jewish community seemingly out of the blue in the middle of my fieldwork. The best way I have to describe her is that she was just there with her bubbly and charming presence. Similarly lively to Nora and always up for a chat, a laugh or a serious conversation, she engages with various persons in all the languages she speaks. She has a particular penchant for speaking Hungarian, and uses every chance of speaking it when, very occasionally, Jonah is present at the services.⁸⁴ Romanian she only speaks when a Romanian gentleman is present who does not speak German well; “he’d be alone otherwise.” The memories of anti-Semitism she suffered as a child in Romania are too painful: “they called me something that roughly means ‘the ugly one.’” As easily as Iris communicates with individuals who speak the languages of her childhood, she talks to the German speakers present. Iris talks about a plethora of topics; with her enviable private library she holds a vast reservoir of knowledge on literature and in particular literature referring to Jewish history and fiction, although she depreciates her knowledge. What Iris lacks is knowledge of religious practice, and the ‘little traditions’ (Redfield 1956).⁸⁵ She only became interested in religious practice in her mid-fifties, when she came to attend the service of the liberal community. While she talks to various individuals at every service and moves between the two tables she never sits amongst the core members. She talks to them but shows an odd deference towards

them. They are residents, she just joined; they have knowledge about religious practice, she is just picking it up. At one point Iris's insecurity became painfully obvious. She started to cry quietly after a service where she felt she had done something stupid, and assumed that Jonathan had said something negative about her. As it was to turn out he had not said anything negative about her. However, Iris's insecurity of being laughed at for her non-knowledge about religious practice was felt by her to be a stigma that in many ways she tried to make up for by her gregariousness and sociability. She felt this stigma to be particularly present with members of the core group who she usually steers clear of.

Spatial arrangements



Guests and ‘others’

Besides the Jewish core members, and those who wish to convert there are two more social groups present at any services. Non-Jewish guests without the wish to convert form the one group. Jewish members who attend services very irregularly, and Jewish one-off guests, appear as the second group. The latter two are perceived as very close to each other by the core members of the community, and enjoy a similar status. They are defined by their categorical belonging as Jews (Handelman 1977). Jewish members and Jewish guests are allowed alike to participate in the rituals fully, and show a similar pattern of movement during the social part of the service. Some of the irregularly attending Jewish members might sit amongst the core members or the more established members at the core table, others might even sit immediately in the core because they have known the core members for a very long time, and have relationships outside the community that are close enough to allow for access to the core. Language plays a major part in the movements of these irregular members or guests. For example, Noam, a short-term member from the US, clustered with English speakers, Sascha, a Russian speaking Azerbaijani clustered with Russian speakers, while Jana, a formerly very active member who now lives in the US, sits amongst the core members. Incoming Israelis usually sit with other Hebrew speakers, regardless of whether these are core or non-core members.⁸⁶

The persons who have immediate access to the core are usually long-standing members, and often those who were for a while more involved in the community than they are presently. These members are for example Emmi, Hayley and Helga who I mentioned above, but also James the founding father of the community. Harry is another such member. Alongside Emmi he is one of the few surviving Cologne Jews. Both Harry and Emmi live more than an hour by train from Cologne. Harry used to be a more regular visitor when I started my research in 2003, but meanwhile has reached his mid-eighties, and lost his partner to a long-term illness that he tended her through. When he currently attends services, Thomas and Nadine fetch him by car. Emmi and Hayley have never been the most regular attendees, both have other commitments that deter them from a more time-consuming engagement. However their relationships in the community are so

long-standing that they can easily enter the core, and sit amongst the core members. Helga enjoys a similar status. She had been more active in the community prior to the breakdown of her marriage and held the official position of the catering manager of the community. Currently, she does not hold any office in the community, and attends services less frequently than at the beginning of my research.

James, “the founding father of *Gescher*” according to Ron, I met only after a couple of months in the field in 2005. It was going to be another couple of months of research until I learned what role he had played in the foundation of the community. James had never struck me as belonging to the core of the community, he is a rather irregular visitor and does not hold any office: “and I don’t want to!” He sits either at the lower end of the core table or at the second table. James’s contacts to the other members of the community are limited to certain individuals he likes; his likes and dislikes he conveys very definitely, and in a rather outspoken manner. Observing the interactions with James I initially had the feeling that some of the other members were afraid of him because he can be a difficult character to get along with. Iris was one of the few new people with whom James struck up a friendly relationship: “He’s so sweet really, totally sweet”, Iris mentioned to me with some surprise when she saw me talking to James after a service. She had initially been rather scared of him.

Another irregular visitor is Ivan, the accountant of the community. He turns up whenever his job allows him to do so, and when he feels like it. If he is around, he always brings along ‘Diaspora Vodka’, a Russian product with a kosher certificate from the Russian rabbinate. While he is a fluent German speaker, Ivan tends to sit with Anna and Ina. Although Anna and Ina fulfil tasks in the community, and Anna is a board member, the two of them tend to sit together, and hardly ever sit with the core members. The language barrier makes it difficult for them to communicate at ease with the German speakers, and vice versa. Besides, Anna and Ina use the option to spend some time together in the synagogue that they might otherwise not have.

The persons sketched above are the more regular visiting members; the very irregular visiting members I have seen perhaps less than ten times in more than three years, some

of them such as Valentina I only know through social gatherings. Interestingly, some of the irregular attendees hold offices in the community, such as Ivan, or Yaron. Yaron was the PR person of the community during my fieldwork who feels that he lacks the time to attend the Friday night service: “on top of all the work that I do for the community. I need some time off, and time to spend with my friends.” Yaron feels that he is able to stay in touch with the persons from the community he likes without attending the services every week, and especially those he knows from *Yachad* (Hebrew: together), the now defunct group of gay and lesbian Jews in Cologne: “the minority in the minority.”

The significance of the seating arrangement

In sum, the seating arrangement after the service is a strong indicator of two things. First, the standing of the individual in the community as it is given to them by others, and second, the status they give themselves. The second table houses non-core members who wish to distance themselves from the core members or who like to leave the social part early. However, core and non-core members share with each other that they are Jewish, unlike conversion candidates and non-Jewish guests. These guests are usually confined to the bottom of the core table but mostly to the second table. Of course the guests enjoy differences in status too. If the guest is a parent, child, or spouse of one of the Jewish members they might well sit with the core members at the core tables, if they are non-relatives, they are very unlikely to sit there.

This group of unrelated non-Jews present at the services is a constant point of tension in the liberal community; the question of how many non-Jewish guests are too many, and how to regulate their access is an issue that resurfaces regularly. That non-Jewish guests are allowed does not mean at all that their presence is unproblematic. Effectively, it takes an effort to establish who is a non-Jewish guest for most members, and on occasion non-Jewish guests act as a reminder of the problems Jews in Cologne are faced with in a non-Jewish majority.

The fluidity of the attendees increases this problem. It is often not clear who is a member, let alone who is Jewish, of the individuals present. This ambiguity lets the core members and those known to be fellow members form a rather closed circle by virtue of the seating arrangements for the social part of the service. Any new face will be marginalised initially and follow movements similar to Iris, Nora, Thomas, Nadine, and Sandra. The marginalisation is subtle though, because every person is greeted in the same way; as I mentioned at the beginning, very few questions are asked. However, asking everybody, always, is not possible for the core members of the community: it would be too time-consuming, and limit the time they have together in the community even more.

Areas of conflict with non-Jewish guests

Non-related non-Jews who do not wish to convert will encounter a much stronger resistance to gain any kind of foothold in the community. Despite the official non-discrimination policy it will be conveyed clearly that they are (non-Jewish) guests. Harald, for example, has been attending services for the last three or four years but has never moved beyond the second table. Udo suffered a similar fate. He remained marginal throughout the time he attended services. Both showed a great interest in all things Jewish outside the community, and are partly active in the organisation of the Jewish cultural themed events. It is problematic that the events they have been organising are backward looking, and rather unpopular. Celebrating Yiddish dancing, an event that Harald helped to organise, did not garner any participation from members of the community; I was the only attendee he knew from *Gescher*. As such, these events are performed by non-Jews and geared at non-Jews who want to experience the lost culture of the *Shtetl*. Criticisms of this nostalgising about the (Eastern European) Jewish past have been voiced by a number of scholars. Weissberg argues that:

The description of a thriving [Klezmer] musical scene evokes haunting images from the past. The reader envisions a resurrected Jewish population, one who does not mourn the dead, but celebrates the presence. The music seems to evoke the memory of an idyllic, life-affirming past, one that none of these people had experienced.
(Weissberg 2003: 2)

Her main criticism is that the events concerning the Jewish past are performed by non-Jews and consumed by non-Jews. The light-hearted presentation and consumption glosses over the parts of the lived reality of Jews in Germany, in particular the loss of a flow of their history through the complete disruption of the Jewish past in Europe through the *Shoah* (Hadar 1991). These events seemingly undo the *Shoah* and resurrect a culture, which died with its people. The events have an exculpatory tinge of an imaginary past, where the Jewish other becomes positively exotic. The historic marginalisation of Eastern European Jews is not an issue that features in these

performances, nor is it an issue to distinguish between Eastern European Yiddish speaking Jews and German Jews who spoke German, a distinction which remains important to the respective Jewish groups in Germany to date. The events invert the murderous past into inoffensive parts frozen in time. Furthermore, they depict a Jewish population that is manageable and deprived of agency. These 'Jews' can be shaped according to the requirements of their non-Jewish audience and unpalatable parts of the actual Jewish past can be edited out.

A similar argument was made by Bodeman, who states that what he calls "Judaizing milieus" (Bodemann 1996a: 48) are made up of "converts to Judaism, German members of German-Jewish or German-Israeli institutions and clubs and a number of "nearly-Jews-by-profession" outside and inside of several institutions" (emphasis in original, *ibid*: 51). Thus, the organisers of these events are already an unwelcome reminder of how non-normal being Jewish can be in Germany. They enter a Jewish community with their baggage, which is unpalatable to descent Jews. Worse, these non-Jewish guests enter a place where Jews retreat to to feel normal, and remind them of the various failures of the current German-Jewish dialogue.

The political and cultural events of the defunct *Forum*, and by now *Gescher* and the *Einheitsgemeinde* demonstrate the contrast concerning Jewish events organised by Jews or by cooperating Jews and non-Jews, as opposed to those organised by non-Jews. Romanticisms about the past are absent in the former events. The events have often a present-focus that lacks from the events organised by non-Jews, the events organised by Jews deal with real existing current Jewish life-worlds. Effectively, these events again show the divide between Jews and non-Jews in Germany, and again how different the strategies to deal with the past are for Jews and non-Jews in Germany.

Becker (2001) observed that encounters with Jews are not the norm for Germans. Harald told me that he did not have Jewish friends or knows any Jews outside the community. His engagement with Judaism and Jews was theoretical. Both Harald and Udo showed an interest that came across as too keen in the Jewish community: they wanted to talk about all things Jewish, whereas this was what most of the members did

not want to talk about in the Jewish community, a place where being Jewish was normal, where they would be in the majority for once. Arguing about Jewish practice was a different matter: that was definitely permitted in the community, as were discussions about politics and Israel. Yet, being Jewish in Germany was close to a taboo topic, and the *Shoah* a total taboo: only visitors or non-Jews breached this taboo, much to the chagrin of the members. Interestingly, members' anger was voiced to fellow members in a hushed voice or at a later time; the person who had overstepped the boundary was not rebuked in the community. Rebuking them would mean doing what the members of the community wanted to escape from for a short period of time, that is dealing with the non-Jewish German society, and explaining themselves to individuals from the other side of the divide.

It is in the community when some of the members want to be “for once not in the minority” or “amongst ourselves”, or to escape the notion that “I was the only Jewish friend my friends ever had” (Jana). In other words they want to be with people who fit at least one of the elements that Barth (1969/1998) defined as a feature of ethnicity, a shared history (cf. Cohen 1985). This wish creates a constant tension for persons without any Jewish background who have or want to convert. Their motives are more or less publicly doubted. How these persons are then incorporated I will look at in the next chapter.

However, even the feature of shared history needs a particular interpretation in the liberal Jewish community, because not all Jews who are members share the same history of the ‘community of fate. For this reason, Jews in the community are defined primarily by their fitting in the category ‘Jewish.’ While this suffices to generate an abstract ethnic belonging through Barth’s (1969/1998) key element “membership, which identifies itself, and identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order” (Barth 1969: 15), it does not suffice to fill the category with shared meaning. This meaning, as the next two chapters will show, is constantly in the process of negotiation amongst the members of *Gescher LaMassoret* to move from an essential category to one that can serve as a resource for the identity of the community and its members.

Problematically, the categorical self-identification and identification by others allows only for the upholding of the idea of an essentialised ethnicity, it creates an abstract category. With such an essentialised notion, the management of the real-life boundary becomes much more complicated as it is unclear what is enclosed in the boundary beyond people who technically fit a specific category. Homophily helps to create some clarity concerning the idea of the boundary which is underpinned by shared values enclosed in it. Yet, in their abstract form, these homophilous values are not enough to solve the boundary issues of the liberal community. The meaning of Jewishness, and what that entails becomes completely individualistic, and subject to individual interpretations and personal identifications in this essentialised form. Connections to other members, although based on homophily are similarly individually defined. This means that a shared group identity needs to be negotiated, and identifications that matter for the group need to be agreed on. The process to accomplish this, and to fill the single key element of Barth that fits with *Gescher* with actual meaning, leads to it being amended by two other major elements within the transient liberal Jewish community in Cologne. These are the narrative of *Gescher*, and a constant debate on what being liberal Jewish means. These two elements and their interplay with the feature of the meta-narrative of a shared history of all Jews (Kranz 2007c) I will also look at in the next chapter.

4. Being liberal Jewish in the community

In the previous chapter I described the different social groups, and the spatial arrangements that reify them in the community space. Underlying these social groups is another issue, which I have so far only alluded to by mentioning that the core and non-core members of the community are indeed Jewish. I learned that various meanings lie underneath the category 'Jewish.' At the beginning of my research I was told by one member of the community in imperative clarity that it is an offence to ask a Jew if they have converted, and that I was not to ask anybody as to whether they had undergone *Giyur*.⁸⁷ However, understanding the issue of conversions, and the acquired belonging and identification that goes with it is a key issue to understanding expressions of the liberal Jewishness of this specific community.⁸⁸ The spatial arrangements and the movements of individuals who are categorised as belonging to certain groups take a different and deeper meaning if conversion is considered as a key issue that masks other issues of otherness and belonging. Conversion as much as the presence of non-Jewish guests at a service make for the need to work constantly on a shared narrative for the community, which helps to put the shared homophilous values and ideology into practice. This is particularly important in integrating converts and in setting the membership apart from non-members (Barth 1969/1998; Handelman 1977; Noy 2005, 2007). This shared narrative then forms the basis of a body of policies concerning what being and doing liberal Jewish means in and for the community setting, and which is supported by the (democratic) majority of the members.

Drawing on Barth (1969/1998) this issue begs the question of whether the cultural stuff that is enclosed in the boundary is a key aspect for the boundary. If it did not have any particular meaning, which is shared by those enclosed, what would be the reason to define a boundary? In other words, how can a boundary be set if the people as carriers of a culture do not have any ethno-historically shared culture and thus historical narrative, which they can use to relate to each other, but are in the constant process of creating one? To name just four anthropologists, Talai (1989) dedicates a whole chapter in *Armenians in London* to the issue of 'The Historical Legacy' of the Armenian genocide, while Geoffrey White (2002) dedicates a whole book to discussing *Identity*

Through History on the Solomon Islands. Arjun Appadurai (1981) takes a closer look at how history is appropriated, and how it cannot be used as an infinitely malleable resource. However scarce the past might be in Appadurai's paper the group of people in question have a shared narrative of the past. The same goes for Israeli backpackers in Noy's (2007) book: however much they might disagree on Israeliness, and however ambiguous signs and signifiers of Armenianness of the Armenians in Talai's work are (Talai 1989: 2), the socialisation and acculturation of the Jewish Israelis and Armenians in question took place in the specific shared framework of an ethnic group. In consequence neither group includes individuals socialised and acculturated in discrete, and potentially mutually exclusive, groups such as Jews and non-Jews in Germany post-*Shoah*. As such, *Gescher* shows a higher level of complexity than individuals of the same ethno-cultural group show, however non-coherent any culture might be.

I will take a look now at what happens if the historical narrative of the ethnic group 'Jews' that carries specific ethno-historical connotations especially in Germany is only accessible to a part only of the members of a Jewish community. *Gescher*, unlike the local orthodox community pre-Russian immigration, cannot be described as a community of survivors and their descendants (Bodemann 1996b; Geller 2005; Kugelman 1988a, 1996). Through the high conversion rates of the liberal community, the categorisation of individuals into two discrete categories Jews and non-Jews is highly problematic, and beset by potential offences, hurt and misunderstandings. In order to approach the issue of expressing (liberal) Jewishness in the liberal community, I will first describe the issue of conversion by describing the official discourse, and private opinions on conversion amongst (birth) Jewish members, and then look at expressions of being liberally Jewish. Of particular interest in regard to the expressions of being liberal Jewish are the reification of certain performances. In this chapter I will focus on access to the community for non-Jews and the food of the buffet, which is fraught with meaning.

Conversion/*Giyur*

According to the rabbi of the liberal community about one hundred persons convert to liberal Judaism in Germany each year. How many more convert in an orthodox settings in Germany or abroad with the intention to come back to Germany as Jews I do not know; the orthodox rabbi refused to answer my question. In the face of about 105,000 members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* the figure can be assumed to be negligible.

Personally, I have only come across three individuals who either underwent an orthodox conversion or had their conversion acknowledged by an orthodox rabbinate in Cologne, and have not heard of others during my research. However, despite the much smaller liberal stream the number of converts is more substantial.⁸⁹

According to Laura, who is very critical towards conversion, at least 40% of the members of *Gescher* have converted. Laura holds the belief that it is impossible to convert, because through conversion courses one can only learn “the bits that you can learn to be a practicing Jew.” These bits she sees as prayer, and the rules laid out in the *Halacha*. But those make up only a small fraction of what it means to be a Jew from her point of view. To her the actual essence of being a Jew is *Yiddishkeit* (Yiddish: Jewishness) an essentialist term that encompasses issues such as descent, narrative conveyance of (small) traditions (cf. Redford 1956) and what can be called Jewish consciousness, the consciousness of being a Jew, and remembering it, even if that is only on the occasion of the high holidays⁹⁰ or for somebody’s *Yahrzeit*. All is not black and white with Laura though. She accommodates patrilineal Jews and those of mixed descent as having a socially Jewish identity, even if they need to undergo *Giyur* to become recognised as Jews by the rabbinate. Laura applies a socially biased concept to being Jewish, which centres on the idea that Jewishness can be passed on by either parent, and not only via matrilineal descent. It is the historical descent that counts for her “that you’re naturally Jewish.” One grows into being a Jew from childhood onwards. With this opinion Laura is at the one end of the spectrum concerning opinions on conversion in the liberal community. However, Laura is not alone in her opinion, or rather highly critical stance towards the conversion of those of non-Jewish parentage. Jana, who used to be very active in the liberal youth movement prior to her studies abroad told me that: “I don’t care if it’s the mother or the father who is Jewish. The child of a Jewish father is as much a Jew to me.” Jana has a Jewish mother and non-

Jewish father. Her mother's family originates from Poland. Jana's family left Poland due to the anti-Semitism they had been encountering on a daily basis. Her concept of being Jewish was entirely socially defined, and dwelled on experiences and family history. She admitted that, "If I was living in Israel I wouldn't go to the synagogue", and that, "I have an emotional problem with conversion: "When they [the converts] say 'I mourn our dead' [the victims of anti-Semitism] I have to swallow hard." Rationally, she felt guilty about her reaction towards converts, and her verdict on these converts as being the other *per se*. Jana and Laura were the only persons who voiced their aversion towards converts with such candour. Usually the aversion or mistrust against converts ran more along the line of questioning indirectly: "What do they want from us?"

The first person who any individual who wishes to attend a service of the liberal community encounters is the PR person. At the beginning of my research this was Mrs Thal-Klein; during my fieldwork, Yaron. He said: "...and when you turn them away, some get really hostile. That makes you wonder how far anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism are really apart." Yaron's saying must be understood in the Germany-specific context, where converts have been suspected of wanting to change role from perpetrator to victim. Most publicly the recently deceased secretary general of the Central Council of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, Paul Spiegel, voiced this opinion.

Other members, matrilineal and patrilineal birth Jews alike, take stances that embrace those who want to convert regardless of whether either of their parents are Jewish. Their attitude is notably set beyond history and the *Shoah*, and regards the individual reasons as to why a person wants to convert as key, and not the historical context they were born into and brought up with. Between these two extremes lie various nuances. The underlying reasons that inform these attitudes are rather different, although a conflict between reason and emotion in regard to conversion was common.

Iris for example is happy for any person to embrace Judaism if that persons feels that they want to become Jewish and practice Judaism. She herself developed an interest in Jewish practice only in her mid-fifties; her husband is not Jewish, and her oldest child baptised. Iris showed a strong appreciation of the changing circumstances and the

fluidities of identities over a lifetime, and if the way leads to becoming Jewish that is perfectly fine with her. She does not have assumptions about more sinister motives of converts. She takes the wish of wanting to convert at face value. Yet, she pondered the much more pronounced praxis of converts; sometimes she felt patronised by the converts, and on occasion she voiced anger about their emphasis on rituals.

The attitudes of Laura and Jana on the one side, and the one of Iris lie on two opposing sides of a spectrum of opinions in the liberal community. Their attitudes express a different approach and philosophy to life, and with it to being Jewish. Interestingly, Iris the child of work camp survivors, holds on to believing in the good of her fellow human beings, whereas Laura who is of German descent and did not want to talk about her family's history, is more suspicious. The different attitudes of these two women should be seen as an indicator that patterns of dealings with converts, or the wider non-Jewish surrounding cannot be assumed to hinge on family histories or generational cohorts.⁹¹ The attitudes were expressions of the individually defined Jewish identity of the members of *Gescher*.

Omitting to mention one's *Giyur*

Not only attitudes towards conversion varied notably amongst the members of the liberal community, but also the dealing with conversion amongst those who had undergone it. I mentioned in the previous chapter that James and Mayan converted. Both had non-Jewish mothers, and Jewish fathers. Researchers focusing on the offspring of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers in Germany refer to these persons as *Vaterjuden* (literally: father Jews).⁹² I have been using the term patrilineal or non-*halachic* Jews to describe them. The reason for my choice is that I find the specific connotations of kinship that beset the logic of matrilineal descent of *halachic* Judaism get lost in the term *Vaterjude*. It triggers the odd notion that there are two kinds of Jews, children of Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers but regardless both are Jews. This does not hold true according to the *Halacha*, which only knows of matrilineal descent. Going by the *Halacha* as applied by both the liberal and orthodox stream in Germany, children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are non-Jews. By referring to a person as a

non-*halachic* or patrilineal Jew I wish to stress the strong social component of the identities I found with patrilineal and matrilineal Jews alike, the acknowledgement of non-*halachic* Jews as Jews by the majority of my participants, and their opposition to *halachic* authorities. As opposed to non-Jews who converted, matrilineal and patrilineal Jews alike had a birth Jew status, which is underpinned by an ethno-historic category, which assumes a shared background based on narrative conveyance within the family.

To appreciate the underlying ‘tribal’ logic of descent, blood, and exclusive categories that birth Jews referred to throughout my fieldwork, I prefer to stick with the parental idea of kinship as a decisive underlying motif of categorisation, and contrast it with the *Halacha*. This categorisation into kin and non-kin can encompass non-consanguinally related persons (Weiner 1982) too, and vividly demonstrates the decisive categorisation as ‘one of us’ as opposed to ‘one of them.’⁹³ Another birth Jew, that is a child of a Jewish mother and/or Jewish father, is categorised as quasi-kin, as the previous chapters show.

I think, especially in Germany, alluding to kinship in regard to Jews is appropriate, as it is the family histories that set Jews, regardless whether of *halachic* or non-*halachic* descent notably apart from “other Germans” (Kranz 2007a, 2007b). The two groups grow up with different narratives, which make for ill-communication and misunderstandings. How then, did the converts of the liberal community cross from the side of the non-Jews to the side of the Jews?

Beside James and Mayan (who were non-*halachic* Jews), Heinz and Sarah converted, as did Helga and her family, and Tanja (another formerly non-*halachic* Jew). Ron’s ex-wife converted, Ursula, Yitzhak’s wife too. Ursula converted when I was conducting research. All others had converted between 1996, when *Gescher* was founded, and 2006.⁹⁴

James and Mayan were the first to convert in the nascent stages of the liberal community. Both had been active in Jewish life in Cologne before the foundation of *Gescher LaMassoret*. Both had always conceived of themselves as Jews, as they told

me in personal conversations. The reason for their conversion had a very practical reason: in order for *Gescher* to become recognised as a Jewish community, which would enable it to set a badly wanted boundary and limit the membership to Jews (Kranz 2007b), it had to become a member of the *World Union of Progressive Judaism* (*WUPJ*). The *WUPJ* in turn sets out that in order to become one of its member communities, certain requirements need to be fulfilled. One of the requirements was that in order to be a member of the Jewish community a person needs to have either a Jewish mother, or if this is not the case, a person needs to have converted to Judaism. In other words, a person needs to be Jewish according to the *Halacha*, the Jewish religious law.

The *WUJP* acknowledges that children of Jewish fathers might have Jewish identities and feel as Jews. Furthermore, as the liberal rabbi of the Cologne community told me, it is common practice that if a child has a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, but both parents decide to bring the child up Jewish, the child will become a fully recognised member of the community if they choose to undergo the ritual of *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. Additionally, conversion of non-*halachic* Jews is referred to as “a confirmation of an existing Jewish identity” based on “history, engagement and family tradition”⁹⁵ which means that the concept of a person’s Jewish identity is strongly aligned along the lines of an ethno-historic social identity that can be conveyed by either parent. These two definitions to Jewishness, the *halachic* concept of the *WUJP* and the ethno-historic concept of the descent members *Gescher*, will resurface in this chapter again. They comprise two conflicting ideologies. Furthermore, the ethno-historic concept conflicts with the attempt to decategorise German individuals. This conflict reflects the limit of the homophilous value of some of the birth Jewish members to decategorise individual Germans on an emotional level. The clash of this ethno-historic concept with the homophilous core value of decategorisation is an underlying problem that takes different shapes, as this chapter will show. Going by the ethno-historic logic of the liberal community, James and Mayan did not so much undergo a change in their social and personal identities as Jews. Their conversion was in the truest sense a *Giyur*. The Hebrew term comes from the verb *L’Ger* and means to undergo a change of religious status. There are no connotations or ambiguities of it meaning anything else, such as

undergoing a secondary socialisation⁹⁶ (Berger & Luckmann 1966/1991) to acquire a different social identity, which is effectively required in Germany of converts of non-mixed parentage.

Upon meeting James, he very quickly told me his father was Jewish and his mother not. Undergoing *Giyur* and becoming a recognised Jew was for him a means to an end, and at the same time “a very negative experience.” James wanted a Jewish community in order to establish boundaries to the non-Jewish surrounding, as I recounted in chapter two. “I am an atheist, and I only thought about being Jewish when I came to Germany”, where the differences between Jews- and non-Jews were more pronounced than in Britain, where he grew up.

Diametrically opposed to James’ candour and clear motive for undergoing *Giyur*, Mayan never mentioned it to me by a single word. It was indeed only when I attended a Shabbat morning service and she was called to the *Torah* that I realised she might be a convert. Unlike persons with Jewish parents who are called by their Hebrew names and then as the daughter or son of a Hebrew named father, converts are called the daughter or son of Abraham and Sarah. These two tribal parents of all Jews become the Jewish ersatz-parents for converts. The same happened with Tanja: it was again during a Shabbat morning service that I realised that Tanja was called to the *Bimah* to read the *Torah* by use of the names of Abraham and Sarah.⁹⁷

Tanja too was a non-*halachic* Jew. As much as Mayan she had been active in Jewish life, although her activities were notably more professional, and not so much centred around being with other Jews or issues relating to Israel. At the same time both Mayan and Tanja are intellectuals, and the engagement with Judaism is for both geared strongly along intellectual lines. They reflect critically on the scripts, and are not shy to interpret or disregard parts they find inappropriate. It was only through their intellectual approach to Judaism, their engagement with the scripts and Jewish history that I learned that their omission of mentioning their conversion was not so much the management of a stigmatised identity (Goffman 1968) as I had wondered about in my early fieldnotes, but more a rejection of matrilineal descent as the imperative for having a religious

Jewish status. However, the hegemonic power that the *Einheitsgemeinde* held for more than fifty years plays a role in their Jewish identities. Especially Mayan who had been living in Cologne since she was a teenager felt strongly averse towards this community, and its disregard of the children of Jewish fathers. Tanja rejects the practice of the orthodox community for a mixture of intellectual and personal reasons. Though one cannot say that she appreciates this specific community, she has an appreciation of other Jews practising differently from her.

Helga and Ursula⁹⁸ never hid their conversions from me, nor did the numerous other converts, non-*halachic* Jews and those without any Jewish descent I came across in the community. With such a high number of converts, being a convert was not that much of a strange thing to be. Yet, the way to deal with it was remarkably different between individuals, and between different ideological stances.

Neither Helga nor Ursula were children of Jewish fathers, or had Jewish family, they both underwent *Giyur* as a final step to change their social, personal, and religious identities from non-Jews to Jews. Their journey to becoming Jewish resembles a secondary socialisation as Jews (Berger & Luckmann 1966/1991) than the more limited term *Giyur* infers. They needed to develop a belonging that Laura conceptualised as *Yiddishkeit*, even though she very much doubts that this is possible.

Helga told me that she and her family were the first ones to undergo conversion as a whole family after the foundation of the liberal Jewish community.⁹⁹ It had been her long-standing wish to convert. Helga had met her then to-be and now ex-husband in a Hebrew language course. From this I assume that he had an interest in Judaism that went beyond his relationship with his wife to be. However, I only met Wilfried at the very beginning of my contact with *Gescher*. Before the time of my fieldwork stay he and Helga had separated, and he was no longer present at any of the services of the liberal community. Before my fieldwork Helga had been the head of catering in the liberal community. This means that she was responsible for the provision of the food and drink that is needed for the service, which is kosher wine for the adults, grape juice for the children and *Challah* for the breaking of the bread. Another part of the job is to

take care of the kitchen, and to ensure that there are table cloths, clean towels, and that the dishes are washed or put in the dishwasher. Helga became catering manager a while after her conversion, when she had already been part of the community, and become more established. When we walked to the subway station on *Sukkot*¹⁰⁰ morning 2005, she told me very vividly about her experiences as a catering manager:

When I was the catering manager, Esther [Mrs Thal-Klein], you know her? ...she was still active and she was meddling with my job, like she was meddling with everything. She wanted everything her way. She rang me one afternoon before the service, and asked me if I'd organised the carpets. There'd been heavy rain and we'd needed to clean everything [the community rooms are in a basement that is prone to flooding]. So I told her, I'd do all of this before the service, I'd come early and arrange everything. And she got so mad at me. After that I'd had it. She wanted everybody to do it like she wanted it. And she was friends with Daniela. The two of them were really vicious together. One time, after we had buffet I heard Daniela say to Esther "Let the *Goyim* clean up, there are enough of them around."

Helga felt treated like a second-class Jew by these two women, although by this point in time she was already a fully recognised Jew according to the *Halacha*. However, using the term '*Goyim*' and knowing that she was a convert who is now responsible for the catering makes for a different connotation. Metaphorically speaking, Helga had crossed the boundary from non-Jew to Jew and was now responsible for the upholding of a ritualistically important job in the community: the cleanliness of the kitchen, which must be in line with the *Kashrut* of the liberal community. A former non-Jew had thus become the carrier of ethnic continuity, which according to Sered (1988, 1992) and Abrahams (1984/2001) in Judaism is strongly linked to food, because food links the sacred with the profane; it links religious Jewish practice with the sociality of sharing a meal, and through the application of the *Kashrut* creates a boundary to non-Jews.

Incidents of open discrimination against non-Jews and potential converts I have only come across once in such a public manner. Where opinions like this exist they are normally kept private and shared with a trusted few, as in the case of Laura and Jana. For Helga the offence was the harsher as it offended what has become the very core of her identity, that is being a Jew:

[...] and then Joshua [Helga's son] was a *Bar Mitzvah* boy [big smile].
And I was so proud [bigger smile] and I thought my son, it's my son's
Bar Mitzvah, and I am here as a Jew!

Telling me this Helga smiled blissfully, but at the same time shook her head in disbelief. She could at times hardly believe it that she became a Jew of her own making.

Ursula converted shortly after I had left Cologne, I heard about the conversion ceremony from her, and from Sandra. In a phone conversation Sandra described to me: "Ursula was so happy. And Yitzhak – he cried for joy. He was so unbelievably touched!" At the time of my fieldwork Ursula took part in the conversion course. This course runs every second Sunday for two to three hours, and is limited to about four conversion candidates at a time. In order to get to the stage of participating in the course a person needs to have received approval from the board of the community and the rabbi. The course is taught by a teacher that the board of the liberal community chooses. For most of the time of my fieldwork the course was taught by Uriel. Uriel was born and raised in Israel; his family is religious. To my knowledge he is a trained architect but had no official accreditations as a teacher of religion when he started his work at *Gescher*. It is quite telling that the board of the Jewish community chose a native Israeli with a religious family background as the teacher for its conversion, adult, *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, children's and Hebrew classes. The focus lies only partly on the religious education. Qualities that an Israeli offers, such as a naturalised sense of being a Jew, a non-Diaspora point of view, and the ability to speak Hebrew natively are assets that help to create a forward looking and assertive Jewishness, which amends the backward looking and past-focused *Yiddishkeit*, connoted by Eastern European pre-*Shoah* Jewishness of the *Shtetl*. This '*Yiddishkeit*' the majority of the members of the liberal

community are keen to leave behind. Those in the community who come from Jewish families connected it to the orthodox community, while those who converted literally could not relate to it.¹⁰¹ I only heard Laura use the term in the community, and only witnessed non-Jews such as Harald and Udo relate to it as something to be transposed into the present (Weissberg 2003).

Ursula attended the conversion course for a year to undergo her *Giyur*, as a final step to become a Jew. Her interest in religion is long-standing. She received a PhD in theology. Through a mixture of her interest in religion, and her engagement as a teacher at a local grammar school, she entered the area of Holocaust education by route of being shocked about the dwindling knowledge of an increasing number of Germans who are keen to forget the past: “The pupils know less and less about the Holocaust. They don’t see the calamity, it’s all in the past and done with for them.” Through her interest in creating a more meaningful Holocaust education that went beyond statistics and incorporated discussions with survivors, she met Yitzhak, who is now her husband. He had come to Germany because of his German, non-Jewish ex-wife, and stayed on after their divorce. Both of his parents are Auschwitz survivors: dealing with the *Shoah* on a personal level and increasing knowledge by way of education and discussion are very important to him.

Through meeting Yitzhak, Ursula developed an intimate link to Jews, and became part of a Jewish family. Having been interested on a historical and intellectual level in Jewish history, she emotionally identified increasingly against other Germans, and started to identify more strongly with Jews and gradually moved from the category non-Jews to the category Jew, religiously, socially, and personally.

Already before her *Giyur*, Ursula had had an office incumbent that concerned Jewish life in Cologne. She was a chairperson of the *Forum*. As a non-Jew she had access to this position, unlike to other offices. Her husband Yitzhak served as a chairperson of the *Forum* too. Interestingly, with the two of them as chairs, the *Forum* started to focus on the past and in particular on the *Shoah*. The *Shoah* is a key feature of the identity of Yitzhak who is a second generation survivor. The combination of the *Shoah* aspect in

his identity and Ursula's already existing engagement with Holocaust education gave her Jewish identity traces of a second generation survivor identity. In the sense of Berger & Luckmann (1966/1991) she underwent a secondary socialisation in a religious and a social sense. According to Berger & Luckmann this secondary socialisation is strongly influenced by significant others at the time of the identity transformation. Helga, for example, who was married to a non-Jew, does not show any traces of second generation survivor identity.

The examples of Helga and Ursula show that the configurations of the identities of those who underwent *Giyur* differ strongly. As with the identities of the *halachic* and non-*halachic* Jews in the community, they are underpinned by individual sources that shape each identity in a unique way. In the next section I will look at how these differences are expressed by individual members.

Doing and performing Jewishness in the liberal community

Differences in the attitudes towards non-Jews at the service, conversion, mixed marriages, and ideas of the concept of Jewishness, underpin the performative aspect of doing Jewish in the liberal community. In order to elaborate on these differences, I will focus on the buffet, which takes place after the religious service. The religious services that prefigures it is less fraught with contention than the buffet. I will focus on other (visible) markers of expressing or performing Jewishness such as jewellery (Heilman 1988) in the following chapter.

The buffet after the religious service offers the prime time of socialisation between members. At the same time, the buffet is one of the major points of contention between individual members in the community, and symbolises difference in approach to being liberal Jewish, as well as other forms of belonging (Bernstein 2008; Buckser 1999; Diner 2001; Jochnovitz 2004; Kraemer 2007; Loewenstein 2003; Prosterman 1984/2001; Sered 1988, 1992; amongst other anthropologist on Jewish eating).

The community rule for food is that it can contain milk but must not contain any meat, in order to comply with the *Kashrut*. The *Kashrut* outlines that milk and meat must be kept separate, and not be mixed. However, not all food items on the *Gescher* buffet are kosher according to the rabbinical *Kashrut* (neither liberal nor orthodox). It is best to describe the buffet as ‘kosher style.’ This means that food that does not have a *Hechsher* (kosher approval sign) but that is technically kosher is allowed on the buffet. In case of processed food, it typically bears a vegan or vegetarian sign. This sign indicates that the food does not contain any meat (vegetarian) or any animal product at all (vegan).

Specific foods which members bring along, such as gouda, which is not kosher, are allowed. The allowance of gouda is based on a compromise which was worked out between the members. Gouda is a cheese which features on buffets in the Cologne area. For the few remaining ‘ancestral’ Cologne Jews this cheese was key to reflect their liberal Colognian Jewish identity. However, this compromise was difficult to reach and it did not make everybody happy. The permission of gouda was part of a policy that defined what is allowed on the buffet and what not. This policy was worked out during several evenings of discussions (*Diskussionsrunden*) after I had left the field. This discussion culminated around the time of *Lag Ba’Omer* 2006, a holiday 33 days after *Pesach*. I will come to the actual event that led to an irreversible fall-out amongst members in the section *Pesach* 2006.

During one of my return visits after *Lag Ba’Omer* I asked one of the board members if there was anything new that I should be aware of in regard to my contribution to the buffet, but was told that: “No, bring the stuff you usually bring, that’s fine.” It seemed that the outcome of the discussion had reaffirmed the liberal stance of the community, and that ‘kosher style’ food was allowed, and whoever felt they did not want to eat something in particular should just not eat it.

In regard to the personal input to the buffet individuals normally bring along the same foods every week, which are either their personal favourites (Crouch & O’Neil 2000) or foods that they connect with their country of origin (Diner 2001; Jochnovitz 2004) or

with their personal Jewishness, but most often a mixture of both. According to Buckser's observations of Jews in Copenhagen the food brought along signifies "what sort of Jew they are" (Buckser 1999: 198) within the Jewish ingroup. However, the food choices in Cologne are more complex than that: they do not only show what Jew one is and what Jewishness one wants to offer to others, but what Jew one wants to be and what Jew one is allowed to be.

Ron, a German Israeli, for example, brings along Israeli egg salad; Laura brings *Salat Aravit*, literally, Arab Salad, a very common dish in Israel; Anna brings Georgian bean and hazelnut salad; Harry, one of the few remaining Cologne Jews, brings "yellow cheese", as gouda is referred to; Noam used to bring foods he knew from his home in Los Angeles or his three years in Israel; Jonathan brings English tuna and mayonnaise salad; Ivan brings 'Russian Diaspora Vodka', Vodka produced in Russia under supervision of the rabbinate that bears a kosher stamp. When present, Helga always brings loads of food in the form of falafel and more *Salat Aravit*. Iris, whose parents did not pass on any Jewish tradition to her, usually brings vegetarian pasta salads; to her it always mattered a lot if her salad was popular or not: "Nobody eats it. They don't like it", she worried at more than once. I contributed either smoked salmon, stuffed olives, or persuaded my mother to make Polish Jewish food which found praise from Ina¹⁰²: "I know that from my grandparents, that's like back home!"

