LIVING FEMINISM AND ORTHODOXY: ORTHODOX JEWISH FEMINISTS

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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by

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This paper examines the complex and controversial interaction between feminism and Orthodox Judaism as experienced by newly Orthodox women (ba’alot teshuvah). Feminist scholars puzzle over the increasing appeal of Orthodox religious forms to contemporary women when a variety of alternatives are available. Of all the varieties of Judaism, Orthodoxy remains the most resistant to feminist challenges, and excludes women from formal and public religious life. Much of the research on Judaism is of a “confessional” nature, done by Jewish scholars. The perception of religion as a form of social and interpersonal relationship, or praxis, is employed as the central analytical tool. Religion as praxis informs and allows for the construction and maintenance of a hermeneutic dialogue between categorizations of feminism and Orthodoxy, men and women, and the sacred and the profane. This analysis is illustrated by ethnographic fieldwork in a small, newly established Modern Orthodox synagogue in Toronto. Dichotomizations of men and women’s roles in Orthodox Judaism are not static and rigid; they are constantly negotiated and reconstructed as individuals seek to maintain continuity with the past and respond to changing cultural and social expectations of gender equality. The validity of the concepts of “insider” versus “outsider” forms of knowledge, and the “exotic Other” in Canadian society are questioned by my status as a non-Jewish female ethnographer.
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INTRODUCTION

Ever-increasing cultural diversity and social complexity are a mark of the contemporary world. Recent decades have noted a significant rise in forms and degrees of religious movements, in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and beyond. These dramatic shifts to increasingly Orthodox belief and practice also mirror significant shifts in the personal, political, and social aspects of individual identity. Such movements can be seen on a global scale, including in Canada and the United States.

These dramatic shifts in social, personal, and religious aspects of life and identity arose at the newly established Modern Orthodox community in Metropolitan Toronto where I conducted this research. The synagogue, which I will call the Watertown Jewish community, is located in a predominantly non-Jewish area. The members of Watertown have "returned" to Orthodoxy and observance, and are from predominantly non-observant and secular backgrounds. Many "returnees" often associate with "Ultra-Orthodox" Jewish

\[1\] The term teshuva means "return" (Davidman 1991: 233). Debra Kaufman, speaking of female returnees (pl. ba’alot teshuvah), notes that several themes emerge: the "... search for a moral community of both public and private virtue, and, above all, their need for a moral framework in which to make decisions, the need ... for "official values"" (Kaufman 1991: 21). Kaufman also writes that many
groups, such as the Lubavitchers and the Haredim (Davidman 1991; Kaufman 1991). Hence, the question of where the Watertown community "fits" into the mosaic of Ultra-Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative groups in Toronto and abroad also arises. This question will be explored further in chapter three. It is necessary to discuss here, however, the variations that are currently found within North American Orthodoxy (Raphael 1984: 155).

Charles S. Liebman writes that the term "Orthodox" is commonly taken to include:

... the institutions nominally described as Orthodox and all Jews identified with such institutions regardless of their private beliefs and practices (1975: 132) (emphasis mine).

Liebman describes three main variations within Orthodoxy: the Traditional, the Modern Orthodox, and the Ultra-Traditional (or Ultra-Orthodox). The Traditional Orthodox in North America retain their allegiance to the practices of Eastern Europe regardless of halakhic (Jewish law) sanction and those which reflect a particular form of

returnees exhibit strong antipathy towards self-interested and superficial behaviour in "... middle-class American culture" (1991: 21). While Kaufman's study was limited to newly Orthodox Jewish women in the United States, I believe the characteristics apply to men and women in Canadian society as well.
class, culture, and ethnicity (Liebman 1975: 133-134). Such practices did not necessarily reflect a religious nature. Rabbis in this stream are seen as having one basic skill: an in-depth familiarity with Jewish law and literature. The view of the rabbi is as a teacher and legal authority, rather than a preacher or pastor. The Traditional Orthodox are also against adopting the mores of contemporary society, such as introducing English into the services. Liebman notes that Traditionalists "... are characterized by an attitude of disdain toward any attempt at compromising the ritual" (1975: 142). Traditionalists are themselves products of Ultra-Orthodox yeshivas (a Jewish academy devoted to the study of rabbinic literature and the Talmud2), and many have post-secondary education as well.

Rather than opposing change, the Modern Orthodox seek "... to demonstrate the viability of the halakhah [Jewish law] for contemporary life ... " (Liebman 1983: 56). Modern Orthodoxy recognizes the tension, and sometimes the outright conflict, between the demands of the principles and

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2According to Cohn-Sherbok, the Talmud is the name "... given to each of the two collections of records of the discussion and administration of Jewish law by scholars and jurists in various academies in the period c. 200-500" (1992: 530). The two Talmuds are the Babylonian and the Palestinian.
traditions of Jewish law and observance and the demands of life in the contemporary world (Kaplan 1983: 242; Riskin 1983). The Modern Orthodox seek to integrate, rather than separate, their commitments to the modern world and Orthodox Judaism.

Ultra-Orthodox, or Ultra-Traditional, Jews adhere to traditional folkways religiously, socially, and culturally (Liebman 1975: 139). Religious behaviour is a mix of religious law and observance, local customs, and class interests. Differing from the Traditionalists, the spiritual, emotional, and cultural lives of the Ultra-Orthodox Jews revolve around right-wing yeshivas and those who head such academies of learning. Liebman notes that the Traditionalists may differ from the Ultra-Traditionalists in their lack of commitment or allegiance to any one leader or educational institution. He further speculates that the Ultra-Traditionalists may

... simply represent a sub-category of 'traditionalists' who are best distinguished by

3Liebman makes a distinction here between Hasidim and Ultra-Traditionalists. The Hasidim follow a Rebbe (Rabbi), while the Ultra-Traditionalists submit their religious and spiritual lives to the leadership of Torah scholars in general (1975: 140). For the purposes of this research with its emphasis on Modern Orthodoxy, I will group the Hasidim under the category of Ultra-Orthodox as well.
attitudes and values from the 'modern Orthodox' (1975: 143).

These differing streams of Orthodoxy share, to greater or lesser degrees, a number of common features. These include a belief in God Who revealed the Torah to the people of Israel; adherence to the halakha (both Oral and Written); observance of the Sabbath, festivals, holy days, laws of kashrut (dietary laws), and family purity (tohorat ha-mishpahah), and other basic tenets of Judaism (Bulka 1983: 15; Raphael 1984: 164). Reuven P. Bulka notes, however, that the "... intensity of application to these and other norms usually increases as one moves further right in the Orthodox spectrum" (1983: 15).

The distinctions made between these three major variations within Orthodoxy are, at times, not easily drawn. Speaking of religious institutions such as synagogues, schools, and yeshivas, Liebman stresses that there are often divergent trends within these institutions themselves, and such institutions are often not entirely within the sphere of any one particular group (1975: 145). As Mayer and Waxman succinctly state: "There is no simple method of determining who is and who is not an Orthodox Jew" (1983: 391). The varieties of religious belief, practice, and attitude as an
alternative means to distinguish between groups within the Orthodox tradition will be addressed in reference to the varieties of Toronto Judaism found in chapter three.

The issues held, in general, by feminism, such as equal access and participation, conflict with the precise delineation of women's roles by many Orthodox Jewish groups. Irrespective of this, many scholars have noted that a surprising number of women "return" to Orthodoxy and observance in a time where women have a great variety of choices and options (Kaufman 1991; Davidman 1991; Umansky 1985; Baskin 1985).

Orthodox Jewish women are defined mostly in terms of their duties as wives and mothers, and are excluded from the public, formal religious domain (Davidman 1991: 26; Schely-Newman 1993). Such groups seek to maintain "traditional" ways of life, such as a strong focus on community and family. This has the effect of removing or minimizing many of the stressors of everyday life in contemporary Western society. Lynn Davidman describes this as an aspect of the "authority of tradition"; that is, with the many options available, Orthodox Judaism does not "... appear to be a recent human construct subject to change with the changing cultural climate" (1991: 96). Women and men are also
physically separated within Orthodox synagogues, which is symbolically representative of and reconstructs the split between the physical and the spiritual, or the "sacred" and the "profane" (Erikson 1992). Women, as they are associated with things profane, are excluded from formal prayer services and assigned to marginal roles within the public life of Orthodox synagogues.

Mary Douglas posits, however, that the separation between the sacred and the profane is not usually quite so simple. "Sacred rules are . . . merely rules hedging divinity off, and uncleanness is the two-way danger of contact with divinity" (1966: 8). She notes that the Hebrew root of k-d-sh - which can be translated as Holy - is derived from the idea of being "set apart", or separated. The conceptualizations of the sacred and the profane that takes place at Watertown will be discussed in chapter four.

Modern Orthodox Judaism, in particular, seems to be caught within an ambiguous and difficult situation. The Modern Orthodox seek to challenge aspects of modern society, while simultaneously " . . . admiring some of its most deeply held values, such as the importance of the individual, freedom of choice, and material and professional success" (Davidman 1991: 179; Drucker 1988). While both
Jewish men and women are challenged by sometimes conflicting ideologies, practices, and "ways of being", the challenges are doubly pronounced for women (Ostriker 1989). According to sociologist Lynn Davidman, the conceptions of women's roles in Modern Orthodoxy try to blend traditional, essentialist understandings of "woman's nature", such as the idea that women and men have separate and distinct natures as a result of biology, with contemporary voluntaristic ideas (1991: 156).

Rather than seeking to remove themselves from the secular world to live their faith, the Modern Orthodox seek to actively engage in social, economic, and political spheres. Modern Orthodox dress codes may vary from community to community, but most require women to wear dresses or skirts below the knee, and hats or other types of head coverings if they are married. Men are also expected to dress conservatively, with suits or slacks. During a formal service, women are seated separately from the men, and do not directly participate in the service. Modern Orthodoxy does not permit women to give a d'var Torah (a commentary on the Torah) to a mixed congregation. Women are permitted, however, to give a d'var Torah in women's study and prayer
groups, which are becoming increasingly common and accepted in North America (Weiss 1990).

The voluntary assumption of restrictive roles runs counter to many of the suppositions that have characterized the liberalization and "liberation" of women's roles in North America. The feminist movement, becoming highly visible in the 1960s and continuing into the present, has introduced and attempted to embed into Western society its notions of gender equality. The feminist movement is itself characterized by a variety of theoretical, political, and practical forms. All varieties of feminist research, however, have in common a particular subject matter: issues that relate to women and/or the importance of gender (Murray and Tulloch 1997: 4; Eichler 1997). Attention to gender issues also include discussions of men, and a recognition of alternative points of view (Behar 1995: 6).

Margrit Eichler writes that "... there are as many definitions of feminist scholarship as there are feminist scholars ..." (1997: 10). The form of feminism prominent in the 1970s and 1980s - termed the "second wave" - has two main strands. The first strand responds to the materialist and capitalist world dominated by patriarchal interests, and is comprised of liberal, radical, Marxist, and socialist
feminist theory (Murray and Tulloch 1997: 1). The second strand which is most prevalent in the 1990s is characterized by poststructuralism, feminist cultural studies, and postmodernism. These forms concentrate most significantly on the "... subjective quest for the meaning of women's lived reality" (Murray and Tulloch 1997: 1).

Most relevant to this discussion of Orthodox Jewish feminists is the postfeminism of the 1990s. While this movement is itself characterized by epistemological and methodological diversity (Eichler 1997), it is united by the rejection of universalistic categorizations such as "truth" and "women," stressing instead a recognition of difference in class, race, sexuality, nationality, and religion. Postfeminists also unite against dichotomizations of objectivity and subjectivity - stressing instead intersubjectivity - and a distinction between the subject and object (Murray 1997: 39). Such dichotomizations are viewed as oversimplified representations of everyday life. Postfeminism also seeks to integrate theory into concrete practice.

Unfortunately, feminist reforms in the workplace, the home, and in educational, political, and religious spheres are far from being completely realized (Davidman 1991;
Plaskow 1983, 1991). Equality in Western society seems to have been adopted generally as a principle, but is not fully carried out in practice (Tabory 1984; Umansky 1985; Kaufman 1991). Postfeminist theory has also been strongly criticized for being remote from the needs, concerns, and real-life problems of most women (Murray 1997: 44; Pringle 1997: 76).

In spite of the disparity between theory and practice, Western women have, in general, been introduced to the ideas and ideals of the feminist movement as a result of changes in educational curricula and through proliferation of feminist concepts in the mass media. Women attracted towards Orthodox forms of Judaism, then, are faced with the difficult challenge of making sense of and incorporating the "traditional" and the "new", religion and secularity, into their roles as women.

Literature dealing with women's issues in religion can be drawn from three broad and mutually supporting categories: the anthropology of religion, feminist anthropology, and feminist scholarship in Judaism.

Recent feminist scholarship focuses on the exclusion of "body-centred", or personal, experience that occurs in religious spheres. The patriarchal structures and contexts of many of the world religions have led to the
dichotomization of body and spirit, public and private. Such polarization seems to have led "... to a glossing over of women's experiences ..." (Sered 1991: 15). As noted, Traditional and Modern Orthodox Judaism delineates a role for women that is largely defined by their duties and responsibilities in the domestic sphere (Greenburg 1981). Men are largely defined as the "spirit"; thus men's roles constitute the public and formal ritual life of the synagogue.

The systematic gender bias of such dichotomization has suppressed and under-valued women's experiences, in terms of birth, menstruation, and daily life events associated with the private or domestic sphere, such as child-rearing, maintenance of households, and food preparation (Pollack Petchesky 1987; Rapp 1979; M. Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Ortner 1974). Departing from dichotomizations of the sacred and the profane that proliferate in the study of religion (Erikson 1992: 40), feminist research in religion has begun to explore those aspects of the human religious experience that have been ignored (Sered 1988).

Modern Orthodox Jewish women, denied these public ritual expressions, are nevertheless increasingly viewed as taking an active role in constructing their own spiritual
experiences. Even though women are in large part restricted to traditional roles in Orthodoxy, they are

involved with beliefs and rituals that reflect and enhance their experiences, dramatize their dilemmas and desires, contribute to the resolution of their problems, and sacralize their everyday lives (Sered 1991: 7).

The "traditional female role" in Orthodox Judaism is not a static construct, but is a result and a consequence of on-going negotiation and choice (Ginsburg 1987: 541). Much of the literature on the politics of identity views identity as the consequence of experience (Roseneil 1996: 88). But as identity is not static, neither is experience. Both are fluid and processual. Experience comes out of the discursive interaction between individuals, and between individuals and communities (Roseneil 1996: 88). Modern Orthodox Jewish women are involved in actively constructing and negotiating their roles and identities, but are constrained by the limited numbers of communally sanctioned identities and roles available to them in Orthodoxy.

Issues of exclusion, negotiation, and religious equality are central issues for Jewish women, on both personal and scholarly levels. As feminist anthropology emphasizes the importance of experience of the individual,
it employs experience as the foundation for both theoretical analysis and political practice (Griffin 1996: 180). This position translates itself well into the discussion of women's issues in Judaism, as many scholars incorporate their own experiences as Jewish women into their research. Jewish feminist scholars, such as Judith Plaskow, Blu Greenburg, Norma Joseph, Tamar El-Or, and many others, have provided a large corpus of literature that is accessible, stimulating, and important for their non-academic counterparts in Judaism. These emic, or "insider" accounts constitute the majority of contemporary scholarship in Judaism. Such "views from within" must be seen in relation to the "objective", "outsider" viewpoint, as the interpretation and construction of knowledge is called into question by the social sciences (Narayan 1993; Shahrani 1994). A more in-depth treatment of the "insider" and "outsider" points of view, as they relate to Weber's concept of verstehen, hermeneutics, and the production of knowledge, will be found in chapter one.

Common themes in this body of literature focus primarily on the issue of women's exclusion, and search for equality in the religious sphere (Ostriker 1989). The halakhic (Jewish law, which encompasses both the Torah and
the oral tradition) restriction on women's involvement in the ritual life of the Orthodox synagogue, namely in terms of exclusion from the minyan - the required prayer quorum of ten - and inability to read from the Torah, is a topic of contention between the various schools of Judaism. The restriction resides in the nature of men and women's differing prayer obligations. Many women feel that "... in communal prayer, which is the preferred form according to tradition, women have neither responsibilities nor rights" (Greenburg 1981: 7).

In terms of Orthodox Judaism, ideally men and women occupy complementary and equal roles. Spiritually, women are placed on an equal, if not higher, plane. A case in point concerns the obligation for daily prayer. Some Orthodox women, such as Eileen and Sheryl who participated in this study, state that women do not need to pray three times a day in the synagogue. Whether or not women's spiritual status is equal to men's and how it translates into social praxis are controversial issues in Judaism (Umansky 1985; Plaskow 1983; 1991). Many Jewish feminist scholars question whether women's exclusion from formal and official religious practice is a result of history and society, or is the result of a divine commandment (Greenburg 1981; Heschel
1983). This issue will be discussed further in chapter one. However, as much of people’s spiritual states remain invisible and inaccessible to anthropological methods, this research will focus accordingly on the social expressions of women’s spirituality.

The issue of halakhic obligation, on the one hand, and lack of religious participation and responsibility, on the other, is multi-faceted and controversial in Modern Orthodoxy. The idea of change - indeed, the ability to - is fundamental. Change is a complex interaction between social and cultural conditions, and divinely inspired religious law. Lynn Davidman outlines succinctly the dilemma between choice and responsibility for Modern Orthodox women, namely that "... acceptance of the obligatory nature of religious law is what distinguishes the Orthodox from the other branches ... " (1991: 37).

Haddad and Findly note that in most religious systems, men and women often occupy separate hierarchies of influence, practice, and organization (1985: xi-xii). In times of societal and cultural transition, women become prominent supporters and initiators of religious change (1985: xii-xiii). Several important questions, however, arise. First, how much power and authority are assumed by,
or attributed to, women in times of upheaval? And second, how can women’s authority and power in religious and social spheres be identified? These issues will be further explored in chapter four, on “Gender, Power, and Negotiation”.

The issue of change relates to the compatibility or mutual exclusivity of Orthodoxy and feminism. The perception of this relationship (or the lack of it) has far-reaching repercussions in a number of spheres. One, it influences the nature and direction of scholarly and religious discussion and literature. Two, in conjunction with scholarly discussion, how does it impact the everyday, personal, and religious lives of Orthodox Jewish women and men? Judith Plaskow maintains that the two are indeed compatible, and cautions against polarized definitions:

When Jewish feminists allow Judaism and feminism to be defined by others in oppositional ways, then we are stuck with two "givens" confronting each other, and we are fundamentally divided (1991: xii).

Instead, Plaskow advocates creating a new identity containing elements of both feminism and Orthodoxy, rather than choosing between the two. First, however, a number of points need to be considered. "Feminism", as a culture-bound political and social movement, has been criticized for its monolithic construction and application. Individual women
possess individual ideas as to "what it is". Further, conceptualizations of "what it does", and "what it means", also differ. In terms of Orthodox Jewish women, feminism must be defined not only according to the above points, but also in relation to "what it looks like" in practice. To borrow Plaskow's definition, feminism is a search for equality, and the desire to see it affirmed in social and religious institutions (1991: xvii). How much change is required for equality? Who decides? And perhaps most importantly, will a Judaism that accords full access and participation for women still be Judaism?

The issues cited here, although by no means exhaustive, are indicative of many of the pressures and trials faced by contemporary Modern Orthodox Jewish women. My intentions are to study the interaction of feminism and Orthodox Judaism, as they manifest themselves within the everyday and religious lives of women in a Modern Orthodox community in Metropolitan Toronto. As one of the paramount aims in contemporary feminism is to ground itself theoretically in the personal and the everyday, I will similarly explore how different women in the community negotiate and define a multiplicity of identities available within feminism and Orthodox Judaism.
A further aspect of this research involves the role played by myself as a non-Jewish, female ethnographer. Much has been written in anthropology on the exclusion or virtual disappearance of the researcher in the process of data collection, and even more on the exclusion of the researcher in the analysis and the resulting text (Caplan 1988). Classically, the anthropologist has appeared within the text only briefly and occasionally, most notably to establish a sense of "having really been there". As such, a vital component of this study is the representation of myself in relation to the participants of this study. I will discuss the challenges and issues experienced by the participants, and how the same challenges and issues have led to a process of self-exploration on my part. As Jonathan Boyarin puts it: "... the projects of studying the Other within and the Other without are linked by a shared goal: 'our ways of making the Other are ways of making ourselves'" (1992: 85). The process of participation and observation indeed goes both ways, as I have found myself to be both a thoroughly gendered subject and the object of intense scrutiny and interest.

Also of importance are my motivations in choosing to study Orthodox Jewish women out of the myriad other groups
found in the rich cultural landscape of Metropolitan
Toronto. My initial interest in Judaism was aroused during a
trip to Israel in the summer of 1993 on an archaeological
excavation. The history of ancient Israel was, as a result,
put into stark relief with contemporary Israel. Most
notably, I witnessed the tension between an ancient
religious tradition and the secular views of modernity.
Also, I have lived with two secular Jewish women (strangely
enough, mother and daughter), the younger of whom is
currently "trying out" Christianity. This led me to wonder
about Judaism. I knew what she was "going to", but I
realized I had little knowledge, other than from a course in
religious studies, about what she was "leaving".

As I come from a small city in southern Alberta - with
a very small Jewish population - in "bible-belt" country, a
Jewish way of life and worship, although related to
Christianity, remained largely unknown to me. It is a
segment of North American society, in which I have been born
and raised, that I previously took for granted.

My methods involved semi-directed interviews, and both
passive and participant observation. I attended weekly
Sabbath services, and holiday rituals, classes and lectures
organized and sponsored by the synagogue, and informal
community gatherings. My use of the interviews and conversation, and the personal stories of the participants themselves (both women and men) will demonstrate the processual nature of religion, spirituality, and identity.

