REVISING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY:
THE RHETORICAL TRADITIONS OF
REFORM JUDAISM IN AMERICA, 1885-1999

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED:  Shaun Hellman
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my husband, Aaron, for his unconditional love and continual support and to our children, Nichole, Justin, and Brandon, for being such joys in our lives.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the rhetorical practices of a tradition: the Reform Movement in Judaism. I analyze the three platforms written in 1885, 1937, and 1999 to define the collective identity of the Reform Movement in America. I begin this study by concentrating on how the Reform Movement framed its collective identity in each of its platforms focusing on what this group agreed on and disagreed on and how they represented those disagreements. Through my investigation, I discovered that these documents reflected different stages in the tradition's development. In this dissertation, I argue that how the Reform tradition framed its collective identity depended on the tradition's stage of development.

I argue that in the tradition's first stage of development, it questioned the external, broader tradition from which it diverged, yet it did not question its own internal beliefs, texts, and authorities, and it projected an authoritative identity uncomplicated by disagreements. For example, in 1885 the rabbis authoritatively declared that traditional Jewish practices were no longer meaningful in the modern era. As the tradition developed, the community no longer deferred to internal authorities unquestioningly, but became self reflective and asked questions about itself--questions that enabled the community to understand the lessons from its history and identify inadequacies. So in 1937, the rabbis stated that some of these practices were worthwhile, can be revised to be more meaningful, and can help keep Jews connected as a collective--as a people. Then, in 1999, the tradition faced an epistemological crisis because conflicts over rival answers
to key questions could no longer be settled rationally. The problem was that the movement could not resolve the apparent contradiction of having a belief system that valued individual differences and being able to define itself as a collective. It was through the writing process of the 1999 platform that the movement articulated the tradition's most significant beliefs and solved its epistemological crisis by defining reform not by the contents of its changes but in the very process of change—the belief in the value of change and diversity.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

My family’s history parallels that of other American Jews who are descendents of Eastern European Jews. My maternal grandmother, keeper of my family’s oral history, explained that my grandparents’ grandparents were traditional Jews in Russia. Segregated in a shtetl (village) with other Jews, they had a rich cultural life and a strong collective identity. My grandmother’s grandmother, as all Jewish women in the 1800s, dressed to show her respect to God by shaving her head, wearing a wig, and always dressing modestly, covering her body from neck to wrist to ankle with a high collared, long sleeved, long dress. My grandmother’s grandfather, as all Jewish men in the 1800s, also dressed to show his respect to God. He had a big beard, wore a long sleeved shirt, pants a tzitzit, (a tunic worn under a shirt with long fringes that stuck out), and a kepah (skullcap in Hebrew) or yarmulke (skullcap in Yiddish) on his head at all times. When he prayed in shul (synagogue) he wore a tallit (prayer shawl) draped around his shoulders, and for the weekday morning service, he wore tefillin (two small black boxes containing scrolls of parchment inside with black leather straps attached to each box) wrapped around his head and left arm. He went to shul every morning like all Jewish men in his village to pray and be part of the minyen (a group of ten men required to read the Torah in a service). In his traditional Ashkenazi synagogue, the service was entirely in Hebrew and chanted according to old musical modes. He, as all worshippers, responded to the prayer
leader individually, by spontaneously swaying and chanting, keeping his own pace. One morning a Kosak came into his shul and shot him dead.

Between 1904 and 1910 all eight of my parents’ grandparents, like two and a half million other Jews at the turn of the century, paid $10 each to travel for 30 days in steerage across the Atlantic to New York to escape the persecution and pogroms in Eastern Europe. They came to a new culture in which their habits were considered strange and unpleasantly foreign. My great-grandparents, like most other refugees, were not willing to endure any more persecution, so they tried to fit in as Americans. They changed their last name as they came into America through Ellis Island. They changed their dress when they settled in their tenement apartment in New York. My great-grandmother grew back her hair, took off her wig and wore her hair in a bun. My great grandfather shaved off his beard and took off his kepah. He did not wear tzitzit or attend services regularly. He worked in the garment district in the lower east side, worked on Saturday, and went to school at night to learn English and become an American citizen. They lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, and this helped them retain their traditional Jewish home life and a sense of a collective identity. My great-grandmother kept a kosher home, made the weekly Shabbat meal, and put it on the radiator to keep it warm all day because electricity was prohibited on Shabbat. As was traditional for Shabbat, she would not ride on Saturday or carry anything. My great-grandfather, however, who needed to support the family, worked on Saturday and tried to be as American as possible.
All four of my grandparents were born in America and looked and acted as American as anyone. They retained even fewer Jewish traditions and practices. They did not belong to a synagogue, attend services, or celebrate Shabbat or the Jewish holidays and festivals. They did, however, remain kosher as long as they lived in New York.

When my maternal grandparents moved to Tucson in 1977, with its one kosher butcher, small selection of meats, and high prices, they stopped keeping kosher. They did continue to cook Jewish foods, but those foods were not connected to their traditional Jewish holidays or practices. I remember eating my grandmother’s stuffed cabbage, potato kugel, and challah, but I never knew about Shabbat or the Jewish holidays and festivals at which they are usually served.

For most of my mother’s life, she was Jewish in name only. She has a sense of Jewish identity as in knowing she’s Jewish, but Jewish traditions and practices or even cooking was not part of her daily life, and consequently, they were not part of mine. But in the 70s we lived in Philadelphia and later Brookline, Massachusetts in Jewish neighborhoods, surrounded by Jewish symbols and traditions. As I was growing up, we would buy a can of macaroons or a stick of chocolate-covered halavah and revel in fond memories of my grandmother’s Jewish food and make mental connections to our Jewish neighbors.

In December 1991, my daughter came home from kindergarten to our house in Tucson, Arizona singing, “I love Jesus.” Surprised, I casually explained that we don’t believe in Jesus because we are Jewish. She started screaming that she hated her family because they didn’t believe in Jesus. Evidently, her teacher had read the class some
charming nativity stories that had captivated my daughter. I realized that I had not given my daughter any knowledge of Judaism except the label that we were Jewish. Apparently she needed more, and if I did not provide a religion for her, she would acquire a different one. I realized that like my parents and grandparents before me, I relied on the presence of a Jewish community to anchor our sense of Jewish identity. In a town where the Jewish population was a tiny fraction of the total population, there was no obvious Jewish presence. Without a tangible community and an agreed upon belief structure, maintaining a Jewish identity wasn’t possible without education. The problem was that I didn’t know anything to teach her. In January my husband and I joined a Reform synagogue and enrolled our children in Sunday school.

My family’s changing Jewish identity stands as one case study of a phenomenon that happened to countless Jews in America. It illustrates why the Reform Movement was created in America. The Reform Movement began in America as a social movement to adapt Judaism to American society. But the roots of the Reform Movement go back much further. Until Napoleon emancipated the Jews in 1806, they lived in segregated communities or “ghettos” in Western Europe, “shtetles” in Eastern Europe. These communities were completely autonomous with their own culture and governing system controlled by rabbinic authority. According to Gilbert Rosenthal, the emancipation offered Jews the opportunity to leave the ghettos and enter the mainstream of the political and economic life in Europe, but the cost was to “relinquish their autonomous community and surrender rabbinic authority to control and discipline their people” (200). In Paris in 1806, Napoleon summoned an assembly of rabbis and Jewish merchants and asked
whether Jews considered themselves Frenchmen or Jews (Rosenthal 200). Napoleon declared the price of freedom for all European Jews was loyalty to France and the laws of the prince (Rosenthal 200). In response, the delegates declared their loyalty to France and renounced rabbinic authority (Rosenthal 200). Eastern European Jews declared that they were “no longer a nation but loyal citizens of their adoptive countries and Jews by religious persuasion only” (Rosenthal 202). Because Jews received their rights in secular society as individuals not as a community, the collective identity of communal-based Judaism needed to be revised. The Reform Movement in Germany was the first significant reaction to emancipation from those who accepted the decisions of the Napoleonic Sanhedrin. Jews in Germany held a series of rabbinical conferences in 1884, 1845, 1869, and 1871 in which they sought to abolish distinctions between Jews and non-Jews and break down religious barriers by deleting ritual practices to modernize Judaism in light of the dictates of reason. The German Reformers “sought to bring the externals of Judaism into closer harmony with contemporary European standards of decorum, solemnity, and reverence, in order to improve the image of the Jews in the eyes of the enlightened Christians” (Seltzer 580). German Reform concentrated on changing the parts of worship that seemed “undignified and oriental to those acculturated Jews who instigated the reforms” (Seltzer 582). But while the Jews in Germany were scientifically studying Judaism and modernizing specific parts of the service, my ancestors in Russia were still living in shtetles. It wasn’t until they came to America that they had to deal with being Jewish in a secular society.
The Reform Movement was very successful in America because it aligned itself with American ideals of freedom and democracy. This belief in freedom and democracy was manifested in a new form of governance in the American Reform Movement: the congregational model. As Lance Sussman explains, in a congregation, authority belongs to the elected board and officers of the synagogue and not the rabbinate (539). The rabbis' only authority was their power of rhetoric. The rabbis of the Reform Movement created platforms to articulate their understanding of the collective identity of Reform Jewish Americans.

The Platforms that Shaped the Reform Movement in America

The Reform Movement in Judaism created and revised the collective identity of Reform Jews against changing conceptions of American identity and articulated its collective identity in its platforms. The Reform Movement in America is the only denomination in Judaism that has created statements or platforms at different points in time to define itself. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in the Reform Movement created three platforms at different points in time to define itself: The 1885 “Declaration of Principles,” the 1937 “Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism,” and the 1999 “Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism.” These historical artifacts provide an opportunity to trace the development of the movement's collective identity. Individually, these platforms redefine the Reform Movement at specific points in time. Together these platforms illustrate how collective identity is a social construction that is continuously reinvented by each generation and grounded in changing social experiences. In this study,
I assess how the authors and readers of these documents drew upon shared knowledge to negotiate an evolving sense of the Reform Movement’s collective identity.

The Reform Movement documented its process of constructing the platforms and saved the documents at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. As a Research Fellow at the American Jewish Archives, I analyzed more than 350 documents from the archive including the CCAR official conference proceedings, annual conventions transcripts, platform committee statements, relevant newspaper articles, and CCAR rabbis’ correspondences. I used my research from the archive to characterize how the influential members of the movement understood the historical context of each platform and suggest how that understanding might have influenced the platform’s creation. My goal was to comprehend how the Reform Movement framed its historical situation at the time each platform was written, so I could perceive how responses were considered fitting to the community. These historical artifacts documented the rhetorical practices through which the movement renegotiated its collective identity. The writing process of these platforms revealed a group of people arguing about the meaning of symbolic forms, what Clifford Geertz would define as culture. It is in the argument over what is their culture and what is their collective identity that the rhetorical practices of this group are revealed.

Individually, these three platforms redefine the Reform Movement at specific historical moments in response to changing realities by “framing” the collective identity of Reform Jews. Borrowing from Erving Goffman and David Snow, I consider a frame to be a categorizing system that functions to organize experience and influences how people
interpret them. In my work, I examine how the authors of these documents interpreted and organized relevant experiences, articulated shared values about the experiences, and revised their collective identity to reflect their understanding of the experiences. These platforms illustrate how collective identity is a creative social construction that is continuously reinvented over time and grounded in changing social experiences. Examined together these platforms illuminate the rhetorical tradition of the Reform Movement over the last century. This community’s understanding of itself as a collective gives organized expression to the beliefs and values already embodied in the social and practical life of the community. In this dissertation, I argue that one can trace the development of the Reform tradition in the platforms by examining how the movement understands and deals with the concept of differences and the dynamics of representing them in its writing processes. Using my researched materials, I reconstruct the writing process for each document, which changed considerably through time.

My methodology for tracing the development of the Reform Movement includes three parts. First, I examine how the situation is framed and how the influential authors of each platform argue within that frame. I argue that the members of the Reform Movement used their particular historical situation, writing situation, and writing process in their framing as evidence to support their claims for a particular collective identity. So if collective identity is composed in symbolic terms, it is the community’s shared knowledge, what Miller calls “the broad-based understanding of the shared experience and traditions of the community,” that makes the symbolism salient (“Treating” 57-58). Next, I focus on how the tradition rationalizes differences and how these differences are
represented in each platform. I develop these ideas using MacIntyre's ideas on how a tradition develops. Finally, I examine the dynamics of representation as manifested in the writing process. I explain the writing process used by the authors of these documents and the members of the social movement and consider how their concept of difference and ideas on representation serve as frames in their representative process.

The study of the rhetorical practices of varied traditions helps us challenge the canon and redefine the rhetorical tradition to include a broader perspective of the various ways rhetoric is made manifest in social practice. In "Reinventing Rhetorical Traditions," Thomas Miller calls for rhetoricians to study "the rhetoric of tradition -- the ways that political parties, ethnic groups, social movements, and other discourse communities constitute and maintain the shared values and assumptions that authorize discourse" (26). Studying the rhetorics of traditions expands our disciplinary frame of reference. Miller argues that if we want to see "how rhetorical traditions function as rhetorical systems," we need to know more about how particular groups "have used discourse to establish a sense of shared identity and act toward common goals" (75). He argues for looking outside the canon to focus on the rhetorics of traditions to study how shared traditions speak to social problems (Miller 75-76). By looking beyond the canon of the "Rhetorical Tradition" to other traditions and beyond academia to other communities, rhetoricians can examine how groups negotiate shared values to address changing needs and how they translate those values into practical action. My study of Reform Judaism provides a glimpse into the dynamics involved in negotiating shared values to frame a collective identity. Influential authors in the Reform Movement used
their interpretation of the historical situation for evidence to justify their conception of
the world and support their conceived collective identity in America.

Reform Judaism: A Collective Identity

Although Judaism is often called a religion and a culture, for the purpose of this study, I examine Reform Judaism as a collective identity. To get another perspective on the documents that define the Reform Movement in Judaism, I interviewed Rabbi Joseph Weizenbaum, ordained in 1958 and the oldest Reform rabbi in Tucson, Arizona, to see what his lifetime of experience in the Reform Movement could teach me. The Rabbi has a specific conception of Judaism that he felt I had to understand before I could understand the documents. He explained that there is no word for religion in the Hebrew language. “You can read the book, the Bible, cover to cover, even in English, and you’ll never see the word, ‘religion.’” The rabbi believed that a religion is an idea to which people subscribe in varying degrees. He explained that Judaism is not a religion, but Judaism is made up of Jewish people. According to the rabbi, “We talk about Judaism like it is [a religion] because we live in America” and that is how it is conceptualized here. He believes Judaism isn’t a religion, but is a lived experience, “a long walk in the desert. It’s a journey. The word for Jewish law used in Orthodoxy is halacha, which means to go or the way you go.” Rabbi Weizenbaum believes, “What we are is a dynamic. A dynamic means constantly changing. You cannot define that which lives, you can only describe it.”
The rabbi explained that what these documents are all trying to do is describe Judaism. He believes that what these documents have in common is being part of a process that long predates them, writing down oral law. He said, “The mishnah was put together in the third century because the oral law was oral. It wasn’t supposed to be written down. But they were going to lose it. This is another attempt. It’s in that tradition. To get a handle on it.”

So, according to Rabbi Weizenbaum, Judaism is not a religion, but is made up of Jewish people. Rabbi Weizenbaum explained that these documents are trying to describe the journey of the Jewish people, the way they go, their ways of living, at specific points in time. The idea of studying Jewish “ways of living” is interesting because in my experience, it pushes Judaism into what has been defined as culture. My account of my family’s history highlights the changes in my family’s ways of living through several generations and illustrates that their culture changed over time. But what is culture?

In this study, I adopt Clifford Geertz’s semiotic conception of culture. Geertz proposes that culture “is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns—customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters . . . but as a set of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs") — for the governing of behavior” (44). More specifically, Geertz defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols” and explains that this conceptual system is expressed in symbolic form and is the means by which people “communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (89). Geertz sees human behavior as symbolic action—action that signifies. Geertz argues that culture
explains the significance or meaning that people attribute to action, or as he puts it, what
is getting said through an action’s occurrence and through its agency (10). In other
words, a community’s culture explains the agreed upon meaning of actions to the
community’s members. Renato Rosaldo implies a similar understanding of culture when
he argues, “culture refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their
lives” (26). However, in contrast to Geertz’s assumption that culture embodies agreed
upon meaning, Rosaldo theorizes, “culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous
array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its
borders” (20). In other words, culture is not only what is agreed upon by a group, but is
also the disagreements, contentions, and arguments of a group. Culture includes the
significant disputes between people in a group. The writing processes of these platforms
reveal a group of people arguing about the inconsistencies, conflicts, and contradictions
in the meaning of symbolic forms. It is in the argument over what is their culture and
what is their collective identity that the rhetorical practices of how this group comes to
terms with differences are revealed.

A cultural identity then is how a group defines itself as a collective. Conzen et al.
argue that ethnic or cultural identity is socially constructed and reinvented in response to
changing realities. They argue that ethnic groups in modern settings are constantly
reinventing themselves, and ethnicity is continuously being reinvented in response to
changing realities. Conzen et al.’s ideas of historicizing ethnicity imply understanding an
ethnic group not as a thing, complete and unchanging, but as a process that has constant
interaction. This process of creating the Reform Movement’s collective identity was
documented in the writing process and product of each platform and illuminates the rhetorical practices of the Reform Movement at that time. Examined together these platforms illuminate the rhetorical tradition of the Reform Movement over the last century. The history of the Reform Movement’s rhetorical practices is intrinsically connected to the history of the tradition’s social and practical life. The writers of these documents were historically situated and as members of the community were inescapably involved in the conflicts central to the historical developing life of the community at that time and place. This community’s understanding of itself as a collective gives organized expression to agreed upon and contested beliefs and values already embodied in the social and practical life of the community that is used to frame its reality. So how a tradition articulates its collective identity helps us understand aspects of a tradition’s rhetorical practices.

A platform articulates one version of a group’s collective identity at a specific point in time. In its most basic definition, a platform is something one stands on. In a social movement, a platform includes the fundamental beliefs that movement leaders and constituents can stand on together at that particular time and place, and it articulates their collective identity. Platforms consist of planks or issues for which the group stands. A platform is valuable to study because writing one requires making decisions that show what the group values. As the platforms of the Reform Movement show, platforms help a group define itself as a group and create certain boundaries. A platform defines a group by articulating the essential beliefs of the group and demarcating how the essential qualities are acceptably manifested. It aims to express unity and consensus and
establishes that despite differences within the group there are basic ideas that unite all members.

A platform can be conceptualized as a tool for identifying with a particular group. Such identification is dynamic, always changing in response to changing conditions and group members’ shared understandings and beliefs. A platform, then, is a creative, social construction, a rhetorical construct that is continuously reinvented over time and grounded in the current context and social experience. The writing of a platform is influenced by changes in shared assumptions and values that are influenced by historical events and demographic changes. To create a platform, the movement needs to make decisions about which issues to tackle, what to draw attention to, and what to ignore. Additionally, decisions need to be made about how precise the platform should be. If it is very precise, it will be clear what the movement stands for, yet it runs the risk of excluding members of the movement who disagree. Vague language will support broad representation, but may not articulate a clear definition. Decisions need to be made about who should write the platform and that can illustrate the group’s shared understanding of who has the authority and credibility to create knowledge. The movement also needs to decide if the platform should present an ideal conception of the group or a more realistic version and if the platform should be descriptive or prescriptive. As my dissertation will show, the Reform Movement in Judaism articulates its collective identity in its platforms and constructs a collective “we,” a collective identity, through a process of interaction, conflict, and negotiation over the community’s shared and contested beliefs and values.
Individually, these three platforms redefine the Reform Movement at specific points in time in response to changing realities by interpreting the shared experience of the community, constituting a shared understanding of that experience, and “framing” the collective identity of Reform Jews. Borrowing from Erving Goffman and David Snow, I consider a frame a categorizing system which functions to organize experience and influences how people interpret and describe issues and events. In my work, I examine how the authors of these documents interpreted and organized relevant events and experiences, articulated values and assumptions in socially acceptable ways, and revised their collective identity to address changing needs and adapt to broader contexts. These platforms illustrate how collective identity is a creative social construction that is continuously reinvented over time and grounded in changing social experiences. Examined together these platforms illuminate the rhetorical tradition of the Reform Movement over the last century. This community’s understanding of itself as a collective gives organized expression to the beliefs and values already embodied in the social and practical life of the community. One can trace the development of the Reform tradition in the platforms by examining how the movement understands and deals with the concept of differences and the dynamics of representing them in its writing processes.

Case Studies of Collective Identities

Sociologists have addressed the concept of collective identity (Deaux and Reid; Zald; Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield). The study of social movements and collective identity has been embraced by the disciplines of sociology, communications, American
Indian studies, African American studies, and religious studies. Many case studies of 
social movements describe a specific community’s experience of collective identity using 
Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield’s definition that a collective identity is the “agreed upon 
definitions of membership, boundaries, and activities for the group” (15). For example, 
Ward Churchill defined what has “traditionally been part of the ‘Indian way’ of 
identifying members/citizens” (40). Frida Kerner Furman studied the traditional and 
creative services in a Reform synagogue and argues the creation of the Chavarim service 
reflects congregants’ desire to find meaning in services and be part of a community by 
actively participating in services instead of passively observing them. Susan Applegate 
Krouse discussed how urban American Indians of mixed blood descent use kinship to 
provide an entry into the urban Indian community. Fernando Pedro Delgado investigated 
how Chicano Movement rhetoric constitutes Chicano identity and uses ideographs to 
activate Chicanos to political action. Some case studies examine how a collective 
changes in response to changing circumstances. For example, Rebecca Kooks examines 
the changes that occurred in the status of African American collective identity before and 
after the civil rights movement. Jeanette Hassin and Robert Young described Native 
Americans’ individual and community identity before and after a Native American 
leadership program. Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites wrote on the 60’s 
social movement led by Malcolm X and how it articulated the evolving identity and 
revolutionary dissent of “America’s Black citizens” in “White America.” Richard 
Clemmer examined the Hopi Traditionalist as a social movement that worked to reconcile 
Hopi ways with modernity. Clemmers examined Hopi Traditionalism as “an ideology
that is constantly being constructed, created, recreated, and negotiated” by examining the political economic history and the Traditionalists activities of the time (128).

Sociologists’ work on examining social movements that focus on creating a collective identity for its constituents suggests a rich site for rhetoricians. Examining how different groups use language to affect perceptions and persuade can add to a more comprehensive understanding of the rhetorics of social movements. Such studies can help rhetoricians understand how communities constitute and maintain shared and contested values and assumptions in the face of change to create, maintain, or revise public identities.

Mayer Zald concentrates on how social movements exist in larger societal contexts from which they draw “cultural stock.” Zald argues that social movements draw upon cultural stock for “definitions of what is right or wrong with current social order and to suggest direction for change” (267). For example, a common term in the 1885 platform was “modern,” which framed a problem (for example, that Judaism wasn’t modern) and a direction for decision-making (for example, making Judaism modern was the priority). Zald explains that social movements, their leaders, and participants draw upon the frames available to and compatible with their group’s orientations, beliefs, and values (267). So “modern” made sense in America where progress, individual autonomy, and the right of the individual were valued. Zald argues that cultural stock is not static but changes over time (267). Social movement leaders have to draw continuously on cultural beliefs that are available at the time and “fit” them to the issue. It is this drawing from the group’s shared beliefs and values on which my study focuses.
Concerning the History of a Tradition

In this dissertation, I show that the Reform Movement began as a social movement, a community of people who attempted social change by negotiating their shared values and suggesting practical actions to address changing needs. The social movement developed into a tradition, a continued body of arguments elaborated and redefined through time in response to changing circumstances and beliefs with a traceable history and potential trajectory. Alasdair Maclntyre theorizes that "a tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of . . . conflict" ([Whose] 12). Maclntyre explains how four traditions developed and how they conceptualized justice. He explains the Aristotelian accounts of justice and practical rationality, which were then developed by Aquinas to accommodate Augustinian versions, which were subverted from within by Hume to produce another version. Maclntyre concludes with the modern liberalism version of justice and rationality. My reading of Maclntyre's theory of how traditions develop influences my analysis. I trace the development of the rhetorical traditions of the Reform Movement in the platforms by examining how the movement understood and dealt with the concept of differences and the dynamics of representing them in its writing processes. I argue how the collective identity was conceptualized in each platform and how the concepts of difference and the representative dynamics served as frames in the collaborations themselves.

Maclntyre argues that a tradition develops through stages. He theorizes that in the initial development, a tradition does not question relevant texts, beliefs, and authorities,
but as that tradition develops, it identifies inadequacies, and as that tradition matures, it designs reformulations to remedy inadequacies (Whose 355). The development of the Reform tradition can be traced in its platforms and follow MacIntyre’s theory on the stages of a tradition’s development. In the 1885 platform, beliefs and authorities were not questioned, by the 1937 platform inadequacies were identified, and in the 1999 platform reformulations were made to remedy inadequacies.

MacIntyre’s enquiry into justice and practical rationality helps explain the connection I make between collective identity and framing. Each particular conception of the collective identity presented in each platform characterizes some overall view of human life and its place in nature. These overall views can be seen as the frame of the movement that was based on its shared beliefs and values and that was used to create the movement’s understanding of reality.

My work elaborates on MacIntyre’s theory. I argue that in the initial development of a group, it defines its culture as only including agreed-upon ideas and does not acknowledge differences. As a tradition develops, it acknowledges that its culture also includes contested ideas that are continuously significant for its members. As a tradition matures, it redefines its understanding of its culture to include multiple understandings. In this chapter, I explain my methodology for tracing the development of the Reform Movement in three parts. First, I examine how the influential authors of each platform framed the situation and argued within that frame. I argue that the influential authors in the Reform Movement used their understanding of the historical situation, writing situation, and writing process as evidence to support their claims for a particular
collective cultural identity. I argue that the collective identity is composed in symbolic terms, so it is the community’s shared knowledge that makes the symbolism salient. My research shows that the saliency of a collective identity depends on whether or not the community agrees with what is articulated as the shared knowledge. Next, I focus on how the tradition rationalized differences and how these differences were represented in each platform. I develop these ideas using MacIntyre’s theory of how a tradition develops. Finally, I examine the dynamics of representation as manifested in the writing process of each platform. I explain the writing process used by the authors of these documents and the members of the social movement, and I argue that their understanding of differences served as frames in their representative process.

Framing Differences and Changes

Social movements are communities of people who attempt social change by articulating socially constructed, shared experiences and values in ways that indicate change is necessary, and they create public identities within those worlds to serve the needs of their members. Understanding how groups use shared and contested beliefs to negotiate differences and prescribe changes is vitally important in understanding our multicultural world in the twenty-first century. Research that helps focus attention on a group’s significant beliefs, values, and the purposes they can imagine challenges us to understand or at least consider their worldviews behind their messages.

Researchers can use the concept of frames to analyze a social movement’s rhetoric. The concept of frames can help researchers consider how the social movement
appeals to shared experiences as a means to foster identifications that are oriented to
forging shared purposes. Framing theory can be used to highlight the social movement’s
interpretation of a situation, which provides it with parameters for a fitting response.
Consequently, to understand how a response is fitting, rhetoricians need to understand
how the social movement defines its situation. A social movement uses frames to justify
its actions to its constituents at a given time, within a given context. Social movement
agents strategically “create” frames in their texts to organize their constituents’
experiences and guide their interpretations.

Sociologist David Snow and his colleagues provide a way to analyze how a social
movement makes sense of its world to construct shared meaning with their concept of
framing theory and categories for analyzing frames (Snow et al.; Snow and Benford,
1988, 1992, 2000 a+b; Snow and McAdam). Framing theory provides a classification
strategy to examine a community’s shared knowledge that is useful because social
movements articulate socially constructed experiences and values in ways that indicate
changes are necessary. Snow and others developed the concept of a frame to understand
the ways in which social movements construct their need for change and subsequent
actions. David Snow and his coauthors introduced the concept of framing theory in 1986
in “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation;”
however, their conception is largely arhetorical. Snow and his collaborators borrowed
Erving Goffman’s idea of a frame, as a “‘schemata of interpretation’ that enables
individuals to ‘locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences in their life,” and
explained that frames function to “organize experience and guide action” (464). In other
words, from Snow and his collaborators’ perspective, a frame influences how people describe issues. Frames are presented as a static construct for interpreting social movements rather than a dynamic heuristic concerned with examining the resources of the rhetorical situation. For example, Snow and his colleagues suggested that social movements begin when grievances are interpreted as injustices and framed in a way to mobilize action. A more rhetorical way to think about this is that social movement representatives use language to create interpretive frames that use the resources of the rhetorical situation to characterize a situation as unjust. These authors highlight salient features of the situation and define them as problems for their audience and then distinguish that situation from one that the audience finds more desirable.

Snow and his collaborators have articulated a set of related concepts useful for thinking about how social movements create frames by using socially defined markers to interpret the world for its audience and promote its cause. Snow et al. explained that people’s participation in a movement occurs when an individual’s interests, values, and beliefs and a social movement’s activities, goals, and ideology are “congruent and complimentary,” and they called this phenomenon “frame alignment” (464). They posited that frame alignment processes are the sense-making techniques that social movement activists use to help unify constituents, shape motivation, and justify mobilization. The idea of frame alignment brings attention to how a social movement appeals to an audience’s beliefs and values by linking its ideas with issues salient to potential adherents. Snow et al. focus on how a social movement adapts its beliefs and values to align with a community’s shared beliefs and values to create symbolic frames that
persuade others to join. But they don’t say how social movements do this. In 2000, Snow and Bedford reviewed the sociology scholarship involving framing and the understandings of the characteristic and variable features of collective action frames. Their review of the literature indicated that there are no studies that discuss the discursive processes that create frames. The study of these discursive processes can contribute to a rhetorical study of social movements demonstrating how influential authors in social movements frame their ideas, develop and revise shared beliefs, and articulate a collective identity for their interpretive community.

Snow et al.’s ideas on frame alignment are more useful with an eye towards the historical context. Francesca Polletta believes that studying the cultural context of a group can help account for the ‘resonance’ of particular frames at particular times ("Snarls" 70). Richard Sheehan suggests this is the group’s “cultural metanarratives” (61). For example, a frame involving freedom and independence was salient to Jewish immigrants in 1885 because it resonated or aligned with their cultural metanarratives, developed through personal experience as Jewish immigrants. Snow et al. propose four types of frame alignment: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Frame bridging involves linking the social movement with groups of individuals who share common public opinion of grievances. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Eastern European Jewish immigrants were faced with the conflict of maintaining a traditional Jewish identity or becoming “Americans.” The Reform Movement bridged this conflict by proposing a way to be “American Jews.” Frame amplification involves the “clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame”
by amplifying values or beliefs presumed to be basic to prospective constituents (Snow et al. 1986: 469). For example, in 1885, the Reform Movement amplified the democratic right to be an individual in America, a belief that was salient to new immigrants who wanted to distance themselves from the traditional Jewish community whose habits were considered unpleasantly foreign in America. According to Snow et al., *frame extension* occurs when movement leaders elaborate their goals and activities to be congruent with the interests and points of view of potential adherents. Goals and activities that may not be obviously associated with the movement’s initial objectives may be salient to potential constituents and will be used in hopes of enlarging its adherent base (Snow et al. 1986: 472). For example, the Reform Movement began with the desire to define Judaism in America as modern, but expanded its goal over the last century to extend agency in Judaism from sacred texts to rabbi to congregations and, finally, to individuals. Snow et al. explain that *frame transformation* occurs when the programs, causes, and values that a social movement promotes do not fit with conventional lifestyles or rituals. When this occurs, old understandings have to be jettisoned and new values have to be identified and defined. In other words, “‘misframings’ have to be reframed in order to garner support and secure participants” (Snow et al. 1986: 473). Each of the 1885, 1937, and 1999 documents reframed what they considered the “misframings” of the previous conception of Judaism.