However, not all persons at the service are Jews by – partial –descent, or by birth. The converts brought along Israeli-style foods, to stress their leaning towards Israel, others brought foods that they know of as 'kosher style' to stress their adopted Jewishness. Traditional Eastern European Jewish foods none of the (non-*halachic*) converts ever brought along: those foods were reserved for descent Jews. Especially Israeli foods such as falafel, humus, *Trina* (sesame paste), and *Salat Aravit* were popular amongst the converts, but as well with the Israelis. Metaphorically, these foods connote to the new Jew: that is an Israeli Jew, a *Sabra*, (Almog 1997/2000) and thus to Jewish life post-*Shoah*. This ethnicity both converts and descent Jews alike have access to, because the State of Israel allows for *Aliyah* of both groups. The pre-*Shoah Yekkishkeit* (German Jewishness) or *Yiddishkeit* (Eastern European Jewishness) was not available as a

resource for converts. Drawing on Appudurai's (1981) argument that the past is not infinitely malleable takes a somewhat different shape with these new Jews: it is not accessible. Birth Jews of German or Eastern European descent might on occasion bring foods they knew from their ancestry though the interest, or knowledge of such foods was random. The birth Jews were not interested in performing pre-*Shoah* identities but were very much living in the present: gefilte fish, the dish *per se* connected to pre-*Shoah* Eastern European *Yiddishkeit*, never appeared on the buffet at a Friday night.

In order to show their personal Jewishness, the conversion candidates during the time of my fieldwork contributed according to their personal views of their developing Jewishness. Sandra brought along nouvelle kosher cuisine foods. Thomas and Nadine brought vegan or vegetarian dishes. Nora is probably the most amazing cook of the community. The variety of food she brought along ranged from poppy seed cake to self-made and thus gelatine-free mousse-aux-chocolates to dishes I do not know by name. As do Thomas, Nadine and Sandra, Nora pays attention that her dishes are rabbinically kosher. Converts and those in the course of conversion take a stricter stand on the *Kashrut*, both in the community and privately.

Thomas and Nadine for example have two different sets of dishes, one for milk and one for meat, and do not have 'latte' after they have had meat. Sandra admitted that, "Gouda is my sin. I really like it." But she would limit its intake as much as she could bear. Ursula mentioned that she used to love: "...asparagus with sauce hollandaise and ham. I ate it one last time before I went in the [conversion] course. That was that. After that, I haven't eaten it again." While the converts had different stances on the *Kashrut*, none of them mentioned the dietary law as decreasing their quality of life. This feature is underpinned by the fact that they chose to convert, become Jewish, uphold the *Kashrut* and thus support their belonging to the Jewish ethno-religion. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) outlines that religion focuses "on tasks which human beings may perform, and whose consequences they are able to experience as long as they still are 'experiencing beings' – and this means here, in this life" (Bauman 1998: 62, emphasis in original). This means that the upholding of the religiously based *Kashrut* allowed the converts to feel Jewish, an aim that all of them had set out to accomplish when they embarked on their

conversion. This ability to feel Jewish – to belong – explains as well why converts did not feel that the *Kashrut* was an instrument of discipline, as opposed to a number of birth Jews, who found the *Kashrut* and its prohibitions oppressive.

Mishaps about the food that is brought along are taken with varying levels of lenience. Take for example the issue that Sandra took with the container Iris used to transport food:

Sandra: The container had contained shrimps. I pointed it out to her, and asked if she could not have taken another one.

Dani: And, what did Iris say?

Sandra: Not much, she didn't seem too bothered.

Iris told me about the same issue:

Sandra told me about the container I used. God, she really overdoes it.

Yes, it contained shrimps but it's been cleaned out!

Corinna wanted to convert in the liberal community at one point but has meanwhile decided that she prefers orthodox Judaism. About her food contributions Laura told me that:

She always brings along those mousses and stuff. That's really not kosher!

Corinna, as it turned out was extremely embarrassed that she had not realised that the mousse mixes she used contained gelatine. She never brought mousse along again. However, Corinna told me that:

Corinna: If you don't eat something for the second time and pick around it, it really shows. People pay attention to it.

Dani: Really? That never registered with me. There's stuff like tuna mayonnaise that I never eat because I don't like it. For me, that doesn't have anything to do with it being kosher or not. I just really don't like it.

Corinna: You should pay attention to it. People really see what you eat and what you don't touch. And if you don't eat something the second time round that really leaves an impression.

Interestingly, what the individuals ate and what they did not eat was never part of a discussion around the table. Discussion occurred later, on the way back home or even during private encounters outside of the synagogue. Buckser (1999) observed a similar pattern in his work on Danish Jews. Here too, the consumption or non-consumption of food was not verbalised, yet it registered with other Jews present. As in Cologne, in Copenhagen food consumption emphasised the personal stance towards the *Kashrut*, one's Jewish identity and various other belongings. Nemeroff & Rozin (1989) stress in this regard that unacknowledged beliefs underpin food consumption. In their follow up research, which looks at kosher practises in particular, they found that positive feelings and ritualistically correct eating correlate positively (Nemeroff & Rozin 1992). This means that an observant Jew feels happy when eating ritualistically clean food. Other food, as they found is connoted to feelings of disgust. With the liberal community a similar correlation can be seen. The emphasis was not so much on ritualistically clean food but foods that supported the ideas of Jewishness of the individual members. Other anthropologists researching Jewish food indicate the different emphases of food too. Jochnovitz (2004) found that specific foods were consumed for reasons of memory and genealogical identifications. Bernstein (2008) found that food correlates with identifications with (former) home countries. Other anthropologists found that food could be indicative of ideological changes of Jews (Kraemer 2007; Prosterman 1984/2001), or wanting to care for and bond with other Jews (Sered 1988, 1992). Within the liberal community in Cologne all of these issues could be observed. Food was connected to memories (gouda), to former home countries; food indicated changing ideologies (vegan and vegetarian signs instead of kosher certificates) or conveyed the wish to care for others (Iris worrying about her salad being popular).

In Cologne, the only times the non-consumption of one or other foodstuff was mentioned at the table was when a person was in doubt whether they had cooked something popular, which indicates the social importance of food. Iris was a particular striking example for this. She would always observe if her food was eaten, how quickly it was eaten and how people reacted to it. Bringing popular food and being complimented for it meant for the cook in question to have increased a social bond to others by feeding them well and caring for them (Sered 1988, 1992). Thus, Iris worrying about her food being popular was more an expression of her feeling of insecurity and marginality in the community.

The explanation for the silence about food at the table lies in the policy of the liberal community. Officially, it was acceptable that one person might not eat a particular dish because it did not fit their idea of *Kashrut*, whereas somebody else might enjoy it. This stance fell under the policy of the liberal community to embrace personal styles of practice.

Wir akzeptieren den individuellen Grad der rituellen Observanz unserer Mitglieder als Ausdruck ihrer persönlichen Entscheidung. [...]
(<http://gescherlamassoret.de/grundsatz.html>, accessed February 20, 2008)

(We accept the individual levels of ritual observance of our members as expressions of their personal decisions.)

The acceptance of these differences reflects a core homophilous value of *Gescher LaMassoret*. Yet, to move away from the abstract underlying value of acceptance and to put this value into practice caused problems. The problems were exacerbated by the fact that the level of observance of the *Kashrut* was higher with converts than with birth Jews. This meant in turn that the former non-Jewish Germans and the birth Jews clashed on an inner-Jewish level within the liberal Jewish community, with the former non-Jewish Germans struggling with the core value of acceptance more than the birth Jews.

Food was always an issue and mentioned in various ways in interviews and conversations, although the degrees of observance differed remarkably between members. The majority of birth Jews were more lenient than converts from non-Jewish families, although some of the latter became more lenient with time. The lenience of *halachic* birth Jews is not surprising: had they been interested in pursuing the orthodox *Kashrut* they could have as easily been members of the orthodox community, where the buffet comes from a kosher caterer. Their practical lenience was underpinned by the knowledge that keeping kosher was: “close to impossible in Germany. You can’t keep kosher here!” Also their more stable and safe Jewish identities did not rely on excluding non-Jews or non-rabbinical-kosher food as a means of boundary management. Interestingly, this stability of belonging was shared with non-*halachic* birth Jews: these too were more lenient in regard to the *Kashrut*. This overlap reflects that their descent Jewishness was socially and personally as strong as that of *halachic* Jews. Literally, these descent Jews did not have to consume Jewishness into their bodies to strengthen their Jewishness, they felt they had Jewish bodies by virtue of descent to begin with.

To underpin the resilience of their Jewish identities, birth Jews in particular inverted the law of sympathetic magic that Rozin, Millman, & Nemeroff (1986) observed in regard to food consumption: however much non-kosher food they would consume their self-ascribed categorical belonging as Jews could never be taken away from them.¹⁰³ They also inverted the law of sympathetic magic as outlined by Mauss (1923-1924/2001): they would not assume to become something by contagion, but remain intact despite transgressing the *halachic* boundaries and thus submitting to contagion. Consuming non-rabbinical-kosher food was an expression of a specific kind of Jewishness, but as well a means of expressing a resilient Jewishness, which could not be taken away by consuming contaminants. Eating these kinds of food reflected a deviant, strong and life-affirming Jewishness that was in dialogue with the non-Jewish surrounding, a surrounding that would not be able to stamp out their Jewishness. Unlike the orthodox Jews of Nemeroff’s & Rozin’s (1992) research overstepping the *Kashrut* made the descent Jews of the liberal community feel good. I suggest the consumption of these foods was as well an expression of being normal within a German non-Jewish society. This offers an explanation as to why the presence of non-descent and non-Jews was

problematic at the service: it disturbed the moments of resilience and normalcy, because these (formerly) non-Jews were a forceful reminder of the lasting destruction of Jewish normalcy in Germany, they had crossed the boundary into a Jewish space where on top of that they were acting out a Jewishness that the descent members had rejected for themselves. The (formerly) non-Jews actually drew attention to the overstepping of the boundary from the side of descent Jews, and begged the question what being and doing Jewish actually entailed. This problematised the representative attitude of the descent members, verbalised here by Jürgen: “It is important that you do it [Shabbat]. It’s not about the meat you use”, because the proclaimed unimportance of the meat used destroyed part of the boundary. Interestingly, Laura was the only member of the community who had not converted who was overly concerned with the food on the buffet. But then, Laura had made *Aliyah* and only left Israel some twenty years later for economic reasons. People who make *Aliyah* in her opinion have: “a different intensity [about being Jewish].” This intensity and yearning for a lifestyle that was defined, not only penetrated, by Jewish law was not shared by the majority of the members of the community, a majority who felt strongly about Israel, but did not want to live there.

Pesach 2006

Laura's different stance or intensity became very clear during *Pesach* 2006, when she organised, or as others felt, "dictated the *Seder*"¹⁰⁴. At this point in time I was no longer in Cologne, but as usual visiting regularly, and in steady contact with my participants, and very much up to date about the news of the liberal community. I had visited Cologne shortly before, and after *Pesach* that year. In a conversation after *Pesach* 2006, Sandra told me that there had been a dispute about the community *Seder*, which had led to some members cancelling their attendance, amongst them Yitzhak and Ursula. In a conversation of several hours, Sandra told me that to her knowledge Laura had told Sarah that she was not allowed to make *Kharoset*¹⁰⁵ this year. This meant, in other words, that Sarah's kitchen was not kosher enough to meet Laura's standards for *Pesach*, which was interpreted by Sandra as Laura seeing herself as a "superior Jew." But not only Sandra interpreted it this way. Sarah took offence, and she and husband, long-standing core members, cancelled their participation of the *Seder*. At this point in time Laura was a member of the board, but not the person responsible for catering. That person was Anna. According to Sandra and other members who told me about the *Seder*, all responsibility had been "wrestled by Laura from Anna's hands." Various other members of the community were outraged to put it mildly. With her actions, Laura had offended the core homophilous values of the membership in terms of the acceptance of different degrees of observance and in terms of making decisions democratically. They felt that Laura's single-handed move to decide that all food had to be prepared in the *Pesach* kosher kitchen,¹⁰⁶ in the place where the *Seder* was to be held, was completely against what they believed in regard to the community policy (democratic) and religious practice (liberal and accepting). As one member put it: "That is why we are liberal and not orthodox!" Another one mentioned that: "She just decided that herself. Without consultation. Bloody psycho!" With her actions, Laura shook the community to the core, because they reflected what the liberal community did not want to be: autocratic, undemocratic, and imposing a normative form of Judaism on the community. I claim she actually helped to create a stronger liberal identity specific to this community, which went beyond the, "We're not orthodox!", or "We're not like the local orthodox community!" diatribes I had heard before. Inadvertently, Laura filled the

abstract homophilous core values that had existed before with meaning, because the other members had to argue their stance for a practice they wanted, and defend the democratic structure of their community, their Jewish home. This structure, which one long-term observer had described as, “Yeah, yeah, it’s always a lot of talk, but nothing happens!”, was now to be defended and put in operational terms. In other words, on a communal level, doing liberal Jewishness needed to be de-essentialised, and the limit of what was acceptable as liberal Jewish needed to be defined in practical terms.

Laura left the board after the *Seder*, and a food policy was discussed and decided. Laura told me: “They mobbed me. It got really so bad, I nearly lost hearing in one ear due to that stress. Especially Tanja was behind it.” From her point of view, Laura had wanted the best for the community, a proper practice that would get them “taken seriously by the orthodox community.” Tanja has a very intellectual and liberal stance to Jewish practice, and accepts orthodox Jews in their practice but knows they are unlikely to accept her, and has no wish to make *Aliyah*. With these opinions she is at the opposite of a spectrum to Laura. Yet, her stance finds a stronger following in the liberal community because it is seen as quintessentially liberal, and in line with the underlying homophilous core values of the community.

The falling out about the *Seder*, and Laura’s and Tanja’s clash, referred to the ‘internal’ order in Douglas’s (1975) sense. This internal order referred to how being liberal Jewish should be turned into doing liberal Jewish in the liberal community. In other words, it needed to be decided how the homophilous core values should be structured and operationalised in the community to ensure a viable compromise for all members. This internal order would then reflect on the external boundary. In more concrete terms, the buffet is a decisive moment concerning how much non-Jewishness was allowed to enter the community, and the individuals.

Alongside Tanja and her liberal stance, other longstanding members expressed their wish to keep ‘their’ community liberal and democratic. By virtue of the power that these longstanding members hold, the food remained ‘kosher style’, and the food policy that

had been at the centre of the discussion did not change anything beyond asking those who contribute to the buffet to look carefully at the label.

Gelatine, overall, was the major problem of the buffet discussions, because the gelatine commonly used in foods available in Germany is made of the bones of cows or pigs. Gelatine that complies with the *Kashrut* is available in health food shops or in kosher shops. It is either vegan or made of fish bones. However, these types of gelatine are not used in ready mixes of mousse-aux-chocolates, creams, or soft cheeses that are sold in mainstream food outlets.

Other food types, such as gouda cheese, that use an enzyme that does not comply with the *Kashrut* did not suffer a general ban from the buffet. The consumption of these foods were deemed as behaving on the judgement of the individual members and as in line with the core value to accept different degrees of observance theoretically as well as to put this core value into practice. If they felt they complied with their personal take on the *Kashrut* they should eat them, if not, they should pass them. Neither the gelatine nor the enzyme of the gouda are visible in the foods. Thus the idea of “safe *treyf*” (safe non-kosher, Kraemer 2007: 144) does not hold in this case. Kraemer argued that America Jews were more likely to eat non-kosher food knowingly if the non-kosher substance was not visible. The prime example for this practice is the consumption of Chinese food by New York Jews: they are aware that shrimps are not kosher, yet they eat them at Chinese restaurants as they are hardly “visible in the food” (ibid: 142-143). In the Cologne case, the difference does not hinge on the visibility of the non-kosher substance. The allowance of gouda seems to follow the logic that the non-kosher enzyme cannot be counted as meat or bones, but that the process to make this cheese does not follow the *Kashrut*. Gelatine clearly falls into the meat category, and thus leads to the mixing of milk and meat. The discussion about food confirmed the boundary to the outside, and clarified the order of the inside as being enshrined in the ethos of the liberal community, where different degrees of observance are acceptable.

Pesach 2007 was a much more peaceful affair. It had been agreed beforehand democratically that all foods would be prepared on the spot in the *Pesach* kosher

kitchen of the event hall. For the first time Dotan prepared the food, which was according to several attendees: “Fantastic! That food was so good!” There were not last minute cancellations that year, and everything had been decided communally. Part of this decision had been the on-the-spot preparation, another one had been that whatever was served needed to comply with the *Kashrut* laws specific to *Pesach* (*Kasher L’Pesach*). The issue of how the holidays should be held needed to be decided democratically in the community. This democratic decision applied another homophilous core value and confirmed the democratic structures of the liberal community. It is here that content and form need to make sense together (Rapport 1993). The holidays, *Pesach* more so than the other holidays, are community events, where the usually individualistic takes on being and doing liberal Jewish in the community need to be reconciled to find a collective compromise.

Food and eating as expressions of a liberal Jewish identity

The food is a prime marker of stratification and distinction between the individuals within the different groups in the community. What a person brings for the buffet, what they consume, and possibly who with, is one of the prime indicators of the different approaches of the individual’s Jewish practice. The food brought to the service was a manifestation of the individual’s Jewish identity, a means of identifications and multiple identifications (Buckser 1999; Sered 1988, 1992). Some persons brought ethnic food of their ‘other’ ethnic belonging (Israeli, Russian, German etc.), others traditional Jewish food (smoked salmon), yet others brought food they liked, which is not necessarily kosher, such as gouda. In the case of gouda, the piece of cheese was fraught with meaning. It was a statement of liberal German Diaspora Judaism. Harry is one of two members of the liberal community who were born in pre-*Shoah* Cologne and returned to their town of birth, he insists on bringing this cheese to the buffet. Bringing this specific kind of cheese, and with it consuming Rhinelandianness, is a profound statement concerning Harry’s belonging, and his own perceived proximity to Rhinelandian –non-Jewish- food culture (cf. Kraemer 2007). Cheese on a buffet is standard in Cologne area, and gouda is one of the most common cheeses for a buffet in the locale: “It is primarily in the kitchen that the child internalises his or her identity as belonging to a

certain kind of group with its particular history, beliefs, and customs” (Sered 1988: 132). And not only that: as Kraemer (2007) outlines in some length, crossing or transgressing boundaries, as does Harry, is as well an expression of the perceived or desired proximity to non-Jews (Kraemer 2007: 137-138).

Consciously or unconsciously the food choices for the service are an expression of individual Jewish identities, but as well of their other belongings. To complicate matters, avoiding one or the other food can be a statement of a Jewish identity or a personal dislike. In the case of Laura, avoiding certain non-kosher foods was an expression of her Jewish identity. It made her feel good (Nemeroff & Rozin 1992). In my case the avoidance was –simply- a personal, non-religiously based, dislike. As I learned from Nora and Iris, foods they did not eat they avoided out of mixture of dislikes and Jewish practice, whereas Mayan and James just went along personal like and dislikes that were independent of the *Kashrut*. As such there is no red thread that runs through the individual food policies, and at times they collide in the collective of the community. I mentioned before that converts keep stricter to the *Kashrut* than birth Jews. By this token, they ingest Jewishness; while through their focus on Israeli foods they ingest Israeliness. Birth Jews showed the tendency to consume foods they connected with ‘home.’ However, in the spirit of a democratically run community that harbours the acceptance of others as the key homophilous value, the individual differences need to be tolerated even though they might not be acceptable to one or the other person.

Differences in being, acting, and performing liberal Jewishness in the community – the difficult way towards a shared practice and narrative

The taking-in by the liberal community concerned two levels of take-in: on the one hand, non-Jews were taken in and became Jews; on the other hand, there was the physical consumption of non-Jewishness through the consumption of foods, which did not comply with the *Kashrut*, and which did not bear a kosher stamp. The mouth, as Rozin & Fallon (1987), and Nemeroff & Rozin (1989, 1992, 1994) state is the boundary into the body and with this to “the self” (Rozin & Fallon 1987: 24), which is in turn

“vulnerable at its margins” (Douglas 1966: 121): taking a mouthful of whatever food it was, was an imperative statement of what kind of Jew one is, as Buckser (1999: 198) rightly claimed, and more so what Jew one aspired to be.

In terms of the food choices, and the number of non-Jewish attendees at the service, the question the community needed to answer collectively was what counts as non-Jewish: where the non-Jewish began, and how much of the non-Jewishness could be tolerated. For example: did food need a *Hechsher* stamp, or did a vegetarian certificate do? These issues are not merely relating to boundary management, they are more a negotiation regarding what is allowed to permeate a semi-permeable membrane, a membrane that is made up of the collective matrix of individually different life stories and experiences.

As the liberal community is based on democratic statutes, all decisions concerning Jewish practice in the community need to be passed by the majority of the members. I have described this practice in regard to buffet, which was decided in the discussions post-*Pesach* 2006. The food discussion seems to have solved this specific problem, and forced the members to develop a collectively acceptable operational strategy. The same cannot be said about the presence of non-birth Jews and non-Jews in all their different nuances. The discussions about the presence of individuals who belong to ‘the other’ categorical group, that is Germans, is an issue that flares up regularly, and for which the liberal community has –so far- not found any collectively satisfying compromise. This means that the core value to look beyond categorical belongings and to decategorise non-Jewish German individuals has a clear, emotionally based limit. Unlike non-rabbinical kosher food which does not have any agency these Germans have agency, they cannot be easily dominated within the community. Metaphorically speaking, they are more difficult, or possibly impossible, to digest.

Why some of the issues concerning the presence of non-Jews are so problematic can be seen through the developments that led to the creation of *Gescher*. As I have stated, the *Shoah* is the undercurrent of Jewish life in Germany. Probably this will change within the next ten years, when Russians will gain positions of power within the communities, but maybe it will not. Becker (2001) and Schütze (1997) showed that Russian Jews who

integrated in the existing *Einheitsgemeinde* took on attitudes of survivors and their descendants. As my data shows those who did not take on this underlying ideology often left the *Einheitsgemeinden*. Yet, while *Gescher* is not a survivor community in its majority, the members exist within the matrix of Jewish life in Germany, and however much they wish to go beyond it are surrounded by memorials, and (personal) knowledge of the *Shoah*. This means that their discussions too reflect transmitted traumata of a Jewish meta-narrative (Kranz 2007c).

When I started my research initially, and also throughout, I regularly heard the line “We’re not orthodox!” or more specifically “Liberal Jews stand by what they do, they don’t pretend.” The latter statement was followed by examples of what the members of the orthodox community did. Driving on Shabbat, eating kosher style as opposed to rabbinical kosher food, not keeping kosher at all, or marrying non-Jews, were amongst the examples given. All of these I have seen throughout my participant-observation amongst members of the orthodox community outside of the confines of the orthodox synagogue. The difference does not lie in the practice of the two communities; orthodox and liberal are catchwords to deflect from an inner-Jewish discussion about the past that still is not taking place. This discussion would need to acknowledge that different Jews have different experiences with the *Shoah* and that uniformity in narrative and identity do not exist. The issue of Jewish unity is critical for (most) survivors and their descendants, as chapter two and three show. The displacement of fears on the boundary is a psychological mechanism, which facilitates living amongst Germans. It allows for a silence surrounding gaps between attitude and behaviour and forecloses the uneasy question why one is in Germany. This question is a near taboo amongst survivor Jews and their descendants, yet a non-Jew who does know of its taboo status might ask it. Furthermore, the *Shoah* and the silence surrounding it lie at the core of the different regimes of boundary management. The chapters two and three demonstrate this with ethnographic data. To repeat, being a member of the orthodox *Einheitsgemeinde* might be a religious decision or it might be a decision based on the need to belong to people with similar life-stories (Bruner 1987). Via the *Einheitsgemeinde* membership, the members can find a psychological way to connect to the living and the dead of the family (Grünberg 2007a). Membership in this *Einheitsgemeinde* community offers the

psychological option to find at least some continuity within a ‘community of fate’ whose continuity was imperatively disrupted (Hadar 1991). The same holds of course true for *Gescher*. Membership in this community offers as well some connection to the disrupted past for the birth Jewish members who learned in their families that mixed-marriage occurred regularly in Germany before 1933 (Geller 2005; Meiering 1933) and that there was an openness to the German, non-Jewish surrounding (Becker-Jákli 2002; Kruse & Schmitt 2000). The memberships in either community reflect different current ways of being Jewish, which are in turn based on different experiences within the family and conveyed through narratives, which in turn shape values and attitudes.

Members of *Gescher* told me that what they were attempting to do was to: “try to incorporate living amongst a non-Jewish majority and trying to find an honest way of being Jewish”, not live an orthodox life in the synagogue, while not adhering to it beyond it. They were seeking for a way to create a holistic way of being Jewish where the synagogue and individual life-styles would meet. This approach struggles against ideas of absolute or imperative exclusive categories, and is not free of contentions. The attempt to decategorise individual German ‘others’ has its limit, as this chapter shows.

In consequence, liberal Jews need to be very clear about being Jewish, as the differences between them and the non-Jewish surrounding decreases; the liberal synagogue as opposed to the orthodox one is not an absolute Jewish space. The boundary decreases to what I have called a semi-permeable membrane through the high number of converts in the community and people of mixed descent, which disable a normative exclusiveness in terms of practice or conveyed (*Shoah*) narrative as in the orthodox community. This means that new and creative ways need to be found in the liberal community to create a Jewish practice that is tenable for all members, and a narrative that gives the practice and the community meaning. Opposed to Barth (1969/1998) the stuff that is enclosed in the boundary is key to creating and maintaining the boundary, the community is constructed narratively, practically, ideologically and symbolically from within.¹⁰⁷ Communal symbols in turn are hardly historical as Cohen (1985) argued in *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Practical commonalities in this specific community need to be created by putting the core homophilious values of

acceptance of different degrees of practice and the attempt to look beyond categories into a democratically decided compromise that can be applied.

This also sets the liberal community in Cologne apart from what Talai (1989) found for Armenians in London, or Israeli backpackers (Noy 2005, 2007) to go back to the examples of the introduction. While Talai realised that the symbols that the Armenians use to connote Armenianness were ambiguous (Talai 1989: 2) the liberal Jewish community in Cologne cannot even draw on ambiguous symbols. The individual life and family histories as well as the experiences of each member are too different to allow for this; there is no background that can be assumed as shared. Consequently, in order to create a shared identity for the liberal community a common ground needs to be formulated, and this happens in discussions throughout, but becomes particularly important at breaking points such as the *Seder* 2006. At this point, the members of the community were forced to decide what kind of community they wanted, and how this community should be realised (Amit 2002; Collins 2002b, 2003). Actions needed to be taken not only to create, but to manifest a community, to fill it with life. Simply repeating the *ex negativum* “We’re not orthodox” like a mantra was not enough, the positive homophilous values that underpinned the foundation of the liberal community needed to be put into practice. The small number of members made an agreement necessary on the major point of contention that was the buffet. Not agreeing on a food policy that was tenable for the majority of members would have led to an absolute instability, the ‘categorical other’ would have become another member of the *same* community. The food policy of the liberal community became a means of creating commonality and asserting it, and giving an expression to a democratically agreed shared identity as liberal Jews. To achieve this, the different stances towards being liberal Jewish needed to be discussed, evaluated, and last but not least appreciated, to braid various individual narrative streaks (cf. Collins 1994, 2004) together into a shared community narrative. Just how different these streaks are despite their underlying ideological similarities, and what challenges follow from this for the narrative of the community will show in the next chapter.

5. The importance of personal narrative

In the previous chapters I have tried to capture how the members of the liberal community attempt to create a sense of community despite their different stances of what being Jewish, or more specifically what approaches to being and doing liberal Jewish entail. At the same time, the previous chapters showed the limits of the possible consensus. The prime examples for the differences in the community manifest around food, non-Jews present at the service, and conversion. Food as the prime marker of expressing nuances of doing Jewish within a Jewish setting is an issue that is echoed by Buckser's (1999) findings amongst Danish Jews, Diner's (1997) and Kraemer's (2007) amongst American Jews, Sered's (1988, 1992) amongst religious Israeli Jewish women, and Bernstein's (2008) findings amongst Russian Jews in Germany.

A policy concerning food has finally been found, while non-Jews at the service and conversion cause recurring upset. So far no policy has been found concerning the latter issues that is collectively acceptable. Why these issues are so much more complex will show through the narratives in this chapter. The narratives show contradictions, ambiguities, and instability, which make in turn the process to find a (long-term) viable compromise regarding non-Jewish presence and converts next to impossible. To appreciate these complexities, the focus of this chapter lies on the sense-making process which underlies the connection of doing with being Jewish. In order to capture this sense-making process, I am focussing on the biographical or life-story narratives of three individuals.

Red threads in the narratives

Being and doing Jewish was an issue which dominated the narratives, probably, because all interview partners knew the topic of my research. However, some other topics ran like red threads through the majority of the interviews conducted, of which the three below are a sample. Home was such a red thread.

Home I have approached not in the sense of a homestead or a house, but as a concept of interrelationality to others, Jews and non-Jews like, and a sense of being in the world,

and also connecting to it, being part of it. This being in the world, and portable home that resides within the life-projects (Giddens 1991; Rapport 2003) and ideas of self, manifests in actions, which are in turn underlain by a narrative sense-making processes (Angrosino 1989; Andrews 2004; Bruner 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1998; Becker 2001).

I mentioned at the end of the last chapter that the members of the liberal community attempt to interweave their individual narratives to a collective one, which then in turn forms the base for policies, and actions. Collins (1994, 2002) and Seale (2000/2006) refer to this practice as “braiding” within a community setting. The current chapter will focus on the narratives of three individuals introduced in the previous chapters. It attempts to unravel how these employ their personal narratives as a sense-making mechanism to being in the world and their relation to socio-historic events (Angrosino 1989; Linde 1993) and how these narratives in turn form part of a lived in individual life-project, of which the liberal community and being Jewish form a part. This chapter will summarise narrative theories, and introduce excerpts of the narratives of two members and one potential convert of the liberal Jewish community. These specific narratives were collected during ethnographic interviews. I will elaborate on the problems of the selection of parts of the interview for presentation purposes, and the interview situation, before I summarise the findings in the conclusion.

Narrative theory

Riessman stated that there is no one narrative theory or method, but different ones that derive from different schools of thought (Riessman 1993: 1-6). While these different schools of thought are highly interesting in their different approaches, to discuss their contributions to narrative methods is beyond the scope of this work. Interestingly, Riessman states the following:

Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are

supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narrative to claim identities and construct lives.

(Riessman 1993:2)

She then moves on to say that narratives need to make sense locally, globally and themally (ibid: 67). In other words, the personal narratives, which I will look at in this chapter in detail, are embedded in a matrix of structures, and narrated within a specific context; they need not only make sense to the teller, but to the interlocutor(s) too (Bruner 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1991b, 1998; Hyvärinen 2006; Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams 2007; Linde 1993; McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2001, 2006; Noy 2005, 2007). Especially a life history, stresses Bruner, needs to make sense within the framework of other life-stories:

[...] life stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life-stories, tellers and listeners must share some “deep structure” about the nature of “life”, for if the rules of life telling are altogether arbitrary, tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by the failure to grasp what the other is saying or what he thinks the other is hearing. Indeed, such an alienation does happen cross-generationally, often with baleful effects.

(Bruner 1987: 21)

Bruner hints at one issue here, which lies at the core of the dynamic of the liberal community: a narrative of any form, be it a life-story or the recounting of a specific event, is not interpreted in the same way by the teller and the interlocutor (Rapport 1993). Catchwords, which are used repeatedly by various individuals present, might mean widely different things to the persons concerned in the –attempted- interaction (Rapport 1994). However, before I delve deeper into the theory of (life-story or autobiographical) narratives, I want to take a step back to what I see as the idea that underlies the narrative of a reflexive subject in its narratological and actual pursuit of their life-project. This idea is the dialogical inter-relationality between the self and others surrounding it on an inter-personal level, and on an intra-personal level the dialogue between the I and the me (Mead 1934).

The concept of ‘I’ and ‘me’ was put forward by the philosopher and social psychologist George Herbert Mead. Mead conceived of I and me as being part of the self, with the ‘I’ being the active part, the part where human agency resides, and the ‘me’ being the socialised part, which takes into consideration what an individual has learned through interaction with others, and who he or she is in a wider societal setting (Mead 1934: 173-178). In other words, being a self from his pragmatist’s point of view is a constructive effort of an individual, in which the individual tries to situate themselves in the world. Unlike Mead I want to use the narratives of this chapter to elaborate my point that through their imagination (Mageo 2002; Mageo & Knauff 2002), which they might put into action, individuals transcend structures (Rapport 2003), and become by virtue of the reflective vehicle narrative (Bruner 1998) what they endeavour to be. Thus, individuals might go further than considering the mere relation with and to others or their point of view as the determining force (Mead 1934) because they can image more. Their very selves are in constant dialogue and relation with their surrounding but through their individual agency, which they verbalise (in parts) in their narratives, these individuals become agents on their own journey (Collins 2002: 149), and overcome what Mead called “the generalized other” (Mead 1934: 154) so as to overcome superimposed existing structures (Rapport 2003: 1). The narratives rendered reflect how individuals make sense of their surrounding, how they incorporate their surrounding into a biographical narrative, and how they influence and change their status and renegotiate boundaries with their surrounding (Becker 2001: 143-145, 183-185, 216-219). Narratives, as Collins put it in his criticism of Bourdieu, shift the focus to human agency:

While it is to Bourdieu’s great credit that he has helped us to shift our focus from rules to strategies (1977: 3-9, 58-71, 1990: 59-75, 1998: 131; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 42-3) his notion of strategy still leaves individuals rather too constrained, lacking in agency, a little bloodless. My own position is that we can (and should) properly allow for human agency within the habitus over and above the possibility of ‘strategising’ that for Bourdieu takes place within severe structural constraints.

(Collins 2002: 149)

This is not to say that the individuals I will introduce are free-floating and detached agents without context or belonging. I am with Collins on the claim that agency which is expressed through narratives (Bruner 1991b) goes beyond the individual liberties that habitus would have. The narratives of the individuals which will follow employ cultural scripts to explain why and how they arrived at where they are at now, but they also contain moments of a counter-narrative (Andrews 2004), and turning points (Bruner 1991a; Freeman 2002; McAdams, Lieblich & Josselson 2001).

Counter-narratives are narratives which go against the hegemonic narrative of a specific group of people, or against the hegemonic narrative concerning the expectations in a specific group of people. The idea of a counter-narrative always infers a power struggle concerning self-ascriptions and superimposed ascriptions. Andrews (2004) employs the idea to analyse narratives of early motherhood. She found that narratives concerning motherhood of mothers diverged widely, yet those who offended the hegemonic narratives felt guilt and/or marginalised. A rather typical offence in the counter-narratives was the experience of mothers to not bond with their new baby immediately. This non-bonding goes against the hegemonic idea that mothers have a bond to their child that starts in the body and continues upon the birth of the child. In the narratives that follow, an aspect of a counter-narrative is the relationship to non-Jewish German society.

Freeman (2002) describes his trip to Berlin as a turning point. Prior to this trip he was aware of the *Shoah*, yet he had no intricate emotional relationship to it just because he is Jewish. Neither did he harbour specific attitudes towards things German. In Berlin, he felt surrounded by reminders of the genocide, somehow his perception concerning his own Jewishness, the *Shoah* and Germany changed. In short, a turning point is triggered by an experience which forces the individual to reinterpret (Bruner 1991a) attitudes, values or beliefs. Each of the three narratives of the chapter have at least one turning point. This can be the increasing interest in Judaism through an encounter abroad (Ron), a chance encounter with a German that lead to a reassessment of things German in

general (Iris) or, for Nora, a university exchange that increased her wish to pursue her Jewish identity.

Cultural scripts: options and limits

The point of cultural scripts in narratives has first been raised in an essay collection edited by Theodore R. Sarbin (1986c) and a year later Jerome Bruner (1987). Sarbin and Bruner, both of whom are cognitive psychologists, contend that narratives are a key feature of the cognition of individuals and form the backbone of their sense-making process, a process that helps them to situate themselves in the world and give them a sense of who they are. Cultural scripts are internalised early on in childhood, and, as Bruner contends lie at the core of

[...] culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose build the very “events” of a life.

(Bruner 1987:15)

The cultural anthropologist Franziska Becker echoes those theories with her findings of Russian Jewish immigrants to Germany (Becker 2001). She found that through biographical narratives Russian Jewish immigrants made sense of leaving the countries of the former USSR, immigrating to Germany, and that way dealt with the old and the new surrounding, and the incumbent changes of their categorical statuses (Becker 2001: 222-230). In other words, they created a ‘new’ narrative of the self (Giddens 1991) that fit their new requirements.

Sarbin, Bruner and Becker contend too that the narrative of the individuals, which Giddens (1991) referred to as ‘narrative of the self’, are nothing that individuals keep to themselves but use actively in interactions with others to present themselves (also: Noy 2005, 2007). This does not mean that individuals fall into some kind of confessional mode the moment they engage in talking about themselves: narratives of the self, and

the strongly related life-stories are selective (Spence 1986), can be contested (Linde 1993), co-authored through interaction with others (Ochs & Capps 2001), and are above all a cooperative effort between the teller and the interlocutor(s) (Angrosino 1989). From here follows the logical point that narratives must be understandable to the interlocutor(s), although problematically, each individual involved in the interactive effort will interpret the story (slightly) differently (Rapport 1993). An understanding does not only refer to the actual language spoken (Stavans 2003), but as well to the socio-historic context that forms the backdrop of the story. In other words, the interlocutor must at least imaginarily be able to empathise with the teller, and vice versa.¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹

Bruner (1991a, 1998), Linde (1993) and Ochs & Capps (2001) use the term cultural script in order to approach the issue of comprehensibility. Drawing on Bruner, these scholars argue that tellers use cultural scripts from the repertoire of their cultural context in order to tell their story to the listener(s). These cultural scripts, they claim, make the narrative comprehensible to the listener. I agree that shared cultural scripts makes the story more comprehensible on the surface, but I would strongly argue that a cultural script should not be overvalued; it might indeed serve as a fallacious shortcut to understand a teller. Linde makes a similar point implicitly but does not elaborate further (Linde 1993: 8, 13). Rapport (1993) in regard to residents of an English village, Riessman (1993) in her analysis of divorcees, Tuval-Mashiach (2006) in her analysis of gender specific life-stories of high achieving and middle-management Israelis, and Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams (2007) in their edited volume in regard to intimate relationships, all demonstrate that the use of a cultural script does not necessarily mean the same to individuals who employ it. The interpretations of the script show strong differences in regard to age, gender, education, and socio-economic groups amongst other parameters within the same ethno-cultural group. In a nutshell this means that the use of the 'same' cultural script by two individuals does not mean that the meaning they try to convey is intelligible to the other person.

The situation in the liberal Jewish community adds a different level of complexity, which on the one hand highlights the importance of cultural scripts, while on the other

undermines them. Unlike the groups of individual with highly problematic interactions that Josselson, Lieblich & McAdams (2007), Rapport (1993; 1994) Riessman (1993), and Tuval-Mashiach (2006) researched, the members of the liberal Jewish community do not come from a shared socio-historic, ethnic or religious background. Thus, narratives concerning their Jewishness differ widely, because of the very different life-experiences of the membership, which besides the above mentioned individual differences includes birth Jews and those who converted, Jews of different nationalities, countries of birth and native languages, descendants of survivors, and those whose grandparents and parents fled Nazi Germany. The internal diversity of the liberal Jewish community thus resembles more a metropolitan area like London, or an immigration country like Israel. The process of creating a narrative for the liberal Jewish community exemplifies the underlying individual identity formations of the members who are a minority group within a minority. As such, the narrative of an individual life does not only shed light on socio-historic events (Angrosino 1989) but on the agential force of individuals in the present. Even within this small minority, options of identification are multiple, and with this, each single identity configuration of each single member is unique. While this is a truism for the individual, it begs questions on how the individuals concerned create and maintain a community that they identify with, and what the underlying mechanisms are for the creation and maintenance of this voluntary community (cf. McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; Rigby 1974). As such, the narratives give clues about ideas of 'individual' and 'community' on several levels. First, they offer an insight into the feedback relationship between individual and community. Second, they pick up the issue of being an individual in the wider society and in this specific community. Third, they shed light on (competing) ideas of community. These three levels will show in the three narratives that will follow, and shed light on commonalities as well individualities, which manifest in the issues raised in previous chapters.

In this sense, the narratives that underpin the creation and maintenance of the liberal community cannot adhere to any single cultural script however contentious: on a community level there is none for liberal Jews, because this tradition was dead until the mid-1990s. On an individual level living in Germany as opposed to happening to get

stuck there has only been problematised since the mid-1980s by Jews of the second generation post-*Shoah* (see chapter two). As the all three narratives will show, descent Jews are still creating a cultural script or better cultural scripts for a life ‘after’ because Jewish continuity in Germany had been irreversibly destroyed with the *Shoah*; old identifications did not function anymore (Hadar 1991). For converts the situation is yet different, they do not have a cultural script to encapsulate their individual ways into Judaism; each single one needs to create a narrative of themselves that makes sense to themselves, and finds recognition in the Jewish community they wish to join.