Such a study, as noted, would greatly increase my knowledge and experience of Judaism, how it is lived, and how it is written. I hope to shed light on who is the exotic Other" in Canadian society, the politics of representation, what constitutes knowledge and "tradition", and who has the right to create it and bear it - not only within Judaism, but in the context of this study between the researcher and the researched. Additionally, there is also the question of whether or not Modern Orthodox Jewish women see themselves as "subordinate" and in what ways, or whether subordination is a theoretical construct that bears no relation to their lives and how they construct their identities.

A discussion of the scholarly interpretation of religion, utilizing Weber's concept of verstehen and hermeneutics, along with women's position in the academic study of religion, will directly follow. The ensuing chapter, entitled "The Problem of Method: Ethnographic Fieldwork and Writing", is devoted to anthropological methods in the field context. An introduction to the
community of Watertown, and where it is located in the tapestry of Judaism in Toronto, is to be found in chapter three. The stage will then be set for a discussion on the dialectic between feminism and Orthodoxy, and on the women's negotiation of power within Modern Orthodoxy (chapter four). The conclusion of this ethnography will identify and discuss the salient issues that have been present throughout this research.
CHAPTER ONE
WOMEN AND RELIGION: UNDERSTANDING GENDER DISJUNCTIONS IN SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

Understanding Religion

There are two primary challenges in the scholarly study of religion. The first, phrased as a question, asks: "What do we study when we study religion?" The second challenge asks: "How do we study religion?" The responses to these challenges are necessarily, and somewhat paradoxically, contingent upon the other. As such, I will turn first to a discussion of the latter, and by so doing, will indirectly respond to the former.

In light of the fact that the discipline of Religious Studies has no methodology of its own, scholars have borrowed from the social and human sciences in order provide a response. Two prominent methodologies exist: verstehen (to understand) and erklaren (to explain). Proponents of the verstehen methodology point out:

... religion is an emotional, value-laden, and communal experience which utilizes imagery, symbols, ritual, and often deals with the sacred and supernatural and not the merely natural. As such, it represents a human cultural form that is farthest from the "natural" world and thus, more than all other cultural forms (e.g., politics, art and literature), requires a methodology different from that utilized by science (Kepnes 1986: 505).
Proponents of *erkennen* take their cue from the natural sciences, and inductive logic. Phenomena are explained by categorization under natural law. Steven D. Kepnes describes utilizers of the explanation method as functionalists and reductionists, "... because they attempt to reduce notions of transcendence and otherworldliness to this-worldly natural\(^1\) terms (1986: 508).

Instead of choosing between one method or another, contemporary hermeneutic theory posits that the most sophisticated accounts of the religious world utilize both methods. Before drawing upon Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory of explanation as a means to further understanding, it is necessary to discuss in greater detail the concept and methodology of *verstehen*.

Max Weber, the earliest advocates of *verstehen*, sought to demonstrate that the subject matter of the social sciences - including the study of religion - was comprised

\(^1\)Paul Ricoeur notes that "... today, explanation is no longer a concept borrowed from the natural sciences and transferred to the alien domain of written artifacts; rather, it stems from the very sphere of language, by analogical transference from the small units of language (phonemes and lexemes) to the units larger than the sentence, such as narratives, folklore and myth (1981: 157)."
of individuals who make judgements as they live and act within the social world. As such, this subject matter is not reducible to the rules and methodologies of the natural sciences (Morrison 1995: 267). According to Roy J. Howard, Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Schleiermacher used the term "hermeneutics"\(^2\) to find a theory of knowledge for the subject of the social sciences. Sciences, in short, " . . . for such products as are the result of man's deliberate ingenuity than of nature's blind working" (1982: 1-2).

Weber notes that any form of knowledge is, first and foremost, a knowledge of humans. Such knowledge is not naturally occurring, but must be acquired. As such, Weber calls attention to the motivations and intentions behind the pursuit of knowledge (1949: 22). Any act to acquire knowledge is presupposed by the acceptance of what is perceived as "correct" knowledge (Burger 1976: 59). Values, then, are what drive the pursuit of knowledge.

Drawing upon Heinrich Rickert's theories, Weber espouses the importance of values: humans are interested in

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\(^2\)The field of hermeneutics is usually associated with theology. Hermeneutics is a method for the interpretation and authentication of texts. Howard notes that there " . . . has always been a theology associated with hermeneutics because of the interest that dogma has in the interpretation of scripture" (1982: 1).
things that possess value. Rickert described such values as laws, customs, economy and religion (Morrison 1995: 264).

In sciences of fact, values are irrelevant because they do not enter into the laws of nature. But the sciences of value, such as history and social sciences, must concern themselves with human beings who, unlike natural phenomena, live in societies and engage in activities which compel them to act in reference to ends which are valued. Hence, the products of their actions always reflect values (Morrison 1995: 264; Burger 1976: 36-37).

The subject matter of the social sciences, by extension, is the domain of cultural meanings (Oakes 1977: 12). There exists an essential difference between what is perceived as meaningful human conduct, and what is "natural". For Weber, that which is meaningful human conduct is "... already identified or defined by the actor himself" (Oakes 1977: 21). Herein lies the key to what constitutes religion. The cultural significance of a phenomenon "... can be the fact that it exists on a mass scale as a fundamental component of modern culture" (Weber 1949: 77).

Hermeneutics, under the influence of Schleiermacher, became the question of a "... member of one culture struggling to grasp the experience of another..." (Bauman 1978: 29), rather than limited to purely textual analysis.
Hermeneutics attempts what two individuals involved in an ordinary conversation do without noticing, that is, achieve understanding. Hermeneutic understanding places the researcher, or interpreter, into the role of a partner in a dialogue with the subject (Howard 1982: 108). Bauman calls the process a hermeneutic "spiral" rather than a circle. Two ideas are important here. One, a spiral implies that understanding and interpretation are continual. Two, the spiral involves constant movement between the general (the larger cultural and social world) and the particular (the individual) (1978: 28).

Hermeneutic dialogue between the researcher and the researched is dependent on "affinity" (Bauman 1978: 27). That is, an individual can disclose or impart knowledge only to a kindred spirit. Affinity is based upon the idea of "inner states" (Burger 1976: 103). Inner states are the motivations, plans, affects, and emotions, which are responsible for the subjective meanings of actions (Burger 1976: 103):

To "understand" another person, therefore, is to have this person's "inner" states as contents in one's own psyche (Burger 1976: 109).
Contemporary advocates of verstehen and hermeneutics claim that the use of explanatory methods can facilitate understanding (Ricoeur 1981). Kepnes, drawing upon Ricoeur, notes that explanatory methods are especially useful when studying a social and cultural phenomenon such as religion. Religion is not always communicated directly, for example, through a conversation. It is also communicated "... indirectly through symbolic or textual form" (Kepnes 1986: 509).

Interpreting Ricoeur's work (1973), Kepnes draws attention to the concept and moment of "distanciation", which enables an "outside" perspective of religious phenomena. The viewer, or researcher, is able to stand back from direct and immediate participation. This has the effect of casting the phenomenon into relief, and allows perceptions and insights that an "inside" view may miss (1986: 509).

The concept of "distanciation" stands in contrast to the empathetic, "putting-yourself-into-someone's-shoes" stance assumed by earlier proponents of verstehen (Bauman 1978: 85; Kepnes 1986: 509). The use of explanatory methods and distanciation can present an alternative view of the
already alternative world of religious experience and expression.

Using this model, we would first develop a preliminary understanding of a religious phenomenon based on initial descriptions, our preconceptions and intuitions. We would then use explanations and functions to analyze religion from a distance. And finally, educated by explanations, we would return to try to understand the world in which the religious participant lives (Kepnes 1986: 512).

According to Ricoeur, the two perspectives of understanding and explanation, as they incorporate "insider" and "outsider" perspectives, are necessary for a sophisticated account of religion and religious phenomenon. The two are inextricably bound together. He states: "... understanding precedes, accompanies, closes, and thus envelops explanation. In return, explanation develops understanding" (1978: 165).

Women and Religion

In spite of the influences of cultural relativism, an emphasis on the social, anthropological literature in the religious lives of women has been notably absent until the

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1970s (Caplan 1988: 14). Starting in the 1970s, feminist scholars have critiqued the existing patriarchal structures found in the world religions, which they say "... have suppressed, devalued and denied women's religious experience" (Greenwood 1996: 109). Susan Starr Sered notes that, as a general principle, religion is often treated by feminist anthropology as a foundation of and a justification for patriarchy. Sered goes on to say that the study of religion is important to feminist scholarship because

... it is so often via religious rituals and ideologies that women and men express their deepest concerns, their truest selves, their fears, hopes, and passions. Studies of women's religious lives - whether utilizing textual, archaeological, ethnographic, historical, sociological, or psychological techniques - seek to discover how women construct reality (1994: 4).

The basis of much feminist scholarly research into all areas of life, including religion, has been the dichotomization of men and women. Stated more directly, it is the perception of women as an "Other" to men. This idea has been a topic of great concern since the appearance of feminist anthropology in the 1970s. Following the tradition

"Caplan further states that prior to the 1970s, even books written by women anthropologists "... differed very little from those written by men: they had almost nothing to say on the subject of either women or gender relations" (1988: 14).
of such prominent works such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), the notion of "woman" as the artificially created, devalued "Other" has often been compared to the situation of the colonizer and the colonized (Hartsock 1990: 160). Women are perceived as direct opposites of men, similar to many other dichotomous categorizations, such as sacred/profane, traditional/modern, and so forth. And, as in many traditional knowledge systems - anthropology and religion being two such systems - women are largely excluded from establishing the values and norms that shape these systems. Women, and their activities, are often invisible to the mainstream.

The concept of "woman as Other" can be directly applied to another set of binary oppositions. In the West, the terms "men" and "women" are often synonymous with the opposition of the "sacred" versus the "profane" respectively. Indeed, the terms "men" and "women" are fundamental elements of the sacred and the profane.

The sacred/profane dichotomy has been, and continues to be, an important focus in the Western study of religion. Prominent writers such as Robertson Smith (1969), Max Weber

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5My use of the term "woman" is not meant to imply that all women everywhere, necessarily share the same experiences.
(1969), and Mircea Eliade (1958), and most influentially, Emile Durkheim (1965), have, to greater or lesser degrees, made the "sacred" the focus of analysis. The sacred is associated with the public, formal, official, intellectual, and the theological. It has also been taken for granted that the sacred is the realm of men. This viewpoint implies that women, associated most often with the profane, are more interested in everyday and practical rituals. As such, it also implies that these types of rituals are somehow

. . . less noble, important, or sophisticated than theology. While men sit and ponder and write about complex metaphysical problems, women jump up and down and ask the spirits to cure their children of the flu (Sered 1994: 120-121; Haddad and Findly 1985).

Sered notes that women in many societies have active religious lives, yet women in many of the world religions are rarely admitted into ecclesiastical hierarchies. As a result, most official religious concepts reflect men's priorities and life experiences, and exclude women's (1994: 3). In many religions, Judaism being only one such example, this perceived "split" between the sacred and the profane encompasses the public and domestic spheres as well. Victoria Lee Erikson raises a striking and profound point when she ponders how a classification such as "profane" can
influence the moral and social lives of so those classified. Erikson also asks how much "religious practice" is simply invisible to formal academia, not just formal religion, because it falls outside of the sacred/profane dichotomies, and is not "official" (1992: 46). Feminist theory argues, however, that difference does not necessarily have to operate according to a scale of value. Caplan notes that, even though women occupy spaces separate from those of men, they are not necessarily unimportant, to themselves, or to the society in which they exist (1988: 11).

Recent research into women's religious lives has shown that the sacred and the profane are not experienced in daily life as dichotomous and mutually exclusive, but rather as points along a continuum, or as overlapping spheres. Although excluded from the "formal and official" religious spheres, women's ways of "being spiritual" and taking part in religious activities that hold meaning for them are not absent (Roseneil 1996; El-Or 1993). Susan Starr Sered notes that Middle Eastern Jewish women actively interpret and engage in ritual activities, such as food preparation. Since traditional Orthodoxy assigns women primarily to the domestic sphere, such women make use of the few resources for spiritual fulfilment available to them. For this group
of women, spirituality is centred on a continuum of ritual and everyday activities. They participate in the holy by caring for their families through the preparation of traditional foods (Sered 1988: 130-131).

Mary Douglas offers an alternative view of the sacred/profane split. She posits that both are pathways to the divine, and hence, both are dangerous (1966: 8). Conceptions of the profane entail more than a notion of "uncleanness"; it is also holy. In other words, holiness and unholliness are not necessarily polar opposites:

"... the universe is divided between things and actions which are subject to restriction and others which are not; among the restrictions some are intended to protect divinity from profanation, and others to protect the profane from the dangerous intrusion of divinity (Douglas 1966: 8).

This conceptualization allows for a significant reinterpretation of the association of women with things profane. Modern Orthodox women's perceptions of the sacred and the profane will be discussed further in chapter four, on "Gender, Power, and Negotiation".

In her study of female-dominated religions in a variety of cultural and social contexts, Sered notes that emotional and social bonds amongst people are emphasized. She adds that "... women's experiences lead them to understand
morality in terms of webs of relationship and interpersonal caring and responsibility . . . "(1994: 121). Sociologist Debra Kaufmann, working with newly Orthodox Jewish women (ba'alot teshuvah) in America, reiterates a similar point:

Nurturance and affiliation are more than just ways of thinking; they are a way of being for women in the Orthodox community. The social practices associated with nurturance dominate their lives. Consequently, their definitions of orthodoxy "resonate" with charity, commitment, and care (1991: 125).

The emphasis on relationship as an aspect of spirituality by many religious women conceptualizes the sacred and the profane not as a dichotomous set, but rather as existing simultaneously within one another.

Individuals occupy actual, physical spaces and places, and as Deidre Sklar phrases it, how people physically occupy and move through these spaces illustrates the importance of embodiment. It is the . . . corporeal aspects of social life [that] provide the glue that holds together world views and cosmologies, values and social structures (Sklar 1994: 13).

Such spaces and places, and the bodies occupying them, are also thoroughly gendered. Gender has a very different effect on the type of knowledges that are accessed and
experienced through the ebb and flow of relation and connection. For example, the Modern Orthodox women who participated in this study had different degrees of access to knowledge in the synagogue from the men. During the formal service, the women, sitting apart from the men and not reading directly from the Sepher Torah, experienced less direct access to the ritual knowledge. After the service, during the luncheon and prayers, the space of the synagogue was no longer gendered as exclusively male, and the women were able to experience knowledge, relationship, and connection more directly. Similarly, as a female anthropologist, I experienced gender spaces within the synagogue. But as a non-Jew, I experienced them differently. More will be said on this topic as it relates to myself as the researcher, however, in the following chapter on methodology.

Embodiment and relation are also key factors in the process of identity formation. Never a completed process, identity is worked out through time, in shifting contexts, and with competing ideologies. Again, the Modern Orthodox women I worked with were often negotiating the complex streams of Orthodoxy and feminism. The ideological and physical spaces they occupied between these two competing
discourses, changed and shifted according to context, and often remained unresolved. As anthropologist Renato Rosaldo puts it:

When in doubt, people find out about their worlds by living with ambiguity, uncertainty, or simple knowledge until the day, if and when it arrives, that their life experiences clarify matters. In other words, we often improvise, learn by doing, and make things up as we go along (R. Rosaldo 1993: 92; Hastrup 1995).

Feminism and Judaism

Process, embodiment, relationship, and identity are not issues that are important to anthropology alone. Feminist scholarship in Judaism is also concerned with these issues as it seeks to understand, re-define, re-interpret, and, in some cases, re-construct women's role in Judaism.

The central theme that has concerned Jewish feminists and Jewish feminist scholars has been women's exclusion, or the representation of "woman as Other" in the Jewish tradition (Sered 1988; Weissler 1995; Greenburg 1981; Plaskow 1983, 1991; Heschel 1983). Unlike in many other world religions, however, Jewish feminists posit that the exclusion of women in Judaism is even more apparent (Ostriker 1989: 542; Ozick 1983: 125).

In keeping with the feminist movement in general in the West, Jewish feminists base the development of theoretical
analysis on the importance of women's personal experiences. Traditionally, Judaism - as most, if not all, of the World Religions - accords men and women separate - but equal and complementary - roles on the basis of biology (Davidman 1991; Zerubavel and Esses 1987). Men fill the public and "ritual" spaces, while "... women are 'moved' into the private domain, the locus of the traditional female activities of nurturing and procreation" (Schely-Newman 1993: 287; Davidman 1991).

In Traditional Orthodox or Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, men devote much of their time to the study of the Torah. Women are often in charge of not only the household and child care, but also maintaining the economic status of the family unit (Zerubavel and Esses 1987). By so doing, Orthodox women enable their husbands to fulfil the commandment to learn.

Currently in Modern Orthodoxy, these role divisions are not so rigidly defined. Among many contemporary couples, both partners work outside the home and have direct and easy access to religious and secular learning. The most definite division of the theological from the social occurs in the

6"The dichotomy masculine-feminine implies other oppositions: rationality-emotionality, culture-nature, production-reproduction, active-passive, dominant-subordinate, objective-subjective, aggressive-peaceful, and so on" (Charles 1996: 7).
synagogue, where men fulfill the minyan requirements and participate in the formal service, while the women sit separately and follow along with a prayer book. The theological and social division seems to overlap, however, when it concerns the core of Judaism, the family unit:

In Orthodox Judaism, both men's and women's priorities are focused on childbearing and -rearing. Orthodoxy requires only men to procreate and considers only children born of a Jewish mother to be Jewish (Kaufman 1991: 90).

In her study of newly Orthodox women, Kaufman notes that, while the division of household labour was often variable, child care and household chores were a part of men's daily responsibilities (1991: 92).

Jewish feminism maintains that women's traditional placement in the private and "profane" results in a "distanced participation" (Weissler 1995). The number of halakhic prayer responsibilities for women are fewer than those for men. Women have only three positive commandments: separating a piece of dough to give to the priests as

7In Conservative synagogues, girls have been able to be bat mitzvah (ceremony for girls corresponding to a boy's bar mitzvah), but such an event marking their movement into an adult world of responsibility, more often than not "... marked the end, rather than the beginning, of [their] participation in congregational life" (Flaskow 1991: xi).
hallah, lighting the Sabbath candles, and upholding the laws of family purity (tohorat ha-mishpahah) (Wigoder 1989: 733). Jewish feminist Blu Greenburg, writing in the early eighties, argued that women

... are not counted as part of the minyan (prayer quorum of ten), nor are they called up to the Torah, nor are they permitted any service leadership role in the synagogue, such as rabbi, cantor or Torah reader (1981: 8; Plaskow 1991; Satloff 1983).

In the preferred form of Jewish worship - that is, communal - women have traditionally had little or no responsibility.

The traditional Jewish definition of spirituality is centred almost exclusively in male, elite ways of being Jewish. Being closely identified with the "profane", women's life experiences are for the most part excluded from any such definition, as Judaism "... offers few official or obligatory rituals that validate women's life experiences" (Sered 1991: 9). Although women are excluded, evidence illustrates that women's ways of "being spiritual" and

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*Renowned Jewish feminist scholar Judith Plaskow attests to this with her own experience. Standing outside a synagogue as her husband was called in to complete a minyan, she suddenly realized she could remain outside all day - her presence was irrelevant (1991: xi).*
taking part in ritual activities that hold meaning for them are not absent. As noted in the previous section, women's spirituality and "women's religion" are centred on a continuum of ritual and everyday life practices.

The *tkhines*\(^9\) - a body of religious literature from the early modern period - are clearly an example of women's expressions of spirituality. Until this century, Jewish women have remained on the whole largely untrained in *Torah* study\(^10\), the central element in Jewish religious life. However, the *tkhines* were predominantly the efforts of women for women. The *tkhines* addressed God in the singular voice, differing from the collective voice of *Israel*\(^11\) used in the *siddur* (formal prayer book). Private rituals and familial concerns are also emphasized. "The *tkhines* testify to the importance of relationships in women's spirituality"

\(^9\)The petitionary prayers of Eastern European, or Ashkenazic, women.

\(^10\)There are, however, many exceptions. Shoshana Zolty makes note of the scholarly accomplishments in the 16th and 17th centuries, of Asenath, daughter of Rabbi Samuel Barazani of Kurdistan, and in Italy, the post-Renaissance women Miriam Luria and Benvenida Ghirondi, among others (Zolty 1993).

\(^11\)The *tkhines* were written in the vernacular of Yiddish, which was more accessible to women. The Hebrew language was used primarily for scholarly and religious purposes (Weissler 1995; Plaskow 1991).
What also emerges is the perception of women's place and importance within Jewish religiosity: the *tkhines* illustrate women's everyday realities, but also their religious limitations, through lack of exposure to the accepted religious texts and knowledge of the language to study them. Chava Weissler argues that while the *tkhines* opened alternative avenues of worship for women, they were often ridiculed by the religious mainstream as non-scholarly religious texts. Thus, women-produced religious expressions were placed at the margins of specifically male activities (Weissler 1995: 37).

Feminist theory argues, however, that difference does not necessarily have to operate according to a scale of value (Caplan 1988: 11). Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine both men's and women's roles and responsibilities in Modern Orthodoxy, how they have changed over time, and how they have interacted with each other to make those changes.