The concepts of frame alignments are useful because they signal categories to consider when analyzing how a movement uses a community’s shared values and assumptions to persuade, but only when researchers also consider the historical situation
of the time. Framing theory suggests a new conceptual vocabulary to apply to social movements. While this vocabulary is congruent with such rhetorical concerns as *topoi*, framing theory provides a theoretical vocabulary that elaborates upon how shared assumptions and values develop and operate as social groups work out a sense of themselves as interpretive communities with similar needs and goals.

Snow and his collaborators' work can also be seen as an examination of the initial stages and development of a social movement's tradition. MacIntyre explains that in the initial stage of development, a tradition defines itself in its own terms. Snow et al.'s work can be seen as elaborating on MacIntyre's ideas. Snow and his colleagues' concept of framing can be used to look at how a tradition defines itself in its own terms by using frames.

In Snow and Bedford's 1988 essay, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," they continued to examine the relationship between shared beliefs and values and audience identification with social movements. They argued that social movements are actively engaged in the production of meaning for movement participants, antagonists, and observers. They used the verb "framing" to signify how social movements "assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (198). They suggested that successful participant mobilization depends on three core framing tasks: *diagnostic framing*, attributing blame for a problem; *prognostic framing*, suggesting solutions to the problem, and *motivational framing*, providing a rationale for action (199-201). Snow and Bedford suggested there
are constraints on these core framing tasks from surrounding belief systems and from how relevant the frame is to participants' own life experiences (199, 207-10). Their emphasis on the surrounding situation and its effect on the creation of a frame is useful for a rhetorical analysis that stresses the symbolic and interpretive dimensions of situated practical action. The concepts they devise are useful when thinking about how the Reform Movement activists used community knowledge and experience to persuade others to believe in their ideas. In the 1885 document, the identified problem was that Judaism demanded strict adherence to ceremonies and laws that Jewish immigrants in America did not want to follow. The blame was identified as the rigid definition of Judaism. The solution was to prescribe rejecting all laws that were "not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization (CCAR Principles). In 1937, the problem was perceived as the 1885 document that defined Judaism only in terms of what it was not and a need for creating a sense of a people. The solution was to redefine Reform Judaism and to educate constituents about their commonalities. In 1999, the Reform Movement's problem was a need for a document that could speak to and for individual Reform Jews in a very diverse movement. Part of the solution was to broaden the definition of Reform Jews to be more inclusive than ever before.

Hunt, Benford, and Snow elaborated on the connections between framing processes and constructing an identity for collective action in "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities." They suggested there are three identities or actors in social movements: protagonists, who advocate for the movement; antagonists, who oppose the protagonists; and neutral observers, whom they
called the audience. I would argue that all parties are part of the audience, but breaking the audience into categories by how each group listens to the movement is useful for understanding the multiple perspectives assumed. The authors suggested that how social movement protagonists, antagonists, and observers perceive the current situation influences how they interpret the social. This suggests that researchers should characterize what social movement actors assume, what types of claims they make, what they take as evidence, and what they take as conclusions to see how they understand the social movement.

In 2000, Snow and Benford reviewed the sociological scholarship involving framing and the understandings of the characteristic and variable features of collective action frames. They discussed framing processes as “deliberative, utilitarian, and goal directed,” in other words, functional, and the frame alignment processes previously identified in their articles and applied by other researchers (624). Their review of the literature indicates that there are no studies that discuss the discursive processes that create frames. Such a study of the discursive processes that create frames can contribute to a rhetorical study of social movements.

Overall, framing theory can be useful to rhetoricians because it provides a conceptual framework for thinking about how and why social movement activists use existing belief systems as a resource to create certain perceptions about their reality and make certain projects seem do-able. When enriched with rhetorical concerns and insights, the concept of frames can help focus studies on how a social movement “speaks” to its audience’s current situation by interpreting the shared experience of the
community and constituting a shared understanding of the experience. A social movement’s frame of interpretation encourages its community to interpret experience in the way suggested by the frame. Rhetorical awareness helps illuminate how the interpretation is achieved—how social movements articulate shared values and assumptions in ways that are acceptable to the group and speak to socially situated ideas to achieve relevant ends. In Aristotelian terms, rhetorical framing studies can help explain a movement’s ethical resources by highlighting who has the agency and authority to create knowledge in the social movement, why they have the authority, and how they exercise it. A movement’s logical assumptions can be explored by examining what the social movement uses as evidence and assumes its audience will value and accept as logical, credible evidence. A social movement’s pathetic dimensions can be explained by focusing on what is valued and how the social movement appeals to its audiences’ shared values and attitudes.

Such rhetorical concerns can be more rigorously developed using models drawn from framing theory. Framing theory became a resource for research in communications when Robert Entman broadened the conception of frames by suggesting the readers’ part in the transaction. He explains that just because a frame is present in texts does not mean that the audience members will notice it, interpret it, or be influenced by it as they interact with the text. Entman suggests a transactional epistemological approach to reading frames, which was first articulated by Louise Rosenblatt in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*. Entman explains that a common understanding of frames will be useful in
some theoretical debates in mass communication; for example, in content analysis that
does not always take into consideration the reader's interaction with the text. He explains:

Often, coders simply total up all messages they judge as positive and negative and
draw conclusions about the dominant meanings. They neglect to measure the
salience of elements in the text, and fail to gauge the relationship of the most
salient clusters of messages—the frames—to the audience’s schemata. Unguided
by a framing paradigm, content analysis may often yield data that misrepresent
the media messages that most audience members are actually picking up on. (57)

Entman’s example illustrates how an understanding of frames can direct our attention to
the relationship between the text and the audience’s shared experience, beliefs, and
values. Entman’s theories of frames are valuable for rhetoricians because they underline
how important it is for rhetoricians to develop shared interpretive paradigms to advance
programs of collaborative inquiry.

Intersections between Rhetoric and Framing

Aristotle tells us that rhetoric is the art of seeing all the available means of
persuasion in each particular case, and he explains that people use emotions, logic, and
personal credibility to persuade. But the available means of persuasion are more varied
than that. Framing theory points out how people use the situation as an available means
to persuade. Kenneth Burke’s work can help reconceptualize framing theory because
frames account for the interactive, or what Burke termed “dramatistic,” process involved
in constructing shared perspectives. Social movements play out dramatically by using
identification to organize shared interpretations of experience. Burke explains, “Any
symbol system explicitly or implicitly turns our attention in one direction rather than in
other directions" (*Language* 57). In other words, as a symbol system, frames invite readers to shift perspectives, conceptualize something through an alternative lens or from a different point of view. A frame shifts perspective on an entire experience and changes how one assigns meaning to it. Frames are used to bring our attention to different perspectives for conceptualizing reality and function like Burke’s “terministic screens” (*Language* 45). Burke explains that the terms we use direct our attention differently and lead to different observations (*Language* 49). Frames work in a similar way. Frames direct an audience to conceptualize experience through an alternative lens, from a different point of view, and lead to different observations. A frame offers a different perspective by reconceptualizing the meaning of a situation. The frame and context have to be, as Burke phrases it, “consubstantial” or “acting together” to be meaningful (*Rhetoric* 21). As Burke explains, “the terms by which we communicate are always circumstantially founded” (*Permanence* 183). There is no acontextual way to understand how a frame is used to achieve particular ends; frames are rhetorical and socially defined. Kenneth Burke tells us that rhetoric is identification because rhetors must identify themselves with the audience if persuasion is to occur: “You persuade a man [sic] only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (*Rhetoric* 55). Burke’s focus on identification highlights the importance of studying the community’s shared knowledge and experience. Frames help rhetors and audiences align meanings and identify with each other.

Framing theory is useful for my project because it provides classifications to use as I examine how the authors of these documents assign meaning to and interpret relevant
events and experiences. A rhetorical perspective on framing theory could help illuminate how social movements articulate shared values and assumptions in ways that are acceptable to the group to speak to socially situated ideas to achieve relevant ends.

Framing theory provides a strategy to examine an individual’s and social movement’s interpretive orientations by providing categories to see how social movement activists use socially defined markers to make sense of the world and serve social movements. Case studies using framing theory have focused on socially defined markers that frame how individual’s interpretive orientations align with social movement’s interpretive orientation to create an acceptable frame. Sociologists have written a plethora of case studies that discuss the frame of a particular social movement uses to mobilize collective action.

Rhys Williams and Robert Benford say a common frame metaphor is of “the window- or picture-frame” in which the frames act as a boundary that keep some elements in view and others out of view” and tells those constructing meaning what is or is not important (131). This window frame concept of framing is reminiscent of Lloyd Bitzer’s work on “the rhetorical situation” in which he claims meaning in situation is an observable, historical fact. This window frame concept of frames is problematic because it assumes meaning exists independent of the interpreter and does not account for the fact that the meaning of a frame is dependent on an interpreter’s interpretation, which is influenced by the community’s shared knowledge. Responding to Bitzer, Richard Vatz

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1 For other case studies using framing theory see Berbrier: New White Separatists, Cress and Snow: homeless mobilization, Evans: Religious Pro-Choice Movement, McAdam 1996a & b: American
states "No situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he [sic] chooses to characterize it" (154). Vatz points out that defining a situation as rhetorical depends on each person's point of view and subjective interpretation, what Burke would call their termenistic screens. Vatz stresses that there is no arhetorical language of observation and indicates that people's lenses influence how they perceive situations. Vatz argues that meaning is not discovered in situations, but created by rhetors. To understand why discourse was persuasive in a specific case, we need to reinvent the cultural values and assumptions and the situational context in which it was created. In this dissertation, I will illustrate how rhetoric can help us to understand frames and framing in ways that differ from sociologists and how we can make productive use of those differences.

Rhetoric can be considered how language is used to come to terms with differences or the language that influences change. Rhetoric involves the construction of meaning through contextually based interpretive work created through interaction. Framing theory provides a strategy to examine an individual's and social movement's interpretive orientations by providing categories to see how social movement activists use socially defined markers to make sense of the world and serve social movements. Frame alignment categorizes how movement activists make their work make sense to others by discussing their values and beliefs in ways in which others can identify. Rhetorical
framing theory helps critics examine language with more complexity and nuance than the classification of framing theory alone would allow.

Chapter Overview

In this study, I argue that a community’s culture encompasses the group’s agreed-upon meanings of actions in addition to the group’s significant disagreements about the meanings of actions. In chapter two, I discuss the 1885 Platform, which was created out of a discussion questioning the significance or meaning that Jews attribute to Jewish practices. The platform was written after a community-wide conversation over the contested meanings of Jewish practices. For example, traditional Jews thought Jewish dress, food, and work practices showed respect to God and were therefore meaningful, while Reform Jews did not. This platform resulted from the articulation of the Jewish community’s disagreements and represents the author’s understanding of the agreed-upon meaning of Jewish symbolic actions. It did not address the community’s significant disagreements, contentions, and arguments over the meaning of symbolic action.

I argue that how the authors of this platform framed the historical situation influenced how they constructed the movement’s collective identity. I discuss the political climate in America before 1885, when immigration laws mirrored public sentiment toward foreigners, and I discuss how this situation was used to frame the 1885 platform. I examine the ways this platform frames traditional Judaism and uses agreed-upon notions and current life experiences to demonstrate that traditional Judaism does not fit American Jews’ needs. The platform combined the community’s concern about
appearing foreign and its belief in the value of modernity to frame the historical situation as an opportunity to revise Judaism. Based on this interpretation, the platform present traditional ceremonies and customs as “primitive” and “foreign” (CCAR Pittsburgh). The platform suggested that the values traditional Judaism promoted no longer fit with the Reform Movement’s constituents because they were reasonable, modern American Jews. The platform used “the views and habits of modern civilization” as the measuring stick with which to evaluate Judaism and it defined traditional practices as something that was outdated and apt to obstruct rather than further “modern spiritual elevation” (CCAR Pittsburgh). The platform thereby reflected Reform Jews’ desire to appear “modern”—a term used often in the document, but never defined. The 1885 platform, written entirely in English, demonstrated to new immigrants that they could be accepted as Jewish Americans by modernizing themselves and giving up outmoded Mosaic and rabbinical laws and practices. In addition to describing what Jews were no longer obligated to do, the Pittsburgh Platform framed Jewish identity as not a nation, but a religious community—a community of reasonable, modern, and progressive people—terms that reflected the values of the Progressive era. Finally, the Reform Movement amplified Reform Jews’ belief in the democratic right to be an individual in America—a belief that was salient to new immigrants who wanted to be part of the America community. The platform suggested that as modern Americans, Reform Jews could choose which Jewish laws and traditions to observe.

The 1885 platform was written in response to the conflicts over the meaning of Jewish practices and if it was necessary to observe Jewish practices to be Jewish in
America. This platform marked the beginning of the Reform tradition in America. Maclntyre explains that in the first stage, a tradition characterizes its own beliefs and "characterizes the contentions of its rivals in its own terms" (Whose 166). I have evidence to show how the Reform Movement does this in its first platform. Maclntyre theorizes that "a tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of . . . conflict . . . with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements" (Whose 12). The 1885 platform was written in response to the proponents of traditional Judaism who were critics external to Reform. By situating the tradition’s commitments within the historical situation in which they were created, I show how these commitments are embedded and draw from the larger conceptual frame. The 1885 platform framed the situation as requiring a new articulation of Judaism and defined its culture as only that which was agreed-upon. The platform presented a unified front and implied homogeneous consensus of beliefs, and did not acknowledge differences of opinion within its ranks.

In this chapter I also discuss the rhetorical dynamics of representation. I argue that the writing process of the 1885 platform was not consistent with the assumptions of the group because one author authoritatively decreed the platform while he declared that individual autonomy was fundamental to making Judaism modern. The 1885 prescriptive platform transformed understanding of religious practice, but it was quickly outdated because it did not value differences in opinion and it did not put the issue to people for them to exercise their own judgment. I examine the representative process and argue that
it was consistent in the historical context as a natural outcome of the traditional tendency to look at rabbis as the authority. In 1885 matters of doctrine were not put to as a democratic vote. Instead the rabbinic leaders were looked to for guidance. But the growing dissonance between the philosophy of reform that valued individual autonomy and the belief in an authority that valued dictates was to become a defining issue in the Reform Movement and an important point of discussion in the 1937 and 1999 platforms. The next platform illustrates a more democratic representative process that supports the assumptions of the group.

MacIntyre theorizes the stages in a tradition's development and has one explanation about how a tradition develops from one stage to another. MacIntyre explains that over time a tradition develops measures to evaluate its own progress or lack of it and may use a rival tradition as a resource to explain its own failings (Whose 167). This explains the sudden shift in the Reform Movement after the platform was written. Years after the Pittsburgh Platform was written, the major author, Kohler, revalued ideas from traditional Judaism and worked to use them as resources to explain the failings in the Reform Movement thereby moving the Reform tradition from the first stage in its development to the second stage. MacIntyre explains that it is difficult for traditions to pass from the first to the second stage because "it requires a rare gift of empathy as well as of intellectual insight for the protagonists of such tradition to be able to understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of their rival in such a way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to recharacterize their own beliefs in an
appropriate manner from the alien perspective of the rival tradition” (Whose 167).

Kohler’s training in traditional Judaism gave him the advantage of understanding it.

In chapter 3, I examine the 1937 platform. MacIntyre explains that, “A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in term of two kinds of conflict . . .” (Whose 12). The 1885 platform illustrated one of the types of conflict: “those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements” (Whose 12). The 1937 platform illustrated the second type of conflict: “those internal, interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted” (Whose 12). As the Reform Movement developed, it grew more diverse and included factions that disagreed over fundamental issues. I will show how as the Reform tradition developed it acknowledged internal debates and continuously contested ideas that were significant for its members.

The Reform Tradition had become diverse enough to contain groups with competing visions. Many Reform Jews had become comfortable enough with their American identity to be able to also identify with Palestine as a Jewish homeland. However, other Reform Jews believed that one could not be an American and a Zionist Jew. These competing visions converged in the discussion on revising the prayer book because it codified the practices that defined the community. The difficulty in revising the prayer book to satisfy the factions in the movement led to the realization that the platform needed to be revised as well.
The writing situation for the 1937 platform was influenced by tensions between the Zionist and the non-Zionists and the belief that Jewish survival meant that the movement didn't want to exclude any Jews. The 1937 platform illustrates the difficulty in making a collaborative writing process to articulate an inclusive collective identity. This writing process for this platform highlights that frames are not monolithic, but there are multiple, overlapping frames. The writing process of the 1937 platform was an attempt to be inclusive of all the factions in the Reform Movement and maintain coherence of beliefs within multiple interpretive communities.

MacIntyre's ideas on the third stage of a tradition's development are useful to explain the 1937 platform. In the third stage, a tradition articulates discrepancies between the beliefs of an earlier stage and contrasts it with the world as it has come to understand it (Whose 357). The Reform Movement reflects back and recognizes its own previous inadequacies in the writing of this platform by comparing what they now judge the world to be with what they previously judged the world to be. In this chapter, I discuss how this reflection is manifested in how the movement rationalizes and represents differences in this platform.

In chapter 4, I examine the 1999 platform and argue that the process of representing a group is just as important as the statement that is produced. I explain that the 1999 platform was written using an entirely different writing process. In this platform, the concepts of difference and the representative dynamics of the collaborative process serve as frames in the collaborations themselves. I show how the writing process for this platform transforms the process of representing the movement into a more
broadly representative deliberation, and this transformation changes the nature of the Reform Movement to include a more democratic process. It was through this writing process that the movement defined reform not by the contents of its changes but in the very process of change—the belief in the value of change. I argue that the process of writing the 1999 platform was understood as a learning process, and it was presented as a model of the type of inquiries individuals and congregations were encouraged to conduct— inquiries that place a high value on change and varied understandings. The platform celebrates the diversity of belief and practice in this community and essentially sanctioned Reform Jews as a community of individuals.

As I examine this stage of the development of the Reform tradition, I will introduce what MacIntyre calls an “epistemological crisis” (Whose 361). The writing process of the 1999 platform showed signs of the tradition’s epistemological crisis when, as MacIntyre explains, “conflicts over rival answers to key questions could no longer be settled rationally” (Whose 362). The 1999 writing process revealed new inadequacies in the articulation of the movement’s collective identity, and the established belief could not provide resources to solve them. The solution to this crisis was to invent a new concept of a collective identity. MacIntyre explains that the solution to a genuine epistemological crisis must meet three requirements. I explain how the Reform movement met all three: it furnished a solution, it provided an explanation of what had made the tradition impotent before the solution, and it carried out these tasks in a way that continued the tradition’s belief structure (Whose 362). I present evidence to support my claim that the Reform tradition resolved its crisis and attained intellectual maturity. Evidence in this
chapter shows that valuing differences as a resource for learning empowers a tradition to learn from the diversity of its experience.

In chapter 5, I suggest that nontraditional groups may employ nontraditional rhetorical practices that would be best analyzed by devising new methodologies. I recommend using framing theory as a heuristic to examine how a tradition uses experience to frame its collective identity. Additionally, I suggest that examining the kinds of questions a tradition asks itself reflects its stage of development. I conclude my study of the rhetorical practices of the Reform Movement and how it developed as a tradition by briefly summarizing how the influential members of the movement used frames and represented differences of opinion in each platform and writing process. I end with my personal experience dealing with a Jewish identity after September 11th. I suggest that because the rhetorical practices of the Reform Movement are not static, but are dynamic, the movement will probably change to accommodate the changes in Jewish identity since September 11th. As such, the Reform Movement represents a tradition that has much to teach us about how to learn from others and represent a collective identity.
CHAPTER 2
The 1885 Pittsburgh Platform: How Can We Americanize Them?

In chapter one, I argued that culture encompasses the agreed-upon meanings that community members attribute to actions in addition to the community's significant disagreements about the meanings of actions. The 1885 Platform was created out of a discussion questioning the significance or meaning that Jews attribute to Jewish practices (see Appendix A). The platform was written after a community-wide conversation over the contested meanings of Jewish practices. This platform resulted from the articulation of the Jewish community's disagreements. The 1885 Platform represented the authors' understanding of the agreed-upon meaning of Jewish symbolic actions, which is typical in the initial development of a tradition. The 1885 Platform did not acknowledge differences or address the community's significant disagreements, contentions, and arguments over the meaning of symbolic action. The Reform Movement can be seen as a community of people who are attempting social change by reassessing their shared values and articulating changes in them and the corresponding meaning of symbolic actions. But the Reform Movement of the 1880s can also be seen as the beginning of a tradition. As a tradition, the Reform Movement began by defining itself to respond to social change.

According to my research, the 1885 platform was written in response to three main developments involving how Jews could be Jewish in America. First, the challenges of following some Jewish practices in America, where strong public sentiment
against foreigners resulted in many Jewish immigrants abandoning Jewish traditions, were difficult for new immigrants. Second, Felix Adler’s Ethical Cultural Society proposed a solution to how Jews could be Jewish without following Jewish practices, but his solution included atheism, which the Reform Movement considered a threat. Third, the conflict about how Jews could be Jewish in America culminated in a debate between two rabbis, which was continued in the Jewish newspapers and provided an arena for the Reform Movement to define itself publicly. Each rabbi had a different interpretation of the historical situation and framed being Jewish in America as necessitating revising or maintaining Jewish traditions. The Pittsburgh Platform was written in reaction to the newspaper coverage of this debate to define Reform Judaism in America. The rhetorical practices of the Reform tradition can be seen in the Reform Movement’s argument about the meaning of Jewish practices and if they were necessary for Jews to be Jewish in America.

In this chapter, I discuss the political climate in America before 1885, when immigration laws mirrored public sentiment toward foreigners, and I discuss how this situation heightened the conflict over the meaning of Jewish practices. I argue that how the authors of this platform framed the historical situation influenced how they constructed the movement’s collective identity. I examine the ways this platform framed traditional Judaism and used agreed-upon notions and current life experiences to demonstrate that traditional Judaism did not fit American Jews’ needs.

I also discuss how this platform marked the beginning of the Reform Movement in America as a distinct tradition. MacIntyre theorizes that "a tradition is an argument
extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of . . . conflict . . . with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject . . . those fundamental agreements" (Whose 12). The 1885 platform was written in response to conflicts with traditional Jews, critics of Reform who believed Jews needed to observe Jewish practices to be Jewish in America. Basically, the 1885 platform was written in response to conflicts over the meaning of Jewish practices. MacIntyre explains that in the first stage of development, a tradition characterizes its own beliefs and also “characterizes the contentions of its rivals in its own terms” (Whose 166). By situating the tradition’s commitments within the historical situation in which they were created, I show how these commitments are embedded and draw from the larger conceptual frame. The 1885 platform framed the situation as requiring a new articulation of Judaism and defined its culture as only that which was agreed-upon. The platform presented a unified front and implied a consensus of beliefs, and did not acknowledge differences of opinion within its ranks.

I will also link MacIntyre’s moral theory with the way this platform changed the conception of Jewish practices. The platform maintained that traditional Jewish practices were not practical or purposeful. The platform essentially announced that Jewish people did not have an essential purpose or function to fill in the Jewish community and it did so by instantiating the American virtues of self-fulfillment, autonomy, and freedom. This move to emphasize individualization and self-actualization undermined the Jews’ sense of communal purpose; as MacIntyre explains, when people see themselves as individuals prior to and apart from all roles they cease to have a functional concept of the collective
(After 58-9). This 1885 platform not only took away the purpose for practices, but it did so by treating people as a “means” and not an “end.” MacIntyre explains that to treat people as a means is to make people an instrument of someone’s will without any regard for their rationality. In contrast, treating people as an end is to offer them reasons for a belief and allow them to evaluate the reasons and decide for themselves. The 1885 platform authoritatively declared what Reform Jews should not do and defined their cultural identity by what they were not. The 1885 platform argued for rejecting religious practice and presented this as dictates to be followed. While the platform constructed religious practices as alterable, they were still exclusively dictated by rabbinic religious conscience and not by individuals. MacIntyre’s notion of rational practice was extended only to the rabbis in this platform and not to individuals.

Finally, in this chapter I discuss the rhetorical dynamics of representation. I argue that the writing process of the 1885 platform was not consistent with the assumptions of the group because one author authoritatively decreed the platform while he declared that individual autonomy was fundamental to making Judaism modern. The 1885 prescriptive platform transformed understandings of religious practice, but it was quickly outdated because it did not value differences in opinion and it did not put the issue to people for them to exercise their own judgment. I examine the representative process and argue that it was consistent in the historical context as a natural outcome of the traditional tendency to look at rabbis as authorities. In 1885 matters of doctrine were not put to a democratic vote. Instead, the rabbinic leaders were looked to for guidance. But the growing dissonance between the philosophy of Reform, which valued individual autonomy, and
the belief in an authority, which valued dictates, became a defining issue in the Reform Movement and was discussed in the 1937 and 1999 platforms. The next platform illustrates a more democratic representative process that supported the assumptions of the group.

The Pittsburgh Platform had an enormous impact on the Jewish community. The response to the Pittsburgh Platform’s acceptance in 1885 was a division of Judaism into two more sects besides the Reform Movement: the Conservative Movement, which considered Torah alterable to modern circumstances, and Modern Orthodoxy, which considered the Torah the word of God that Jews must obey in a modern world. While the Reform Movement was created out of a need for a different collective identity than traditional Judaism, the Conservative Movement and Modern Orthodoxy were created “as a defense against those modern secular values that gave rise to the more liberal Reform” Movement (Greenberg 15).

The Pittsburgh Platform defined the collective identity of Reform Jews in very different terms than traditional Judaism. To understand the frame of the Pittsburgh Platform, we need to examine the current situation, life experiences, and shared beliefs and values of the authors, opponents, and community members of the time in which it was written. Looking at the Pittsburgh Platform without the contextual information doesn’t give the full picture. Using archival research about the historical situation, I theorize about the shared beliefs of the community and how it was used to create a collective identity in this document. I examine the rhetoric produced by the proponents of the Reform Movement, who were the writers of the document and like-minded rabbis,
and the opponents of the Reform Movement, who were represented in the Jewish press, and show how each group framed the Reform Movement. Framing theory can help focus attention on how this social movement used the community’s existing belief systems as a resource to create certain perceptions and use them to enable particular practical projects. The concept of frames helps focus attention on how the Reform Movement created meaning by “speaking” to its audience’s current situation and this understanding helps explain how its responses were considered fitting. A rhetorical perspective on framing theory helps illuminate how the Reform Movement articulated shared values in a way that was considered acceptable to the group to speak to socially situated ideas to achieve relevant ends.

Framing Fodder: The Political Climate in America

An overview of the political climate in America before 1885 helps explain the rationale behind the 1885 document. The Reform Movement perceived a need for the Jewish community to blend in to American life. The immigration laws in America before 1885 reflected the political climate of the time when the Pittsburgh Platform was written. Even though the vast majority of Americans were immigrants or descendents of immigrants, there was strong public sentiment against foreigners in the 1880s. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Treaty in 1880 restricted the entrance and naturalization of immigrants from China because of public sentiment against foreigners. In 1882, with violence against Chinese nationals escalating across the country, the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited Chinese immigration and naturalization for ten years. This fear of reprisal
for being identified as foreign influenced Jewish immigrants. In America, Jewish immigrants who adhered to their religious practices could not avoid appearing foreign, so they had a strong motivation to appear as American as possible.

In this period, Americans believed in the concept of a “melting pot,” which valued the merger of Anglo-Saxon peoples with other groups and a blending of their respective cultures. In other words, retaining one’s unique culture was not valued and was discouraged. The idea of the melting pot demanded the complete renunciation of immigrant’s ancestral culture in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon core group. One problem with this melting pot concept becomes clear when one tries to define what is this American soup into which people melt. Regardless of this problem of definition, people believed that foreigners would jeopardize the coherence of American society. At that period of time, Americans did not value the perspective of the Other and did not see it as a resource to enrich their perspective. Cultural diversity was seen as having potentially destructive effects on the collective psyche of the nation and the smooth functioning of a democratic society. The rapid growth of immigrant populations at this time made the issue increasingly important. The rhetoric against immigrants made foreigners the scapegoats. Making foreigners the scapegoat directed people’s suspicion and anger to immigrants and diverted attention from the other problems such as inequities in American society’s established power structure.

Meanwhile increasing pressures in Eastern Europe pressed thousands of Jewish immigrants into America, where they were forced to deal with being a foreigner in a foreign land. In Russia, the new czar, Alexander III, and his chief minister, Konstantin
Pobiednetsov, instituted the May Laws, which limited Jews' access to the peasantry with whom they had traditionally conducted business, and encouraged a series of pogroms perpetrated by the peasants (Neuringer 3). In addition, the Russian Army would take all able-bodied Jews to serve in the army and most of them would never return to their families. My great-grandfather was so desperate to avoid being forced into the Russian Army that when they arrived at his village on a winter's night to take away all the men, he hid in the lake. He was not taken into the Army that night, but the night in the lake gave him pneumonia and he died two weeks later. His son, my grandfather was among the flood of Jewish immigrants from Russia that poured into the United States. This mass immigration continued until the restrictive laws of the 1920s. To the German Jewish community in America who were striving for a greater sense of acceptance in America, these Eastern European immigrants were a threat because their appearance and practices made all Jews seem foreign.

The Eastern European Jewish immigrants were in many respects completely different from those who had come from Germany. They brought with them to America a traditional sense of Judaism. Eastern European Jews came from all-Jewish towns and villages in which their Jewish culture was almost totally unaffected by the cultures of the people around them. They saw Judaism as a religion that completely enveloped their lives and dictated a large part of their behavior. These East European Jews, who maintained their traditional ways, quickly formed a proletariat in American cities, a working class (Glazer 61-62). In contrast, most German Jewish immigrants and their offspring defined Judaism in universalistic religious terms and believed in scientific
rationalism. German Jews who had given up the observance of restrictive Jewish laws and Americanized were “rewarded” with rising to middle- or upper-middle-class status in America. Those who desired to blend into American life learned English rapidly, assimilated American work habits and practices, and rose in the social hierarchy (Glazer 43-44, 64). It appeared that the cost of socio-economic integration in America was religious compromise because Jewish religious life included laws involving dress, food, and work habits that separated Jews from the rest of American society and created economic hardships. In an effort to eradicate all evidence of separatism many Jewish immigrants dropped the Jewish practices and wanted other Jews to do the same.

Reform German Jews considered the influx of East European Jews as a problem that needed fixing. Reform rabbi David Philipson, who attended the Pittsburgh Conference, wrote in his journal on January 2, 1888: “the Jewish Russian Problem [is] one of the great questions which we must solve in the near future. There are people in our communities by the hundreds and thousands. How can we Americanize them?” (David Philipson Collection [1823-1949], 35: 3). The Reform German rabbis felt impelled to hasten the adjustment of foreign-born Jews to modern America by providing them with a form of religion that would be consistent with their new status as Americans. The Platform was, after all, written just before an astounding number of Jewish immigrants came to America. In 1880, there were 250,000 Jews estimated to be living in America. By 1900, immigration added half a million more. Another 1,250,000 entered between 1900 and 1914 (Garland 48). The great majority of the newcomers came from Eastern Europe. They were poor, traditional Jews and their adjustment to life in America
created social issues and problems for them and concern for German Jews. While
traditional Jews may have seen this situation as indicating a need to hold tight to their
traditions, Reform saw it as indicating a need to adapt.

As Eastern European Jews continued to immigrate to the United States, the
country’s prejudice toward foreigners continued to be reflected in policy changes. These
policy changes reinforced fitting in and adapting oneself to America. The federal
government took control over state immigration regulations when Congress passed the
Immigration Act of 1882, which required states to monitor their ports for “undesirables”
and charge a 50-cents head tax to all arriving immigrants. This act prevented Chinese
immigrants from entering the county as well as “any convict, lunatic, idiot, or any other
person unable to take care of him or herself without becoming a public charge” (Daniel
456). This Pauper Exclusion Provision was enacted primarily to deny entrance to
indigent persons who appeared likely to become long-term burdens on public charity.
The vagueness of the language left determining which particular immigrant should be
excluded up to the discretion of each individual immigration officer. Generally the aged,
the chronically ill and handicapped, and widows with large numbers of young children
fell into this category (Neuringer 20). However, it was impossible to know what other
groups of people were placed into this category so, as I will discuss later, some
immigrants took care to not be perceived as paupers.