On a communal level particular attention needs to be paid to the issue of general cultural scripts that make a narrative understandable in a specific culturally defined group of people, and the interpretation of these cultural scripts by specific segments within this culture. For example, Lustig (2006) showed impressively how the (then) secretary general of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, Ignatz Bubis, and the non-Jewish writer Marin Walser clashed on matters of memory, the *Shoah*, and what was permissible to say. Their public dispute became known as the *Walser-Bubis Kontroverse* (*Walser-Bubis controversy 1998/99*)¹¹⁰. Lustig comes to the not surprising conclusion that some things ring very different in Jewish ears (Lustig 2006: 205-206, 211). She admits that that ringing was amplified by the fact that the person who said them was a non-Jewish German. Yet, she does not venture into the murky area about what would have happened had the same issues been raised by, say, a Jew or an Israeli. The reactions would have been different, and hit on another level (Kranz 2007c): the classification of the interlocutor underlies reactions or interpretations (Becker 2001). I argue therefore that cultural scripts should not be overvalued because what one person says to another who happens to share the same native language, country of residence, ethnicity, and/or nationality and what arrives at the other’s ears is strongly influenced by individual’s unique situatedness (Simmel 1890).

Cultural scripts, hegemony and counter-narratives

A second issue is that cultural scripts are hegemonically defined (cf. Becker 2001), which raises the issue of counter-narratives (Andrews & Bamberg 2004) and their

reception not only by interlocutors, but how their very nature of going against the grain influences the teller of the narrative (cf. Linde 1993). Hegemonically defined narratives, which are also referred to as master narratives, are narratives that reflect the attitudes or opinions of the majority of people of a specific ingroup. They tend to be rather abstract and highly conceptualised (Lyotard 1985). This allows for their filling with specific personal examples, which then allows for the hegemonic master-narrative to become integrated into personal narratives. An example for this process is the data of Mitchell (1988), which I mentioned in chapter two. He found that centuries of persecution of Jews by non-Jews made Jews wary, or averse, to non-Jews coming too close to them; the *Goyim* were at best kept at a safe distance. Those Jews who agreed with this hegemonic master-narrative would use a personal story to underline the Jewish-Gentile distinction. If they did not agree with it, they might engage in a counter-narrative, which means they filled the hegemonic narrative with counter-examples.

Definitions of what a counter-narrative is vary (Andrews 2004). For the purpose of this dissertation, I will define a counter-narrative as a narrative that reflects a minority opinion and is therefore not in line with the hegemonic narratives of the ingroup and its outgroups, and thus reformulates cultural scripts. Counter-narratives and narratives at the margins will be at the centre of this chapter, because the members of the liberal community in Cologne are a minority amongst the Jewish minority in Cologne (Kranz 2007b). How do those individuals create a coherent narrative of themselves, which helps them to create a sense of coherence and connectedness to their surrounding, and to each other? In other words, how do these individuals create coherent life-stories that lie beyond cultural scripts, and how do they interweave this into a shared community narrative? It is in particular the coherence and the attempt to create a wholeness as a community, as part of a German society, that I will look at, and in particular how that what was not said, and experiences that were beyond a narrative featured in allusions or performative acts as the narratives were rendered to me.

Interview situation

I conducted interviews with a select number of participants after I had been in the field for more than a year, starting in September 2005. By this point I had participated in the liberal community since February 2003 irregularly, and since June 2004 regularly. By September 2005 I was well known to the participants, some had indeed become friends, while to others I had relationships ranging from decent working to more distant but nevertheless friendly. This relationship plays into the interview situation.

All interviews used in this chapter were conducted in the participants' homes, which was their choice. The German original uses first names, too, which indicates the non-formal atmosphere of the interview situations and further the fact that I was no stranger. My relationships to the persons whose narratives follow below are friendly, we do engage in communication outside the synagogue, and have remained in touch since I left Cologne in January 2006. My relationships with Iris and Nora, I would describe as having reached a level of a private and continuing friendship, although communication might be sparse at times. Basically, whenever it comes in handy we will catch up. To Ron I never had this degree of closeness. Whenever we spent time together within the confines of the liberal community or beyond it, we shared animated conversations and exchanged information easily, though I would not refer to my relationship with him as a friendship.

Before conducting the interviews, I had mailed, faxed, or given the potential interviewees the following document:

Hallo

Ich hoffe, es geht Dir gut!

Das Interview ist offen, dass heißt ich überlasse Dir, was Du mir zu den folgenden Themenkomplexen sagen möchtest.

Die Stichwörter sind:

- *biographischer Hintergrund*
- *Wie prägt sich dein Jüdischsein im Alltag aus?*
- *Positionierung gegenüber Juden bzw. nicht Juden*
- *Kontakt mit der liberalen Gemeinde*

Natürlich werde ich nachfragen, wenn ich etwas nicht verstanden habe oder mir etwas besonders interessant scheint. Es steht Dir natürlich offen, Fragen abzulehnen, bzw. Teile des Interviews auszuschließen. Das Interview ist anonym, d. h. Namen und Orte werden verändert oder weggelassen.

Ich würde das Interview gerne auf meinem Laptop aufnehmen. Ich kann es Dir gerne auf CD brennen.

Fragen beantworte ich gerne!

Vielen Dank für Dein Interesse,

Dani

The original document contained my (then) contact details (landline, mobile, fax, email), and was meant as a rough guideline to the issues I was interested in. I had initially asked if participants would agree to interviews and used the term ‘life-story interview’, but that did not ring any bells with participants and was perceived of as

strange request. The four very open questions on the other hand were perceived of as a welcome guideline. By designing the guidelines with the theme 'biographical background' as the first point, I was hoping to be able to get a life-story interview. In the three cases below this happened; the biographical feature set the narrative recounting in autobiographical fashion in motion.¹¹¹

The German document above asks specifically about the following issues

(*Themenkomplexe*):

- Biographical background
- How do you express being Jewish in the everyday?
- How do you position yourself towards Jews and non-Jews, respectively?
- Contact with the liberal community

The remainder of the document outlines the confidentiality of the data, asks for permission to record the interview, and asks if the interviewee would like a copy of their interview on CD. It outlines as well that I might ask questions for clarification or if something struck me as very interesting; answers could of course be declined.

Incidentally, none of the interviewees wanted a copy of their interview on CD. The interest of the interviewees and participants was centred on my actual dissertation and papers I have been writing.

The questions were deliberately open-ended, to allow for a flowing narrative, and to gain an insight into the sense-making processes and aspects of narrative coherence of the interviewees. For most of the interview I attempted to remain quiet, and only co-authored if an interviewee got stuck, or asked me explicitly to contribute. Interviewees did on occasion ask me questions; some questions were asked out of sheer interest, whereas others were more meant to clarify my intentions (Kalir 2006), or classify me as a non-stranger, and indeed somebody they shared something with. The majority of these questions occurred after the tape recording stopped (Becker 2001). I see them as part of the debriefing that the interview partners chose; I did not attempt to control the interview situation in any way after the interview ended.

While the interview data presented here encompasses one male and two female participants, an equal share of men and women were interviewed. Gender issues are not central to this dissertation, and therefore I have chosen these interviews for their interest, and because I am able to incorporate only a small fraction of the interviews in any depth. The interviews were conducted in German¹¹²: the translations are my translations. German, especially spoken German, uses tenses differently to English; past perfect is a tense that is not used in German when it is spoken; this means that the chronology of past events becomes only clear from the context, or remains unclear. I have kept this opaqueness of German language to convey the problematic notion of chronological order and coherence, which is not a problem in any interview that I conducted in English. The usage of the tenses alone gives a stronger sense of clarity in English (cf. Linde 1993).

In order to refer to non-personal events or to generalise, German speakers use the term “*man*”, which translates into “one” but is not as formal as the English “one”, and not as informal as “you.” I have translated “*man*” with “one” and not “you” when the interviewees generalised or referred to a collective, because “*man*” infers a collective.

The interview data below represents only parts of the interviews; the whole original scripts run four times the length of the data presented here. [...] denotes when I cut out data. ... indicates short pauses, (pause) denotes pauses of more than ten seconds. Despite the shortening of the interview the chronological order of the content was kept to uphold the gestalt (cf. Wengraf 2001) as much as possible.

Ron

Ron agreed immediately to an interview with me even before I gave him the rough outline of what I wanted to know. He was one of the first persons I made contact with at the very beginning of my research, and over the years he had been curious about how the research was going and what I going to do with it. It is easy to strike up a conversation with Ron in the synagogue although Ron does keep his distance both physically and socially from the core of the community. He never sits at the first table at the buffet, let alone amongst the core, and he keeps his privacy in the community setting. Ron has been active behind the scenes with various technical things since the creation of the community. For the purpose of the interview we met in his flat on a Saturday afternoon; he had suggested we meet Saturday, it did not matter to him that it was Shabbat. Ron had prepared some tea and offered me *Fruits de Mer*, Belgian chocolate delicatessen, that are commonly offered alongside tea and coffee. Ron and I sat opposite each other at his dining table with the MP3 recording stick between us.

Dani: Would you like to say something about your biographical background?

Ron: My name is Ron Rotbaum. I was born in Israel in 1950. Both of my parents originate from Germany, my father from Frankfurt, my mother from Berlin, both immigrated to Israel before the war. They only met in Israel. And... mmm... I grew up in Israel until I was 23 and came to Germany to learn my profession. I wanted to be a trick cameraman and that option didn't exist in Israel. Mmm... through a very good job offer I got stuck here. In Germany I mostly lived in Cologne, one year in Munich, one year in Berlin... mother tongue... difficult to say... at home we spoke German, both of my parents spoke German but the colloquial language on the street was Hebrew. But we children, my two younger sisters and I made Hebrew presentable (*salonfähig*) at home...

Dani: So you children spoke Hebrew with each other?

Ron: Yes.

Dani: Did you reply in Hebrew to your parents?

Ron: No. It was like this: my mother's mother was living at ours and she hardly spoke Hebrew, so if we wanted to talk with her we had to speak German. That's why we spoke German with her though less often with my parents. I more so than my siblings. They're six and twelve years younger than me, and Hebrew had entered the home much more. It could happen that the parents said something in German and we answered in Hebrew, and the German we spoke at home was a very Hebrewised German, there were sentences like "We're going to the *yam* [Hebrew: sea]." So it was more a mishmash between German and Hebrew.

Dani: Do your parents speak Hebrew?

Ron: Yes, they speak Hebrew. Yeah... they read in Hebrew, and have Hebrew newspapers... mmm... they read books in Hebrew... that wasn't a problem... but they only learned it in Israel. But as young persons... that wasn't a problem... they had more access to it than my nan, who was a bit older... (pause)

Dani: And then you came here and got stuck? Did you ever want to go back?

Ron: The plan was that I'll learn my profession and then go back at one point... but then I did more internships and when I was done I got an offer from the *WDR*¹¹³ that they'd hire me as permanent staff, and that you can hardly refuse. Yes, then I got married here and had children, and therefore the centre of my life (*Lebensmittelpunkt*) I actually see here in Germany, and when I retire in three years from now I could go back to Israel but I don't quite see that. I feel at home here in Germany, here in Cologne. (pause)

Dani: Ok... (pause)... are your children bilingual?

Ron: No, unfortunately not. For their *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* they learned some Hebrew, the script, and to read... they've been called to the Torah... the *Haftarah*¹¹⁴ and *Parashat*¹¹⁵ learned... and as my wife didn't speak Hebrew or just a little... she also converted to Judaism...

the language of interaction at home was German. At home we spoke German... (pause)

Dani: Was the conversion in that sense a... technical conversion?

Ron: No, no, she did have to learn for that... actually, for me the conversion was not an issue... I married her without this ever being an issue. It really surprised me that when she was pregnant with the first child she... wanted to convert to create a unity in the family... and she is then... a couple of days after he was born... didn't go before, unfortunately, appointment-wise, and she went then to the *Mikvah*¹¹⁶ with him, who then converted with her... (pause)

[...]

Ron immediately relates to his being in Germany as something that just happened; there was no struggle to come to Germany with his family, he did not feel the need to justify his coming to the country against the backdrop of the *Shoah*. He does not mention the *Shoah* but uses the euphemism “before the war.” When speaking of his parents’ origin (Berlin and Frankfurt) he does not mention that they fled to (then) Palestine, he chooses another euphemism in the shape of the neutral term “emigrated” (*ausgewandert*) which does not carry any connotations to the *Shoah*, nor to persecution. Immigrating to somewhere implies agency to leave one place and move to another, as opposed to being forced to leave, expelled or extradited.

Furthermore, Ron mentions how his parents and grandmother kept the German language alive, while at the same time his parents learned Hebrew. They had arrived in the new reality of Israel but did not reject the language of their country of origin. In his opinion they were still young enough to learn Hebrew, while his grandmother was already too old to acquire a new language. By virtue of his grandmother’s inability to speak Hebrew, and his parents’ hanging on to the language, it was only the children who introduced Hebrew into the German home. Ron uses here the interesting term *salonfähig*, which translates into ‘presentable’ in English, which does not carry the same connotations though. The German *salonfähig* refers to the salons of the high

society, where certain manners are expected, and street language has no place. This reflects impressively the connection of German as a language of (European) culture, and Hebrew as the language of daily trade, and of the people.

The notion of German as a prime language does not stop here: when settling in Germany, Ron's home became again a German home, and his children speak only enough Hebrew to take part in Jewish rituals. The non-transmission of Hebrew relates to his German wife, who did not speak much Hebrew. He rationally shifts the non-transmission of Hebrew language to his wife, who did not speak Hebrew, and does not present it as his choice. The non-transmission appears logical, as to not create a rift in the family, and to strengthen the unit that his wife created through her conversion (which will be mentioned later again). Ron's logic seems to be based on finding viable compromises within the family to incorporate all members, and only later in the interview it will become clear that beyond the incorporation of all family members his reasoning is underpinned by the idea of being an active part of German society. In order to do this, Ron recreated the German home he had in Israel, where German was the prime language of communication. This means that Ron did not have to decategorise German individuals because Germanness was conveyed to him at his home in Israel, it was not opposed to Jewishness. This issue will resurface several times in the interview. Based on these early experiences Ron perceived the German-Jewish dichotomy he found amongst members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* as disagreeable.

The third issue, which already occurs in this first part of the interview, is the boundary management to the German – non-Jewish – surrounding. Not only did Ron's wife not speak Hebrew, but she was a non-Jew too. None of these issues bothered him. For him these issues seem to express a belonging to Germany and German culture without the confines of adhering to the *Halacha*, which does not allow for marriage to a non-Jew, and which only recognises matrilineal descent. Ron does not relate to the *Shoah*-implicated sense of boundary management either, which excludes non-Jews from Jewish spaces, and that underpins discussions about mixed marriage. Interestingly, as much as Ron confirmed his own German-coloured identity and does not express any

problems regarding living in a German home, his (then) wife makes a statement with her own conversion: their shared home became thus a German Jewish home.

[...]

Dani: And why did you become a member of the liberal Jewish community?

Ron: (pause) ... Because... because... I was of the opinion that... after my experiences with the Roonstraße...¹¹⁷ I've realised that this Eastern European mentality... the lived Judaism that is lived out there... that was before the immigration of the Russians... the whole community was so Eastern European... orthodox... and this ghetto thinking... that was not my thing... and... I had engaged myself before with liberal Judaism... and I found... that that... that that is my thing. In Israel I was totally non-religious... if after my *Bar Mitzvah* I was in the synagogue like three, four times then that was a lot... (laughs)

Dani: (laughs) That's more often than Dan [my (then) boyfriend who Ron knows] then!

Ron: Really (laughs some more)... mmm... mmm... but I found we needed... we could take another route here in Cologne... because I was in favour of... I found that my children should approach Judaism... but not the orthodox Judaism that really didn't do anything for me. (pause)

Dani: And a more positive attitude like in the liberal community... I find the orthodox synagogue so... it feels like a negative space...

Ron: It wasn't only that I didn't get along with the people in the Roonstraße... I mean because I... the liberal Judaism... when was it? In 1982... in the US... I was seeing family in San Francisco... that is where I first experienced a liberal service in their community... [raises voice] and I was excited... and I thought... well, why... I didn't know that... it didn't exist in Israel...and of course not Germany... yes, and I wanted to establish something like that in Germany... and become part of it...and when James came up with this idea... I thought initially that

the idea was rather... a little overbold that such a small group of people could be turned into a community, but hey... hats off!

[...]

In this part, Ron mentions one of his run-ins with the orthodox community. He complains about “the ghetto thinking” and the Eastern European orthodoxy of this community. This categorisation of the orthodox community relates directly to his own sense of Germanness, and being in Germany. The orthodox community is indeed very Eastern European coloured. The Jews of Eastern European descent who came to Germany post-*Shoah* adhered to a more orthodox form of practice (Geller 2005; Kugelman 1988a, 1996; amongst others) than German Jews pre-*Shoah* did; Ron is a descendent of the latter group. An issue which Ron does not engage with is that the reason for their orthodox observance was not necessarily a stringent belief in it, but that this praxis was familiar to Eastern European Jews, and the only part of their tradition they could keep alive in an unfamiliar country, and in the face of the complete annihilation of their previous homes, and often complete loss of families.

Intermarriage rates amongst Eastern European Jews were lower than amongst German Jews pre-*Shoah*. As Ginzel (1984) outlined the first board members of the post-*Shoah* community in Cologne were German Jews who had been marginal in the pre-*Shoah* community, and often married to non-Jews. The current liberal rabbi of Cologne explained to me that: “The less you looked like a Jew [he meant a practicing Jew in orthodox attire in this conversation], and acted like a Jew the more likely you were to survive.” Being married to a non-Jew certainly helped in the survival too (Grabowsky, forthcoming; Zielinski 2002). However, with time Jews of Eastern European descent gained power in the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Geller 2005; Zieher 2005). These Jews were in their majority *Shoah* survivors, and post-*Shoah* DPs. The sense of boundary management to the non-Jewish surrounding of these Eastern European Jews was stronger than that of their German counterparts who were part of German society, pre- and post-*Shoah* (Geller 2005; Meng 2005). Ron very much acts like these German Jews, despite having been born and raised in Israel. But more so than acting similar to

post-*Shoah* Jews of German descent in Germany, he aims at integrating his secular (profane) approach to life with his religious (sacred) parts, and create a coherent whole. This whole he could not achieve through the orthodox practice in the Eastern-European-coloured community, which sets profane and secular boundaries he does not agree with, and sets itself imperatively apart from the non-Jewish surrounding. At the same time, Ron's reaction towards the Eastern European DPs does not show an understanding of their suffering, and their ambiguities of being in Germany. This issue will become clearer at the end of the interview, when it shows that his life-story and the ones of members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* do not “mesh” (cf. Bruner 1987: 21).

An approach to Judaism he likes he finds initially only outside of Germany and Israel, in the US, where the pre-*Shoah* Liberal Judaism, having originated in Germany developed further by virtue of a high number of German Jewish refugees. This Liberal Judaism speaks to Ron, who was not particularly religious in Israel, and averse to what he saw in the synagogue in Cologne. The prescriptive form of orthodox practice and the absolute exclusion of any non-Jew offended values that Ron deeply cherishes. The offence this caused to his values to see individuals beyond categories and to seek dialogue with led to the breakdown of his relationships with the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (cf. Burt 2000).

Ron mentions that he came across Liberal Judaism in the US in 1982, and wanted to take some of the experience to Germany with him. This time was a crucial one for Jews in Germany. At the end of the 1970s and beginning 1980s, Jews of the second generation in Germany came of age, and the “cocoon” of the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Bodemann 2006: 168; Kranz 2007b) burst. Jews of the second generation were in their mid-20s to mid-30s at this time, politicised their being in Germany, sought for an active dialogue with non-Jewish German society, and expressed an assertive Jewishness. Thus, Ron brought home the right idea at the right time, and found supporters in James and Mayan, who had a huge investment in being Jewish in Germany, and were ideologically very close to Ron's stances.

[...]

Dani: What about the current development of the [liberal] community?

Ron: At the moment... I see quite a bit of stagnation, because... (pause) you could do more, on the other hand... through the... through the voluntary nature of the work of the people there's nothing more you can do. (pause) I think the possible fusion with the Roonstraße... I think that would be the right way, I think there is such a vast liberal potential in the Roonstraße, more than we could ever realise from the outside... Because... a lot of the people in Roonstraße think that the liberal community... they're the *outlaws* [English in original] they're the pariahs, we don't want to deal with them, it's nice what they do, but they're the pariahs.

Dani: So you don't see it as the downfall of the [liberal] community?

Ron: No, on the contrary I see it as... I see it as a chance. Because I think if it's done properly then the orthodox in the community have all reasons to be afraid...

Dani: Don't you think they'll be all stubborn again? Or that it ends when you were active?

Ron: No, I don't think so. A lot of things have changed since then. The fact alone that they invited the Pope¹¹⁸. That would have been unheard of before... totally impossible. They changed quite a lot, especially since the time when Sascha Jung... you know him?

Dani: (utters 'no')

[...]

Ron: Yes... as I said... he [Sascha Jung] married the daughter of Gustavo Cohen and then everything was still fine... and then he left her and married a non-Jew... and that was... in the community [orthodox community] non-acceptable. He had to go. [raises voice] That's one of the other things where I think that's not my community. If these things

happen? No way. [sounding angry] Just because he married a non-Jew he's not allowed to be active anymore? (pause)

[...]

In these parts of the interview Ron raises again issues of the liberal community vis-à-vis the orthodox community. The first one refers to the possible merger of both communities under the auspices of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. This merger did not happen; it was rejected by a majority of the membership of the liberal community during my fieldwork. During the debates about this merger old wounds were opened again, and despite it being behind closed doors, the discussion made a lot of noise.

Ron elucidates that he thinks that the orthodox community has changed, that is now less Eastern European and less ghettoesque and more open to a different form of practice, which goes hand in hand with assuming that the boundary management of the orthodox community to the non-German surrounding is subject to change too. He sees a new generation in power in the *Einheitsgemeinde*.

The statement concerning “outlaws” and “pariahs” refers directly to the founding members of the liberal community, who all had either fallen out with the *Einheitsgemeinde* (Ron), been marginal (Jonathan), or non-members due to their non-*halachic* descent (James and Mayan). In a conversation at the beginning of this research, a member of the orthodox community had told me that: “The form of practice is not at issue. It's the people who set up *Gescher*.” Another one had referred to the members of *Gescher* as, “Aren't those the self-hating Jews?” referring to their critical stance towards the *Einheitsgemeinde*, and Israeli politics. He criticised too their openness towards non-Jews. In other words, the values and attitudes of the founding members of *Gescher* and the *Einheitsgemeinde* were too different for them to exist in one community. A homophily of values between these two different groups barely existed, a shared ethnicity was not enough to hold these Jews together in the past nor to unite them in the present.

However, Ron thinks that by now the majority of the members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* have changed in their attitude from what he experienced some twenty years ago. A merger of both communities would lead to new common ground, and bridge old abysses. To elaborate again how much the members of the orthodox community used to diverge from his opinions, he brings the example of Sascha Jung, and the fall-out after the divorce of the latter from the daughter of Gustavo Cohen. Gustavo Cohen runs like a nemesis through Ron's narrative, the stories about him I have heard several times before and after the interview. Gustavo seems to be Ron's epitome of what is wrong with the orthodox community: Gustavo not only sets exclusive boundaries, with Jews on the side and non-Jews on the other, but from Ron's point of view discriminates against anybody who transgresses this exclusive boundary. This is not to say that Ron sees the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Germany as unproblematic, but he aims at an understanding of individuals, and refuses to treat persons based on some categorical belonging. This is a value he shares with other members of *Gescher*. Yet, the Gustavo figure stands for more issues. Political psychologists who work in post-conflict and post-scandal societies found that guilt for the conflict or scandal is attributed to one single person, it is personalised (Capelos 2008). Ron is very keen to live as an active and integral part of German post-*Shoah* society, whereas Gustavo rejects this society. This means that on a personal level, Gustavo thwarts Ron's effort to be this integral part of German society that Ron wishes to be. Gustavo does not (want to) experience himself as part of this society, and neither does his family, as he, Gustavo is of Eastern European descent. This sets him diametrically apart from Ron, a Jew of German descent who has a personal familiarity to Germany through his own German-Jewish family (cf. Geller 2005; Meng 2005). From this family Ron knows about pre-*Shoah* Germany, and Jews in Germany pre-*Shoah*. Through this family history, and his personal and intimate connections to German Jews and non-Jews Ron wished to create a positive identity for Jews in Germany, because he can imagine it based on his experiences at home, and with non-Jewish Germans. By this token, the nemesis who is attributed with the guilt for making the maintenance and establishment of this identity harder is not a non-Jewish German, as in the next interview, but a Jew. The next interview sequence will show this attribution of guilt again, and introduce a second Jew, who acts like a younger twin of Gustavo Cohen.

[...]

Ron: Yes, and I personally in my surrounding, because I am so assertive about it [being Jewish and Israeli] ...I think... I've never... mmm... had any anti-Semitism directed at me. People don't talk behind my back... I mean, why would you, if everybody knows? Yes... and... it always worked for me... and professionally too... I was the youngest in the team back then... the only foreigner... and... when the time came I took over as the head of the department, right? You know... it was about technical knowledge... One experience I had, where I think, yes, that's the wrong way... (pause) ...I have a colleague at the *WDR*... also a member of the Roonstraße, as well a cameraman... and he's about my age... and he always told me that at the *WDR* he constantly suffers from anti-Semitism directed against his person... and that he doesn't progress... because he's a Jew... and I was so surprised... we work at the same employer with the same structure and the same people... and then I found it out: why he thinks and feels that way. When Miriam [Ron's then wife] was pregnant with Oz, our second child, she had to go to hospital for a while... and I stayed there alone with Omri... he was two, two and a half years... and I needed... and he wasn't in kindergarten... and we didn't have a nanny because Miriam needed go to hospital from one day to the next... (pause) and then I asked that friend, that guy...he had a daughter the same age as Omri... and she went to some pre-kindergarten thing... and she wasn't three either... and I asked if he could ask if Omri could come to this pre-kindergarten thing for a couple of days... until I have a nanny for him. And he asked, and then he called me and said yes, that works, you can bring Omri there tomorrow... but... but he told me... 'Do me a favour (pause). Don't tell anybody we're Jews in this pre-kindergarten thing.' And then I thought yes, that's it.

Dani: Is he German?

Ron: Yes... he grew up here. He is... his parents come from Hungary...

Dani: Are the parents survivors?

Ron: Yes, yes.

Dani: Ah... they quite often don't want their children to tell anybody...

Ron: Mmm... although... those were... not people who pretended to be non-Jews... on the opposite... those were people who were orthodox... they kept kosher at home and all that... mmm... they tried to hide their Jewishness to the outside... and the moment you try that... people really start talking behind your back. Because you try to hide it. And that was never the case with me.

Dani: But how did people know?

Ron: Don't know.

Dani: It's not that everybody can access your personal file.

Ron: I don't know. But one knows. You can't hide that sort of thing.

Maybe somebody saw him around at the synagogue.

Dani: Did you ever tell him?

Ron: Yes, I told him, but he has a different opinion. (pause) But that's typical for Diaspora Jews as I call them. It's like they try to avoid this society... and all of their contacts... (pause) that's... all inner-Jewish... besides working they don't have much to do with non-Jews. (pause) And those fights I had when I was the head of cultural affairs in the Roonstraße (pause) I tried... to open the synagogue a bit to the outside. And I said, let's try... like once or twice per year... an open house day (*Tag der offenen Tür*)... but not in the sense of showing them [the non-Jews] a dead synagogue. Let's do that Saturday morning... yes... so people can come in and see how a Jewish service looks like (pause)

Dani: That's a problem... they might not even let you in if you're a Jew... Dan failed...

Ron: Yes... well... you could have solved those issues... and then Gustavo Cohen said something to me that I'll never forget. And he said... (pause) that was so typical for the attitude in the community [orthodox community] that wasn't only his opinion. So he said: 'Listen

Ron, (pause) I work with *Goyim*, I trade with *Goyim*, all my neighbours are *Goyim*, I have a number of friends who are *Goy*... I'm always surrounded by *Goyim*... and when I'm here, in the community, I don't want to see any *Goy*.' And then I told him: 'Gustavo, if you work with *Goyim*, and some of your friends are *Goy*, and you're surrounded by *Goyim*, and the *Goyim* are unwanted strangers here in the synagogue, then it doesn't surprise me if you're an unwanted stranger amongst the *Goyim* too and you will remain one.'

Dani: And what did he say?

Ron: Nothing.

In this final part of the interview Ron expresses again his assertive Jewishness, a Jewishness he does not try to hide. He connects his Jewishness to his Israeliness, as when he uses the expression "the only foreigner" when referring to how he sees himself at his work place. He is aware that he has an accent when he speaks German, although his German is that of a native German speaker, he chooses expressions carefully to convey specific connotations.

In order to pre-empt any speculation about where he is from, he somehow mentions in passing that he is Israeli. Ron believes that this assertiveness pre-empts anti-Semitism too. This reasoning follows the logic that those who will engage with him will not be anti-Semitic in their attitudes anyway, otherwise they would not engage with him. Also, his candour leads to an avoidance of experiencing anti-Semitism because the persons who encounter him know he is Jewish and Israeli and will thus watch what they say. This latter issue Ron does not acknowledge.

His colleague, on the other hand, avoids telling anybody that he is Jewish and claims to suffer anti-Semitism. In Ron's logic, this man makes himself weak, and easy to target because he does not stand by what he is, he tries to hide it. I had asked Ron how the other colleagues knew that his friend was Jewish, and he answered he did not know. I think it is reasonable to speculate that Ron's friend took the Jewish holidays off, and as he came from a practising household maybe tried to avoid the omni-present pork in the

canteen, or the mixing of milk and meat. Ron was right to ascertain that “you can’t hide something like that.” Ron did not hide it. Ron did not set himself up as a victim, but as somebody who would fight back. This attitude to fight (Dan and Roy), or to walk tall (Mayan), the notion that Jews who were born and raised in Germany are weaker than Israelis (Mayan), was common amongst Israelis I encountered in the field. This notion hints at the Israeli discourse concerning the *Shoah* and Diaspora Jews in Israel, which sees Israelis as strong, and Diaspora Jews as weak (Almog 1997/2000; Kranz 2007c). Referring to this discourse, it is possible to draw the conclusion that ‘weak Diaspora Jews’ thwart the Israeli Jewish self-schemata (Bruner 1987, 1991a) of Israeli Jews. In line with the attribution of guilt concerning the destruction of German Jewishness, which is key to Ron’s self-schemata, he attributes guilt to Gustavo Cohen, who he sees as thwarting his efforts on a personal and on a public level. On a personal level, Gustavo disturbs Ron’s effort to live as an integrated part of German society. On a public level Gustavo upsets Ron’s effort to re-establish liberal Judaism in Germany.

In the last part, Ron returns again to the issue that runs through the interview like a red thread. The exclusive boundary management of the orthodox community, and its categorical disengagement from German society runs contrary to Ron’s value to decategorise individuals, to seek dialogue with them and to live as an integral part of German society. He tells the story about the boundary management of the community immediately after the story about his friend to strengthen his stance that living as a Jew in Germany with a positive identity is only possible if one engages with German non-Jews. This means as well that Ron, although he classified himself as an Israeli, sees himself as an intrinsic part of German society despite all the differences between Jews and non-Jews. Gustavo appears again as the anti-hero of Ron’s story, as the person who for him epitomises how one should not live in Germany; feeling besieged by the non-Jewish German, by the *Goyim* majority.

Throughout the interview Ron presented himself as an upright person, as a person who does not hide and who seeks for a positive identity as an Israeli and Jew in a non-Jewish surrounding as well as in the Jewish space of the synagogue. Ron does not show any interest in creating boundaries, but opens doors for new dialogues with non-Jews. This

ideal he lived out: his ex-wife was a German non-Jew when he married her, he has non-Jewish friends, he has made Cologne his home, and he wants a Jewish practice that is part of this life-philosophy and not a disconnected ritual part.

Ron does not relate to the boundary management of the orthodox (survivor) community and does not mention his acknowledgements of their traumas as a plausible reason for wanting to shut non-Jews out, and keep the synagogue an exclusive Jewish space.

Having grown up in Israel with a grandmother and two parents who spoke German with him, Ron's first experiences of Germans and German language are underpinned by positive memories, by memories of home (cf. Hammerstein 1995).

Iris

Like Ron, Iris agreed immediately to an interview though doubted in the same breath that she had something of interest to tell me: “I am not that interesting, really!” I have mentioned how Iris often felt uncomfortable during the religious service due to her lack of knowledge of religious practice. Rather worriedly she asked if I was going to ask her about religious practice. I assured her that religious practice as such was neither my focus nor my area of expertise, nor did I feel that any judgement on that matter was behoving to me. This seemed to calm Iris down, and we agreed to meet at her house for the interview. When I arrived at the agreed time she was still rather nervous, and showed me her impressive library of books on and by Jews, and all aspects of Judaism, that fills up a whole wall of her living room from top to bottom and overflows on other shelves, the stairs and into other rooms. For the interview we sat at her dinner table next to the library.

Dani: Ahhh... it's [the recording device] working. Can't figure that thing out. Don't tell Dan how long it took me to get it working... would you like to say something about your biographical background? Where you're from?

Iris: I was born in Romania... are times important as well?

Dani: If you think they are...

Iris: Ok... yes... (laughs) ...I was born, lived and died... (laughs) ...what should I say? What does biographical mean? I'm an only child. What else do you want me to say (laughs) ...

Dani: Mmm... how long were you in Romania for?

Iris: Fourteen years.

Dani: And then you went to Germany?

Iris: No, in 1956 was the uprising [of students in Romania]... and then we wanted to go to Hungary... to go to the West... my father always wanted out... out, out, out! And... mmm... fourteen years I was there... quite unhappy. I've always hated that country, I've always hated Romania, it was never my home (*Heimat*).¹¹⁹ I've always hated this

country, really hated it. And that was because the anti-Semitism was so strong, incredibly strong... also from the teachers, they always put me down, really down... mmm... after Jewish holidays, for example, I was always called up to tell why the Jews are always crying... (pause) With the fellow pupils I was relatively popular... as long as I got bad grades... if I got good grades... it was like: 'Look at the Jews! Want to show what they are!' (laughs) I was at a German school in Romania... there were till... I started school in 1958... when I was in the first grade... the German school depended on Jewish children... it was like 90% Jews.

Dani: German-speaking Jews who were living there?

Iris: Yes, most of them were German speakers where I lived. Or trilingual.

Dani: Siebenbürgen [region in Romania] or where?

Iris: Banat [region in Romania], yes... so... 1959/60 the big wave of immigration happened... we remained... and then I was the only Jewish child left. There were six classes back then... and it decreased to one class... German children, Romanian children, Hungarian children and the so-called Jewish one... the only Jewish child.

Dani: How come your parents didn't emigrate?

Iris: My mum, she absolutely did not want to emigrate. She was very attached to her parents...and never really flexible... and... mmm...I can't really tell you... they somehow didn't want... (pause) ...it started later... I already caused a lot of trouble as a child...my parents tried to hammer in my brain not to say under any circumstances that one is a Jew... mmm... I don't know if that was purely based on the anti-Semitism... my father was always afraid that 'it' could repeat itself... he never talked about it until just before his death, yes... he was in camps (*Lager*) with his parents... and... mmm... my parents always forbade to tell me... 'Say Hungarian, Romanian, but please not Jewish' ...and that has probably increased my curiosity and my resistance to the degree

that I told people who didn't want to know it 'But I'm a Jewess' ...
mmm... (pause)

[...]

Iris raises one of the key themes that runs through the interview. These are her emphasis on her personal Jewishness in the face of, or probably in spite of anti-Semitic discrimination, her multiple non-belongings to nation states, and the *Shoah*. Iris expresses the feeling of being completely out of place in the place where she was born, and whose languages she spoke, because she was a Jew. Effectively, her self-ascription of the categorical belonging 'Jew' is the only one which is open to her: Hungarian and Romanian is not an option of a self-ascribed category because she is a Jew, and as such rejected as a Hungarian or Romanian by (non-Jewish) Hungarians or Romanians who discriminate against her. German as a categorical belonging she rejects because of her family's suffering during the *Shoah*, which she blames on Germans as much as on Hungarians and Romanians. To strengthen her point about being out of place she tells that she was "the only Jewish child" after the large-scale emigration of Jews from the region where she grew up. Yet, despite being left behind she refuses to assimilate, and remains fierce about stressing her Jewishness.

Her relentless and unapologetic definition of herself as a Jew is not the only expression of agency in this part of the interview. She expresses how she defied her parents, which is an issue that runs through the whole interview. Iris does what she wants, and what she sees as the right thing to do, because she does not feel that her (survivor) parents can offer her the strength to navigate the non-Jewish surrounding. Her mother in particular she depicts as "inflexible"; her mother comes across like a lost child, who through the *Shoah* lost all moorings of the Jewish surrounding she was raised in. Her father is depicted as more practical, yet completely traumatised by the *Shoah*, which he survived as a teenager. His whole life post-*Shoah* is described as a survival strategy, which runs in particular along the lines 'to not show', to blend in, and by all means to avoid 'to show as being different' (cf. Hill 1991), because being recognisable could be lethal. The issue of her weak parents is pronounced in regard to the emigration from Romania: why

they stayed so long, and how the immigration to Germany happened, remain unclear: her parents do not seem to have any active role in it. Already as a child and teenager, Iris shows the opposite to both her parents: she is flexible, and willing and able to relocate and confront new challenges, and she does not hide. She is resilient in the face of problems, and refuses to give up. These issues will resurface in several parts of the interview.

[...]

Iris: My parents went to Germany... I have to add to that when my granddad died... those were Germans, actually... they beat their chests and said “We’re Germans”... and they only spoke German... my granddad was an officer in the *KuK* [Austro-Hungarian] monarchy, studied in Berlin one must say... I found the papers recently... and he always said at one point we have to go home... to Germany... for him it was like... through that I had so much trouble with my granddad. I always refused to speak German; he spoke German to me and I always replied in Hungarian and Romanian... and he pampered me so much, he loved me so much... but until his death he spoke German with me and I replied in Hungarian. I was so opposed to the German [language] ...and time and again I was told we’re Germans. We should go home. Back to Germany. All of the death camps and work camps couldn’t harm that [*konnten dem nichts anhaben*] ...they felt as German speakers... German culture... Germans... (pause)

[...]

Iris goes on to tell how her parents and she finally emigrate, because she “caused so much trouble.” Now, of all places, her parents choose to go to Germany. Iris does not elaborate if going to Germany was a joint decision of her parents, or driven by her father. I knew from previous conversations with her that her mother came from a small village and that Yiddish, or a very Yiddish-coloured German, were lingua franca at her mother’s home. Her father’s family looked down at these “village Jews” (*Dorfjuden*). It is only through this background knowledge that it becomes clear that her father’s father was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. For reasons beyond my knowledge, the family of her father aligned themselves to Germans, and saw Germany as their home country, not the equally German-speaking Austria. Iris never elaborated on this issue, it had never surfaced before or after in the interview or conversations.

Again, as with Romania she expresses a non-belonging, this time to Germany, and German language. All these years after the actual events she still voices her surprise at her grandfather's expression of belonging to Germany, and that he spoke German with her. Out of protest she spoke Hungarian or Romanian. While this offered a means of a protest against German, it caught Iris in the situation that she spoke yet two other languages of peoples she rejected having a belonging to. Romanians she had mentioned before in the interview as a hated 'other.' In several conversations she told me that: "The Hungarians managed something that the Germans didn't manage to do at that speed: the deportation of all the Jews." Later in the interview, she will mention the still existing anti-Semitism in Hungary. What seeps through the rejection of German, Romanian, and Hungarian language and the respective countries is a fundamental out-of-placeness, as opposed to a displacement, that Iris experienced in her youth. She is not displaced from anywhere, because she belongs nowhere, but to the Jewish people. While her belonging is placeless, she expresses her personal agency time and time against these places, and the persons she sees as wanting to put her in place who are in more powerful positions than she is.

[...]

Iris: No, I didn't want to come to Germany at all... I actually hated Germany. I hated everything German... And they [her parents] said you don't have to pronounce your Jewishness... it was my father's fear... that history could repeat itself... and then again in school I said it immediately... although we were classified as 'without religious affiliation'... although my parents became immediately members in the community in Aachen [town in Germany]... and I shouldn't emphasise this... they wanted to save me from this Jewishness... in case something would happen... but just like in Romania, I emphasised... I wouldn't shut up... and through my parents... well, one can't say they forbade me... but they asked me to not tell anybody... to emphasise... in school and wherever... and I have to say... not a single time did I encounter resistance in Germany... not a single time in Germany did somebody take offence... or react... not a single time did anybody bother about it... it was just normal... even in class... I never felt anything like anti-Semitism... not by the pupils, not the teachers... and in grammar school I had elderly teachers... and they really cared about me... there was no issue with that... I really have never ever encountered something like anti-Semitism... no comparison to Romania at all. But still it was my aim to finish school and then get out of here... away from Germany... and that's what I did. I finished school... and then I told my parents a little lie... that I'm going on holidays... and then I stayed there [Israel] for two and a half years. (pause)

[...]