Judith Plaskow writes that feminism is a process of self-affirmation as women and as persons. It is also a process of having religious and social institutions mirror such affirmations. Jewish feminists agree that a full incorporation of women's experiences, both personal and religious, is necessary and long overdue (Plaskow 1991;
Gross 1983; Heschel 1983; Satloff 1983). The reinterpretation of Judaism in this sense involves the acknowledgement of both men and women as constitutive of the Jewish community. Jewish feminist scholar Susannah Heschel writes that feminism itself often underpins the desire for deeper understanding and more meaningful avenues of expression. Traditional Jewish teachings are being examined from a new feminist perspective, and are re-creating new " . . . interpretations that allow, even demand, radical changes in outlook and behaviour" (Heschel 1983d: 118). Such creative activities include the ritual of Kos Miryam, Rosh Chodesh, feminist Passover

12 Many Jewish feminists acknowledge that their search for justice and equality in Judaism is a direct result of being Jewish, as the Jewish tradition has as part of its history the " . . . commitment to the creation of counter-institutions reaching towards equality and community" (Heschel 1983e: 222; Plaskow 1991; Geller 1983). This illustrates the contrapuntal processes of constant adaptation in Diaspora (the dispersion and settlement of the Jews outside of Palestine starting in the 6th century BCE and continuing until the establishment of the State of Israel after World War II), while trying to remain the "same".

13 Kos Miryam re-invents and celebrates the strength of Miriam, the sister of Moses. It refers to a " . . . vessel containing the waters of Miriam's Well, a legendary well said to have been created on the second day of Creation. From that time on, the well has been passed on to those who were in desperate need of water in the desert and whose merits made them deserving of such a gift. Miriam received the well on behalf of the children of Israel who were
liturgies (*Haggadot*) that make women's experiences, struggles, and liberation central to the ritual enactment of the Jewish year (Plaskow 1991: 94), birth ceremonies for girls (Satloff 1983; Plaskow 1991), and the use of female imagery and pronouns of God in liturgy (Gross 1983). Women's contributions to secular and religious life and Jewish culture, addressing images of women and God in Jewish literature, female leadership in communal institutions, and women's ordination, are just some of the issues that have been addressed in the past few decades by Jewish feminism.

The question being asked, however, is whether or not the changes outlined above are "going far enough" or are wandering in the desert after their escape from Egypt. According to the legend, she was able to call forth the water with her beautiful voice" (Adelman 1994: 156; Plaskow 1991)

14 An ancient women's ritual that, according to the legend, was a holiday given to women as a reward for not participating in the making of the Golden Calf. Today, it is celebrated in keeping with the new moon, where women explore their tradition through study, dance, singing, as women with women (Adelman 1994: 155). Adelman notes that the rabbis of the first century of the Common Era incorporated the holiday into synagogue worship. They feared it would draw people away from the "Jewish fold". However, as "... the New Moon was observed in the synagogue, it lost its distinctive connection to women" (Adelman 1994: 155).

15 Orthodox Judaism does not allow women to be ordained as rabbis. Traditional Orthodox groups "... have largely resisted the encroachment of feminism" (Davidman 1991: 43).
simply re-casting women in traditional male roles. The issue of women's involvement in Jewish feminism finds itself debated on two opposing, but not mutually exclusive, fronts. Judith Plaskow eloquently states the issues as follows:

Most of women's civil and religious disabilities have been eliminated. But these changes have not turned Judaism into a feminist tradition. They have simply meant that, as women take our place in Jewish life - as we are called to the Torah, as we are counted in the minyan and lead services, as we act as rabbis and cantors - we function as participants in, teachers and preservers of a male tradition. We become full members of a tradition that we played only a secondary role in shaping and creating. We appear to be equals, but we leave intact the history, structures, images, and texts that exclude and testify against us (1991: xvi).

For Plaskow and many others (Heschel 1983; Gross 1983; Waskow 1983; Weissler 1995), change means incorporating women's experiences into definitions of Jewish religion and spirituality to the extent that every aspect of the Jewish tradition is re-formed. Not only must women participate, but they must also participate in defining the Jewish values that constitute and perpetuate the religious community. Susannah Heschel notes that women's change and women's equality should not simply mean an assumption of traditional male roles (1983a: xviii). Heschel warns of the danger of abandoning the unique histories and perspectives that are
particular to women. For some, change is not simply participation; it is the transformation of the tradition altogether.

Women's subjugation and inequality are argued as emerging from two different sources: from halakhic roots and from social and historical circumstances. The latter arguments hold that the treatment of women is first and foremost a misinterpretation of the law, that "... it is a social, not a sacred question" (Heschel 1983d: 115; Sered 1991; Fulkerson 1991; Lancer 1988; Adler 1983; Waskow 1983). Feminism, then, is perceived as a source and a method for reclaiming intact elements of the Jewish religion that have been buried (Waskow 1983).

Judith Plaskow firmly believes that change must take place at a deep level; change must go beyond the existing systems of value and religious law.

In a system in which women have been projected as Other, there is no way within the rules of the system to restore women to full personhood (1991: 12; 1983).

These polar views are not mutually exclusive, however. Many scholars (Plaskow 1983, 1991; Geller 1983; Greenburg 1981) recognize that halakhic sources add weight and
authority to socio-historical precedents, and vice versa. Blu Greenburg asks: why should such male-female stratification in Judaism - a sociological truth which has been codified into halakha - "... oblige[s] us to make an eternal principle out of an accident of history" (1981: 46).

Jewish feminism, mirroring the feminist movement in the West, is plagued by concerns of unity and direction, as women grapple with the dichotomies of self/other, sacred/profane, men/women, and religious law/socio-cultural custom. Feminists and women differ in their individual needs and wants, and the roles they seek within Judaism, their families, and their communities. Jewish women are torn

16Women's ordination as rabbis is a case in point. It feels "un-Jewish", because it is perceived as discontinuous with the Jewish past. Similarly, Laura Geller notes that the "feminization" of the synagogue often evokes a fearful response. She states that once women achieve power positions in the synagogue, men will feel the synagogue is no longer important enough to occupy their attention (1983: 211).

17For further discussion about the politics of Jewish memory and forgetting, and the appearance of the past in the present, see Boyarin (1992).

18The majority of accounts of Jewish feminism are the products of Western feminist scholars, in Western contexts. There are, however, a number of accounts based on non-Western Jewish women (Sered 1988, 1991; El-Or 1994), and these are concerned with traditional roles and avenues of power in patriarchal contexts.
between the aspirations to equality, changes in status, changes in female imagery in communal and religious life, changes in *halakha*, with being liberated from the underpinning structures of women's oppression, or by finding personal and spiritual satisfaction through already existing avenues. In Reform Judaism, women participate directly in formal services, and have *aliyot* (the calling up of a member of the congregation to read the *Torah* in the synagogue). At the other end of the spectrum, Orthodoxy requires a strict separation of men and women's roles, as they pertain to the theological and the social respectively. Both men's and women's roles are ultimately being contested.

As there are many forms and interpretations of Judaism - Modern Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Egalitarian\(^\text{19}\) - there are also many forms and interpretations of "feminism". Meaning and direction are contested in both Judaism and feminism, as separate discourses, and as a dialectic. As such, there are many different feminist views of Judaism itself, the direction for the future, and the roles, rights, and responsibilities

\(^{19}\text{Men and women are equally involved in Egalitarian services. Women are rabbis, hazzans, and have aliyyot. Girl's bat mitzvahs are also formally recognized within the synagogue.}\)
that men and women should, or can, assume. All these contested viewpoints are themselves interpreted and re-interpreted by individual men and women within their personal and public lives.

How, then, do Orthodox Jewish women in Toronto negotiate and construct their identities simultaneously as traditional and modern women? The question - and the answer - is being addressed by many Jewish women, at both the scholarly and popular levels (Plaskow 1983, 1991; Kaufman 1991; Davidman 1991), as they negotiate their religious and spiritual obligations, their careers, their families, and their communities.
How is social reality represented, interpreted, and described? How is knowledge produced, expressed, and experienced (Marcus and Fischer 1986)? The current mood of questioning in anthropology and other disciplines has centred on alternatives to totalizing frameworks, general models of social and natural stability, and abstract theoretical visions. As Marcus and Fischer claim:

The authority of "grand theory" styles seems suspended . . . in favor of a close consideration of such issues as contextuality, the meaning of social life to those who enact it, and the explanation of exceptions and indeterminates rather than regularities in phenomena observed - all issues that make problematic what were taken for granted as facts or certainties . . . (1986: 8).

This questioning mood, responsible for the most interesting of theoretical debates, takes place on the level of method (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Stacey 1988; Van Maanen 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990).

Anthropology's primary, self-defining method is ethnography. John Van Maanen writes that the written representation of a culture, or certain aspects of a
culture, is what constitutes an ethnographic account (1988: 1).

To write an ethnography requires at minimum some understanding of the language, concepts, categories, practices, rules, beliefs, and so forth, used by members of the written-about group. These are the stuff of culture, and they are what the fieldworker pursues (Van Maanen 1988: 13).

In order for the ethnographer to learn such things, current ethnography demands the his/her presence in the culture-area of study, in other words, actually “being there” in the field (Van Maanen 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990). Being there, however, is only a portion of an ethnographic account. Cultural accounts are written, constructed accounts. Such accounts, according to Van Maanen, are most assuredly anything but neutral, and carry serious moral and intellectual responsibilities (1988: 1). James Clifford notes that ethnography is always more concerned with the invention of culture, than the representation of it (1986).

Issues of representation, epistemology, and interpretation, are being addressed by the “new ethnography”, a commonly used term that refers to reflexive ethnographic writings, forms that were not commonly seen in traditional accounts (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989).
Current ethnography emphasizes the experiential nature of fieldwork. Feminist anthropology, acknowledging this, posits that the fieldworker herself becomes the primary medium or the instrument of the research itself. As Judith Stacey notes:

... this method draws on those resources of empathy, connection, and concern that many feminists consider to be women's special strengths and which they argue should be more germinal in feminist research\(^1\) (1988: 22).

Other "new" reflexive accounts can take a variety of forms, and may even incorporate more than one strategy. Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen outline several, including the identification of the field researcher as an involved actor in the research process, experimentation with traditional ethnographic forms, study of global systems of domination as they manifest themselves in the everyday lives of the individual, and confessional accounts (1989).

\(^1\)There has been a great deal of scepticism about the universal concept of "woman's experience". After the self-critique of feminist scholarship in the 1980s by the realization that many groups of women had been excluded in the development of theory. Abu-Lughod notes that no matter how "... attractive the prospect of associating certain positive qualities such as sensitivity, care, attention, embodiment, or egalitarianism with women and their projects, one finally had to confront the fact that these 'feminine virtues' belonged strictly to a contemporary Euro-American subculture" (1993: 4).
Even in light of the new approaches in ethnography, the final result is still the product of the writer, no matter how it may have been modified or influenced by the subjects of the research (Stacey 1988: 23). "In brief, the ethnographer has the final word on how the culture is to be interpreted and presented" (Van Maanen 1988: 51). 

These pages being the result of my first attempt at ethnographic research, the problem of method reared its head in the first stages of my research in the field, and continued into the writing process. This chapter will address some of these issues—all of them interrelated—notably, the notion and practice of reflexive anthropology, power and the appropriation of knowledge, epistemology itself, the issues surrounding the idea of a "native" anthropologist, and ethical dilemmas I grappled with during the writing process. First, I will turn to a discussion of reflexivity, in fieldwork and in theory.

Anthropology has long been criticized for the exclusion or virtual invisibility of the researcher in the process of data collection (Caplan 1988: 13). Participant-observation has been characterized as a "distanced" participation, always placed on the fringes of "the action". As far as the production of the text was concerned, the anthropologist was
again absent, appearing only to establish authority as the esteemed observer with dazzling insights, and to lend authenticity to the account by "having really been there" (Caplan 1988: 14). In current anthropology, emphasis has shifted away from static, dispassionate, and "objective" representations of the researcher, to the recognition and acknowledgement of the conflicts of interest and emotions of the ethnographer's dual role as an "... authentic, related person (i.e. participant), and as [an] exploiting researcher (i.e. observer) ..." (Stacey 1988: 23).

Every individual is firmly rooted in her or his ongoing life history. As such, it makes no sense to deny or remove history from the researcher. Anthropologist Judith Okely states:

Long-term immersion through fieldwork is generally a total experience, demanding all of the anthropologist's resources; intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive. The experience involves so much of the self that it is impossible to reflect upon it fully by extracting the self (1992: 8).

Acknowledging the researcher as a thinking, feeling person does more, however, than grant personhood and make anthropology all the more human. The endowment of an on-
going life history effectively positions the researcher. Feminist Anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup remarks that "... like culture, anthropology is not primarily what we see, but what we see with" (1995: xi). "Position" refers to both the physical and the metaphysical, although the two are inextricably bound.

First, the anthropologist is physically there, in terms of research "in the field". He or she occupies the same space as the subjects in the research. Even so, the researcher is almost always partially in a liminal space (Hastrup 1995). The liminal role of the analyst rather peculiarly straddles, permeates, and influences both the personal and the professional lives of the anthropologist. Reminiscing over her past field experiences among female sheep herders in Iceland, Hastrup notes:

One must surrender to the role in a very direct manner; there is no way of finding oneself between cows handling their udders and still pretending that one is there only for scholarship (1995: 18).

Research "in the field" has been likened to a rite of passage for anthropologists. In this sense, research in the field, and the work towards my own degree, represent the construction and consolidation of my professional identity (Fortier 1996: 308).
Van Maanen uses the terms "marginal natives" and "professional strangers" to characterize the awkward position of the ethnographer (1988: 2). In my own case, my primary fieldsite was a Modern Orthodox synagogue. The data I gathered through participant-observation during certain ritual proceedings were based more strongly on "observation"; I could not fully participate, as I was non-Jewish, and female as well.

The second issue - the metaphysical - is knowledge, and the ability to experience it. Knowledge is always socially and culturally shaped. The background and personal experiences of the ethnographer, in conjunction with the liminal spaces occupied in the field, allow not a complete comprehension, but rather, one that is selective (Hastrup 1995).

As noted, my primary fieldsite was the synagogue. Within the synagogue itself, I initially found myself firmly positioned outside of and on the margins of the "women's circle." Being a woman neither guaranteed access into this close-knit circle, nor did it allow the women of Watertown and I to draw upon any "shared experiences" as women. The women at Watertown shared amongst themselves religious experience, long-term friendships, and in some
cases, career interests and/or experiences of motherhood. As a single, non-Jewish woman with no children, I was often at a loss for words and felt uncomfortable on the edges of the conversation. The degree of access I gained into the “women’s circle” - and my degree of comfort with it - increased over the duration of my field research, but I was not privy to a great deal of the conversations amongst the women of Watertown.

Many of the women of the community juggled the demands of marriage, careers, religiosity, and children and perhaps had no inclination or desire to have me “snoop” in their personal lives. As a result, I was only occasionally allowed access into their lives at home. Feeling initially excluded from the “women’s circle” at the synagogue, coupled with the limited degree of access I had into the personal lives of the study participants, has led to a “gap” in my presentation of women’s issues in Orthodox Judaism. A central theme of any discussion of women in Orthodoxy includes the mikveh (ritual bath), niddah (menstruation), and tohorat ha-mishpahah (family purity). These issues were not topics discussed by women in my presence, with the exception of Sheryl who expressed no difficulties with these obligations. As a researcher, I
also did not want to unduly influence any responses to my questions, and encouraged the women themselves to define and discuss topics they considered important. This is not to say that the issues of mikveh, niddah, and tohorat hamishpahah are not important features of these women’s religious lives. It does, however, rather strongly illustrate the partiality of knowledge that I experienced, collected, and wrote about.

Being non-Jewish and non-religious, my only means of understanding what an "Orthodox lifestyle" actually was outside of the synagogue was based primarily on interviews. This example illustrates the issue of position on both fronts: one, that I had no experience with the knowledge of living an Orthodox life; and two, that I was not in the position to begin to experience it. As a researcher, and as a positioned subject myself, I can offer only provisional interpretations. It is necessary, then, to make clear to my readers exactly why I was "... prepared to know certain things and not others" (R. Rosaldo 1993: 8; Hastrup 1995: 49).

It was assumed by anthropologists that their presence did not affect the relationships, ways of being, and the activities of the research subjects. Recent scholarship,
and my own experience, has shown that this is not the case (Stacey 1988). Seeking to continue my field research in early January of 1997, I returned to the Watertown synagogue after spending the semester break of two and a half weeks with my family in southern Alberta. I arrived early, and formal services had not yet begun. Immediately upon entering, I was greeted not with "Hellos!" and "Welcome back!", but rather with a vivid (and humorous) story of how my presence had "caused a ruckus" among the Watertown community. Unbeknownst to me, one of the young girls whose family participated at Watertown regularly was apparently quite fascinated with me. Her father, Frank, described how his three and a half year old daughter, Michelle had been playing at home, and was heard to say a number of times, "I wanna be like Angie!". This was then followed by piercing screams and tears. I was shocked to discover that Michelle - who had never, to my knowledge, even acknowledged my presence at the synagogue - was so taken with my appearance that she had shoved a plastic bead far up her nose in imitation of my nose piercings! Her father good-naturedly informed me that a trip to the Emergency Room had been necessary to remove it.

All humour aside, much of the literature on this issue
centres predominantly on issues of power. According to anthropologist Helen Callaway, the discipline of anthropology:

had its roots in the imperialist era and carried with it implicit relations of inequality between an anthropologist from the dominant West and the people of less powerful societies (1992: 33).

Anthropological research is known for requiring long-term immersion in the field, which often results in mutual affection, even friendship, between the researcher and the researched (Van Maanen 1988; Okely 1992; Stacey 1988). Even so, Kirsten Hastrup notes that such interpersonal interaction is not, cannot, be free from power differentials. Any such dialogue, no matter how friendly, is darkened by the fact that the ethnographer is practising a form of implicit and indirect violence. Questions are unsolicited, and "... knowledge of what is systematically hidden can only be obtained by maintaining a degree of pressure" (Hastrup 1995: 47; Stacey 1988).

Being fully aware of anthropology's colonialist history, coupled with the fact that I, like any other anthropologists in the field, was at the Watertown synagogue to further my own understanding of the Jewish religion and culture, caused me significant stress and
periods of doubt. Even though I made it a point to be completely "up-front" about my scholarly intent, and no one (to my knowledge, at least) expressed any difficulties with it, I found myself often questioning my own motives, especially in terms of the "appropriation of knowledge", and offering little or nothing in return².

In actuality, the anthropologist can reciprocate to a degree, by supplying personal information about herself. Other circumstances can also provide an "equalizing" effect. Over time, I began to assist a couple of the women in preparing the lunch: setting the table, arranging food, and so on. Outside of the Sabbath service, on a number of occasions I went to a kosher deli in the north end of Toronto and collected the food ordered by the synagogue. I also ran errands to help with the High Holiday

²I actually experienced a rather nightmarish dream concerning my motives and the appropriation of knowledge. In my dream, I was handed a transcript of three interviews my academic supervisor had with Samuel concerning my continued presence the Watertown synagogue. The actual form of questioning on behalf of the synagogue and its members did not evoke my reaction in itself. It is valid and completely understandable (in fact, I would most likely be concerned with this answer myself, were I in a similar position). Rather, I felt that my motives did not stand up to scrutiny and had been "found out". Interestingly, this dream occurred during a brief vacation taken on the other side of the country. It lends credence to Judith Okely's statement that fieldwork is a completely involving experience (1992: 9).
preparations. I had acquired, or fallen into, a definable role in the synagogue. By taking part in as direct a manner as I was able, I began to learn about and understand the basic flow of the Sabbath service and what was happening, some of the requirements for kashrut (dietary laws), and the often discussed division of space along gendered lines.

Power was to play a significant role in the course of my research, and became most apparent to me in the process of "writing up" my results. The perception of power not only influenced what kinds of information and knowledge I had access to, but also the manner in which I acquired it. The colonialist power relations evinced by Hastrup (1995) are complicated - if not compromised altogether - by doing anthropology "at home" in one's own society. My questions were very much unsolicited, and I had to be very persistent in order to attain a more "formal" interview, over and above any conversations held at the synagogue. In this sense, I was exerting pressure, eliciting information through "symbolic violence" (Hastrup 1995: 47).

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1According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence, “... of which the realization par excellence is probably law, is a violence exercised, so to speak, in formal terms, and paying due respect to forms. Paying due respect to forms means giving an action or a discourse the form which is recognized as suitable, legitimate, approved, that is, a form of a kind that allows the open production, in public view, of a wish
In another sense, however, power (whether consciously or not) was also exercised upon me. Most, if not all, of the members of the Watertown synagogue had some idea of what anthropology and ethnographic research are, and I could have very easily been refused access altogether, or asked to leave. Power was exercised in more subtle ways as well. Some participants were happy to talk, although refused to be taped. Others felt comfortable with a tape recorder present, but specifically asked me not to record certain stories and events involving other people.

Perhaps one of the more noticeable and direct manifestations of power came in the scheduling of interviews. All of the women who participated had careers, families, observance and worship, and children (or any combination thereof). Interviews were scheduled only when the participants felt time permitted. On a number of occasions it took anywhere from three to six months to schedule an interview, it being continually re-scheduled as "something came up" unexpectedly. Anthropologist Galina Lindquist, facing similar issues, states it eloquently:

or a practice that, if presented in any other way, would be unacceptable” (1990: 84-85).
I am in no position of power or authority with respect to my informants, nor do I represent any resource for them by the mere fact of being an anthropologist. The people I study do not need me to help them or to represent them, in fact, they do not need me at all, while I, in my project, am totally dependent on their accepting me (1995: 29).

These events not only illustrate power relations and differentials, but also affected the type of "anthropological knowledge" that I was to have access to.

The issue of doing anthropology "at home" raises another issue in regards to position. That is, what exactly is a "native" anthropologist? Anthropologists are often portrayed as either "regular" or "native".