The Reform Movement’s perception of the current situation was an important part
of understanding the times before the writing of the Pittsburgh Platform. The platform
drew upon the community’s concern for appearing foreign and belief in the value of
modernity to frame the situation as an opportunity to revise Judaism. The rabbis who wrote the 1885 platform did not question a society that demanded conformity and marginalized those who were different. They were not skeptical of the established system, and they did not question whose interests were served by conformity. The 1885 document reflected their desire to change the definition of Judaism into an Americanized religion so Reform Jews could adopt American behaviors as their own and still adhere to their religious beliefs. The Pittsburgh Platform seemed to be written for Jews who felt observant Judaism was too difficult to follow in America and who wanted to rid themselves of an image of being alien and different. Given their assessment of the situation of the time, they reflected the community’s shared beliefs and experiences that entering American society required Jews to change their traditional practices to fit in and survive.

A new subtle undercurrent of religious skepticism also affected American Jews. Scientific knowledge was privileged and biblical criticism made the Bible a study of scientific investigation that tended to highlight the unanswerable questions of faith. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* supported a general effort to apply science to human behavior and culture. Additionally, in 1883, William Graham Sumner released his book on Social Darwinism, which explains how the rich prosper because they are better equipped for surviving the process of natural selection (Daniel 461). This theory reflected the current belief of the importance of economic success and further encouraged Jews to drop their Jewish practices to be successful. Studying Judaism through scientific rationalism meant that there needed to be a verifiable
reason for laws involving actions that justified their existence. Since no such rationale existed, following these laws was deemed unreasonable.

Adler Proposed an Alternative, Non-traditional Identity for Jews

One Jewish response to modernity was provided by Felix Adler, who was the son of rabbi Samuel Adler and trained to take over his father's congregation. Beginning in 1873, Adler lectured on one way that Jews could free themselves from their rules and rituals by introducing his Jewish audiences to “the fundamental premises and conclusions of Bible criticism, science, and comparative religion” and encouraging them to radically reevaluate the Jewish religion (Kraut 87-88). In 1876, Adler inaugurated the New York Society of Ethical Culture, a movement that was dedicated to the practical concerns of social justice. The Ethical Society, as it was often called, published Adler’s series of discourses, Creed and Deed, in 1877 that defined his beliefs. In “The Ethical Society What it Means,” Felix Adler explained the Society of Ethical Culture stands for “ideas respecting the inner life, the essential life. The chief object of the Ethical Society is to gain real insight into the Way of Living, to see more clearly how to live so that life shall be worth living” (Hebrew Union College Special Collections Box a-82 20). The Ethical Society’s focus on living ethically was attractive to many Jews, but Adler’s alternative to a traditional Jewish identity was perceived as a threat by many because it seemed atheistic and therefore moved the identity out of the value system that Jews considered Jewish. Adler addressed assimilated Jews’ problem of Jewish identity by offering them a belief system that included dropping their own religious forms, beliefs, and behavior
patterns and taking the process of assimilation to its logical conclusion: departing from the Jewish community (Kraut 34). He lectured and published his lectures, with such titles as “When Are We Justified in Leaving Our Religious Fellowship?” and “A Secular View of Moral Training,” to explain his beliefs to his audience (Adler Addresses. HUC library).

The Jewish community was painfully aware of Adler and most considered his version of Judaism a threat. Some even blamed the Reform Movement for the growth of the Ethical Society. A letter to the editor in 1877 claimed the growth of Adlerism is the result of the leaders of the progressive party not having the foresight to maintain Jewish life while changing the rituals. It charged “a genuine reform was possible without breaking down the barriers between Judaism and irreligion. The logical result of what the leaders did and left undone is the apparent growth of Adlerism” (The Jewish Messenger 42.11 Sept. 14, 1877: 4). The author claimed that “when Jewish life was regarded with indifference by the teachers of the faith” then “an audience capable of thinking little of Judaism and everything of their own puny ‘reasons’ became possible” (The Jewish Messenger 42.11 Sept. 14, 1877: 4).

About a year and a half before the Pittsburgh Platform, Felix Adler announced a sister society to the Society of Ethical Culture of New York would open in Chicago and include an ethical school for children. This announcement on February 18, 1883 signaled the spread of the Ethical Society beyond New York and a shift from only offering Sunday lectures of theoretical concepts to offering a comprehensive educational program. Adler’s rationale was that many people feel “intense dissatisfaction with the existing
order of things” because religion “does not meet their wants” (*The Index* 14.691 (old series) 3.38 (new series) March 22, 1883: 450).

It does not fill their hearts. They ask for bread and it gives them stone. They feel dissatisfaction from the so-called liberal [Reform] movement. . . . They find no comfort, no strength in mere Liberalism [Reform], with its wrath, its bitterness, its denunciation, its negativism. They want a positive and constructive movement, which will build up rather than tear down, which will give rather than take away. (*The Index* 14.691 (old series) 3.38 (new series) March 22, 1883: 450)

Adler called for new leaders to help spread the Ethical Society, and he outlined the qualifications of these leaders. He ended his call for leaders with a persuasive plea appealing to people’s conscientiousness, “Oh, I know well that it is not an easy task which I recommend to them; but it is a worthy task, and one that urgently needs to be attempted” (*The Index* 14.691 (old series) 3.38 (new series) March 22, 1883: 452). The spread of the Ethical Society was perceived as a threat to Reform because it offered to fulfill the need of those Jews in a way that Reform could not. It attempted to convince them that ethical concerns were most important and that Jewish practices and a belief in God were not. While the Reform Movement would present ethical concerns as an important issue and Jewish practices as not vital, the belief in God would be paramount in Reform. Reform Jews believed that if Jews lost their faith in God, they were no longer Jewish.

The major author of the Pittsburgh Platform, Dr. Kohler, was aware of Felix Adler’s Society of Ethical Culture and perceived it as a threat to Reform Judaism. Although the Sinai Literary Association had invited Adler to speak at Temple Sinai, Kohler’s temple, Kohler refused to allow Adler to lecture from his pulpit (*The Jewish
Times 10.5 March 29, 1878: 4-5). The editor of The Jewish Times praised Kohler for taking a bold stand and upheld Kohler as an example to his brother-ministers, who are usually "over-timid and trot all round a danger instead of grappling with it boldly as Kohler has done" (The Jewish Times 10.5 March 29, 1878: 4). Kohler explained that he objected to Adler coming to his pulpit because:

Of what benefit to a society of young people the lecture of a man can be who has deserted the Jewish flag, and openly professes his disbelief in God and immorality, I really fail to see, unless the eradication of the Jewish faith is the object contemplated. But I suppose very few of your members, if any, know anything about the young professor, who merely by his fine oratory, combined with great arrogance, created for a while some sensation in New York. At any rate, I shall not allow my temple to be disgraced by a lecture to be delivered within its walls by one who blasphemes God and Judaism. (The Jewish Times 10.5 March 29, 1878: 5)

Kohler explained what he saw as Adler's allure and danger, "Certainly, the young professor [Felix Adler] and his anything but original book [Creed and Deed] . . . would hardly have created such a sensation in Jewish circles, were he not the son of the venerable Dr. S. Adler and the pupil of the late Dr. Geiger, misleading thereby, and by fine oratory, many an advocate of Jewish reform" (The Jewish Times 10.5 March 29, 1878: 5). While Felix Adler still lectured in Chicago it was not in Kohler's temple (The American Israelite 30.1234 March 29, 1878: 2). The prevailing success of Adler's ideas testified to the felt-need for a new identity for American Jews. The response to his Ethical Society helped establish one agreed-upon distinctive quality of Jews -- the belief in God. So while there was still a need for a new identity for American Jews, Adler's alternative was seen by his opponents as ending Judaism. Kohler responded by making a belief in God the first plank in the 1885 platform.
Two Competing Visions of Jewish Identity

"But in the name of hundreds of thousands of Jews who no longer believe in the divine origin of the entire Mosaic law and its rabbinical superstructure; in the name all those who are honest enough to say: ‘I avoid everything unclean, but I do not think that to eat oyster and pork is a sin that can in any way compare with lying or cheating,’... I claim the name of Jew for all who, while standing on the platform of the reformed or enlightened Judaism, discard on principle all ritualism of the past and seek for better and more adequate forms of religious devotion and life. (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84)

It was during this time, when immigrants wanted to blend in, when foreigners wanted to appear American, when Americanized Jews wanted new immigrant Jews not to look foreign, and when Adler's atheist approach to modernity seemed logical, that Jewish rabbis began to publicly address the issue of being Jewish in America. The two rabbis addressed the conflicting desires of many Jews to remain Jewish and be "American" and the problems involved in creating an America-Jewish identity. Each rabbi offered a way for Jewish immigrants to be Jewish in America. The rabbis sought to fill the need for a new consensus in America to define "what is Judaism" and "who is a Jew." The debate between Kaufmann Kohler, a Reform rabbi from Germany, and Alexander Kohut, a traditional rabbi from Eastern Europe, eventually led to the first platform in Reform Judaism. These two rabbis were historically situated and, as members of the Jewish community, were inescapably involved in the conflicts central to the developing tradition of the Reform Movement. Kohler's overall views and his responses to Kohut's arguments give expression to the Reform rhetorical tradition. To understand the Reform rhetorical tradition, scholars need to understand Kohler's distinct conceptions as parts of the whole and in terms of the historical context out of which it emerged. An
understanding of how Kohler articulated Reform ideas in response to Kohut’s arguments against reform provides a broader context. Kohler’s articulation of his philosophical theories of reform in response to Kohut gave organized expression to concepts and theories embodied in his view of reform. As such Kohler’s articulation made available for rational criticism and for further rational development his socially embodied theories and concepts of reform.

Faced with the same historical situation, Kohler and Kohut each had a different interpretation of it and framed it as necessitating revising or maintaining Judaism. Their frame of the situation determined how they made sense of themselves and created the collective identity of Reform. So while conservatives like Kohut saw traditional Judaism as something to be revered and preserved because it was sacred, reformers like Kohler saw traditional Judaism as stifling and oppressive and not relevant to current experiences. Through a conservative screen, Reform threatened to destroy the integrity of Judaism. Yet through a reform screen, Reform offered an opportunity to modify oppressive restrictions and enliven Judaism to be relevant in modern America.

Kohler was able to argue about Reform with Kohut because Kohler was trained in traditional Judaism. Kohler was raised in Fuerth in an atmosphere of genuine orthodoxy, and so he understood traditional Judaism intimately. Kohler explained in his personal memoirs that the religious circles in which he was brought up, “held fast to the proud memories and endearing customs of the ancient days” (“Personal” 224). Kohler’s religious education was also traditional. His father began teaching him the Chumesh (Pentateuch) of the Torah at age five (“Personal” 224). When Kohler was six, he began
studying the Talmud in the day school of Simon Bamberger ("Personal" 225). At the age of ten, he boarded in Hasfurt and began his rabbinical studies ("Personal" 226). He studied under Dr. Marcus Lehman of Mayence, the Rabbi of an orthodox congregation and head of the rabbinical school; R. Jacob Ettlinger of Altona, "the leader of orthodoxy in many quarters"; and Samson Hirsch, who represented neo-orthodoxy ("Personal" 227-28). Kohler explained that he never lost hold on his ancestral faith, but after studying at the Breslau Seminary of the Berlin University, he realized he had outgrown "the romanticism and conservatism of those who adhered to the teachings of the Breslau Seminary and began exploring other options ("Personal" 231). Kohler’s education gave him experience with the primary canonical texts in the Jewish tradition as well as the agreed-upon critical and historical understanding of those texts. As a scholar and a Rabbi, he understood traditional Judaism and could discuss in significant measure those values that rivaled Reform. Kohut did not have this same advantage because he was only trained in traditional Judaism.

When members of two distinct rival traditions such as traditional Judaism and the Reform Movement in 1885 confront incompatible and conflicting demands such as how to respond to modernity in America, they often cannot see each other’s point of view. Maclntyre’s theory of how rival traditions argue about their differences is useful here. Maclntyre explains that a major issue when two rival large-scale intellectual traditions confront one another is that each tradition has its own interpretation, its own account of truth and knowledge, and its own mode of characterizing the relevant subject matter. There is no neutral way of characterizing the subject matter that would be acceptable to
both sides (*Whose* 166). Maclntyre’s argument suggests that there is no neutral way for Kohut to characterize reform and for Kohler to characterize traditional Judaism. The only way to understand each view is to examine how each rival characterizes the other since each has its own understanding. The historical situation prior to and including the writing of the Pittsburgh Platform illustrates how the Reform Movement characterizes the contentions of traditional Judaism “in its own terms, making explicit the grounds for rejecting what is incompatible with its own central theses” (*Whose* 166-67). Kohler and Kohut each characterized Reform and traditional Judaism in his own terms and explained why he rejected the other.

Kaufmann Kohler framed living in America as a Jew as an opportunity to adjust Judaism to the times. Kohler arrived in New York from Germany on August 28, 1869 at the age of twenty-six to assume the pulpit at Congregation Beth El in Detroit. Kohler lived in and adjusted to America for sixteen years before his debate with Kohut. At the time he was the most vocal and prolific writer on the Reform Movement. At his inaugural address, he spread his message of Darwinian Evolution, insisting that a living Judaism means constant change and adjustment to the conditions of the time. His point of view was that Judaism must be interpreted in terms of the needs of the present as well as in terms of the historical past. Catering to his constituents’ belief in scientific rationalism, he argued that Darwin and other scientists had proved the evolutionary process in history, and that religion alone cannot be excluded from that process. Kohler argued that Judaism has shown that it accepts the principles of evolution because it has always followed the principle of the survival of the fittest in terms of ceremonies and
ideas, and new ceremonies and ideas have always taken hold when old ones died out (The Jewish Times 1.30 Sept. 24, 1869: 10 and The Jewish Times 1.31 Oct. 1, 1869: 10-11). Kohler's ministry reflected his beliefs. In 1871, Kohler assumed the pulpit at Sinai Congregation in Chicago and introduced the Sunday service to provide those who had to work on the Sabbath an opportunity to worship on Sunday. His sermons often addressed the spirit of indifference and the tendency toward assimilation of his mostly immigrant congregants and showed the relevancy of Judaism in America at the time. Unlike Adler, Kohler did not lecture on the irrelevancy of Judaism. Instead he argued for altering Judaism to support American Jews.

Alexander Kohut framed living in America as a Jew as a threat to traditional Judaism which necessitated holding fast to traditions. Kohut was a newly arrived immigrant who had just arrived in New York from Hungary on May 3, 1885 at the age of 43 (Elzas ix, xxvii). He had immigrated to the United States to assume the pulpit at Congregation Ahawath Chesed in New York and soon after his arrival began a series of lectures on “The Ethics of the Fathers,” which included attacking the Reform position. Kohut became the most vocal and prolific opponent of the Reform Movement. In his first Shabbat sermon he had challenged the authenticity of the Reform position and declared reform “a deformity” (The American Hebrew 23.4 June 5, 5645 [1885]: 51).

Kohut’s first Shabbat sermon began a community-wide debate. After Kohut declared reform "a deformity," Kohler, who was at the pulpit at nearby Temple Beth El, took Kohut’s position as a challenge to his Reform beliefs and delivered a Shabbat
sermon the following week that defended Reform, stressed the evolutionary character of Judaism, attacked Orthodoxy, and asked American Jews to choose. Throughout the summer Kohut and Kohler replied to each other week after week in their Shabbat services. The dispute immediately received wide publicity, even in secular presses, because the dispute was not just between two rabbis but reflected the tension Jewish immigrants felt about how to be Jewish in America. The Jewish press reported on the details because the issue was salient for its readers, who were dealing with these same issues. The Kohut-Kohler debate attracted enormous attention and acted as a stimulant for American Jewry. "New York is agog with a new sensation," reports The American Israelite in Cincinnati (The American Israelite 32.1 July 3, 1885: 2). The huge crowds that assembled at Congregation Ahawath Chesed and Temple Beth El testified to the interest that the two antagonists had stirred up. Kohut's and Kohler's synagogues were overcrowded with interested people (The American Israelite 32.1 July 3, 1885: 2).

This exchange was significant because it was printed and because out of this debate Kohler called the Pittsburgh Conference and wrote the Pittsburgh Platform. The Kohler-Kohut Controversy published in the Jewish press shows how each side created different realities by how it framed the situation of being Jewish in America. The rhetoric produced by the two sides -- the proponents represented by Kohler and the opponents represented by Kohut -- helped explain the nature of how each side framed themselves and the other. It showed the proponent's view and the opponent's view of Reform by itself and in relation to traditional Judaism. Since one definition of rhetoric is the art of situated practical action, the newspaper articles are valuable because they
document how the Reform Movement used language to construct the situation in a way that argued there was a problem and used language to appeal to the community’s shared beliefs, values, and experiences to construct an argument about the cause, solution, and rationale for action. The articles also showed how the opposition saw the Reform Movement and how the Reform Movement responded.

The American Hebrew followed the Kohler-Kohut debate and published articles on it each week. However, The American Hebrew was not neutral in its coverage but expanded the division between Conservative and Reform and was overtly hostile to reform. The American Hebrew was (and still is) published every Friday in New York and had an editorial tone that was consistent with a more conservative religious ideology, which was even reflected in the newspaper’s date. It was dated using the Hebrew Calendar and the Christian calendar for the month and day but just the Hebrew calendar for the year. For example, one issue was dated: “Sivan 29, June 12, 5645” instead of the year 1885. The first half of each issue was written in English and the second half was written in German to serve its vastly German Jewish immigrant audience. The American Hebrew began coverage the first week with Kohut’s sermon and did not print Kohler’s response sermon until the second week. This put Kohler in the position of asynchronously answering Kohut’s first discourse published in the previous week’s edition (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84-85). The problem with the asynchronous communication was that the readers of The American Hebrew had to pay close attention to follow the argument and keep each side’s view distinct. Kohut’s text appeared more valuable because Kohut’s words were published first so Kohler was left to
respond to Kohut’s argument for the previous week. The reaction published in *The American Hebrew* exposed the external and internal tensions that confronted the American Jewish community and made defining a Jewish identity in American so difficult at the end of the nineteenth century.

But the debate in the Jewish press exposed more than the tensions in the Jewish community. It also illustrated how members of the Reform Movement evaluated traditional Judaism and how adherents of traditional Judaism evaluated the Reform Movement. MacIntyre argues that we can examine how one tradition evaluates another “by first considering the difference between the task of rationally evaluating rival and competing claims within one and the same tradition and that of evaluating similar claims when each has been developed within one of two very different and competing traditions” (*Whose* 328). Kohler’s and Kohut’s discourses show that each account of Judaism is understood “within very different conceptual frameworks, which employ quite different modes of characterization and argument, and which yet are clearly incompatible (*Whose* 329). MacIntyre suggests that one could compare the traditions of Aquinas with those from Aristotle, or the traditions of Aristotle with those from Plato, or the traditions of Hume with those from Hutchenson, in terms of their accounts of practical reasoning and of justice (*Whose* 328). MacIntyre argues that in each case there is a “a set of relatively unproblematic standards to which to appeal in making the comparison: How far does the latter thinker solve either the problems posed by or the problems found insoluble by the earlier thinker? How far is the latter thinker able to resolve incoherences in the work of the earlier? How far does the latter thinker make available conceptual or
theoretical resources, which do not have the limitations of those of his predecessor (Whose 328)? His questions are useful to examine Kohler and Kohut's public debate to compare the Reform Movement with traditional Judaism and how they rationally justify their own conception of both traditions.

Each rabbi's argument is logical within his frame. Each rabbi's understanding of the situation implied or presupposed a context, evaluation criteria, and an understanding of the individual's part in society (see Whose 298). Kohler's account of the Reform Movement presupposes a specific context, that of a society in which progress and modernity is good and being enlightened and reasonable is desirable. Kohler's implied social context is one in which evaluation is made primarily in terms of people's individual satisfaction. In contrast, Kohut's account of traditional Judaism presupposes a society in which sticking to one's tradition makes one a member of the community and as such, stronger. In Kohut's conception, evaluation is made in terms of Jews adhering to their sacred traditions and remaining part of the community.

The first publication about the Kohler-Kohut or Reform-Conservative debate began with the opponent's point of view. The American Hebrew introduced its champion, Dr. Kohut, as the newly elected minister of Congregation Ahawath Chesed and explained that Dr. Kohut is "fresh from the regions where what is even 'Reform' would seem to us as over-rigid Conservatism." Kohut was described as having a "strong Conservative bias" and being "trained to look upon tradition as something to be revered instead of scorned." The article warned, "ultra-radicals will find they now have a severe critic and an able one" (The American Hebrew 23.3 May 29, 5645 [1885]):
The opponents to Reform Movement defined themselves as people who value and revere tradition by defining their champion as one who personifies those qualities. Opponents of Reform viewed themselves as traditionalists and they saw the proponents of Reform as ultra-radicals who scorn tradition. Opponents framed the cost of the Reform Movement as threatening the survival of Judaism. The concern for preserving the integrity of Judaism was reflected in all *The American Hebrew* editors’ responses. For the entire Jewish community what was at stake was defining the parameters of Judaism and Jewish identity in America.

Kohut’s first sermon was delivered in German and translated into English when printed in *The American Hebrew* (23.4 June 5, 5645 [1885]: 50-51, 58-59). It was the first discourse in a series of fifteen. Kohut approached the problem involved in evaluating the Reform tradition in terms of his own traditional beliefs. He characterized Reform as creating problems for the individual Jews. In his sermon, Kohut described Reform as making a Jew no longer Jewish. Kohut argued that “he” who does not observe all the laws of the “mosaic rabbinical tradition” “has banished himself from the camp of Israel; writes his own epitaph: ‘I am no Jew; no adherent to the faith of my fathers’” (51). He then moved his argument from condemning the individual Jew to condemning the concept of reform. He argued that the concept of Reform was deadly to Judaism. “Such a reform which seeks to progress without the mosaic-rabbinical tradition, such a reform is a Deformity; is a skeleton of Judaism without flesh and sinew, without spirit and heart. Without tradition there is no life but only vegetation; without it we have a tying of the wheels of life – a suicide. And suicide is no Reform” (*The American Hebrew* 23.4 June
For the opponents of Reform then, the Reform Movement is dangerous because it makes the individual Jew no longer Jewish and costs the highest price – the discontinuation of Judaism. In addition to declaring Reform deadly, the opponents of Reform appealed to their audiences’ appreciation of scientific rationalism and declared adhering to Reform beliefs as irrational.

Kohut's attack on reform provided Kohler with the opportunity to publicly formulate an explanation of reform and to systematically extend his inquiry. However, since Kohler had to respond to Kohut's attack, he was in a defensive position and had to modify and reformulate his view of Reform in reaction to his encounters with Kohut's objections. Kohler's first discourse, the first of five in his series “Backwards or Forwards,” was written in answer to Kohut’s first discourse (The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 66-67 & 75). But before the reader could read Kohler’s discourse, the front page of The American Hebrew praised Kohut’s “peculiar charm” and slandered Kohler (The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 65). Kohler was even blamed for taking up too much space in the newspaper and forcing Kohut’s sermon out – a metaphor of what traditional Jews felt the Reform Movement would do to Judaism. Kohler was framed as making hasty decisions and was accused of not waiting to read Kohut’s sermon before responding. The Reform Movement was framed as a hastily put together concept that did not consider the potential repercussions of its existence. Kohut and traditional Judaism were defined as being liberal, comprehensive, and noble while Kohler and the Reform Movement were characterized as reactionary, impulsive and dangerous (The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 65). On the second page
of this issue, the editor commented on Kohler’s first discourse, which the reader still had
not yet seen, and stated, “Dr. Kohler attacks his foe with the vindictive vigor of one who
is glad of the fray, ‘spoiling for the fight;’ he... hurls sneer and satire, and even positive
misrepresentation, at the head of what he calls ‘Orthodoxy;’ whereas, in truth, it is but a
bugaboo of his own imagining, fashioned out of the relics of ignorance and
superstition....” (The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 66). The opponents
of the Reform Movement continued to question the logic and wisdom of the Reform
Movement by questioning Kohler’s logic and wisdom. The column declared Dr.
Kohler’s “loose use of terms and definitions” becomes “singularly apparent” when he
describes “what he thinks Orthodoxy is and what he claims Reform to be” (The American
Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 66). By attacking Kohler’s character, thought process,
and actions, the opponents of the Reform Movement attacked the very idea of the Reform
Movement.

In contrast, Kohler created his ethos as rational, tolerant, and thoughtful in his
first discourse as he characterized the situation and his opinion of Kohut. Kohler
acknowledged that

the novelty of the learned speaker’s notions and attitude creates a stir and a
welcome sensation throughout the Jewish circles of New York; and an opinion
about the influence to be exercised by the new rabbi for whom I cherish the
highest regard both as an eminent scholar and as a most sincere and earnest
advocate of Conservative Judaism, would be rather premature. Personally, I
gladly and heartily wish him the greatest success, and I have little doubt that,
being supported by our exclusively conservative local press, he will exercise a
wholesome influence upon the consolidation and the right coalition of the
different elements of our congregations which are at present too often brought
together without unity or purpose. (The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645
[1885]: 66)
Kohler presented himself as a rational and logical gentleman and by extension projected this image of the Reform Movement. His statement also hinted at the conservative factions that exist within congregations that often act and react without forethought. Kohler presented himself as benign and thoughtful by noting “Gibes and sneers cast at orthodoxy or at reform by opponents will not solve the question” (*The American Hebrew* 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 67).

After setting the stage and establishing his ethos, Kohler laid out his argument involving his vision of the problem in the community and his vision of the solution. He implied the problem with Judaism is that there is only one definition with which many Jews no longer agree and the problem can be solved by creating another definition of what it means to be a Jew. Kohler approached the problem involved in evaluating the Reform tradition in terms of how it solves problems in traditional Judaism. Kohler declared, “But the gauntlet thrown into our face must be taken up at once, and I to-day simply propose to ask: Are we progressing, or ought we to retrograde? Has Reformed Judaism come upon a sandbank so that we require Talmudical Orthodoxy to set us afloat again, or are we strong enough to stand at the helm and steer American Judaism towards its lofty goal?” (*The American Hebrew* 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 66-67). Kohler challenged the basic assumptions in Judaism that in order to be real Jews, Jews “must believe exactly what our fathers believed,” must “believe that all the laws and narratives given in the Book of Moses have been dictated to the very letter by God,” and must “keep all the rites and ceremonies prescribed by Law and tradition” (*The American Hebrew* 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 67). Kohler resolved incoherences in traditional
Judaism by insisting on the compatibility of social evolution with modern Judaism.

Kohler believed that Judaism must be willing to change and grow as humanity changes and grows. He insisted that laws directed to meet the needs of one age must be modified and adjusted if they are to fit the needs of a later age. He argued that Reform is just another definition of Judaism.

Kohler insisted that Orthodoxy had stifled freedom within Judaism and had thereby crushed its true spirit. He charged that traditional Judaism “is retrospective. It has not the courage to stand on its own feet. It subsists on the merits of our fore fathers” whereas “Reformed Judaism, on the contrary, looks forward with hope to a brighter future . . .”(The American Hebrew 23.5 June 12 5645 [1885]: 67). Kohler drew distinctions between traditional Judaism and Reform by using terms that framed Traditional Judaism as old fashioned and framed Reform as modern and progressive.

In Kohler’s second discourse, which answered Kohut’s first one and was printed along with Kohut’s second discourse, Kohler used the knowledge of the Jewish community to explain the Reform Movement and its oppositions (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 82-83). Kohler positioned the Reform Movement as well established and positioned the opponents of Reform as impulsive and not aware of their own actions. Kohler stated,

Reformed Judaism has been challenged by the declaration recently made from a Jewish pulpit that ‘a reform which seeks to progress without the Mosaic-Rabbinical tradition is a deformity . . . This is as much to say that . . . the tens of thousands of Jews in Europe and the great majority of Jews in this country who have reform inscribed on their banner, are with one stroke of the pen, to be deprived of the title of Jews, because they cannot on principle recognize the validity of the Law and tradition. (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84)
Kohler identified that what was at stake here was the issue of who was recognized as a Jew by the Jewish community. He argued that traditional Judaism had its purpose but no longer applies, “…while Talmudical Judaism was good enough as a wall of seclusion and protection for the Jew in the gloomy Ghetto, the Jew in the midst of modern civilization demands different forms of religion…” (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). Kohler used the shared knowledge and experience of the Jewish community and the history of the community to authorize his proposed changes. He reflected the Reform community’s beliefs by equating Traditional Judaism with “the gloomy ghetto” and Reform Judaism with “modern civilization.”

Kohler defined Judaism in a way that reflected Jewish immigrants’ experience and their value of pragmatism. Kohler redefined Judaism without renaming it Reform Judaism. He set up a binary that Judaism is “dead” in one conceptualization and “living” in another. Kohler referred to Judaism as “a living faith, not a religion confined to dead letters on a scarcely readable parchment scroll, but one which forms the vital spark of all moral actions and conduct, which prompts us to worship and perceive God not in dead forms, in rites of by-gone ages, in signs hardly intelligible, but in living truths and forms expressive of life and truth” (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). This understanding of Judaism appealed to those who valued scientific rationalism because it valued only what was perceived as relevant. Kohler characterized Judaism as a “living” religion when it “shows its vitality in constant change and reform” (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). He characterized Judaism as decaying and “galvanizing dead forms” when it is inaccessible and demands meaningless obligations.
By equating a reform of Judaism with the living and the modern, he implied that traditional Judaism was lifeless and therefore irrelevant and meaningless (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84).

Kohler used the Jewish community's shared knowledge to authorize his plan. He argued that in the history of Judaism, rabbis have changed aspects of Judaism to the times. He claimed Rabbinical Judaism "made use of what later ages and civilizations offered" to shape opinions and create new forms (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). By defining rabbinical Judaism as a revision of Judaism, he established it as historical evidence and precedence to support his call for another revision or reform of Judaism, "to find appropriate and impressive forms for what is the living Judaism of our ages" (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). He concluded by arguing "We shall never preserve Judaism from decay by galvanizing dead forms, by instituting rites and views which collide with modern civilization and prevent us from a free intercourse with a world . . . . We want a broad, enlightened and cosmopolitan Judaism. We want a Judaism which appeals to the heart as well as the reason" (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 84). Kohler established Reform as everything new Jewish immigrants seeking to melt into America could want: a Jewish religion that is modern, enlightened, and reasonable.

In response, Kohut argued, "Who authorizes the Radical Reform to discard the Mosaic; despise Rabbinical Judaism, and teach only a prophetical Judaism?" (The American Hebrew 23.6 June 19, 5645 [1885]: 85). The opponents of Reform defined the
Reform Movement as radical and unauthorized people who are reactionary, act hastily, and are hot headed.

It was the last issue in which Kohler had a voice. *The American Hebrew* published Kohler’s third discourse, an open letter to Kohler that criticized his beliefs, and Kohut’s third discourse (*The American Hebrew* 23.7 July 26, 5645 [1885]: 101 and 104). But after this, Kohler’s fourth and fifth sermons answering Kohut were not printed in the *American Hebrew*. Kohler and the idea of Reform had been silenced. In all, *The American Hebrew* published three of Kohler’s five discourses from his series, “Backwards or Forwards,” but it published all fifteen of Kohut’s discourses from his series, “The Ethics.” (Kohut’s fourth through fifteenth discourses are published consecutively in *The American Hebrew* 23.8 July 3 5645 [1885]: 113-16 through 24.6 September 18, 5645 [1885]: 83-84). After Kohut completed his fifteen-part series, he continued to write a weekly column in *The American Hebrew* about his conservative view of Judaism. The Reform perspective had been entirely replaced in *The American Hebrew* by the conservative perspective. Kohler no longer had a public forum in which to speak. The pressure from the Jewish community in the following weeks pressed Kohler to act.