Here, Iris emphasises again her notion of being out of place, this time in Germany. As she did before in regard to Romania, she mentions now that she "hated" Germany, and "all things German." Like in Romania, her parents asked her to remain quiet about being Jewish – much like Ron mentioned for the (survivor) parents of his friend and the

friend himself. Iris's parents too, were in hiding, and out of fear attempted to "save" Iris from being recognisable as a Jew, even though they became members of the local Jewish community in the city they moved to in Germany. Iris mentions that they were classified as "without religious affiliation" to the authorities, despite her parents' membership in the Jewish community. This official non-affiliation was based on the issue of taxation and the uneasy mix of (secular) fiscal authorities and religious authorities. At the point of their arrival in Germany, only Catholics and Protestants paid the so-called-church tax, members of all other religious groups counted as "non-affiliated." The church tax has meanwhile been renamed 'cult tax' and includes Jews too, who pay to their local community. Now, despite this loophole of not being classified as Jews Iris stressed her Jewishness again. On tape her surprise at the non-reaction of Germans towards her assertive Jewishness is audible in the tone of her voice. At the time of the interview, which was conducted forty years after her arrival in Germany she is still amazed how the natives in the country she hated did not discriminate against her. Yet, she still did not feel she could stay in Germany and decided to leave. Interestingly, she left for Israel despite not having been part of the youth groups of the local community, and not having been influenced in the way that Germany is not the place for Jews to be, and that Israel is the only option (Kranz 2008c; Löw-Beer 1996; Zuckermann 2008). Iris's decision for Israel was more based on the personal quest for a place she could call home, and where she could settle without being marginal. And yet again, she did this on her own account, and based on her own agency. She did not consult with her parents, and as she admits, lied to them. Iris did not reveal in the interview or in any other conversation how her parents took that lie, and reacted to their only child leaving the family to live in a different country. She only alludes to this issue later, in regard to her return to Germany.

[...]

Dani: Why did you not go back [to Israel]?

Iris: [...] I met my husband who proposed to me after six weeks (laughs) yes... and... I stayed in Germany... reluctantly. But if you have family and children then this is your home... yes.

Dani: And you didn't try to get him to Israel?

Iris: No, no, I found by chance a really interesting job. It was supposed to be temporary for six months, and I wanted to start my degree. But then I found myself pregnant, John [Iris's husband] was as well at the beginning of his degree, in his third term. And we needed to make a living and by chance, despite me being pregnant, in the editorial office... I was supposed to start as the secretary... not that I had a clue about any secretarial work... but the editorial chief meant well... as I was pregnant and she had had her children in really difficult circumstance, she decided to hire me... until I have the child. And by chance the copywriter failed/disappeared... and they didn't find one in time. And the editorial chief asked me if I thought I could write the texts for *Elegance* [name of the paper]. And I told her 'actually not.' But apparently the texts were so good that from then on I worked as a copywriter and editor. I did that for ten years. And once you have a child here and a good job... yes, well... then... from then Germany became my home [*Heimat*]... no, not *Heimat*... it started to become my home.

Dani: Did the hatred stop at one point? Or do you feel it still?

Iris: Yes, well, actually... it comes up at times it comes up at times. Especially, we had a lot of trouble with my mother-in-law. She was the only one I ever had trouble with in Germany. She definitely wanted to get in the way of the wedding... with all sorts of arguments... degrees, age... and when all that failed she said, 'There are so many great woman around here. Does it really have to be a Jewess?' (laughs) And that was really the only one who ever made trouble. She was the one who suffered from my entire hatred. Even when we got along well later... We didn't get along for years. But even now, of course we get along well, when I want to say something against Germany then I get mad at her... (laughs) I think she quite likes me meanwhile after thirty-three years... but she hasn't really reconciled with it completely... especially when my husband said that sure... my children would count as Jews... she can't really stomach that... at the end of the day they have a German

father and then they can't be Jews, or half Jews, in the Nazi terminology. (pause) Yes, I feel well here and I couldn't imagine a life in Israel right now. (pause)

[...]

Here, Iris elaborates on two contrasting experiences in Germany. On the one hand she mentions how she met her German, non-Jewish husband, and the editor-in-chief who helped her, and contrasts these experiences of good Germans with a bad one who comes in the form of her mother-in-law. However, through her experiences with good Germans, she managed to somewhat overcome her hatred of Germans in general and focuses them on her mother-in-law. Yet, Iris is still unwilling to call Germany *Heimat*, but maintains that it is home, a place where she feels settled. This ability to settle in Germany and de-categorise Germans hints at the flexibility she expressed in other parts of the interview. At the same time that she shows this flexibility, her feelings towards her mother-in-law might as well relieve her from her hatred, because symbolically she can attribute guilt to a members of the perpetrators collectively, Germans, who as an amorphous mass she sees responsible for her family's sufferings, and with this responsible for her out-of-placeness. Now, attributing guilt post-*Shoah* was very difficult to do for Jews who lived in Germany, because perpetrators were literally everywhere. By this token, through attributing guilt and concentrating negative feelings on her mother-in-law, Iris can exculpate her husband, and other Germans like the editor, who technically belong to the perpetrators' collective too, but are themselves good persons. In her case, unlike in Ron's, the scapegoat is a non-Jewish German. Ironically, Iris's mother-in-law helped Iris's ability to live in Germany through her actions, because Iris could displace her negative emotions on her, and forsake other Germans from them.

At this point in the interview a value homophily (cf. McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001) with Ron shows. As Ron, Iris harbours the attitude to be open towards other people, even if they belong to the perpetrator collective. If she did not harbour this attitude she would have not been able

to fall in love with a German non-Jewish man, have children with him and remain in Germany. Being in Germany she describes several times as difficult, yet she is willing and able to face up to this difficulty. However, her attitude to see beyond categorical belongings is facilitated by the psychological process to concentrate her hatred of the category 'German' onto her German mother-in-law as well as by her first positive experiences with her beloved German-speaking grandfather (cf. Hammerstein 1995). This means that despite the dissimilarities Ron's and Iris's narratives show underlying similar features of positive experiences with Germany through German language and people in their childhood. These experiences lead to overlaps in terms of the homophilous value to decategorise German individuals that lie beyond their shared Jewish descent.

[...]

Dani: You told me before [in a conversation] that your Jewishness doesn't really matter in the everyday, but now it seems like it's really important to you so that you told people about it...

Iris: (interrupts) Yes, I did that.

Dani: Or was that more like something abstract? Or as well festivals and culture?

Iris: Less that... it was actually defined through the events in the Third Reich... other than that it would have ebbed away (*verebbt*) in our family.

Dani: Was that a maintenance... or a negative *Shoah* identity?

Iris: (pause)... that is very difficult. Probably a form of a *Shoah* identity.

Dani: Did your parents pass on tradition to you?

Iris: No, unfortunately not. My mother grew up in this tradition. At home they kept Shabbat, she grew up in the Jewish religion. But my father didn't want anything to do with it when he was home... after the war... not that one... like so many he said: if there was a god this wouldn't have happened. And at home he forbade my mother more or

less to observe the holidays, and keep Shabbat in his presence. He was absolutely non-religious.

Dani: Became?

Iris: Yes, became non-religious. But I don't think religion was important in his parents' home. But he became absolutely non-religious. Mmm... my mother at least went with me... at least on the holidays, the high holidays to the synagogue. My father went only... *Yom Kippur*... Other than that he refused. He didn't like it. When I fasted with my mother aged ten... he didn't want... effectively, we did these things behind his back... in hindsight, I find it very, very, sad... a pity. But you can't change it. I hope in the future... somehow... I will be able to close those gaps. (pause)

Dani: Did he have a Jewish funeral [Iris's father died during my fieldwork]? Or did he not want that?

Iris: No, not at all. (pause) The only thing, which we didn't know he'd organised everything before, he'd talked it through with the funeral home, he didn't want a Jewish burial and he didn't have one, though a little bit it was (laughs): he wanted a very simple coffin like in Jewish tradition. That appeared to be important to him. My mum was completely surprised. He'd organised his funeral ten years ago, because my mum was a little lost. He didn't want it to be work for her. It was all organised. When we turned up at the funeral home and said our name they knew, 'Oh yes, he's been in and out of here for ten years.' In the funeral home we heard for the first time that my father talked about his Judaism (*Judentum*), which he never did at home. Never. And... mmm... they knew it and how, a coffin, simple, non-treated and unpolished. That he cared about.

Dani: Did your father know you collect Jewish books?

Iris: (interrupts) Yes, sure, yes!

Dani: How did he react to that?

Iris: Mmm... pf... he asked 'Don't you have anything better to do?'

But... actually... he didn't want to hear about it. The only time... I gave

him a video for his seventieth birthday... *Life is Beautiful*... mmm...
so... after the first part he called me and said: 'Why are you giving me
something that stupid?' and after the second part he called me, crying. It
had got to his heart, it reminded him of his own childhood. Only the last
two weeks before his funeral he talked in great detail about everything.
To date my mum hasn't forgiven me; she said it accelerated everything.
I pleaded with him. He was very weak, and he could only tell me about
it sobbingly. Aged thirteen he was interned [in a Nazi work camp]
because he was quite a stout boy and he was assigned to digging graves.
And on his death bed he always told the same story, how people knelt
down and pleaded not to be shot... then he confessed that those pictures
(*Bilder*) didn't leave him for decades. They seem to have used children
quite often to dig graves because they would pull themselves together...
Yes, my father talked for decades about the nothingnesses
(*Nichtigkeiten*)... how he met his first love in there and even that he got
a dog through, but never really about the cruelty. (pause) That is the
reason why I never understood... why he pronounced his Germanness
so much, as if the Germans hadn't anything to do with the whole *Shoah*.

[...]

Dani: Did he talk to your children about it [*Shoah*]?

Iris: (interrupts) No, not at all. Never. (pause) My father's point of view
always remained that they were born here [Germany] they should lead a
life here, that they should be unencumbered. He wanted to forget it all.
They never talked to my children about it.

Dani: Was it a problem for your parents that your husband is a non-Jew?

Iris: Actually, no. No, not at all. Not at all. [...] 'He's a *Goy* but he's not
dark.' (laughs) They were happier with a decent *Goy* [than her non-
Ashkenazi Israeli ex-boyfriend]. (laughs more)

[...]

In this part of the interview, Iris verbalises the direct connection between the *Shoah* and the external assimilation of her parents who kept their Jewishness as private as they could. In the case of her father he literally took it to his grave with him. While Iris did not engage in a hiding strategy, she initially used the phrase “after the war” to refer to her father becoming non-religious, and not ‘after the *Shoah*.’ This change of phrase depicts a change of discourse in her narrative: persons raised in Jewish environments or communication with other Jews hardly use this phrase. It is part of the German discourse. Because Iris was not raised as part of this environment, and she is married to a non-Jew this discourse and its phrases are not alien to her.

Hand in hand with the use of the language of both discourses, this part of the interview shows the direct connection between the breakdown of the transmission of Jewish custom, tradition, practice, and the *Shoah*. The survival strategy of her father was to reject Jewish religious practice and obliterate all traces of Jewishness from his life, until his death. As Iris says, this it was a direct effect of the *Shoah* that he “became non-religious.” Her mother did not become non-religious but hid her practice from her husband. In her own way this apparently weak woman rebelled against her husband, and showed resilience against the effects of the *Shoah* and its aim to annihilate Jews, Judaism and any living Jewish practice. Iris had mentioned at the beginning of the interview that her mother’s family had not been implicated in the *Shoah* like her father’s family. Her father’s story, his rejection of Judaism and at the same time his embracing of Germanness, seem to overrun her mother’s experiences. This becomes particularly clear when she says in the last section that it was her father’s point of view not to transmit on any *Shoah* trauma to her children: they should be “unencumbered.”

Going by this logic, it of course helped that their father, Iris’s husband, was a German non-Jew, which made the children less Jewish, and furthermore removed Iris more from Jews and Judaism. It is here that the leaning for Germanness of her father, and his *Shoah* traumata become the building block for a strange alliance: they work towards a de-Jewification of Iris, and consequently her children. At the same time, they fulfil her father’s craving for his Germanness, which he refuses to give up as much as Iris refuses

to give up her Jewishness. Each member of the nuclear family defends the parts of their identity which they experience as the most threatened ones: her father his Germanness, her mother her religious Jewishness and Iris her categorical Jewishness. By this token, all three show the same pattern of resilience, and defying superimposed attempts to strip them of their core identities.

Despite their strong expressions of agency, the next sequence of the interview shows that the non-passing on of any Jewish tradition, in conjunction with *Shoah* trauma, and also a non-religious Catholic spouse, led to the loss of tradition, and a lack of knowledge of either religion. The motives why her husband did not pass on any Catholic tradition are not clear from the interview – was it because his children are *halachically* Jewish, or because Iris is a Jew, or his parents-in-law were *Shoah* survivors, did he not care, or was it a means to rebel against his own parents? Iris does not question it, nor does it seem to affect her. What worries her is if and how her children are supposed to pass on anything Jewish as they lack knowledge even more than Iris does. As opposed to her, neither her son nor her daughter are members of any Jewish community. Having met both of them they do not seem to need to express their Jewishness towards their surrounding as Iris did.

[...]

Dani: Did your children have a Jewish upbringing?

Iris: No, unfortunately, not at all. We talked about it a lot. Time and again. Less about religion... because I don't know much about it. It was more about Judaism in general... how should I say... more about this community of fate (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). That I talked about with the children a lot, from when they were little. My husband is Catholic and that was nothing that was ever talked about. Mmm... we had Christmas and we had a Christmas tree. It was colourful. And when the children were little we hunted Easter eggs like mad... But it was always without the religious background to it. Neither on one side nor on the other. I have to say my dad suffered like mad when I had my son

circumcised. He asked if I really had to do this and set an outside sign. Maybe not being circumcised could prove useful for him [her son]... save his life somehow... because he had witnessed that of those who escaped from the camp... and those who were hunted down... shot... and those who weren't circumcised were allowed to live. And he asked me: "Did you really have to do that?" Religiosity... (laughs) today I would do it differently... with the liberal community (laughs) I made a mistake but one can't undo it. I try... I try... to include my children... though I think that the children feel more Jewish [than Catholic]... but that has less to do with religion... simply feeling.

Dani: You can be a Jew and non-religious.

Iris: And that's where I'm fighting with myself. Why is there still Judaism? There'd be no Jews anymore... and Judaism is the religion.

Dani: What about the ethnical component? You're automatically a Jew if your mother's Jewish...

Iris: Yes, that's right. But still... would they have survived a couple of thousand years if the religion had not existed? I don't think so.

Dani: Mmm... I mean sure... it contributes... I think it goes hand in hand... the religion and the ethnicity... you can pass on rather non-problematically if you're a woman...

Iris: I think... but what about my children? Will they pass it on? I really do hope so, but I fear they won't, I have to tell you honestly.

Dani: Because they lack the knowledge?

Iris: Yes, they lack the knowledge...

[...]

Dani: Did it change anything? Did the membership [in the liberal community] change anything... You're quite active in the community...

Iris: (interrupts) Yes, yes I am quite active there... changed... (pause) I mean, I can't really say... Let me put it this way... since I can think... and remember... was little I've been reading so much about Judaism...

so much information... it might sound crazy... even if others nag and outline all that's not right [in the liberal community]... I feel every time like I have come home... it's not that I have so much close contact with others... you can count them on one hand... but still... despite the trouble and arguments... I feel at home... above all... when I enter the premises Friday evening... huhhhh (exhales audibly) ... I feel like I came home... like I have arrived... I mean, of course I'm working on it... (laughs) and maybe I'll become [religiously] enlightened one day... but I feel like I came home... that something that's difficult to explain...

Dani: Because you're amongst Jews? Or people of similar origin?

Iris: Because I am amongst Jews. Yes... and partly because they are people of similar origin... (pause)

Dani: But there's no one there that you could speak Hungarian with...

Iris: That doesn't matter, Hungarian, Romanian that's not really important that doesn't bother me...

[...]

This part of the interview relates directly to Iris's membership in the Jewish community, and for the second time in the interview she mentions that she came home to somewhere. The first reference of home referred to her husband and her children, this time it refers to being at home amongst Jews. As the pauses and emotional reactions show (audible exhaling and laughter) this is a highly charged area for Iris, because by going to the Jewish community she oversteps a limit that especially her father had been so keen to establish.

This part of the interview relates back directly to the beginning of the interview where Iris stressed her non-belonging to Hungarians and Romanians. While she does not mention hatred for Romanians or Hungarians in this context, she makes clear that the maintenance of the language "does not bother" her; she did not pass any of the languages on to her children. She again stresses her belonging to Jews. This belonging she expresses with the metaphors: "I came home...like I have arrived", which can be

related to the notion of the Wandering Jew. Perhaps ironically, she found her Jewish home not in Israel but in a small Diasporic community of Jews in the country she just wanted to pass through, who often went through as many out-of-placements and displacements as Iris. Like her, the other birth Jews in the liberal community wanted and needed a Jewish home, and worked on its creation. Underlying her homecoming and arrival is that the (descent-Jewish) founding members of *Gescher* were as agential in their quest for a Jewish home, like Iris they acted against super-imposed notions of orthodoxy or assimilation and held similar ideological values to her. In short, Iris and those members share homophilous values.

[...]

Dani: Did you always... mmm... wear those *Magen Davids* [Stars of David, referring to her pendant and earrings]... even when your father was still alive?

Iris: (laughs) Yes... I bought them [points to her earrings] now [on her last trip] in Israel... but that necklace I've always worn that and my dad: 'Do you have to do that? Really? Does it really have to be?'...he was member of the [Jewish] community... he claimed because he was sick anyway, there'd be no loss... and... but he didn't want... if history repeats itself... that I and my children would be implicated... his fear was for us. (pause) Yes. (pause)... Just ask if there's anything of importance... there's nothing I can think of right now...

Dani: (pause) Mmm... it sounds to me that... that your acting out being Jewish in the everyday is a very cognitive endeavour... it's reading all of those books... and to think about what being Jewish means... Do you think that manifests in a difference in your position towards Jews and non-Jews?

Iris: No... no, that doesn't really matter... I don't care... I want... do I care? Good question! Yes...

Dani: I'm just wondering... because you said that you feel quite well in the community because they're Jews...

Iris: (interrupts) It's like that: 99% of my friends are non-Jews. That's how it is. But I have to say those people... those 99% non-Jews are probably my friends because... because... besides shared interests... because through me... through me... they are very involved in my Jewishness (*Jüdischsein*)... I got them that far that they only read books about Judaism... through me they engage... they are interested in Judaism... with nearly all of my friends... the major topic is Judaism... I would say... if it's people from swimming or the literature circle... every day I get a number of articles about Judaism... I get bombarded by these articles... because all of those friends really engage with it...

[...]

Two important issues resurface in this interview sequence: first, Iris's outward signification of being Jewish through the Stars of David she wears in the form of her earrings and pendants, and then her non-Jewish friends who support her in her Jewishness. These two issues are inextricably linked. On an outward level, Iris already signifies her belonging to the group 'Jews', or at least her strong connection to them for any person to see. This in conjunction with her verbalisation of being Jewish shows a similar strategy to Ron's assertive Jewishness and Israeliness. Much like him, she pre-empted encounters with anti-Semites because they will either immediately react to her, or will stay away from her. However, a person who does not hide and who does not set themselves up to be a victim is less likely to suffer abuse. Thus, the persons who become friends with her are most likely to show reactions from supporting her Jewishness actively to being neutral towards it. These non-Jews are hence "untypical" or "non-typical" Germans as Lynn Rapaport's (1992: 197, 1997: 162-204) interview partners referred to them. Her interview partners stressed the difference between their German friends and random Germans, and thus justified their friendships, or even intimate relationships with them. Because Iris had suffered so much anti-Semitism in the past, it is crucial for her to be accepted by those non-Jews as a Jew, and not having to hide it. Iris's underlying attitude to see beyond categories is confirmed by these Germans. They too see beyond categorical belongings and show openness towards

people. In other words, a homophily of this value exists between Iris and these ‘categorical others.’ This enables the growth and maintenance of personal friendships (Carrier 1999; Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983) across ethnic categories. Furthermore, these Germans confirm the notion that Iris’s grandfather and father attempted to pass on to her and that her husband lives out everyday. In sum, the shared values and the positive experiences with these Germans outweigh the negative ones and thus confirm Iris’s early positive experiences and her fundamental attitude towards other people.

Yet, her *Magen David* relates to a different notion too, which is the lack of knowledge of Jewish tradition. While she does not have much of an understanding of it, she avers her own belonging to Jews with this Star; it is for her more of a shield, which is the literal translation of the Hebrew term *Magen*. Wearing the Star of David can be seen as a performative act of Jewishness and embody being Jewish, and by this token distract from the actual lack of substance when it comes to Jewish tradition or religion.

Impressively, Iris demonstrates the ability to engage in a Jewish/non-Jewish dialogue. In chapter three I talked at great length about how Jews and non-Jews do not communicate in Germany, or if they do so, they do it privately. Iris confirms this point. She has all of her friends interested in Judaism, and her Jewishness, it is not a taboo, and by the private nature of these relationships offers the option to all parties concerned to speak unencumbered by stereotypes and categories, and learn about a different point of view. With her private actions Iris shows that through openness, and again flexibility to change one’s opinion of a certain people, decategorisations and exchange are possible. However, it took Iris until she settled back in Germany after long deployments of her husband in Indonesia to be able to engage in this dialogue with non-Jewish Germans, and furthermore she could divert her hatred of Germans to her mother-in-law, and concentrate her negative feelings towards Germans on a single person (cf. Capelos 2008).

[...]

Iris: (pause) And what's important to me... when I die... it doesn't have to be a Jewish cemetery... but I want to be buried in our village... where my husband can come and visit me quickly... but [I want my] date of birth and date of death... and a Star of David [on my tombstone]...

Dani: And that נ (pey nun)¹²⁰ ... what's it again... 'here rests'?

Iris: No, no... I don't need that... that's unimportant to me.

Dani: Yes, I think it's 'here lies' ... it's the abbreviation...

Iris: No, I don't want that.

Dani: ...but you want the *Magen David* [on the tombstone] ...

Iris: No... that [the Hebrew script] is really unimportant to me... but I've always worn that Star of David [pendant]... my cousin in Haifa told me all I need is a Star of David tattooed on my forehead... something simple [for my tombstone]... only name, date of birth and death and a Star of David. I don't need Hebrew script [on it]... reading and writing [Hebrew]... I have problems with that myself again... so, no, but I want a Star of David [on my tombstone] and then I'll be satisfied. (pause)

[...]

In this last part of the interview, which prefigures the debriefing, Iris comes full circle. She wants to be buried in the village near Cologne where she lives with her husband, where her husband can "visit" her and she wants a Star of David on her tombstone. Thus, she puts four threads together: that of being at home in the village, with her husband, being recognisably Jewish and asserting her own individual Jewishness. Iris is aware that her husband would not be able to be buried with her in the Jewish cemetery, which allows the burial of *halachic* Jews only. With her burial decision she confirms her belonging to him as a spouse who is a vital part of her Jewishness in Germany. He was the reason why she stayed in Germany, and it was him who enabled her reassessment of the 'Germans.' However, had Iris not harboured the deep seated value to think beyond categorical belongings, she would not have been able to fall in love with her non-Jewish German husband, stay in Germany and make German non-Jewish friends. This key value of hers has been confirmed and strengthened through her

encounters with these non-Jewish Germans. They too think beyond categories and can thus be seen as an extension of Iris's own identity, which lies beyond Jewishness.

These different forms of belonging stand in the contrast to her non-belonging and alienation at the beginning of the interview: there she was in a hostile land, surrounded by hostile people, and the only Jew. Now she is not the only Jew anymore and surrounded by individuals who love her and care for her. The localisation aspect in this part of the interview is very pronounced. Iris repeatedly talks of "our village", a place where she has a strong personal belonging and which stands in binary opposition to the totality of Germany. This little place of Germany is filled with friends, it has become her home while the country as a whole remained alien. This feeling at ease, despite her occasionally resurfacing hatred for Germans goes so far that she wants to rest amongst the people of the village, as long as she can assert her Jewishness.

Throughout the interview Iris asserted her Jewishness, and stressed several times how she refused to hide it. This refusal to hide her Jewishness did not deter her from falling in love with a German man, whose mother acted anti-Semitically towards her. It was not only that Iris was sure of John's love and support but that she was not scared of her mother-in-law. She had withstood anti-Semitism in Romania as a child and caused her parents to leave: how could one person alone now get to her? Iris presents herself as very unafraid on the face of discrimination, and mentions very early in the interview that maybe because she was supposed to hide her Jewishness she emphasised it. This emphasis did not stop when she came to Germany. Here, she used the same strategy as in Romania. This strategy leads to an apparent strength and fearlessness in the face of discrimination. At the same time it makes her noticeable as a Jew, and potentially deters the odd slip of the tongue because interlocutors might monitor themselves more carefully.

This strategy of candour has led to Iris being able to settle in Germany, even though she might still not call the country her *Heimat*. She has non-Jewish friends who support her interest in all things Jewish, her non-Jewish husband supports her: she shares the common ground of homophilous values, ideologies and interest with these people. Her

children have some interest in Jewish life too. Both of them accompanied her to the synagogue on different occasions. Through *Gescher LaMassoret* Iris found homophilous co-ethnics amongst whom she feels homely. How homely she feels in Germany comes up when she talks about how she wants to be buried: in the village cemetery where her husband can visit her with a tombstone that bears a Star of David. This way, she puts her Jewishness and being in Germany together, by literally becoming part of the German soil. Through this final act she would live out what her grandfather wanted: she came home to Germany. It might as well be this junction that disables her from imagining a life in Israel as she mentioned earlier in the interview. Her cousin in Israel does not show much understanding for her Jewishness. He is a secular Israeli, she has become a somewhat religious Diaspora Jew. This bears witness to the diverging ideas concerning Jewishness of Jews in Germany and Israeli Jews (cf. Kranz 2007c). Iris German husband and her German friends on the other hand accept her Jewishness and support it. Ironically, a blood-related Israeli Jew understands her less than the ‘categorical others’, another confirmation of Iris’s value to think beyond categories.

Nora

Nora is the youngest of the three interview partners. She is in her mid-thirties, and came to attend the liberal community in late 2004. For the interview we met in her flat just after *Chanukah*¹²¹ 2005. The chandelier she used as a *Chanukiyah*¹²² was still on the window ledge, and Nora told me that she had been lighting the candles every evening “I’m now out of tea lights!” Decembers in Cologne are wet and cold, though it is the darkness that gets most to those living in the area. Christmas Fairs and anything to light up the darkness that falls at half past three in the afternoon is very welcome, as is any hot drink. Nora and I chatted about these issues, of the cold, and more so the dark; she had prepared hot spicy tea and biscuits for comfort, and lit candles.

[...]

Dani: (laughs) Mmm... do you want to tell me anything about your biographical background? Where you’re from... parents... grandma... I know that she was Jewish...

Nora: (interrupts) Yes, my patrilineal (*väterliche*) grandmother.

Dani: And your father was baptised, right?

Nora: Yes, that’s correct, he was baptised Protestant.

Dani: Because your mother wanted that?

Nora: No... my father was originally baptised Protestant because his father was a Protestant...

Dani: Yes...

Nora: It was the [19]30s it was somehow foreseeable... and my mother is Catholic... and my mother’s family insisted either you marry a Catholic or you don’t marry at all... and therefore as my father put it... “I bowed to the circus” and underwent a Catholic baptism because he wanted to marry that woman...

Dani: (laughs) Wow... he’s been part of all major religions of the country then... are they practising Catholics?

Nora: My.... maternal grandparents (*Großeltern mütterlicherseits*) ... I only got to know my maternal grandmother and she was really ‘dark’ Catholic...

[...]

The beginning sequence of the interview indicates that I am already aware of Nora’s partially Jewish family from previous conversations. This part of the interview is a repetition of themes, which had been raised in conversations before, and a verbalisation of attitudes and topics, which run through the interview. The two main issues are knowledge about her Jewish grandmother, which goes hand in hand with non-knowledge about her. This paradox of knowing and non-knowing runs through the interview. It is being expressed in different ways, sometimes metaphorically, sometimes in the sense of ‘be/longing.’ In this ‘be/longing’ the ‘longing’ is dominant, and the ‘be’ not yet officially realised. The other dominant theme is the recognition of the other religious affiliations of her family, and the religious approach of her father. Nora uses derisive language such as “bowed to the circus” to underline that her father did not appreciate his (second) baptism either, and “‘dark’ Catholic” to describe her mother’s parents. The term ‘dark Catholic’ is part of the vernacular language: it means strictly adhering to the dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church and not questioning them. Besides this colloquialism, Nora uses the classificatory terms “*väterlicherseits*” und “*mütterlicherseits*”, which shows her understanding of the categories, which are used to establish a *halachic* status. Both terms are used in regard to kinship in German academia, they are the exact translations of patrilineal and matrilineal, and function as synonyms.

[...]

Nora: See! Yes... [speaking local dialect] [...] I think that my mother told her mother that my father comes from a Protestant family originally... the Jewish part they swept really carefully under the carpet... that genealogically you don’t get further than to some

employee of the train service... that would have been my great-granddad... I never got further than to some person called Moselau... all I know about my grandmother Mia Moselau... born where and when I don't know... it's... mmm... my father only shrugs his shoulders 'No idea when my mother was born.'

Dani: But she did not convert, right?

Nora: No, no, she did not convert.

Dani: So she basically survived through her husband...

Nora: (interrupts) Exactly...

Dani: ...because it was a mixed marriage?

Nora: Yes. Exactly. But it's been swept under the carpet really carefully... nobody asks... we're Protestants... and no further... I don't know what they pulled off or who they knew...

Dani: Does your dad have any connection to Judaism?

Nora: No, not at all. Besides a couple of issues concerning his worldview, which penetrate...

Dani: Like what for example?

Nora: (pause) I can't really say... mmm... (pause) [exhales audibly] ... I can't really pin it down... mmm... (pause) he says that he believes in a higher order in general but that we can't really grasp it... when you come up with some trinity thoughts of Christianity he just stares at you... like 'bugger off'... and overall... my father is not a religious person... he'll say that he believes there is some system in place... and 'I believe that there is something higher which we can't grasp and will never grasp... and all else we'll figure out...' or not.

Dani: But your grandmother did not pass anything on?

Nora: No, no.

Dani: So they were Protestants already for safety?

Nora: Yes, yes.

In this section Nora elaborates further on her family, and the facts there her father was baptised and that she does not know more about her grandmother than what is

presumably her full name, and that her grandmother's father was an employee of the train companies. She also mentions that her grandmother did not pass any knowledge about Judaism on to Nora's father, and that her grandmother did not convert. If any of this is factually true, I do not know, it is the truth Nora lives by (McAdams 1993). Her father claims to not have any knowledge about Judaism, and as it seems about his own mother. His mother, Nora's grandmother, appears like a ghost throughout the interview: while she is an anchoring point for Nora's identity, factual knowledge about where she born, where she was from, and her family does not exist.

In this sequence another issue that runs through the interview is raised for the first time. This concerns Nora's father. Does he not have any interest to tell Nora more about his mother, or does he really have no information as he conveys to her? Despite his unwillingness and non-knowledge about Judaism, Nora makes a point of stressing that there is something essentially Jewish about her father: his worldview. Her father seems to align to something that she can identify as a Jewish religious concept, and this way sets him apart from Christianity, and Jewifies him. The theme "belief system" is expressed by Nora explicitly as an anchor for her father's, and her own Jewishness.

It is important to understand that the individuals who want to convert need to convince the rabbi that they believe, and want to practice in order to be allowed to convert. Thus patrilineal Jews, or those without papers as well as all other potential converts will have to stress their religious belonging; a socio-cultural, ethnic, or historic belonging does not suffice to be admitted to conversion. This makes for the highly problematic issue that patrilineal Jews and those without papers have to deal with. Based on their family history, they might feel as Jews, but because they do not fulfil the *halachic* requirement of matrilineality, or cannot proof it, they do not have access to a Jewish infrastructure in Germany, unless they convert.¹²³ However, as Becker has shown in her ethnographic work on Russian Jews in Germany, the role expectations of Jews and non-Jews alike shaped the narratives of her Jewish interview partners (Becker 2001: 99-102). In a bitter twist of irony Becker mentions that:

[...] because of persecution under National Socialism and/or Stalinism people wishing to immigrate to Germany might not own any papers [to identify as Jewish] at all anymore. They lack proof of identity because they have been persecuted as Jews. Put differently: their [categorical] Jewish identity is constituted through the fact that it cannot be proved anymore, or only with great difficulty. [...] A complete obloquy of a Jewish identity is part of the history of the twentieth century [...]. (Becker 2001: 57).

By virtue of the lack of proof of their factual Jewishness, and the role expectations of the Jewish and non-Jewish surrounding, the Russian incomers in Germany had to twist and turn their life-stories and narratives. The same goes for Jews of German or Eastern European descent without papers: to be easier accommodated they need to fit the master narrative of the *Shoah*, while those who resist are literally out of discursive means. Nora goes along with the hegemonic *Shoah* narratives, and will in later parts express something that I called a phantom pain concerning her family. She does not know anything about them, yet she feels the acute loss of them. The non-knowledge about her own family, and the knowledge about the *Shoah* are constitutive of Nora's Jewish identity (cf. Hoffman 2004)

Dani: Did your mother know that he [her husband] was originally a Jew? That his mother was a Jew...

Nora: Yes, that was mentioned at one point...

Dani: Mmm...

Nora: But... she didn't give it any meaning... I mean, it took me... I wondered... why would one give a child in elementary school...

Holocaust literature... or children's books that emphasised the Jewish (*das Jüdische*)... that I find somewhat funny... hold on I'll get them for you! Jewish children's books... here they are!

Dani: And those you got from?

Nora: My mother.

Dani: (completely startled) Aha.

[...]

Nora: And I remember... that [TV program] was something I was allowed to stay up for... normally I had to be in bed at half seven or eight... sure, I was an elementary school child... but for that I was allowed to stay up... it was always on TV at quarter past eight on *ARD*¹²⁴. For that I was allowed to stay up, that I was allowed to watch... and I got the books very quickly afterwards from my mother... at least the first two volumes... I think the third one I still don't have... the first two... they are from this time... and nowadays I ask myself 'Does one give that to a nine or ten year old? The diaries from the Warsaw Ghetto?'

Dani: Did you know about your family history then?

Nora: No.

Dani: Was it mentioned to you at one point? Did you ask?

Nora: No, at one point I started to ask questions... and I got the lackadaisical answer 'Yes, paternally, your grandmother' but nothing more precise.

Dani: Do you have family in Germany who you could ask?

Nora: Family from my father's side... yes... [his] siblings... in as much as one is in contact with them... that's the problem... my father defines relatives as: 'Relatives are something to eat? No! To drink? No. What are they then? Something to puke about.'¹²⁵

[...]

Nora tells two stories in these two sequences, which are content-wise repetitions. Both deal with how her mother paved her way to more knowledge about the *Shoah*. She also repeats the theme how her father does not want to engage with his family, or his family history.

I reacted startled to Nora's announcement that her mother gave her *Shoah* literature, and that her mother told her about her paternal grandmother. At no point in the interview did Nora come up with any solution, why her mother, and not her father, gave her the literature, and told her about her grandmother.

In line with what Bruner (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b) refers to as narrative sense-making, and Becker (2001) as an accommodation of changing circumstances in a life-story, Nora connects narratively her mother's actions with the fact that her grandmother was Jewish. In the narrative she makes this connection, although she does not state her mother's motives at any time in the interview. However, by this narrative reasoning she combines her mother's action with her own sense of being Jewish, and that her mother must have somehow known something that she wanted to tell her. Nora shows here what Leon Festinger referred to as cognitive dissonance (1957/1985). He argues that individuals suffer cognitive dissonance if they cannot unite their experiences into one coherent whole. In order to overcome this dissonance they engage in the creation of possible explanations to integrate unfitting or contradictory parts. Linde (1993) asserts that the creation of coherence is one of the major themes that underlie a life-story narrative (cf. Collins 2003, 2004). Nora integrates her mother's actions into her narrative as part of her sense making process as to why her mother, and not her father paved her way into Judaism, and why her mother engaged in passing on parts of German history, which are highly problematic and taboo ridden. If the non-transmission of Jewish tradition, or the wish to pass are symptoms of her father's trauma, or if he is indeed traumatised is not known to Nora. Because of the lack of knowledge about her father, she strongly focuses on her mother, and the positive aspects of this, non-Jewish, family of hers. Nora emphasises how resistance against following the majority runs in her mother's family:

[...]

Nora: And... some things like... that her mother [Nora's maternal grandmother] hit her [Nora's mother] in the bunker in front of all people in a night when there were bombs because she did the *Hitlergruß* [Hitler

Greeting]... my mother was too young for the *BDM*¹²⁶ and when you're eight you just don't have a clue really... she just wanted to be part of this girls' group... and when they were in the bunker this *BDM* group came in and greeted with the then typical greeting... and my mum greeted back the same way... and my grandmother hit her and told her: 'That's the first and last time that you've said *Heil Hitler*, if you do that ever again you're in for a serious beating!' and I just thought: 'Oh my god, grandmother, that could have cost you your life!' And... those were things when I started to ask questions like, 'Tell me, in our family, what's there?' And then my mother told me you should be asking your father because they brushed somebody under the carpet... and then I got the answer from my dad that, 'Yes, there's something', but I've never dared asking that much... it was somehow awkward.

[...]

Dani: And in London you started to be more interested in Judaism again, right? Or did you look for Jewish places? Or did you meet somebody?

Nora: (interrupts) Yes, I looked for Jewish places... and I wrote my Master's thesis on Jewish continuity... that means more or less 'Will we have Jewish grandchildren?' [English in original] and I did then... mmm... (pause)...

[...]

Here, again, Nora engages in the creation of a coherent narrative by connecting elements with previous parts of her narrative within the topic 'mother's family.' Her German (non-Jewish) grandmother resisted the pattern of behaviour superimposed by the Nazis. This makes for a narrative bridgehead to her mother's action in later life, when she supports her, Nora's quest, into the Jewish side of the family.

This interest in Judaism which her mother had awakened became dormant in her teenage years and resurfaced when she was an adult and had the option to do Jewish things on her own account. Interestingly Nora engages in an academic effort that deals with Jews, while at the same time she pursues Judaism religiously, as the next sequence shows.

[...]

Nora: I went to *Island's Garden Reform* in Golders Green... that was the synagogue where I felt really at home immediately... I came in and I thought... you belong here... Do you know that feeling? I felt as if I'd come home. And... I was once in the *Ealing Liberal*... but never in the orthodox... the orthodox never attracted me... and... don't know... through my research and digging... somebody gave me the contact to Judith Rubin... and Jonathan [long time head of the liberal community in Cologne] told me... that he lived opposite the *Ealing Liberal* but always went to the Orthodox one on Grange Road... and I asked that as he went there, if he didn't know Judith Rubin... and "Yes, sure!"... so I thought, cool the world is just a small place! And I told Judith...

[...]

Similar to Iris, Nora describes her initial arrival in a non-orthodox synagogue in the sense of having come home, and belonging. Although Iris is a *halachic* Jew she had lived outside of the community structures for most of her life. Nora declares her preference for the liberal form of practice and, like Ron, refers to the orthodox practice as not attractive. This attitude might be influenced by her knowledge of orthodox practice, which would reject her because she is a patrilineal Jew. The liberal notion, which she is aware of, declares that a person who is not *halachically* Jewish might indeed have a Jewish identity and that the conversion for this person is indeed 'only' a confirmation of an existing Jewish identity.¹²⁷ This means that Nora shares a homophily

in terms of this ideology with the members of *Gescher LaMassoret*, who understand Jewishness as an ethno-historic identity. Nora mentioned to me as well that she had not “dared” going to the orthodox synagogue in Cologne, and only been there to inquire about a list of kosher food. She had not felt welcomed during the short encounter, which she describes in the sequence below. She had felt that the encounter had been beset by suspicion towards her. Like Ron, she did not question the underlying suspicion that might have informed this attitude towards unknown incomers.

Besides her preference for a liberal practice, Nora engages in further narrative coherence by connecting an encounter with a person in London, Judith Rubin, with a member of the Cologne community. By this token she creates familiarity between other Jews and herself. This familiarity amongst Jews is part of the master-narrative of Jews in Germany, where, due to the small number of Jews pre-Russian immigration, all those who were part of the communities knew each other, or of each other (cf. Rapaport 1992, 1997). She refers to the knowledge of the person in London and in Cologne with “the world is a small place”, and with this notion creates a sense of coherence between her own journey to the liberal community in Cologne which went via London. Again, like in her encounter with the orthodox community, she does not reflect further. The stories serve to create a coherence of how she journeyed into the liberal community in Cologne: one plot connects her ideologically with the liberal community, another connects her personally with it, yet another connects to the master-narrative of Jews in Germany.

[...]

Nora: Yes, and back here... (exhales audibly)... I continued reading and the thought and the wish increased that I wanted to go in this direction.