Those who are anthropologists in the usual sense of the word are thought to study other Others whose alien cultural worlds they must painstakingly come to know. Those who diverge as "native", "indigenous", or "insider" anthropologists are believed to write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity (Narayan 1993: 671).

Culture and society are no longer perceived as homogenous, and neither should individuals, including the anthropologist. We all belong to many societies simultaneously (Narayan 1993: 676).

According to Bourdieu (1977), culture and society, rules and regulations, are all embodied; they are lived and
experienced. Studying in a Canadian context, am I not a "native" anthropologist in some sense? As Canadian, I share common "roots", and common social and cultural knowledges, such as living in Toronto, experiencing the Canadian educational system, and so on, with the members of the Watertown Jewish community.

That being accurate, in some sense, I am a "native" anthropologist. Does the "inside point of view" that I am purported to have, provide me with undistorted and "authentic" insights? Hardly. In spite of the shared commonalities of Canadian culture and society, I cannot blend smoothly into the Watertown congregation. Most obviously, we do not share a religious and religio-cultural background.

The question to ask, then, is not "what" is a "native" anthropologist, but rather "when". The answer concerns issues of subjectivity, knowledge, and position.

To acknowledge particular and personal locations is to admit the limits of one's purview from these positions. It is also to undermine the notion of objectivity, because from particular locations all understanding becomes subjectively based and forged through interactions within the fields of power relations (Narayan 1993: 679).

Since I was in some ways a "native anthropologist",

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power was a strong issue throughout the course of my research. An anthropologist doing research in her own society—indeed, living in the same city as her study participants—is, I believe, more visible, and perhaps legally liable, to her subjects than she would be on the other side of the world (Van Maanen 1988). Of course, knowledge can be disseminated everywhere, but it becomes less an abstract concept and more a concrete reality when I read the same newspapers, see the same movies, and even bump into my study participants on the street.

During the process of my research, I presented each individual with a consent form, approved by an ethics committee. This form essentially outlined the purpose of my study, and the rights of a participant to stop at any time or extract any information at a later date. One particularly vivid experience cast the issue of accountability into a stark relief. My first interview was with Sheryl, at her law offices. I felt immensely foolish as I passed my consent form across her desk, on two counts. First, this woman had undoubtedly seen much more sophisticated documents in her legal career; and second, as a criminal lawyer, she could easily launch a lawsuit were I to be irresponsible with my research!
Even with written and verbal consent, the ethical line is not so easily drawn. Much of the ethnographic information I obtained was through informal means—standing around and talking at the synagogue, or having the occasional coffee and a chat—rather than through a formal interview. These occasions provided me with a rich ethnographic description and a "feel" for the community and its members. The people at the Watertown synagogue are very much a close-knit group, socializing outside of the synagogue, and some even work together. In the course of these more informal meetings, I have been told "inside" and/or personal information about other people at the synagogue. The question of whether or not I could use a great deal of this "insider" information arose constantly during the writing process. More often than not, I found the decision has been almost entirely subjective, and varied from situation to situation. My choice was dependent on whether or not the information appeared to be a type of "common knowledge" among the people in the congregation, and whether or not the person made it a point to tell me.

The notion of embodiment - and how it impacts upon discussions of identity - is relevant not only to an analysis of the subjects of study, how they experience
social reality, identify themselves, and negotiate space and place, but also to the identity of the researcher, and the research process itself. The perception of my role as "the anthropologist", from myself and the members of the synagogue, did impact what form the "knowledge" in question actually took.

Just as the researcher must negotiate her role within a fieldwork context, she must also negotiate this role in relation to others. In my own case, I was entirely new to "the field" and to Modern Orthodox Judaism. Even though I had read a few reflexive field accounts, such as Paul Rabinow's account of his experiences in Morocco (1977), and had listened to some of the "corridor talk", I still had no idea of what to expect. Similarly, many of the people in the community knew something about anthropology and ethnographic work, but had no experience of being the focus of anthropological research either. I had no idea of what I was supposed to be doing, and the people in the community had no idea of what I was looking for. John Van Maanen

"Indeed, I was often teased about "studying the Natives". On one occasion, I had been absent from a baby-naming ritual at the synagogue. The baby girl's father ended up teasing me mercilessly about missing all the "good anthropological stuff". He said they had all put on "face paint, danced around a ritual fire, and swung from the rafters".
describes this ambiguous and awkward experience as part of the difficulty associated with ethnographic methods:

For better or for worse, we lack a formal apprenticeship in the trade . . . our appreciation and understanding of ethnography comes like a mist that creeps slowly over us while in the library and lingers with us while in the field (1988: xii).

Renato Rosaldo has noted that people often learn by doing, and improvise in situations that are ambiguous and uncertain (1993: 92). Subsequently, most of our interactions and encounters had to be improvised, and our relationships worked out over time. Knowledge was also negotiated over time. It took time, familiarity, and trust to establish dialogue. Dialogue is itself a process, as it involved discovering our backgrounds, and negotiating our interests. As I discovered earlier by trying to shake an Orthodox rabbi's hand, book knowledge is not a replacement for experiential knowledge (Van Maanen 1988; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Stacey 1988; Abu-Lughod 1993). The rabbi shook his head gently and said quietly: "Only with my wife". A great deal of time was devoted to finding a mutually understandable and significant frame of reference. I could not easily assume that women's issues I had read about in books had any great meaning or application to the
people who participated in this study.

The anthropology of religion has normally focused on non-Western religions, in non-Western contexts. Other, older approaches have sought to describe religion (Merleau-Ponty 1969), or to explain it as a social structure (Durkheim 1965). Approaches such as phenomenology have sought to study "alien" traditions in a comparative framework "... in order (ultimately) to clarify their own or, say the religiousness of the western world ..." (Twiss and Conser 1992: 29). Even with the aim of qualitative understanding, phenomenology nevertheless pursues universal categorizations of religious phenomena (Twiss and Conser 1992).

My focus on a Western, world religion in a Western context is not undertaken to gain greater insight into my own tradition, or to identify ideal categories, but rather to understand what social and religious life means to the members of a particular religious community in Canada. The combination of verstehen and hermeneutics is particularly useful in a study of this sort, as the researcher and the researched become partners in a dialogue to facilitate mutual understanding.

*Verstehen*, in conjunction with hermeneutic
understanding, depends on the affinity between the researcher and the researched (Bauman 1978: 27; Howard 1982). As a theoretical construct, it is a sound device for studying social and religious lives. As a practical method, however, it is problematic on a number of levels.

First, hermeneutic understanding is based on the establishment of affinity. Any relationship thus established between myself and the members of Watertown is not based on a sense of completeness. Words, statements, gestures, responses, and silences are cloaked by inference and implication, and point to potentially misleading interpretation. As such, any sense of affinity is partial.

Second, Howard writes that hermeneutics places the researcher and the researched into a dialogue or partnership (1982: 108). Bleicher concedes that when both partners are placed on equal terms, the "... intended and perceived meaning can most nearly coincide" (1980: 32). This identifies the point of potential conflict as the meaning of communication itself. Further, it implies that the partners possess complete knowledge, which they then impart in the dialogue. This assumption is problematic, when, in the case of the people of Watertown, many are learning how to become more observant, and how to negotiate
feminism and Orthodoxy. They do not possess a full knowledge and understanding of the Jewish tradition, or how it is to be integrated with feminism. From my perspective, I am also actively negotiating my role and purpose as an ethnographer.

In these ways, any hermeneutic understanding thus gained is only partial. It is further compounded by diverse and sometimes divergent experiences of Canadian culture and social life. This in itself does not presuppose any solid "common ground", or affinity. The people of Watertown and I are simultaneously "natives" and "foreigners".

Epistemology is an important concern not only in terms of anthropologic and ethnographic methodology, but also as it relates to subject matter. I noted in the previous chapter that a significant number of ethnographic accounts on women and Judaism are of a "confessional" nature. That is, the authors of such accounts are themselves Jewish, whether observant or not. I am one of the very small number of non-Jewish authors to undertake a study of this sort.

The methodological implications of this issue - accounts done by "practising, believing insiders" in contrast to the "detached" and supposedly "objective" analysis done by an "outsider" - are profound. The
significance of the two types of observer is strongly related to epistemology. A few such issues are especially noteworthy: Who has access to knowledge? What form does such knowledge assume? Is one type more disposed to present an "accurate" and "authentic" account? What are the criteria for accuracy and authenticity?

The methodological implications of the confessional "insider" accounts, as opposed to my "outsider" interpretations, are particularly salient in regards to the Self/Other dichotomy in feminist and postmodern anthropology. The two streams of thought resemble each other in a number of ways, yet are asymmetrical in the mediation of the Self and the Other. Drawing upon Strathern's explication of this difference (1987), Jennaway writes that for

... feminism, the 'self' is women, both first and third world; the 'other' is male and patriarchal. For

Jennaway lists such similarities as: "... the subversion of hegemonic totalizing ideologies; their deconstruction of objectifying systems of representations that are predicated upon a false dichotomy between the self and other; their rejection of a symbolic system that privileges vision over other forms of sensory perception (the 'scopic economy'); their emphasis on polyphony and their recognition of the multiplicity of simultaneous cultural discourses; their aim to undermine unitary (feminists would say phallocentric) forms of authority, and in their critique of scientific knowledge(s)" (1990: 167).
anthropology, on the other hand, it is the self who is male but also Western; the other is exotic (1990: 178).

Feminism strives to unite the Self, which requires separation from the Other, while anthropology seeks union with its Other (Strathern 1987: 289). As Jewish women, confessional writers have a distinctly different conceptualization of who is the Self and who is the Other from mine, as a non-Jewish "outsider". The knowledge that is predicated on the basis of these different standpoints, like social life itself, is in flux. Standpoints change, depending on who is talking, being talked to, where, and when.

It has been said that an anthropology that takes gender into consideration "... is not only good anthropology but better anthropology" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 17). This holds true for the study of religion, as women's experiences, beliefs, and expressions have been excluded from much of anthropological interest in the past (Greenwood 1996).

All of the topics discussed here - epistemology, power, and anthropology "at home" - have a mutual point of intersection: position. Position fundamentally affects access to knowledge, the characterization of knowledge, and
ultimately the direction and nature of the research, and the results. Position becomes problematic; it is never fixed. Lila Abu-Lughod notes that the problem facing anthropology "... is the instability of the epistemological ground - where do we stand to get this better view?" (1990: 17).
CHAPTER THREE
COWS, KOSHER, MINYANS AND COMPUTERS: THE COMMUNITY OF WATERTOWN

The Jewish community in Toronto is composed of a diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, such as Polish, Hungarian, Moroccan, Ethiopian, South American, Canadian, American, Sephardic (Spanish or Portuguese Jewry) and Ashkenazic (Eastern European Jewry), to name only a few. Each of the major streams of Judaism - Reform, Conservative, Orthodox - and their variations are also present.

The great majority of the Jewish community is based in the northern end of the city. A northward movement has characterized the Jewish community in Toronto over the past decades. As a result, there are few synagogues left in the downtown core, and fewer still are Orthodox. Communities based in northern Toronto have easier access to kosher foods, through a variety of supermarkets, delicatessens, bakeries, and restaurants. There are also Jewish hospitals, care centres, schools, day-care, book stores, and community centres, such as the Bathurst Jewish Centre, and the Bloor Jewish Community Centre. Jewish newspapers such as the Canadian Jewish News and the Jewish Tribune run articles and advertisements about religious events, Jewish storytelling,
family activities such as fundraisers and marathons.

Programmes such as United Jewish Appeal, Jewish Family and Child Services, Jewish Immigrant Aid Services, the National Council for Jewish Women in Canada, Toronto section, the Kashruth Council of Toronto, and the Jewish Student Federations in the Toronto area attempt to address the needs of all Jews. Kabbalah Learning Centres also operate in the greater Toronto area, welcoming all interested Jews. Similarly, the Aish Hatorah’s educational philosophy is to grow Jewishly and recognize all Jews regardless of observance. Jewish films and books, lectures, seminars, travel opportunities to Israel, editorials, and other cultural, ethnic, and religious issues related to, or part of, the Jewish faith are highly visible within the Toronto Jewish community.

There are three predominant streams of thought in Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. It is necessary to briefly explore each of them, in order to set the stage for this research.

The Reform movement arose in the early nineteenth century in Germany. Reform marks a significant departure from Orthodox Judaism, as it attempts to make worship undemanding and convenient (Wouk 1959). Dan Cohn-Sherbok
describes Reform as a modification "... of traditional belief and practice to meet contemporary needs" (1992: 452). Men and women sit together during shortened services, read from the Torah, and women can be ordained as rabbis. Above all, Cohn-Sherbok writes that Reform Judaism is a movement that "... advocates the harmonization of the Jewish tradition with modern life and culture" (1992: 452).

The Conservative movement also originated in the nineteenth century. It attempted to find a "middle ground" between Reform and Orthodoxy. Conservative Jews believe that "... a working faith ... [is] ... more than an abstract idea, that life went deeper than logic" (Wouk 1959: 223). Prayers are in a mixture of Hebrew and English, women and men are permitted to sit together, and the Conservative movement has also begun to ordain women rabbis in recent years (Marty and Appleby 1995). Generally, Conservative synagogues have more ceremony, ritual, and Hebrew than Reform synagogues. It must be noted, however, that the dividing lines between Reform and Conservative, along with Orthodoxy, are never clearly drawn. Interpretations and practices vary not only within these variations of Judaism, but also between individual communities.
Herman Wouk, in his chronicle of Jewish religious history, addresses the meaning of the term "Orthodoxy". Wouk maintains that there are many groups in Orthodox Judaism, such as the Haredim, the Gush Emunim, the Neturai Karta, Traditional Orthodox, and Modern Orthodox, who believe that they hold the only "Orthodox" viewpoint, and see only themselves as being truly observant of the religious law. Aside from personal interpretations, there remains a great deal of institutional interpretation "... on what the law commands, and what counts as obedience. The word 'orthodox' lacks precision" (Wouk 1959: 213; Pelikan 1990; Wieseltier 1990).

Based in Israel, the Neturai Karta are opposed to any form of change, and try to live "... as though the last two centuries never happened" (Wouk 1959: 211). Their manner of dress, their lifestyle, and their homes are strongly reminiscent of an eighteenth-century ghetto. Haredi men in Israel and the United States, identified by long black coats, black hats, ear-locks (payot), and long beards, also reject many of the values of modern society. Haredi Jews, however, utilize the latest communication and electronic technologies to refine their religious lives (Marty and Appleby 1992: 14-15). The Lubavitchers, most prominently
based in Canada in Montreal and Toronto, live in communities separate from non-Jews. Such strict communities are opposed to many of the doctrines and values of contemporary society and post-Enlightenment modernity (Marty and Appleby 1992, 1995), such as the emphasis placed on individualism and material success (Davidman 1991; Drucker 1988).

The variation found at individual and communal levels in Orthodox religious practice becomes relevant here. Reuven P. Bulka, for example, describes the "non-observant Orthodox Jew" (1983: 14). Such individuals identify with Orthodoxy for reasons other than the strictly religious. These reasons often include convenience (the synagogue is in the area), the rabbi (charismatic and well-spoken) (Bulka 1983: 14), and a feeling of warmth and community not found in larger synagogues and congregations (Liebman 1975: 145; 1983: 44-46).

Practice also varies greatly within communities. Orthodox day-schools in Toronto, for example, serve members of the non-Orthodox communities as well. Another example concerns the variety of practice within the Orthodox community itself. In some Traditional synagogues, the women sit in a gallery overlooking the bimah and the men involved in the service. In others, women and men are seated in the
same room and are separated by a mehitzah. The mehitzah may be a cloth divider set at waist-level, allowing women and men to see one another, and women to see the service and the Torah. It may also be a wooden fence rising to shoulder-level or higher, restricting visual contact between the sexes. At other synagogues, the mehitzah may also be a wall which allows for no contact whatsoever between men and women. One Modern Orthodox synagogue in the greater Toronto area houses two distinct and different congregations. One is larger, less religious, and observant, while the other is smaller, more religious, and more observant. They both assume the label of "Modern Orthodox." Some members of this particular synagogue - although this occurrence is not limited to these congregations alone - drive their cars or take transit to the Sabbath services.

The Orthodox community in Toronto is divided not on adherence to Jewish law, but rather how it is interpreted and played out in practice. Different Orthodox institutions may disagree on whether men and women may sit together during services, whether lights can be turned off or on during the Sabbath, and indeed, whether driving is allowed on the Sabbath. While diverse, the Toronto Orthodox community is close-knit. Institutions and learning centres
welcome members from other streams of Judaism, and different types of Orthodoxy. Large and well-established Orthodox synagogues are known to provide aid to smaller communities and synagogues in need in the form of prayerbooks, pews, religious ritual information, and even Sepher Torahs. Food donations are also common, and it is also common for members from different synagogues and different types of Orthodoxy to share personal and career-related ties.

One issue that is a frequent and highly visible topic in the Orthodox community - and within the larger Jewish community in Toronto - is the matter of Jewish survival. Concern over maintaining the Jewish tradition in the context of a secular and materialistic global culture is also expressed. Another facet of this issue, one that is less visible to outsiders, is the concern and debate over "Jewish identity". The Toronto Jewish community is divided along internal lines over who is a Jew on ethnic, cultural and religious grounds. Alan Unterman succinctly states the issue:

Being Jewish is not . . . necessarily synonymous with being a believing Jew, nor does the religious Jew identify himself primarily with doctrinal formulae. For some Jews their Judaism is more the participation in the life of a given ethnic community than any rigid
adherence to rituals or beliefs. For others the primary dimension of Judaism is the set of halakhic proscriptions and prescriptions which determine normative behaviors, with theological issues relegated to a shadowy existence on the sidelines (1976: 11).

The issues of Jewish identity, secularity, adherence to and interpretation of Jewish law, are the concerns of all streams of Judaism. They are also the concerns of the community of Watertown, as they constitute a newly established Modern Orthodox synagogue in a non-Jewish area of Toronto. The Watertown Jewish community consists of approximately twenty members who attend on a regular, weekly, basis. This core group consists of three or four families, couples without children, single men and women, and single mothers. Anywhere from two to twenty occasional members can attend on the Sabbath. I chose the Watertown community as the focus of my research after attending a variety of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogues in Toronto. A relatively small congregation such as Watertown would allow for greater access to individuals than I would experience in a larger congregation. Additionally, Watertown’s “new” status as a Modern Orthodox synagogue and community provided an excellent opportunity to study a “grassroots” religious movement with its emphasis on
directly involving members in worship. Another key factor in my decision concerned the interaction of feminism and Judaism. As a newly established Modern Orthodox synagogue, Watertown did not have a clearly defined or immutable position on women’s involvement, or on how it would integrate the values of the contemporary cultural and social world, and the long-standing tradition of Orthodox Judaism.

The congregants of Watertown have been the first to describe themselves as "unique" within the context of Toronto Judaism. It is impossible to discuss this issue, however, without first describing the synagogue, the formal service, and the congregation. As such, Watertown's "uniqueness" will be addressed towards the end of this chapter.

Many of the members formed their synagogue to become more intimately involved with Judaism. One of the members, Samuel, said Watertown is a synagogue for people who don't like to go to synagogue. He adds that almost all of the members have, at one time or another, felt alienated from large synagogues. Samuel and others want the people who attend Watertown to feel more involved with Judaism, and to pass such feelings on to their children. He also wants people to be able to worship in their own neighbourhoods.
Aside from direct, individual involvement, many of the members are interested in becoming more observant. A number of women who attend on a regular basis also express this interest, although they realize they must reconcile feminist and Orthodox worldviews.

During the past three years, the congregation has grown from friends and families meeting for worship in homes, and moved to the boardroom of a public-health clinic. The High Holiday services of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah had been previously held in a Greek restaurant. The community has recently converted a Tai Chi studio in the Greek district of Toronto into a small Modern Orthodox synagogue. This area is not known for its Jewish constituents, numbering approximately 500, and an even smaller number interested in Orthodoxy. A large and very successful fund-raiser had taken place the month before I began attending the synagogue. This fund-raiser featured Spanish music and dance, and a film focusing on the modern descendants of Jews forcibly converted during the Spanish Inquisition. The film and the Spanish guitar highlighted the talents of individual members of the community. Samuel was responsible for producing the documentary through his film company, and Ben plays Spanish guitar professionally. Many of the members of the community
are also connected by secular, career-related ties, which results in a small number of couples visiting the synagogue occasionally. These couples are not Orthodox and do not have close ties with other synagogues in Toronto.

Irrespective of the form of Judaism, the dress codes at the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogues I had visited prior to my arrival at Watertown were largely similar. Women wore conservative but fashionable skirts or dresses. Married Conservative and Modern Orthodox women wore hats or scarves upon their heads. Girls wore blouses and skirts or dresses. Boys and men were either dressed in slacks or suits with ties. At Watertown, the dress-code seemed much more casual. Taking a wide interpretation of the issue of women's modesty¹ (tsniut), the women wore anything from knee-length dresses to tights to jogging suits to jeans. Some had hats covering their hair, and some did not. The assembled men, casually dressed in running shoes, knee-length shorts, jeans, and rolled-up sleeves, presented an interesting contrast with the prayer shawl (talles) and skull cap (kipah or yarmulka) that each wore. This alone

¹Laws of modesty that require women to keep their bodies covered, to protect against flirtation or immorality between the sexes. Such laws also concern menstruation, display of hair, and interactions between the sexes (Plaskow 1991: 176).
suggests varying degrees of observance within the community itself.

The women, myself included, sat on benches and folding chairs on one side of the room, facing the side of the bimah\(^2\) and the Ark of the Covenant. The children of the community had taken part in the renovations and subsequent redecoration of their synagogue. The Ark of the Covenant was vividly coloured with the Star of David, people, rainbows, blue skies, and clouds.