Once Kohler’s sermons were excluded from the newspaper, *The American Hebrew* was even more supportive of Kohut. *The American Hebrew* described Kohut and his conservative view as captivating: “The attention with which they listen to the sermons and the animation with which they discuss the points made after they leave the house of worship is an entirely new characteristic in American Judaism. The audience is
on the verge of applauding" (The American Hebrew 23.9 July 10, 5645 [1885]: 133). The American Hebrew described the audience that attended Dr. Kohut's sermons as being full of young people of both sexes, particularly female. This is significant because services usually attracted older people, and Jews valued young people in the audience because passing traditions to the young was seen as perpetuating Judaism.

Simultaneously, Kohut's conservative views appeared to be gaining supporters. All fifteen of Dr Kohut's discourses in his series, "The Ethics of the Fathers," were printed in book form by The American Hebrew. The front page of the September 30, 5645 [1885] issue of The American Hebrew the editors state that if one orders a copy of Kohut's "The Ethics" then, and only then, can one receive a copy of Kohler's sermons, presumably to understand Kohut's argument (The American Hebrew 24.8, September 30, 5645 [1885]: 113).

Since Kohler was unable to have his sermon published in The American Hebrew, he printed a sermon in the secular press, The New York Herald. Rabbi H. P. Mendes answered Kohler's sermon in a letter published in the Herald. Kohler answered back in another letter in the Herald. Mendes, annoyed that Kohler was "very distasteful to bring forward such topics in the Christian press" brings the discussion back to The American Hebrew (The American Hebrew 23.9 July 10, 5645 [1885]: 134). In a two-column letter, Mendes critiques each paragraph of Kohler's letter, which is not printed in the American Hebrew. This issue also contained two more letters that attacked Kohler and his view of Reform. One letter from "Liberal" framed Kohler as un-American and argued that "any congregation adopting his views will condemn it as un-American in type, taste, and
manners!” (The American Hebrew 23.9 July 10, 5645 [1885]: 134). In other words, “Liberal” claims that those who support Reform Judaism are not only not Jews, but not American as well.

Not only were Kohut and his conservative views valued in The American Hebrew, but in the following issue Kohler became the butt of a joke. Kohler had explained in The Herald that he doesn’t plead for pork and oysters but “neither in eating them nor abstaining from them do I find religion.” The editors of The American Hebrew explain that “our contemporaries . . . have been making merry over a paragraph in the New York Times of a couple of weeks ago wherein Dr. Kohler was reported as saying: ‘I plead for pork and oysters,’ and we regret that, having so good a case otherwise, they should have injured it by taking advantage of a typographical error” (The American Hebrew 23.10 July 17, 5645 [1885]: 145). The editors explain, “Dr. Kohler does not think enough of the dietary laws that they should at all enter into the question of what Judaism is” (The American Hebrew 23.10 July 17, 5645 [1885]: 145). For Kohler, a proud man with a vision, the experience of having his words twisted and used against him, pressed him to act.

With each public attack, Kohler became more convinced of the need to defend Reform from its adversaries. In a July 30, 1885 letter to David Philipson, Kohler first suggested a conference that would answer the opponents of reform. He wrote, “Reform requires consolidation. We cannot afford it to be constantly maligned and anathematized for every reform measure or liberal view expressed” (David Philipson Collection, 35:1.10). Kohler wanted to call a conference because he knew his struggle with Kohut
held more than local interest; it represented the irrepressible conflict between Traditional Judaism and Reform Judaism in America.

The program of discrediting Kohler spread beyond The American Hebrew to other Jewish presses. This continued to pressure Kohler to accomplish something, some action, and not just facilitate a conversation. In the Aug 7, 1885 issue of The American Israelite, a writer wrote that while vacationing in New York he ran into a prominent member of Dr. Kohler’s congregation and asked him what he thought of the Kohler-Kohut controversy. He replied that he thought neither minister would accomplish much. “Both being foreigners, they could never expect to exert any influence among the rising generation of young men who are thoroughly American in their views. What we need he said is a recognized authority on religious matters and American born rabbis” (The American Israelite 32.1 (Cin, Ohio) Aug 7, 1885: 6). This was an ironic sign of the times and showed how little confidence some Jews had in an immigrant rabbi’s ability to accomplish any more than debate.

Other Jewish presses join in to attack Kohler. On August 21, 1885 The Jewish Free Press from St. Louis reprinted an article from The Hebrew Standard, which declared that, “sometimes there is no other means of finding the truth except by comparison” so it compared Adler with Kohler. Given Kohler’s assessment of Adler in his letter forbidding Adler to lecture at his temple, this comparison must have been especially upsetting for Kohler. The Jewish Free Press claimed “Professor Adler, the agnostic, would scorn to impose his lack of belief upon any believer, he would never dream of ... trying to persuade [another] to relinquish the ceremonies and usages which
he deems sacred. Dr. Kohler, the rabbi, does nothing but assail the religious profession of the faithful, sneers at their customs, derides their ceremonies, belittles their rights, scoffs at their usage and advocates nothing but the abolition of all that which has been considered as religious law for ages” (The Jewish Free Press 267 August 21, 1885: 4). Kohler, and by extension Reform were portrayed as worse than Ethical Society, which was perceived by all Jews as a great threat to Judaism.

Kohler’s voice was silenced in the Jewish presses, his vision called “incongruous nightmares,” and his beliefs presented as more dangerous to Judaism than Adler’s (The Jewish Free Press 268 September 4, 1885: 1). Kohler’s “own words and arguments in the haze of rhetorical verbiage shall be evidence against him” (The Jewish Free Press 13.6 Oct. 16, 1885: 1-2). In response in letters to a trusted friend, David Philipson, Kohler sounded frustrated and eager to present his views at a conference so he could make an impact. In the letter dated Sept. 21, 1885 Kohler stated, “You understand I want not merely a Conference but a united and permanent work which includes a Reform organ [newspaper]” (David Philipson Collection, 35:1.10). In another letter to David Philipson dated Sept. 28, 1885 Kohler stated, “We want men who work for Reform and are for the Union!!” (American Jewish Archives. David Philipson Collection ms. Co. 35 box 1 folder 10). It appears that because of repeated disastrous attempts at conversation in The American Hebrew, Kohler did not want any more public dialogue with those who oppose Reform. Kohler had no means to articulate Reform doctrines without immediate criticism so he wanted a medium to define Reform unencumbered by critique.
But before Kohler could act, *The Jewish Free Press* printed a series of weekly editorial reviews that sharply criticized Kohler’s sermons “Backwards or Forwards.” (*The Jewish Free Press* from 13.5 Oct. 9, 1885: 1 through 13.10 Nov. 13, 1885: 1). The first editorial began by critiquing Kohler’s first discourse (of five). It did not reprint the sermon just the criticism of it. This critique worked to cloud up Kohler’s definition of Reform by calling it prophetical Judaism and confusing terms. It described Kohler’s “prophetical Judaism” as abstract values, “a vision which we perceive in the haze of cloudy distance – there is nothing tangible for us there” (*The Jewish Free Press* 13.5 Oct. 9, 1885: 1-2). The critique declared a Reform without Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism “an impossibility” because, it claims, Mosaic and Prophetic laws are inseparable. It was the most damaging critique because it used Kohler’s argument to undercut the necessity of a Reform Movement. It declares Reform not necessary because Rabbinical laws already allow for changes with the times. It stated “No laws are framed unless the social circumstances of the people require them. The Mosaic-Rabbinical laws were called forth by the circumstances of the various times and various conditions. Times have changed and the condition of the people for whom the Rabbis have made laws have changed too” (*The Jewish Free Press* 13.5 Oct. 9, 1885: 1-2). This critique undercut Kohler’s argument that rabbinical Judaism was a revision of Judaism in its time and could serve as precedence for another revision of Judaism for the current time. This critique also confused Kohler’s distinction about laws. It equated Kohler’s argument with getting away from laws involving physical practices and laws involving ethics. Kohler needed to act now and so on November 2, 1885, he sent out invitations for a Reform conference.
The time had come for Kohler to lay down the boundaries between Reform and Orthodoxy on the right and Reform and the Ethical Culture on the left.

The Writing Process of the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform: Kohler Authoritatively Declared the Collective Identity of Reform Judaism

The writing process of the 1885 Platform was not consistent with the assumptions of the group because one author authoritatively decreed the platform while he declared that individual autonomy was fundamental to making Judaism modern. However, the representative process was consistent in the historical context as a natural outcome of the traditional tendency to look at rabbis as authorities. In 1885 matters of doctrine were not put to as a democratic vote. Instead the rabbinic leaders were looked to for guidance. But the growing dissonance between the philosophy of reform that valued individual autonomy and the belief in an authority that valued dictates was to become a defining issue in the Reform Movement and an important point of discussion in the 1937 and 1999 platforms.

After Kohler's experience with the Jewish press in which he was portrayed as a rebel, he called the Pittsburgh Conference to discuss his comprehensive plan for the Reform Movement. Because of the way his views were twisted in the Jewish press, Kohler needed to articulate one clear vision of the Reform Movement and could not present multiple understandings of it. The writing process of creating a collective identity in the 1885 platform was not consistent with his assumptions of the Reform Movement because Kohler decreed the platform even though he argued that laws could be modified and individual autonomy was fundamental to making Judaism modern. He began by
sending invitations to the conference to a selected group of like-minded rabbis so he would have a consensus of opinion. Dr. David Philipson was one of the eight graduates from the Hebrew Union College’s first two classes and, at the age of 23, was invited to attend the 1885 Pittsburgh conference. Philipson wrote about his experience in 1935. He explained that on November 2, 1885, Dr. Kohler sent a letter to rabbis that stated,

I herewith take the liberty of inviting all such American Rabbis as advocate Reform and Progress and are in favor of united action in all matters pertaining to the welfare of American Judaism, to meet in Conference on November 16th and 17th, ... for the purpose of discussing the present state of American Judaism, its pending issues and its requirements, and of uniting upon such plans and practical measures as are demanded by the hour. (Philipson 196-97)

Only a relatively small group of selected rabbis were invited to define Reform Judaism in America since, according to Philipson, nineteen rabbis attended the sessions while eighteen others sent letters or telegrams expressing regret at their inability to attend (197). Only American rabbis who were in favor of Reform were invited to attend this conference because the conference was not for an open discussion, but an arena for like-minded rabbis to come together to declare a consensus. Traditional rabbis, lay leaders, and the rank-and-file were also excluded from the conference.

The only record of the Conference, the “Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference Held at Pittsburgh, Nov. 16, 17, 18, 1885,” was created by the Committee on Publication made up of conference participants: Rabbis Kohler, Philipson, Schlesinger, and Falk (The proceedings were first published in The Jewish Reformer January of 1886 1.1:5-6; 1.2:3-4; and 1.3:3-4). In 1923, they were published in pamphlet form by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR, 34:1.1). In 1985, they were reprinted, together with papers presented on the 100th anniversary of the Pittsburgh
Platform in “The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect.” The report states that Dr. Kohler opened the conference with his keynote paper that began by reflecting on his interpretation of the experience of Jewish immigrants in America.

Every one who has watched the condition of affairs of Judaism in general and in our country in particular, must have been impressed with the urgent need of decisive action in view of the appalling indifference which has taken hold of the masses, and of the materialistic tendency of the age which, owing to the precipitous transition from the oppressive ghetto-life to today’s untrammeled liberty, has done great havoc in our midst.

Kohler continued to explain that it is time “to rally our forces, to consolidate, to build” a common platform of reform that provides “a wide margin” for individual views.

In this keynote address, Kohler set out a ten-point program for Reform that was reprinted in Philipson’s memoirs in 1935. Kohler’s ten-point program was written in response to the many Jewish immigrants’ abandoning the behaviors that defined them as Jewish, to an increase in Eastern European Jewish immigrants, to Felix Adler’s Ethical Cultural Society, and to the Jewish press’ coverage of the Kohler-Kohut debate. He defined the Reform Movement as being concerned with redefining Judaism in order to secure its continuance by attracting indifferent, apathetic Jews back to Judaism. Kohler’s address laid out his perception of the growing indifference Jews display towards Judaism and his plan to adapt Judaism for American Jews. He believed that Judaism would be lost to thousands of Jews without its reformation so he sketched out a comprehensive, self-authorized program he believed was necessary to accomplish his goal. He envisioned a Reform Movement that redefined the concept of Judaism by creating a unified, systematic program, which included the following:
1. **a platform to show that Judaism is “comprehensive, enlightened and liberal” and free of “agnostic tendencies.”** Based on his experience he suggested: “We can no longer be blind to the fact that Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism, as based upon Law and Tradition, has actually and irrevocably lost its hold upon the modern Jew,” particularly “laws concerning diet or dress, concerning work or the kindling of lights on Sabbath, or any other ancient rite” (Philipson 93-94).

2. **“a Jewish mission to work with the entire Jewish camp.”** To influence all classes of Jews, particularly the working class, he suggested providing services on Sunday for those who “are compelled to work for their living from Monday morning until Saturday night.” Kohler suggested “the Jewish clergy should be made thoroughly familiar with the moral conditions of the poor in order to be able to exert an educating and ennobling influence upon them. And even if the poor Russian or Polish Jews is, on account of his religious mistrust or fanaticism, inaccessible to our ministries, his children are not. They can be easily Americanized, and we ought to assist in, and direct the process of naturalization (Philipson 95).

3. **a “well-organized literature and press.”** Kohler stated “We require a perfect outpouring of sentiment, a continual flow of stirring and inspiring poetry and rhetoric to break the ice of indifference which has gathered around the Jewish hearth and to melt into real religious longing” (Philipson 96).

4. **a uniform system of religious instruction for Jewish children.** Kohler suggested creating books “better adapted to the wants of the children,” and establishing the curriculum according to the “different grades and classes and the various objectives of instruction” (Philipson 98).

5. **a plan to “render our mode of worship more attractive.”** Kohler suggested worship should be made more inspiring and interesting for the younger element, more congenial to the American audience and more uniform throughout the land” (Philipson 98).

6. **a revision of the readings from the Law and the Prophets for the Sabbath and the Holy Days.** Kohler suggested we “omit all chapters or passages which fail to impress and to inspire” (Philipson 99).

7. **a revision of the Bible and the Apocryphal books.** Kohler argued that the Bible needed to be revised for students, family, and pulpit use to delete “offensive chapters,” “cruel ordinances,” “matters which ought not be mentioned before the youth or before mixed assembly” (Philipson 99).
8. a plan to “introduce new ways and measures to make our people, and particularly the young, more familiar with the Bible and the entire Jewish literature...” He also recommended “We ought to have parts of the Bible read aloud, in the form of responses, in both Synagogue and Sabbath School, and there should be more stress laid on this than on the Hebrew, from which only very few will ever be able to derive any profitable results” (Philipson 100).

9. “a better and more clearly defined position towards the Gentile world, theoretically and practically.” Specifically, Kohler suggested the Reform movement “declare the Christians to be worshippers of the same God as we worship,” allow Christians to convert to Reform Judaism, allow men to convert without requiring them to be circumcised, and allow children born of intermarriage to be viewed as Jews (Philipson 100-101).

10. a plan to “rekindle Religion’s fire on the domestic altar” to combat the “present religious indifference and apathy.” Kohler suggested we “create new striking and stirring, attractive and beautiful forms” of “joyous religious home training” “adapted to the needs and the taste of our age and people” (Philipson 102).

According to his keynote address, Kohler wanted to create a comprehensive movement, which included uniting a Jewish community by creating Jewish literature and press, an education system (as Adler had suggested to expand his Ethical Society), more attractive services, a revision of the Bible, improved relations with non-Jews, and religious home training. However, the conference mainly dealt with the first point of creating a platform. The bigger picture, presented in Kohler’s keynote speech, was not reflected in the Pittsburgh Platform—the only remaining, publicly-accessible remnant of the 1885 Pittsburgh Conference. Kohler’s vision in his keynote speech for a more comprehensive program was not represented in the platform and, without the context provided by Kohler’s keynote speech, the platform looked more like a plan for assimilation than a plan for perpetuating Judaism in America. The Pittsburgh Platform gave a different impression than the keynote speech. The platform has withstood time
and is still read today. It is reprinted each time a new platform is written and is available on the CCAR web page. The keynote speech, however, is not. Therefore the Pittsburgh platform is not read in the context of being one idea in a comprehensive proactive plan. The 1885 Platform does not explain that Jews were perceived as indifferent to Judaism so the platform was written as one part of a plan to revitalize Judaism by creating Jewish publications, educational systems for children and adults, more attractive services, and revised liturgy. Isolated, the Pittsburgh Platform alone defined Reform Judaism only in relation to traditional Judaism and what Reform Jews do not have to do. Decontextualized, it looks like a plan for assimilation and not a plan to revise Judaism for its continuance.

The Collective Identity Framed in the Pittsburgh Platform

According to Philipson, Kohler came to the conference having already carefully written not only the ten-point keynote speech, but also the ten-plank platform on which the conference participants would vote (198). After his experience with the Jewish press, Kohler created the platform as a culmination of his ideas from his sermons “Backwards and Forwards” in response to Kohut. The small group of rabbis met to discuss Kohler’s document and eventually adopted it without substantial revision (Temkin 3). According to Philipson, who attended the conference, the platform was referred to a committee of five conference participants, including Philipson, and they made minor revisions to Kohler’s draft (Philipson 198). The committee reduced the propositions to eight and presented them to the entire conference of nineteen rabbis for a vote. In other words, the
collective cultural identity of Reform Jews articulated in the Pittsburgh Platform was composed by one person and authorized by just five people.

The concept of frames can help explain how the Reform Movement created meaning in the 1885 Platform by articulating shared values and assumptions in socially acceptable ways to speak to socially situated ideas and articulating a collective identity. The Pittsburgh Platform created a frame, but it is the interpreter’s prior experiences and beliefs that provide the salience of it. The meaning of a frame is dependent on an audience member’s prior experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of the specific context. Understanding a frame requires the interpreter to compare the frame to the context. If the frame is metaphorically salient and resonates with its audience, the authors used it to formulate the movement's collective identity.

The Reform Movement defined what should be and should not be by bridging the movement’s beliefs with one part of the community’s common public opinion. Snow et al. explain that frame bridging involves linking the social movement with groups of individuals who share common public opinion of grievances (469). The Pittsburgh Platform used frame building to link its beliefs with those in the community in three ways. First, it demarcated the one boundary in defining Reform Judaism in the first plank, which stated that Judaism “presents the highest conception of the God-idea” (CCAR Pittsburgh). This plank connected a bridge to the community’s understanding that a belief in God is primary in Judaism and those who do not believe in God are not Jewish. The plank framed the cultural identity of Reform Jews as including a belief in
God. This idea of valuing a belief in God spoke to the threat from Adler's Ethical Society, which promoted atheisms.

Second, the Pittsburgh Platform demarcated the other boundary in defining Reform Judaism by arguing that Reform is not traditional Judaism. The Pittsburgh Platform framed Reform Judaism as opposite to its negative conception of traditional Judaism. In other words, Reform was defined in terms of what it was not. The Pittsburgh Platform did not exclude or alienate Traditional Judaism or discredit traditional Judaism since it is the roots from which Reform comes. The Pittsburgh Platform also did not subjugate traditional Judaism to scapegoating because the Jewish community believed in fixing one's own problems and not casting them on another (For more on the dialectic of the scapegoat see Burke Grammar of Motives 406-07). Additionally, the Reform Movement would not attract constituents if it did not respect its own historical past.

The platform described Traditional Judaism as consisting of outmoded ceremonies that are "not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization" and used the community's beliefs about traditional Judaism to articulate its collective identity as opposite (CCAR Pittsburgh). The platform used the community's belief in scientific rationalism to introduce the idea that ceremony is only worthwhile if it has meaningful results. The platform scientifically examined the Mosaic legislation, defined it as "a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during it national life in Palestine" and implied that since the Jewish people were not in Palestine but in America, they did not need the Mosaic legislation (CCAR Pittsburgh). Using this logic, the platform deemed that Reform Jews were free to choose to accept only the moral laws.
platform also evaluated all ceremony and practices using the scientific rationalism valued by the community and argued that ceremonies and practices are only valuable if they “elevate and sanctify our lives” (CCAR Pittsburgh). The platform used the community’s belief that the laws that regulate diet and dress were not only unimportant, they were actually detrimental.

Third, the 1885 platform defined itself by bridging its ideas with Jewish immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century whose common, public grievance was that practicing Jewish laws marked them as foreigners, prevented them from becoming “Americans.” The platform acknowledged the community’s belief that new immigrants had to choose between maintaining the traditional Jewish identity or becoming “Americans.” The 1885 platform was written entirely in English and demonstrated to new immigrants what that they could remain Jewish even if they accepted only Judaism’s moral laws. The Pittsburgh Platform included nothing about specific observances, it did not include a single Hebrew word, and it did not mention any kind of organized structure. The Pittsburgh Platform framed the collective identity of Reform Jews not as foreigners, but as moral and rational people who believe in God, social justice, and the modern discoveries of scientific researches that were in order with the postulates of reason. The Pittsburgh Platform essentially erased all evidence that would equate Judaism with foreignness and identified it with striving to elevate and sanctify life in ways consistent with those who belong to modern civilization.

Kohler transformed the frame of Judaism by distinguishing an outmoded Judaism from one that met the Reform Movement constituents’ needs. This is what Snow and his collaborators called frame transformation. His platform implied that old understandings had to be jettisoned
and new values had to be identified and defined. In other words, the "misframing' has to be reframed (Snow et al. 473). The authors of the document used "the views and habits of modern civilization" as the measuring stick with which to evaluate Judaism and defined traditional practices as something that was "apt rather to obstruct than further modern spiritual elevation" amplifying Reform Jews' desire to appear "modern"--a term used often in the document, but never defined (CCAR Pittsburgh). Finally, the Reform Movement amplified Reform Jews' belief in the democratic right to be an individual in America--a belief that was salient to new immigrants who wanted to be able to be part of the America community. The platform suggested that as modern Americans, Reform Jews could choose which Jewish laws and traditions to follow.

The authors of the Pittsburgh Platform used what Snow and Bedford called *diagnostic framing* and *prognostic framing* to use the community knowledge to persuade others to believe in their ideas ("Ideology" 199). According to Snow and Benford, in *diagnostic framing*, "some event or aspect of social life" is identified as a problem in need of a solution and the blame or cause of the problem is identified ("Ideology" 199-200). The diagnostic frame in the 1885 document identified the problem in need of a solution as traditional Judaism because it demanded strict adherence to concrete Jewish practices that made new Jewish immigrants in America appears as foreigners and not modern. Kohler framed Traditional Judaism as a problem because it had "irrevocably lost its hold upon the modern Jew" (CCAR Pittsburgh). This platform also framed Judaism as connected to times of "continual struggle" and "enforced isolation" which set up an argument claiming parts of Judaism were no longer relevant "today" (CCAR Pittsburgh).
According to Snow and Benford, *Prognostic framing* involves proposing specific solutions to the identified problems (201). The cause of the problem was identified as Mosaic and rabbinical laws because they “originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state.” As Burke points out the names that we give something largely determines how we fight against it (Permanence xv). The authors of the 1885 document created a prognostic frame when they proposed a solution to the identified problems—a way to be “American Jews” by using terms like “modern,” “progressive,” and “reasonable,” and concepts like keeping only the ethical, moral laws and giving up traditional foreign-looking practices—an idea that appealed to its constituents. Each plank in the eight-plank platform reflected a belief in the inevitability of progress and the value of all that is modern, reasonable and enlightened. The platform used the community’s belief in Darwin’s modern ideas on evolution and biblical criticism, and set up the rationale for revision. The platform framed Reform Judaism as a “progressive religion” and “in accord with the postulates of reason” (CCAR Pittsburgh). The Reform Movement defined a new Judaism that prescribed shifted the emphasis from practices to beliefs and values.

The Reform Movement accomplished this shift in focus from valuing practices to valuing beliefs by defining practices as unreasonable and without purpose and presenting that belief to its members. In contrast, Traditional Judaism defined practices as fulfilling a communal purpose from God. MacIntyre’s moral theory is useful for examining how this platform changes the conception of Jewish practices. The platform implied that some Jewish practices were not practical and without purpose. The platform essentially
announced that the purpose of being Jewish was not to perform practices, but to follow moral laws. This removed the Jews' sense of communal purpose because the platform specifically stated what actions to not do, but it was not specific about the moral beliefs that joined Jews together. As MacIntyre explains, when people see themselves as individuals prior to and apart from all roles, they cease to have a functional concept of the collective (After 58-9). The 1885 Platform depicted certain practices as unreasonable and without purpose, and it did so by treating people as a "means" and not an "end." MacIntyre explains that to treat people as a means is to make people an instrument of someone's will without any regard for their rationality. In Traditional Judaism, people accept being treated like a means because they believe that the purpose of religious observance is to obey God's laws and practices without question. For traditional Jews, Jewish laws and practices are not to be debated. They follow them because they believe God commanded them to and they do not need to evaluate the reasons and decide for themselves. In contrast, the Reform Movement believes Jews should have a choice. The 1885 Platform implied that people have the right to decide for themselves about Jewish beliefs and practices. The 1885 platform implies that Judaism should treat people as an end by offering them reasons for a belief and allowing them to evaluate the reasons and decide for themselves. Ironically, the authors of the 1885 platform authoritatively declared what Reform Jews should believe about Jewish beliefs and practices in the same way that traditional Judaism did. The authors of the 1885 Platform argued for rejecting religious practices and presented this as dictates to be followed. While the platform maintained that observing religious practices was a choice and Judaism was alterable, the
decisions were still exclusively dictated by rabbinic religious conscience and not individual conscience.

Response to the Pittsburgh Platform

"The Ten Commandments Revised and Improved Amid the Roars of Thunder at the Pittsburgh Conference" (which I have summarized),

1. I am I.M. Wise who brought you out of the bondage of orthodoxy.
2. Thou shalt have no other Popes before me.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Western Pope in vain.
4. Remember Sunday for the convenience of humanity.
5. Honor the Cincinnati College and support it.
6. Thou shalt not eat kosher.
7. Thou shalt not keep Pesach.
8. Thou shalt not fast on Yom Kippur.
9. Thou shalt not circumcise your sons.
10. Thou shalt not read Hebrew nor have anything in common with your Jewish neighbors.
Let not Wise speak to us lest we all become meshugga" [crazy].

The Jewish Free Press 14.2 Dec. 18, 1885: 2

Response to the collective identity framed in the Pittsburgh Platform was evident in the Jewish presses, the opponent's creation of an institution to counter Reform, and motions from congregants to not be help responsible for what the platform contained. The negative response to the Pittsburgh Platform indicated that the authors had not articulated beliefs that were agreed upon by the entire Jewish community, but perhaps just one section of the Reform community. The Pittsburgh Platform was denounced by conservative Jews who eventually split off and formed a new denomination: Conservative Judaism.
A broad overview of the reaction to the Pittsburgh Platform in the Jewish presses provides a useful perspective on its acceptance. Kaufmann Kohler noted the antagonistic reaction in the Jewish press in a private letter to David Philipson dated Nov. 28, 1885, “My congregation and the liberal elements throughout the city are in full sympathy with the results [of the conference], but all the more do the papers clamor and rage” (David Philipson Collection, 35:1.10). After the conference, the editors of The Jewish Free Press continued their cutting critique of “Backwards or Forwards” (The Jewish Free Press 13.11 Nov. 20, 1885: 2; The Jewish Free Press 13.12 Nov. 27, 1885: 2; The Jewish Free Press 14.2 Dec. 18, 1885: 2; The Jewish Free Press 14.4 Jan. 1, 1886: 1-2). The Jewish presses reacted by ignoring the impact of the Pittsburgh Platform or dismissing it as insignificant. The editors of The American Hebrew belittled the significance of the conference by explaining that six of the eight resolutions at the Pittsburgh Conference of Reform Rabbis are already accepted as Conservative doctrine. “If this proves anything, it proves that reform, that gigantic mountain, gave birth to a mouse. After all these years of striving and bickering, and making dissensions and heartburnings, this vast and mighty reform has decided to abolish the dietary laws and not to go back ‘to Jerusalem!’” (The American Hebrew 23.2, November 20, 5645 [1885]:18). The two resolutions with which the editors of The American Hebrew claimed conservatives disagree are the third and fourth planks – one which they dismissed as merely subjective interpretation and the other as political manipulation. “The force of the third resolution lies in its interpretation. We all agree in rejecting such ceremonies ‘as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.’ What those are, however, would, we fancy, be not so readily
agreed upon.” On the fourth resolution, the dietary laws, the editors of *The American Hebrew* claim Reform rabbis, “have unitedly, systematically and without cessation, sought to bring these laws into contempt both by their own defiance of them and by encouraging their charges, so that the laws inevitably ‘fail to impress’ those who have been taught to regard them as folly” (*The American Hebrew* 23.2, November 20, 5645 [1885]:18).

To meet the criticism and clear up inaccurate reports, Kohler published a newspaper that would be able to speak in defense of reform. On January 1, 1886, Kohler printed the first edition of *The Jewish Reformer*. In the first volume, he printed “The Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference Held at Pittsburgh November 16, 17 and 18, 1885” which included the Pittsburgh Platform and the entire text of Kohler’s keynote address (*The Jewish Reformer* 1.1 Jan. 1, 1886: 5-6). *The Jewish Reformer* published the other installments of the Proceedings of the Pittsburgh Conference in the next five consecutive issues: January 8, 1886 1.2: 3-4; January 15, 1886 1.3: 3-4; January 22, 1886 1.4: 3-4; January 29, 1886 1.5: 3-4; February 5, 1886 1.6: 3. By printing the proceedings of the conference, the Pittsburgh Platform, and his keynote speech, Kohler set out his articulation of Reform for the Jewish community to review. But only those who would read *The Jewish Reformer* would see it.

Still, antagonism continued in the Jewish presses between Reform, now represented by *The Jewish Reformer*, and the conservative, still represented by *The American Hebrew*. On January 8th, *The American Hebrew* announced the newest edition to Jewish journalism, *The Jewish Reformer*. *The American Hebrew* described the tone of
The Jewish Reformer as distinctly radical and stated that the objective of the journal was to support the principles adopted at the Pittsburgh conference (The American Hebrew 25.9 January 8, 5646 [1886]: 130). Every week that The Jewish Reformer was published, The American Hebrew criticized reform and the Pittsburgh Conference. Each week The Jewish Reformer did not respond to the attacks, but presented its views on Reform Judaism.

After months of attacks in the Jewish presses, Kohler finally responded in his own newspaper in the form of editorials. On January 29, 1886, the editors of The Jewish Reformer poked fun at one of their attackers for the first time. They reported that conservative rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes said in his recent sermon that, “there is too much liberty accorded to individuals, no central authority existing to decide between questions of law. A chief rabbi is needed, so recognized by the government as to render a Pittsburgh Conference an impossibility. His ‘tremendous’ power of condemnation and approbation should teach the mass of Hebrews in the land obedience to the law.” The editors of The Jewish Reformer explained that since Mendes did not explain how the chief rabbi should be recognized by the United States government and what should be his functions and powers, they “beg to supply the deficiency by the following proposition.” They suggested that first, the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which states ‘Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion,’ would have to be repealed. They suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that among other things, the Chief Rabbi would have to appoint “United States Hebrew Sheriffs” to watch over all Hebrew residents in every town in America and to make sure they follow every Mosaic
and Rabbinical law and punish transgressors. Additionally, to control independent-minded Jews who believe America supports religious freedom, "The Chief Rabbi shall have a torture chamber adjoining his residence, to be supplied with thumb screws, iron boots, iron shirts, and other instruments for inculcating Orthodox belief." The editors of The Jewish Reformer ended this article stating, "We have no doubt that the adoptions of these Amendments to the Constitution of the United States will do away with all Reform measures" (The Jewish Reformer 1.5 January 29, 1886: 1). By resituating the conservative rabbi’s suggestion in the context of the United States governing policies, Kohler showed how ridiculous Mendes’ proposal is in America. Kohler framed Mendes’ proposal as un-American while he validated his ideas about Reform Judaism by using the shared belief in American ideals of religious freedom and independence.