(pause)

Dani: Mmm... did you start going to the liberal community immediately after you returned to Cologne?

Nora: No, no... I only dared going there at the end of last year... at the end of 2004.

Dani: Dared?

Nora: Yes, dared... contact... I didn't really dare going to the orthodox... I once went there to get a kosher list¹²⁸... but other than that... it's quite a closed club...

Dani: Mmm

Nora: Yes, closed, at least drawing on my experiences... kind of 'Don't open the door too far!' and... then I thought: more than bite you and kick you out they can't really do... and did... try with the liberal community... (pause)

Dani: And you got in touch because they are liberal?

Nora: Yes, exactly. (pause)

[...]

Dani: And the worldview thing. How do you express that in the everyday?

Nora: (pause)... that is... that is difficult to put into words (pause)... (pause) I feel it more in discussions with people when it comes to philosophical issues... that would be things like... a particular basic philosophy... that I live in the here and now... a particular basic attitude towards life and the universe and the rest... that I say (pause) I live in the here and now and have to deal with it... I base the attitudes that underlie my actions... on lessons I learned in the past... but I refuse

strictly to think about the issue when I'm no longer... I had discussions with people... 'Yes but it has to go on when you die'... and I said no... that is like... I live now... and all the rest will work out or not... but I'll see it then... I... I don't conceptualise... (pause) with a paradise or a hell in mind... I... no... this... I have to adjust to everything new... what should I worry today about... about things I can't influence... I have to deal with them and I have to get on with them anyway... (pause)... I can't put my finger on it... and when you say Shabbat... (pause)

Dani: Mmm...

Nora: ... I refuse to clean the house Saturdays... generally.... After the week... Saturday is my day... but it's not like I don't use money... well...

Dani: So you don't do the things that you see as work?

Nora: Yes, exactly.

Dani: Do you light candles [on Friday night]?

Nora: Yes, I light candles...

[...]

In these sequences Nora explains her personal notion of Jewish religion. Narratively, she moves on from how she came to the Jewish community in Cologne, and why she came to the liberal community, and now attempts to capture the essence of believing (liberally) Jewish. Her idea is underpinned by the notion of the ungraspable, which Judaism expresses through the idea that the name of God (YHVH) must not be said, because it is too sacred, and beyond the grasp of humankind. Nora takes on board lessons. She has learned from the past, but rejects conceptualising things she cannot grasp or foresee, things such as what happens after death over which she has no control. Instead she invests in the here and now, and deals with the things she has to deal with. From this metaphysical idea she returns to applied practice, and here again puts her own twist on it. She lights candles to greet Shabbat and will not engage in what she conceptualises as work, but will use money, which is, *halachically*, forbidden on

Shabbat. The reason for this is that the use of money implies that at least one person worked, because money is a means of exchange. It does not matter if the person who worked is a Jew or non-Jew, as the *Halacha* stipulates that Shabbat is the day when all should rest. By combining her worldview with her practice on Shabbat, Nora connects transcendence of the scripts with the immanence of her own practice (Sered 1988).

[...]

Nora: And... if I will ever be admitted to conversion or not... that is a thing... if I'll ever belong officially or not... that is at the end of the day... (pause) I don't want to say irrelevant... but secondary... (pause)

Dani: Because you perceive of your belonging [there]?

Nora: Yes. Exactly... I feel I belong... because I feel that way... (pause) because I can come to the community... I am allowed in the community... and mmm... yes, well ... if at one point I'll get some 'kosher certificate'... we'll see.

Dani: Why do you perceive belonging to the Jewish people?

Nora: (pause)... (pause) That's a good question (pause)...

Dani: Why is it such a dominant belonging?

Nora: (pause)... (pause)... That is... well... (pause)... On the one hand that is a question of faith... because I... as I... (pause)... like my father believe in a higher concept... but that I don't find in Christianity... that is too personalised for my liking... that... that doesn't work for me... (pause)... (pause)... and... and... it's more like... the aspect of faith and the aspect of philosophy which are behind it... like particular attitudes to life and the rest... to the concept that lies behind it... I can identify with it... (pause)... (pause)... (pause)... I can't manage to make it more precise... (pause)... (pause)...

[...]

In this section Nora uses her belief to express why she belongs to the Jewish people. This sets her notably apart from Ron who not once mentioned faith as the key feature to belonging to the Jewish people. Ron throughout stressed his Jewishness and Israeliness as a means of expressing his position in the orthodox synagogue and German (non-Jewish) society, but did not actually verbalise what being a Jew, or Israeli meant to him besides that he is not a Diaspora Jew. Iris mentioned she is struggling with the notion of what Judaism and (her personal) Jewishness are. The closest she came to explaining it was by using the term 'community of fate' (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). She also referred to the *Shoah*, and that she had some kind of *Shoah* identity, which in turn forbade her to call herself anything but a Jew. Now Nora who comes from a mixed family uses the idiom of belief to explain her belonging, and that belief connects her with her (birth Jewish) father who as she had stated before does not have any links to Judaism, or Jewishness, yet he believes 'Jewish style.' This connection shows again Nora's attempts to create a bridge and make sense through connections to a tenuous Jewish past of her family to strengthen her own claim to belong to the Jewish people, while not rejecting her Christian family but Christian faith. She stresses the difference of Jewish to Christian faith; to the first and its direct and abstract yet immediate relationship¹²⁹ to god she reacts positively; to the latter she does not align. Her sense of belonging makes a conversion desirable, although she calls it "secondary". Nora perceives herself as definitely belonging to the Jewish people, not only by descent, but as well by belief. The latter she can prove by doing Jewish, being Jewish is more difficult. She lacks any proof beyond the bits of narrative information she has from her parents.

[...]

Dani: Do you actually have Jewish friends outside of the community?

Nora: Mmm... yes, one, Tally, the mother of my godchild.

Dani: Where do you know her from? From back in the day... school?

Nora: Mmm... (pause)... no, it was an accidental acquaintance... on the train actually... the topic Judaism occurred really late... when we met

later... and we went to the *Haus der Geschichte*¹³⁰ in Bonn... when you come in... there are names running in one room... of Holocaust victims...

Dani: Yes...

Nora: And then Tally said 'I'm still waiting for a name from my family to come up there'... and then... that was the first time when it became a topic... (pause)...

Dani: Do you seek the proximity of Jews?

Nora: (interrupts) Mmm

Dani: Or is it like... you go to the community... and what happens happens...

Nora: (interrupts) Exactly.

Dani: But you don't go consciously...

Nora: No, what happens happens... and through Binah's move... through Binah's move I met Nathaniel... and that is... but explicitly... that I go and seek... beyond the community... no, can't say that... though it feels to me I can register for a second residency in the community as often as I am there... (laughs)

[...]

Similar to her chance encounter with Judith Rubin in London who happened to know Jonathan and vice versa, here again, Nora creates coherence within her own Jewish identity through a chance encounter "on the train", a non-place in Augé's (1995) sense, and not a place with is (positively) connoted to Jewishness in Germany. This serendipitous encounter led to her friendship with Tally who lives in a neighbouring city. Nora stresses that she does not push for Jewish friends, she is aware that chances to encounter a Jew in Cologne are fairly low (cf. Becker 2001).

Nora met Binah in the liberal community, where Binah, who is my (private) friend, had asked to accompany me for a service. Binah in turn has access to a vast network of Jews because she used to be active in the orthodox community and in the Jewish students'

association (*BJSD*). Nora and Binah stayed in contact briefly, but did not grow close, the same happened with Nathaniel. Falling in the category ‘Jew’ did not suffice to create enough common ground between Nora and the two others. This gives weight to Nora’s claim that she does not push for contacts or friendships with other Jews, they just happen much like her other friendships just happen. This approach to relationships to others shows the underlying homophilous value that connects Nora to Iris and Ron. Like the two of them, she shares an appreciation of others beyond categorical belonging, she seeks like-mindedness and acceptance in her friends (boyd 2008; Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983). This non-categorical thinking and openness is a key value that runs through the three interviews presented here and resurfaced in the other interviews conducted with members of *Gescher* as well. By this token, the members of *Gescher* show the homophily that McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001) characterised as the key feature for creation and maintenance of social networks; boyd (2008), Cohen (1977) Lazarsfeld & Merton (1954) as well as Verbrugge (1977, 1979, 1983) define as enabling and sustaining friendships, Fischer (1977) and Kalmijn (1998) as underpinning marriage choices, McPherson & Smith-Lovin (1982, 1986, 1987) as well as Popielarz (1999) as underlying voluntary organisations and that Collins (2002b) sees as the key feature that underpins the community of the Quakers he researched.

[...]

Nora: [...] I have it [Star of David] right now under my jumper... but depending on what I wear I have this relatively visible star... I’ve been wearing it since... I got it as a present from a Jewish colleague in my first job... (pause)

Dani: Mmm

Nora: With her... through her... she had between three and five citizenships and lived all over the world... Hebrew was her native tongue... from her I learned the first bits of Hebrew... and at one point she gave me the Star... and that means... I’ve been wearing the thing for more than ten years now... besides some stupid line from some

stupid Neo-Nazi in Berlin-Wedding... fortunately it was just a verbal attack that I gave back and walked on... I had luck... mmm... here in Cologne I got some stupid line from whatever spoke shit English 'You bloody fucking Jewish' (sic; laughs)... I just looked bewildered... 'What does he want from me?'... no... generally... my colleagues ask me... especially with one of my colleagues... practising Muslim, originally Turkish now German citizen, and we regularly lead these philosophical comparative discussions... and he brought along a Turkish translation of the *Qu'ran* and I brought along my German translation of the *Torah*... and we started to compare... no, it's more interest... (pause)

Dani: Mmm

Nora: If... if somebody asks me about it... they are more likely to find it exciting...

[...]

Again, serendipity runs through the plot of Nora's narrative journey into Judaism. One of her colleagues who happened to be (Israeli) Jewish gave her a Star of David as a present. This Star Nora wears: to date I have never seen her without it. The Star then she relates to the only two times she ever encountered anti-Semitism because the Star made her visibly Jewish. This anti-Semitism was in turn perpetrated by the two major groups which Jews in Germany see as a threat to their well-being: Neo-Nazis and Islamists. Nora does not spell out the latter group, but mentions that the person spoke "shit English" when he offended her. By this idiom she dwells on my understanding of anti-Semitism in Germany, and my knowledge that especially children of Turkish Muslim immigrants imitate American 'Ghetto culture.' However, to counteract the notion of Turks as anti-Semites *per se* she uses the example of her colleague, a devout Muslim, who is very interested in discussing religion with her. This example is important to stress her own non-categorical thinking about other human beings, an attitude that Iris and Ron stressed in regard to non-Jewish Germans.

Nora uses her Star of David similarly to Iris to display a clear sign of belonging to the outside. Nora is the only person who told me that they encountered discrimination because they wore a Star of David. I think at this point it can be speculated that Nora expresses three issues through this discrimination story. First, she is willing to be recognisable as a Jew. Second, by virtue of being recognisable she uses the strategy that Ron and Iris use as well, which is to not hide. Third, through the discrimination she connects to the suffering of Jews. Nora does not have much actual knowledge about her Jewish grandmother, nor does she know if she lost any family. Her connection to the suffering of Jews is more a phantom pain, a pain she feels because of non-knowledge, which is a form of having suffered the annihilation of Jewish culture too (cf. Fischer 1986 for Armenians). Furthermore, by virtue of her non-knowledge she is subject to the suspicions of the other members of the community. One of them found her story somewhat strange and mentioned to me “You couldn’t brush something like that [a Jewish wife] under the carpet.” Interestingly, the person who rendered this line was a convert from a non-Jewish background. Descent Jews found Nora’s story credible, because they had a different kind of lived-in experience with the loss of tradition, and the loss or glossing over of family.¹³¹

[...]

Dani: Is there anything concretely as to why you came to the liberal community only at the end of 2004?

Nora: Mmm... (pause)... on the one hand I didn’t know for the longest time that there was a liberal community... (pause)... and on the other hand... to overcome oneself and take the plunge into cold water and say, ‘I’m doing this now. I’ll get through it’, took time.

Dani: And that process has...

Nora: (interrupts) Yes, that process took quite a while... that process took really long... well to deal with it, to come to terms with... to say I feel I belong there... I feel Jewish...

Dani: Mmm

Nora: To feel at home there... it was the feeling 'that's where you belong'... that feeling I had for the first time in London... that was like a piece of the puzzle that just fitted... and I couldn't put my finger on why that is so... it just fitted... and... it ate away in me into all different directions... mmm... it bustled about in me in all different directions... one thinks in all different directions... and... you start reading all sorts of things... and at one point I reached the point when I thought 'that's not enough and therefore you need a Jewish community'... and that was the point... when I had started to research and looked on the internet... and I already had that flyer that I'd brought back with me from England... from the *RSGB*... I think... *Reform Synagogues Great Britain*... and... it covers conversion to Judaism and other things... and then I had a look around in Germany to figure out if there are liberal or reform communities... as I said... the orthodox form of practice doesn't touch me...

Dani: Mmm

Nora: I don't know... it's... it's not for me... and as I said until I had figured out, 'Wow there's a liberal community in Cologne', and until I kicked myself in the butt to overcome my fear to venture into a closed society it took quite a while...

[...]

Nora goes back again to describing how long it took her to go to the liberal community in Cologne: nine and a half years. Nora had returned from her year abroad in London in 1995. By the time she arrived in the Jewish community in Cologne at the end of 2004, she had been wearing a Star of David for eight years, and more so than her outward signifier, Nora felt a Jew. This feeling of belonging, of being Jewish, is verbalised by Nora several times in the interview, and averred by referring to her belief and practice. Using this route of belonging to the Jewish people, a narrative belonging by virtue of descent, is problematic for Nora because she does not know much about her family history, and she lacks any factual proof. This faith-based way of expressing a belonging

to the Jewish people has been expressed by other converts, and those in the conversion process too. Thomas, Sandra and Helga expressed their belonging similarly to Nora, which does not mean that their ideas about Jewish religion were similar to Nora's. However, these expressions of belonging were based on doing Jewish in compliance with the *Halacha*. This pattern of behaviour is much more pronounced with converts and converted Jews than with descent Jews, who do not do Jewish according to Jewish religious law, but according to their individualised ideas of being Jewish.

[...]

Dani: Later, would you like to move somewhere with a bigger Jewish community, where it's easier to lead a Jewish life? Where you have a different kind of infrastructure? Or a better one...

Nora: Mmm... (pause) (pause) Yes, if this infrastructure was liberal too...

Dani: Like London, New York...

Nora: Yes, mmm... New York - I can't imagine to live in the US currently... but London... sure! (pause) (pause) If I could live off the money I earn in London I wouldn't have come back to Germany (laughs) (pause)

Dani: Did you ever hunt for a job there? With German you can get quite far... it's not that common a language that people speak...

Nora: I had a look around, when I finished my degree... but then I didn't find anything... and currently I am quite... how should I say... moored... rooted here... I have built a social network here because of which it would be difficult to leave here generally... (pause)... I would... I would not go to some hickville (*Kaff*, Yiddish in original) where I don't have contact to the surrounding world... (pause) ... in Germany itself there are only a limited number of cities where I would want to live... (pause)... a certain cadre needs to be there... smaller than Cologne I wouldn't like it... Hamburg, Berlin are clear options... but... Berlin has some [Jewish] infrastructure... don't know about Hamburg...

[...]

Similar to Iris and Ron, Nora muses in the last part of the interview as well where she could go in the future. As with Ron, it was actually my curiosity to ask them where they would like to live, which reveals my own bias of trying to understand if their positioning as an Israeli (Ron), or as a Jew who happens to become homely in Germany (Iris), or a German with extensive experiences abroad (Nora) would potentially lead to a physical mobility away from Cologne. Ron did not express the wish to 'return' to Israel, while Nora was not averse to the idea to move to London or to a town in Germany with a better (liberal) Jewish infrastructure. Iris mentioned that she wanted to be buried on the village cemetery. While the different stances of potentially moving away are certainly influenced by age and family situations, there is one shared motif: feeling in place through (significant) others. For Ron these are his children primarily, for Iris her family, and for Nora her friends: "my social network." These often non-Jewish others form the anchor of the attachment to stay in Cologne. However, I know from conversations with Nora and Iris that without these others they would not feel any attachment to staying in Cologne, or Germany. Both women mentioned that they are rather disinterested in property. Iris mentioned to me at one point: "if the house was gone tomorrow, it would be gone" and shrugged her shoulders, whereas Nora prefers renting to buying. I think it is too simple to assume that by virtue of the weak connection of property as homes, and these homes being in Germany, they could be easily discarded. Yet, the notion to be out of place is at least for Iris pronounced. It is the issue of *being in place* that is more important to understand, and this being in place is based around significant others. This means that the notion of home for all three is not bound to birthplace, and I would speculate that their attachment to any spatial place is lower than that of persons who have not been through displacements like Iris, or international moves like Ron or Nora.

The flexibility that Nora expresses regarding her place of residence mirrors her overall flexibility, or possibly her quest for an attachment that is underpinned by sense-making in progress. Unlike Ron and Iris she cannot fall back on prefab categories, or cultural

scripts ('Israel', '*Shoah*', 'DP', '*halachic* Jews') however much both question or reject the categories having validity for themselves. Nora's narrative presents an attempt to put information together in a way that the information makes sense, and leads to a logical outcome in coherent form (Linde 1993). In the interview it is obvious at some points that I reacted rather puzzled. This was in particular in regard to her mother's role in Nora's search for her Jewish roots. I have never met Nora's mother, and have no further information about her than what Nora told me.

About nine months after the original interview, in September 2006 Nora told me on the way home after a Friday night service that her mother had given her a "really interesting crystal bowl: it has a really huge *Magen David* etched into the bottom." I inquired where that bowl came from: "I don't know. She said she found it at home, amongst her parents' things." To date, like Nora, I am trying to piece these strange parts of information together. For Nora any such new part of potential ancestral Jewishness is exciting. I think here lies an interesting parallel to the research of Loewe & Hoffman (2002). Their research refers to Jews in Venta Prieta, Mexico, and their maintenance of Jewishness. Their fieldwork connects to research conducted from the end 1940s onwards. A number of the inhabitants of this Mexican town had been claiming to be of Jewish ancestry despite little knowledge about Jewish religion. During some of their first contacts with Jews from the US, and the Israeli (Jewish) anthropologist Raphael Patai in the late 1940s, the Venta Prieta Jews had been stressing their ancestry as a means to define themselves as Jewish (Loewe & Hoffman 2002: 1135). This claim was subsequently rejected by the rabbinate in Mexico City after visiting Venta Prieta (ibid: 1141). In consequence the Jews of Venta Prieta were forced to undergo *Giyur*, or remain unrecognised (ibid). Now, the descendants of those who converted in order to be recognised by the rabbinate hold much more knowledge of Jewish religion than their ancestors, Patai found during his return visit in the early 1960s (ibid). These descendants of converts do not feel the need anymore to stress their ancestral connection to Judaism as the way to belong to the Jewish people because they know Jewish religion (ibid: 1145), in other words, they pass as Jews. At the time of the interview Nora was in the process of acquiring this religious knowledge. This in

combination with the notion of family or loss there of, which is a feature in the identity of most descent Jews in Germany, leads to Nora's emphasis on her own family history.

At the time of the interview, Nora's main connection to Judaism consisted of a mix of her family history, a newly acquired knowledge about Jewish religion, and contacts to (*halachic*) Jews she seemed to have met though serendipity over the years. This way, Nora tries to put different aspects of a 'normal' Jewish identity of *halachic* Jews she knows together. These 'normal' identities, which for potential converts become somewhat normative show through in the narratives of Ron and Iris, and consists of practice (or its rejection), family history, and connection to other Jews (both positive and negative). The latter aspect is particularly important in Germany, where by virtue of their small number, members of the *Einheitsgemeinde* would often know each other at least by name, or knew somebody who knew; the notorious six degrees of separation amongst Jews who had grown up in Germany were often cut down to two degrees of separation.¹³² Nora is aware of these issues of Jewish life in post-*Shoah* Germany, and thus aligns to the building blocks of the master narrative by building on the descent story, lived-out Judaism, and familiarity with other Jews, and adds the counter-narratives of liberal Jews. By doing so, she incorporates values, which are homophilous amongst the Jews she wants to belong to. She expresses this homophily through her narrative. However, the value homophily to the other members of *Gescher* prefigure her encounter with the community (cf. Collins 2002b). In as much the homophilisation is an act of putting her attitudes and values into a narratable form (Noy 2007) that emphasises as well as confirms her belonging to them. As with Iris, she came home to something amongst the members of *Gescher*. Nora uses the narrative building blocks she can access to position herself vis-à-vis Jews and non-Jews alike, because hand in hand with her use of the master-narrative and counter-narrative manipulates both to fit into her own history. This way, she tries to connect the past with the present, and to develop potential solutions for the future by developing her own narrative (cf. Becker 2001). The actualisation of the future in her narrative is supposed to be lived out in the desired Jewish framework amongst Jews Nora relates to through a homophily of attitudes and values (boyd 2008; Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983) that would allow for personal friendships to develop.

Methodological and thematic issues

These are excerpts of interviews with two members of the liberal community and one person who wishes to convert. I have not edited their language and left pauses in to represent the spoken narrative as truthfully as I can. Riessman (1993) raises the point that the picking and choosing of bits of an interview are highly problematic, because they represent the emphasis and interpretation of the interviewer more than that of the interviewee. This is of course the case with these interviews too. I cut out parts due to the lack of space to accommodate the full narrative, and to be able to present data of more than one person. My reason for doing so is to be able to show the range of worldviews of the members and attendees of the liberal community, and the repercussions this has for the creation of a shared narrative, policies as well as actions which are acceptable to the majority of the members. The narratives of these three individuals highlights the complex issues of what can be conceptualised as different backgrounds. They each grew up in different countries, have different genders, family statuses, levels of formal education, native languages, belong to different generations, yet they all categorise themselves as Jews. In short, each of their experiences positions them uniquely in the social circle of the Jewish liberal community (Simmel 1890). The different family histories alone demonstrates a fraction of the possibilities of descent Jews, and beg the question whether a cultural script can be assumed as a means to convey meaning in a community as diverse as the liberal one (Kranz 2007c). The building block ‘descent’ of the cultural script of the *Einheitsgemeinde* master-narrative does exist within the counter-narratives of the members of the liberal community, but it cannot be assumed to have the same meaning for the individuals, because their ‘descent stories’ are too different, and do not show the internal similarities of the ‘descent stories’ of the *Einheitsgemeinde*¹³³.

Looking at the content of the narratives there is one striking issue that overshadows the individual differences of Ron, Iris, and Nora. This issue is the relentless expression of human agency. The volition to live their life according to their own individual standards, shows through self-referential narratives (Giddens 1991; Rapport 2003) by all three, throughout. In their narratives all three express a minority position amongst

Jews in Cologne, all three engage in counter-narratives that go against the grain of Jewish hegemony in the form of the local *Einheitsgemeinde*. All three defy an orthodox interpretation of the *Halacha*, and amend interpretations according to their standards. Ron and Iris also defy the ideological notion of *Yordah* (descend), a term used to refer to Jews who leave Israel (Magat 1999; Shokeid 1988, 1989; Noy 2007), and which is negatively connoted. Considering the time when Ron and Iris left Israel in the early 1970s, the risk to move categories from the positively connoted *Ole* (somebody who ascends, in this sense a Jew who immigrated to Israel) to the negative *Yored* (somebody who descends, a Jew who leaves Israel), was more likely than when Shokeid was conducting research in New York in the 1980s and Magat in Canada in the mid-1990s. Nora did not express any wish to make *Aliyah* (to ascend to Israel) in the interview, and has not done so in conversations, which is again part of a counter-narrative.

Making some sense, home, love and individualised attribution of guilt

Now looking at the narratives and connecting them to the theory I have put forward, it is striking to see how narratives function as a sense-making process and a tool of coherence-in-process. They offer a tool to put one's imagination into a framework that can be communicated to others (Bruner 1991b, 1998). The interview partners communicated the themes that are key to their lives in the narratives. These themes underpin their narratives constantly and coherently, as if when the events had happened they were bound to build up to a logical conclusion that fits into their self-schemata (Bruner 1987, 1990a). The coherence of the narratives and the different courses of actions that followed from self-schemata are followed through to different extents by the three individuals. According to Bruner, self-schemata are the schemes that persons develop of themselves, drawing on their past-experiences and using their imagination. The interpretation of the past experiences and their integration into a framework form the base of self-schemata. The individual develops (possible) plans of action to achieve a future goal from the self-schemata. At the same time the self-schemata are used to explain the past in a way that appears logical within the self-schemata: in the self-schemata past(s) and future(s) meet to live in the present to create (possible) future(s).

Linde (1993) outlined that life-story narratives, which I argue are underpinned by self-schemata, need to be coherent to make sense to the individual. If the narratives of life-stories cannot be integrated into a coherent form, the individual suffers from psychological distress and insecurity. Examples for incoherent life-story narratives where parts cannot be integrated are those of *Shoah* survivors (Grünberg 2007a, 2007b; Linde 1993; Ochs & Capps 2001). Their identities remain unsettled as a result of the extreme trauma (Baeyer, Haefer & Kisker 1964; Hadar 1991) which can not be integrated into their life-stories. The before the event and the after the event cannot be connected. The before cannot be used as source of identity to build a future version of the self, it does not make sense anymore. For non-traumatised people this is not the case. Self-schemata always exist in the plural as multiple nuanced versions of the self. This makes it possible for an individual to develop possible versions of the self (Nurius & Marcus 1986), and incorporate multiple dimensions (Mageo 2002) of the possible versions of the self in the self-schemata. This helps the individual to remain coherent through flexibility even if unsettling changes occur which necessitate a reinterpretation of the past (cf. Peacock & Holland 1993; Hyvärinen 2006).

Looking at Ron's narrative it seems as if a red thread runs through it. It is represented with an incredible fluency and reflexivity, it is very smooth: narratives and actions show a fit in this narrative, the self-schemata seem to condense into one single self-schema. Pauses like in the other two interviews do not exist in this interview. Spence (1986) claims that individuals smooth over non-fitting parts in their narratives; I predict Ron did that too. Why, for example, did he as a secular Israeli of German descent ever engage with a religiously defined Eastern European survivor community? Why did Jewish religion, which in Israel was rather irrelevant to him, become important in Germany? Why was a secular gathering not enough in the Diaspora? These issues hint at potential problems he has with non-Jewish Germans, and potentially a higher attachment to being and doing Jewish than he admits. In the interview he rejects any such problems as non-existent for him.

His narrative is the most cohesive of the three, it does not show any contradictions or ill-fitting parts, it just seems to fit and flow. However, unlike Iris who went through

displacement, and Nora who has a non-proven non-*halachic* Jewish status, he fits existing categories easiest: he is Israeli and Jewish, his parents “emigrated to Israel”, he left Israel to pursue his career in Germany, and happened to settle in Cologne. He does not resent Germans, and prefers a non-orthodox practice. Being Jewish is naturalised¹³⁴ for him whereas Iris and Nora try to figure out what being Jewish means to them. An indicator for this are their attempts to do Jewish in various situations.

Iris’s narrative seems penetrated by contradictions. Its internal coherence can only be understood if her fundamental value to venture beyond categories is taken into account. She describes her “hatred for Germany” and her immediate and long-standing love and marriage to her German non-Jewish husband. Then there is the contradiction of desired and actual action: her wish to return to Israel has not been realised (yet). Iris claims that she does not mourn or regret this non-return, she mentions in the narrative that she (now) feels at home in Germany, where she has her nuclear family. This contradiction becomes only understandable through the interview sequence where she mentions her cousin in Israel who does not understand her (religiously infused) Jewishness. Her German husband and her German friends on the other hand attempt to understand and support her Jewishness. In this sequence of the interview the difference between Iris’s Diaspora Jewishness and her cousin’s secular Israelis Jewishness show. The non-Jews with whom she shares her life in the Diaspora understand her better than her own Jewish kin. This in effect undermines the dichotomy ‘German-Jewish’ further, it supports Iris’s ability to decategorise and it leads to the conclusion that she has become homely in Germany. In the last section of her interview she goes as far as to say that she wants to be buried in the village cemetery in Germany, so her German husband can visit her¹³⁵. This is a very strong idiom of expressing a belonging. I have found during my fieldwork that it is not uncommon to wish for a burial in Israel, or at least in the local Jewish cemetery.

Ron, who does not mention any hatred or dislike against Germans or Germany, relates his being at home “here”, Cologne, to his children. Like Iris, he claims that his wife originally being a non-Jewish German did not affect him.¹³⁶ The issue of marriage choices of Jews of the second generation in Germany has been researched by Lynn

Rapaport (1992; 1997) and Kurt Grünberg (2000). Both found that marriage patterns of this generation cannot be understood without reference to the *Shoah*. Grünberg used about twenty-five in-depth interviews; Rapaport's sample is more than fifty. However, all of their interview partners had grown up in Germany and within the structures of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. This is not the case with Ron and Iris. Ron grew up in Israel, and Iris's parents tried to remove her as far as they could from the *Einheitsgemeinde*. Ron and Iris encountered the prevalent ideology of the *Einheitsgemeinde* either as adults or only at the margins. Drawing on these different experiences to the sample of Rapaport and Grünberg it is possible to say that Ron and Iris were better equipped to love across 'the' boundary. Being German was not conveyed to them as negative in their formative childhood years, which are key to the development of attitudes. The educational scientist and anthropologist Elieser G. Hammerstein (1995) discusses this issue concerning his return to Germany. He had expected to feel negative emotions when he first saw Berlin again, a city he had left as a nineteen-year old in 1937. Walking through Berlin nearly sixty years later, he was surprised that he felt overwhelmed by positive emotions and happiness about seeing the city of his childhood and hearing the language of his parents. To him too, being German had not been conveyed as something negative and the Germany of his parents and childhood was not defined by trauma. Hammerstein argues that these memories underpinned his reactions upon his return to Berlin. As with Ron, these memories had not been annihilated by negative experiences because Hammerstein had left Germany early enough to not witness the *Shoah* himself, just like Ron's family. Iris on the other hand had grown up with a grandfather and a father whose perception of Germans, their culture and language was favourable. While she rejected their leaning towards things German in her childhood and youth, it somehow left an impression on her, maybe one that had been subconscious until she herself made positive experiences with things German after her arrival in the country.

Iris stated repeatedly how much she loved both her grandfather and her father, and how close she was to them. Her 'evil' mother-in-law helped the exculpation of Germans, because she enabled her to symbolically attribute guilt, and focus her hatred, on a single person (cf. Capelos 2008). For Ron this attribution of guilt worked differently. Unlike Iris, his first experiences with Germany were positive, they happened within a German

Jewish home. Thus, when he came to Germany and saw his positive German Jewish self-schemata endangered by Eastern European Jews in Germany, he focused his negative feelings on them, and not on random Germans, although these, realistically speaking, were the root of the suffering of German and Eastern European Jews alike (cf. Longerich 2006). These Germans, he claimed repeatedly in the interview, never discriminated against him, for him it was other Jews who made his life miserable. With Nora the attribution of guilt is in line with her narrative-in-progress. There is her birth Jewish father, who thwarts her efforts to find out more about her family, and return to her desired roots, but there are as well ‘evil’ Turks and Neo-Nazis who endanger her. The not yet personalised attribution of guilt bears further witness to her developing Jewish identity, but as well to her mixedness. As a mixed person who fits various categories, how can she easily attribute guilt? For Iris and Ron it is clear where they stand, and where they come from; for Nora this not the case.¹³⁷

Nora who is about twenty years younger than Ron and Iris was much less nervous than Iris during her interview, but at the same time her narrative was much less rehearsed than Ron’s. The interview transcript shows parts when she very much struggles to find answers and to make sense. These parts refer in particular to definitions concerning what being Jewish means to her, as opposed to how it is superimposed on her by others in the form of discrimination. It is also striking how often she quotes other people to substantiate her opinion or support her narrative. Her stream-of-consciousness narrative shows that there were things beyond her comprehension: she could not make sense of them rationally, and struggled emotionally. The most remarkable of these issues is her mother’s repetitive provision of Judaica and support of Nora’s quest for her Jewish identity, and her, Nora’s, “Jewish roots.” Her mother’s support is the more surprising because it is actually Nora’s father who had a Jewish mother, while Nora’s mother comes from a non-Jewish family. Her mother’s support of Nora’s quest has not stopped, as the crystal bowl story shows. Nora struggled in the interview to make sense of her mother’s behaviour. She has told me repeatedly that she did not get far by asking either of her parents for more detail about their family history.

Germanness – Jewishness

There is an overlap between the narratives on the matter of categorical thinking as well as the attempt to decategorise individuals. Ron and Iris categorise themselves as Jews vis-à-vis ‘Germans’, and stress the non-German side of their identities. While Ron claims that he is happy in Germany and Iris that her German “home village” (*Heimatdorf*) is her home, their identification lies not with non-Jewish Germans; their identification is with Jews and being culturally, socially, historically and ethnically Jewish. Ron referred to himself as “the only foreigner” at work and Iris mentioned that being Jewish would not exclude the categories “Romanian or German” but that those just do not feel right to her.

The religious aspect plays less of a role with the two of them. Both state that they either did not attend services (Ron) or struggle with religion as such (Iris). I think it is here that the master-narrative of Jews and other Germans completely bifurcates and enters the territory of a binary opposition (cf. Grossmann 2007). The experiences of their Jewish families and their own biographies do not allow Ron and Iris to self-ascribe to the category ‘German.’ Ron and Iris both live amongst Germans, but that is as far as their identification goes; Ron remained stoutly Israeli and Iris Jewish in their self-proclaimed categories, which they verbalised candidly to their surrounding.¹³⁸

Somewhat ironically, and despite the rejection of the label, both of them have reclaimed their Germanness. Ron who is the descendant of German-Jewish parents settled in Germany, while Iris did what her grandfather had wanted for her, she has gone “back home to Germany” married a German, and has German children. She now rejects Romanian as language, and showed ambivalences in her use of Hungarian. German has become her first language.

Nora does not reject the category ‘German’ for herself, which would be very difficult for her because she was born and raised in the country without conscious contacts to Jews or to an institutional Jewish framework. In order to create coherence within her self-schemata, and her narrative, she stresses her Jewish identity and perceives of her German environment as at times hostile towards her or as disconnected from her, and

thus employs parts of the master-narrative of Jews in Germany. This connects her to other Jews, and disconnects her from Germans while not denying Germanness completely.

She was the only one of the three who claimed to have encountered random anti-Semitism from Neo-Nazis and what seems to be a young immigrant. Potentially, Nora's stressing of these encounters is underpinned by the (subconscious) notion (Freeman 2002; Raskin 2002) that being Jewish is connected to suffering in Germany. She does not know about the suffering of her family who most likely did suffer, and that way displaces their imagined suffering and her own suffering through the loss of knowledge into these encounters. The groups, which act hostile towards her as a visible, and thus categorical 'Jew' are encoded in a cultural script that Nora and I share. This script knows of Neo-Nazis and the descendants of Muslim immigrants as potentially hostile towards Jews (cf. Peck 2006). Furthermore, Nora complained in several conversations vociferously about 'Germans.' While she has very close German friends, 'German' as an abstract concept for an amorphous mass of people does not have positive connotations for her.

In conclusion, the Jewish identities these three interview partners verbalised show strong aspects of distinct categories, the most pronounced being the opposition of Germanness to Jewishness. Yet, despite this categorical thinking, all three interview partners show the homophilous value to venture beyond categorical thinking, which fits with their self-schemes as liberals. This value homophily is key to understanding what holds the individuals in the liberal community together despite all of their differences. This key value is rather easy to overlook, because it refers only to a personal level of decategorisation. On a personal level they are all able to overcome feelings ranging from hatred to non-belonging to Germans while on a generalised level there are different strategies of how to deal with the category of Germans. To overcome the general binary opposition between Jews and Germans is too much for all three. Considering approaches to *Shoah* trauma and its transmission (Brumlik & Kunik 1988; Grünberg 1988, 2000, 2007a, 2007b; Hadar 1991, Kranz 2007a, c) the inability to decategorise the German collective as a whole lies certainly within the area of this

trauma. However, I claim that the decategorisation of the non-Jewish Germans intimates and friends happens, because they are known to the three and because the three relate to them, they have something in common with them, whatever this might be. The experience of similarities to them outweighs the categorical difference. These significant others support Ron, Iris and Nora as spouses, family and friends. With them, there might be the need to explain one's otherness to build a relationship, but there is no need to assert oneself in a way that resembles a pre-emptive strike. With the unknown generalised other, 'Germans', there is the need to show one's Jewishness immediately through Star of David pendants and earrings (Heilman 1988), or verbalising one's Israeliness. The positioning of these three interview partners in the face of non-Jews is pronounced and assertively Jewish¹³⁹ or Israeli.

Jewishness

The narratives of the three interview partners show differences along the lines of being descent Jewish or, potentially undergoing *Giyur*. Ron does not question that he is Jewish, or what that means. Iris on the other hand wonders in the interview what this Jewishness is and mentions she struggles with it. Yet, because she is a *halachic* Jew she is unquestionably Jewish in her self-schemata. As a non-*halachic* Jew with a mystery ridden family history, Nora cannot attach the label 'Jew' to herself without further questions. Her Jewishness is unconfirmed by the authorities who can give her the permit to label herself as Jewish. For herself she has arrived at the conclusion that she is Jewish. This Jewishness she lives out through signifying Jewishness on different levels. On the one hand, there is the Star of David pendant which she refers to in the interview, on other hand there are a number of books visible in her home which deal with Jewish topics, and she showed me the chandelier which functioned as a *Chanukiyah*. Nora uses a number of *Yiddishisms* in her language, particularly striking being her use of the term *Mishpokhe* for family: probably this is a verbalised link to her own Jewish family. However, Nora's transition to employ the lingo of descent Jews is not yet fully accomplished. She uses the term Holocaust in the interview, which is not used within the descent Jewish ingroup. Using ingroup lingo falls into the building block 'descent' and acts as a connector to other (descent) Jews. Her Jewishness has performative

aspects to it, which beg reactions. On occasion these performative aspects seem to be too learned, and not yet fully integrated, and seem to thrive on outward validation. By this route Nora seeks to validate her narrative through bodily performances (Peterson & Langellier 2006), and means inscribed on her body, such as the Star of David.

Iris too refers to her Star of David pendant. She refers to the Star of David as something that she has always worn. The Star of David adds an eternal theme to her narrative: it was always there, and it will be, even when she is dead; it is a symbol for all Jews and the State of Israel, yet she has customised it: she wears it, and it will adorn her tombstone. This outward sign of Jewishness is important for Iris, too, it shows her belonging. She is aware that Jews (and non-Jews) react to this pendant. Her father did not like her wearing it; her cousin in Israel found it strange that she wore it. Her cousin does not feel the need to perform Jewishness, or practice Judaism, he is part of the Jewish majority in Israel; he does not keep kosher, and found it strange that Iris had “turned religious.”

Through the Star of David, Iris expresses an unequivocal belonging to the Jewish people, yet she is unsure what being Jewish exactly means to her. In some respects, her Star of David pendant glosses over the lack of substance of the knowledge of Jewish religion and tradition she suffers from. Oddly, this lack of substance seems to overshadow all other knowledge about Judaism she holds, and it seemingly discredits her claim to being Jewish. The lack of knowledge she has been trying to fill as much as possible since I first met her; she has the most amazing library of books about Jewish themes, and consumes lectures and workshops inside and outside of the community.

Despite these strong differences to the issue of their personal Jewishness, the three each engage in talking about their way into the liberal community in terms of a turning point (Bruner 1991a, 1991b; McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich 2001). Ron experienced a liberal service in the US for the first time, and wanted to set up “something like that in Cologne.” Ron was still active in the orthodox community, but felt already alienated from this community, in as much as he had ever belonged to it. He had only become active in the orthodox community as a response to embezzlement charges against the

national Jewish leadership. This seems to have been his first step into becoming active within a religious framework in Germany. In Israel he admitted in the interview he had been to a synagogue about three times after his *Bar Mitzvah*. The orthodox practice he knew from Israel and experienced in Germany did not speak to him, while the liberal US practice did. Underlying the wish to establish a “different form of practice” was also that Ron wanted his children to experience something different from what he had witnessed so far in Germany in terms of Jewish experiences. His children’s experience of being Jewish should be positive like his, strong and forward looking. It is important that his US experience triggered Ron’s action, because the US is part of the Jewish Diaspora. His experiences from Israel could not be translated into the Jewish Diaspora, they are distinct to the Jewish majority situation in Israel. In San Francisco, Ron experienced what Bruner referred to a turning point:

By “turning point” I mean those episodes to which, as if to understand the power of the agent’s intentional states, the narrator attributes a crucial change or stance to the protagonist’s story to a belief, a conviction, a thought.
(Bruner 1991a: 73)

I think that Bruner overstates the issue of intentional states. I suggest that Ron became active out of outward, and not intrinsic change. He learned about an option to create a space for a positive Jewishness he had not known of before in the Diaspora. Yet, the US experience is not underpinned by his intentional state. Ron is not the one who initiates it. The same goes for Iris who only ventured into a Jewish community when her father died. She had contacted both communities in Cologne, and by chance arrived at the liberal community: they got back to her first. Although she described her arrival in the liberal community as a turning point for her, the actual arrival had occurred by chance.