Separated by a cloth divider, the men sat at right angles to the women, facing the bimah and the Ark directly. The children, the oldest being no older than eight, have the option of attending the service or occupying themselves in the playroom. They also frequently run up to their fathers in the middle of the service and race between chairs and people. The d'var Torah, a commentary or interpretation given before the formal service begins, is usually done by one man, Andrew. Women at Watertown are able to give the d'var Torah as well, although this is infrequent as a result of inadequate preparation time, due to juggling young children, families, and careers.

\(^2\)Literally, "elevated place". This is where the Torah is placed and read. At Watertown, this is a large wooden desk.
Since the purpose of the synagogue is to foster direct participation in the service, the community does not have a rabbi. This is an accepted practice for small synagogues, and formal services can be held with a minyan of ten learned men (Cohn-Sherbok 1992). Reading from the Sepher Torah, however, is difficult and requires preparation, as the Sepher Torah does not have vowels or punctuation. Most of the men in the Watertown synagogue do not have time to prepare for this, or do not have the knowledge to read directly from the Torah. In the course of the service, the hazzan (the person who directs the service), Michael, reads directly from the Torah. The man having the aliya follows along in the Tikkun. The Tikkun is a book which has on one page a direct copy from the Torah (without vowel marks), and

3The form in which the Torah is used for public reading in the synagogue (Cohn-Sherbok 1992: 309).

4Cohn-Sherbok describes the hazzan (or cantor) as follows: "... the synagogue official who leads the worshippers in prayers and is in charge of the music" (1992: 77). Initially, Michael was the only person at Watertown who was able to read from the Torah directly. He later taught those men who were willing to learn.

5This means the calling up of a man in the congregation to read the Torah in the synagogue, or to read a blessing. The first aliya, and the second, are reserved, respectively for those of priestly descent, the Cohens and the Levis. The other aliyot are then given to ordinary Israelites, with the exception of women in Orthodox services.
one side with vowel marks. In the pauses between each aliyah, Samuel interjects humorous comments about the passages about to be read, such as "This next one is really exciting; it has all the elements of a Steven Spielberg movie", and "In our journey down the spiritual highway, this next aliyah will be read by . . . ", and so on.

I discovered first-hand the emphasis in Watertown on individual involvement. The eighth aliyah at Watertown is reserved for the entire congregation. This is happily touted by members as entirely unique to Watertown, and "the envy of shuls [synagogues] everywhere". Men, women, and children - and frightened anthropologists - are all encouraged and invited to take part in the huppah (literally in Hebrew "canopy"). Large prayer shawls - talles - are held up over the Sepher Torah, and everyone crowds underneath. It symbolizes the unity of the shul and the unity of Israel. I was given a corner to hold, since I was one of the tallest people attending.

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6This practice has caused some controversy in the synagogue. A visiting Orthodox friend and Kabbalist, witnessing the reading from the Tikkun, wanted to either stop this or the service altogether. The regulars at Watertown put an end to the controversy by maintaining "our synagogue, our rules".

7My height of almost six feet has jokingly lead to comments about me being "a pillar of the community."
The formal Sabbath service is followed by a luncheon. Before lunch could take place, everyone is required to wash his/her hands and say a blessing. As I had no previous experience with what happens after a service, I often asked for direction or simply imitated others. This frequently inspired questions and discussion amongst the congregants themselves about the more accepted practices or prayers. The newly formed synagogue, with many of its members learning how to become more observant, clearly shows culture as constantly in process, and a process of creation. For example, there was, on one occasion, a good deal of discussion concerning the ritual surrounding the hallah (the special braided bread for the Sabbath). Some of the men were unsure of whether or not the hallah was supposed to be dipped into salt before or after the blessing.

Lunch was eaten with a flurry of elbows, excited children, and much laughter. Synagogue announcements, given by Susannah, outlined the upcoming community activities and special events. It ended with a rousing chorus of clapping and "ya-da-dadadada-da-da", which, after months of being haunted by its familiarity, I eventually recognized it as an a cappella version of "The Can-Can".
One kiddush³ lunch in particular stands out. It involved cows, kosher, minyans, and computers. It started with a theoretical discussion of cows and kosher. Much of this discussion was "over my head" theoretically, since it involved a detailed discussion of dietary laws. In essence, the participants were discussing how a herd of cows could be made kosher. In practice, apparently, it is another matter. A guest and friend of Samuel and his wife Norma then brought up the prospect of using computers to complete the minyan. The computer could be programmed with mitzvot (commandments), and it could be placed in a cupboard and taken out when it was needed. This comment was followed by jokes about how Watertown could programme ten computers and people could sleep in on the morning of the Sabbath.

The Watertown synagogue reflects diverse cultural backgrounds - such as Romanian, Russian, South American, American, and Canadian - and varying degrees of observance - from those who follow kashrut, to those who attend Sabbath weekly or less. This attitude also reflects an emphasis on learning and individual involvement. One woman, Norma,

³Literally, "sanctification" in Hebrew. According to Cohn-Sherbok, it is the " . . . name of a prayer recited over a cup of wine in the home or the synagogue to consecrate the Sabbath or a festival" (1992: 291).
states that such diversity provides constant challenges, constant questioning, and thus more learning, because "It's not just the way it is".

The emphasis on learning and education extends to all members of the congregation. According to Norma, it is the congregation's "chosen identification", for themselves and their goals, and their presence within a larger, non-Jewish community. Norma adds that an emphasis on learning helps to make the synagogue as "user-friendly" as possible to others in the neighbourhood. The synagogue and community centre have sponsored a number of educational series, courses, and guest speakers to promote religious education in the synagogue, but also within the larger community itself. Course topics that have been presented include Judaism and modernity, the meaning of the High Holidays, women's role within Judaism, and a series of Jewish story-telling.

Sponsoring and supporting religious education is also an immediate and active avenue for the participants to shape their own identities as Jews, and as a congregation. One woman, Pamela, married with two children, told me that the synagogue's location in a non-Jewish area brings the issue of Jewish identity to the fore, and urged me to go "up north", to see the "real Orthodox". She also, however,
pointed out that phrasing it in that manner "... did not diminish what we are; we are 'unresolved Orthodoxy', working to figure out who we are".

The role of women in Modern Orthodoxy is an especially central issue for the Watertown congregation. All of the women who participated in this study emphasized the need, both personally and collectively, for knowledge and understanding before change is instituted. Norma notes that knowledge and learning are the "starting points" of and for the synagogue. In her words, knowledge is essential, because

... if you know nothing about something, you can't just come in and say "I think it should be this way"; so, basically, everyone is trying to understand the rules - there must be a reason for doing things a certain way.

This perspective is in keeping with the decision made by the executive board to count only men in the minyan. The decision of synagogue executive, comprised of an equal number of men and women, reflects the synagogue's desire to come from an Orthodox perspective. Within this stance, however, is the desire to question and challenge Orthodoxy - and possibly institute change - from and within the Orthodox community.

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Norma is married, has two small daughters under the age of four, and is in her late twenties. Before her children were born, she was a ceramicist and was working on a master's degree in art therapy. She plans to continue with her career when her children are older. Her home is kosher, and both she and her husband Samuel, over the course of their marriage of approximately five years, have become increasingly observant. She describes herself growing up having a strong "cultural" Jewish background. She and her family attended Sabbath services regularly at a Conservative synagogue in Toronto, but adds, "We always drove there". She has lived in Israel when her father - a historian - was on sabbatical, and speaks and reads Hebrew. Of her childhood, she says:

I felt very Jewish. But on the other hand, when it comes to religion, even though I had a bat mitzvah, I didn't know; I wasn't taught kosher - the laws of kashrut - you know, and the laws of the Sabbath . . . like basically the logistics of being Jewish! You know, like what it means to observe.

Women's involvement in Judaism is important to Norma on two fronts. She herself describes her own experiences in Judaism growing up to be "very positive"; she enjoyed her aliyah on her bat mitzvah and would like to read from the
Torah and be a part of the service again. She also says women's involvement is

... something that is very important to me since I now have two girls. I want them to have positive experiences, and I want them to have experiences where they are directly involved and not just "in the kitchen" kind of thing ... .

Pamela states that her two young daughters (ages eight and three) are also one of the "key" reasons behind her own interest in religious learning. Pamela and her husband Frank made the conscious decision to become more observant in conjunction with starting a family about ten years ago.

Pamela, however, is opposed to the term "Orthodoxy"; she states there are "lots of shades of grey". She says the existing "Progressive" Jewish community in the same neighborhood perceive Watertown as very rigid, while more traditional Orthodox Jews regard Watertown as "too slack". Pamela acknowledges the different and individual levels of observance, motivation, and spiritual direction at Watertown - which are found at any shul - but at Watertown, the congregation does not have a prescribed way of life, a strong sense of a community standard, or a "sense of

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9The Progressive Jewish Community formed in the fall of 1996. Many of the congregants at the Watertown synagogue feel that it was a reactionary move.
everything". She does not describe herself as "strictly Orthodox", but expresses a desire to become more observant.

Similar to Norma, Pamela thinks that religious learning is also an important issue. A historian in her mid-thirties, Pamela notes that, for women in Orthodox Judaism, there is a distinction between religious and secular learning - that women's religious learning is usually lower than men's. According to her, Jewish women have traditionally been responsible for imparting Jewish values, and the "logistics of being Jewish" to their children in the home. Typically, the underlying reasons were not questioned. Asking "why", in Pamela's viewpoint, is precisely what makes Judaism such a "rich tradition".

Susannah, a single woman in her mid to late thirties, describes herself as a secular Jew, who believes in God, but is "trying to sort through all the layers of personal subjection, cultural, social and historical distortions".

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10 At Watertown, Pamela says this disparity is not clearly noticeable: "The men don't know it either". Everyone, men and women together, is in the process of learning.

11 The term "distortion" came up in one of the lecture sessions on women's role in Judaism. The course instructor titled the series "Women in Judaism: the Cover Up". The term was used to describe how women's roles in Jewish history have been affected by socio-cultural factors, rather than a deliberate, premeditated, theological effort to exclude women. One man took offense to the use of "distortion",

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Susannah is also the sister of Samuel, and is very close to him and Norma, and their children. For Susannah, learning and acquiring an understanding of the concepts that lie behind observance are the key points in her faith: "... I really do believe I need to understand, and then the 'doing' comes naturally, as part of the understanding".

Susannah, a practicing psychotherapist, comes from a secular environment and up-bringing, although she says her parents were spiritual. She has been trying to find her own "niche" in Judaism. She hopes that in the course of her learning she will become observant.

I want the synagogue to remain Orthodox, because I think Orthodoxy, from my point of view, is the most grounded in history ... I mean in terms of struggling with "why" ... 

According to Susannah, women's ability and desire to learn has always been a matter of personal choice, as opposed to the obligation placed on men. She personally has never encountered any barriers to religious learning, noting instead it was

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saying that Torah had always had differing interpretations; even the Sages and the Rabbis didn't agree. Interestingly, that was the first and last time he participated in this lecture series.
... just a kind of historical, sociological observation. I think it's more of an attitude thing, a personal or community attitude, rather than an act of life. Whether the community encourages women, or within the family, or caregivers, parents encouraging girls - their daughters or whatever, to study, then they will.

Susannah hopes that women's issues will be active and dynamic within the Watertown synagogue. She hopes women's issues will continually challenge them, asking "Why are we doing this? Should it be this way? Should it be another way?" Learning is a priority for her, and by learning more about women's roles and obligations in Orthodoxy, she hopes to be able to influence the system from within. Susannah, like Pamela, is also a part of the decision-making process. Along with Pamela, Susannah is a member of the Programming Committee, and is responsible for lectures, community functions, newsletters and so forth. Susannah is also becoming increasingly central to the decision-making committee.

Religious learning, then, is an important component of the Watertown synagogue and community centre. Religious education for women is openly supported and encouraged, by individuals and families, the synagogue and community centre itself - through lecture series on women and Judaism, among others - and by women's participation in the decision-making
and executive functions. Women's roles and obligations in Orthodoxy, however, are a hotly debated topic, and may prove to be controversial and complicated for the Watertown synagogue.

One of the most often discussed topics was the issue of Watertown's "uniqueness". In one sense, the most obvious reason for this lies in reference to the rest of the Jewish communities in Toronto. There are few synagogues in the downtown core of the city, and very few of those are Orthodox. In fact, the Watertown synagogue, located in the Greek section of Toronto with a relatively small population of Modern Orthodox Jews, is usually required to "confirm" - through telephoning and networking - participants in the minyan for the Sabbath. Kosher foods are also more difficult to acquire in this neighbourhood, although a number of large supermarkets have a limited selection.

Many members of the congregation also do not live within the Watertown area. Members either drive cars or take transit to attend services. Driving or using money on the Sabbath is prohibited in Orthodoxy, as they represent "work" and secularity. This illustrates the tolerance towards differing levels of observance, and commitment to observance, practiced by the synagogue and the congregation.
One member, Pamela, notes that the synagogue location is sometimes a determent to observing the Sabbath. She and her family attempt to walk to services as often as possible, although this is complicated by the young ages of her daughters, and the weather. On one occasion, the entire family had walked to services, and her eldest daughter became ill suddenly. In order to make her daughter more comfortable, Pamela was given a ride home by one of the other members who had taken her car to the synagogue.

The members of the Watertown Jewish Community have always been the first to say they are unique. In addition to their professing a great interest in my research, I have been urged many times to seek out other "normal" Orthodox synagogues. Frank often queried with an interested grin how they "shored up" in comparison. Michael, who acted as the synagogue hazzan 12, remarked on a few different occasions that Watertown was kind of the "flower child" of Modern Orthodox synagogues in Toronto. He also remarked that I

12Michael doesn't describe himself as Orthodox, even though he was brought up in an observant family and continues to be observant. However, he adds that other people view him as such. Michael decided in March of 1997 to move "up north" to the Jewish neighbourhood in order to have more direct access to an observant lifestyle. He visits Watertown occasionally.
probably wouldn't see any other congregations singing the Can-Can and clapping wildly.

According to Samuel and Michael, the difference between the Watertown congregation and others is a version of the "Spirit of the Law", as opposed to the "Letter of the Law" argument. Samuel stated that more knowledgeable people were more lenient in terms of following the Law; it was those who had less knowledge that were not as tolerant, as they usually erred on the side of caution. Since the congregation is devoted to religious learning, and many of those who attend regularly have differing levels of observance, the focus of the service, the synagogue, and the community centre is on the "Spirit of the Law". Michael, who used the term "flower children", replied: "The ritual is pretty typical, it's the people that make it unique". Samuel stated that

. . . the siddur (prayer book) we use - the Artscroll - is pretty standard. So the ritual we do is also Orthodox. What makes us different is attitude.

Questions and discussion are always encouraged, even during the formal service, in between prayers. Children are welcomed, and play in all areas of the synagogue. The use of the huppah symbolizes the synagogue's desire to be inclusive regardless of degrees of observance and gender. In order to
make a comparison between Watertown and other Modern Orthodox synagogues, I took the instance of the huppah performed on a weekly basis to three Modern Orthodox rabbis\(^\text{13}\) in Toronto, along with the issue of women giving a d'var Torah.

The rabbi of a large Orthodox synagogue noted that having a huppah every Sabbath was "out of the realm of Orthodoxy"; a communal aliya happens only once a year to celebrate the holiday of Simhat Torah. A second view, held by the rabbi of Modern Orthodox synagogue regarded the weekly communal aliya as "extraordinary", although not in a negative sense. He knows of no other synagogue in Ontario, or even Canada, that practises it. With this exception, he regards Watertown as a "fairly normal" in terms of Modern Orthodoxy.

A similar view was held by the rabbi of another large Modern Orthodox synagogue; a weekly huppah was uncommon for other congregations. When I noted that for Watertown, the use of the huppah symbolizes a desire to be inclusive of all of its members, regardless of gender and level of

\(^{13}\text{My conversations with these men are based on my limited knowledge of Jewish ritual, and my explanations and descriptions of these rituals at Watertown may be subject to interpretation.}\)
observance, the third rabbi suggested that the location of
the synagogue might also be a factor in the desire to be
inclusive and welcoming to all. First, members may be more
tolerant of the dress code for both men and women in order
to encourage attendance; and second, on a number of
occasions someone from the shul has had to "recruit" one or
two of the local Jewish business owners in order to complete
the minyan. Indeed, at Watertown, shouts of joy and joking
comments about the tenth man getting a complimentary t-shirt
are frequent.

The second issue addresses women's involvement in the
formal service, in the form of the d'var Torah. Women at
Watertown give a commentary to the entire assembled
congregation of both men and women. I personally witnessed
only one of these given by a woman - Norma - although some
women have done so in the past and express interest in
continuing to do so. The rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue
views women giving (or being able to give) a d'var Torah
during the service to a mixed congregation as "very, very
modern". In his words, he would not call the Watertown
congregation "Orthodox"; they are more like "Traditional" or
"Conservative".
The second rabbi agreed that a woman giving the d'var Torah is not usual or customary for a Modern Orthodox synagogue, due to the issues of female modesty that arise in addressing a mixed congregation. He did state, however, that the position on this issue can vary from synagogue to synagogue.

The third rabbi similarly noted that this was uncommon for most congregations in a Modern Orthodox context. Although the rabbi of the Orthodox synagogue said he would not label the Watertown congregation Orthodox - not even Modern Orthodox - he did stress that such labels are contextual, hard to define, and contain lots of variation. It is difficult to infer what the reception of the Watertown community is at this time, only since it has only been officially established since June of 1996. In fact, two of the rabbis I spoke with had no prior knowledge of the Watertown community. The other did have prior knowledge of Watertown, as his synagogue had donated prayer benches and prayer books to the new community. This suggests that Watertown, as a Modern Orthodox synagogue, while it may be unique and creative, is not unacceptable to the majority of the Modern Orthodox population in Toronto.
Samuel noted that as a community, Watertown is trying to focus on the "Spirit of the Law," encouraging members to feel included and involved. Feelings of inclusion and involvement, especially in terms of women, are in conflict with the "Letter of the Law" in a Modern Orthodox synagogue. Jewish scholars have debated for years over whether women's prayer obligations enable them to be counted in a minyan or included in any formal liturgical roles (Hauptman 1993; Wolowelsky 1995; Ross 1993). Simcha Fishbane, writing about the emancipation of women in the nineteenth century, notes the problem that challenged

... the halakhically observant community was whether the values espoused by modernity ... [are] ... to be incorporated into halakhic Judaism (1993: 492).

The issue is the same, when the challenges facing Orthodoxy come from the feminist ideals of equal access and participation. The following statement from Fishbane remains relevant in the late twentieth century:

The issue ... [is] ... whether the boundaries between the Orthodox community and the rest of society ... [are] ... to be demarcated more sharply, with a demand for even greater attention to traditional behavior, or whether it was possible to consider social and religious modification in view of a changing reality (1993: 492-93).
Watertown is innovative in its use of the huppah, and women giving a d'var Torah to a mixed congregation, as methods of inclusiveness. Pamela's earlier comment about Watertown being an "unresolved Orthodox" community is particularly salient to this discussion. She acknowledges that while all religious communities experience differing degrees of observance and commitment, Watertown is unique in that it does not have a prescribed way of life for the community. The synagogue was established as Modern Orthodox, which establishes a guiding framework, and many of the congregants, though not all, are moving towards a greater degree of observance. A significant number of the regular congregants also have secular Jewish up-bringings, and are currently in different stages along the spiritual and religious path, and are in the process of learning how to be Orthodox and observant simultaneously.

Many members have expressed the desire to be a larger part of an ancient tradition, to be grounded in something more meaningful than the secular "rat-race", and to pass stable and fulfilling values on to their children. Again, they do so currently without a clearly defined socio-moral code of beliefs and practices. In this sense, the
foundations of the Watertown synagogue are oriented towards the future, rather than the past.

The lines between the secular and the religious worlds are not clearly indicated at Watertown. The secular world is not perceived as threatening to members' own individual lives, but there are concerns over the survival of the Jewish tradition in a global context. Discussion of career-related activities, interests, and concerns on the Sabbath are common. The concern is not so much of how to demarcate the secular and the religious, but rather, how to integrate the two effectively. One woman notes that it is harder to be observant if one partner is not at home. As she and her husband have demanding careers, having one partner at home - she does not specify which one - is easier, as there is less "diverted energy" in the household. She notes that when following a "secular rhythm", the end of the work week is typically marked by Friday afternoon. When following a "religious rhythm", Friday afternoon and evening also mark the beginning of Sabbath. She adds that preparation for the

14 The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday, and ends with the appearance of the first three stars in the sky on Saturday. In the winter months, the overlap between the "secular" and "religious" becomes even more apparent. The sun may set as early as 4:40 PM, signalling simultaneously the beginning of the Sabbath and the end of the secular week.
Sabbath requires a great deal of work and energy, and thus is made more difficult when both partners are working simultaneously.

The community of Watertown is not "typically" Modern Orthodox. The members of Watertown are uncertain on issues of religious belief, practice, and observance, and stress tolerance towards all members. While some have assumed the label of "returnees" to Orthodoxy, the term implies solidarity where there may, in fact, be very little. Orthodoxy relies on continuity with the perception of a "traditional" and "authentic" past. The congregation of Watertown is in fact creating or recreating the Orthodox Jewish tradition. In this sense, Watertown can be defined as "post-modernist"; they are choosing specific elements, such as inclusivity for all members, and seemingly ignoring established rules and traditions that exclude certain members.