While it did not appear that the Pittsburgh Platform had much effect by the responses in the Jewish presses, the platform had far-reaching results in other ways. While conservatives implied that the Pittsburgh Platform was ineffective, it motivated the conservatives to found the Jewish Theological Seminary of America to counteract the influence of the Reform movement and its institution, the Hebrew Union College. On February 26, 1886, the editors of The American Hebrew, announced the proposal to establish in New York a Jewish Theological Seminary claiming that the “institution will not be bigoted or sectarian” (The American Hebrew 26.3 February 26, 5646 [1886]: 34). This new institution would be “free from the shadow of the baneful influences which have perverted the Cincinnati institution” referring to the Reform Movement’s institution, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati (The American Hebrew 26.3 February 26, 5646.
This comment from editors of *The American Hebrew* assumed that the Pittsburgh Platform would somehow affect how the only Jewish seminary in America, the Hebrew Union College, would educate its rabbis.

While the Jewish presses implied that the Pittsburgh Platform was inconsequential, they devoted a lot of attention to it. Additionally, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the organization that represents all Jewish congregants, did not ignore the Pittsburgh Platform either. The UAHC wanted to make it clear that it did not support the platform and would not be influenced by the platform. In *The Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations 13th Annual Report*, the Executive board requested that “the Union be held responsible only for its own acts, as shown by the doings of its council and Executive Board, and not for the acts, opinions, and utterances of any man or body of men, unless the same be officially indorsed by said Councils of Executive Board” (vol. III July 12, 1886: 2006). In other words, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations did not want to be held responsible for the Pittsburgh Platform. The Executive Board added a plea “to correct the erroneous impressions entertained by some men, that the tenets of any platform other than Judaism pure and simple are permitted to be taught, directly or indirectly, in the Hebrew Union College” (2006). In other words, the board wanted it known that the Pittsburgh Platform would have no influence on the Hebrew Union College. So between the Jewish press that declared the Pittsburgh Platform had accomplished nothing, the conservatives who created a new Jewish Theological Seminary to counter the influence the Platform might have on the Hebrew Union College, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations
which pledged that the Platform would have no influence on how rabbis were trained at the Hebrew Union College, Kohler had not articulated a well accepted vision of the collective identity of Reform Jews in America.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the response to the Pittsburgh Platform is that it marked the beginning of a tradition. The 1885 platform framed the situation as requiring a new articulation of a Jewish collective identity. The platform framed its understanding of the meaning of Jewish practices and their place with Jews in America as if there were a consensus. As MacIntyre's theory suggests, the Reform Movement first characterized Reform in its own terms and characterized its rival, traditional Judaism, in its own terms "making explicit the grounds for rejecting what is incompatible with its own central theses" (Whose 166). But MacIntyre's theory includes a second stage about how a tradition sees its rivals, which the Reform Movement's development illustrates. The Reform Movement saw that traditional Judaism could "provide resources to characterize and to explain the failings and defects of their own tradition more adequately than they, using the resources of that tradition, have been able to do" (Whose 166-67).

Signs of a Tradition Developing

MacIntyre theorizes the stages in a tradition's development and has one explanation about how a tradition develops from one stage to another. MacIntyre explains that over time a tradition develops measures to evaluate its own progress or lack of it and may use a rival tradition as a resource to explain its own failings (Whose 167). This explains the sudden shift in the Reform Movement after the platform was written.
Years after the Pittsburgh Platform was written, Kohler revalued ideas from traditional Judaism and worked to use them as resources to explain the failings in the Reform Movement thereby moving the Reform tradition from the first stage in its development to the second stage. MacIntyre explains that it is difficult for traditions to pass from the first to the second stage because “it requires a rare gift of empathy as well as of intellectual insight for the protagonists of such tradition to be able to understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of their rival in such a way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to recharacterize their own beliefs in an appropriate manner from the alien perspective of the rival tradition” (Whose 167). Kohler’s training in traditional Judaism gave him the advantage of understanding. So instead of immediately rejecting all that traditional Judaism had to offer, Kohler used it. Instead of characterizing traditional Judaism as an error from the Reform point of view, Kohler used his view of traditional Judaism to solve problems in Reform. By the standards of Kohler’s reform tradition, he recognized that traditional Judaism offered resources for understanding the problems and issues that confronted Reform. Kohler came to an understanding that Reform’s ideas of giving up practices could not solve all the problems of being Jewish in America.

Kohler was in the unique position to issue a challenge to Reform because he had at one time been an inhabitant of both the traditional and Reform traditions. MacIntyre explains that someone in Kohler’s position “could have no good reason for putting his . . . allegiance to [Reform] in question and every reason for continuing that allegiance” (Whose 367). However, Kohler had a good reason for putting his allegiance to Reform in
question: American Jews were changing and he saw the resulting apathy and pull to assimilate as threatening the continuance of Judaism. Kohler’s beliefs on how to modernize Judaism in America changed in the years following the Pittsburgh Platform. This change of view is shown most strikingly in his sermon six years after the Pittsburgh Platform, “The Sabbath Day of the Jew,” originally published in The Menorah 12 1891: 151-60 and reprinted in A Living Faith: 31-41. Kohler explained that as a religious leader, he must periodically “re-examine his attitude . . . amidst the ever-changing demands of the age [because] altered circumstances require a change of tactics” (31). Kohler came to the conclusion that the radicalism which he enthusiastically espoused at the time of the Pittsburgh Platform no longer presented an effective answer to the problem of being Jewish in America. Instead of minimizing the importance of Jewish traditions, Kohler reframed them as important and came to place new emphasis on them.

Kohler implied in this sermon that based on his experience as an advocate of the Sunday service he came to two new understandings of Jewish identity both of which drew resources from traditional Judaism. First, he concluded that Jewish identity was tied up with traditional practices in ways that the Pittsburgh Platform did not account for. Second, he concluded that Jewish identity needed to be maintained and preserved. Kohler claimed that having been one of the chief promoters of the Sunday Service for eighteen years, he has found sufficient reason to change his views. He explained that he believed that the Sabbath, Saturday, is important because it is a day of rest and worship meant to redeem Jews “physically, mentally, and spiritually,” “to cheer and liberate,” and bring “joy and comfort,” (“Sabbath” 32-33). He explained that Sunday services
were introduced for the benefit of those who were prevented from attending Saturday Sabbath services because of “business and social life” (“Sabbath” 33). Sunday services were meant to substitute for Saturday Sabbath services as a compromise with the assumption that the main objective was to offer one day of rest and devotion in the week and that which day of the week was selected was not as important. After all, as Kohler explained, “Reform Judaism would rather see the Sabbath observed on Sunday than not at all” (“Sabbath” 34). As an advocate of the Sunday service, he had appealed to “the common sense of the people” and argued that “one interval of twenty-four hours” does not differ from another. He had come to realize, however, that the Sunday service “became the death knell of the Sabbath much to the chagrin of the Reform leaders themselves” (“Sabbath” 34). While Kohler believed the success of the Sunday service “more or less paralyzed” “the Ethical Culture craze,” which also met on Sunday, the Sunday service did not succeed in its primary goals to “render Judaism stronger and firmer in the hearts of the people and in the estimate of the world,” to “deepen religious sentiment and conviction,” and to “create a real zeal and enthusiasm in the audiences for our ancestral faith” (“Sabbath” 35).

Kohler provided two critiques of the Sunday service to justify his sudden change of view after years of fervent advocacy of the Sunday service. He came to the realization that reasonableness and progress would not transform Reform Judaism into what he had hoped. First, he argued that giving up the Sabbath because of “the pressure of commercial competition” changed Jews because it changed their priorities and because it devalued Judaism and “robbed the Jew of his wondrous idealism, loosened his family
ties, [and] his precious heritage of the past...” (“Sabbath” 32). This change of priorities from giving up the Sabbath and attending Sunday services also affected what Jews wanted in their service. Kohler claimed that the Sunday audience did not want Jewish and religious topics; they craved “artificial stimulants” from “personal magnetism,” “morbid sensationalism,” “oratorical pyrotechnics,” or “flashing wit” (“Sabbath” 35). Judging from his own experience, Kohler explained that the result was “something in the very air of the Sunday service that chills the heart. Reason alone, cold, proud reason dictates the words. The soul is not there. The true spirit of devotion and of reverence, which animates the Sabbath audience and inspires the Sabbath sermon, is altogether missing. Radicalism [has meant] uprooting rather than rooting in” (“Sabbath” 35). The result of the Sunday service has been “laxity,” “skepticism,” and “agnosticism” (“Sabbath” 36). Kohler implied that he came to the conclusion that Jewish identity is tied up with traditions in a way in which the Pittsburgh Platform does not account.

Kohler argued that the second and “far weightier” reason for his change in attitude about the Sabbath is “THE CHANGED ATTITUDE OF THE WORLD TOWARDS THE JEW AND THE PRINCIPLES HE REPRESENTS (Kohler’s emphasis) (“Sabbath” 36). Kohler explained that there was another reason for the Sunday service besides convenience for Jews who worked on Saturday: the Reform Movement’s belief in the ability to “unite all men and races upon the common ground of a pure faith in God and man in all its grand simplicity” (“Sabbath” 37). Moving the Sabbath to Sunday was intended to create a universal Sabbath. The Reform Movement “would willingly sacrifice their own tribal traditions” “upon the altar of a broad
humanitarian religion” (“Sabbath” 37). But, Kohler noted that “the era of tolerance and enlightenment” had become “a sham and a fraud” as anti-Semitism escalated and the churches kept silent, not offering “a word of condemnation for the prosecution of the Jews” (“Sabbath” 37-38). Now that all his illusions had been shattered, Kohler argued, “Our duty is to maintain our Jewish identity and to preserve our Jewish institutions without faltering, without yielding. We must, with united forces, rally around our sacred Sabbath (Kohler’s emphasis) (“Sabbath” 39). Kohler suggested Jews refashion the “old landmarks, symbols and signs of our faith” that they have done away with and make them meaningful expressions of Judaism (“Sabbath” 40). Kohler argued that “true progress lies not in abolishing but in improving the ceremonies of religion, and in making such innovations as tend to strengthen the loyalty and reverential piety of the people” (“Sabbath” 40).

The rhetorical implications of this shift in belief brings us back to the issue of contested meanings for religious practices that I discussed at the introduction of this chapter. The meanings of Jewish practices were still contested. Kohler concluded that regardless of their meaning, Jewish practices were still linked to identity, so Jews needed to maintain Jewish practices to maintain a Jewish identity. Kohler implied that resolving the inconsistencies and contradictions in the meaning of Jewish practices is not as important as maintaining some practices to maintain a Jewish identity.

It is ironic that “progress,” the very term which Kohler used in the Pittsburgh Platform to justify giving up traditions, was the same term he later used to justify revising them. Kohler framed giving up practices as the mark of progress in the Pittsburgh
Platform because he believed deleting traditions would make Judaism modern. In this sermon, he framed revising traditions as a mark of progress and as a way of modernizing Judaism. In his sermon, Kohler no longer used the binary of Reform versus traditional or modern versus antiquated to define Reform Judaism. Instead, he transformed his ideas on how to revise Judaism. To Kohler, revising is no longer merely deleting traditions, now revising means re-visioning them. Kohler’s understanding of revising Judaism that he expresses in this sermon is very different from that which he expressed in the Pittsburgh Platform, although it was consistent with his keynote speech. However, it is the Pittsburgh Platform and not the keynote speech nor this sermon that survived thought the years for public consumption. He also explained how the frame of logical reasoning, the measuring stick with which to gauge the need for revision, failed the Reform Movement because reformers logically eliminated community practices such as Shabbat that they didn’t realize were tied to Jewish identity.

Kohler realized that judging Judaism entirely by logical reasoning quickly deconstructed into something meaningless. Thirteen years after the Pittsburgh Platform on July 8, 1898, Kohler admitted in a lecture “A United Israel” delivered to the Central Conference of American Rabbis that “the Reform movement has disappointed us all. It has not realized many of our fondest hopes. The novelty is worn off. The glowing enthusiasm of the older generation has died away with them; the next one becomes lax and indifferent, and the young. . . care little....” (“United” 12-13). This lecture was originally published in *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 8 1898: 82-90 and was reprinted in *A Living Faith*: 8-18. In this lecture, Kohler explained that one reason Reform Movement had
failed and the next generation was indifferent to Judaism was because “The appeal to reason as final arbitrator in things godly has impaired the feeling of reverence and humility, the sense of responsibility and solidarity among the modern Jews” (“United” 13). Kohler implied that when the German reformers valued scientific rationalism, they progressed quickly to “near skepticism and nihilism” because reason cannot be the benchmark for matters of faith (“United” 14). Kohler suggested uniting the Reform and Orthodox factions so they could work together to improve a sense of Jewish identity through Jewish charity, education and home life (“United” 16-17).

Kohler explained the long-term affect of giving up Jewish practices on the next generation. In Kohler’s inaugural speech as president of the Hebrew Union College in 1903, he argued that the Jewish background of most Reform Jews was so minimal that rabbis have a new job of educating Jews about Judaism. He described the new demands placed on the college by explaining the Jewish background of most Jews, “The old generation, mostly foreign at birth, with a deep religious feeling ingrained from childhood, with fervent religious needs and deeply-rooted religious convictions and customs, is fast dying away. A new generation thoroughly American in education, culture, and tastes, sits in the pews waiting for inspiration from the pulpit” (Kaufmann Kohler Nearprint collection. Ceremonies at the Installation of Rev. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler as President of the Hebrew Union College, October 18, 1903). Kohler claimed that most American-born Jews have little Jewish education or attachment to Judaism so the Hebrew Union College must teach their rabbinic students well so they in turn can educate Jewish Americans about Judaism. It appeared that the ideas in the Pittsburgh
Platform of giving up Jewish practices have different results when it was educated Jews who were giving up Jewish practices yet still have “deep religious feelings ingrained from childhood” versus when it was the next generation of Jews without a connection to Judaism and without a Jewish education who had no practices to give up and no fond memories to sustain a connection to Judaism.

Based on what Kohler saw in the Reform community, he argued that Jews needed ceremonial practices to help them connect back to Judaism (“The Origin and Function of Ceremonies in Judaism,” CCARY 1907 vol. 17: 205-29). He claimed that doctrine alone does not stir the soul as religious acts do because they appeal to people’s emotional nature. Kohler argued that ceremonies “impress us with the holiness of life much more than abstract truth can. They bring all the lessons of religion home to us in striking, persuasive and attractive forms. The skeptic who remains cold when he hears arguments, however convincing, is moved to tears when some ceremonial act brings back to him long-forgotten memories roused by associations of thought and sentiment connected therewith” (224). In this sermon, Kohler framed ceremonies as things that “grow and change like languages” and therefore can be revised (208). He now framed that the mosaic ceremonial system as valuable, but argued that it speaks to Jews in a religious language that is not their own and needs to be “retranslated” into their “own mode of thinking and feeling” (210). He explained, “abstract truth and ethical practice fail to satisfy the religious craving of man. He needs ceremonies that impress with the nearness and holiness of the divine” (221). In other words, the Pittsburgh Platform, which prescribed rejecting ceremonial practices and only using Jewish moral law, did not
satisfactorily meet constituents’ religious needs. Kohler claimed that Reform was in a
great transition period because Reform constituents no longer considered ceremonies
divine obligations; they now must have intrinsic value in order for Reform Jews to follow
them (226). Kohler claimed that the challenge for Reform Jews was to make sure that the
spirit of the old ceremonies were not lost when they transition to the new ceremonies
(229).

An overview of the political climate and immigration laws in America after 1885
helps to explain Kohler’s re-assessment of the Reform community and his subsequent
change of beliefs and ways of framing Reform. In 1886, the Statue of Liberty was
dedicated in New York City harbor welcoming immigrants to America even as
discrimination continued against foreigners. The United States government continued to
enact more restrictions to limit immigration, but events in Russia forced Eastern
European Jews to flood into America. President Roosevelt summed up America’s uneasy
relationship to immigration in his 1905 annual message to Congress. Roosevelt
explained that “there is no danger of having too many immigrants of the right kind”
which meant those willing to be Americanized - learn English, embrace the values and
customs of the middle class, improve themselves through education, work hard in their
profession, and obey the law (Daniel 549). To make sure that only “the right kind” of
immigrant was allowed into America, the Immigration Act of 1891 was created. It
included two provisions that were potentially formidable barriers to Eastern European
Jewish refugees. The first provision expanded the scope of the Pauper Exclusion
Provision of the Immigration Act of 1882 by giving immigration inspectors authority to
deny entry to able-bodied men, who because of lack of money and/or job skills, might rely on public charity for support (Neuringer 20). The second provision was the Assisted Immigrants Clause, which called for the automatic detention of all immigrants whose passage had been paid for by individuals or organizations abroad. Detained immigrants had to undergo special investigation and produce proof that they would not become a public charge (Neuringer 20).

The Pauper Exclusion Provision and the Assisted Immigration Clause might have seemed appropriate even to the Reform leaders in the early 1880s trying to fit in as Americans and trying to not be associated with foreign-looking Jews. But as events in Europe unfolded, anti-foreign policy in America lost its initial appeal and became simple intolerance. In the 1890, there were an average of 40,700 Jewish immigrants each year. From 1899-1902 that average climbed to 53,500 a year. But from 1903-1907 the average more than doubled to 123,000 Jewish immigrants a year (Sarna 360). In 1905, exceptionally bloody pogroms erupted in the Russian empire that sent many Russian Jews including my maternal and paternal great-grandparents fleeing to America. They learned how to circumvent some of America’s immigration laws most likely from other Eastern European Jews who were also running for their lives. To thwart the pauper exclusion provision of the Immigration Act of 1882, they learned to break up family units into acceptable combinations so they would not appear like they would become long-term burdens on public charity. The Assisted Immigrant Clause stated that people could not purchase tickets in America for immigrants, but required that immigrants purchase tickets from their point of departure. My family, like many immigrants, circumvented this
clause by sending money back to their family members in Russia so they could purchase their own tickets. My paternal great-grandfather immigrated to America in 1902 to avoid serving in the Russian army. As a single, able-bodied male, he was allowed into America. After 2 years of working in America, he earned enough money to pay for the passage for his wife and sons. He sent her the money so she could purchase the tickets in Europe and would not have to worry about the Assisted Immigration Clause. Under the Pauper exclusion Provision, she would be denied entry to America if she came alone with young children so in November 1904, she boarded a boat bound for America with her 2 year-old son, and her infant son and her brother posing as her husband. Once inside America, she joined her husband, and her brother worked for years to accumulate sufficient funds to send to his wife so that she could purchase tickets for herself and their four children and thwart the Assisted Immigration Clause. She traveled to America accompanied by her bachelor brother posing as her husband to circumvent the Pauper Exclusion Clause.

Stories like this one were repeated thousands of times as Eastern European Jews flooded into the United States. Threats from more restrictive immigration laws pushed the Jewish community to act. To further stem the tide of immigration, in 1897, strong support from the Immigration Restriction League pushed a bill requiring literacy tests for all immigrants through both houses of Congress, before President Cleveland vetoed it (Daniel 514). Members of Congress resurrected the literacy test requirement to heighten barriers to immigration. From 1905 until 1917, American Jewish spokespeople acted vigorously against the continued efforts to pass the literacy test on behalf of Eastern
European Jews who were trying to migrate to America to escape persecution and pogroms (Neuringer 88). After several unsuccessful attempts to pass the literacy test bill into law, in January of 1917, President Wilson became the third president to veto this bill. But two days after the veto on February 1, 1917, the House overrode the President Wilson’s rejection of the literacy test bill and on February 5, 1917, the Senate also overrode the presidential veto making it law (Neuringer 119-20). The Immigration Act of 1917 required all immigrants to pass a literacy test and barred Asian workers other than Japanese from entering the United States (Daniel 601). However, the American Jews’ spokespeople who fought against the literacy test bill successfully included a liberalized religious persecution exemption provision, which exempted immigrants seeking admission to the United States to avoid religious persecution from the literacy test (Neuringer 120). In March 1917, the czar was overthrown during the Russian Revolution and the full citizen and religious rights of the Russian Jews were restored (Neuringer 120). The emancipation of the Russian Jews invalidated the literacy test exemption provision. The literacy test went into effect on May 5, 1917 and between that date and June 30th, a total of 21,482 immigrants gained admission to the United States and only 391, or 1.8%, were excluded because of an inability to read (Neuringer 121).

As Eastern European Jews came into America, they quickly became the majority. The German Reformers swam against the demographic tide. Within two decades more than a half a million Jewish immigrants came to America; a population of newcomers which far exceeded the resident Jewish population of 1880 and which was about twice the number of Jews that had come to the shores of America over a period of two centuries
The Eastern European Jewish immigrants changed the primarily German Reform movement. The inflow of Eastern European Jewish immigrants was so great that they could not be absorbed into the existing Jewish communities; new immigrants changed the character of the existing communities. According to Schwartzman, “about two million Jews immigrated to America between 1880 and 1935” (128). The inflow of Eastern European Jewish immigrant was so great that by the end of the century, “the German character of the Jewish settlement in America was beginning to change, despite the fact that institutions still remained in the hands of the German, Ashkenazi, leaders” (Davis 261).

A flood of eastern European Jewish immigrants changed the make up of Jews in America and, consequently, the make up of the constituents of the Reform Movement. At the 1891 CCAR annual conference Bernard Felsenthal warned that in the future the Classical German Reformers, like those who wrote the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, will no longer make up the majority of the Reform Movement because they will be overwhelmed by Eastern European immigrants:

And in times rapidly approaching, when the immigration from Russia will swell still more in constantly increasing numbers, and when our unfortunate oppressed brethren-in-race living in the dominions of the Czar will flock by the thousands into our country . . . in these rapidly approaching times the party entertaining orthodox and conservative views and tendencies will vastly grow, and their majority will be overwhelming. (1891 CCARY 2: 93)

Felsenthal warns the members of the Reform Movement that these Eastern European immigrants will come to the conferences and vote, and “you will be swamped out of existence” (1891 CCARY 2: 93). Felsenthal’s words proved prophetic. A huge influx of
Eastern European Jews significantly changed the demographics of the Reform Movement. As the constituency of the Reform Movement changed, so did their shared beliefs and values.

Changes in the situational context resulted in a community with a diverse variety of shared beliefs. This presented a problem because the Reform Movement defined itself by articulating agreed-upon beliefs that a diverse population did not share. When people's understandings of who they are and the situations that they are in are diverse, how can they be transformed into a collective? In 1889 a structured organization claimed authority for the Reform Movement. In July 1889, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) was organized, officers were elected, and the first conference took place in July 1890 (1890 CCARY 1:12). As Chaim Perelman has explained, “it is only when a symbolic liaison becomes institutionalized that argument can play a role” (102). In this case, creating the institution of the CCAR meant that members of the organization had a structure in which to work together to create a collective identity that could speak for all of them. This necessitated argument. In contrast, in the 1885 Platform, there was no CCAR organization. The selected, like-minded rabbis who were the authors of the 1885 platform did not argue their proposed platform because they did not have to convince others about the value of their ideas; they just authoritatively decreed it. Perelman examined the processes that arguers use to reason about and justify values and claim rationality (xii-xiii). Perelman claimed “accepting assumptions about the nature of reality gives some arguments their quality of rationality” (ix). For example, at the first conference of the CCAR, rabbis addressed the newly created institution and began the
process of framing the collective identity of the Reform Movement by valuing the
diversity in the movement and by characterizing the resulting dissention in the movement
as a result of misguided ideas. The welcoming address delivered by rabbi Hahn explained
that the main cause of the “disunion and dissensions” among American rabbis was
because “they were all foreigners coming from different parts of Europe, from different
schools, from under different local influence, with various conceptions of their own
worth and authority, and most of them without the democratic idea of co-ordination and
subordination . . . with out appreciation of the power of union, co-operation and
consolidation” (1890 CCARY 1:13-14). Rabbi Hahn justified the dissension and
projected the goals of the institution by co-opting American values of democracy.
Appropriating American ideals was one way the movement dealt with balancing
integrating and being distinctive.

Conclusion: Defining Only What They Agreed Upon

Abandoning Jewish practices to blend into America and not appear foreign
seemed like appropriate action to the German reformers like Kohler in the early 1800s.
This belief changed as anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe escalated and anti-foreign policy
in America increased. The community’s beliefs changed not only in response to change
in Europe and immigration laws but also because the make-up of the Jewish community
changed to include a majority of Eastern European Jews. Additionally, the Reform
Movement’s justification for giving up practices and “Americanizing” hinged on the
belief in universal humanitarianism. As the reform leaders lost belief in universalism and
the ideal of a humanitarian religion, they began to value belief in particularism. As Kohler observed when Jews prioritized, for example, work on Saturday over attending Shabbat services, they did not learn to value the idea of a universal day of rest and worship, they learned to devalue Jewish identity. While privileging reason and logic as the final arbitrator on issues involving religion seemed appropriate in the early 1800s, Kohler observed that abandoning practices affected identity. Kohler now believed that the next generation after giving up Jewish practices was uneducated in and indifferent to Judaism, so he argued for the need to preserve Jewish identity. He framed ceremonies as encapsulating the emotional aspects of Judaism, necessary to Jewish identity, and revisable to current situations.

The collective identity of Reform Jews was defined based on what Kohler and the Reform rabbis valued and believed. Kohler framed Reform Judaism as modern and reasonable in the Pittsburgh Platform because the Reform rabbis valued these features and perceived the world as necessitating these changes. The Reform rabbis in the 1880s valued progress and believed in universalism and so the Pittsburgh Platform was persuasive to them. As events changed in the world, the community’s beliefs changed and the Pittsburgh Platform was no longer salient.

The writers of the Pittsburgh Platform asserted with great self-proclaimed authority that Judaism was revisable. The revision, however, was limited to selecting what to keep and what to eliminate based on logic and a desire to be modern. Because of Adler’s Ethical Society, one unalterable requirement was a belief in God. In this platform Judaism is revisable, but only by authorized rabbis. Agency in the platform belongs to a
few selected rabbis lead by Kohler who defined the collective identity of their constituents based on their experience of the community. Jewish constituents were not allowed to participate in revising Judaism or defining their own collective identity. The Pittsburgh Platform advocated dropping ceremonies if they did not “elevate and sanctify our lives” because that’s what Kohler and his community valued. Kohler later declared that ceremonies did not have to be eliminated, but could be revised.

The history of the 1885 Platform shows that what a community agrees is meaningful about actions changes through time. The Reform Movement developed and matured as a tradition because of its ability to change as meaning and beliefs changed to correspond with different purposes and evolving contexts. This ability to transform is evident again in the 1937 Platform.
FIGURE 1, Kaufmann Kohler and his family
FIGURE 2, The First Picture of a CCAR Convention (1897)
FIGURE 3, The 1937 CCAR Convention
CHAPTER 3

The 1937 Columbus Platform: The platform that “must somehow or another attempt to strike a balance”

In chapter two I discussed MacIntyre’s conception that “A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict . . .” (Whose 12). The 1885 platform illustrates one type of conflict with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject its fundamental agreements (Whose 12). The Reform Movement responded to these external critics by representing only the authors’ agreed-upon meanings of Jewish symbolic practices and did not acknowledge the community’s significant disagreements, which is a typical in the initial development of a tradition. The 1937 platform illustrates the other type of conflict that MacIntyre defines: “those internal, interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted” (Whose 12). MacIntyre suggests three possible outcomes from internal debates: it may destroy common fundamental agreements causing the tradition to divide into warring components with each side transformed into external critics of each other, or the tradition may lose all coherence and not survive at all (Whose 12). Or, as the writing process of the 1937 platform illustrates, the internal debate can result in the group recognizing the “possibilities of fundamental agreement and reconstitute themselves as a single, more complex debate” (Whose 12). As the Reform Movement developed, it grew more diverse and included factions that disagreed over fundamental issues. In this chapter I will show
how as the Reform tradition developed, it acknowledged internal debates and included continuously contested ideas that were significant for its members.

The writing situation for the 1937 platform was influenced by tensions between two factions in the Reform Movement: the Zionist and the non-Zionists and the belief that Jewish survival depended on not excluding any Jews. The writing process of the 1937 platform was an attempt to be inclusive of all the factions in the Reform Movement and maintain a coherence of beliefs within multiple interpretive communities. The 1937 platform illustrates the difficulty in making a collaborative writing process to articulate an inclusive collective identity. This writing process for this platform highlights that frames are not monolithic, but there are multiple, overlapping frames.

The introduction to the 1937 Columbus Platform explains that it was written in response to the “changes that have taken place in the modern world” (CCAR Columbus Platform). These changes never defined in the document itself, but understanding these changes helps explain the context and, in turn, the rhetorical situation that prompted the writing of the platform. Essentially, as the Reform Movement’s demographics became more diverse so did the community’s beliefs, which made the Pittsburgh Platform no longer relevant to its members. The 1937 platform illustrated the difficulty for factions in the Reform Movement to collaboratively articulate an inclusive collective identity that would maintain coherence of beliefs among multiple interpretive communities.

The people who made up the Reform Movement in the 1930s had a variety of ideas about what Reform Judaism was and should be. The Reformed Tradition had become diverse enough to contain groups with competing visions of their identity, and it
was also developing an organizational structure that provided a means for such competing visions to be articulated. By the 1930s, many Reformed Jews had come to think of themselves as being Jewish Americans, enabling many to identify with Palestine as a Jewish homeland without feeling that doing so meant giving up their American identity. But others continued to think that one could not be an American and a Zionist Jew. These competing visions converged in the discussion on revising the prayer book because it codified the practices that defined the Reform community. The difficulty in revising the prayer book to satisfy the factions in the movement led to the realization that the platform needed to be revised as well.

People’s dissatisfaction with the prayer book led to its revision. The process of revising the prayer book highlighted Reform Jews’ differences of opinion over whether Judaism was a religion, a nationality, or a people. According to the CCAR rabbis, these differences culminated into two camps: Zionists and non-Zionists. But as the definition of Zionism changed, the demarcations between these two groups became more difficult to identify. A Zionist rabbi and a non-Zionist rabbi each created a version of a new platform that reflected their beliefs, and the attention was shifted to the proponents of these two drafts and their personal differences. This internal debate threatened to tear the Reform Movement apart, but as events in the world changed prior to WWII, the entire Conference recognized fundamental agreements, voted for the Zionist draft, and reconstituted itself as a single more complex collective.

The process of creating this platform is important because it shows the complexities of dialectically framing a collective cultural identity in a developing
tradition when the community recognizes it contains agreed-upon and contested ideas. Framing theory helps explain how a community with homogeneous beliefs taps that common, shared beliefs system to persuade like-minded constituents. For example, in 1885, the leaders of the Reform Movement defined Reform Judaism in opposition to traditional Judaism since they had a common goal of being modern, which they saw as the antithesis to being traditional. The issue for this small group of selected rabbis was to define their collective identity by setting their shared beliefs in opposition to a rival tradition. Their task was less difficult because they had a well-defined collective identity, traditional Judaism, on which they could draw to show how their collective identity was opposite. Framing is less difficult when the community has a homogeneous, static knowledge base on which to draw. Framing theory needs to be complicated when a tradition develops and acknowledges conflicts between contested frames like in the 1937 platform.