Nora mentions she did not dare going into the orthodox synagogue in Cologne, she started her pursuit of entering Jewish institutions only when she was abroad. This means that in their cases there was a clear relation between an outward occurrence and the action taken. Interview data with other members of the liberal community show similar

structures: outward event and personal action are strongly related. There is no proof that any of the individuals acted purely on their imagination without outside pressure. It makes sense to see the outward pressure as the trigger to act on the imagination that underpins the self-schemata (Bruner 1987; 1991a) to keep it coherent and/or to arrive at a desired possible self (Nurius & Marcus 1986). This is likely, as these three used changes constructively to pursue their own agenda; they acted as self-aware agents (Rapport 2003: 1-2), and by this token kept their self-schemata coherent on one level while on a second, they made them even stronger because the actions taken were in line with the self-schemata of strong and self-determined agents. Here again, a homophilous value shows between the three: they all want to be positively Jewish in the Diaspora and they want to be Jewish within a Jewish community that consists of people they relate too because they share something with them, and not only because those others are Jews too. While not all of the relationships they have to other members can be defined as personal friendships, Ron, Iris and Nora share enough with the others in the community to be friendly with them. This means that enough shared homophilous values exist (Carrier 1999; Cohen 1977; McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983). The key shared homophilous value is to accept others in the community in their otherness, and not superimpose one's own take on Jewishness as the imperative one. This shared value fits with the self-schemata of all three interview partners who see themselves as agential, open, able to think beyond mere categories and as making the choice to be part of this voluntary liberal Jewish community, which is held together by the idea to accept other styles of practice, and with this other Jewishnesses.

Aspects of coherence – Imagination

The narratives rendered by Ron and Iris show a much greater internal coherence than the narrative rendered by Nora. The reasons for this are multiple. To begin with, Ron and Iris are about twenty years older than Nora, their narratives and life-stories have had more time to mature, their stories have been told more often. This does of course not mean that they are static. Peacock & Holland (1993) contend that life stories are always works in progress, they are changing throughout our lives, and are not immune to new

experiences (Hyvärinen 2006). More importantly Ron and Iris have always and unambiguously fitted the (*halachic*) category Jew, while Nora does not. She learned only in her teens from her non-Jewish mother that her father had had a Jewish mother. Nora mentions that she made little of this snippet of information. To contextualise this information in the sense that she does now, and appreciate that her father was indeed a *halachic* Jew who was baptised to keep him safe is partly a fact, partly her interpretation. That he was a *halachic* Jew at birth holds true as his mother was Jewish; that he was baptised for safe keeping or for other reasons is Nora's interpretive effort, which she backs up with the line: "it [the *Shoah*] was foreseeable." This statement rang odd to me, as the *Shoah* in its murderous nature was deemed unforeseeable.¹⁴⁰

In her life-story, Nora interprets her father's baptism as an event that was necessary. This way she smoothes over the undesirability it has from her point of view (cf. Spence 1986). She makes sense of these facts in retrospect and fits them into coherent narrative fashion in regard to her life:

"Life" in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as "a narrative" is. It is constructed by human being through ratiocination, by the same kind of ratiocination through which we construct narratives. When somebody tells you his life – [...] – it is always a cognitive achievement. There is no such thing psychologically as "life itself." At the very least, as it is a selective achievement of memory recall; beyond that, recounting one's life is an interpretive feat. Philosophically speaking, it is hard to imagine being a naïve realist about "life itself."

(Bruner 1987: 13), emphases in original

Iris mentions in regard to her father that he did not talk to her about the cruelty of the camps, but his first love and a dog he rescued, issues she refers to as "nothingnesses" (*Nichtigkeiten*, plural in German original).¹⁴¹ Ron does not mention any loss of family members, but mentions his grandmother and parents who had "emigrated" to (then) Palestine. Iris refers to her German-speaking grandfather several times. Ron and Iris

present their family as having survived, whereas Nora alludes to her family as being dead, she does not know if her grandmother had siblings, and if they or the parents of her grandmother survived. This shows two contrasting forms of narrative, one is based on survival the other on loss. Both forms of narrative are culturally scripted; they form part of the discourse of Jews in Germany. All interview partners knew that I would be able to make sense of the terms they used, the issues they raised, and the context they were put in; to a person who had grown up in Germany and comes from a mixed family background, the issue of loss and survival definitely were familiar topics on a personal level – I would emotionally connect to them, and empathise (Shuman 2006). This does of course not mean that our interpretations are congruent (Rapport 1993, 1994), but they were good enough to communicate successfully.

Hand in hand with destruction and loss goes the issue of personal survival and creating a Jewish identity that fits into the life-project of the three individuals holistically. All three express their personal agency strongly through past events they recount. Ron wanted to pursue his career and joined in to create a Jewish community according to his liking; Iris wanted to reclaim her Jewish identity and be an active part of Jewish community life; Nora wanted to pave her way into the liberal Jewish community and has been working towards her conversion. I think it is at these junctures that the individuals use their imagination (Mageo 2002; Mageo & Knauff 2002) and develop possible scenarios of themselves (Nurius & Marcus 1986) to “colonise the future” (Giddens 1990: 65), and shape their individual surrounding according to their own wishes and desires and beyond any categorical belonging they might have been allocated (Rapport 2003: 150). Bruner (1987, 1990b, 1991b) claims that in order to pursue such a plan, or as I would call it life-project, the individual needs to put his or her ideas into a form that makes them possible to pursue. This form is underpinned by past experiences but driven by notions that shape the individual’s ideas of the future. To order the past experience logically and connect them to the desired future, the narrative acts like a gateway to develop the future. Bruner refers to the creation of a narrative as a “world-making process” (Bruner 1991a: 76), a statement even stronger than that of Riessman (1993), which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Looking at the three narratives again, I think that it makes sense to claim that the reflective thought process,

Bruner's "active ratiocination" (1987: 13) occurs in a narrative form. The stories of all three reflect their personalities that I got to know during my fieldwork.

Nora's narrative stands out in its form as a becoming-in-process, which was indicative for the state of the time of the interview. Her narrative bears witness to what McAdams (1993) outlined, and Linde (1993) averred: that it is not necessarily the factual truth of the narrative that counts, but that the narrative cohesion and assumed truth is the building block of a person's sense-making, and integrated in their self-schemata.

All three narratives express as well plans for the future that focus on belongings. Ron wishes to stay in Germany after his retirement; Iris wishes to be buried in 'her' village as a recognisable Jew; Nora reasons that even if she will not be allowed to convert, she has arrived at a point where she feels an unequivocal belonging to the "Jewish people" and at ease with the local liberal community. As such, all three narratives have a strong subtext of home-coming that is strongest expressed with the predictions for the future.

Putting it together: Similarities in the three narratives

Stating the obvious, all three have individually different narratives, based on their experiences, and their very uniqueness as individuals (Rapport 2003), their unique positions in the social circle of the liberal Jewish community, and beyond that (Simmel 1890). However, some issues surface in all three narratives. Some of these issues are based on underlying homophilous values, which all three share and appreciate. Then, there is the expression of individual agency, the wish to realise aspects which are deemed important to each of the three (Rapport 2003), the wish to rise beyond categories and as well as the value to accept others in the community in their otherness, and be accepted by them.

All three narratives have pronounced aspects of being Jewish, being Jewish in Germany and in the Diaspora. What are the precise overlaps that can be employed to feed back into the narratives of the liberal community? Overlaps occur on several levels between the attitudes voiced in the narratives. The attitudes are similar enough to allow for a

negotiation within the community, the overlaps contain homophilous values that the members of *Gescher* share. These overlaps between their values did not exist with the local orthodox community. This non-overlap of values can be seen most clearly in Ron's interview, it lead to 'Decay Functions' (Burt 2000) of the social relations with the other members of the *Einheitsgemeinde*.

First, the overlap explains what the members of *Gescher* are not, and that is orthodox Jews. This 'orthodox' does not only refer to the practice of Jewish religion. As outlined in chapter three, not all members of the local orthodox community are indeed practising orthodox Judaism. This means that 'orthodox' has a specific meaning in the context of the interviews, it refers to an inner-Jewish difference that the three agree on.

The first level mentioned above is easy to spot, it refers to religious practice. However, underlying are several more meanings of 'orthodox' that the three interviewees find disagreeable. These refer to the boundary management of the orthodox community. In particular the issue of the exclusion of non-*halachic* Jews bothers Ron, Iris and Nora. This exclusion offends their shared value of the social inclusion of non-*halachic* Jews, because the idea of Jewishness of all three is geared along social, historical and cultural lines.

Then, the negative attitude towards mixed marriage to non-Jewish Germans of the official policy of the orthodox community is a related issue which feeds into the opposition of the three towards the other community. This exclusion causes offence to Iris and Ron on two levels. First, they were brought up with positive aspects concerning Germans in their homes. This means that the *Einheitsgemeinde* policy contradicts what they had learned in their formative childhood years at home through their primary socialisation (Berger & Luckmann 1966/1991). Thus, the orthodox community is literally non-familiar. Second, all three interview partners wish to look beyond the categories of the German/Jewish dichotomy. Ron outlines this most clearly by mentioning that he does not have "problems with Germans." Iris gives throughout the impression that she is willing to discover individual Germans and Nora finally was

raised by a German mother and a German father who happened to have a (German) Jewish mother. Nora too, can see the good in single Germans.

However, all three agree as well on a shared negative value. This refers to the caution towards unknown German. A boundary between them to the non-Jewish German population in general exists, which can be seen in the performative aspects of the Jewish and/or Israeli identities of all three.

This means, that the boundary the three set to German non-Jews runs along different lines to the Einheitsgemeinde. For the three interview partners patrilineal Jews have a social Jewish status, they are not to be confused with German non-Jews. This overlap exists in their personal attitudes and has been laid down in the statutes of *their* community (see chapter two). This means, while all three see problems of varying degrees in the living together with random German non-Jews, people who are mixed regardless of their *halachic* status are subject to a categorisation which is closer to their own, Jewish, category. Drawing on Handelsman (1977) these co-ethnics have special rights within the category 'ethnic Jewish group.' Looking at this key distinction to the local orthodox community it becomes clear that the inner-Jewish distinction 'not orthodox' is entwined with the nuances of Jewishness, boundary management to non-Jews and a different notions of categorisations of Jews and non-Jews. Yet, to create a basis for a 'not orthodox' community of their own, the mere rejection of something else is too little. This means, that underneath the openly voiced criticism of the orthodox community there is agreement of what the liberal community should be. The agreement of the three, who are examples of members of the liberal community who hold similar opinions, are significant enough to allow for the creation and maintenance of an community.

To begin with, all three show a very clear acceptance of Jewish identities which are fashioned differently to their own. Yet, underlying the acceptance of these differences hides similarity. This similarity has been called homophily by sociologists who researched friendship patterns and networks (boyd 2008; Cohen 1977; Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983).

The concept of homophily describes how friendships and networks of friends run along the lines of similarity. While most of this research was conducted in the US, I see it as applicable in Germany. The first level of this homophily is based on ethnicity, which correlate positively with socio-demographics according to McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001). In the US context this refers to people of the same ethnic group as clustering in specific areas (Fischer 1977, 1982; Kalmijn 1998). This spatial proximity allows for people to meet. In regard to the liberal Jewish community there is no shared neighbourhood, and the spatial proximity is not given. Yet, another issue is given that replaces the proximity rule: due to the small number of Jews in the Cologne area, and the similarities of their family histories Jews seek each other out. In Bruner's idiom these Jews seek people with whom their life-stories mesh (Bruner 1987: 21) and who based on similarity understand them (Linde 1993). However, while Jews seek out co-ethnics with assumed similar attributes the internal differences within the Jewish population in Cologne are too big to allow for only one community. Here, the levels of homophily that McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook (2001) referred to as 'bonding tie' take their effect. These bonding ties refer to the level where people of the an ethnic group (also referred to as 'binding tie' by McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook) seek out people form the same ethnic groups who are similar to themselves in terms of education, interest, values and attitudes. However, in order to form voluntary organisations or communities, the homophily of attitudes needs to be very pronounced. This means for *Gescher* that the ideologies of those who set this ethnic voluntary community up need to be highly compatible in terms of ideologies, attitudes and values.

The homophilous attitudes can be exemplified with the interviews of the co-ethnics Ron, Iris and Nora. They identify positively as Jewish and wish to live as active parts of German society. They wish for a communication between Jews and non-Jews in Germany, they want to live out the German parts of their identities which are intrinsically linked to their Jewish identities, they want to integrate their families and friends within their Jewish life-worlds, they want to live in the Diaspora, they wish to see beyond categories. Finally, they do not want be forced to perform, or pretend to perform, to orthodox *Halachic* standards, they want to discuss and negotiate their Jewishness. All three have moved to what Furman (1987) conceptualised as *Beyond*

Yiddishkeit, they engage in the creation of a Jewishness which has moved away from the old world and mixes post-*Shoah* realities of Germany with individual roots and takes from international influences. This shared openness towards people who are in the same homophilous bracket is the base of the liberal Jewish community in Cologne. In other words, there is what could be called an ‘un-orthodox orthodoxy’ in place: an imperative appreciation of difference and the uniqueness of each person is cherished by all members, it is the core homophilous value that led to the creation of *Gescher*, supports its maintenance and will afford this community its future. The agreement on this matter runs through personal narratives and actions. It is reflected in communal discussions and actions, it is the binding homophilous glue that allows for the development of a shared community narrative. It is this acceptance that fills the ethnic category Jewish with meaning in this specific community. This homophilous value is the cornerstone that is spelled out in the statutes of the liberal community. It lies at the heart to understand the ideology of the community as well the way to understand the resurfacing debates and their resolution within the community framework. *Gescher LaMassoret* is built on discussion and feeds of it, it is both an accepting and democratic entity.

Despite all of the differences between Jewish communities in the US and in Germany, there are striking similarities between the findings of Furman (1987) in the reform community *Temple Shalom* and the liberal community in Cologne. Her findings support my argument of the underlying bonding homophily of *Gescher*. Furman outlined that the idea of liberalism which underpins the ethics of the reform community of her research is based on personally held ideas of morals and in particular how to relate to other human beings (Furman 1987). These personal morals show overlaps in *Temple Shalom*, they are similar enough to allow for negotiations within the community to create a sufficient collective moral denominator to be able to act on a shared community ethic. This ethic allows as well for dissent in the community. Members in *Temple Shalom* set up groups for various activities of like-minded people within the community. Referring back to the concept of homophily, these members are more similar to each other than to other members yet the internal differences are tolerable for

all members alike. The special interest groups ranged from spiritual subgroups to secular ones. *Gescher* has those as well.

The general overlap of the members of Furman's research centred around notions of being liberal, or/and doing good. As with *Gescher*, the members shared these notions which were not necessarily based on Jewish religion, but on more universal notions of goodness (ibid: 52). In the interviews with the Cologne participants this issues ran through the interviews too. Doing good, being a moral person and having integrity took a more or less Jewish tinge for the members. Ron stresses his integrity in regard to the clashes with the *Einheitsgemeinde*, Iris stresses hers in regard to making friends with Germans and Nora in regard to her Turkish co-worker. Through these stories, they all showed the homophilous value to decategorise others.

Within the community framework of *Temple Shalom* these general notions were then seen through Jewish glasses, and reinterpreted as stemming from Jewish religion (ibid: 61). The same pattern holds true for *Gescher*. James, for example, maintained his atheism, he took an intellectual interest in the scripts and used the scripts as a discussion base. Various reading or discussions groups picked up on topics which could be given a Jewish tinge. These ranged from Freud to contemporary Jewish literature.¹⁴² The argument for homophily as glue between the members, which is made even stickier through narratives, can be supported by looking at the data from Cologne. Although Furman is not interested in narratives as a sense-making mechanism, I think that these findings confirm how even abstract notions such as goodness are recounted as part of a narrative that confirms a belonging because they underpin the search for like-minded individuals (bonding homophily) who fall into the same ethnic group (binding homophily). In effect they lead to the creation and maintenance of communities, or as can be seen with the *Forum* too little homophily leads to the abandonment of social groups (cf. Burt 2000).

Braiding the collective narrative

Looking at the interview data of the chapter and bearing in mind the ethnographic data of the previous chapters, it is possible to understand the mechanism that underpins the pattern of braiding the collective narrative of the liberal community. The pattern is based on boundaries to the non-Jewish German society and to the local orthodox Jewish community as well as on the self-ascription of belonging to a liberal Jewish community. On this matter, the braiding process rests on only one of Barth's (1969/1998) key features of ethnicity, which is the self-ascription of the members of the group and their recognition as members of this group by others. However, this key feature is not enough to keep an ethnic group unified as the creation of liberal community showed. As with their counterparts in the orthodox community the liberal community is recognised as Jewish by the German surrounding, and shows collective ambiguities towards non-Jewish Germans. Yet, not all members of the liberal community are recognised as Jews by the orthodox community. Drawing on Barth and Handelman (1977) this non-acknowledgment causes a clash between the self-ascription of these members and their ascription by others. This difference in the status ascriptions could have been overcome by an orthodox *Giyur* of the respective people who founded *Gescher*. This *Giyur* they did not want, James found it offensive, Mayan still harbours grudges towards her non-acknowledgement as a Jew from the side of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. All of these issues have been discussed in previous chapters. This chapter offers an explanation for the braiding of the collective narrative of the liberal community which underpins its community-identity-in-process. This community identity is shaped by the difference to the orthodox community. However, not all members of *Gescher* had been excluded from the local orthodox community. The will to create their own community was not based on the exclusion only, it is based on an internal similarity between the members, because regardless of descent, nationality, native language and so on the members of *Gescher* show a remarkable internal coherence. As discussed above, they hold a bonding homophily which I argue leads to the creation of binding –ethnic– homophily. The creation of ethnicity in *Gescher* works differently to what McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001) summarise in their review article for various ethnic groups, where the

binding homophily prefigured the bonding homophily because *Gescher* is a voluntary ethnic community without tradition.

All three interview partners showed throughout the interview an intellectual approach to Judaism. With the two women this was stronger, maybe based on their perceived lack of knowledge of the religion or because it interested them. Most likely, both are causes for their interest. This interest in turn is shared by other members of *Gescher*, as for example the *Pirke Avot* reading group showed. Now, as the vast majority is highly educated (cf. educational homophily, Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001) discussions of religious or other texts are on a very high level. It is not uncommon to find intellectuals with a professional expertise in textual studies at the table of the discussions groups.

Beyond the interview, but part of their symbolic Jewishnesses, is the interest of Ron, Iris and Nora to collect *Judaica*. Ron collects *Chanukiyot*, which are on display at a wall in his living room. This is telling, because the pre-*Shoah* Chanukah of German Jews took on elements from Christmas. Amongst liberal and assimilated German Jews it was not that uncommon to have a Christmas tree (colloquially called ‘*Weihnukkah Baum*’, English ‘Chanukah Bush’). Iris collects books, in particular anything that has to do with Eastern Europe, biography, stories of displacement or Israel. Nora has religious items, such as a *Menorah*, and has refashioned a candleholder into a *Chanukiyah*. Then, she has several books on the *Shoah*, most of them biographies, and books to study Judaism. Here again is an overlap in the interest in Jewishness and Judaism of all three. These different emphases are compatible, and offer a ground for interaction that they have been using in the community.

In summary, it is possible to say that creation process of the liberal community was supported by particular structures in post-*Shoah* Germany. Yet, its maintenance, and the creation of the narrative of the community that keep *Gescher* together are underpinned by a whole set up different topics, on which the members hold similar opinions. It is crucial to bear in mind that dissent is imperatively allowed, it forms part of the ethics, and statutes of the community, which is democratic at heart.

From homophily to the creation of the community narrative

Moving from the factual homophily back to the narrative creation of the community, I argue it is in this moment that orthodox cultural scripts of narratives are overcome by the three interview partners and become secondary to individual interpretations and sense-making processes. The key feature that is laid out concerns homophily of values and attitudes. These homophilous features are based on parameters other than the shared Jewish ethnicity, and this ethnicity is only filled with meaning through the existing homophily. This means that speaking within the theoretical concept of homophily the three move from homophilous bond to homophilous bind through their narratives. This opposes the findings summarised by McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001), which all showed the opposite move for existing ethnic group. The 'opposite move' of *Gescher* reflects one more time the aftermaths of the *Shoah*, where a new Jewishness is still being created. This is not to say that the categorical Jewishness of Ron, Nora and Iris did not work in favour of their arriving and subsequent meeting within in a Jewish community. Yet, as the creation of *Gescher* and the near death of the *Forum* show, more so than a shared ethnicity (orthodox community; homophilous bind) and non-ethnic like mindedness (*Forum*, homophilous bond) both factors play strongly into the creation of the narrative of *Gescher*, because in its democratic roots the community depends on the similarities of people who are Jewish.

The members overcome the main cultural script for Jews in Germany. To maintain a community that offers them a positive extension of their personal Jewish identity, the community narrative needs to overcome the *Shoah* script that is transmitted through family (Iris) or upon arrival through the Jewish community (Ron), or the realisation of loss without an actual narrativised transmission (Nora). The three interviews show how the interviewees wish to overcome this cultural script of loss and destruction and enrich their lives with a positive meaning to being Jewish in Germany. They employ the cultural script in their narratives to establish what they are not: victims, part of the orthodox community and categorically averse to those who are non-Jews. They supplement these notions by positive values concerning their own Jewishness. This does

not mean that there are no ambiguities towards Germans or being in Germany, yet the coping strategies are individually defined and show an assertive Jewishness.

In combination, the individual narratives and their overlap that flow into the braid of the community narratives (Collins 2002b) reflect the underlying homophilous ideology of the liberal community. The three narratives of this chapter all contained strong overlaps of the core values of the community. All interview partners were interested in a decategorisation of German 'others' and a dialogue with them, all three are accepting of individual styles of Jewish practice and all three want to live positively in Germany in the Diaspora. Narratives, as Bruner (1987) had rightly claimed are a way to understand life-worlds and the link between thought process and action. Through the narratives too, it becomes clear how a community, which is so diverse on the surface, functions. If just the actions of the members are considered then the workings of the community remain shrouded in mystery because some of the actions of the members go into opposite directions.

There are several overlaps in the narratives of Ron, Iris and Nora as well as other members of the community. There is the acknowledgement of the problems of being Jewish in post-*Shoah* Germany, and the realisation that being a Jew is much more than just being of Jewish religion as the German state sees it in its legal discourse. The problems of being part of the social category 'Jew' find their expressions in the food debates, which show an overlap between the sacred and the profane (Sered 1988, 1992). The discussions and disagreements beg the question of how much of the other category, German, is allowed into the Jewish retreat (read: the community rooms). This means that the relation to German society and wider socio-historic events (Angrosino 1989) needs to be appreciated as the subtext of the discussions. Yet, the debates show as well that being Jewish has various positive meanings for the members. There is the positive identification with Cologne as home that begs for gouda on the buffet. There is the future orientated Jewishness which demands nouvelle kosher cuisine. Through allowances and creativity it is possible for the members of the liberal Jewish community to sustain a community. The allowances and creativity in turn are based on homophilous values that the individuals share and which are not necessarily dependent on their

Jewishness. To repeat, without the value homophily of the individual members *Gescher* as a community would not be possible. Metaphorically speaking, the narrative of the community would not come into existence, and its currently tense braid would probably resemble sharp-etched barbed wire.

This creativity and future-orientation does not mean that the members of the community do not use the building blocks of the master-narrative of Jews in post-*Shoah* Germany. They use the building blocks of the master-narrative of Jews in Germany in a similarly creative fashion and fill the blocks with their own counter-narrative. These blocks of both, the master-narrative, and the counter-narrative, are descent and family, Jewish practice, and familiarity with other Jews. The members of *Gescher* try to find the positive overlaps in their individually narrated building blocks. In the block family, there is the murder of one's own family for the descent Jews, yet there are also those who survived, and who passed on positive memories of their past. James's and Mayan's fathers were German Jews, both were married non-Jewish German women, both of Ron's parents "originated from Germany." The families of all three remembered times of being positively Jewish in Germany, and passed those on to their children (cf. Hammerstein 1995). Then, all founding members had witnessed different forms of practice in English-speaking countries. They found positive inspirations of communities abroad, and wanted to take them back to their –difficult- home. Finally, all descent Jews in the community know other Jews, but their familiarity with them does not mean that they wanted to retreat into an exclusively Jews realm, a traditional ethnic bond is not enough for them to want to close. They found friends and inspiration in like-minded people, and rejected those they did not like; they did not like people simply on account of their categorical belonging. Yet for the creation and maintenance of their own community it turned out that both the ethnic similarity and the homophily in terms of values and attitudes was needed. These overlaps ran through all narratives of the birth Jewish members, regardless where they were from. In slightly different forms they could be found with 'Russian' and other incomers too. All members sought out the positive aspects of being Jewish, and tried to grapple with the negative without giving in to it.

Conclusions: Being, doing and feeling Jewish - Creating and breaking boundaries

A social form severed from content does not gain existence, and the world only becomes an object of information, of substance and content, if provided with a common form. The content implies goals, motives, purposes, interests. The form implies the shape by which these obtain social expressions. The form represents a mode of exchange and continuing association between individuals. Forms are shared vehicles by which individuals and their meanings come together. Moreover, it is because individual contents and cultural forms constitute one social reality that neither can be properly or ideally described in the absence of the other. And to repeat, it is their meeting in opposition which is socially constitutive.

(Rapport 1993: 164-165)

I started with the assumption that the liberal Jewish community in Cologne was underlain by a shared ethnicity, and the features Barth (1969/1998) had outlined. Through attending the services, gatherings, and spending time with the individual members, I realised that this is not the case; that, indeed what Rapport (1993) described above underlies the creation and maintenance of *Gescher*. The content of the community is at constant issue: the same goes for what form the community is supposed to take. On the most superficial level it is a liberal Jewish community, where only Jews can be members and have categorical rights (Handelman 1977), yet under the superficial level are layers of complexity, seeming contradiction and hiding similarities. In these layers, the individual and the form come together. Now, problematically, the form is unanchored, due to the destruction of individual and communal life in Germany during the *Shoah*, which has lasting effects, and which makes for a very difficult re-anchoring process.

To come back to the issue of “cultural forms” (Rapport 1993: 164-165) it is important in this community to look at the negotiation of what the complexity of the content of this form is to appreciate the highly problematic notion of the boundaries; in other

words, that what is enclosed in the boundary, the content is as debatable as the boundary. This can be seen in the inner-Jewish debate concerning food within the liberal community, and on an extra-communal level in the misgivings between liberal and orthodox community. Through acknowledging these issues I moved from a Barthian perspective of the liberal community prior to my fieldwork to what could be called heavily revised Barthian perspective: the boundary is key to understand the workings of the community enclosed in it, yet, it is the “cultural stuff” (Barth 1969:15) which Barth found unimportant, which shapes, and defines the boundary. The boundary of the liberal community is subject to constant discussion and negotiations. The individual members have individually defined requirements in it. These requirements are part of the process of the maintenance of the community, because they are based on a fundamental and underlying value homophily (Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001) that allows for as well as supports individualised Jewish identities and attitudes. However, the application of the homophilous values ‘acceptance of others’, ‘decategorisation’ and ‘democracy’ cause tensions in the community. One effect of these tensions is that negotiations surrounding the boundary of the liberal community in Cologne turn into predicaments because of the ideological stance to create a democratically agreed boundary. Ironically, the very same homophily of the values ‘acceptance of difference, decategorisation and democracy’ that brought the founding members of *Gescher* together support a constant threat to its existence. For example, the openness to the non-Jewish environment causes constant tensions. It is this where the problems congregate concerning the treatment, allowances and contacts with Germans and German things in the community. Because the members of *Gescher* attempt to put the statutes to into practice, different members of *Gescher* operationalise the same statutes of openness and acceptance differently on different occasions. The badly wanted boundary of the founding father is thus not clearly defined, and undermined by the underlying homophilous values.

I found narrative approaches to understand the workings of this community fruitful because they allow for the capturing of the constant dynamic of the community, of its transient features, but as well for the capturing of the human agency (Collins 2002b, 2004) that goes into the community. Looking at narratives, and their relation to actions

offers an insight into the coming together of individuals in the community; narratives show the (constant) constitutive efforts to create, shape and maintain the liberal community, to fill it with life. Furthermore, as Bruner (1987) and Sarbin (1986a) outlined so forcefully, narratives offer a way to understand the logic that underpins actions. Looking at the narratives of the members of the liberal community, especially at the interviews introduced, it is through the narratives where the underlying logic of what otherwise would seem like a cacophony of actions in the community becomes clear. The narrative are underpinned by the appreciation of different forms of 'Jewishnesses', they value difference and at the same time demand the acceptance of ones' own Jewishness. The underlying attitudes and ideologies of Ron, Iris and Nora are homophilous, they allow for the three of them, as well as the other members of *Gescher* to come together as a community. These narratives exemplify as well why Laura's actions surrounding the *Seder* had such strong consequences, her actions ran contrary to the homophilous values of the vast majority of the members of the liberal community: Laura was a misfit amongst them.

Drawing on the works of Peter Collins on Quakers in Britain, storytelling is a constant feature of the Quakers' practice before and after the service at any meeting (Collins 2002b), it is at this juncture that 'community' is being negotiated. While those who participate in the storytelling attempt to braid their stories into a communal braid, this braid is never seamless, and narrative threads are more or less in tension with each other (Collins 2003: 255). A feature, which might be of key importance to one individual cannot be accommodated into the braid of the community. The case of the *Seder* 2006 in Cologne showed that such a narrative thread that underpins the actions of an individual can become a threat to the whole community. To save the community this thread was voted out by the majority of the community during the discussions on the food policy, which had a cathartic effect. Laura's stance was seen as too orthodox, too dogmatic, and her actions as prescriptive undemocratic. This went against the beliefs of what the liberal community in Cologne should be according to the majority of its membership, which is accepting and democratic. The form of community action was based on discussions which created a consensus and fed into a collective community narrative of what *Gescher* is supposed to be, and from this collective thread followed

the action to oust Laura as a member of the board. Her actions reminded the founding members of the autocratic orthodoxy of the local orthodox community, which these founding members had so whole-heartedly rejected when they attempted to build their own 'Jewish home.' The threads of narrative of the founding members in particular did not braid with the threads of narrative of the majority of the membership of the orthodox community. The narratives, and the attitudes and values contained in them, were too different and in too much tension to create a shared braid, and create a shared collective narrative, however tenuous (cf. Burt 2000). The foundation of *Gescher LaMassoret* was therefore not only informed by what one wanted to be although it was underpinned by homophily of the values 'acceptance, democracy and decategorisation.' More so, the foundation of the liberal community was informed by what one did not want to be, as the quotes, or little stories from Mayan, and James show, and in much clarity the interview data of Ron.

Drawing on the ideas Henri Tajfel (1978, 1981, 1982) it is as important to understand what a group of people does not want to be, as what they want to be. This parallels the ideas of value homophily (cf. McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). Already the suffix 'phil' (like) infers this: where there is 'phil' there is 'phob' (dislike). If Tajfel's and McPherson's, Smith-Lovin's & Cook's ideas are translated back into the anthropological theory of Barth, they strongly support Barth's (1969) take on the boundary. He argues that the boundary is more important than the cultural stuff it encloses: the founding members wanted a boundary to the general German non-Jewish society and to other Jews alike. Problematically, the stuff within the boundary was initially defined *ex negativum*, and only slowly became *ex positivum*. It became positive from the time onwards when the abstract notion of 'accepting others in their difference' needed to be operationalised within the democratic framework of the liberal community. In the process of the operationalisation the value homophily of the members was put to a very difficult test. Indeed, at times they would only agree on the abstract notions of the underlying homophilous values, while practical solutions differed. In these moments the sheer will to community and the definition against other groups held the community together. The food compromise is an example for this. It does not make all members happy, although it has been accepted as a viable

compromise by democratic majority vote after discussions, thus actualising two of the core values.

In the case of the Quakers of Collins's research it seems clear that they embrace being Quakers on canonic, vernacular, and prototypical/individual levels (Collins 2003: 255-259, 2004: 104-106). While there is discussion between the Quakers, the debates seemed to me less heated than those of the Jews in Cologne. Collins mentions, drawing on Linde (1993), how the context and the situatedness of the narrative needs to be considered in its socio-historic context (Collins 2003: 259). This –Cologne- context is highly charged on three levels. Firstly, vis-à-vis the non-Jewish German society and its competing narratives (cf. Grossmann 2007), on a second level inner-Jewish to the orthodox community, which represents the hegemonic Jewish master narrative, and on a third level between the individual members of the liberal community. The tensions and conflicts in and around the liberal community can, and should be seen as reminders that Germany even after all those years is still a post-conflict society, in which the narratives of two mutually exclusive 'racial' categories are still tangible, painful and difficult to verbalise for those concerned (cf. Grünberg 2007a; Kushner 1977; Linde 1993; Ochs & Capps 2001).¹⁴³ However, due to the non-survivor majority of *Gescher*, the will of the survivors and their descendants in the community, and the different international influences that the members of the liberal community bring with them, they try to find a way to integrate their personally held will to live in Germany and decategorise (single) Germans. Furthermore, the value to allow different Jewishnesses within the framework of the liberal community supports the interaction across the German/Jewish divide. In line with the value to decategorise non-Jewish Germans, they are allowed to attend services as guests despite the tensions this causes within the community. *Gescher* is thus an example of finding the ability to live as part of the formerly perpetrating country again. While forgiveness is probably too much to achieve, there is the will to interact across the divide and work towards collectively and personally more satisfying future scenarios.

The three levels of narrative Collins suggests open up the possibility to integrate the individual and his or her narrative and the community, which is formed through

narratives. According to his theory, the narratives of the members of the Quaker meeting show parts of the canonic narrative, which is encapsulated in formal Quaker belief. The vernacular level of the narrative is the part of the narrative that is specific to a local Quaker meeting, whereas the prototypical or individual narrative is the narrative of the individual; as I understand him, this level can be seen as synonymous with the narrative of the self of Giddens (1991). Quoting Rapport (1993) Collins states that “People can be said to be members of communities and living in individual worlds at the same time,” (Rapport 1993: 190 quoted in Collins 2004: 106). Collins had come to the conclusion that while the individual Quakers of the meeting might well live in individual worlds, they lived as well together in a shared world, the world of the meeting house where they create shared meaning through the exchange, and hence braid their stories together.

The liberal Jewish community shows a similar, though not congruent, structure in terms of the three levels of narrative that Collins outlines. The Cologne community has a canonic narrative. This narrative shows in the *Siddur*. Yet, the *Siddur* is specific for this community, it was developed by the founding members of *Gescher*. This sets the Cologne community apart from canonic narrative of the Quakers of Dibdenshaw. The Quakers follow the canonic outline of general Quaker practice, whereas the Cologne community already shows a mixture of canonic and vernacular narrative on the canonic level. The *Siddur* bears the names of those who designed it, all of the translations and transliterations from Hebrew into German come from founding members. This allows for a ‘*Gescher* spin’ already on this level, it allows for the introducing of unique *Gescher* features into the canonic level. Especially the features of allowing for individual levels of observance, the key features of *Gescher*, can be found in the *Siddur*. It is written in German, Hebrew and transliterated Hebrew in most parts, which allows the single members to choose which of the two main language of the service they want to use. But the influence of the vernacular level on the canonic levels runs deeper than that. It reflects the post-*Shoah* Cologne context. Unlike an orthodox *Siddur*, a liberal one uses vernacular language. Before the *Shoah* a strong liberal movement existed in Germany. This movement was destroyed and most German Jews never returned to Germany. They took with them the knowledge of German liberal Judaism, which grew

particularly strong in the US, where a vast number of Jews from Germany immigrated. The current liberal movement that began only in the 1990s could not use this knowledge resource, it had to create its own practice in Germany from scratch. This means, that in the canonic narrative of *Gescher LaMassoret* the socio-historic German context already finds an imperative reflection.

The vernacular level of the community narrative reflects the context of the community, its past, present and possible futures and the inputs of the single members. The most crucial streak of this level of the narrative can be found in the statutes of the *Gescher*. In these statutes the value homophily of the community is laid out very clearly. The key themes are the acceptance of individuals and their observance and the democratic structure of the community. This key theme allows for the growth of the community, its ability to change dynamically over time and its resilience in the face of various disagreements.

The prototypical narratives, despite all their unique features support the vernacular and the canonic levels of the narrative because they show agreement in the key features, in the acceptance of others, the decategorisation of others, the wish for democratic community and the endeavour to live positively in Germany. On an individual level, as can be seen in the interviews, the members show shared homophilous values.

Paraphrasing Rapport (1993), while the Cologne liberal Jews certainly live in their own and their shared world, the attitudes and values of the individuals, which can be traced through the prototypical narratives make the community with its vernacular and canonic levels only possible.

Rapport (1993) had arrived at the conclusion that while the inhabitants of the Yorkshire Dale village of Wanet might well exchange stories and engaged in what he called a routine, or 'talking relationship' (Rapport 1987) the very same term used by two individuals might have widely different meanings to either. These different meanings led to gross misunderstandings between Sid and Doris, two of the inhabitants of the village. Interestingly, while these two engaged in interaction and debate they never engaged in meta-communication, that is a level of communication that is concerned

both with form and content of an interaction, to appreciate the different meanings given to the same term, and learn about different interpretations of one of the same communicatory situation. Now, the liberal community in Cologne on occasion does engage in this form of communication in order to establish what the key terms of its name, 'liberal' and 'Jewish', mean for the individual members, and how as a community they might be put together. It should not be overlooked that the liberal community often needs catalysts, such as Laura, or some specific non-Jew to challenge its (tenuous) internal order (cf. Douglas 1966), and with it the boundary of the liberal community. These two levels, internal order and external boundary are interdependent. The underlying reason is that *Gescher* is a voluntary community which needs to be engineered to define what sort of Jewish community it is. This engineering implies that the underlying homophilous values need to be put into practical application that is supported by a democratic majority. Rigby (1974) had argued this point as well in regard to communities he researched. The communities in his research were defined by the underlying values of the members, which through their application gave the communities a specific profile. This profile defined as well how a community was maintained and if it could be sustained.

The internal order (Douglas 1966) of the community is the order that refers to the ordering of inner-community and inner-Jewish business, it is an order that regulates the being in the community and establishes a status quo of dealings to the outside. This inner order has a direct relationship to the external boundary (Barth 1969/1998), because it is in the internal order that defines the boundary to the outside. In less abstract terms, a Jew who offended the internal order that is based on the key homophilous values 'acceptance, democracy and decategorisation' was Laura. With her doings concerning the *Seder* 2006 she disturbed the internal order that accepts different levels of observance and democratic structures. She did not harbour an acceptance of these homophilous core values of the majority of the membership when she declared the food prepared at the homes of members as not kosher enough for a *Seder*. Her actions also implied that she wanted a completely and orthodoxly Jewish zone within the confines of the liberal synagogue, and rejected all (German) otherness in it. This was not a stance found agreeable by the majority of the members who attempt to put

together being in Germany with being Jewish. Their idea of the content and the boundary of the community was accordingly different to Laura's. To use the idiom of Rigby (1974), this majority wanted to engineer the community differently from Laura.

The challenge that this person, Laura, poses to the value-based content and the boundary leads to a reaction from within, and a renegotiation and recalibration of order within the boundary to re-establish the boundary. The establishment of a new internal and external order is necessary to overcome the problem at hand because the meshing of stories (Collins 2002b, 2003) or life-stories (Bruner 1987) does not suffice to fill the community with content: the (life-) stories of the members are too different to show similarities easily, the similarities must be dug out of layers of complexities. Bruner mentioned in his first take on the narrative features of life that:

[...] life stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life-stories; tellers and listeners must share some “deep structures” about the structure of a “life” for if the rules of life-telling are altogether arbitrary, tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or what he thinks the other is hearing.

(Bruner 1987: 21 (emphases in original))

Noy (2007) makes a similar point in regard to the (Jewish) Israeli backpackers who told him their stories. In a first step, he describes how they communicated to him in the “common Israeli fashion” (Noy 2007: 6) because his interlocutors figured that he, as a fellow (Jewish) Israeli, who had travelled and been exposed to the same society and the same institutions, most importantly the army (IDF), could follow their narratives; he became part of their narrative community (ibid: 34-46). This realisation Noy summed up with the following words:

Clearly, narratability and the move to the effable require sociocultural conditions of the type that make performance possible – namely, a community of speakers wherein one can assume and materialize a voice, a speaking role: and, as the earlier chapters showed, wherein the speaker can conjure and perform various social voices *directly* by quotation.