The desire for inclusiveness is particularly significant in light of the intense debates surrounding women's roles and responsibilities in Orthodox Judaism. The following chapter will explore and discuss how some of the

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15 The invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), authority, and power will be developed further in chapter four, "Gender, Power, and Negotiation".
women of Watertown regard their role as women in Modern Orthodoxy, and the impact of feminist ideals upon their religious and secular lives.
CHAPTER FOUR
GENDER, POWER, AND NEGOTIATION: RELIGION AS PRAXIS

Feminism versus Orthodoxy

Making sense out of the two seemingly divergent approaches of feminism and Orthodoxy is an issue that concerns Modern Orthodox Jewish women, and those who seek to become more observant. It is a common conception among Jewish scholars and lay people alike that the two are indeed incompatible. It is felt that feminism - defined loosely as equality of access, participation, and opportunity - is incompatible with Orthodoxy's essentialist understanding of women's nature as rooted in biology. Feminism has also been deeply criticized for its attacks on and rejection of the "... basic structures and life values that Judaism has contributed to human society" (Greenburg 1981: 6).

In traditional Judaism, feminist criticism and analysis focuses on women's exclusion from formal, public ritual - being called to the Torah, and exclusion from the minyan - and women having fewer prayer responsibilities than men (Greenburg 1981; Plaskow 1991). Traditional Judaism exempts women from religious study,
... just as it exempts them from a range of other "positive" commandments (that is, commandments that require action, rather than abstention) that must be performed at specific times (El-Or 1994: 66).

In terms of the Modern Orthodox stance on women, sociologist Lynn Davidman writes that it incorporates and accommodates the pluralism and structural differentiation of the larger society (1991: 38). Women are considered equals in political, economic, and social spheres, but this equality is not allowed to penetrate into the sphere of religious practice (Greenburg 1981: 42). Debra Kaufman, in her study of newly Orthodox Jewish women in the United States, notes many women have no doubt they are 
theologically (or spiritually) equal to men. The ba'alenteshuvah in her research share the "official" beliefs of Orthodoxy, that for the sake of the preservation of Orthodox Jewish life, the community is fundamental. For them,

... female activities and systems of meaning are as vital to Orthodox Judaism as are men's. They do not see their sphere as inferior, but rather as a place where... they are free to create their own forms of personal, social, intellectual, and at times, political relationships (Kaufman 1991: 113).

1According to Tamar El-Or: "The sages of the Talmud determined that women were exempt from these commandments because they must be free to see to the needs of other family members" (1994: 85).
Kaufman also notes, however, that the newly Orthodox women in her study did not "... directly challenge the sociological and legal sources of gender inequality" (1991: 160).

It is no small wonder, then, that feminism is perceived as incompatible with (and even destructive to) Orthodoxy. The changes associated with feminism range from altering the face and practice of Judaism, to changing the very structure.

At the onset of my research in May of 1996, I attended a conference on women and spiritual growth. The first speaker, a sociologist of religion, dealt with the issue of women's exclusion. She talked of the tension between Traditional and Orthodox Judaism and feminism, and the private and public division between men and women in those streams of Judaism. She argued that the term "Jew" was an engendered identity, grounded in public, male definitions of spirituality. In short, feminism and Orthodoxy were presented as adversarial perspectives.

The following speaker, Sheryl, a criminal lawyer practising in Toronto, took an opposing viewpoint. Her opening statement was memorable:
I am an Orthodox Jewish feminist. And we need to get rid of a lot of the anger and aggression we have towards Traditional and Orthodox Judaism!

Sheryl, who later participated in this study, went on to add that the perspectives from academics and those from "real life" need to be re-considered. Women have always been active and learned throughout Jewish history. The majority of women's involvement has, however, been largely undocumented. She added that feminism is not a movement away from Orthodoxy and tradition, but rather there is already a long tradition of feminism itself in Traditional and Orthodox Judaism. Susannah Heschel echoes this point. Jewish women have unique histories and experiences, and it is these histories and experiences that must be incorporated and recognized within Jewish religious life. Heschel posits that "equalizing" women's and men's roles would prove to be "... an erasure of Jewish women's lives" (1983a: xvi). The combination of women's marginality and centrality reflects "... an understanding of Judaism that no man can have" (1983a: xxiv).

Judith Plaskow writes that allowing feminism and Orthodoxy to be defined in oppositional ways removes from Jewish women the power, as Jews, to shape what Judaism is,
and what it becomes (1991: xii). For the women who participated in this research, feminism and Orthodoxy are not mutually exclusive world views. These particular women may not be representative of all Jewish women, but the amount of popular and scholarly literature on women’s roles, and the interest with which the issue is discussed at individual synagogues, conferences, forums, and the like in Toronto, does indicate that there is a very real and pervasive interest in women’s issues in every stream of Judaism. The ways in which feminism and Orthodoxy interact and hold meaning for Jewish women are necessarily dependent on the perception of feminism, its meaning and its goals - both individually and as a larger movement - and how it is realized in everyday life. The conceptualization of Modern Orthodoxy must also be addressed; what does it mean as a religious, spiritual, and lived tradition for Modern Orthodox Jewish women? The Modern Orthodox women who participated in this study are all concerned with the interaction between feminism and Orthodoxy, in particular the importance of community, relationship, and involvement.
Religion as Praxis

The social aspects of religion, such as ritual, community, and "living it" (in other words, praxis\(^2\)), are all current foci of anthropology. Nevertheless, theology and scriptural elements remain important aspects of study, although not in a direct manner. Theology becomes primary when it is realized within the religious lives of individuals, or religious praxis. Until the last two decades, there was a paucity of evidence concerning the religious lives of women (Sered 1994; Greenwood 1996; Caplan 1988).

The "social" elements of Orthodox Judaism, more so than the theological, were emphasized by the women who took part in this study. For example, Susannah, who made the commitment to an Orthodox and observant lifestyle over the course of this study, feels that a strong community spirit is an important and meaningful component of the Watertown synagogue. For her, the communal aliyyah fosters a sense of belonging.

\(^2\)Praxis, is used here to signify the "everyday", social aspects of religion. In particular, it signifies the social interaction and personal relationships of Orthodox women and men, with each other, and with others. Religion as praxis and "religion as relationship" will be used interchangeably in the course of this research.
... it's symbolic of saying we're here to be within "the spirit". You know, I can't call a woman up to the Torah, but that doesn't mean as a community we can't receive the same type of blessing.

A sense of community is also experienced by Eileen, a married, twenty-seven-year-old nursing administrator. Eileen, who comes from an Orthodox family, currently lives and worships within a Modern Orthodox community in Toronto. She talks of the "bond" she sees and experiences:

There's a very strong bond. And this is sort of where I see feminism - the part of it that I like. It's almost a feminist view, of a nurturing and caring family, where the community takes on a lot of "female" attributes, of nurturing and caring for a family [that is struggling]. And it really is the community as a whole; it's not the women of the community . . . it's really a community effort, where the men take on - as well as the women - whether it be helping financially, or inviting them over to your house for lunch or dinner . . . or playing ball with them or anything like that.

Norma, similarly to her sister-in-law Susannah, finds a sense of connectedness by drawing on her past experiences growing up in an Egalitarian synagogue, and applying them to how she lives currently as an Orthodox woman.

In the Jewish community she grew up in, Norma notes that she knew the synagogue rabbi only as someone who leads the service, not as a religious guide, or someone who interprets the laws of the Torah. Currently at Watertown,
she has a personal desire to study Torah and offer her own interpretations. By doing so, she achieves a sense of belonging and connection with the community, and the service. Norma also notes that this stance has not been adopted by her alone. She brings up the example of the d'var Torah.

... at our other location, we would take turns; the women would do it, the men would do it, the women would do it. So that was one way of actually involving ... some women expressed - and some men too - the desire to be more involved in the service.

A sense of connection and belonging, then, with other individuals, the community, and Orthodox Judaism, is important to the religious lives of these women. The emphasis on the "social" elements, however, is also tied to the theological. The theological and the social are intertwined. This interplay enables a sense of awareness of how the theological is active and realized within their religious and everyday lives.

The "theological" and the "social" become fused for Susannah on the very issue of observance. Observance is dependent upon awareness and conscious decision. She believes it to be a "life change" for her. Susannah told me the story of her decision to become vegetarian, and the
corresponding behavioural changes she made, as a metaphor for observance. She made the decision only when she felt she was ready for the commitment. "So if once in a while I have chicken, it just doesn't 'jog'. It doesn't feel right".

The awareness of the interaction between the "theological" and the "social" became even more pronounced when she came to observe the Sabbath.

I started to get it's the idea of a cessation of creation. You know, the idea of six days? God Created. On the seventh day, He stopped. So it's not like He rested and "Oh, I'll read the newspaper today" . . . It's almost like the idea of the responsibility related to us . . . And there's an obligation for me to stop and say "I've got that ability [to create]; what am I doing with it?" And if it's on the Sabbath day, you've got to stop . . . You let nature take its own course on that Seventh day.

Susannah feels strongly that observance is a complex undertaking. It involves more than acting out prescribed behaviours; the capacity to judge is a key factor. This, combined with an understanding of the rules and behaviours, and what is happening in the surrounding environment, is a multi-faceted view of observance.

An awareness of the "theological" acting within the "social" is clear also for Sheryl with the issue of the minyan. A single criminal lawyer in her early forties, Sheryl was born and raised within a Modern Orthodox family.
As a child, she talks of the synagogue being a very comfortable and familiar place. In her words, "It was the place where 'Daddy' worked". The daughter of an Orthodox rabbi, Sheryl explains that she has always regarded a minyan as ten men. On an experiential level, she states she has no difficulties with the minyan being male. When saying kaddish (prayers for the dead) for her parents, she felt that every congregation and minyan had been accommodating of her presence and needs. Intellectually, however, she states that it is difficult to justify the derivation of the male minyan. She finds it "bizarre", and

... the business of the minyan being male is hard for me. But not, I think, changeable. And I am not prepared to move to another part of Judaism where the issue of minyan is not an issue. Because there is so much else in Orthodoxy, and holds importance and significance for me . . . I think either you accept it or you don't. You don't choose what particular pieces you like. I think that if I am going to take all the wonderful things that I find in Orthodoxy, I have to be prepared to grapple with the stuff that is intellectually disturbing.

Theologically, the minyan is ten men. In order for the theological and the social to coincide, then, the minyan must remain male for Sheryl.

Religion as praxis is a fundamental element of spiritual and social experience for these women in different
stages of observance. Religion as praxis necessarily involves an incorporation of the theological and the more "mundane" experiences of the everyday. Feminist analysis in Judaism has questioned whether or not such definitions of spirituality are centred exclusively in formal, male ways (Weissler 1995: 39). The narratives explored here suggest that spirituality is expressed in a variety of manners. Lynn Davidman, in her study of women "returning" to Orthodoxy in the United States, reiterated this point. Many women talked about "... powerful feelings of belonging and of being part of an ongoing community..." (1991: 103), more so than God and theological concerns.

The Sacred and The Profane

The occurrence of the "theological" within the "social" raises a number of salient points. By seeing a correspondence between the theological/social dichotomy with that of the sacred/profane respectively, Victoria Lee Erikson is led to question how the classification of "profane" affects those so labelled.

In one sense, the answer is obvious. Theoretically, anthropology and the other human sciences have traditionally focused on the "sacred" half of the dichotomy in the study
of religion (Weber 1963; Durkheim 1965; Robertson Smith 1969). Susan Starr Sered asks if, by so doing, major segments of human religious experience have been glossed over - or even rendered invisible - to researchers (1988). In Judaism, there is some speculation that the conceptualization, and indeed the location, of the "sacred" is in part due to the influence of Christianity. Cynthia Ozick writes that it is due to this influence,

... we are told, that the synagogue has become central - whereas it is, in fact, not at all central, and never was: the true matrix of Jewish life is in the family and the home (1983: 127).

Even though anthropological methods are suited to the study of social elements, anthropology has also been predisposed to study these elements as they occur in a sacred location, such as the temple, mosque, church, or synagogue.

In another sense, the dichotomization of the sacred and the profane is, in fact, an idealized one. "Sacred" and "profane" are presented as distinctive, separate elements, or as essentialized categories. "Returning" to Orthodoxy - a paradoxical concept, considering returnees are primarily representative of those with secular or non-religious backgrounds - is a way of reinstating the unity of the
religious and the secular. For some members of Watertown, it is a way of achieving balance between the two. Brandon notes that observing the Sabbath is a welcome release or "break" from the pressures of the secular world.

For Samuel, the Sabbath is a time specifically set aside for "... husbands and wives". His work in the film industry is often time-consuming, and requires that he spend significant periods travelling. The Sabbath is a time to focus on his wife and children.

During one of our interviews, I was discussing with Pamela how the sacred/profane dichotomy factored into my research, and women's roles in religion. She responded that such a dichotomy did not even begin to address her life, as Judaism is first and foremost a "lived tradition"; it comes from the home. She added, "You don't have to pick up a siddur (prayerbook) to be observant". As Pamela's statement implies, the sacred/profane dichotomy also proves to be inaccurate. Orthodox Jewish women are excluded from much of the formal and public religious domains,

... yet experience a well-developed religious life that is intrinsically and often indistinguishably intertwined with their 'profane', day-to-day, female activities (Sered 1988: 129).
The occurrence of the "theological" within the "social", and the "sacred" within the "profane", establishes that spirituality is not consigned to a particular sphere or location. Spirituality is intertwined with the everyday and the sacred simultaneously. In her study of women-dominated religions in different cultural contexts, Sered notes that spirituality is a process of continuity, rather than transition from place to place. Devotees in women's religions learn to

... sacralize profane experience, to enhance the quality of their current lives, to comprehend the supernatural already present within the natural world, and to invite the divine into their lives or even into their bodies (Sered 1994: 145).

The sacred and the profane are both are categories that are "set apart", surrounded by rules, prohibitions, and demarcations (Douglas 1966: 22). In this sense, the two spheres exhibit more similarity than difference. According to Douglas, both the sacred and the profane have access to the divine, and represent potential danger. Power, therefore, is an intrinsic element of those things classified as sacred and profane (Douglas 1966: 94).

The categories of the sacred and the profane are not precisely correspondent with the demarcations between the
theological and the social. Mary Douglas' work on the sacred/profane dichotomy was based primarily upon the Jewish dietary laws in the Old Testament. Her ideas of purity and pollution were dependant upon their "fit" with categorical concepts. The difficulty with concepts of purity and pollution, sacred and profane, is that, to a great degree, they remain static concepts. As Sheryl describes it, Judaism is characterized by the dialectic of religious law, and socio-historical assumptions. A case in point is women's religious learning. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the socio-historical underpinnings changed, and the contexts to which halakhic theory is applied had also changed. Women were thus in a social, economic, and cultural position to learn, both secularly and religiously.

The categories of the theological and the social have the potential to incorporate the sociological assumptions.

\[^3\]The sociological side of the argument concerns the transmission of Jewish values. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, most Jewish women received an "experiential" education in the home. They grew up in observant households, and experienced what it meant to be Jewish on a daily basis. As the Reform and Conservative movements expanded in the nineteenth century, it was no longer certain whether children could, as Sheryl phrased it, "... absorb Jewish values from their homes. And so it becomes more important to find . . . another source to inculcate Jewish values in both boys and girls."
that underpin Jewish law. Flexibility is inherent in this relationship. Religious law, theoretically, does not change, but interpretations over the nature of social reality frequently do. The categories of the sacred and the profane are firmly rooted at a theological level, and have no explicit or specific correspondence to the sociological realm.

The sacred and profane, viewed as categorizations unto themselves, do not readily reflect the religious and social praxis of Modern Orthodox men and women. Debra Kaufman, drawing from Liebman (1979), sheds light on this issue. Kaufman maintains that the term "holy" does indeed mean "set apart", but it is not indicative of the split between the sacred and the profane; rather, it is between the sacred and the secular (Kaufman 1991: 114). Pamela noted earlier that the designation "profane" does not characterize her religious and spiritual lives. It is highly unlikely that the sole application of the term "secular" would do so as well.

If viewed as specific elements of the theological and the social, however, the sacred/profane split can represent the dialectical tension between separation and attachment. Elements of the "profane" can include child care,
involvement and relationships with individuals and community, home-centred activities and responsibilities, and those activities that can be located outside of the synagogue. In one sense, Orthodox women experience sacred and profane elements as integrated and intertwined. Feelings of connection, nurturance, and community are predominant in the lives of Sheryl, Eileen, Norma, Pamela, and Susannah. An example of an overlap is in keeping the laws of kashrut, and maintaining an observant and kosher home. In another sense, these women do perceive themselves as "set apart", in a positive, women-centred manner. Note Eileen's perception of women not participating in formal services because it is not necessary; women are spiritually fulfilled in other ways. The paradox of attachment and separation, then, operates in theological and social spheres simultaneously.

The Interaction of Feminism and Orthodoxy

Relationship, connection, and experience are also prominent features in current feminist theory. Feminist critiques have been levelled against the existing patriarchal structures of the Western world religions of

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This brief list is by no means exhaustive, but it does represent the experiences of the women in this study.
Islam, Judaism, and Christianity for largely excluding the experiences of women (Sered 1994; Greenwood 1996; Caplan 1988), and the social sciences for excluding women in their analyses (Sered 1988; 1994; Erikson 1992). The study of religion is especially important to feminist scholarship, as religion is the origin of our deep-seated personal and societal values, our passions and our hopes, and our "reasons for being" (Sered 1994: 4).

Emphasizing women's experiences (Kaufman 1991; Plaskow 1983, 1991; Sered 1988, 1991, 1994, Caplan 1988), feminist theory maintains that even though women are excluded from ecclesiastic hierarchies, they nevertheless have active religious lives. Experience can also become the basis for both political and theoretical practice (Greenwood 1996: 180). The study of women's religious lives as it is characterized here by the conceptual framework of "religion as relationship", establishes a "common ground" for feminism and Orthodoxy.

The relational view of religion is fundamental in the narratives of the Modern Orthodox women recounted here. As Debra Kaufman notes, Orthodox Jewish women
... establish nurturing, caring, and interconnected relationships as the primary basis for their everyday lives and ... for the community at large (1991: 126).

For Pamela, feminism and Orthodoxy are not mutually exclusive terms, world views, and/or lifestyles. Connection and interpersonal relationships are factors that are common to both movements. Although Pamela does not describe herself as "strictly Orthodox", her level of comfort with Orthodoxy extends from the services to the intensity of the intellectual involvement. She related to me that she had participated in a Reform retreat for women two years ago. The retreat involved classes and discussion groups, and was attended by a large number of "successful, professional women". In comparison with her experiences in Orthodox streams, she felt that the "... level of intellectual and personal commitment just wasn't the same". The level of discussion, especially in terms of spirituality, was "superficial and unsatisfying". She finds "more of a charge" with study and discussion groups that are organized by Orthodox women. She has studied Torah in Orthodox groups, both mixed and women's groups, and finds Orthodox study experiences to be very personal and satisfying. Above all, she has felt very "included" in Orthodox study groups.
Pamela also identifies herself as a feminist. She recounts that she has been involved with feminist movements in the past, but admits her involvement has taken a back-seat to her children. She does not see a break with the feminist values that she practised in the late 1970s. Rather, she feels that a change has occurred in the expression of these values. Academic theory, she says, bores her. "I find gender theory tedious, although I can't really say why". She adds that her biggest concern is to locate feminism on a pragmatic level. She remains connected to feminist organizations in Toronto through friends that are directly involved. This on-going connection illustrates her feeling that it is "... important to express feminism face-to-face, in personal relationships". Pamela cites her own marriage as a case in point. On one level, her marriage is very equal. She and her husband both have demanding careers and alternate child-care responsibilities at home.

Eileen, on the other hand, hesitated when asked if she identified with a "feminist" label. She does, however, identify with what she perceives as "feminist" values:

That's a very tough thing ... on the one hand, I think I hold certain feminist beliefs; on the other hand, to say that I completely identify with the movement, I don't necessarily think so.
To varying degrees, these narratives show identification with what are perceived as "feminist" qualities and values of nurturance, interpersonal relationships, and a sense of community involvement and belonging. Not all women, however, identified with feminism as a social movement. At one end of the spectrum, there is the powerful identification of Sheryl as an "Orthodox Jewish Feminist," and at the other, Susannah's difficulty with feminism's connotation as "male-bashing". Susannah states that she does identify, however, with the feminist movement concerning abuses of power.

I believe that women have rights, based on their abilities, based on their choices — they should have choices; they should have options. They shouldn't be prevented from developing to their potential because of their gender.

Whether people view her stance as a "feminist perspective" or not, she adds, is entirely up to them.

There is currently no officially sanctioned dialogue between feminism and Orthodoxy (Greenburg 1981). The views of the Modern Orthodox women discussed here illustrate, however, that feminism and Orthodoxy are currently being negotiated in the lives of Orthodox Jewish women, through a dialogue created by religion as relationship. The
negotiation is not, however, without difficulty. The differing perspectives of feminism held by each of the women here, and the direction it assumes in their lives are potentially in conflict with the traditional role of women within Orthodox Judaism. More succinctly, the women who participated in this study are divided on whether women’s traditional roles in Orthodoxy are to be considered the same as, or different from, the roles of Orthodox men.

Even though all the narratives of the women explored here emphasize “feminist qualities” of nurturance and relationship, they differ on how these values ultimately impact upon their personal conceptualizations of the role of women in Orthodoxy. Salient factors involved in this issue include individual religious backgrounds, and the period of time each woman has been actively engaged with Orthodoxy. Sheryl and Eileen have both received Orthodox educations, and have remained observant throughout their lives; Norma became observant approximately five years ago and did not have a strong religious background; Susannah, with a secular up-bringing, made the commitment to observe within the past two years; and Pamela has engaged in religious observance and education for approximately ten years. According to Sheryl and Eileen - and to an extent, Pamela - women’s roles
are different from men's, but equal in importance and value. Women's roles in Orthodox Judaism focus on connectedness and nurturance, and are considered vital components of the community and synagogue. Such values can form the backbone of a strong women's culture within a patriarchal religion (Kaufman 1991: 113-114). Susannah and Norma define women's roles - framed in terms of involvement and participation - as similar to men's roles. In their view, women should have the opportunity to assume the same religious and spiritual obligations and responsibilities as men in the public life of the synagogue (Plaskow 1991: xvi).