Dissatisfaction with Prayer Book Highlights the Need to Define a Collective Identity

The diversity of beliefs in the Reform Movement made it difficult to articulate any aspect of Judaism in writing. The new constituency of the Reform Movement was dissatisfied with Reform, and this dissatisfaction was articulated most clearly with dissatisfaction with the current prayer book. This dissatisfaction was initially expressed by the members of the Reform Movement, not the rabbis, and eventually led the rabbis to act. As the members of the CCAR strove to articulate a new prayer book, they discovered that the rabbis themselves had as diverse beliefs as the constituents (see 1928-
1939 *CCARY*). Discussion on revising the prayer book highlighted the movement's differences of beliefs and suggested that the Reform Movement had no consensus on a collective identity, and perhaps not even an experience of being a collective. These discussions led to a belief in the necessity of creating a new platform to articulate the Reform Movement’s collective identity because all agreed that the 1885 platform no longer defined Reform Judaism for the Reform community. Snow and his collaborators explain that a social movement needs to transform its frame when the values that it promotes no longer fit with its constituents. Frame transformation is what happens when the social movement abandons old understandings, and it identifies and defines new values that are of interest to its audience. In other words, “misframings” are reframed.

Creating a prayer book that represented all the members of the Reform Movement was a problem because the constituents and rabbis had varied beliefs, and the Reform Movement, by its own definition, valued varied beliefs and individual interpretation. The inadequacy of this prayer book was first addressed in the CCAR in 1929 by the director of the Hillel Foundation, who felt the current prayer book did not meet students’ needs. In response, the CCAR wrote a Prayer Book for University Students, but the director felt it, too, did not meet students’ needs. The director of Hillel thought the students themselves should write prayers for these services. He sent the CCAR a number of student-written prayers, but the CCAR found them inadequate. So while individual interpretation was valued, the CCAR rabbis did not let go of doctrinal control. This interchange between the movement rabbis and constituents reflected the current belief in the movement about who could participate in the creation of knowledge. The CCAR
believed that rabbis were the only ones considered credible and authorized to create knowledge for the Reform Movement services. This belief clashed with the Reform Movement belief, as yet implied but not clearly articulated, that individuals should interpret Judaism for themselves and decide what practices are spiritually enlightening. From this exchange, the Committee on Liturgical Literature decided to compile all CCAR rabbi's suggestions for changes in the ritual and innovations in the services, so that these suggestions could be available should another revision of the prayer book be undertaken (1929 CCARY 39: 95-96). For four years the congregants requested a new prayer book and the rabbis did not write one (For details see 1930 CCARY 30: 84-85; 1931 CCARY 41: 92-93; and 1932 CCARY 42: 80-81).

Finally, in 1933 the Committee on Liturgical Literature presented to the Conference a set of Weekday Services that consists not of the usual one Sunday service, but five different Sunday services that would speak to different factions of its diverse population: a standard service with the regular classic prayers and four variant services. The discussion that followed the presentation of this new collection of services highlighted that there were many contrasting beliefs in the movement that made it necessary to provide different services to suit constituents' needs (1933 CCARY 43: 85-93).

The writing of the prayer book highlighted the split in the Reform movement between the Zionists and non-Zionists. In 1934 the Liturgical Committee presented five different Friday evening services. The discussion that followed centered on whether
there should be a Zionist service (1934 *CCARY* 44: 65-84). CCAR member Rabbi Newman explains the tension in the movement about Zionism:

> It is possible to continue to hold down the lid in the Central Conference, but holding down the lid means an eventual explosion. I think the time has really come for the Central Conference of American Rabbis to change its attitude with reference to the place of Palestine in the liturgy. It ought not be necessary for those who opposed the inclusion of constructive reference to Palestine in the liturgy . . . to block any attempt to undertake a revision, however modest it may be of the Prayer book’s attitude toward Palestine . . . . (1934 *CCARY* 44: 75-76)

In 1935, the Liturgical Committee addressed this issue by including one prayer “voicing the aspiration of the Jewish people for Palestine” (1935 *CCARY* 45: 121-123). They also presented one Saturday morning service with five different introductions and five variant sets of prayers to appeal to different members of the diverse movement. In 1936 the committee presented the services for the festivals, which completed the work for volume one of the Union Prayer book (1937 *CCARY* 47: 143).

The need for a new prayer book and the difficulty in creating it highlighted the need for the Reform Movement to reassess how it articulated its collective identity and relationship to Zionism. Zionism was such a difficult issue in part because people had different understandings of its definition. Some people conceptualized Zionism as an “either-or” situation in terms of belonging to a nationality: either you were for adopting a Palestinian citizenship or you were an American citizen. Others conceived of Zionism as both -- “and” situation in terms of nationality that included being an American citizen and favoring Palestine’s existence. The issue was that as Jews’ experiences changed, their socially accepted definition of Zionism changed. This change in the definition of
Zionism occurred because as Reform Jews increasingly broadened their conception of Jewishness, the variety of beliefs increased and their understanding of a distinction between being Jewish and being an American lost its demarcation. In the 1930s national loyalty was no longer a salient issue to the majority of Reform Jews who considered themselves Americans.

The Changing Definition of Zionism and Reform’s Changing Relationship to It

Jews felt enough at home in America to be able to entertain ideas about a homeland for the Jewish nation, and historical events provided powerful arguments for the need for such a homeland. The CCAR convention transcripts and rabbis’ correspondences on the 1937 Columbus Platform suggest that to the rabbis of the Reform Movement, the central topic of this platform was the Reform Movement’s relationship to Zionism. Zionism is one level of abstraction that the Reform Movement used to define itself and is the driving force in defining their collective identity. The Reform Movement was originally adamantly anti-Zionist in the 1800s. At the end of the 19th century, the term Zionism denoted a movement whose goal was the return of all Jewish people to a Jewish state. The 1902 Jewish Encyclopedia defined Zionism as “a movement looking toward the segregation of the Jewish people upon a national basis and in a particular home of its own” (666). To Kohler and the early Reformers, Zionism was equated with separatism, and since they believed Reform Jews in America could fit in as Americans, they were anti-Zionist. Early Reform saw Zionism as a cause of anti-Semitism. The Reform Movement’s resistance to a return to Zionism reflected their resistance to being
forced back to a homeland because Jews couldn’t fit in elsewhere. Kaufmann Kohler explained that those who believe in progressive Judaism protest against “the very idea of a return to Judea as if that were our land and we but foreigners, aliens, exiles in the country in which we live.” He argued that Jews are not in search of a homeland because they are already at home (“Zionism” 457-58).

The most powerful influence of the change in Reform Jews’ sense of a need for a homeland was World War II. Identity became a big issue in the 1930s because the existence of Jews was threatened. At a personal level, the most concrete issue involving identity is where does one exist in the world. Dealing with where one exists in the world leads to issue about how one is integrated into or distinctive in the world. Jews’ existence in the world was a salient issue after Hitler assumed power in Germany on January 30, 1933. A homeland for the Jews ceased being an abstract dream and became a necessity for survival. American Jews watched as businesses owned by Jews in Germany were boycotted and closed. As life for Jews in Germany became more difficult, it also became more difficult for Jews to enter America to escape their predicament. The total American immigration of Jews from all countries in 1933 was only 2,732; in 1934 it was 4,134; and for 1935 it was 4,837 (Neuringer 220). In September 1935, the Nuremberg Laws took effect, and the Jews of Germany were stripped of their German citizenship and civil rights. These decrees prohibited Jews from all economic activity except that involving their own people, excluded their children from schools attended by persons designated as Aryans, and sought to shift all Jews into ghettos. As non-citizens, the Jews of Germany were converted into a class of stateless outcasts who, although still allowed
into America, were not eagerly welcomed. War erupted on September 29, 1939. On November 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} 1939 was a two-day pogrom known as Kristal Nacht in which Jewish non-citizens were victims of mass looting, synagogue desecration, concentration camp incarceration, and murder.

These events and the resulting belief in the need to evacuate Jews from Eastern Europe altered the definition of Zionism from the idea of creating a place in which to segregate Jewish people to the idea of creating a Jewish state because a Jewish homeland was needed for refugees. When ratified, after years of controversy, the Columbus platform defined Zionism as the upbuilding of a Jewish homeland, not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. In other words, this platform defined Jews as “a people” who have a collective experience and need a collective home. The concept of Zionism no longer connoted a nationality with allegiance to one country. But this change in the definition of Zionism was not accomplished easily or quickly. The CCAR shifted its shared understanding of Zionism to a broader conception that involved one’s interaction with the world after years of negotiation that was documented in the process of creating the 1937 platform.

By the 1934 conference, Jewish survival was threatened in Europe, and the Reform Movement revalued their traditions and felt a more urgent need to define themselves as a people. The need to express one’s identity when one is being threatened seems somewhat counterintuitive, but profoundly human on another level. This speaks to the felt need to be a part of a distinctive collective identity and the tendency to seek group solidarity in times of oppression. At times of oppression, group survival takes
precedence as it did in the president’s message of the 45th Annual Convention of the
CCAR June 14-18, 1934. CCAR President Samuel Goldenson suggested that “we, as
spiritual leaders of our people . . . keep the fires of Jewish learning and aspiration
burning” to combat the affects of Nazism and the Third Reich (1934 CCARY 44: 157).
He recognized a need to maintain and foster Jewish culture and spiritual life in America
by highlighting the distinctiveness of Jews. He also demonstrated an awareness of a
larger audience than just Reform Jews in America and directs attention to all Jews in the
world: “because the Jews in this country are free and numerous and more prosperous
than their brethren elsewhere, they are naturally looked to not only for assistance, but also
for something of leadership” (1934 CCARY 44: 158).

In this 1934 CCAR convention, Abraham Feldman first introduced the idea of
revising the platform, but he called for revising just the fifth plank of the Pittsburgh
Platform, which defined Jews as a religious community. Feldman insisted that “Classical
Reform” “made the serious blunder of divorcing the people from the religion by
removing the concept of group togetherness.” The Pittsburgh Platform emphasized “faith
versus people” instead of “faith and people.” Feldman contended that the separation of
faith from people “resulted in loss of Jewish group loyalty, in the atrophy of the sense of
belonging, in the death of a consciousness of joyous attachment to the Jewish group…”
(1934 CCARY 44: 182-83). His argument was compelling because threatened with
extermination, a people becomes more than an abstraction.

In 1934, the CCAR elected Felix Levy, an avowed Zionist, as president. It
appeared at this point that the majority of Reform rabbis were Zionists (i.e. believed in
creating a Jewish state) because 241 out of 401 signed a resolution to support the Palestine Labor movement (CCAR Records, 34: 4.7). At 1935 CCAR convention, the CCAR voted 81 to 25 to shift its collective position on Zionism from opposition to neutrality. The CCAR declared that “acceptance or rejection of the Zionist program should be left to the determination of the individual member of the Conference,” and that the CCAR “takes no official stand on the subject of Zionism” (CCAR Records, 34:17.7 and 1935 CCARY 45: 102-03, 110-12). The CCAR’s neutral stance on Zionism opened the door for more discussion of Zionism within the Reform Movement.

The Call for a New Platform is Answered by Zionists and non-Zionists

As the Reform tradition developed, it acknowledged that its culture included conflicting and contested beliefs and, to some degree, it opened a space to hear and perhaps learn from the conflicts of beliefs. This “opening” occurred at the forty-sixth annual convention of the CCAR on June 25-30, 1935 when the entire CCAR membership, all the rabbis in the Reform Movement, were asked to be involved in revising the platform. The President of the CCAR explained that although the Pittsburgh Platform was written four years before the CCAR was created and was never the official expression of the CCAR, “it has been commonly regarded as representative of the views held by our membership [because] the Reform rabbis have for the last four decades quite generally accepted the conception of Judaism then enunciated” (1935 CCARY 45: 133). The president’s message noted that this conference marks the 50th anniversary of the Pittsburgh Platform, and he recommended a continuation of “a series of studies,” “an
inquiry” into “the matters on which there is still lacking a meeting of the minds” (1935 CCARY 45: 119). The president’s message called for the “presentation of the major differing interpretations of what has entered into the knowledge and thinking of the House of Israel since the making of the Pittsburgh Platform” (1935 CCARY 45: 120). The CCAR Executive Board decided to devote the next 2 or 3 annual conferences to the discussion of the principles of Judaism “before any attempt at the formulation of a new platform” is made (1935 CCARY 45: 121). The conference sessions in 1935 began these discussions by the presentations of papers on God, Torah, and Israel that Rabbis were asked to prepare in advance. (CCAR Collection, 34:17.7). Two men, representing different points of view, presented a paper that represent both of the major differing interpretations on each subject (1935 CCARY 45: 134).

The most significant presentation for this study was the one that highlighted the distinctions between Zionism and non-Zionism since the Reform rabbis characterized the controversy about revising the platform as being about Zionism. Letters archived in the CCAR collection at the American Jewish Archives mark the friction between the Zionist and non-Zionist factions before the 1935 conference in the Reform Movement. In a letter dated May 10, 1935 to CCAR President Samuel Goldenson, rabbi David Philipson, a non-Zionist, worries that, “It is altogether likely that a certain element will try their best to secure control of the Conference. This is rather troubling to me” (CCAR Collection, 34:17.5). Philipson fears Zionists will gain control. In another letter to President Goldenson dated June 17, 1935, Rabbi Simon Cohen, a non-Zionist, regrets having to miss the upcoming 1935 convention because, “it seems to me that some of the younger
generation of the Rabbinate, who to my mind, are more vocal than wise, let it be known that they intend to do quite a number of things that will seriously compromise the tradition and the wisdom of the Conference.” He continues that the “sore spot, Zionism, insists upon making itself heard and upon doing things. It is quite unfortunate indeed that we have no Synod…for the purpose of squelching that group of rabbis” (CCAR Collection, 34:16.15).

Samuel Schulman and Abba Hillel Silver were asked to prepare the conference papers on Israel and presented them to the entire membership at 1935 CCAR convention to provide opposing sides to consider when formulating a new platform. According to Michael Meyer’s research, Schulman the champion of classical Reform, was then aged 71, and his paper was read for him in his absence while Silver, a Zionist, then aged 42, presented his own paper (“Response” 327).

These two presentations suggested that Zionism was broader than nationality or location but also involved ideas about how Jews should interact with the world. Each presentation showed the author’s interpretation about the present situation and used his characterization of reality to justify his argument and claim rationality. MacIntyre’s ideas on the development of a tradition are useful here. MacIntyre explains that in the third stage, a tradition articulates discrepancies between the beliefs of an earlier stage and contrasts it with the world as it has come to understand it (Whose 357). These two presenters reflect back on the movement’s previous position on Zionism as represented in the 1885 platform by comparing what they now judge the world to be with what they previously judged the world to be and rationalizing the movement’s position on Zionism
as appropriate or inadequate. This reflection is manifested in how each presenter argued that given his view of the situation, his ideas suggest a fitting way to define the collective identity. Overall, Schulman privileged the idea that Jews should integrate more and blend into the world so they will not be discriminated against. Silver privileged the idea of retaining Jewish distinctiveness for the survival as a people. Since the term and concept Zionism was not stable, Schulman and Silver needed to explain their understanding of the term by bringing a vision of it before the minds of all the rabbis in the entire membership of the CCAR. According to Perelman, “arguing always includes procedures by which ideas and values are given special presence (in the French sense of being made present) in the minds of those addressed” (x). Perelman explains “arguers must give terms, his ideas, and the relationships he asserts presence . . . actively bringing thoughts predominately before the minds of the audience” (xiii).

Schulman, an anti-Zionist, began his speech by saying that he wanted to define the “conception of Judaism” so it would “become clear in our own minds” (404 and 393). He then began creating presence in the audience’s mind of his conception of the current situation for Jews in the world. He attempted to create presence in his speech by using negative images that did not fit with constituents’ experiences when he discussed his conception of Jews in the world. He stated, “effort is being made . . . to undo the achievement of Jewish emancipation and to force the Jew back into what was called the ghetto” (Schulman 393). The term “ghetto” gave the issue powerful presence at the time. The Nazis had separated Jews from other people by putting them in designated ghettos and then treating them inhumanely – like nonhumans. The rhetorical use of such imagery
is explained by Perelman’s concept of presence. Perelman explains “choosing to single out certain things for presentation in a speech draws the attention of the audience to them and thereby gives them a presence that prevents them from being neglected” (35). However, the victim imagery did not fit the audience’s experience in America in the 1930s. Schulman drew the audience’s attention to a negative view that they were not accustomed to seeing. Schulman used his description of a hostile world to argue that Jews needed to blend in to avoid persecution. He contrasted Jews’ need to blend in and avoid persecution to his conception of Zionism. His 19th century, anti-Zionist logic associated being a Zionist with being a foreigner, and he rationalized that the 1885 Platform was still an appropriate representation of the Reform Movement’s understanding of Zionism. He claimed that the Reform Movement “eliminated every petition for a return to Palestine” which he defined as “the rebuilding of the ancient Temple and the restoration of the sacrificial cult that went with it” (Schulman 394-95).

Schulman argued that Israel, the Jewish people, is not a race, not a nation, not a nationality, not a civilization, but a religious community that wants “freedom to be such a community in any part of the world” (Schulman 397). He argued that Jews are a religious group and what binds them is “a particular kind of faith in God and an interpretation of that faith, and nothing else (Schulman 398). Schulman argued that in “a free world where the Jew is accepted as free and equal,” he or she become “a light to the nations” (393). Schulman argued that for Reform Jews, American nationality is “good enough for us” (405). Schulman represented the assimilation view of the 1885 platform.
Schulman’s vision of the Jews in the world was not persuasive because he explained Judaism as a conceptual abstraction, and the only concrete images he provided were negative ones that did not fit with his audience’s personal experience. Perelman’s theory helps explain the rhetorical importance of Schulman’s argument strategy. Perelman explains, “Argumentation cannot do without either abstract or concrete values, but, given the situation, a speaker will subordinate one to the other” (28). In his presentation to the CCAR rabbis, Schulman relied on abstract values to argue his view of Jews in the world. Perelman explains “Abstract values . . . serve more easily as a basis for critiques of society, and can be ties to justification for change, for a revolutionary spirit” (28). However, in his speech, Schulman used abstract values, but he did not want to justify change. He tried to justify keeping Reform the same as it was in 1885. The use of abstract values was successful in the 1885 platform because it was used for the purpose of critiquing society and justifying revolutionary change in Judaism. Perelman explains that “Reasoning that is based on concrete values seems characteristic of conservative societies” (28). In the situation in 1937 when constituents were thinking of Germany, they needed concrete values to conserve Judaism. Schulman’s presentation of abstractions was not persuasive.

Silver, a devout Zionist, devoted his paper to a discussion of plank five of the Pittsburgh Platform in order to refute the concepts in Reform that led to anti-Zionist conclusions. Silver argued that the fifth plank of the 1885 Platform inadequately represented the Reform Movement. Silver presented an argument that articulated concrete claims and provided concrete evidence that made sense of the community’s
Silver reminded his audience that the Reform Movement in America came from the Reform Movement in Germany, and he explained that the purpose of the Reform movement in Germany was "to adjust Jewish life pragmatically to its new environment" and "to gain for the Jews full rights of citizenship by producing the proper effect upon the civil authorities," which, in the 1930s, they were now denied (418). Silver refuted what he called the erroneous assumptions of the Reform Movement in Germany that "Jewish separatism, manifested in speech, dress, folkways, rituals, and ceremonies was responsible for the non-Jews' suspicion and hostility and for their reluctance to concede to Jews full political equality" (418). Silver presented images of Jewish separatism that the audience readily understood as significant. According to Silver, the eradication of all evidence of separatism meant, for some Jews, total assimilation and for others "assimilation stopped short of religious surrender" (418).

Silver created presence in his speech by using concrete examples to illustrate how Jews in different countries had assimilated to gain rights of citizenship. As Perelman suggests, this reasoning by using concrete examples was persuasive to argue that Judaism needed to be preserved. Even though this conservatism represents a change in Reform views, it represents conserving and preserving Judaism. Silver described how Moses Mendelssohn "sought to find a place for religiously observant Jews in the political and intellectual milieu of Western European civilization" by neutralizing Judaism theologically, by denying its unique character, and by restricting it to "the status of revealed law which was in no way in conflict with the law of the land" (Silver 418). Silver explained how, consequently, Mendelssohn's contemporaries used his ideas as
justification for assimilation. Silver explained that the “first generation of enlightened Berlin, Frankfurt, and Viennese Jews were convinced that their political and social salvation lay in deorientalizing and Germanizing themselves, in making themselves like other people in order to be accepted by other people” (419). He explained the disastrous results of their ideas in the current Nazi regime (Silver 421). Silver gave specific examples of when “the Russian Jewish intelligentsia of the [eighteen] sixties and seventies resorted to the self-same unavailing tactics” because they believed that “in thorough Russification and assimilation lay the hope of ultimate salvation” (422). He explained how the brutal pogroms of 1871 and 1881 “broke the back of assimilation” in Russia and claimed “the solution clearly did not lie in the formula ‘Russian of the Mosaic Persuasion’” (422). He connected his ideas to the present situation and claimed, “the catastrophe of 1933 broke the back of assimilation in Germany. The whole improvised philosophy of Jewish history which is expressed in the doctrine that we are not a nation but a religious community has proved bankrupt and has been liquidated in the very home of its origin” (423). The world that Silver described was a familiar depiction to his audience because it drew from a shared history. The audience was accustomed to seeing itself in the situation described. Silver organized and made sense of that history by arguing that the overall ends it produced was not the intended one. He argued that those who could not stand the strain of the Jewish experience in other countries simply disappeared or were forcibly assimilated (424). In his argument, Silver used concrete values to critique society and justify a major reform of Reform Judaism to conserve it in contradiction to Perelman’s theory.
Silver's perspective was that assimilation for acceptance was a perpetual problem that needed to be addressed if Jews were to survive as a distinct people. He suggested that one solution to this problem was creating a unified plan for survival that "must take into account not only shifting interests and needs of the Jews themselves but also the varied and changing political and economic milieu in which Jewish groups find themselves" (425). Silver's point is that concrete practices in Jewish religion are the "strongest factor in the survival" of the Jewish people (435). He argues that the Jewish people cannot survive in the Diaspora without the Jewish religion, and they need a place for an "ingathering" for their survival as a people (Silver 427). The survival of the people was a more compelling frame in the historical context than Jews' acceptance as Americans, a status that they already achieved. His main point was that for Jewish survival religious leaders should stress the total program of Jewish life (Silver 436).

Schulman and Silver created two competing views about Jews' relationship to the world. Schulman's perspective necessitated assimilation so Jews would not be discriminated against while Silver's understanding necessitated maintaining distinctiveness for survival as a people. The writing process of the Columbus Platform reflected the problems involved in synthesizing these two opposing views about the degree to which Jews need to integrate or be distinctive in the world. The Reform Movement wanted to create a collective identity and claim to speak for it. Differences in opinion on the desirability of adopting any platform and disagreements about Zionism mixed with personality conflicts to create bitter debates. Yet, the report of the 1935 conference debate in the *CCAR Yearbook* did not convey the emotional tensions between
members with conflicting convictions because it was extensively edited. But the signs of the tension are evident in the letters and manuscripts preserved in the American Jewish Archives. In a letter from CCAR Secretary rabbi Isaac Marcuson to CCAR President Samuel Goldenson dated Sept. 20, 1935, Marcuson asks Goldenson if the discussion that he selected represents the “essential features of the debate” from the Conference minutes and transcripts and, referring to a comment, said, “I do not believe that these remarks should be sent in the Yearbook.” He specifies by adding “I do not believe that members of our own Commission should be referred to as old fogies and antiquated, and I certainly do not believe that such statements should appear for permanent record in the Yearbook” (CCAR Collection, 34:17.2). Marcuson was eager to present what he considered a respectable version of the 1935 Conference because he knew the Conference held the attention of a wide audience. The President’s message at the Conference was published not only in the Jewish press, but also in the New York Times. Not only were Jews paying close attention, but non-Jews were interested because the issue of Zionism was a hot topic in the world. Additionally, the CCAR attempted to speak for all its members and must somehow frame a collective identity that fit with the community even if that community had conflicting views.

Framing a Collective Identity When the Community Has Conflicting Shared Beliefs and Values

Framing theory contends that a social movement uses the community’s shared beliefs and values to create a frame. But as MacIntyre explains and my research on the Reform tradition shows, as a tradition develops it contends with internal, interpretive
debates about shared and contested beliefs (*Whose* 12). So how does a social movement or a tradition use its community's beliefs to define itself when those beliefs are conflicting? The Reform tradition rationalized differences and introduced a process of dealing with them in the writing of the 1937 platform. To claim to speak for the community and to strengthen its sense of a collective identity, the Reform Movement needed to build a collective identity that did not ignore contested beliefs. To acknowledge the internal debate and include continuously contested ideas in the writing process, the committee in charge of drafting the new platform, the Commission on the Revaluation of Judaism, was formed to represent both Zionists and non-Zionists. The selection of the chairman was handled very delicately because the issue was watched closely, and the debate was volatile. Considering the make-up of the committee and the role of the participants can help explain how the CCAR framed the collective identity in an attempt to suit most of its members. The commission did not decree the collective identity of the Reform Movement but began by working through a dialectic process that included discussion and deliberation. According to Perelman, “Deliberation and discussion give rationality to practical activities, where one is to decide and choose, after reflection, among possibilities and contingencies. Through dialectical reasoning and rhetoric, one can influence people’s judgment and direct them toward taking reasonable positions.... the role of dialectical reasoning and rhetorical discourse is essential in order to introduce some rationality into the exercise of individual and collective will” (155). The make up of the committee and the writing process of the platform suggests that the CCAR made a special effort to respect and include minority opinions. Schulman, whose
speech was vague and full of abstractions was made head of the committee and asked to
write the platform, which turned out to be vague and conceptual. Schulman’s draft was
deemed unacceptable by the committee and was replaced with Cohon’s specific, concrete
draft.

In 1935 the incoming Conference president, Felix Levy, a Zionist, invited eleven
rabbis to participate on the Commission on Revaluation of Judaism “for the purpose of
drawing up a platform expressing the present viewpoint of Reform Judaism in America”
(CCAR Collection, 34:17.2 Marcuson letter dated Oct 28, 1935). To be inclusive, the
commission included four Non-Zionist: Samuel Schulman, Bernard Heller, Samuel
Goldenson and David Philipson. Goldenson and Philipson believed so strongly in their
non-Zionist convictions that they signed The Statement of Principles by Non-Zionist
Rabbis (Nearprint of American Council of Judaism Collection, 17:5.4. Reprinted in the
New York Times Sunday, August 30, 1942). The commission also included seven
Zionists: Stephen Wise, Felix Levy (who was a member of the National Board of The
Zionist Organization of America), Samuel Cohon, Barnett Brickner, Max Raisin, Abba
Hillel Silver (who was an officer of The Zionist Organization of America) and James
Heller (who was an officer of The Zionist Organization of America) (Zionist of America
Collection 1927, 1930, and no date, 147:1.10).

The make up of the committee was suspect by some rabbis. In a letter to
Schulman dated Jan 14, 1936, Louis Wolsey wrote, “I am rather curious to know your
reaction not alone to your appointment to the Committee on Formulation of a Platform
for Reform Judaism, but also to the composition of that Committee. You must have
noted that of the eleven men appointed to the Committee, only four are non-Zionists, and the remaining seven are almost fanatical Zionists. Of course, this is a packed committee, which in the end must be a greatly self-defeating piece of maneuvering upon the part of a Zionist president and his cohorts” (Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.5).

Evidence of an undercurrent of division between these two groups can be seen in the letters between the CCAR rabbis as Zionists and non-Zionists jockey for position. In a letter to Goldenson dated Sept 30, 1935, Isaac Marcuson, secretary of the CCAR, implored ex-president Samuel Goldenson to reconsider his decision to not serve on the Commission on Revaluation of Judaism (CCAR Collection, 34:17.2). He stated, “Under the circumstances it will be impossible to put either a Zionist or a non-Zionist in your place on the board.” Marcuson wrote Goldenson again in a letter dated Nov. 5 1935 and said he received acceptance from every member of the Committee on Revaluation but him. Marcuson stated “It is absolutely essential that you accept this appointment – you know why . . . . Levy says he is going to ask Schulman to act as chair of the Commission. If you see Schulman, tell him not to accept the chairmanship – let Levy preside. You may need Schulman’s vote” (CCAR Collection, 34:17.2).

Of the original eleven rabbis selected to be on this committee, only nine, three non-Zionists and six Zionists, were present at the first meeting (Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6. Minutes of the First meeting of the Commission on Platform). The committee divided almost entirely by the ages of the members. Zionists were for the most part in their 40s to early 50s while the non-Zionists were mostly in their 70s. Zionist Stephen Wise motioned that non-Zionist Samuel Schulman be elected chairman
and the motion unanimously carried. The committee selected Schulman and Heller, classical Reformers and non-Zionists whose views represented the minority of Reform rabbis as the chair and secretary perhaps as a gesture to include all points of view. Perelman explains, “When it is a question … of value judgments, not only the person of the speaker, but also the function he exercises, the role he assumes, undeniably influences the way the audience will receive his words” (99). So putting Schulman, a rabbi who held the beliefs of the minority, as the chair of the committee must have appeared odd and influenced how the audience received his words. After a lengthy discussion on the advisability of whether there should be any formulation of the principles, the committee decided to concentrate on what contents should be included in the statement and the procedure for writing the statement. In another demonstration of the tensions between Zionists and non-Zionists, Zionist Samuel Cohon and other members proposed a list of subjects to be included in the statement and then the chairman, non-Zionist Samuel Schulman, proposed a list of subjects. The committee discussed whether single themes should be assigned to single rabbis to write or whether one rabbi should write the entire statement and distribute it to the members for suggestions and corrections. It was motioned by Zionist Felix Levy and passed that “one person be designated to prepare a tentative draft to cover all the items and that the secretary send it to all members of the Commission who are to amend it and return it to the secretary who will in turn send them all to the author and also copies of the same to each member” (Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6. Minutes of the First meeting of the Commission on Platform). Zionist Felix Levy suggested to Zionist Stephen Wise that non-Zionist Samuel Schulman be asked to
prepare the draft. This was a curious move because Schulman’s speech on Israel was so
unclear and abstract and his views represented the minority in the CCAR. After the
meeting, Zionist A. H. Silver and Zionist Stephen Wise suggested that Zionist Samuel
Cohon collaborate with non-Zionist Schulman to write the draft. Schulman initially
turned down the suggestion. Then Wise suggested that Cohon send Schulman a copy of
his draft for consideration in preparing his own. Schulman reluctantly acquiesced
(Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2. 6. Minutes of the First meeting of the Commission on
Platform). So the Zionists figured out a way to potentially influence the writing of the
draft and if that didn’t work, they designed a writing process that insured that the
commission members could amend the draft and present a consensus. In effect, the
Zionists included the non-Zionist members in the writing process, but guaranteed the
Zionists’ ability to maintain coherence of beliefs in the final platform.

Two and a half months after Schulman received Cohon’s draft, Schulman sent a
letter to the members of the platform committee, enclosed his draft, and asked all
committee members to send him comments so he could write up a new draft for the next
committee meeting (Letter dated March 21, 1936 Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.5).
Even though Schulman said at the first meeting of platform committee that the platform
should be 1,000-1,500 words, his draft contained over 4,200 words. Double-spaced his
platform was 16 pages long. His draft was confusing, unclear, repetitive, and unengaging
(Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.5). According to Meyers, “to everyone’s chagrin, his
work turned out to be a lengthy, highly theological, and ponderous document that was
more argument and exhortation than collective statement. It specified no religious
observances and left open the question of whether the Jews were only a religious community or also a nation” (Meyer Response 318).

Cohon and Schulman each supported his own draft of a new platform. The Cohon/Schulman conflict can be followed in detail in their letters archived in the Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6 and 7 and the Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.5, 9-11. Schulman’s and the Cohon’s drafts differed in interesting ways. Just like in his speech on Israel that he delivered to the entire CCAR, Schulman created a presence that did not fit the Reform Movement constituents. Schulman’s draft created presence in the audience’s minds of the world in which Jews live as “one of great confusion of thought” in which there is “a break-down of religious faith,” and “an impairment of moral obligation” in which humanity is “threatened with the destruction of civilization” by rampant war (Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.5). In the rest of the platform, Schulman defines aspects of Judaism in abstract terms. He created presence of Jews in the world by using concrete negative images that do not fit with constituents’ experiences and abstractions that provide no presence of Reform Judaism when discussing his vision of Judaism. On the most emotionally-charged issue, Zionism, he presented both sides of the debates which he characterized as consisting of one side that insisted Israel is a religious community and the other side that insisted Israel is a nation, but he did not elaborate on either or take a position. Schulman did not adequately address what the community declared the most important issue: Zionism.