(Noy 2007: 184 (emphasis in original))

Thus, both Bruner and Noy implicitly fall back on the notion that because the speakers share a similar social, cultural, or historic (to name just a few of the assumptions) background they somehow manage to communicate and create some kind of intersubjectivity. In his Wanet ethnography, Rapport (1993) had challenged this assumption. Yet, because the inhabitants of Wanet share a physical village space at least they can talk about common features, about a literal common ground.

Where does that leave the members of the liberal community in Cologne? The individual members I have introduced do not share any of those features; there is no shared place of residence (the members come from as far as 70 kilometres,

Cologne/Bonn/Düsseldorf metropolitan area has more than 2 million inhabitants), native language, enculturation and so on. The three interview excerpts clearly show this. These individual differences make for different ideas about Jewish observance as well. While in theory these individual differences are all appreciated through the shared homophilous values of the individual members that are laid down collectively in the statutes of the community, these individual differences create constant tensions. Thus, the homophily of values, be it the acceptance of individuals in their individuality or the attempt to decategorise 'German others', have their limits. This shows most clearly in the buffet discussion, or the individually different stance towards non-*halachic* Jews or German guests at the service. On an abstract level, what all members share, and the members-to-be align to, is the self-ascription as 'liberal Jews.' As outlined, the specific of being liberal Jewish within this community shows an agreement of the homophilous value of accepting others, acting democratically and the venturing beyond categories. These values contain the shared denominator that the liberal community is positively diverse and not like the orthodox Jewish community, which then is only an inner-Jewish difference. How now do the members fill this essentialised notion, liberal Jew with collective meaning?

Shades of Jewishness

Before I come to the inner-Jewish difference of how being liberal Jewish is filled with meaning sufficient to do liberal Jewish, it is important to stress the point, again, that the liberal Jewish community I researched is based in Germany. This issue is far from neutral, it hits on a collective and personal level; on an inner-Jewish level, and a non-Jewish level. The liberal community was set up to create a Jewish home and keep non-Jews (read: unknown non-Jewish Germans, not spouses or non-*halachically* Jewish children) out, to be able to be amongst what James and Mayan called like-minded people (read: people with homophilous values), but underlyingly, to be specifically with people who shared the Jewish narrative of suffering and displacement because it forms part of the very life-stories (read: co-ethnics of the same background), and thus identities (Bruner 1998; Linde 1993) of the founding members. This specific *Shoah* narrative does not include all Jews in the community or beyond it. Ron's experiences

with the *Shoah* are different from Iris's, Nora has yet different experiences. This means that any of the internal discussion of what being liberal Jewish means is as well a discussion about how much non-Jewish Germanness is allowed in the community, and is underpinned by the different experiences with the past (read: *Shoah*) within the Jewish collective.

This can be seen most clearly in the debates about the buffet and converts. With their mixture of stricter practice and what was perceived as non-Jewish backgrounds, these individuals disturbed the so much craved for normalcy of the birth Jewish members, even if this normalcy meant to go beyond the *Halacha*. How much this normalcy is being craved for becomes only clear through the narratives of the single person; without this background the upset that debates about food can cause seem petty. Only through narratives the different levels of the meaning of food become more tangible: not observing the *Halacha*, overstepping the *Kashrut* in order to feel normal, and creating a new order to fit the current purpose are communicated through food. More importantly, food, and the intake of food can be controlled and managed within the liberal community where Jews are in power; non-Jewishness can be dominated in this space. Non-Jewishness in the outside world cannot be dominated, it can only be managed in pieces. Thus the introduction of every piece, person, or narrative which is non-Jewish endangers this precarious construct.

The converts, of whom Nora is an example, bring different (life)-stories to the community which are differently informed by the *Shoah*.¹⁴⁴ Nora's case is particularly interesting because she has a Jewish grandmother but does simply not know anything further about her or the Jewish part of her family, her father remains silent, and she assumes and interweaves these assumptions of her family history into her life-story, which she then brings to the community. However, in order to convert she stresses her religious take on Judaism as a personal expression of Jewishness, because the rabbi will only admit her to conversion for religious reasons. This sets converts strongly apart from the descent Jews of the community. Some of the birth Jews are surely religious, but the religious aspect of being Jewish is only one feature of their Jewish identity. The similarity of these descent Jewish members lies in the area of being descent Jews as

well as harbouring similar homophilous values. Only being descent Jewish or only harbouring similar homophilous values was not enough to create meaningful communities for them, as the problems of both the *Einheitsgemeinde* and within the *Forum* clearly showed.

In regard to religious practice this creates a problem between descent Jews and converts. The descent Jews are often less religious than converts, beside notable examples such as Laura who was effectively marginalised by the majority of (descent Jewish) members. This means, that the majority of the descent Jews have a homophilous agreement on acceptance on personal forms of practice and overall describe themselves as liberal in practice, they are liberal liberals. This homophilous value does not necessarily hold true for the converts. They might be liberal Jewish by denomination, but take that the liberal practice more liberal than descent Jews. This means, that converts not only introduce Germanness into the synagogue through their life-stories, but as well a different form of liberal practice which is not part of the original homophilous value contract of the founding members. In the interviews Ron mentions that he prefers the liberal form of practice to the orthodox form, while Iris is still assessing what being Jewish means to her religiously; she is not sure she believes, or will ever believe. Looking at these two (life-story) narratives and the one of Nora it becomes evident that the liberal community is needed by its descent Jewish members, be they *halachic* or non-*halachic* Jews upon birth, for a purpose which lies way beyond Jewish religion, it lies in their very being in Germany, and in the Diaspora. Hence the first boundary of the community is the boundary to the non-Jewish German outside. The strength of this boundary I had underestimated at the beginning of my research in the community, because my access as an unknown incomer seemed so easy. Only through listening carefully to the stories of the descent Jewish members I realised how problematic it is for many of them to be in Germany, and how difficult it is to voice these problems because voicing them goes hand-in-hand with potentially not being understood, from which follows the self-questioning why one is in Germany, and relatedly who to be angry with, as the majority of perpetrators are dead. I found that this anger was often transformed into a defuse alienation from German society, which was divided up into those personally known friends (good German, Rapaport 1992: 197,

1997: 162-204), a personalised scapegoat (cf. Capelos 2008), and the unknown amorphous rest, which was regarded with suspicion.

Furthermore, those members who had immigrated to Germany even though they might have been descendants of German Jews, or German passport holders, would not refer to themselves as ‘Germans’, even if they wanted to be part of German society. Those born in Germany who had access to dual citizenship because one of their parents was non-German would not position themselves as Germans but align to their non-German nationality. This positioning included as well Jews of the third generation in the liberal community. In sum, any non-German part of their identity was more pronounced with descent Jews, is an expression of the perpetuated trauma of the *Shoah*, which disabled them from seeing themselves as Germans (Kranz 2008c). The value of decategorising (German) others has here its limit. Yet, this limit was challenged by converts who came from completely non-Jewish families. These formerly completely non-Jewish converts could not join into the Jewish meta-narrative of suffering, displacement and descent, but introduced with strength the feature of religious practice into the narrative of the community, because this was their sole access into, and performative anchor in being and doing Jewish. An example I have mentioned is the food debate, and its multiple layers of conflict: Germaness as opposed to Jewishness, and liberal as opposed to orthodox praxis, converts as opposed to birth Jews and so on.

For converts of completely non-Jewish parentage, religious practice is the key anchor of their Jewishness, which occasionally vexes descent Jews who attend services to *be* amongst Jews (read: homophilous descent Jews) as Iris, Mayan, and others outlined, while they did not want to be forced to perform as (orthodox) Jews. Taking these factors together with the afore-mentioned wish for normalcy underpins the basic problem with converts and non-Jews in the community: birth Jews want to be normal as ‘Jew’, and not perform according to a (superimposed) category, which is a reflection of the cravings, if not fetishes, of non-Jews.

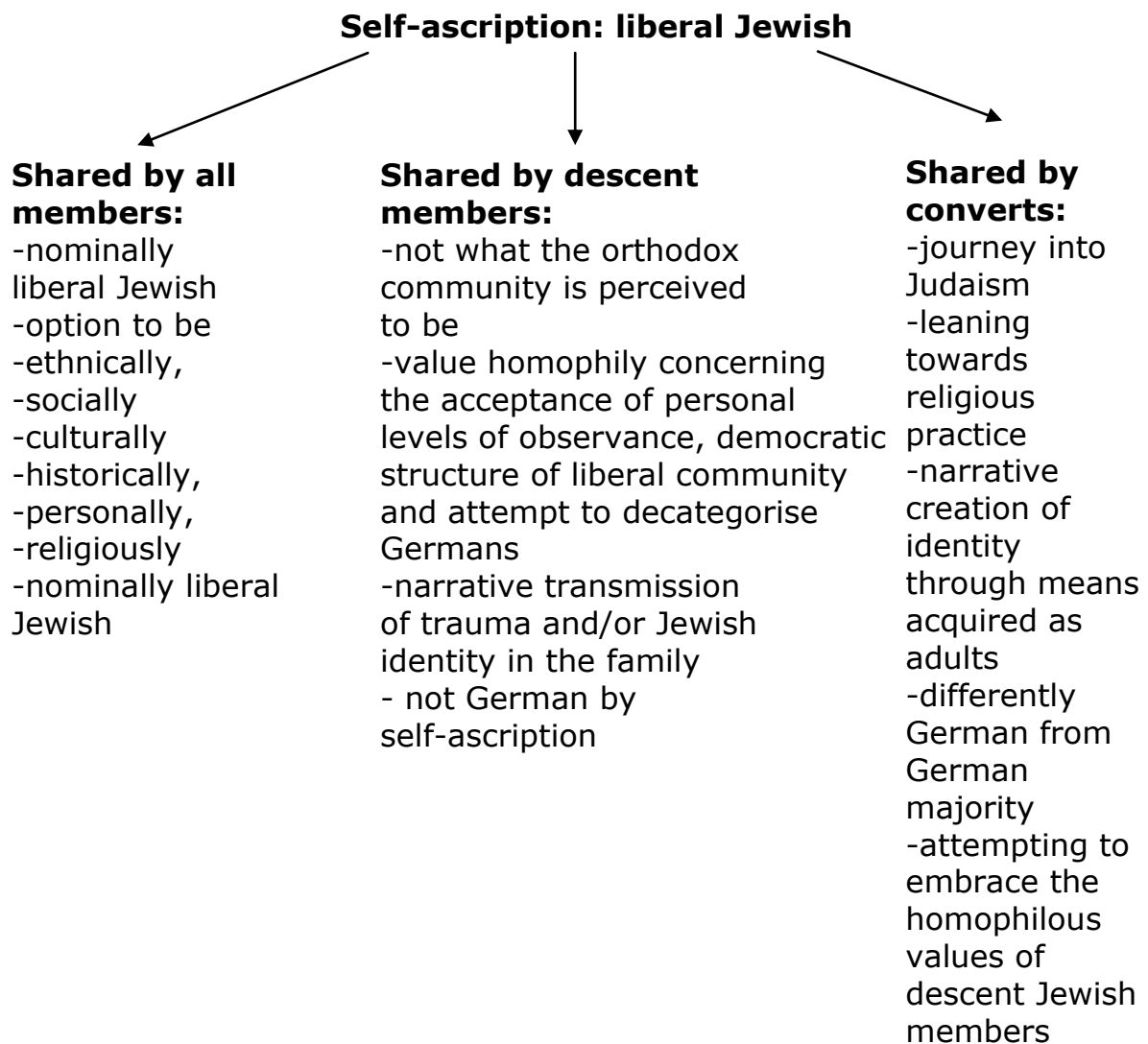
The liberal community was originally set up in opposition to the orthodox community. However, the treatment of non-Jewish presence which was a major point of contention

with the *Einheitsgemeinde* became an issue in the liberal community, too once it was set up and had a community space. In the liberal community, too, non-Jews are contentious because they are a living reminder of the past. As German non-Jewish outsiders of the community, more so as guests in the community, but most as converts who switch categories from ‘German non-Jew’ to ‘Jew’, they are a reminder of the failed German-Jewish symbiosis and its catastrophic end although not all Jews in the community are descendants of survivors. The problem with the presence of non-Jews for these non-survivors shows just how strongly the *Shoah* is integrated in Jewish identity and Jewish collective memory.

Through their doing Jewish, converts perform Jewishness that might seem learned to birth Jews. Their religious take on being Jewish can be seen as a parallel to the vernacular of Collins’s Quaker research, yet as a vernacular which removes them from birth Jews in the community. The religiosity of converts, which defines them as Jews is recognised within the community narrative as a features of being Jewish, although it remains a highly problematic one, because it constitutes an ill-fit with the personal narratives of many of the descent Jewish members who do not see themselves as “overly religious” (Yaron) and by definition not orthodox. This means that the religious take of the converts creates tension in the vernacular trope, in which the personal/prototypical trope is interwoven (Collins 1994, 2002b, 2003, 2004), because the converts challenge the statute of Gescher, which outlines that different degrees of observance are acceptable on a very fundamental level. Thinking of Geertz’s (1973) idiom of commonsensical knowledge or the volume edited by Harris (2007) on learning and knowledge, this level of commonsensical knowledge that is shared by the birth Jews needs to be created and negotiated in *Gescher* because of the converts. This implicit level of knowledge does not exist as a form of a passed on and lived community tradition for all members of the community. All the members can agree on are abstract homophilous values that need to be negotiated in their practical application to create a ‘*Gescher* tradition.’

This implicit level contains the non-verbalised disclaimer that different levels of observance are acceptable only as long as they do not offend the homophilous value of

the ‘individually observant’ descent Jews (and founding members), and to not expect those to follow the *Kashrut*, or *Halacha* to an (orthodox) standard. The problem of this different standard of observance is exacerbated by the fact that (some) converts would have rather converted orthodox, but that the *Einheitsgemeinde* would not have them.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, I propose the following model to appreciate the widely differing attitudes of being Jewish amongst the members of *Gescher LaMassoret*:



These features of being Jewish form the *Shades of Jewishness* of the title of this dissertation which translate into specific actions of doing Jewish, as narrated by the members of *Gescher*. All of these features have been mentioned by the members of the liberal community to me, and all of these features are recognised as features of being liberal Jewish. All of these features are options to express a Jewish identity in the community, and form contributions to the narrative of the community. Yet, these features only fit Collins's (1994, 2002b, 2003, 2004) canonical and vernacular to an extent.

The practice in Cologne does align to the liberal practice in Germany, though the differences between the liberal communities in the country are remarkable, and depend on where the key members come from. In Cologne the initial members were descendants of German Jews, Western Europeans and converts. The community in the city of Bad Pyrmont on the other hand is completely Russian speaking. Berlin, which has the largest number of Jewish residents, has as well the most international community, which reflect in the practice of the community. This means that ‘formal’ liberal Jewish practice is not that clear cut. As discussed before, the canonic narrative is penetrated by the vernacular narrative. This can be seen from the Cologne *Siddur* most clearly.

Then, on a vernacular level, descent Jews and converts show strong differences in regard to religious observance, and their self-positioning within the German non-Jewish majority as well as within the Jewish minority. This means that not only each individual with his or her life-story relates differently to the canonical and vernacular levels, but that as well the original belonging of the individual to one of two groups (Jews or Germans) imperatively influences the tensions and the braiding of the community narrative¹⁴⁶. The tensions between the narratives of individuals, and the different narrative threads reflect the attempt to create an order on the inside of the community. This attempt to order represents the internal order (Douglas 1966) needed to create the external boundary (Barth 1969/1998). It is possible to see the food debate as the part of this internal ordering process, which contains the elements which cannot be verbalised, such as the *Shoah* (which is not mentioned within the community setting), and truly hateful feelings towards non-Jews or converts (who are always present). To use Douglas’s (1966) metaphor of the mouth as the dangerous margin: the mouth that eats or rejects food, and the mouth that speaks or remains silent are two sides of the same coin, because the person attached to the mouth chooses actively whom to take food from and whose to reject, and who to share a narrative with and whom better to avoid in the sharing of words. Food and feeding and narrative and talking are intrinsically interwoven and reflect perceptions of internal and external order, and the respective limits that translate into boundaries.

In practice this means that a person who describes himself as an atheist, such as James, will recognise a person like Jonathan, who expresses a strong interest in Jewish practice as a fellow Jew who emphasises a different features of being Jewish than he himself does. Yet, this means, as well, that conflicts such as the one between Iris and Sandra arise, and that compromises need to be found, which are acceptable for the individuals concerned and the community they are part of. In practice this means, too, that all of the potential features of being liberal Jewish become de-essentialised and are filled with life and meaning only in the narratives of the single members and their actions (Bruner 1998). Yet, as Rapport (1993) outlined, individuals live in individual and collective worlds at the same time, which means that the collective is always a place of tensions, whose content needs to be constantly negotiated.

There are of course connections and continuities between the features of the far left column. A person who sees 'ethnicity' as the prime marker of their Jewish identity might connect this to what was passed on to them in terms of Jewish culture, while another person might connect it to a social identity, which becomes salient in moments when they are confronted with non-Jews. Any of the features are therefore interpreted individually and given individual weight, which then in turn leads to the discussion within the community setting where the different emphases of the individual identities on occasion lead to clashes. These clashes in turn lead to reassessments of what the liberal community actually is, and fill it with life and content on the inside, and strengthen its boundary to the outside in terms of what the community is not.

Because of the constant negotiation and tension concerning the underlying relation to the outside and on the inside, what are 'outside' and 'inside' of the community represents a constant dynamic interplay. It is possible to say that while the liberal community shows some features of an ethnic group by virtue of the pronounced ethno-historic take of its descent Jewish members, its (official) adherence to the *Halacha*, and some features of a religious group because its existence centres around the weekly Friday night service, *Gescher* is indeed much more than that: it is more than a group of people which engages in symbolic ethno-religious acts (Gans 1994). With its mixture of quasi-ethnic and religious features, and its strong influencing by the socio-historic

realities of its German surrounding, and constant influences in particular from Israel, it shows various features of Jewish Diaspora life in general and in Germany specifically; it reflects German society post-*Shoah*, and post-conflict societies and the aftermaths of genocide in general. It indicates the importance of the idea to belong, and why a group with ethnic features is key to belonging, and how this ethnicity is being (re)created in a (post-)modern and complex society, where identifications are multiple. Fischer (1986) offered some clues about the (re)creation of ethnic identities in the post-modern USA. While his idea refers to immigrant groups and Native Americans whose context is different to that of Jews in Germany, he stresses the emotional currency of the idea of ethnicity. Ethnicity offers to interweave the (imagined) past with the (experienced) present and create (possible) futures. Furthermore, ethnicity offers the experience of a bond that connects an individual to a collective throughout time. Fischer argues that changes occur over time and between generations concerning their understanding of their ethnicity and that immigration adds to the possible resources of an ethnic identity repertoire. Concerning the last point, Fischer stresses in particular Jewish identity in the USA, its changes and consistencies in the writing of American Jewish authors. As with the examples of Native American identities and their religious or mystical anchoring, Jewish identity, through its routedness in holy scripts, offers the specific feature to be interpreted as a primordial, blood infused, tribal religio-ethnic identity that is god given. This divine feature allows for the connection between the human and divine sphere and vice versa (Berger 1967). This connection increases the possible interpretability of Jewish/Judaic identity and in effect strengthens the resilience of the Jewish ethno-religious group, because it offers options to be Jewish. One can be a self-ascribed ethnic Jew or a religious Jew, unite both, or create new self-ascriptions by combining Jewish past(s) and present(s) to develop Jewish future(s).

This liberal community in Cologne is a microcosm which opens up a view onto being Jewish in present-day Germany because national and international events concerning Jews become magnified here. It also hints at issues which are highly pertinent to Diaspora communities in general: such as whether ethnicity, or in the case of Diaspora Jews ethno-religion (cf. Gans 1979), is by virtue of the forces of modernity weakening as a defining feature of identity. How does one fill a self-ascribed categorical belonging

like this one with content? And further, how does one fill the self-ascribed categorical belonging with meaning, and uphold a boundary in countries where different narratives that set Jews and non-Jews do not exist as a dichotomy? In other words, how do Jews in Australia or Brazil create Jewishness? Is Jewishness still an ethnicity, or has it features of a malleable and debatable quasi-ethnicity, open to amendments, discussion, disjunctures and only held together through narratives by people who seek out homophilous ‘co-ethnics’ with whom they are or do symbolically Jewish on occasion? Or is this a harbinger of a new form of belonging, which is informed by (several and individually defined) ideas of ethnicity, but lies in its complexity and fluidity way beyond the seemingly rigid and static idea of an ethnic group, and uses ‘ethnic’ for the mere lack of better term (cf. Braidotti 2006)? Or does ‘ethnic group’ afford the luxury of an apparent timelessness, and an ‘eternal’ belonging? In the case of Jews this would make sense, as Judaism as a religion offers a gateway into a non-human, supernatural sphere (Berger 1967; Magat 1999). Would it in this case not be more useful to speak of a ‘felt ethnicity’ to appreciate the strength of the emotionally invested belonging? I think that taking into consideration that my participants in Germany (and Britain) told me repeatedly that, “If you are a Jew, you are a Jew. You can’t just leave it,” this might indeed be a more accurate notion to approach the emotional and embodied attachment to being Jewish.

If this is the case, than especially the quasi-ethnic features of the Cologne liberal community offer a new way to understand the malleability of concept of ‘ethnicity’, its processes, blending, and underlying negotiations in a highly complex Western European society, as well as the resilience of the idea of ‘ethnicity.’

On a communal level *Gescher* bears witness to the interaction and interface of individual and social agency. The community is an attempt to braid different approaches to being, doing, and to *becoming* Jewish into a narrative which underpins policies, but as well creates a lived-in belonging. The resulting policies allow for difference, and the creation of a liberal home for a Jewish community which attempts to live the complicated dialogue with its non-Jewish German surrounding, however difficult this might be for the single member. The liberal community connects all three levels of

narrative of Collins's theory (1994, 2002b, 2003, 2004) on a communal and on an individual level, yet their situatedness in Germany, and the internal complexities make for amendments of his theory. The interactions between the different levels of the community narrative centre around the vernacular and the prototypical levels. A canonic level as with the formal Quaker practice does not exist in Germany to date. While technically, a very abstract document concerning liberal Jewish practice exists ('acceptance of different degrees of observance'), what is actually done and how it is done depends on the communities, and here again on the key members. This is again a long-term effect of the *Shoah*, which annihilated German liberal Judaism. The threads of the narrative show therefore a different tension than with the Quakers of Collins's work. The context and each individual have a stronger influence as the canonical level does not have a stabilising effect that it would have if a 'formal liberal Jewish status quo practice' existed in Germany.

This scenario gives the community a specific dynamic. It thrives on the interweaving of the canonic, vernacular and prototypical levels, and allows each of the members to bring their own form of practice into the community. This is necessary, because the value homophily in regard to the acceptance of the practice take a similar stabilising effect that the formal practice of the Quakers does. It lies at the heart of hearts of the *Gescher*. This homophilous value has been defended on various occasions, as the examples show, despite the difficulties to operationalise them. It allows for the dynamic to interweave individual narratives (canonic, vernacular and prototypical) into the braid of the community. It offers as well an answer an explanation how different canonic narratives can be put together. This homophily shows how somehow, if uneasily, the 'narratives of origin' of the members and their different initial belonging to the category 'Jew' or 'German' can be interweaved in the community narrative, because the attempt to decategorise Germans is another homophilous value. Especially the birth Jewish members show a strong investment to in this area because for them it is nearly synonymous with their rejection of the orthodox community. Yet, it remains difficult to negotiate this territory for them. The only way to survive, and thrive, despite these categorical and individual complexities is to negotiate carefully how the 'narratives of origin' can be reinterpreted to achieve the creation of a future-orientated narrative of the

liberal community, and on the way through this heavy investment create an emotional bond, and in consequence attachment to an ‘experienced’ and ‘felt’ ethnicity of being (liberal) Jewish.

The bond and attachment can only be created if it is based not on the smallest common denominator (*halachic* Jews by birth or conversion), but an individual and collectively sufficient and satisfactory master denominator that is filled with life, which lies beyond categorical thinking. This satisfactory denominator must be underpinned one or more of the shared homophilous values. In the case of the liberal community in Cologne the aim of combining those values is that the members wish to create a future-oriented Jewishness. The birth Jews underpin this endeavour by their shared homophilous value of accepting other forms of practice, the attempt to decategorise Germans and to run a democratic community. The converts underpin their endeavour by embracing Judaism wholeheartedly and by attempting to fit into with homophilous values of the birth Jews. Of course, the coming together of these two groups of people makes for negotiations, it challenges both sides and on occasion the members hurt each other. Yet, they all showed the determination to hold the community together and work together at its future. In the future the satisfactory homophilous master denominators (accepting of other forms of practice, overcoming categories, democratic community) can be used as the stepping-stone to venture beyond the schism of the past, while appreciating the past (Hoffman 2004), and finding a collectively acceptable way to deal with it. This would open up what is possible, and create in consequence a positively connoted ingroup with an ethnic resilience that becomes part of the multifaceted, and very different forms of living Jewishnesses (and Judaism) globally.

In effect, the satisfactory homophilous common denominators shows that ‘ethnicity’ is a process and that ‘ethnicity’ can be created. ‘Ethnicity’ based on the notions of biological perpetuation (Barth 1969/1998), segmentary lineage (R. Cohen 1978) or descent (A. Cohen 1974) might apply to some ethnic groups, but ‘actual’ bloodlines or kinship are no longer applicable to all groups that self-ascribe as ‘ethnic groups.’ The liberal Jewish community in Cologne shows that specific shared homophilous values are needed to achieve ethnic resilience as a community within a society, where ethnic

categorisations are optional and have voluntary features (McPherson & Smith-Lovin 1982, 1986, 1987; Popielarz 1999). Here, ethnic groups are underpinned by features which anthropologists and sociologists saw more applicable to the creation and maintenance of personal friendships, which are based on similarities, like-mindedness and homophilous values (boyd 2008; Carrier 1999; Cohen 1977, Lazarsfeld & Merton 1954, McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001; Verbrugge 1977, 1979, 1983). Merely being ethnically (as in descent) and/or *halachically* Jewish did not suffice for the birth Jews to want to be with other Jews, and mere like-mindedness did not suffice to hold a mixed Jewish/non-Jewish group such as the *Forum* together. The liberal Jewish community shows that for the creation and more so for the maintenance of a construct that can be called 'voluntary ethnic community' commonality in terms of ethnicity and value homophily is needed because these create an emotional attachment. The individual and collective worlds of Rapport's (1993) theory need to come together to allow for the creation of an emotionally supported voluntary ethnic community. In this specific case commonality is based on a shared, as in self-ascribed categorical ethnicity and the homophily of the values of the individual members. Only one of those two components would not suffice to create enough of a shared denominator. Taken together the self-ascribed ethnicity and the homophily of values are satisfactory common denominators to create a community by way of narrating that allows for the members to experience an 'emotional' and 'felt' ethnicity.

Notes

Introduction

¹ I will use the term *Shoah* throughout this dissertation, and not Holocaust. *Shoah* (Hebrew: annihilation) is the term used by the Jewish ingroup to refer to the genocide of 6 million Jews. This choice has three reasons. First, the term was used by my Jewish participants. I think it is appropriate to use the term of their choice to capture their discourse. Second, the term Holocaust comes from the Greek *ολόκαυστον* (*holókauston*): *holos*, "completely" and *kaustos*, "burnt" and was, and is used in archaeology to refer to a sacrifice to the gods. While I appreciate that the term was initially used by virtue of a lack of a better one, I consider that *Shoah* is actually a more appropriate term to describe the events of the 1930s and 1940s. Third, the term Holocaust includes various victim groups, which are not covered in this dissertation. However, these other groups do not use the term Holocaust within their ingroup either, Sinti and Roma, for example, use the term *Porajmos* for the genocide waged against them during this time, which means devouring.

² The transliterations of the Hebrew script follow the pronunciation of modern Israeli Hebrew (*Ivrit*). This means that they are not necessarily in line with linguistic conventions. Rules for transliterations are not unanimous. The reason for following the modern day *Ivrit* pronunciation is that the members of the community used this pronunciation, and not the Ashkenazi (German and Eastern European) pronunciations of Hebrew. There are several reasons underlying the use of modern Israeli Hebrew. First, only a couple of elderly people in the community know the Ashkenazi pronunciations from pre-*Shoah* Germany. Second, the Ashkenazi pronunciation stands for the old dead world, modern Israel is connected to life, being alive, being strong, self-determined and having a future. Third, only the birth Jews in the community could access this source of *Yiddishkeit* (Yiddish: Jewishness). For all others it would be perceived of as rather inappropriate, and the usurpation of a language that would be just a performance without ethno-historical substance, and thus an overstepping of an inner-Jewish boundary.

³ Unfortunately, Barth does not give a time frame, or an explanation who decides on the Pathanness of a non-birth Pathan, or if self-ascriptions and ascriptions by others vary.

⁴ The same holds for the orthodox community. Being a member in this community does not offer economic advantages either. 'Inner Jewish business deals', a stereotype that is often part of anti-Semitic discourses cannot be substantiated with the data retrieved.

⁵ Over the years, I have witnessed only one incident that focused on Jewish ritual. The issue of contention was that the person asked to light the Shabbat candles and say the *Bracha* (blessing) declined, because from her point of view Shabbat had already started, and she did not want to make fire by lighting a match, and thus violate her take on the *Halacha*. The recurring argument concerning the service ensued around the issue of the participation of non-Jews in Jewish ritual. But this again is an issue that begs the question of boundary management, not religious liberal ritual and practice.

⁶ The term displaced person (DP) describes a person who after WWII could not return to their town or country of origin. Jews were displaced through the *Shoah*, their homes and infrastructures had been destroyed, and anti-Semitism prevailed in Eastern Europe.

However, non-Jews were as well displaced through WWII or through its aftermath. Germans fled the Red Army to the West and were unable to return to their former homes in East Prussia for example. Poles were moved westwards to former German provinces, as the Soviet Union incorporated vast parts of Eastern Poland into its territory. In this work the term DP will be used to describe Jews of Eastern European origin. Yet it should be noted that Jews were not the only people who were displaced, and that competing narratives concerning suffering and displacement exist (for Jews and Germans, see Grossmann 2007).

Chapter 1

⁷ This figure should be considered as indicative of the number of Jews but not as a definite. The same goes for any statistical figure for Jews in Germany. The issues for this are multiple. First, statistical classification changed between the different censuses. Second, not all Jews were members of the communities pre- or post-*Shoah* and persons who were non-members might define themselves as Jewish to authorities yet be non-members of the communities and vice versa, or might simply not mention anywhere that they are Jewish. I estimate that about 70% off all Cologne Jews were members in the *Einheitsgemeinde* pre-1991. Post-1991 the number of members might be about 50% or 60% as not all Russian incomers became or could become members, and especially younger Jews showed a decreasing interest in membership of any religious community. Young Israelis for example derided the idea of being “member in a synagogue where I don’t go to begin with.”

⁸ Brenner (1995) draws similar conclusions in regard to the period 1945-1950 in his book *Nach dem Holocaust* (After the Holocaust).

⁹ Bodemann (1996b) mentions a secular Yiddish speaking culture of Polish Jews. It seems that Eastern European Jews have been assumed to be more religious by researchers and Jews of German descent alike. I am not sure if they are or were more religious in their daily lives or only ‘preferred’ an orthodox practice. The descendants of DPs I came across were not more religiously observing than the descendants of German Jews.

¹⁰ According to the rabbi of the liberal community in Cologne, the pre-*Shoah* liberal practice differs from the current practice in Germany or the US. In Cologne men and women sat separately in the liberal synagogue. Despite this detail the practice of German Jews was different from the practice of Eastern European Jews, and reflected the higher assimilation of German Jews in pre-*Shoah* Germany.

¹¹ Beate Meyer (2002) published a monograph called *Jüdische Mischlinge 1933-1945*, (Jewish Mixed Persons, 1933-1945) and gives some indication for the number of mixed marriages in Hamburg; Kerstin Meiering (1998) looks at mixed marriage pre-1933 specifically. Günther B. Ginzel (1984) mentions for Cologne that men who survived in mixed marriages were the founding members of the post-*Shoah* community in 1945. Zieher (2005) confirms this with his research on the communities in Düsseldorf, Cologne and Dortmund. Comprehensive statistics of mixed marriages do not exist. Jay Howard Geller (2005) does not have statistics that would substantiate his claim (personal communication, 2006). His data is qualitative on that matter. By virtue of the differences of the categorisations of a person as Jewish according to the *Halacha* and Nazi law, the loss of data through burnings and bombings, and the reluctance of Jews or

mixed persons to register with authorities after the *Shoah* all data should be seen as indicative and not imperative.

¹² German Jews are historically considered to be the most assimilated, and least marginalised. The development of the assimilation of German Jews was spurred by German Jewish scholars such as Moses Mendelsohn (1729-1786) who was a key figure in the Jewish enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*). Mendelsohn lobbied for an active engagement of Jews with their surrounding society and saw this engagement as key to obtain equal human rights. In German speaking countries (German speaking lands were a conglomerate of duchies, kingdoms, and church lands, and only reunited to a German nation state in 1871), Jews obtained citizenship rights earlier than in Eastern Europe. Their growing assimilation reflected in specific transmogrifications of the religious service, such as the use of German language or organs. These changes made the Jewish service resemble a church service. Furthermore, Jews who spurred liberal Judaism took on ideas from the secular realms of modernity, such as gender equality or specific philosophical ideas. To date, communities with strong 'German roots' such as Belsize Square or Northwood in London, use organs, choirs and tunes that originate in Germany. The literature of what is now, post-*Shoah*, perceived as a 'German Jewish symbiosis' is vast. Georg L. Mosse published on this topic, as did Amos Elon, Hagit Lavsky, Shulamit Volkov, Monika Richarz or Dan Diner, to name just a few historians. The 'German-Jewish symbiosis' and 'liberal Judaism' is created in opposition to Eastern European Jews and their practice. All of these categories should be seen as social constructs against the backdrop of the *Shoah*.

¹³ Yiddish for jacket. This term is used to refer to German Jews in Palestine/Israel and their (allegedly) stiff conduct, which manifested in clothing unsuitable for the hot climate.

¹⁴ Day of Atonement, highest Jewish holy day. Religiously observing Jews fast *Yom Kippur*.

¹⁵ From the data I gathered amongst liberal Jews of Eastern European descent I cannot confirm this notion. Two came from communist Jewish families, one from a moderately religious family, while the parents of another one only visited the synagogue on high holidays and otherwise were uninterested. My 'sample' needs be considered carefully as it is very small. Yet, I am not sure in how far the majority of DPs were religious, just happened to practice due to circumstance or were perceived as more religious because of their difference by German Jews. My observations in Israel, which included non-German Ashkenazim did not confirm a higher religiosity of the descendants of Eastern European Ashkenazim. I think that the religiosity of the DPs might be more a matter of boundary management, and the maintenance of a Jewish identity through a familiar Jewish practice in the face of near annihilation. The high birth rates (Kugelman 1996) would confirm this assumption. Jewish practice, as much as a Jewish baby were an affirmation of Jewish life against death, despair and trauma.

¹⁶ Besides my name, my (then) boyfriend Dan's, and our mutual friend Roy's, all names are aliases. In order to convey a feeling of the names, their 'theme' was kept. This means that a person with a Hebrew name would be given a Hebrew alias, and a person with an English name would be given an English alias, and so on.

¹⁷ Jael Geis is the daughter of the late rabbi Raphael Geis. His progressive ideas caused a stir in the 1950s (Bodemann 1996a). Jael Geis was active in the *Jüdische Gruppe* in Berlin.

¹⁸ Cilly Kugelman (1988a) observed very keenly that remaining in Germany foreclosed the psychological process of dealing with the past and absolute loss. This might be true for a number of Jews, yet not for all. I learned that remaining in Germany could be based on a multitude of reasons. For some German Jews Germany remained their home. These Jews had often been saved by non-Jewish spouses or friends or ‘emigrated’ early enough to not witness the *Shoah* in full swing. These Jews often expressed the wish to be buried in German soil or they wanted to work for a better Germany (Borneman & Peck 1995). Other, Eastern European DPs without prior connection remained for long enough to settle and to begin to make a living (Geller 2005) in Germany. Yet others were too traumatised to face up to emigration. Trauma can result in depression, which leads to lethargy. This state made it impossible for some survivors to go through the difficult emigration process to other countries. Another psychological effect of trauma can be the inability to deal with normalcy. Any normalcy, for example not living in Germany anymore with the idea of a constant threat on their minds, would have been impossible to deal with (Grünberg 1988). Thus, while Zimmermann’s review is a good read, it lacks empathy with the Jews who remained in Germany. They might have engaged in a lifetime lie to shield themselves, but given their trauma and experiences a reaction like this is psychologically speaking common in post-conflict societies.

¹⁹ The term ‘living with packed suitcases’ (*auf gepackten Koffern leben*) refers to the syndrome that survivors could not admit that they were living in Germany. They needed the packed suitcase to pretend they were only sojourning on the one hand, on other hand the packed suitcase remains a metaphor for the inability to settle in Germany, and insurmountable traumas (cf. Strathmann 2003). I found with Jews of the second and third generation who had been born and raised in Germany that they still needed to know where their passports were at any time, they ensured that they were valid and they needed enough cash (not credit cards, bank accounts might be frozen) in the house to be able to leave at any time. Multiple citizenship strategies were common with the second and third generation. Nick Lambert (2008) found in his research that double or multiple passport strategies are common amongst European Jews in other countries too. My participants and interview partners rationalised their fears. They gave various examples of the changing face of anti-Semitism as they perceived it and the threats that came with it to rationalise their perception and resulting behaviour. Only very few verbalised that the *Shoah* might be underlying.

²⁰ While the *Einheitsgemeinde* exists as a legal entity within the legal framework of Germany, the state does not have any say in its internal affairs. Indeed, state forces do not have any right to enter religious premises. This law, part of the law concerning the freedom to practice one’s religion (*Religionsfreiheit*) is part of the German constitution (Article 4).

²¹ Historians agree that the orthodox form of practice was chosen due to the small number of Jews in Germany, because all Jews can participate in an orthodox form of practice. Liberal Jews acknowledge orthodox rituals, but not vice versa. I think that this assessment lacks the crucial feature that only Kugelman (1988a, 1996) picks on: the majority of Jews wished to stand united against the non-Jewish outside, and an orthodox shell (cf. Bodemann 2006) was perceived as safer. The founding fathers (and mothers) of the post-*Shoah* community were highly traumatised, and agreed on a form of practice that could function on the smallest common denominator for the (transit) time they were

going to stay in Germany. However, as can be seen from this chapter, even the smallest common denominator was heavily fought over.

²² Registration with the local registry is compulsory for any person living in Germany, citizens and foreigners alike.

²³ Church tax (*Kirchensteuer*) or cult tax (*Kultussteuer*) is payable by those who declare themselves as belonging to one of several Christian churches (mostly Catholic and Protestant) or as Jewish to the local registries. These faith communities exist as *Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts* (entity according to public law), and are acknowledged by the federal state. Other faith communities, which are as well *Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*, such as Jehova's Witness or Christian Science do not charge this tax, they exist on voluntary donations or membership fees.

²⁴ Liberal Jewish congregations in Britain or the US for example acknowledge children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as eligible for membership.

²⁵ The practice, which is encapsulated in the term 'liberal' is Germany specific. By US standards it is a conservative form of practice, while in Britain it resembles strongly the reform stream. This hints at the issues that liberal Judaism in Germany was annihilated with the *Shoah*, and did not grow consistently like in the US and Britain. The current liberal form in Germany probably resembles liberal Judaism in pre-*Shoah* Germany, and is much more conservative than its namesakes in the English-speaking world.

²⁶ All translations of non-English sources are my translations.

²⁷ Problematically, German discourse refers to Jews by generational cohorts. This leads to a de-emphasis of internal differences, and assumes that the *Shoah* holds the same significance for the 'members' of an age cohort (Kranz 2008c). The children of second generation Jews are referred to as third generation in this discourse.

²⁸ Only Oppenheimer's work was published. Kushner's PhD dissertation is available through the University of Cologne. Maor's thesis is accessible online through www.harrymaor.com. The webpage was set up in the memory of Maor in 1998, sixteen years after Maor's death.

²⁹ Sichrovsky (1985) comes again to similar conclusions to Kushner in his book *Wir wissen nicht was morgen wird, wir wissen wohl was gestern war: junge Juden in Deutschland und Österreich* (We do not know what will be tomorrow, but we know what was yesterday: young Jews in Germany and Austria). His work comprises data of young Jews in Germany and Austria whom he accessed via the official Jewish communities.

³⁰ Frerker (1998) makes a similar point, and stresses the imperative non-neutrality between Jews and non-Jews in Germany.

³¹ Bodemann (1996b) offers a comprehensive list of titles and comments on these works.

³² The works of Jeffrey M. Peck (1995, 2006) and various books and volumes by Sander L. Gilman have a similar scholarly importance. Yet, they are published in English and therefore reach a smaller audience in Germany, they remain in the realm of scholars. These books are written from an outsider's perspective, neither Peck nor Gilman are Germans, and their perception by Jews in Germany is problematic. They are not part of the Jewish hegemonic discourse. The historian Kaufmann, who is Swiss, taught in Germany. Bodemann is German, but was educated in the US, and teaches in Canada, while spending his breaks in Berlin. Both are insider-outsiders, and perceived as such, while Gilman and Peck are perceived of as American Jewish outsiders.