While women's issues in Orthodoxy are central to the women in this research, different backgrounds in observance and education may be responsible for differing degrees of acceptance of women's traditional roles, and the authority of the Orthodox tradition. Each of these women are also at different stages in the integration of their religious, spiritual, and secular lives. As Eileen noted earlier, she does not struggle with women's exclusion from the public life of the synagogue - it was something she learned and understood as a child. Norma, on the other hand, had an aliyah at her bat mitzvah. She is currently in the process of learning and understanding why women are not allowed an
aliyah in Orthodoxy. These factors in turn can impact upon whether Orthodoxy is perceived as having within it a long history of feminism that needs to be reclaimed, or whether Orthodox women must take a greater role in shaping and creating a tradition where women have historically played a secondary, under-valued role (Plaskow 1991: xvi). As religious learning is a lifelong process, the views of these women on traditional roles may change over time as their understanding deepens. These changes may also impact on the Orthodox communities and synagogues of which they are a part.

**Continuity and Change**

For the members of the Watertown congregation, the perceptions of feminism and observance held by Norma, Pamela and Susannah, create tension between the synagogue’s desire to “directly involve every member”, and to come from an Orthodox perspective. The issue of women’s participation in the formal service is a topic of frequent discussion at Watertown, and it is a topic not without differing and sometimes conflicting viewpoints. At a basic level, the issue of women’s involvement creates tension. As Sheryl phrases it, it is a tension “... between the idea of
responding to the world around you, and the idea of what you have received from your ancestors”.

Although I frequently ask questions on women's issues at Watertown, many of the members - both men and women - discuss the topic during lunch, or ask questions during the formal service. On one occasion, two men were talking about including women in the formal service and reading from the Torah. On that particular Sabbath, only seven men were present, while eight women were also attending. The local small business owner5, who had been "recruited" in the hopes of completing the minyan, made a quiet comment about how it did not seem right not to have a formal service, considering the number of educated and capable women that were present. The other man, who attends Watertown on an occasional-to-regular basis, responded equally as quietly, that it was the minhag (custom) at this shul (synagogue), and the matter was dropped. One man, James, said afterwards that even though he knew the law did not allow women to be included in the minyan, if a movement arose where women were included, he would join it.

5This man attends the Reform, or Progressive, Jewish Community in the Watertown area.
In the early part of my research, I was part of one conversation concerning the inclusion of women in the minyan. On that Sabbath, we were waiting for the last two men who, during the week, had "confirmed" their presence for the minyan. I was about to ask Brandon, a single male member of the congregation, if he was ever tempted to include a woman in the minyan, rather than face the possibility of not being able to hold a formal service and remove the Torah from the Ark of the Covenant. Brandon immediately guessed my intentions and responded he had never even considered the possibility. He stated simply: "It's against the law".

Another example concerns Andrew, who has refused to take an aliya since the synagogue's formal inception in June of 1996. He does so as an act of protest; he feels that women should be able to read from the Torah as well as men. As Watertown is located in a predominantly non-Jewish, non-Orthodox area, and as many of the participants in the minyan must be confirmed on a weekly basis, his refusal has been highly visible and thought-provoking.

Jerry, an occasional participant, simply cannot understand women's desire to become more observant in an Orthodox synagogue. He feels the exclusion of women in the formal and public service is oppressive, highly patriarchal,
and absolutely unnecessary. He wishes the women at Watertown
would openly rebel and demand to take part in the minyan and
Torah reading.

The discussion of the roles of women, especially in the
context of the synagogue’s Orthodox perspective combined
with a position of direct involvement, allows for
speculation on Watertown’s “position” within one of the
varieties of Judaism in Toronto. As noted previously, one
Orthodox rabbi speculated that, based on Watertown’s use of
the weekly huppah, and women giving d’var Torah to a mixed
congregation, they are not Orthodox, or even Modern
Orthodox. He concluded by saying that it is their way of
“... having their cake, and eating it too”.

One of the reasons for Watertown’s unique and sometimes
contradictory approach to Modern Orthodoxy and observance
lies in the personal life histories and backgrounds of the
members. With the exception of Michael (the hazzan), the
majority of the congregation have had secular or non-
religious backgrounds. Currently, they are in the process of
discovering the rules, customs, and underlying motivations
of Orthodox Judaism. Brandon has stated that he attends
Watertown on a regular basis because he finds the
opportunity to be directly involved with the Torah reading.
to be a thrilling experience. He said it is much more fulfilling and spiritually satisfying, in contrast with taking a passive role when he worshipped in larger synagogues. He states, however, that he has become increasingly concerned with integrating women's equality in the secular world into the religious domain. On the occasions when a minyan has not been present, he now finds himself wondering why women cannot participate⁶.

In terms of the women of Watertown themselves, Susannah, Norma, and Pamela have differing opinions on the nature of women's involvement. Each of these women have indicated that women's direct involvement is a personal concern, whether it be counted in the minyan, giving a d'var Torah, or having an aliyah. Each of these women have also, however, clearly expressed that furthering their religious learning, and their understanding, would be a priority before they sought any significant changes. In other words, the underlying motivations and reasons behind women's separation from the formal service need to be discovered.

⁶Brandon's previous statement concerning women's exclusion from the minyan because "It's the law" occurred during the early stages of my research. His professed indecision over women's involvement occurred approximately eight months later.
Eileen, coming from an Orthodox background, notes that she does not struggle with issues of women’s involvement in the formal service. She says people coming into Orthodoxy from a non-Orthodox background only know the “end product”.

So you don’t know often the basis for things; you just sort of know the end product. Without knowing how you got to the end product can be a frustrating thing, trying to figure out for yourself why things “are the way they are”.

Predominantly secular and non-religious backgrounds are characteristic of the members of Watertown. As they are “returnees” (ba’alot teshuvah/ba’alei teshuvah) that have never been Orthodox, the question of what they are “returning to” ultimately arises. Watertown was established so that members could participate actively and intimately with Orthodox Judaism. Members chose to establish their own synagogue, rather than join an already established community. As a result, they have greater control in choosing the direction and manner of worship the synagogue assumes, and will assume in the future. The role of women in the Watertown synagogue is a topic of immediate concern. It necessarily involves power and its negotiation between individuals and groups. Power and negotiation will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.
Orthodox women have access to power through their "traditional roles". As Chava Weissler notes, just as "... power is drawn from traditional female roles, so too is it exercised in traditional female ways ..." (1995: 34; Zerubavel and Esses 1987). Faye Ginsburg cautions that "traditional female roles" are a process of choice and negotiation between competing views of gender, rather than a static construct (1987: 541; Charles 1996). Women are active agents, but even though they may be constrained by the "disadvantaged sub-set" of social identities available to them (Charles 1996: 28), they are not bound by them (Roseneil 1996: 91).

Power, according to Foucault, exists not only at an institutional level, but also on the level of everyday life. Power is incorporated into individual bodies, their actions and their attitudes, and their everyday behaviour (Foucault 1980: 125). It is

... transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggles against it, resist the grip it has on them (Foucault 1984: 174).

In a patriarchal context such as Modern Orthodoxy, gender and power become particularly salient on three levels
through the medium of the “profane”. Elements of the profane are employed, first, as a subtle subversion of patriarchy; second, as a catalyst for change; and third, as a means of continued oppression and subordination. Power also becomes relevant on a fourth level, in the construction of tradition and meaning.

Locating sacred elements within everyday praxis enables Modern Orthodox women to recreate, reconstruct, and reinterpret women’s exclusion from the formal and public service. Preparing for the birth of her first child, Eileen holds a perspective different from Norma, Susannah, and Pamela on women's roles and women reading from the Torah. In her perspective, women assume an elevated status in the synagogue, and are not required to wear special garments or undertake special responsibilities. Eileen feels that her Orthodox upbringing and religious education provided her with an understanding of the origins of men's and women's separate, but complementary, roles. Women in Reform or Conservative traditions, she states, do not have that background. She feels comfortable with men making minyan and reading from the Torah.

I still believe in this idea that if I don't need it, why should my daughters need it? Why should my
sisters need it? Why should my mother need it? Why should . . . whoever? Just because we're moving into the future doesn't mean that I don't believe this argument holds water . . . I'm quite happy with the way things are.

Drawing upon men's and women's innate and natural characteristics and socialization processes, Eileen's perspective reveals a subtle form of subversion. Realizing the argument is controversial, Eileen believes that men and women have "different sorts of natures". Women, she says, have more of a tendency to be nurturing and caring, whereas men are more inclined to be individualistic, and less inclined to care for those who are vulnerable. She explains that men's religious obligations are "actually more like burdens". She states:

. . . there's more rules, more of an onus placed on men to attend a synagogue, to learn how to read from the Torah, to pray up front, to be actively engaged in the community efforts, and to work on behalf of the community, in order to raise and heighten their sensitivity to the community, to others around them, to sort of a caring and nurturing attitude towards others. And when you feel the community is depending on you, to be a part of that minyan, to make that minyan, you can no longer say, "I'm just going to do my own thing"; whereas with a woman, those responsibilities aren't there because we don't need them in order to feel that bond, to feel a responsibility and a sensitivity to other people in the community . . .
A similar perspective was held by Julia at the Watertown synagogue. A single mother and full-time student who attends Watertown on a regular-to-occasional basis, Julia agrees that it is not a "big deal" to get ten women together for a purpose. With men, it is "another story altogether", and men should make the minyan, because they need to.

Humour is also employed by women at the Watertown synagogue as a form of subversion. On one occasion, the formal service had not yet begun, and the men and women were sitting and talking in same-sex groups on their respective sides of the mehitzah (the partition separating men from women in Orthodox synagogues). The women’s group was animatedly discussing a newspaper clipping of an article on Jewish survival that had appeared the previous week in the Canadian Jewish News. The woman who had brought the article, Hazel, wondered if she should "cross over" on to the men’s side to share the article with them. In an instant, Susannah stood up and shouted, "Female coming through!" amidst the laughter of the women, and the confusion of the men who had not been following the discussion.

On another occasion, the "confirmed" men for the minyan were late in arriving, and the start of the service was long
overdue. Hazel walked a few steps past the mehitzah onto the men’s side, and interrupted two men discussing sports. She stated: “Far be it from me to intrude upon an intelligent conversation, but isn’t it time to start?” While it was the topic of laughter and jokes by those who overheard, Hazel’s statement was responsible for initiating the service. Hazel and Susannah in these situations made use of the informal power available to Orthodox women. Acknowledging the traditional spatial separation along gendered lines enabled Hazel and Susannah to simultaneously maintain the boundaries of the community, and yet subvert it (Ginsburg 1987: 546).

Foucault writes that “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (1990: 95). The actions of Susannah and Hazel can be seen as a form of protest within the boundaries of compliance. Everyday forms of resistance by powerless groups are often covert, informal, and concerned with immediate gains. In a patriarchal, socio-religious context such as Orthodox Judaism, men most likely control formal and overt exercises

7Women in patriarchal contexts may not have the ability to overtly state their position, to either themselves, or to others. In a sense, women are “muted” (E. Ardener 1975: 21; Eugene 1992: 97; Scott 1985)
of power. Women hold power so long as they do not overtly challenge male hierarchies. Susannah and Hazel, through a form of subversive compliance, conform to minimal standards of behaviour and deference, while simultaneously marking

... an intrusion sufficient to convey its meaning to the directors but not so egregious as to risk a confrontation (Scott 1985: 26).

Susannah’s desire to read from the Torah in an Orthodox context is also indicative of the ways in which power is invested, and contested, at an interpersonal level. She realizes that she herself may not be able to have an aliya in an Orthodox context. By continuing her religious education and becoming increasingly knowledgeable in Jewish law, Susannah realizes that she may play a role in constructing broader definitions of accepted and legitimate avenues of access and participation. In concert with the Watertown community’s own commitment to learning and

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*Susannah explained that she would not feel a sense of total affirmation if she were to have an aliya in another stream of Judaism. For her, the significance of a woman reading from the Torah in an Orthodox context indicates that "... there has been a transformation, and understanding, a learning process ..." that leads to a greater sense of affirmation and legitimization.*

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understanding, Susannah feels optimistic that her niece Zora may eventually have an *aliyah* in an Orthodox context.

The women at Watertown, as they move towards Modern Orthodoxy and observance, cannot be viewed as merely “giving in” to a tradition in which they are “subordinate”. As Homi Bhabha puts it,

Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or ‘selling out’ which people too easily understand it to be (1990: 216).

**Religion and Social Change**

Religion has been recognized as a important institution for the transmission of values, knowledge systems, and worldviews. Religion has also given meaning to these systems of life. Nancy Falk writes that religion can also be an important component of social change. Religion not only establishes stabilizing values and worldviews, but also, since it encodes, it

. . . can recode, framing prophetic new views of human possibility and releasing the enormous bursts of energy that are necessary to move peoples and polities in altered directions (1985: xv).

While the intricate relationships between religion and social change have been long documented (Haddad and Findly
1985), the role of women in such processes has often been ignored (Falk 1985; Smith 1985). Yet, it is often women who provide "... the unprecedented balance of support that determines whether a direction 'takes' "(Falk 1985: xv).

Change is negotiated at Watertown on two levels, at the level of the community, and amongst individuals.

As previously noted, the community seeks to involve its members more intimately and directly in the service, while coming from an Orthodox perspective. A regular feature of the formal service is to offer prayers and blessing for those with illness or in need. At this point in the service, individual members of the congregation, both men and women, stand up and say the name of a person in need. These names are directed to Samuel, who often acts as one of the informal leaders of the service. On one particular Sabbath, Samuel was absent and Vincent took over as an informal leader. At that time, he was also one of the few members who could read directly from the Torah and who could direct the service. A woman stood up to announce the name of a person to be blessed, and was told by Vincent to wait until the men had done so first. This was followed by a moment of


9Vincent attends Watertown only on an occasional basis. I was told he has difficulty with the familiar and informal structure of the services.
silence, from both men and women. Brandon and a number of men quickly responded, stating strongly that "At this shul, it doesn’t matter", and "We want everyone to be equal here". Vincent raised his hands in acquiescence and both men and women continued to announce names for blessing.

The negotiation of change also occurs at an individual and familial level. Frank and Pamela negotiate child-care responsibilities at the synagogue during the service. When a minyan is present, and he is not required to be immediately involved, Frank moves into the children’s playroom and Pamela attends the service.

Religion at Watertown furthers social changes in the nature of women’s involvement in Orthodox Judaism, and increases men’s involvement with child care and domestic responsibilities. Women’s roles in Orthodoxy are primarily centred on the family and the domestic sphere (Davidman 1991: 127). Women’s "profane" roles overlap with the assertion that the family unit is the core of Judaism (Greenburg 1981). As Davidman writes, ‘... the men’s involvement with child care can be understood at least partly as an unexpected consequence of the religious division of roles’ (1991: 117; Kaufman 1991).
Nancy Falk describes a number of particularly salient forms the relationship between women, social change, and religion may assume:

Women have been inspired by religion to take part working for changes in society; women have been prompted by social changes to work for changes in religion. Religion has often been an instrument of liberation for women. But religion has just as often become an instrument of women's social oppression (1985: xxi).

Feminists have argued that traditional roles, and the underlying belief system, are powerful social-control mechanisms. Women are restricted to activities that are "... subordinate in importance and power to those of men" (Kaufman 1991: 158). Casting, or re-casting, themselves in these "traditional female roles", women such as Pamela, Norma, Susannah, Sheryl, and Eileen focus on positive "women-centred" values, such as connection, relationship, and other "feminine" qualities.

While these values are held by many contemporary feminists, "... the defense of the domestic sphere and 'femininity' has served feminist as well as anti-feminist purposes" (Kaufman 1991: 160). Eileen's perspective on the nature of women's roles and women's exclusion from the formal service is a case in point. On the one hand, her
assertion that "men need those responsibilities, not women" is empowering. Such a view, in conjunction with the emphasis in Judaism on the family unit, places women's traditional roles into a prominent and important position in the structure of Orthodox Judaism. On the other hand, complying with essentialist and traditional understandings of men's and women's nature limits and constrains women's roles and potentials to the realm of the traditional only. At Watertown, a similar situation exists where the assumption of women's traditional roles centred on the family is the basis for exclusion. Norma is often unable to participate in the luncheon and ensuing conversation, as she is often caring for her two daughters, the youngest being a newborn.

Religion can be both a forum for social change as well as continued oppression. In terms of the relationship between social change and religion, women and their support, Falk posits, often are key deciding factors (1985: xv). The relationship between gender and power has been problematized by feminist analysis, and the question of what role women

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10 Kaufman notes that Orthodox communities are largely against women's prayer groups, and there exists "... the potential for blackmail and coercion of husbands against wives in granting a divorce, [and] the equivocation among Torah authorities on the use of forms of technology surrounding childbearing" (1991: 162).
assume in continued oppression and why is frequently asked (El-Or 1993: 586; Weissler 1995; Charles 1996).

As Foucault notes, power is not simply exercised over individuals. It implicates individuals in complex sets of relationships (1984: 174). The reasons why women such as Pamela, Norma, Susannah, Eileen, and Sheryl have chosen to actively participate in what may be perceived, by both outsiders and insiders, as their own "subordination", are equally complex.

Women may choose traditional and oppressive roles "... in preference to 'liberation' because of the advantages associated with it" (Charles 1996: 23). Modern Orthodoxy's adherence to the traditional sexual division of roles, while it denies women public participation in the synagogue, also clearly defines and delineates these same roles. According to Lynn Davidman, for many Orthodox women, it is "... a welcome contrast to the blurring and confusion about these roles in secular society" (1991: 126). Assumption of traditional roles ensures continuity of

1Debra Kaufman posits that many ba’alot teshuvah create a strong women’s culture within the patriarchal context of Orthodox Judaism. Such women often "... claim to have found in the very branch of Judaism most resistant to feminist challenge a strong female consciousness and a community which values what they feel is 'uniquely' theirs" (Kaufman 1991: 132).
cultural and religious norms where women’s status is recognized and respected.

Viewing the practice of religion as a form of relationship points to the conceptualization of socio-religious power as the property of a group, rather than the ability to dominate and control. Victoria Lee Erikson, drawing upon Hartsock (1983), believes that such power is often viewed by women as

(1) the glue that holds community together, (2) the means by which community is constituted and (3) the means by which immortality is obtained and death overcome (Erikson 1992: 40).

A case in point is found in the community of Watertown. Pamela, Susannah, and Norma all expressed the desire to increase women’s involvement in Modern Orthodoxy in the future. Currently, all support the synagogue’s commitment to an Orthodox perspective. Nancy Falk’s position, that women’s support often helps determine whether a movement for change succeeds (1985: xv), becomes pertinent here, as it relates to the construction of tradition and the creation of meaning.

Watertown’s use of the huppah as a means of directly involving members and women giving the d’var Torah to a
mixed congregation is in accordance with what Mary McClintock Fulkerson calls “interpretive communities” (1991: 60). Fulkerson notes that such communities create and construct meaning; meaning is not solely the product of texts or scriptures. Contextual assumptions and cultural codes are key factors in determining how readers make sense of texts, and how meaning is reproduced and socially constructed (1991: 63). As Eileen noted earlier, Orthodoxy emphasizes the values of connection, nurturance, and relationship. By so doing, Orthodox Judaism not only reinforces traditional understandings of the female role in the domestic sphere, but reinforces these values in male roles as well (Ginsburg 1987: 546). As such, both men’s and women’s roles are being negotiated at Watertown, taking the form of a continuous tradition and as a response to individual and social needs.

The Reinvention of Tradition

Watertown’s commitment to direct involvement of members can be conceptualized as a process of negotiation with the doctrines and rules of Modern Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy. Support of the huppah and women’s d’var Torah is a means for both men and women to actively engage in constructing and
reinterpreting Orthodox Judaism¹². Scripture is not perceived as an archetype for the community, but rather as an historical prototype (Fulkerson 1991: 60).

What does the term "tradition" actually mean? Does it include the old, or can it also include the new? The weekly huppah at Watertown marks a point of intersection between the real (or invented) past, and the nature of the present. Hobsbawm defines "invented tradition" as a response

... to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition¹³ (1983: 2).

The weekly huppah, then, is a point of intersection between the authority of Orthodoxy, and the current cultural and social climate emphasizing women’s direct involvement and participation. The construction of meaning that occurs

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¹²In her discussion of the tradition and ritual of Miriam’s Cup, Adelman notes that the women who participate in this ritual develop a stronger sense of their own spirituality, and as Jewish women, they are “... creating the very communities they need in order to test out their interpretations of the tradition” (1994: 153). Watertown, through the use of the weekly huppah, is also testing out their own interpretations of tradition.

¹³Grounding and legitimizing a “new” tradition in “traditional” and hence, authoritative, theological terms is also a characteristic of fundamentalist religious organizations (Davidman 1991: 32-33; Marty and Appleby 1992; 1995; Kaplan 1992).
through the huppah becomes relevant to the discussion of power, authority, and gender in a Modern Orthodox context on two particular levels.