While Schulman’s draft presented abstract concepts about Judaism, Cohon’s draft, which was very similar to the ratified platform, argued that Reform Jews were
obligated to create a place and take action, and he presented concrete actions and specific examples. Cohon continued Silver's use of concrete values to redefine Reform Judaism. Cohon's draft stated that Reform demands more from its adherents than just belief. He argued that reform expects its adherents to take up specific practices which he listed: synagogue attendance, participation in Jewish communal affairs, the transmission of Jewish knowledge, the use of Hebrew prayer in the home and synagogue, the celebration of Jewish festivals and holidays, and the "retention and development of customs, symbols, and ceremonies as possess inspirational value" (CCAR Columbus).

James Heller responded to Schulman's draft by saying that there are a number of details in the draft with which he finds himself in disagreement, and he is against issuing "so voluminous a statement or one which appears to repeat itself so many times" (Letter dated April 10, 1936 Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.9). Other letters from rabbis explained that his draft was too verbose and too sermonic. Schulman's platform was also called repetitive, confused, and argumentative (Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.10). President Levy decided that Schulman's draft was "not what I had in mind" and instead of "correcting it" would substitute Cohon's platform to "correct." (Letter from Felix Levy to Schulman dated April 13, 1936 Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.9) So Levy sent Cohon's draft to the committee members and asked them to "study this and come prepared to debate it next Wednesday at the meeting" (Letter Felix Levy dated April 14, 1936 Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6). Schulman replied that he had read the Statement of Principles of the Reformation of Judaism, would not sign the document, and
was resigning from the committee (Letter dated June 19, 1936 to Bernard Heller from Schulman Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.9).

Presenting a United Front

The revision process showed the Platform committee’s attempt to include all and create a consensus, and the recording process showed the difficulty in presenting an image of the process that would bring the community together. The original transcripts of the 1936 CCAR Convention included parts not published in the 1936 *CCARY*, apparently in another attempt to minimize evidence of the tensions between the conflicting parties or to present a more unified front than existed. President Levy explained at the 1936 conference that the committee was made up of members of the Conference with a variety of points of view so all shades of opinion, “both positive and negative” would be represented (CCAR Collection, 34:36. Original Transcripts of the 1936 CCAR Convention pp. 229-230). Levy explained that the committee met with “insupportable difficulties” of reconciling points of views that were diametrically opposed, but the committee felt the statement represented not only “the dominant point of view of the Committee,” but the point of view of the average man of the Conference, who neither leans to the left too far nor to the right too far--the left being a nationalistic interpretation of Judaism; the right, the old conservative ...interpretation of Judaism” (CCAR Collection ms. co. 34 box 36. Original Transcripts of the 1936 CCAR Convention: 230). He explained that the platform “cannot include every shade of opinion
... it must somehow or other attempt to strike a balance" (CCAR Collection, 34:36. Original Transcripts of the 1936 CCAR Convention p. 231).

Yet the process of creating a platform that could represent all factions helped the authors of the 1937 Platform rationalize and articulate what was most important to Reform. MacIntyre explains that progress in rationality is achieved when the adherents of a particular point of view “succeed to some significant degree in elaborating ever more comprehensive and adequate statements of their positions through the dialectical procedure of advancing objections which identify incoherences, omissions, explanatory failures, and other types of flaw and limitation in earlier statements of them, of finding the strongest arguments available for supporting those objections, and then of attempting to restate the position so that it is no longer vulnerable to those specific objections and arguments” (Whose 144). In precisely this way the authors of the 1937 Platform identified the limitations of Cohon’s draft and enriched it with contributions from the ensuing dialectic. As MacIntyre explains “Any philosophical theory of any large degree of comprehensiveness has to include in what it explains the views of those intelligent, perceptive, and philosophically sophisticated persons who disagree with it” (Whose 144). However, the authors decided that in order to appeal to its diverse population of Reform Jews who had a variety of beliefs, the 1937 Platform needed to be less precise to be more inclusive. Cohon’s draft was submitted to the Conference for the rabbis to vote on. It was decided to accept the draft of the Declaration of Principles with revisions. All members were asked to examine the proposed platform carefully and give Cohon their “frank opinion regarding it as a whole and its parts with specific recommendation of
additions, omissions or verbal changes that you may desire" (1936 Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6. Letter from Cohen dated Dec 30, 1936 to all members of CCAR).

Every member of the conference was asked to make comments and suggestions for the Commission to consider when reformulating a revision to be voted on at the next annual conference (1936 CCARY 46:106). Cohon asked the members to “Give us the full benefit of your constructive thought and help us thereby to render this platform a true expression of the CCAR” (1936 Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6. Letter from Cohen dated Dec 30, 1936 to all members of CCAR).

The draft submitted to this conference differed from the final draft in several ways, highlighting how the final draft was changed to accommodate the requests of the CCAR rabbis not on the revision committee. The two most significant changes in the draft involved the sections on Israel and on ceremonies including prayer. In the original 1936 version submitted at the 1936 Conference, the subsection, Israel, referred to the people and included two other subsections: Palestine, which referred to the place, and Mission of Israel, which referred to the mission of the people. Instead of creating a more comprehensive explanation for the varieties of disagreements between Zionists and non-Zionists, as MacIntyre’s theory would suggest, these two subsections were simply eliminated. The final version combined the idea of place and mission as it defined Jews as part of the community in which they lived. This change represents the tensions between the Zionists and the non-Zionists and to bring the community together this articulation is less specific to accommodate both.
In the original 1936 draft, ceremonies were defined in a more concrete, emotional way as "the sign-language of faith," which are the "poetic and symbolic elements of religion" that make religion "a power and a joy" and serve "in holding us together as a united people" (1936 CCARY 46: 93). The final version of the draft acknowledged the variety of interpretations, eliminated this emotional aspect, and suggested Jews retain and develop "such customs, symbols, and ceremonies as possess inspirational value (CCAR Columbus Platform). In the original 1936 version, prayer is defined as "the mystic ladder on which the devout soul mounts to the throne of God and enlists in his service" yet in the final version, the emotional aspect is not present since prayer is defined as "the voice of religion" (1936 CCARY 46: 93 and CCAR Columbus Platform). These two changes represent the difficulty of being precise and inclusive for people with a diversity of ideas. To accommodate all interpretations of ceremonies and prayer, the final version is less specific in an attempt to bring the community together.

After Cohon and the Committee considered all responses from the rabbis, they revised the platform, and it was adopted at the 1937 Conference in Columbus. The reaction from the Jewish Press about the adoption of the 1937 Columbus Platform was neutral. The American Hebrew and The American Israeli print the entire Columbus Platform without commentary (June 4, 1937 Sivan 25, 5697 The American Hebrew 141.3: 7 and June 17, 1937 The American Israeli 85.59: 5). The platform is not discussed further in the Jewish press, perhaps because the platform articulated the agreed upon beliefs of the movement or perhaps because world events demanded attention. Coverage was devoted to current events. The American Hebrew concentrated on "An Eye-Witness
Account of a Pogrom-Torn city in Poland" and editorial interpretations of current events (June 11, 1937 The American Hebrew 141.4; June 18, 1937 The American Hebrew 141.5; June 25, 1937 The American Hebrew 141.6.) At this point in time who American Reform Jews are was considered less important by the press than Jews being killed in Europe.

After the platform was adopted, the CCAR needed to record the process in the CCARY. In a letter to Rabbi Samuel Schulman, CCAR Secretary and editor of the CCARY, Rabbi Isaac Marcuson, explained, "there will be no reference in the Yearbook to any of the differences of opinion that existed in the Commission" (letter dated June 14, 1937 Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.10). In a letter to Samuel Cohon, Marcuson alluded to the difficulty at the conference by stating, "we have the Guiding Principles – without which we could have lived a year or two longer . . . . It was sad enough that such a thing should happen on the floor of the convention – that couldn’t be helped but I do not think the thing should be perpetrated in the pages of the yearbook” (Letter dated August 30, 1937 Samuel Cohon Collection, 276:2.6).

The report of the writing, revising, and accepting of the 1937 platform printed in the CCARY represents a version designed to bring the community together. Schulman wrote several letters to several rabbis after Cohon’s platform was adopted asking them to assist in a letter writing campaign to persuade the president of the CCAR Executive Board to publish his proposed statement in the yearbook. (Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.11). To create goodwill, Marcuson told Schulman that the CCAR would approve printing Schulman’s draft if he cut it in half (Letter dated Oct. 8, 1937 Samuel Schulman Collection 90:7.11). The executive board approved printing an abridged version of Schulman’s statement in the appendix of the CCARY. Schulman wrote several letters to
secretary Marcuson and president Currick arguing over the wording that would introduce
his statement (Samuel Schulman Collection, 90:7.11). To defuse tensions, an
introduction acceptable to both parties was eventually worked out.

How can a Collective Identity Be Precise and Inclusive?

The issue in the platform was to create a collective identity that would be precise
enough to foster a distinctive collective identity and inclusive enough to include all
members of the Reform Movement. Because Reform Jews believed in the need to be
distinctive for their survival as a people, they believed they needed to include all Reform
Jews for survival. The Reform Movement was in an interesting rhetorical situation.
Since the tenet of the Reform Movement is the judgment of the individual, commonalities
had to be worded in the broadest conception to represent the views of and speak to most
CCAR rabbis and all Reform Jews. The Reform Movement needed to strengthen its
shared sense of collective identity, which necessitated being precise on what they
believed, but being precise worked at cross purposes with being inclusive. The Reform
Movement needed to strengthen the shared sense of collective identity, but ran into
difficulty in being precise and inclusive.

To be precise and inclusive, Cohon created a concrete collective identity in which
Reform Jews were obligated to take action, and he changed the concept of action.
Alasdair MacIntyre’s ideas on how different traditions understand virtue in relation to
practices help explain how the 1937 platform changed the frame of Jewish practices or
actions. MacIntyre explains that moral arguments within the classical, Aristotelian
tradition involve the central concept that man is “understood as having an essential nature and an essential purpose or function” (*After Virtue* 58). MacIntyre elaborates that to the theorists of the classical tradition “to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose” so that “when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that ‘man’ ceases to be a functional concept” (*After Virtue* 59). But this Aristotelian conception of man’s purpose does not apply to the real social world of the Reform Movement in 1937. According to MacIntyre, “every moral philosophy offers explicitly or implicitly at least a partial conceptual analysis of the relationship of an agent to his or her reasons, motives, intentions, and actions, and in so doing generally presupposes some claim that these concepts are embodied or at least can be in the real social world” (*After Virtue* 23). MacIntyre explains it follows that “we have not yet fully understood the claims of any moral philosophy until we have spelled out what its social embodiment would be” (*After Virtue* 23).

For the Reform Movement, Reform Jews do not do Jewish practices to fulfill their function or purpose; Reform Jews should do Jewish practices because doing those practices assure the survival of the Jewish people as Jews. Silver explains what the world looks like through a conception of valuing Jewish practices to assure the Jewish people survive as a collective.

The 1937 document focused on the issue of the Jewish people’s function or purpose, a move that appeared to begin with Silver’s speech. Silver examined how Jews in the past assimilated to gain acceptance, and when examining the combined pattern through history, the only end it served was to threaten the survival of Jews as a people.
Silver introduced the issue of being a people and discussed with the survival of Jews as a distinctive people. In the 1937 platform, practices served the decided purpose of maintaining Jews as a people.

The 1937 platform made a significant shift in Reform Jews' relationship to practices when compared to the 1885 platform. The 1885 platform did away with all practices because the authors of the 1885 platform believed the laws did not accomplish their goals of giving Jews spiritual elevation. The 1885 document rejected all such practices that were deemed to be inconsistent with modern civilization because being modern and fitting in were their only goals. As such, the Pittsburgh Platform declared Jews no longer had to observe those laws.

The 1885 document not only took away any sense of purpose for practices, but it did so by treating the process of deliberating upon practices as a means and not an end in the Kantian tradition that dominated the 1885 Platform. Maclntyre explains that for Kant “the difference between a human relationship uninformed by morality and one so informed is precisely the difference between one in which each person treats the other primarily as a means to his or her ends and one in which each treats the other as an end” (After Virtue 58). Maclntyre explains that to treat someone else as a means is to seek to make that person an instrument of someone else’s will by using whatever influences will be persuasive (After Virtue 24). The 1885 platform implied that Traditional Judaism treated Jews as a means because it dictated the rules they were to follow and implied that Jews were to follow them for the sole reason that they were commandments or obligations. However, when the 1885 platform threw off the yoke of Traditional laws
and practices, it also treated people as a means by dictating to them to reject all Jewish laws. According to MacIntyre, "to treat someone else as an end is to offer them . . . reasons for acting in one way rather than another, but to leave it to them [sic] to evaluate those reasons (After Virtue 23)." MacIntyre explains that until an agent has decided for himself or herself whether the reasons are good or not, he or she has no reason to act. (After Virtue 46). The 1937 document began the tradition of treating people as a means by offering reasons for the beliefs presented and providing the rationale for actions so people could decide for themselves. A full one third of the document is devoted to religious practice in the home and the school reflecting the movement’s fundamental shift in its basic ideology from a primary emphasis on theological universalism to a greater appreciation of Jewish particularism.

Cohon shifted the Reform Movement from valuing individual interpretation on religious thought to valuing an understanding that Reform Jews are a collective. Cohon justified more traditional practices by explaining how they support the survival of Jews as a people. Cohon’s draft focused not only on Jewish observance, but also on Jewish thought and how to balance them both. Cohon explained,

Within our camp we find ourselves divided on the most vital questions of belief and practice, and often have no more authoritative guidance than the judgment of the individual. In consequence, vast numbers of our people find themselves bewildered and many have severed their connections with their religious heritage. To eliminate the confusion in our religious life it is essential to rethink our position regarding the fundamentals of our faith and find improved ways of translating them into the life of our people. [Reform’s] primary task no longer is adjustment to the modern temper but rather the complete self-reaffirmation as a religion . . . (Pittsburgh 8).
Cohon's platform was successful because he articulated his version of reality with concrete values and in a way that fit the constituents' assumptions by relating to the survival of Judaism.

The Collective Identity Framed in the Columbus Platform

The Columbus Platform appeared constitutional in that it was titled, “The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism” and was classified into three major sections with headings and subheadings. In the first major section, “Judaism and its Foundations,” the 1937 Platform defined Judaism’s fundamental components—its foundation in the names of the five subsections: “Nature and Judaism,” “God,” “Man,” “Torah,” “Israel.” The 1937 Platform framed Reform Judaism in a way that not only expanded its definition, but also allowed for a various interpretations from its diverse constituents. It defined Judaism as “the historical religious experience of the Jewish people” (CCAR Columbus Platform). In other words, it created a collective identity based on a collective experience. One purpose of this section is to defuse the conflicts, tensions, and debates within the Reform movement by stressing what Jews have in common, an identity as members of a community with a “common history” and common “heritage of faith” with a “group loyalty” and a “bond” (CCAR Columbus Platform). The platform stressed identification with the totality of the Jewish people in a movement that values diversity. To stress Jews’ distinctiveness as a group, the platform used the Hebrew word “Torah” instead of “Bible” which was used in the 1885 platform (CCAR Columbus Platform). This document amplified the belief that Reform Jews are a people, and that as a people
Reform Jews can selectively choose practices from among their traditions. Clarifying an interpretive frame by amplifying the values or beliefs presumed to be basic to prospective constituents is what Snow and his colleagues called frame amplification (Snow et al. 469). This document amplified the frame of a collective by encouraging Jews to reclaim and reinterpret traditional practices since "a people" have traditions that unify them.

The fifth subsection, "Israel," referring to the Jewish people, settled the dispute between the Zionists and the non-Zionists by defining its constituents as "the people of Israel" and "our people." The issue of nationality is no longer connected to the Zionist idea of creating Palestine. The platform framed Palestine as "a haven of refuge for the oppressed" and as "a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life" (CCAR Columbus Platform). This section reflected a carefully constructed synthesis of two sets of principles: the Jewish religion and the Jewish people. The metaphor, "Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body" implied a strong connection between Judaism and the Jewish people (Israel) because just like a soul cannot exist without a body, Judaism cannot exist without the Jewish people. The issue of Zionism was framed in the idea of survival as a people and worked to reach out to all Jews: Jews "living in all parts of the world," Jews "who have become estranged from their religion" and even the non Jew "who accepts our faith (CCAR Columbus Platform). So while this section framed the collective identity of Reform Jews as distinctive, it also complicated the collective identity to include "our historic task to cooperate with all" to work for "universal brotherhood, Justice, truth, and peace" (CCAR Columbus Platform).
In the second major section, "Ethics," the 1937 platform linked issues of ethics, social justice, and peace to Reform Judaism by enlarging the interpretation of Jewish law to include duty to the larger community and promoting Jewish practice as a necessary link to these issues. The ethics section was a full third of the platform and expanded the idea of Jewish service and responsibility beyond concern for the Jewish people to include concern for "one's fellowmen," "the human race" (CCAR Columbus Platform). This section showed how the Reform Movement addressed the ideology of purposive service to the larger community.

The first subsection, "Ethics and Religion," bridged Jewish ideals with American ideals by giving specific examples that provided points of reference and worked to bring the community together. Perelman claims, "To argue by example is to presuppose the existence of certain regularities of which the examples provide concretization" (106). In the subsection, Ethics and Judaism, Judaism was explained in terms of familiar, concrete examples that tied it to American ideals of individual freedom, "justice to all, and "inalienable rights" (CCAR Columbus Platform). Perelman claims, that an "illustration must, above all, strike the imagination" (108). When Judaism is defined as emphasizing "the kinship of the human race, the sanctity and worth of human life and personality, and the right of the individual to freedom" at a time when, in Europe, the existence of such kinship was questioned and individual freedom was denied, the illustration struck the imagination and was powerful (CCAR Columbus Platform).

The next two subsections continued to frame inclusiveness to all and provided points of reference, a common goal, to bring the community together. The subsection
“Social Justice” used specific, concrete examples such as safeguarding against childhood exploitation and protecting people “against the material disabilities of old age, sickness, and unemployment” to explain concretely the abstract notion of Judaism seeking a just society (CCAR Columbus Platform). The subheading, “Peace,” linked Judaism to the ideal of universal peace and used specific, concrete examples such as “the disarmament of all nations” to give presence to the abstract notion of universal peace (CCAR Columbus Platform).

The final major section, “Religious Practice,” was a full third of the platform and explained that, as a people, Judaism required religious practice. However, since one purpose of the Reform Movement was to allow for diversity of opinion, this section did not include specific examples, but it implied that religious practices are purposive. It stated that Jewish life required action: active participation in specific locations - the “home, synagogue and school” - but it left defining those actions up to each person (CCAR Columbus Platform). To allow for individual points of view and to cater to different factions in the movement, this section suggested Jews retain and develop “such customs, symbols, and ceremonies as possess inspirational value (CCAR Columbus Platform). It did not give any suggestions about what actions to do, and it did not suggest the emotional response from any actions. However, this section suggested that one influential factor in choosing what action to do was being a member of a collective, and to make decisions based on that community membership.
Conclusion: Acknowledging Contested Ideas

Defining a collective identity is difficult for a tradition to do in any context. The Reform Movement had particular difficulties because it valued individual interpretation and individual choice. Stressing the importance of the individual makes it problematic to articulate agreed-upon meaning, but the writing of this platform was even more complicated because as the Reform tradition developed, it acknowledged internal debate and contested meaning that were significant for its members. Defining the collective identity of Reform Judaism was complicated by conflicting goals of being distinctive to survive as a people and including all Jews for survival as a people.

To include all factions in the Reform Movement, the writing process of the 1937 platform included circulating a draft of the platform to all CCAR members for feedback. The movement acknowledged differences of ideas in the actual writing process, and it dealt with these differences by revising the draft to be less specific in areas of contention so it could come to consensus to maintain coherence of beliefs within multiple interpretive communities. The writing process of the 1937 platform shows how engaging internal debate can help a tradition progress in its development and evolve as it reconstitutes itself into a more complex debate.
CHAPTER 4

The 1999 Pittsburgh Principles: A New Dialectic

MacIntyre argues, “a tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of conflict” (Whose 12). But what happens when a tradition can no longer successfully respond to conflict? For a tradition to evolve, it needs to be able to counter identified objections, omissions, and limitation by restating its position to respond to conflict. MacIntyre explains that when “conflicts over rival answers to key questions could no longer be settled rationally,” a tradition shows signs of an epistemological crisis (Whose 362). In 1973, the Reform Movement had such a problem. The CCAR created a diverse committee to systematically explore the fundamental principles of the Reform Movement for the purpose of creating a new platform. But the committee discovered that it could not resolve disagreements within its membership, and it could not come to any form of consensus to write a platform.

In this chapter I examine this inability to deal with differences of opinion when trying to represent a group with diverse beliefs. I explain how the movement understood and dealt with the concept of differences and attempted, unsuccessfully, to deal with the dynamics of representing them in its writing processes. I argue that this inability to deal with differences marked the Reform Movement’s “epistemological crisis” (Whose 361). The writing processes used in the attempt to write a platform in the early 1970s, in the 1976 Centenary Perspective, and in the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform were part of the Reform
Movement's process of discovering and solving its epistemological crisis. These writing processes revealed inadequacies in the articulation of the movement's collective identity that the established belief could not provide resources to solve. In this chapter, I show the process through which the Reform tradition identified and resolved its crisis and attained intellectual maturity. The Reform Movement resolved its epistemological crisis by valuing differences as resources for learning, using them to empower the tradition to learn from the diversity of its members' experiences, and creating a writing process that supported this new belief. Ultimately, the solution to this crisis was to invent a new conception of the Reform tradition and a new writing process for articulating the differences of beliefs. MacIntyre explains that the solution to a genuine epistemological crisis must meet three requirements. I explain how the Reform Movement met all three in the process of writing the 1999 platform: it furnished a solution, it provided an explanation of what had made the tradition impotent before the solution, and it carried out these tasks in a way that continued, yet transformed, the tradition's belief structure (Whose 362).

My analysis of the writings up to and including the 1999 platform shows that the process of representing a group is just as important as the statement that is produced. Part of resolving the Reform Movement's epistemological crisis in the 1999 platform was to create an entirely different writing process for this platform. In this platform, the concepts of difference and the collaborative representative process served as frames in the collaborations themselves. I show how the writing process for this platform transformed the process of representing the movement into a more broadly representative
deliberation. This transformation changed the nature of the Reform Movement to include a more democratic process to represent not only shared ideas, but significantly contested ones as well. It was through this writing process that the movement defined reform not by the contents of its changes but in the very process of change—the belief in the value of change and consequently the value of differences. The process of writing the 1999 platform was ultimately understood as a learning process. It was presented as a model of the type of inquiries individuals and congregations were encouraged to conduct— inquiries that place a high value on change and varied understandings. The final platform celebrated the diversity of belief and practice in this community and essentially sanctioned Reform Jews as a community of individuals.

The 1976 Centenary Perspective: The Platform that Wasn’t One

The 1976 Centenary Perspective is still considered a platform by most reform Jews, but it is actually not one. However, the 1976 statement was significant in the development of the Reform Tradition because the writing of the statement and the attempt to write a platform that preceded it marked the beginning of the tradition’s “epistemological crisis.” The writing process of the statement was inconsistent with the assumptions of the Reform Movement, but by clarifying that problem, it laid the groundwork for the more inclusive writing process that led to the 1999 platform.

The 1976 Centenary Perspective is thought of as a platform because it was written just after a committee to create a platform was disbanded. A committee was created to write a new platform for the 1973 centennial celebration of the United American Hebrew
Congregations and the Hebrew Union College (Transcript of the minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection, 34:28.4 p.30). To further the Reform Movement’s own standard of progress, the CCAR sought to create a more broadly representative committee to encourage a more democratic representative process. To be inclusive of all in the Reform Movement, the committee consisted of members from the Hebrew Union College (HUC), which represented religious scholars, teachers, and students; the United American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), which represented congregants and lay leaders; and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), which represented rabbis. MacIntyre explains that “a tradition becomes mature just insofar as its adherents confront and find a rational way through and around those encounters with radically different and incompatible positions which pose the problems of incommensurability and untranslatability” (Whose 327). For the Reform Movement, those radically different and incompatible positions were found within its own ranks. In order to acknowledge this diversity in its ranks and to confront the differences within its membership, the Reform Movement formed, for the first time, a diverse committee to write its platform.

The platform committee met every three or four months from November 1971 until September 1974 to “produce a major assessment of the nature of Reform Judaism today and the direction it should take in the future” (Borowitz 13). During this time, committee members presented dozens of platform papers in different forums, wrote dozens of letters to each other discussing details of the platform, and proposed versions of the platform (CCAR Collection, 34:26.1+2). Rabbi Haskell Bernat explained in a
memo dated August 9, 1972 to Pat Vallone, that one platform manuscript, written by Dr. Ellis Rivkin, was 107 pages long (CCAR Collection, 34:26.1). Although committee members met several times, had several conference calls, exchanged dozens of letters, and delivered papers at conferences, they could not come to a consensus and formulate a platform. The committee determined that to speak for the entire Reform Movement and the future would be impossible. The committee concluded that they could only “describe the theological and ideological conditions of the Reform Movement at the present time” and not articulate a consensus on affirmation and goals—a platform (Reform Judaism 5.5 Feb., 1977: 2). Although the committee had dealt with the issue of diversity by creating a diverse committee, it worked on trying to come to a consensus on the shared beliefs in the Reform Movement to write the platform. It did not have a way to articulate the significant contested beliefs in the movement and represent them. MacIntyre explains that “essential to the growth of a tradition whose conflicts are of any complexity” is “an ability to recognize when one’s conceptual resources are inadequate” when confronting conceptually different and incompatible positions (Whose 327). The committee recognized that its conceptual resources were inadequate to articulate a platform that spoke for and to its members. It could not resolve this problem, so it ended in a stalemate and was disbanded. This inability to resolve conflicting ideas marked the beginning of the tradition’s “epistemological crisis.”

The attempt to write a platform in the early 1970s illustrates how the Reform tradition ceased to make progress in its development by its own standard because the broadly representative committee that the tradition now considered required had no way
to resolve its conflicts. MacIntyre explains that central to each stage in a tradition’s development will be its current “agenda of unsolved problems and unresolved issues by reference to which its success or lack of it in making rational progress towards some further stage of development will be evaluated” (Whose 361). MacIntyre theorizes that at any time a tradition may “by its own standard of progress” cease to make progress because its trusted methods have become sterile (Whose 361-62). In an epistemological crisis, a tradition’s methods of inquiry and forms of argument, which helped the tradition make progress at the outset, begins to disclose new inadequacies, unrecognized incoherences, and new problems, and there seem to be insufficient or no resources within the established fabric of belief for a solution (Whose 362). MacIntyre explains that the solution to a genuine epistemological crisis “requires the invention or discovery of new concepts and the framing of some new type or types of theory which meet three highly exacting requirements” (Whose 362). First, this concept or theory must furnish a systematic and coherent solution to the problems. Second, the concept or theory must be able to explain the problem. And third, these tasks must be completed in a way that shows continuity with the tradition’s fundamental beliefs (Whose 362). The make-up of the early 1970s platform committee illustrated that the movement’s trusted way of writing a platform, by a small committee of rabbis determining the shared beliefs, had become sterile. The movement recognized its constituents had diverse beliefs that the movement could not adequately represent. The committee’s solution was to create a more broadly representative body. However, the committee did not establish the architecture of a systematic and coherent way to deal with diversity of beliefs except to
look for areas of shared belief in an attempt to form a consensus. The committee could not manage the new method of inquiry in practice, even though it seemed so appropriate in theory, because it did not create a new theoretical framework or writing process that supported conceptual and theoretical structures that could continue the fundamental shared beliefs of the Reform Movement. The fundamental belief that reform is a continuous process so its definition must represent different interpretations could not be achieved using the tradition of inquiry and the writing process that had been used up to this point.

This platform committee did not resolve the movement’s epistemological crisis, and the problem festered. It was manifested again, around the same time, in a heated debate about intermarriage that threatened to split the CCAR, and consequently the entire Reform Movement, into two camps. A significant problem in this debate was that the movement had no established way to acknowledge contested ideas and represent differences. The president of the CCAR, Robert Counc, suggested that a brief statement about the unity that existed within the Reform Movement would help heal the breach in the movement (Transcript of the minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection, 34:28.4 pp. 31-32). The CCAR approved the appointment of a special committee made up of eleven rabbis, with Eugene Borowitz as chair, to write a unifying statement. The writing of the 1976 Centenary Perspective was “only a local CCAR matter” (Transcript of the Minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection, 34:28.4 p. 49). This committee was made up of CCAR rabbis because the task of this committee was not to write a platform, but to write a unifying statement, “to
give a rather compact indication of where the Reform movement stands today”
(Transcript of the Minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection,
34:28.4 p. 51). Rabbi Robert Kahn, president of CCAR, explained that the Centenary
Perspective was written “to heal the movement’s feeling of fragmentation, to bind up the
wounds, to bring together the scattered fragments” (CCAR Collection, 34:47 Proceedings
143-144).

The Epistemological Crisis Continues

The writing of this 1976 statement did not provide a solution to the movement’s
epistemological crisis because it did not furnish a solution to this problem of acceptable
representation. The 1976 statement was written according to the points of view of a
small group of selected rabbis who decided by an unusual process for whom they will
speak and on what issues they will focus. The committee decided that it was impossible
to speak for everyone in the Reform Movement, so according to Borowitz, “That brought
up the interesting question of how many people do you need to speak for in order to be
able to speak for the major sense of unity within the movement” (Transcript of the
Minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection, 34:28.4 p. 33).

Borowitz explained that the new committee started out by deciding how many people
were so extreme in their views at either end of the spectrum that it would be impossible
to speak for them. They decided, based on educated guesses, that there were 7% at either
end of the spectrum. Therefore, they gave themselves permission to not speak for 14% of
a Reform rabbinate. With a little simple math, they concluded that they could, therefore, speak for the rest of the Reform rabbinate, or 86% in a way that would be significant. According to Borowitz “Well, no one has ever been able to speak for eighty-six per cent of the Reform rabbinate so we decided to be modest and set ourselves a goal of trying to speak for eighty per cent of the Reform rabbinate” (Transcript of the Minutes of the CCAR Executive Board 1976. CCAR Collection, 34:28.4 pp. 33-34). So the committee decided, based on their own beliefs, what 80% of the rabbinate would consider the most disturbing problems in the Reform Movement. Committee Chairman Borowitz explained how the committee decided on what topics to focus: “we decided to limit ourselves to five major problems that we thought we should face: first, the question of diversity in Reform Judaism; second, the question of the proper stand of religious practice for Reform Jews; third, the relationship between the state of Israel and the Diaspora; fourth, the balance between universalism and particularism in our time; and fifth, the question of human despair which is so wide-spread today” (CCAR Collection, 34:47 Transcripts of the 1975 CCAR Conference pp. 146-47). The committee did not poll any Reform Movement congregants, Reform Movement national organization members, or even CCAR rabbis to come up with this list. Instead eleven rabbis decided on what issues the statement should focus.

The 1976 statement was written in only six months using the same writing process as the 1937 platform. The committee met three times as a full committee and several times as sub-committee. The first draft was circulated to the CCAR with a letter from Borowitz asking members of the CCAR for their responses to the draft stating,
“Even general reaction will be useful. Verbal improvements and substantive suggestions are particularly welcome” (Letter dated March 8th, 1976. CCAR Collection 34:28.1).