³³ The term ‘Jewish space’ was first coined by Diana Pinto (2002). Sandra Lustig & Ian Leveson (2006) use it to describe a space, which encapsulates things relating to Jews in Germany. My own interpretation of the Jewish space is that it is a social circle (1890) in the Simmelian sense with a Jewish focus. Individuals are part of it and they are uniquely positioned in it. The same individuals are part of various other social circles, and influenced by their various memberships and belongings. As such, the Jewish space is populated by Jews and non-Jews alike. Bodemann (1996a: 48) uses the term “Jewdaising Milieus” (*judaisierende Milieus*) to describe Jewish spaces in which Jews and non-Jews discuss, create or do ‘Jewish things.’

³⁴ The *Kahan Commission* was formed to inquire into the massacres. The IDF was found “indirectly responsible” for the massacres, because they had had knowledge of the Phalangists entering the refugee camps. According to the *Commission*, the IDF did not respond appropriately. Ariel Sharon, who later became prime minister of Israel “was found responsible for ignoring the danger of bloodshed and revenge when he approved the entry of the Phalangists into the camps as well as not taking appropriate measures to prevent bloodshed.”

(<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1982-1984/104%20Report%20of%20the%20Commission%20of%20Inquiry%20into%20the%20e>, accessed March 13, 2009).

³⁵ The *Königsteiner Schlüssel* is a statistical figure which assesses the wealth and population of each German state. According to this figure, refugees are distributed to the respective German states. The statistical measurement is highly problematic for the distribution of refugees because it does not take into account social science research concerning refugees, and relies solely on total population figures and wealth distribution.

³⁶ The figure is an estimate as Jews from the former Soviet Union entered Germany on different visas. Highly qualified Jews might not have immigrated as quota refugees but have entered the country on regular work permits. Legislation was changed in June 2006, and Jewish immigration curbed.

³⁷ A number of publications deal with Russian Jews exclusively. Various publications by Julius H. Schoeps and the Moses Mendelssohn Institut at University of Potsdam that is chaired by him are dedicated to Russian Jews. A conference at University of Sussex in Brighton in December 2004 dealt exclusively with Russian Jews in Germany. By virtue of the limits of this dissertation, these works will not be dealt with in this section. Some publications will be used in later chapters.

³⁸ I do not agree with Vesper’s findings on this matter. From my research it seems that non-*halachic* Jews had been turned away by the *Einheitsgemeinde* and this led to a rejection of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. The result was a withdrawal into a private Judaism, (liberal) conversion or political activism. Complete detachment from Judaism as a religion might have occurred, but a detachment from Jewish culture beyond religion I have not come across. Drawing on my observations at the Annual Conference of Liberal Jews in Berlin in 2004, the rejection from the side of the *Einheitsgemeinde* was a common feature amongst the Russian-speaking participants.

³⁹ The transliteration of the name if the community follows the German convention where the letter *shin* (ש) is transliterated with ‘sch.’ The double ‘s’ stands for the letter *samech* (ס), and reflects the pronunciation of a fast and toneless ‘s’ in Hebrew. Hebrew

does not use double vowels. The use of ‘ss’ is a matter of the accommodation of the pronunciation.

⁴⁰ I use the term birth Jew to refer to a person who has at least one Jewish parent, although some persons with only one Jewish grandparent I met in Cologne very strongly identified as being Jewish or with Judaism. The defining moment for a Jewish identity in this case is the social identification with Judaism, being Jewish, or seeing themselves as part of the people of Israel, the *Halacha* or its rejection is only one element in the identification of these individuals.

⁴¹ Hebrew: ascend. The immigration of Jews to Israel is referred to *Aliyah*. See chapter six on the notions *Aliyah* and *Yordah* (descend).

⁴² *Aktion Sühnezeichen* was founded in 1959. In 1958 Lothar Kreysing of the Protestant church had called for an organisation that would help to undo the hurt that the Nazis had caused in particular in Russia, Poland and to Jews. (http://www.asf-ev.de/ueber_uns/asf_geschichte/gruendungsaufruf/, accessed February 3, 2007). Since then the organisation has sent volunteers to these countries and to Israel. It has furthermore been active in the peace movement in Germany, and pushed for a civic service (http://www.asf-ev.de/ueber_uns/asf_geschichte/die_aktion_suehnezeichen_im_westen_von_1959_bis_1991/, accessed February 3, 2007)

⁴³ Like the second generation Jews in the work of Rapaport (1992, 1997) and Grünberg (2000) a number of the Cologne Jews found their mixed marriages problematic, and were acutely aware that they overstepped a categorical boundary created by the *Shoah*. The overstepping of the *Halacha* was less of a problem, as most of them were little or non-religiously observant. In one case a male Jewish attendee had been married to a fellow second generation Jew in his first -failed- marriage. In his second marriage he married a German non-Jew. He struggled with her categorical non-Jewishness (not her Germaness, his parents were German Jews), and needed *A Groisse Liebe* to be amongst ‘similar’ Jews: “This is my Jew club.” Furthermore, he had already bought a grave on the Jewish cemetery in his mid-fifties, where his non-Jewish wife cannot be buried, to be close to his parents’ grave.

Chapter 2

⁴⁴ While it is beyond the scope of this work to engage with the design of synagogues in Germany, it is important to note that synagogues, even new ones, have a *Shoah* memorial in the space before entering the prayer room. One usually enters into a Jewish space through the past, and through suffering; one enters into life through death. Robert Leventhal (2007) drew particular attention to this in regard to the new community centre in Munich, which opened in March 2007. The orthodox synagogue in Cologne shows this feature too.

⁴⁵ *Kharoset* is part of the ritual food components served for the meal (*Seder*, Hebrew: Order) for *Pesach* (Passover). It is eaten between pieces of Matzos and supposed to symbolise the mortar used by the Jewish slaves in ancient Egypt prior to their escape to what is now Israel.

⁴⁶ The structures of the liberal community will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ A volume edited by Brumlik & Kunik (1988) draws attention to the highly problematic issue of Jews and Germans mourning together. Both Brumlik and Kunik

are children of survivors, while Ron is not. This biographical difference, and the proximity to the *Shoah* will resurface several times in this work.

⁴⁸ Michel Friedman's autobiographical novel *Kaddisch vor Morgenrauen* (Kaddish before Dawn), published in 2005 is a prime example for this non-sharing. Kushner (1977) had outlined this issue in her dissertation (Kushner 1977: 7-8).

⁴⁹ This sharing is underpinned by the assumption that another Jew will understand the story more easily. The assumption is built on the categorical belonging 'Jew' as an imperative category that includes all Jews. The imperative category Jew holds a higher validity for survivors and their descendants and Diaspora Jews in general. Israeli Jews in Cologne do not readily relate to it (Kranz 2007c), Russian Jews have a very different idea concerning their Jewishness too (Becker 2001).

⁵⁰ The boundary to exclude non-*halachic* Jews is not solely based on the self-definition of the Jewish community in Germany as a religious community. More so, the majority of the post-1945 and pre-1991 Jewish population were descendants of DPs of Eastern European descent whose assimilation into their host societies was less than in Germany before the *Shoah*. Thus mixed marriage was less common than that of Jews in Germany.

⁵¹ *Jung und Jüdisch* was initially aimed at young liberal Jews, but the has redefined itself as non-denominational to cater for all young Jews.

⁵² <http://www.tamar-germany.de/content/view/14/26/lang.en/>, accessed October 25, 2008.

⁵³ As *Gescher* was the first liberal community of the country, its foundation prefigured the foundation of the national liberal organisation.

⁵⁴ It is common that the language of the country where the suffering was experienced was not passed on to children or grandchildren. Yitzhak told me that: "My parents spoke in Yiddish or Polish when they did not want us to understand them." He was brought up monolingually in Hebrew. Both of his parents were Polish Auschwitz survivors. Laura's daughter too was brought up monolingually in Hebrew, Mayan's son was brought up monolingually in German. While this seems odd at first, it was her reaction to her own displacement from Israel to Germany as a child, and as she referred to it: "I wanted him to have a home, and not to be torn like me." Her son learned Hebrew as an adult, he now lives in Israel.

⁵⁵ This estimate includes those who immigrated under the quota refugee law, and takes into account that not all Jews are registered as Jews with communities or local registries.

⁵⁶ It remains to be seen how the growing Islamophobia post 9/11 will influence the public discourse concerning Israel. So far the tendency seems to either blame Israel for unrest that spills over into Europe, or to barbarise Muslims.

⁵⁷ Implicitly he refers to the pre-1991 residents, which were in their majority survivors and their descendants. This implicit notion is only understandable to people with knowledge of Jews in Germany, and who know that the liberal communities are not survivor communities.

⁵⁸ God do retribution, Lord,
God of retribution, appear!
Rise up, judge of the earth,
give the arrogant their desserts!
How long shall the wicked, O Lord
how long shall the wicked exult,

shall they utter insolent speech,
shall all evildoers vaunt themselves?
They crush Your people, O Lord,
they afflict Your very own;
they kill the widow and the stranger;
they murder the fatherless,
thinking, "The Lord does not see it,
the Lord of Jacob does not pay heed."

[...]

Shall the seat of justice be Your partner,
That frames mischief by statute?
They band together to do away with the righteous;
they condemn the innocent to death.
But the Lord is my haven;
my Lord is my sheltering rock.

He will make their evil recoil upon them,
annihilate them through their own wickedness;
the Lord our God will annihilate them.

JPS (2000) Hebrew English *Tanakh, Kethuvim*/Psalms, No. 94, pp. 1530-1531.

⁵⁹ The term 'scenic memories' (*szenische Erinnerungen*) is used in psychoanalytic discourse to describe the reliving of particular, often traumatic, memories. These memories can often not be verbalised, they are presented in highly condensed scenes (Keilson 1979/2005). These scenes are often highly symbolic, and the symbols are interpretable by the interlocutor (Grünberg 2007a). The duration of the scenes and their episodic reoccurring differs between individuals.

⁶⁰ Kathryn Frerker (1998) researched *Young Jews in Germany* for her Master's thesis in psychology. She too contents that her own Jewishness played into the interviews. She argues that concealing would it would have been dishonest, and would have made for "antagonisms" (Frerker 1998: 51) towards the (presumably) German other.

⁶¹ The *Walser/Bubis* debate concerns the publicly held argument between the (then) secretary general of the Central Council, Ignatz Bubis, and the writer Martin Walser. In his acceptance speech for the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* (peace price of the German book traders) Walser had argued that 'Auschwitz' was used as a killer argument against Germans, to put them into place, and silence any criticism concerning various issues, because Germans can neither deny guilt, nor reject responsibility, nor atone for Auschwitz. Bubis argued against this, and tried to communicate to Walser that 'Auschwitz' was not an abstract for Jews in Germany, but a relentless trauma for survivors that had been transmitted to children and grandchildren. The public dialogue failed, Bubis and Walser did not find away to communicate. Bubis, who had been advocating dialogue between Jews and Germans grew very frustrated about the exchange, and Walser's unwillingness or inability to delve into the emotional world of Jews. For Bubis this cast doubt if his work had accomplished anything. His doubt went so far that he decided he wanted to be buried in Israel, and not in Germany.

⁶² An opinion poll in 2003 found that Germans perceived of Israel as the foremost threat to world peace. <http://www.zeit.de/2008/13/Merkel-Israel?page=1>, accessed March 26, 2008. I do not think that this attitude as changed.

⁶³ Literally: In the Beginning was Auschwitz. The title of the English translations, published in 1992, is *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge*.

Chapter 3

⁶⁴ *Karneval* is a festival in Cologne, known by locals as the ‘fifth season.’ It moves with the calendar of the Catholic Church. The seven days of *Karneval* lie directly ahead of Lent and feature parties, parades and the consumption of vast amounts of alcohol. My participants were torn about the festival, some found it too German, while others celebrated it, especially Jews whose families were from Cologne were active, some on official levels. Alongside the ‘Cologne Jews’, Israelis, Russians and Americans were most likely to participate in the festival.

⁶⁵ Orthodox practice counts men only.

⁶⁶ The Union has meanwhile been renamed to *Union der Liberalen und Progressiven Juden Deutschlands*.

⁶⁷ The members of *Gescher* used the Hebrew term *Kippa* (plural *Kippot*) to refer to the skullcaps. The Yiddish term *Yarmulke* was not used.

⁶⁸ Meat is purchased in Frankfurt, Hanover or Antwerp. The kosher shop in the orthodox synagogue in Cologne closed down. According to the *Chabad* rabbi there was neither support for it by the members nor the board. An attempt to open a kosher shop in the trendy student part of Cologne happened after my fieldwork stay, but according to my participants was short-lived.

⁶⁹ Services start at the same time Friday nights. This means they are not aligned to the Jewish calendar, in which the beginning of Shabbat follows the sunset. This is a clear break from orthodox tradition, and a compromise to the non-Jewish superstructure of Germany. Services for high holidays are aligned similarly. The time of the beginning of the fast and fast break for the highest holiday *Yom Kippur* is kept strictly though.

⁷⁰ The woman and Helga’s ex-husband have according to the gossip of the community been asked to not attend services. If this is a temporary or a permanent ban, I do not know.

⁷¹ Sandra, Thomas and Nadine underwent *Giyur* in March 2008 and are now members in the liberal community. Their successful *Giyur* and welcome to the community membership was mentioned in the *Rundbrief* (newsletter) in March 2008.

⁷² Becker (2001) outlines that the *Shoah* is the defining moment of the self-concept of Jews who were pre-1991 residents because they were in their majority survivors or descendants of survivors. For non-Jewish Germans the *Shoah* is as well the defining feature of Jews. The *Shoah* is present in German daily discourse whenever it comes to Jews (and often in regard to Israel, as the state visit of the current Chancellor Angela Merkel showed in March 2008). Germany is littered with memorials (cf. Freeman 2002; Ben-Amos & Weissberg 1999). Ironically, while Jews and non-Jews in Germany act mostly on different stages, the *Shoah* is the defining moment of being Jewish in Germany from the point of view of both groups (Diner 1988; Frerker 1998). Becker outlined that this poses huge problems to Russian incomers who define themselves along different lines. Kranz (2007c) outlined this in regard to Israelis.

⁷³ I learned through gossip from older members of the orthodox community that Mayan had grown up in this community but was rejected when it transpired that her mother was not Jewish. She never mentioned this to me.

⁷⁴ The *Shabbat Circle* consists of core members of *Gescher*. These gather on occasion privately, such as when there is no Friday night service or for the first *Seder* of *Pesach*. Diaspora Jews hold two *Sedarim* on the first and second night of *Pesach*. Due to the small number of Jews in post-*Shoah* Germany, the *Einheitsgemeinden* did the first *Seder*, to ensure that every Jew would have a place to go, as most Jews in Germany hardly had any surviving family. Traditionally, the first *Seder* is a family event, and only the second is a public event. The liberal community adheres to this tradition; the first *Seder* is at people's homes, the second one in the community. Members invite each other around, as many of them do not have any, or not much, family in Germany.

⁷⁵ See footnote 36 in chapter 2. *Aktion Sühnezeichen* offers to German citizens to work on charitable projects or for social services in countries whose people were severely harmed by Nazi Germany.

⁷⁶ I am not sure if this is still the case as both women signed the so-called *Berliner Erklärung* (Berlin Declaration). This declaration sees the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the root of the current troubles in the Middle East. Since signing the declaration, none of the two has been present at the service according to my information. See <http://www.schalom5767.de/>, accessed March 25, 2006.

⁷⁷ This name is an alias. The original name of Noor is similarly Persian or Arabic, although she is German and has German parents.

⁷⁸ At the time of the final draft the situation had changed and Yitzhak and Ursula have been on the board of the liberal community, and the *Forum* since mid-2007. This shows that the official positions in the community are non-static, but it shows too that they are static in as much as that those with access to the core might at one point decide to become more active, and others, like Ron, might retreat to background work. In over five years, I have not observed a person without access to the core to be elected to the board. Those who entered the active core were either birth Jews, or married to a birth Jew in Ursula's case.

⁷⁹ Hebrew: Chapters of the Fathers, a part of the *Mishnah* that contains ethical writings of rabbis from the *Mishnaic* period.

⁸⁰ The issues underlying this are highly complex. Post *Shoah*, DPs often did not want to live, or did not want to admit that were they living in Germany, and thus shied away from any engagement with the German surrounding (Geller 2005; Kauders 2007; Königseder & Wetzel 1994; Kugelmann 1988a; Meng 2005). Then, they often did not speak German, and unlike their German counterparts had no pre-*Shoah* connections to Germans (Geller 2005; Meng 2005), and accordingly little knowledge of German culture. Currently, Russians are underrepresented for different reasons. They connect to their Jewishness differently than survivors and their descendants, and are often non-observant (Becker 2001; Schütze 1997; Silbermann 1999). A significant number of Russians is not very interested in community matters for the simple reason that they have enough problems with making a living in a new country.

⁸¹ Mid-2007 this ruling was changed according to the (then still) PR person Yaron: "Individuals with non-Jewish partners won't be allowed on to convert anymore."

⁸² Nadine went on to convert with Thomas.

⁸³ If this is the case or if his parents had other reasons I do not know. For the purpose of my analysis the narrative of Nora and her interpretation of the events are imperative, as they inform her attitudes and behaviour (McAdams 1993; Bruner 1998).

⁸⁴ Iris contradicts this observation in the interview, but had told me that she likes speaking Hungarian, a fact that Jonah confirmed.

⁸⁵ Redfield (1956) opposes big to little traditions. A big tradition in the regard to Iris would knowledge of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible), whereas a small tradition would be specific knowledge of how to prepare a traditional meal, or meal component, for a religious holiday.

⁸⁶ It is beyond the scope of this work to address Israeli national identity. In an edited volume by Cohen and Noy (2005) a range of essays addressed some features of Israeli national identity abroad by focussing on backpackers. The authors found that Israeli backpackers sought the proximity of other Israelis, and engaged in what Noy referred to the construction of a *Narrative Community* (2007). The essays focus on backpackers who travel immediately after the army, and those who travel after they finished degrees, as a last chance “to reevaluate his or her choices” (Maoz 2005: 163) The majority of Israelis who came as visitors to the liberal community and who did not speak German fell into these age groups; older visitors often spoke German and were of German Jewish descent. Because Cologne lacks Israeli enclaves (either) Jewish community was used as a reference point in the hope to find other Israelis. I predict that this pattern will change through SNS very quickly. The reasons for the search for other Israelis are multiple. From observing young Israelis in Cologne and London it seems to me that there is categorical trust in fellow Israelis. I have seen that there is the realistic chance that the other Israeli will help with some information needed about the locale, or help on practical matters such as obtaining jobs, flats, or bureaucratic matters. Noy (2007) confirms these observations with his findings, and argues that they are influenced by the army experience, the high social cohesion of Israelis, and their lacking ability to speak foreign languages. However, it seemed that Israelis who have been living abroad for longer act less along the lines of this pattern than those who have more recently arrived in a locale. The Israeli Group in Cologne was subject to a mixed reception amongst Israelis in Cologne. Some of the long-term residents in Cologne participated in the Israeli Group, others shunned it.

Chapter 4

⁸⁷ This ‘offence’ applies on two levels. First, in this community it reflects the uneasy relationship with converts. It bears witness to the process of ‘Jewifying’ formerly non-Jews. Second, the Mishna (Mishna Baba Metzia 4:10) stipulates that “Just like there can be wronging in commerce, so too there is wronging in words. One shouldn't ask him: “How much is this object?” if one doesn't want to buy. And if he was a *Ba'al Teshuva* [repentant], one shouldn't say tell him “remember your former deeds”. And if he was the child of converts, one shouldn't tell him: remember the deeds of your parents”, because it says: “Thou shalt not wrong the stranger, nor pressure him, because you were strangers in the Land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:2). Furthermore, the Babylonian *Talmud* (Baba Metzia 58b) outlines that “If someone is a convert and comes to study *Torah*, one must not say to him: the mouth that ate *nevelot* [meat not ritually slaughtered], *trefot* [animals with problems in inner organs], and creeping and crawling creatures is coming now to study *Torah* that was recited from God's mouth.” By finding a source for the treatment of converts in the *Torah*, the Mishnah is implying that it is a prohibition from the *Torah*, which increases its strength.

⁸⁸ According to the Rabbi of the liberal community, *Gescher* can be seen as an example for what can be found in a liberal community. From my observations of other liberal Jewish communities I agree with this, although the acrimonious relationship between *Gescher* and the local orthodox community and the low number of Russian Jews set it apart from other liberal communities. However, *Gescher* indicates trends, which relate to issues faced by all liberal communities in Germany.

⁸⁹ I can only estimate the number of liberal Jews, as not even the president of the liberal stream in Germany has figures (personal communication, 2006, 2007). The historians and sociologists I had consulted with over figures on various matters concerning Jews did not have any other information. The estimates I heard range between 3,000 and 5,000 liberal Jews in Germany. The only certain figure I have refers to the Cologne community.

⁹⁰ Non-observant Jews in Cologne often referred to themselves as “three day Jews”, meaning they remembered, or partly observed the highest holidays *Pesach*, *Rosh HaShanah* (New Year) and *Yom Kippur*. *Yahrzeit* is the annual memorial for a deceased person. Some people would light a candle and say prayers in their memory; others would say *Kaddish*, a specific ritualised prayer for the dead.

⁹¹ Grünberg (2000) and Rapaport (1997) show in their work trends of relationship patterns of Jews of the second generation. Neither of the persons they worked with were part of the liberal stream, but part of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, which both characterised as being made up of survivors and their descendants. The variety of opinion amongst the liberal Jews in Cologne shows that attitudes hinge on an unpredictable amount of parameters and persons of the second generation such as Laura or Iris diverge strongly from the types that Grünberg and Rapaport had identified in their analysis. Laura who is averse to conversion and who would not consider intermarriage was born in Germany and grew up in South Africa, whereas Iris grew up in Romania and Germany at the fringes of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. Iris has been married to a German non-Jew for more than thirty years.

⁹² <http://www.levisson.nl/content/view/164/290/>, accessed February 11, 2008. The term *Vaterjuden* entered the German discourse from the Netherlands. It was coined in 1995 by Andreas Brenier who stated that at a conference concerning father Jews that “[...] -ze waren ‘niks.’ Ze horen (hoorden) nergens bij, niet bij de joden, niet bij niet-joden.” (...they were nothing they belong (belonged) nowhere; not to the Jews, not to the non-Jews. Quoted by Tamarah Benima in *De Context*.).

⁹³ The pre-1991 communities functioned on the notion of assumed relatedness, and served often as a substitute family due to the destruction of the actual families (cf. Ginzel & Güntner 1998). It is crucial to bear in mind that the communities were small. Even the so-called *Großgemeinde* (big community) Cologne had only 1,500 members prior to 1991.

⁹⁴ This is just a sample of converts. I have enough data concerning these persons, including interviews. Some others for whom I have data I left out due to the limit of this work, for yet others I have hardly any material as they did not participate actively in the community or had left for Israel.

⁹⁵ <http://gescherlamassoret.de/geschichte2.html>, accessed February 11, 2008.

⁹⁶ Individuals are socialised into a particular socio-cultural configuration of a specific ingroup as children (Berger & Luckmann 1966/1991; Sered 1988). If they leave the configuration through immigration, or conversion, for example, they need to learn the

ways of their new surrounding and through this learning become members of the new ingroup. Berger & Luckmann (1966/1991) refer the term to religious conversion specifically. Various anthropologists who worked on people who changed ethnic categories, such as Barth (1969/1998), did not use the term, but imply the same concept: an individual learns the conduct, mannerisms, narrative, language, history and so on of a different ethnic group, and at one point switches ethnic groups.

⁹⁷ Jews from religious and/or traditional families have a Hebrew name which is used in religious ceremonies if their first name is not a Hebrew name. This name is often not written in any documents concerning secular affairs (identity cards, passports, birth certificate etc.) but restricted to the Jewish stage (cf. Eidheim 1969). Ashkenazi Jews typically use the first name of a deceased relative. Sepharadi Jews use the name of a living relative. Converts choose a Hebrew name which is used for religious affairs from their *Giyur* onwards.

⁹⁸ Helga and Ursula are two examples for converts of non-Jewish parentage, while Mayan, James and Tanja are examples of non-*halachic* Jews who converted. It is beyond the scope of this work to introduce more than these five people in detail.

⁹⁹ I have only access to the narrative of Helga about the conversion. By the time of my eighteen months' fieldwork stay in Cologne, she and her husband had already separated, and her husband was no longer present in the liberal community. His non-presence went so far that he did not attend the *Bar Mitzvah* of his son, while he turned up late and remained marginal at his daughter's *Bat Mitzvah*. Helga is the member of the family who attends services most often. Her son and daughter attended services very irregularly.

¹⁰⁰ *Sukkot* is one of the three pilgrimage festivals in Judaism (the other two being *Pesach* and *Shavuot*). *Sukkah*, the singular of *Sukkot*, means booth or hut in Hebrew. For *Sukkot* (observing) Jews build a *Sukkah* in their garden or on their balcony where they eat meals, entertain and maybe sleep for the seven days of the festival. The *Sukkah* is symbolic for the huts in which Jews lived on their forty-year journey of the Exodus from Egypt to what is now Israel.

¹⁰¹ *Yiddishkeit*, or Eastern European Jewishness, was destroyed during the *Shoah* through the mass murder of Eastern European Jews, and the annihilation of their infrastructure. Most Jews in present-day Germany who are not descendants of survivors are keen to move beyond the *Shoah*, only some descendants of survivors identify with the *Yiddishkeit* of the *Shtetl*. This does not mean that they do not mourn the loss of this tradition. Their non- or partial identification is based on the recognition of the irreversible destruction of this world. People from non-Jewish families who convert do not have an emotional bond to the *Shtetl*; it is neither part of their family history (primary socialisation), nor of the narrative of the liberal community, where their socialisation as Jews (secondary socialisation) takes place. Yet, some of the converts used *Yiddishisms* to stress their Jewishness, because *Yiddishness* sets Jews apart from Gentiles, whereas present day Jewishness does not 'show.' However, there are various issues underlying this performative aspect, which can range from the *Shtetl* as a locus, with boundaries, and community cohesion, to unacknowledged and potentially unconscious issues concerning guilt. The problems that this causes for birth Jews have been mentioned in chapter two.

¹⁰² The area where Ina comes from had been Polish before 1945 and now belongs to Ukraine.

¹⁰³ This pattern of food consumption was particularly pronounced among young and secular Israelis whom I met outside of the communities who showed great joy in the unrestricted access to non-kosher foods. New York Jews according to Kraemer (2007) eat “safe *treyf*” (Kraemer 2007: 144). This is food where the *treyf* (Hebrew, literally: torn, ritually: non-kosher food) component would not visibly show. Israelis consumed food that was visibly non-kosher and thus reified their secular Israeliness. They did not feel the need to use food as a boundary to their non-Jewish surrounding (cf. Douglas 1966). Besides their being non-religious, they were as well non-locals, and saw the boundary between them and their German surrounding in terms of being Israelis. This boundary existed as well towards the local Jewish population.

¹⁰⁴ The *Seder* (Hebrew: order) is the ritual meal on the first and second night of *Pesach* in the Jewish Diaspora. It consists of the eating of ritual foods, and the reading of the *Haggadah* (Hebrew: telling), which chronicles the exodus from Egypt.

¹⁰⁵ See footnote II of Chapter three.

¹⁰⁶ Special regulations apply for the food during *Pesach*. Any food that falls under *Chametz* (leavened bread), certain grains and food fermented for more than eighteen minutes is forbidden. Food, which is kosher for *Pesach* is also referred to as *Kasher L’Pesach*. Processed foods often bear the sign *Kasher L’Pesach* to avoid Jews overstepping the *Pesach* food laws by accident.

¹⁰⁷ While I focus on the liberal community the same holds true for the orthodox community, as the problems to incorporate Russian Jews (Becker 2001; Silbermann 1999) show.

Chapter 5

¹⁰⁸ It is well documented that there are events which are beyond telling, because there is no way of expressing the experience to the interlocutor. Grünberg (2007a), Linde (1993) and Ochs and Capps (2001) give the example of the *Shoah*. There is no cultural script that can be used to express the horrors according to the authors. As Grünberg (2007a, 2007b) outlined there might be no words, yet transmission of traumata does take place on a non-verbal level too, which then of course makes efforts to reflect on the transmitted horrors infinitely more difficult, as the receivers of the transmitted horror again lack the script to express their experiences with what was passed on (Hadar 1991).

¹⁰⁹ None of the interviewees of this chapter were *Shoah* survivors (first generation).

¹¹⁰ See note 20 in chapter two for details.

¹¹¹ This strategy worked for all interviews conducted. In two cases the person did not want to give much detail of their biographical background directly, but later on in the interview rendered long biographical narratives to make various issues “understandable.”

¹¹² Ron and Iris were hard-pressed to tell me what their native language is as they are multi-lingual. Nora on the other hand is a German native speaker. Only while transcribing the interviews I realised that her German language was littered with colloquialisms and was more difficult to translate as she uses concepts and idioms of spoken, slang and regional language. This issue gives weight to Stavans’s (2003) research finding that individuals tell stories differently depending which language they use, and depending if it a native language or not.

¹¹³ Public broadcasting cooperation for the west of Germany, literally West German Broadcasting Cooperation.

¹¹⁴ Hebrew: parting, taking leave. A specific part of the book of *Nevi'im* (Prophets) read after the reading of the *Torah* each Shabbat, and on Jewish holidays.

¹¹⁵ Hebrew: portion. The portion of the *Torah* read for the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.

¹¹⁶ Hebrew: collection (of water). Jewish ritual bath, the water must be flowing, not standing ('living water').

¹¹⁷ Ron throughout refers to the local orthodox community by the street where the synagogue is based.

¹¹⁸ The pope visited the *Einheitsgemeinde* in Cologne in August 2005, when the World Youth Day of the Catholic Church was held in a nearby location. He had been invited by the *Einheitsgemeinde* upon his election in April 2005.

¹¹⁹ The German term *Heimat* does not translate properly into English. *Heimat* is a much stronger term than home, which literally translates into *Heim* or *zu Hause*. *Heimat* infers belonging, attachment, and yearning (*Sehnsucht*) if one moves or had to move.

¹²⁰ The letters *pey nun* נ פ are the acronym for *פה נטמן* (*po nitman*) meaning "buried here" which endorses tombstones on Jewish cemeteries.

¹²¹ *Chanukah* (Hebrew: establishing or dedication) is the festival that remembers the successful rebellion of the Maccabee against Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BC. The Greek ruler had desecrated the Jewish Temple. When it was liberated there was only enough oil for the eternal flame to last one more day. However, when the Maccabees returned eight days later with oil to re-consecrate the Temple, the flame was still burning. On each of the evenings of the holiday a candle is lit for every day for eight days to remember the lasting of the eternal light.

¹²² *Chanukiyah* is the name of the nine armed chandelier for *Chanukah*. The lights for of the eight days of festival are lit with a ninth light called *Shamash* (Hebrew: guard or servant), which often stands in the middle of the *Chanukiyah*.

¹²³ Children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers, like Nora, and those with one Jewish grandparent do have the right to make *Aliyah* and immigrate to Israel under the Law of Return (1950; amended 1971). Problematically, while the Israeli state acknowledges them as citizens, the orthodox rabbinate will not acknowledge them as Jews. This means that patrilineal Jews in Israel are excluded from lifetime rituals such as marriage and Jewish burial. These rituals are exclusively conducted by the orthodox rabbinate in Israel. Liberal converts face similar problems: they are not acknowledged by the orthodox rabbinate, but can make *Aliyah* and become citizens. Nora did not mention these problems in the interview, but has done so in conversations.

¹²⁴ Public TV channel.

¹²⁵ This saying of her father is an example for the colloquialisms Nora used. It is a literal translation from the original German "*Verwandtschaft, was ist das? Was zum Essen? Nein. Zum Trinken? Nein. Was ist es denn? Zum kotzen.*"

¹²⁶ *Bund Deutscher Mädlern*, German Girls Association of the Nazis.

¹²⁷ "However, we have experienced cases in which this prerequisite [of matrilineal descend] is not fulfilled. In cases where the background of a person's religious engagement and their family traditions have led to a very clear Jewish identity, the conversion process takes on the character of a formal acknowledgement of their identities and acts as a correction between rules and reality."

(http://gescherlamassoret.de/en/geschichte2_en.html, accessed March 2, 2008)

¹²⁸ The orthodox community provides its members with a list of food items which are on sale in German mainstream outlets. These items are technically kosher, although they might not bear a kosher certificate (*Hechsher*).

¹²⁹ The observation of the strong difference between the mediated Christian as opposed to immediate Jewish relationship to god was stressed to me by Tsur Genosar. I am grateful for him sharing his observation and input on that matter.

¹³⁰ German: House of History. The museum houses permanent and temporary ethnographic exhibitions on Germany.

¹³¹ Like Becker (2001) I have come across a number of mixed persons who lacked any papers to prove their Jewish descent. They found the experience of having to prove their Jewishness upsetting, as a disparagement of their families suffering, and themselves as being 'real.'

¹³² While British Jewry is more diverse, one of the major building blocks is familiarity here too, and 'two degrees of separation' (Kranz 2008c). In regard to Germany, the ingroup structure of the *Einheitsgemeinde* becomes highly visible through SNS such as Facebook or *MeinVZ/StudiVZ*, where friends and mutual friends, can be seen immediately.

¹³³ Russian incomers and the descendants of survivors have of course very different 'descent' stories, yet the descendants of survivors to date dominate the discourse of Jews in Germany, and represent the hegemonic master-narrative of Jews in Germany. A change might occur in the next ten years, when Russian Jews gain more power. This will be helped by the fact that descendants of survivors who find Germany unbearable leave the country in significant numbers (Kranz 2008c). Yet, at the same time, as Becker (2001) outlines, the ideas of Jewishness of the Russian Jews change through their contact with Jews and non-Jews in Germany.

¹³⁴ This naturalised Jewishness seems to be specific to Israelis who grew up in Jewish majority society. From my current work with British Jews in London I am aware that British and Jewish is not a binary opposition as German and Jewish, yet the majority of the interview partners expressed doubts how 'native' they were in Britain and are highly aware of their minority status.

¹³⁵ On another trope the strong identification with the family and/or relationship to the non-Jewish spouse puts the family at the centre of Ron's and Iris's belonging; potentially this personal belonging shows another level of non-belonging to the majority of Jews and non-Jews in Germany, and a further de-identification with both groups, while stressing individual belongings.

¹³⁶ Gossip has it that Ron's parents saw Miriam's conversion as very important. Whether this is the case I do not know; he describes her conversion as her wish to create unity in the family.

¹³⁷ Nora's mixedness challenges the personalisation of the attribution of guilt, which political psychologists found in post-conflict societies (Andrews 2002; Capelos 2008). Nora seems most upset about her father, although she harbours an understanding for his unwillingness to engage with the past based on her knowledge about how difficult it is to be Jewish for mixed people of his generation (cf. Grabowsky, forthcoming; Zielinski 2002).

The attribution of guilt with the members of the liberal community differs between individuals. Guilt is normally focussed on the person who is seen as most offensive to the self-schemata. For example, Mayan and James hate one person in particular who

they feel discriminate against them in the *Einheitsgemeinde*; Jürgen detests one Eastern European Jew in particular because this person abolished the *Karneval* ball in the synagogue of the *Einheitsgemeinde*. For Jürgen who is a Cologne Jew, this is major offence; it offends his Colognian Jewishness. Other members of the community showed similar attributions of guilt, Jews and non-Jews could be seen as the major culprit; guilt was always focussed on one person, yet it was completely individualised. Interestingly, German non-Jews show the same strategy when it comes to attributing guilt for the *Shoah*. They usually blame Hitler, or single high-ranking Nazis, but not their families (cf. Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall 2002).

¹³⁸ It lies beyond the scope of this work to engage with issues of citizenship. Iris and Ron are both German citizens, yet neither of them mentioned this in the interview, or related to their citizenship as more than a categorical belonging (cf. Kranz 2007a).

¹³⁹ I think that this is a phenomenon specific to Jews in Germany. My Jewish friends and contacts in the UK and the US, let alone Israel, did not seem to feel any need to position themselves amongst non-Jews as ‘the other.’ They felt little inclination to talk about their Jewishness, or reveal it as a means of positioning. The pattern of behaviour of my Cologne participants was perceived of as strange by those who met them.

¹⁴⁰ When and how the full extent of the *Final Solution* was realised is difficult to determine. At times the Allied soldiers who liberated camps are quoted as the first witnesses, although intelligence and witness statements of refugees such as the *Vrba-Wetzler* report (1944) existed much before that, potentially as early as 1939, but definitely since June 1942, when the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* ran articles on the on-going genocide (June 30, 1944). Jews described in letters to their families abroad their daily sufferings (Browning, Hollander & Tec 2007, for example).

¹⁴¹ For Iris, these are “nothingnesses”, for her father they are most likely crucial expressions of agency (cf. Levi 1959).

¹⁴² The term Jewish literature is problematic because it begs the question what makes literature Jewish. Is it important that the author is a Jew, or does the topic need to have relevance to Jews, or does the content have to depict a topic which Jews and/or non-Jews define as Jewish? W. G. Sebald, for example, is often incorrectly assumed to be Jewish because of his grasp of Jewish topics, while he was a German non-Jew who lived in Britain (Kranz 2009a).

Conclusion

¹⁴³ On this matter it is crucial to remember that the *Shoah* was a taboo until the mid-1960s and that Nazi perpetrators in the majority were not sentenced but re-integrated into (East and West) German post-war society. Only high-ranking Nazis were sentenced immediately post-war by the Allies (Nuremberg Trials), or in the Auschwitz Trials in Frankfurt in 1961. The selective sentencing helped to shift blame to individuals (cf. Capelos 2008), and conceal the uneasy truth of the ‘normal’ perpetrators. Three years after the Auschwitz Trials, in 1964, *Die Psychiatrie der Verfolgten* (The Psychiatry of the Persecuted) was published by psychiatrists who worked with survivors of work and death camps (Jews, Sinti and Roma, gays, lesbians, political prisoners). The groundbreaking book remained within the realm of academia it did not reach a wider public. The book is the first of its kind and contains the acknowledgement of the extreme levels of trauma of survivors. Discussions about the different aspects of the

Holocaust and the Nazi regime would only occur in the 2000s over books such as *Hitlers willige Helfer* (1996, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, original in English, German translation 2001), and the notorious *Wehrmachts Exhibition* (2002). The Walser/Bubis controversy (1998/1999) did not suffice to trigger this debate, probably because Bubis was an insider, a Jew living in Germany: he was part of the system. As Peck outlined the launch of the German translation of the Goldhagen book, and the opening of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition unleashed smouldering anti-Semitism in full force (Peck 2006: 13). Truth and Reconciliations Committees as in South Africa did not exist in Germany, which lead to the creation of two mutually exclusive narratives of Jews, and Germans (Grossmann 2007). In the 1990s when the discussion happened, the narrative threads of Jews and Germans had separated to the extent that they were, and are, not in dialogue (see chapter three on the *Walser/Bubis Kontroverse*). I mentioned before that I think that this will only change with the less *Shoah*-encumbered Russian Jewish incomers gaining power. Jews who grew up in Germany are in their vast majority too overburdened by transmitted traumata (Kranz 2008c), they have often lost any interest in communicating their issues to non-Jews. It should as well be noted that other victims groups, in particular Sinti and Roma, remain to date under-researched and marginal in the German Holocaust discourse.

¹⁴⁴ Young Israelis can pose a similar problem if they venture into their communities (liberal or orthodox), because their *Shoah* experience is often more intermediate through the Israeli educational system than immediate through family (Kranz 2007c). The same goes for one-off American visitors, who often talk immediately about their family histories.

¹⁴⁵ This problem was raised by more than person who had converted and one individual in the process of conversion. They wanted to observe “properly” meaning orthodox and convert orthodox, but the *Einheitsgemeinde* would not accept them. The individuals who mentioned this were keen for this information to not reach the other members of *Gescher*; they are aware of the consequences this would have. Unfortunately, I never found out from the orthodox rabbis what makes a potential convert acceptable; they refused any answers to date.

¹⁴⁶ I have not found a single descent Jew in Germany who would align to the German master narrative (cf. Grossmann 2007) or only use the category ‘German’ to describe themselves. This does not mean that the Jewish master narrative was whole-heartedly embraced. Yet, the unanimous self-ascription of descent Jews within and more interestingly beyond the communities was ‘Jewish’, or ‘mixed Jewish’, but never only ‘German.’ Russians would follow the same pattern, and substitute ‘German’ by ‘Russian.’ This bears witness to the fact that a Jewish meta-narrative of belonging exists, but that it is underpinned by national, regional or local parameters.

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