First, the remembered past, in Judith Plaskow's words, is the foundation for a particular perception of the present, "... but the nature of the present also fosters or inhibits particular kinds of memory" (1991: 75; Boyarin 1992). At Watertown, the dialectic between the past and the present takes place at both the individual and the collective levels. Norma, for instance, recalls having an aliyah and sitting together with her parents at synagogue. In the fall of 1996, Watertown sponsored a lecture series on women and Judaism, the aim of which was to discover, or "uncover", women's role and involvement in the Torah. Individual memory recalls women's equal participation in Judaism, and in turn motivates the community to try to locate in the scriptures a "... fuller Jewish memory as the foundation for a community in which women are full participants" (Plaskow 1991: 75).

Second, feminist analysis recognizes that it is problematic to locate authority in scripture, as it denies the authority of the reader (Plaskow 1991: 19; Fulkerson 1991: 64).
When one element of a text is declared true or normative, where does authority actually lie? Do biblical texts themselves provide a sure basis for judging between their conflicting perspectives? (Plaskow 1991: 19).

The authority of the Orthodox tradition dictates officially sanctioned codes of conduct, values, and norms. Authority is largely perceived to derive from scripture, and assumes that meaning comes from texts, rather than communities. In this instance, the authority of scripture is presented as divine "truth". This, in turn,

... is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it (Foucault 1984: 74).

In the case of the huppah, Watertown has assumed the authority to interpret scripture. By doing so, they locate the power to inscribe, or enforce, authoritative codes and norms into religious and social lives on an individual and communal basis.

Watertown’s ambiguous location in the Modern Orthodox community in Toronto illustrates the conflicts inherent with conceptualizations of tradition, authority, and power. Among the three Modern Orthodox rabbis I spoke with, there is no consensus concerning Watertown’s status as a Modern Orthodox
synagogue. Watertown was regarded by two rabbis as "unusual, but Orthodox", whereas the third saw Watertown as "not Modern Orthodox at all". There is also disparity within the community of Watertown itself as to whether or not it is indeed "Orthodox".

The weekly huppah may be an avenue that furthers women's participation in the formal, public service, but it does so only to a certain extent. Adelman notes that interpretation is ultimately limited by the community's willingness to affirm it (1994: 152). In order to become Orthodox Jewish women, the women of Watertown have to accept the basic values of the system (Boyarin 1992:43), which restrict, or remove, women's participation altogether.

The weekly huppah at Watertown does expand the idea of who the bearers and creators of tradition are in Modern Orthodox Judaism. The authority to interpret scripture is located at an individual and community level. The women of Watertown - Pamela, Norma, and Susannah - are thus in a position to integrate the secular and the religious, and the modern and the traditional. The situation is similar for Eileen and Sheryl. Both incorporate successful and demanding careers into their lives as Orthodox Jewish women. Sheryl also actively participates in a number of Rosh Chodesh
groups, which explore women's study and prayer groups and changes in liturgy emphasizing the female attributes of divinity.

Feminist scholars have puzzled over the increasing appeal of Modern Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy to contemporary, middle-class, and educated women when a variety of alternatives are available (Davidman 1991: 26; Ginsburg 1987). Modern Orthodoxy is an attractive alternative to the constant change of the contemporary secular world, for both "returnees" (ba'alot teshuvah/ba'alei teshuvah) and those who have Orthodox backgrounds. Modern Orthodoxy provides clearly defined roles for men and women, invested with respect and autonomy. Such divisions, along with Judaism's emphasis on the family, often see the greater involvement of husbands and fathers in the domestic sphere (Davidman 1991:117; Ginsburg 1987). Modern Orthodox women also have access to women's traditional avenues of power (Zerubavel and Esses 1987). While such traditional forms of power may be used to continue women's "oppression" and "subordination" in Modern Orthodoxy, they may also emphasize "women-centred" values such as connectedness, relationship, and nurturance. Modern Orthodoxy offers women the opportunity to come together with a community to observe the Sabbath and
holidays, while simultaneously carrying out aspects of their lives within the secular world.
CONCLUSION: UNRESOLVED ORTHODOXY

The Watertown synagogue and community is characterized by dramatic shifts to increasingly Orthodox beliefs and practices. Corresponding shifts in personal, political, and social aspects of individual identity are also evident. Watertown mirrors similar movements seen on a global scale, including in Canada and the United States, and in many of the Western world religions. Such socio-religious movements are responses to, and consequences of, ever-increasing cultural diversity and social complexity. The issues of social change, tradition, and power are of a central concern to the Watertown congregation, and other Modern Orthodox communities in Canada and the United States. Modern Orthodoxy is paradoxically defined by a desire to actively engage in the social, economic, and political spheres of life, and to simultaneously maintain continuity with a stable and ancient tradition.

A prominent element in this ethnography of Modern Orthodox Jewish women in Toronto is the perception of religion as a form of relationship. Religion as praxis necessarily involves an incorporation of sacred with profane elements. The women involved in this research expressed their spirituality in ways that differed from the formal and
official expressions found in the synagogue. Feelings of community and belonging were commonly held by these women, and constituted a vital component of their observance and spirituality. Expressing religion as a form of relationship allows Orthodox women to move away from dichotomizations of the sacred and the profane, and to present themselves as connected to other women, men, and the community itself, rather than be defined solely as set apart and excluded.

Religion as praxis creates a potential space for dialogue between Orthodoxy and feminism. Current feminist theory emphasizes connection and relationship as “women-centred” values. Orthodox Judaism’s traditional role of women recognizes connectedness, relationship, and nurturance as valued and significant components of the Jewish synagogue and community. Women in Orthodox Judaism also have access to informal and unofficial avenues of power through “woman’s traditional roles”. These roles are not static constructs, but are constantly negotiated on an individual basis over competing views of gender. Power is located at everyday levels, and is incorporated into the bodies and behaviors of individuals.

The women involved in this study represent diverse backgrounds. Pamela, Norma, and Susannah do not have
Orthodox backgrounds, while Eileen and Sheryl were raised in Orthodox homes. Marital and employment status also differs amongst the women. Susannah and Sheryl are single, do not have children, and are involved with their respective careers in psychotherapy and criminal law. Norma and Pamela are married, and each have two young daughters. Eileen is married and expecting the birth of her first child. With the exception of Norma, who is planning on returning to her career when her children are older, all have full-time careers. Of these factors, religious learning and education is one of the more salient factors in forming views of women’s roles and women’s involvement.

There is a diversity of responses concerning the nature of women’s involvement from Pamela, Norma, Susannah, Eileen, and Sheryl, which reflects the diversity found in Jewish feminism as a larger movement in North America. Eileen feels no personal need, or reason, for women to become involved in the formal services. Sheryl, also raised within an Orthodox family, similarly does not indicate a desire for women to participate within the service. She does, however, stress women’s direct involvement and participation in women’s prayer groups and rituals, and supports women giving a d’var Torah in all-female congregations. Susannah and Norma have
indicated they want to see women participate directly in the formal, mixed services in the synagogue, through having an aliyah and making the minyan. Pamela has stressed women’s involvement and participation in Orthodox Judaism, but recognizes she has access to alternative avenues of worship and spirituality that may be found in women’s study and prayer groups.

Jewish feminism, as a movement, occupies polarized positions, remaining undecided on women’s roles, women’s involvement, and the origins of women’s exclusion. One position cites Jewish law and the underlying structures of value and belief (Plaskow 1983, 1991), whereas the other cites social and historical circumstances and interpretations as the central causes of women’s exclusion (Heschel 1983d; Greenburg 1981). Jewish feminists disagree over the very “... nature of the Judaism they ultimately envision” (Heschel 1983a: xiii). Such polarized stances, however, do not adequately reflect the social and religious lives of the women who participated in this study. Instead, the women whose narratives were recounted here express their own personal brands of Jewish feminism as an on-going process of negotiation and tension between religious law, socio-historical circumstances, and their own personal
interpretations of each.

Feminism, as it is realized in everyday practice, is as diverse and multifaceted in its direction and goals as it is as a movement. Not all of the women who took part in this study identified with feminism. Susannah opposed feminism as a "male-bashing" movement, and Sheryl easily aligned herself with the term. Pamela and Norma both called themselves feminists, and Eileen hesitantly associated with what she called "feminist values" only. In spite of their differing perceptions of feminism and how it impacted on their lives, each of these women identified commonalities. "Feminine" qualities, such as nurturance, connection, and relationship, were emphasized by all. Feminism and "feminist values" are important to Sheryl, Norma, Pamela, Eileen, and Susannah as they are realized in everyday, interpersonal, and practical terms, rather than as academic, theoretical constructs.

The negotiation between Western feminism's emphasis on equality of access and participation and Orthodox Judaism's secondary role for women within the synagogue and the formal service is problematic on both micro and macro levels. Opinion remains divided on the form of women's involvement, for Jewish feminism as a movement, and for the women in this study. For the individual women in this project, women's
religious and spiritual involvement, as it is desired in different forms, is contingent on continued learning and acquiring greater knowledge in religious law. Pamela, Norma, and Susannah have expressed interest not only in learning the rules of Orthodox Judaism, but also in learning the underlying concepts. Susannah has noted that learning and understanding in an Orthodox context such as Watertown may effect change in women’s roles in the future. Susannah feels confident that her niece Zora may benefit in direct ways from women’s current interest in learning and understanding. Sheryl describes learning as a life-long process. She states she will never be finished her religious and spiritual learning, and may not even come to any conclusions, but maintains it is the process itself that is important. As Orthodox women become more knowledgeable in religious law, the struggles they face and the questions they ask, individually and collectively, they may currently be constructing broader avenues of accepted and legitimate knowledge in Orthodox Judaism in the future (Kaufman 1991: 162).

The status of women’s roles and participation in Orthodox Judaism are controversial topics within Jewish communities in Toronto, North America, and the Watertown
community itself. Many members, both men and women, feel strongly that women should be directly involved within Orthodox services, making the minyan and reading from the Torah. Members of Watertown, both men and women, are aware that women can become more intimately and directly involved in formal and official capacities in other streams of Judaism. This necessitates asking why women such as Pamela, Susannah, Sheryl, Eileen, and Norma choose to remain in Modern Orthodoxy.

The congregation of Watertown formed officially in the summer of 1996, through a combination of social and religious factors. Many members have associated with each other for significant periods of time through careers and the workplace, and shared religious beliefs and interests. They and their families often socialize outside of the workplace, and the synagogue. Others attend Watertown due to its location; the synagogue provides an opportunity to worship in a Modern Orthodox context within their own neighborhood. Many women at Watertown, including Pamela, Norma, and Susannah, affiliate with Watertown as a result of these interpersonal, religious, and career-related elements.

A sense of community involvement and belonging is a factor in why women such as Pamela, Norma, Sheryl, Eileen,
and Susannah remain in Orthodox Judaism. Feminist scholars are puzzled by the surprising number of women who "return" to Orthodoxy - and a significant number who choose to remain - in an era where women are considered to have a variety of available choices and options (Kaufman 1991; Davidman 1991; Umansky 1985; Baskin 1985). One of the key ways to involve all members in the Watertown services is through the use of the weekly huppah. The Watertown synagogue has committed to worshipping in an Orthodox tradition, where women and men are separated by the mehitzah, and only men make the minyan and read from the Torah. Susannah has pointed out that even though Orthodox women cannot participate directly in an Orthodox service at this point, she feels that both men and women should receive the same type of blessing. This is achieved during the huppah, when the women and children cross the mehitzah and assemble as a group around the bimah and the Torah.

The weekly huppah at Watertown incorporates the themes of continuity and change. It is a way of responding to social and cultural circumstances - that emphasize the involvement and participation of women - and of acknowledging the authority of Orthodox tradition. It is also an attempt to merge individual and communal needs and
obligations. As an interpretive community (Fulkerson 1991: 60), the use of the weekly huppah enables Watertown to engage the dialectic between continuity and change in another way as well. The authority to interpret the scriptures and the power to inscribe authoritative norms and codes of conduct are located at the levels of the individual and the community. Norma, Susannah, and Pamela, along with other women at Watertown, have acknowledged the traditional separation of men and women in Orthodoxy, and maintain the boundaries of the Orthodox community by conforming to it. The use of the huppah on a weekly basis also indicates that men and women at Watertown are actively engaged in reinterpreting and reconstructing Orthodox Judaism in ways that emphasize and value women’s direct involvement and participation. The weekly huppah and women’s d’var Torah provide the women of Watertown with a means of influencing tradition in ways that are supportive of women’s involvement. Casting, or re-casting, themselves in women’s “traditional roles” allows the women at Watertown to make women’s concerns, values, and needs a central and positive focus of their own spirituality and observance, and of the synagogue as a whole. The synagogue and community, comprised largely of friends and family, also provide a positive
environment to learn about Orthodoxy and observance. The congregation welcomes and supports questions about the Orthodox tradition, and accepts different levels of observance and attitude.

One prominent factor deserving consideration is the “paradox of attachment and separation” experienced by Orthodox Jewish women. The women who took part in this study recognize that Orthodoxy currently does not allow women to take part in the formal service. Sheryl and Eileen in particular, in part due to their Orthodox upbringings, do not regard this as a point of contention in their social and religious lives. Rather, they regard “female activities” and systems of meaning, centred on connection, relationship and nurturance, to be vital components of Orthodoxy. Women’s spheres of activity are viewed as places where women can create and develop their own personal, intellectual, social, and spiritual relationships (Kaufman 1991: 113).

Orthodox Judaism, the stream of Judaism most resistant to feminist challenges and changes, can also offer women the stability and safety of clearly defined roles for men and women. Modern Orthodox Jewish women receive the benefits of community and a strong sense of belonging, while simultaneously having the opportunity to live aspects of
their lives in the secular world as well.

The interaction and negotiation of feminism and Orthodox Judaism at Watertown, and within other communities in Toronto and North America, is a clear example of religion in process. Orthodox Jewish women have long been involved in the secular, career-oriented world. They are seeking to mirror this involvement in the Orthodox Jewish world as well.

Charles Liebman writes that it is difficult to identify what "Orthodoxy" is in North America simply by looking at the institutions so labeled - such as newspapers, scholarly journals, synagogues, day-schools, universities, and the like (1975: 132). Attention must also be paid to individual beliefs and practices. The same needs to be said of the interaction between feminism and Orthodoxy. While this interaction is becoming increasingly visible, it remains to be fully recognized and realized at the institutional level in Orthodoxy. This is, to some degree, a result of the current lack of cohesion and agreement amongst Orthodox Jewish feminists themselves, and the divided position on women's roles taken by proponents of the mainstream Orthodox communities and institutions in North America (Grossman 1997: 60).
This research has demonstrated, however, that Orthodox women are slowly claiming (or re-claiming) the power and authority to define their own roles and identities as Orthodox Jewish women. This movement is simultaneously an individual concern and yet something larger. As the women in this study demonstrate, how feminism interacts with Orthodoxy - and what that looks like in everyday practice - is conducted on the level of the individual. At the same time, these women are operating within the lines and boundaries of adherence to the Torah and observance of the basic tenets of Judaism (Bulka 1983: 15; Raphael 1984: 164). Pamela noted during one of our interviews that the meeting of feminism and Orthodoxy in the future will have profound impacts. This research clearly illustrates, however, that the dialogue is already underway.

To begin to understand the dynamic interaction between feminism and Orthodoxy, and the idea of “religion in process” in general, it is useful to conceptualize religion as praxis. The notion of praxis incorporates some of the predominant themes in the anthropology of religion and feminist theory in the 1990s.

Feminist theory and anthropology both emphasize the social elements, that is, how religion is carried out,
expressed, constructed, and negotiated at the level of everyday reality (Murray 1997; Sered 1994). Emphasizing the religious lives of women effectively blurs the distinctions between sacred/profane dichotomies and addresses Orthodox Jewish women’s conceptions of self within a patriarchal religion, their communities, and their families. Until recently, women’s religious lives were ignored by anthropology and the other human sciences (Erikson 1992: 46).

To better understand and frame religion as a dynamic process, it is also necessary to explore the meaning of the lived religious and spiritual realities of individual men and women. Meaning is itself constructed and negotiated through hermeneutic dialogue involving constant interpretive movement between individuals, and between individuals and the larger social, cultural, and religious worlds (Bauman 1978: 28).

Utilizing religious praxis as a tool for facilitating the understanding of religion as a process is not without difficulties. Religious praxis does enable an exploration of how meaning is constructed and re-constructed at an individual level. It also provides a framework in which to integrate Orthodoxy and feminism, but it does not easily
facilitate discussion and interpretation of these dynamic religious processes at a more generalized macro level. A possible avenue of future inquiry may include a continued focus on religious praxis - especially in terms of feminism and Orthodox Judaism - as a form of political praxis. Whether or not Orthodox Jewish women clearly distinguish between the roles and identities of "interested participant" or "political activist" in an Orthodox feminist movement, combined with an exploration of the underlying motivations for such a shift in political and practical orientation, is a line of inquiry that may better serve to frame the dialogue between Orthodoxy and feminism - and the integration of the two - at an institutional, macro level.

It remains to be seen whether the women who participated in this study will be spiritually, personally, and politically satisfied with "alternative avenues" of worship and spiritual fulfillment that are open to women in Orthodox Judaism. The reconciliation of feminism and Orthodoxy is not guaranteed, as a movement, or as it is realized within the lives of individual women. The meaning of "feminism" is ambiguous and problematic for many individual women, and men. Does it mean equality - of participation, direct involvement, or religious obligation?
As Pamela, Norma, and Susannah are newly “returned” to Orthodox Judaism, their struggles with what feminism means, as a conceptual construct and as it is realized in their social and religious lives, are necessarily evolving over time as they increase their knowledge and understanding of Orthodoxy and observance. These are issues that will continue to be at the fore in the Watertown synagogue and congregation.

Pamela noted earlier that Watertown is “unresolved Orthodoxy”. In order to resolve their religious, spiritual, and interpersonal identities, and to come to terms with Modern Orthodoxy in the landscape of Toronto Judaism, the women and men of Watertown must address issues of women’s involvement and traditional gender roles within Orthodox Judaism.
GLOSSARY

Aliyah. (pl. aliyot). The calling up of a member of the congregation to read the Torah in the synagogue, or to read a blessing; the act of immigrating to Israel.


Ba’alat teshuvah. (pl. ba’alot teshuvah) An adult woman who adopts Orthodox Judaism (Davidman 1991: 227).


Bar mitzvah. “Son of the commandments”; an adult with religious responsibilities; a ceremony in which a thirteen-year-old boy is initiated into religious adulthood” (Davidman 1991: 227).

Bat mitzvah. “Daughter of the commandments”; an adult with religious responsibilities; a ceremony in which a thirteen-year-old girl is initiated into religious adulthood” (Davidman 1991: 227-228). In Orthodox circles, a twelve-year-old girl is initiated.

Bimah. Literally, “elevated place”. Where the Torah is placed and read.

D’var Torah. A commentary on the section of the Torah being read that week. A talk on a Jewish theme (Davidman 1991: 229).


Halakha. Jewish Law, which encompasses both the written Torah and the oral tradition.

Hallah. The special braided bread for the Sabbath.

Hazzan. The person or “... synagogue official who leads the worshipers in prayers and is in charge of the music” (Cohn-Sherbok 1992: 77).
Huppah. The portable canopy under which the bride and bridegroom stand during the wedding service (Heschel 1983: 285); or during the festival of Simhat Torah.


Kaddish. Prayers for the dead.


Kiddush. Literally, “sanctification”; the prayer recited over a cup of wine to consecrate it the Sabbath or a festival (Cohn-Sherbok 1992: 291).

Kipah. Skull cap.


Mehitzah. The partition in Orthodox synagogues that separates the women’s from the men’s section (Davidman 1991: 230).

Mikveh. (pl. mikva’ot). Ritual bath. “Even after most of the laws of defilement fell into abeyance with the destruction of the Temple, the ritual bath remained an essential component of family life for observant Jews, since a wife has to immerse herself in it after her menstrual period (niddah) before cohabitation” (Wigoder 1989: 490).

Minhag. Custom.

Minyan. The minimum requirement of ten men needed for Orthodox communal prayer.

Mitzvah. (pl. mitzvot) Commandment.

Payot. (sing. pe’ah) Ear-locks.

Rebbe. (Yiddish). Rabbi. “The title is also accorded to a teacher, and among the Hasidim to their spiritual leader” (Cohn-Sherbok 1992: 450).

Rosh Chodesh. The first day of the Hebrew month, or New Moon (Heschel 1983: 286); a holiday given to women as a reward for not participating in the making of the Golden Calf (Adelman 1994: 155).

Rosh Hashanah. The Jewish New Year.


Sepher Torah. Scrolls of the Torah; the form in which the Torah is used for public reading in the synagogue (Cohn-Sherbok 1992: 309).

Shul. Synagogue.


Simhat Torah. A holiday that “... celebrates the annual conclusion of the reading of the entire Pentateuch (Torah) in the synagogue during the course of the year. It is observed during the autumn, at the conclusion of Sukkot” (Heschel 1983: 287).

Sukkot. Festival of Tabernacles.

Talles. Prayer shawl.

Talmud. A series of texts that are commentaries on the Mishnah, dating from 200 to 600 C.E.

Teshuva. Return.

Tohorat ha-mishpahah. Family Purity. The laws regulating sexual relations between husband and wife. “According to these, couples may not engage in relations during the wife’s menstrual period (niddah) and for seven ‘clean days’ thereafter. When the period of abstention ends, the wife immerses herself in a ritual bath
(mikveh), and it is presumed that she will reunite sexually with her husband that same night" (Wigoder 1989: 257).

Tkhines. The petitionary prayers of Eastern European or Ashkenazic women.

Tikkun. A particular edition of the Torah or Pentateuch, which has pages with vowel marks.

Torah. The Jewish bible.

Tsniut. Laws of modesty requiring women to keep their bodies covered, to protect against flirtation or immorality between the sexes (Plaskow 1991: 176).

Yarmulke. Skull cap.


Yom Kippur. Day of Atonement.
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