According to Rabbi Alfred Wolf, senior member of the committee, “every one of these responses, was read, cataloged by the chairman and considered by the committee and somehow incorporated in the final document” (CCAR Collection, 34:47 Proceedings of the Eighty-Seventh Annual Convention Central Conference of American Rabbi, p. 146). Borowitz saved and numbered all 238 responses, which are filed in the CCAR Collection, 34:28.1.

After the adoption of the 1976 Centenary Perspective, the CCAR took steps to assure that the Centenary Perspective would not be considered a platform. When the CCAR approved the Centenary Perspective, Rabbi Elliott Rosenstock declared, “though this document is historic, the committee does not wish it to be considered a platform” (CCAR Collection, 34:47 Proceedings of the Eighty-Seventh Annual Convention Central Conference of American Rabbi, p. 167). To avoid confusing the statement with a platform, the 1976 CCAR Yearbook printed a copy of the Centenary Perspective after it was approved, without any introductory comments or concluding discussion as was provided with the 1937 platform (vol. 86: 174-178).

When Rabbi Jack Spiro made a chart comparing the Centenary Perspective with the 1885 and 1937 platforms, Bernard Martin, editor of the CCAR Journal, declined to print it in the journal even though he appreciated its value. He explained in his letter dated January 25, 1977, that “the CCAR executive board emphatically rejects the idea that the Centenary Statement is a ‘platform’ and wants to dispel any notion that it is to be
regarded as such. Printing your chart, I fear, might give rise in the minds of some of our colleagues . . . that the Centenary Statement is a platform, similar in status to the 1885 and 1937 platforms. Hence . . . I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that we must omit your chart" (CCAR Collection, 34:28.4)

Even with such careful measures to clarify that the Centenary Perspective is not a platform, but a statement, people still mischaracterized it as a platform. The journal, Reform Judaism, published a copy of the statement under the heading “A CCAR Centenary Perspective: New Platform for Reform Judaism” (Reform Judaism 5.3 Nov., 1976: 4). The only response to the publishing of the Centenary Perspective in Reform Judaism was a letter to the editor by Joseph Glaser, Executive Vice-President of the CCAR. Glaser explained that the designation ‘platform’ in the subtitle was erroneous. “Believe me, if it had been a platform, we would have called it such and not come up with the tortured title we had to settle for instead” (Reform Judaism 5.5 Feb., 1977: 2). Glaser described the events preceding the Centenary Perspective and explained why it was a perspective and not a platform. Glaser explained that he hoped that now, built on the foundation of the Centenary Perspective, laity and rabbis would work together to collaboratively create a platform. This, he deemed, would be a collaborative writing process that fit with the assumptions of the Reform Movement. Glaser explained that to facilitate this effort, the CCAR printed copies of the Centenary Perspective in bulk and the UAHC produced a study guide to accompany it (Reform Judaism 5.5 Feb., 1977: 2). Still, the 1976 Centenary Perspective was commonly considered a platform even though its authors and ratifying body did not consider or intend it to be one.
Laying the Groundwork for the 1999 Platform

The attempt to write a platform in the early 1970s and the 1976 statement that followed it were both important steps towards solving the movement’s epistemological crisis and towards writing the 1999 platform. The failed writing process in the early 1970s had created ideas about what would be a more ideal committee make-up and writing process. The ideal committee would consist of representatives of all national bodies: the UAHC, HUC, and CCAR, to represent congregants, laypeople, rabbinic scholars, teachers, students, and rabbis. The ideal writing process would be a collaborative effort that included all voices and excluded no one. The 1976 statement also addressed some important topics that would help the movement develop conceptual and theoretical structures that could continue the fundamental belief in the Reform Movement of valuing change and diversity. Daniel Polish, one of the authors of the Centenary Perspective, explained that the statement identified “Reform not by the contents of our changes [as previous generations had] but in the process of change. . . . Reform is characterized by the belief that change is permissible, indeed by the affirmation of change” (Polish 38). The platform addressed the potential problem for the movement because it engenders change: “How we shall live with diversity without stifling dissent and without paralyzing our ability to take positive action will test our character and our principles” (CCAR Centenary). This statement identified Reform’s focus on valuing change and diversity, but did not illustrate how to speak for a diverse community by engendering those beliefs.
This statement described the movement as valuing change and diversity by the declaration, “While we differ in our interpretation and application of the ideas enunciated here, we accept such differences as precious…” (CCAR Centenary). Borowitz characterized the Centenary Perspective as “rigorously dialectical” because it addressed the movement’s concern with how to hold conflicting commitments and beliefs “in steady tension with one another” (Borowitz 16). The document reflected the movement’s foundational loyalties “to individual and community, to the ethical and tradition, to the whole of humanity and the Jewish people” (Borowitz 16). Borowitz described it as a “new sense of dialectic faith” (Borowitz 17). The Centenary Perspective provided the opportunity for this concept to be articulated by a small committee of rabbis within the CCAR community even though the make-up of the committee and the writing process of the statement did not engender the Reform Movement’s value of change and diversity. The writing of the statement defined the Reform ideal and identified differences as a valuable resource that empowers the tradition to learn from diversity of its members’ experiences, but this alone could not solve the epistemological crisis.

Solving an Epistemological Crisis: Defining a Collective Identity While Being Ideologically Committed to Diversity

In 1998, the CCAR president, Richard Levy, wrote a new platform for the new century. His third draft was printed in Reform Judaism magazine and posted on the CCAR and the Reform Judaism websites. The publication of the draft stimulated a movement-wide discussion. Response from rabbis, lay leaders, and congregants focused on the concern that the draft represented a narrow conception of beliefs and actions (it
was, after all, one rabbi’s view) and did not reflect the diversity of beliefs and practices in
the Reform Movement. It was through the next part in the writing process of the 1999
platform that the CCAR resolved its epistemological crisis and discovered how to frame
the movement’s collective identity in the platform to speak to all constituents in some
way. Because of the tremendous response of the constituents, the CCAR determined that
evaluating and reorienting the beliefs and practices of the movement must actively
involve others in the process if it was to have any impact in the Reform Movement. The
CCAR decided that the laypeople or at least the rabbis’ understanding of their
congregants had to be part of the inquiry and any construction of a collective identity.
The CCAR president created a committee made up of eight Reform rabbis from across
the ideological spectrum, two Hebrew Union College faculty members, a rabbinic
student, and three national Reform lay leaders to revise the draft. The writing process of
the final 1999 platform was dialectical in that it worked on articulating contradictory
positions to value the diversity in the movement. The platform was recast as a teaching
opportunity for rabbis and an opportunity for Reform Jews to reflect on their beliefs and
practices. The new vision of the revised platform was for it to provide a framework of
governing conceptual paradigms of Reform Judaism so rabbis and laypeople could fill in
the details on where they stood on issues. This process was understood as a learning
process, and it was presented as a model of the kind of inquiries that individuals and
groups were encouraged to conduct. The role of the rabbi was shifted in this document
from one of authority to facilitator because religious authority had been decentralized
away from the rabbis and into the hands of the lay people. The platform illustrated an
understanding that meaning is not confined to the narrow intentions of the author or
rabbi, but rather is generated within the experience of the reader or congregant interacting
with the text. Inviting non-rabbis to respond to these documents reflected the changing
belief in the Reform Movement that a more broadly representative body should
participate in the creation of knowledge.

A Non Collaborative Writing Process and an Angry Response

According to Levy, he originally created the first three drafts of the platform himself
through a process of conversations and revisions (Levy. Personal e-mail). Levy used the
resources of the movement in an attempt to listen to his colleagues and remedy the condition of
sterility into which the writing of Reform platforms had fallen, but, as I will show, ultimately
his attempt revealed new problems, flaws, and limitations. As Levy explains,

We began with brainstorming sessions first involving a group of rabbis at the Fall
1997 President’s Kallah, and then with the CCAR Board. From these discussions
we created twelve questions that regional CCAR gatherings considered and
reported on, which formed the basis of the First Draft of Principles, completed in
March 1998. Meeting in London with Progressive rabbis from around the world,
the Board critiqued the first draft in an atmosphere where British and Israeli
rabbis were sharing their newly crafted Statement of Purpose as well. The
comments of the Board and of a Southern California group of layleaders helped
create the Second Draft, which was discussed by some fifty colleagues at our
Anaheim convention in June 1998, which in turn produced the Third Draft . . .
(Levy 8-9).

The writing process of the first three drafts included others’ feedback, but it was still
insufficient to represent the diverse ideas in the entire movement.

The third draft, or Ten Principles, was printed in the CCAR Newsletter and was
published in the winter 1998 edition of Reform Judaism along with a rebuttal by Reform
Rabbi Robert Seltzer and interviews with Rabbi Levy and Rabbi Seltzer. Additionally, the third draft, rebuttal, and interviews were posted on the CCAR web page. What became a major issue in the responses to this third draft were areas in which rabbis and constituents felt excluded from the document’s articulation of a collective identity. Since the goal of the Reform Movement was to include all Reform Jews, the document needed to speak to all Reform Jews at some level. The Reform community’s response to the third draft demanded a more dialectic process and illustrated that this writing process had not solved the Reform Movement’s epistemological crisis.

The third draft was over five pages and formatted very much like a constitution with sections and subsections and beginning with a “Preamble” (see Appendix C). The names of the sections and subsections were lengthy and elaborate and were used to further define Reform Judaism. Each section specifically defined concepts and actions with precise explanations. The sections illustrated the difficulty Levy had in articulating shared and contested ideas in this document. The first of four major sections, “Preamble: Who Are We Reform Jews?” characterized the Reform Movement as “a movement of varying beliefs and practices, strengthened by our diversity yet increasingly in search of common themes that can deepen the religious life of the Reform community” (CCAR Ten Principles). This articulation acknowledges that the Reform Movement’s collective identity is composed of shared ideas and contested ideas as well. The preamble defined the document’s purpose as not to “legislate a code of belief or conduct for Reform Jews, nor presume to advocate a single mode of religious expression for all” (CCAR Ten Principles). Yet this platform defined Reform Jews’ obligations as never defined before:
"As Reform Jews we are . . . commanded to engage in the study and practice that will embody that tradition in a manner appropriate to our different situations" (CCAR Ten Principles). So for Levy, the purpose of this document was to define Jewish concepts so Jews can understand them more fully and choose to integrate them into their lives in alternative ways that they deem appropriate. This introduced a contested idea in the Reform Movement as if it was a shared belief. The statement assumes that all Reform Jews believe that they are commanded or obligated to study and practice Judaism in some way even though it acknowledges that study and practice is situation specific and dependent on interpretation. Responses to this third draft overwhelmingly disagreed with the notion that Reform Jews are commanded or obligated to study and practice Judaism.

The second major section, “Toward God,” characterized Reform Judaism as embracing “the story of the Jewish people which tells of three great encounters with God: Creation, our standing together at Sinai, and our redemption from Egypt” (CCAR Ten Principles). Each of the three subsections in this section used concrete images of these three stories to create presence in the reader’s mind as it precisely defined how Jewish values could be physically manifested. According to responses to this draft, the audience was not accustomed to seeing itself in such a scene, did not readily relate to it, or did not understand the significance of these images. This section implied that all Reform Jews understand or believe this concept. However, according to responses to this section, the audience did not relate to the presence in which the values were introduced. In the first subsection, “Created by the Holy One, We Are Seekers After God” discussed in concrete terms how Jews could create texts and worship environments that would enable them as
individuals and as communities to create their own relationship to God (CCAR Ten Principles). However, those who did not experience themselves as created by or in relationship with God felt excluded. This precise language was continued in the second and third subsections called, “Having Stood At Sinai, We Respond to the Call of Mitzvot Amid Modernity” and “We Were Redeemed From Egypt to Help Repair the World” which were also interpreted by respondents as exclusionary (CCAR Ten Principles). Respondents felt that the presentation of images that depict Reform Jews as obligated to do specific acts, excluded those who did not engage in those acts.

The third major section, “Toward Torah,” contained three subsections. The first subsection, “We Are Committed to Shabbat, Which Elevates Our Work and Frees Us From It,” presupposed that Reform Jews observe Shabbat in a specific way and have a specific conceptual understanding of and emotional response to Shabbat (CCAR Ten Principles). Some respondents suggested that this section was not inclusive because they perceived it as not conveying an appreciation for more diverse beliefs and actions about Shabbat. The next subsection, “We Are Committed to Learning and Seasonal Celebration” presupposed that Reform Jews would have a scholarly appetite to learn Torah. It stated that Reform Jews are “required” to have “a disciplined commitment at every stage of our lives to learn Torah in the widest sense--biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern texts, history, literature, philosophy, art, music and dance . . .” (CCAR Ten Principles). It addressed the issue of seasonal celebration by listing specific, concrete examples of all possible ways of celebrating and used the word “and” to indicate that Reform Jews do all of these traditions. Respondents felt such a precise explanation
presupposed one conception of seasonal celebrations and precluded many people in the Reform Movement.

The final subsection, “We Are Open to Expanding the Mitzvot of Reform Jewish Practice,” dealt with the diversity in the movement. It explained, “we may feel called to other mitzvot new to Reform Jewish observance” and gave an example in terms of Jewish education: “some of us send our children to Jewish day schools, others to supplementary schools, but all strive to participate actively in our children’s Jewish schooling” (CCAR Ten Principles). This section also stated that “In the presence of God, we may each feel called to respond in different ways” and gave examples of traditional responses: offering blessings, covering one’s head, wearing tallit or tefillin, keeping kosher, using the mikvah, or “discovering rituals now unknown which in the spirit of Jewish tradition and Reform creativity will bring us closer to God, to Torah, and to our people” (CCAR Ten Principles). This section introduced the concept of interpreting Jewish practices and responding in different ways so the practices will have meaning in one’s life. This section described what to do, gave specific examples, and explained why such practices could be valuable, so on one level this section functioned as a “how to” guide for beginners. There were two typical responses to this section. One response to this section valued the idea that Reform Jews could discover the value of traditions and could choose to observe them because they see them as valuable, and not because they were merely obligations that they must obey. The other response to this section was resentment that this section was directing Reform Judaism to more traditional observances, which defeated the purpose of Reform.
The subsection, “Members of a Holy People, We Are Heirs to a Holy Tongue,” encouraged Reform Jews to read and speak Hebrew because “Hebrew binds us to Jews in Every Land” (CCAR Ten Principles). Ironically, this document contained no Hebrew characters only the transliterations of Hebrew. The draft did, however, introduce the transliteration of twenty-one Hebrew words or phrases. In other words, the Hebrew words are phonetically rendered into the corresponding letters of the English alphabet. Transliterations were then followed by the definition in English. The document did not assume its readers understood the Hebrew language or concepts and therefore introduced them phonetically and then defined them.

The writing of the Third Draft had not solved the Reform Movement’s epistemological crisis for several reasons (see page 153 for a summary of MacIntyre’s theory on the three requirements for a solution to a genuine epistemological crisis). First while it did provide somewhat of a solution to the problem of creating a more broadly representative deliberation by soliciting feedback from CCAR rabbis around the world, its scope of representation was limited to only CCAR rabbis. Additionally, the conceptual scheme of requesting feedback on a draft was not radically new or conceptually rich, but had been used in both the 1885 and 1937 platforms and the 1976 statement. While the draft acknowledged the diversity of ideas, it often presented just one conception and assumed it was shared. Second, it did not provide an explanation of just what it was that caused the epistemological crisis. Third, there was no fundamental continuity of any conceptual and theoretical structures of the Reform Movement’s
beliefs. The Reform Movement’s commitment to diversity was not manifested in the writing process or the concepts in this draft.

The publication of the third draft stimulated a movement-wide discussion. UAHC Vice President Rabbi Thal noted that, “the debate has prompted Reform Jews who are serious about the Judaism to ask themselves -- and each other -- what do I/we believe, what do I/we practice, how have my/our own beliefs and practices changed over the years and what may have prompted those changes?” (Reform Judaism Spring 1999: 4).

Spirited discussions on the Third Draft continued for nearly two years and generated heated debate among Reform rabbis and their congregations. Numerous synagogues created forums to examine the Third Draft. Rabbis’ sermons and congregational bulletin articles discussed the draft. The editors of the Spring 1999 Reform Judaism magazine “received a record number of letters to the editor and approximately 70 pages of comments on the Reform Judaism magazine web page” (4). Reform college students joined the conversation on their Kesher online chat group, rabbis had open discussions for members of the CCAR on their RAVKAV or “rabbinic telephone line” listserv, and Hebrew Union College Alumni discussed it on their HUCALUM listserv. Additionally, constituents responded individually to the draft and read others’ responses on the Reform Judaism web page <http://uahc.org/rjmag/1198fb.html>. The use of computers in this process included many more participants—even the periphery of the community and allowed for almost instantaneous feedback.

There were most likely hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of e-mails, letters, phone calls, discussions, and listserv posts from rabbis responding to the third draft.
Only a small stack of letters and e-mails were preserved in the AJA archives. However, there were several reoccurring themes in the ones I read which imply that these might be the recurring themes of many responses. Overall these responses to the Third Draft discussed points where rabbis felt they or their congregants would be excluded. They expressed concern that when the draft discussed beliefs and actions, it referred to “all” as if all Reform Jews believed and acted the same way when in fact they and their congregants had a variety of beliefs and responded to Judaism in many different ways that were not represented in the draft. The rabbis were concerned that because the document did not reflect the diversity of Reform congregants’ beliefs and actions, it would not speak to them. Michael Meyer explained in a letter dated October 4, 1998, “The gap between these principles and where 99% of Reform laypeople stand today is so vast that, if it is indeed directed to them and not the rabbis, it is unlikely that they will be able to relate to them seriously unless the document moves closer to where they find themselves” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). This sense of audience awareness was present in all letters. Arnold Fink explained in an e-mail dated October 26, 1998, “I feel the present document . . . would alienate those of us who have disagreements with it. We need inclusiveness now, not a drawing of principles that will exclude those devoted members of the CCAR who feel ‘outside’ these principles, in their present formulation” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). These responses show how the CCAR rabbis were actively engaged in the process of working to articulate meaning for their constituents that their constituents would find meaningful. If the collective identity resonates with the audience, the audience will be more likely to believe the CCAR
authors are credible. In this way, the constituents’ beliefs and values act as constraints and resources for framing a collective identity.

Rabbis made suggestions for being more inclusive that centered on beliefs and action. Many letters expressed concern for the narrow conception of Jewish actions portrayed in the draft that did not represent the constituents’ lived experiences. Ruth Reidbord wrote that the draft needed to reflect the belief that “there are a variety of ways of carrying out mitzvot” because “Reform Judaism . . . is a place where a variety of practices can be respected and tolerated” (Letter dated October 11, 1998 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). More specifically, many letters expressed apprehension about including specific observances associated with orthodoxy such as mikvah (ritual bath), tefillin (phylacteries), and kashrut (keeping kosher). Rabbi Thai wrote, “the moment that most of our lay people see reference to a mikvah they will conclude that the entire movement is on a very slippery—and none too congenial—slope for them and that might prompt them to not take any of the document seriously at all” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Rabbi Feinstein wrote, “I am uncomfortable with the inclusion of tefillin and mikvah into this document” because “only a tiny minority of our rabbis, let alone our laypeople, are involved with these mitzvot” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Ruth Reidbord suggested that the platform’s focus on kashrut and mikvah might “inflame the laity” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Bill Cutter suggested that the principles needed to be explained, “in language that people can understand” and be “realistic in terms of people’s lives” and connect to “people’s experience in the lived life” (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501).
Other letters expressed concern for the narrow conception of Jewish beliefs portrayed in the draft. For example, Rabbi Forman explained, "I found it jarringly out of character to read here that the idea of God after which we all might be searching is one in which a vertical relationship exists . . ." (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). He suggested the "narrow strictures be more inclusive" by having the platform reflect more basic goals, "the awareness of God in our lives at all times" (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Dr. Aaron suggested the document use "more neutral language, inclusive of a variety of god beliefs" since "reform Jews are free to embrace a great many conceptualizations of divinity" (letter dated October 8, 1998 p. 9 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501).

Some rabbis were also concerned with the use of Hebrew. In an e-mail, Rabbi Arnold Fink explained, "The statement that Hebrew is inherently holy is not something that I can buy. Nothing in the world is inherently holy and this is true of language as well. Holiness involves what we bring to the world as Jews, and the sanctity of Hebrew for us is based on how we have used it over time and space and what we have brought to it. Letters are letters and words are words. But the beauty and holiness of Hebrew lies in the interaction between the Jew and his/her language" (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Rabbi Mark Shook explained in his letter that Hebrew phrases have "nuances of meaning" so the writer of the platform is "obligated to provide definitions in English which explain the sense in which you use the term" (CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Dr. Aaron took this idea one step further and explained that the concept of some Hebrew words is "extremely complicated," their meanings change through history, and
have “great historical import.” He suggested concepts be “given historical context and then defined more specifically for Reform Judaism” (letter dated October 8, 1998 p. 6 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). Along the same line Judge David Davidson explained that many respondents “questioned both the objective and the practicality of urging that we strive to read and speak Hebrew, although there was recognition that serious study of transliteration of Hebrew texts inevitably leads us to the understanding that all translation is really interpretation and that in the end we need the ability the interpret for ourselves . . .” (Appendix to the UAHC Board Minutes p. 2).

The participants were very aware that they were in the process of constituting the community's sense of itself. Dr. David Aaron suggested that Reform Judaism’s connection to tradition is a similar “dialectic process” as in Reform Judaism’s connection to its literary heritage. Using Jacob Neusner’s conception of “generative myths,” Aaron explained that “Our world views are an amalgam of mythologies we inherit from the past, and those we fabricate in the present. Both contribute to our conceptualization of Judaism’s past, its traditions and the meaning of its history; and both contribute to our conceptualization of the future (letter dated October 8, 1998 p. 5 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). He argued that the notion of generative myth would help the document reflect the community’s values.

Letters addressed concern that the CCAR rabbis and laity might not have ownership of this platform. Rabbi Shook explained, “There is a sense among my own congregants that these principles are being imposed upon them by the rabbis” (letter dated October 29, 1998 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). The resistance to rabbis'
imposing views was dramatically different from the tradition of following rabbis' teachings and reflected Reform Jews’ belief in their right to their own individual interpretations. Rabbi Aaron suggested, “a much more impressive vehicle might be to invite the entire constituency of the CCAR to contribute personal statements on a variety of issues; and then based on that great diversity of data, a scholar might provide a synthesis and commentary on the state of Reform Jewish belief” (letter dated October 8, 1998 p. 10 CCAR Small Collections SC-14501). This would prove to be the key to solving the movement’s epistemological crisis.

After the unprecedented outpouring of comments from both rabbis and laypeople on the Third Draft, Rabbi Levy and other CCAR leaders wrote a fourth draft which was discussed at the December UAHC Board meeting (Reform Judaism Spring 1999: 4). Even though the CCAR rabbis now had feedback from a more broadly representative group, it was not enough to solve the epistemological crisis because CCAR rabbis revising the third draft would not create the necessary “radically new and conceptually enriched scheme” to create significant changes in the dynamics of representation (Whose 362). As MacIntyre explains, “The theses central to the new theoretical and conceptual structures . . . will in no way be derivable from those earlier positions” (Whose 362). For radical change to occur “imaginative conceptual innovation” will have to occur (Whose 362). As MacIntyre explains, “The justification of the new theses will lie precisely in their ability to achieve what could not be achieved prior to that innovation” (Whose 362).
Resolving Contradictions: A New Writing Process/A New Dialectic

The dialectical conversation between the CCAR and the Reform Movement members that took place after the Third Draft was published called for its revision with a new committee that included a more diverse authorship. The radical new concept was that all, not just rabbis and lay leaders, but all Reform Jews, the laity, should participate in the creation of a platform. A fourteen-member “advisory task force” was created to write the fifth draft (Levy 9). According to Levy, the task force was made up of eight “Reform rabbis from across the ideological spectrum,” two Hebrew Union College faculty members, a rabbinic student, and three prominent national Reform lay leaders (9). There was almost universal appreciation for the process of creating a task force; it was seen as “a demonstration of the partnership between rabbis and laity that... [is] one of the hallmarks of Reform (Appendix to the UAHC Board Minutes p. 1). Rabbi Levy’s vision of the revised platform was for it to provide an outline of what is a Reform Jew “then it will be up to us, rabbis and laypeople, to fill in where we stand on them, and in what directions we would like to move (Reform Judaism Spring 1999: 17).

The platform was recast as a teaching opportunity for rabbis. As religious authority was decentralized away from the rabbis and into the hands of the lay people, the role of the rabbi was shifted in this document from one of authority to one of facilitator. Because of this phenomenon, evaluating and reorienting the beliefs and practices of the movement actively involved the laypeople in the process so it would have any impact in the Reform Movement. Laypeople had to be part of the inquiry and any construction of a collective identity. The rabbis would only provide the framework of governing conceptual paradigms that supported
their belief that Reform can only provide principles that can be applied in different ways in different settings.

Richard Levy and Paul Menitoff explained that the most compelling reason why this new platform was needed was because of

the outpouring of responses in all your congregations and communities to the various drafts of these documents, liberating people’s desires to talk about what they believe, what they practice and want (or want not) to practice, how Judaism can elevate their lives.

(Letter to CCAR members dated April 19, 1999 CCAR Nearprint)

Another way to explain this demand for a new platform is that the people’s responses became the relevant historical situation. The movement insisted in creating a sense of itself after Levy’s Third Draft provided the occasion and not the frame. The collaborative process itself and the concept of valuing differences served as the frame. In this way, the movement framed the authors.

The 1999 platform reflected an understanding that human reality is constructed from the interpretation that is assigned to words. The platform illustrated an understanding that meaning is not confined to the narrow intentions of the author, but rather is generated within the experience of the reader interacting with the text. There was also the awareness that meaning is not stationary, but implicated by the local context. The fact that participants were invited to respond to these documents reflected the changing belief about who could participate in the creation of knowledge. In 1885, authorities decreed what was important, while in 1999 everyone was invited to participate in constructing what was important. All were considered credible and authorized to contribute to creating knowledge in the Reform Movement.
The rest of the writing process continued the dialectic. According to task force member rabbi Lewis Kamrass, the task force met at Camp Kutz over two days, threw out the previous draft, and produced a completely new fifth draft (interview). This response allowed for the dialectic, an interpretative method in which some assertible propositions are opposed by equally assertible and apparently contradictory propositions. In dialectics, the contradiction is reconciled by working it into a new synthesis. As it moves into a new synthesis by contemplation, a conscious thinking through, a new definition is created. This new definition does not lose the original ideas, and in fact, the new synthesis has a direct historical connection to what came before it. The new fifth draft illustrated dialectic at work. For example, the Reform Movement grappled with the contradictory propositions of valuing diversity and change and wanting to define a collective identity to promote a sense of community. These contradictory goals have resulted in problems with being precise and inclusive. This platform reconciled these problems by defining Reform Jews as a group who respond in different ways and listed specific, concrete ways some might respond, but implied that not all would.

This fifth draft was distributed to the entire CCAR membership who responded with suggestions. The CCAR Executive Board adopted a set of procedures for making amendments to the draft and sent the procedures to the members of the CCAR along with an invitation to make amendments in advance of the Pittsburgh Conference (Procedure for Amendments CCAR Nearprint Collection). Proposed revisions were posted on the CCAR web site and distributed at the start of the CCAR Conference (Procedure for Amendments CCAR Nearprint Collection). Final changes included using Hebrew
characters for Hebrew terms and the transliteration of those Hebrew terms. Sentence changes were also made that indicated respect for others’ diverse conceptions, appreciation of making individual choices based on unique contexts of the time, and deference to being more inclusive and encouraging dialogue (Proposed for adoption at the 1999 Pittsburgh Convention of the CCAR May 1999. CCAR Nearprint Collection). The task force incorporated many suggestions and sent the revised sixth draft to the CCAR board, which approved it to be brought up for a vote at the 1999 Pittsburgh Conference (Levy 9). The general meeting, which was scheduled for two hours, lasted for an unprecedented six hours. Unfortunately, this meeting, in which the 1999 Platform was discussed and ratified, was not transcribed. According to the CCAR main office staff, the company that transcribes for the CCAR went out of business just before the 1999 Pittsburgh Conference, and another company was not found in time to replace it. However, the meeting was recorded on tapes, which the CCAR possesses.

After the CCAR ratified the sixth version, it was posted on the web site and printed in Reform Judaism magazine. In response, congregations continue to discuss the ratified the version and how to interpret it. The CCAR created the Responsa website which includes a searchable database of Reform Jewish responses to specific situations. Additionally the Union of American Hebrew Congregations created a resource to begin discussion of the platform. The text included statements from the platform and for each statement discussed provided related references from sacred and scholarly sources and lists of suggested study questions. This whole process was characterized as an inquiry into shared and contested beliefs.
The 1999 Pittsburgh Principles Constructs A Collective Identity

You know what these documents do for me? They provide a platform for discussion. I have not used them as a sword, if you will, to say this is what Reform Judaism is. It’s kinda like, here are these principles, where are you in relationship to these principles? My perspective is really a classical Reform perspective. And that is that the movement can’t technically tell me what to think. So I just use it to enhance my personal knowledge and where I am and if it helps me grow, it helps me grow. If it shows where I’m different from the “movement,” or the statement of the movement, then I’m different.

Thomas Louchheim, Reform Rabbi

The 1999 platform created a new conception of the Reform Movement’s collective identity (see Appendix D). The document frames the Reform Movement as a movement that celebrates the diversity of belief and practice and implies that this concept is what unites all Reform Jews. It essentially sanctioned Reform Jews as a community of individuals with shared but also conflicting commitments and beliefs. This document placed a high value on “varied understandings” and on individual interpretation of Reform Judaism. The 1999 platform used relational vocabulary of dialogue such as “hearing” and “responding to a call” to explain the individual nature of response. This document also included twenty-one Hebrew words written in the Hebrew language, transliterated into English pronunciations in parenthesis, and followed by English translations in order to not only value Hebrew, but to value the understanding that translation is interpretation and encourage people to translate for themselves. This document was designed to not impose Reform ideology or practices on individuals or congregations. This document suggests that lay people and rabbis explore the implications of the platform to clarify and enrich the text and make it their own. The
final draft left the elaborations for the individual rabbis, laypeople, and congregations to work out.

The 1999 platform conveniently fit on two pages of an 8 ½ x 11 page, the size of the Reform Judaism magazine in which it was published. It contained four sections, each with a one-word heading to describe it: “Preamble,” “God,” “Torah,” and “Israel.” There were no subheadings used to divide issues into categories or to further define them. The “Preamble” section defined Reform Judaism by setting up binaries to define Reform Judaism that seem, at best, extremely difficult to co-mingle, such as the idea of introducing innovation while preserving tradition, embracing diversity while asserting commonality, affirming beliefs without rejecting those who doubt, and bringing faith to sacred texts without sacrificing critical scholarship (CCAR Statement of Principles). These binaries explained how Reform Judaism does not just include shared ideas, but included contested ideas as well. They defined the struggles Reform Jews have had and imply that they are not resolved but are the dynamism that defines Reform Judaism.

The next three sections were written in the format of the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform. However, this platform clearly defined the author and the audience. The platform explained that the authors are the Reform rabbinate and the primary audience is individuals who are “striving for religious meaning, moral purpose and a sense of community” (CCAR Statement of Principles). Each sentence began with “we” and was a separate paragraph. Concepts were not explained in detail and examples were not provided because, keeping in line with the Reform belief, these were left up to individuals to decide. The first section, “God,” dealt with diversity by acknowledging
and valuing the different beliefs about God. It stated, "we may differ in our understanding" of God, and we may have "varied understanding of creation, Redemption, and Revelation" (CCAR Statement of Principles). It acknowledged and valued the diversity of perceptions about God and the diversity of acts for responding to God. Eight of the nine one sentence paragraphs in this section addressed beliefs. Only one sentence in this section connected belief to action: "We respond to God daily: through public and private prayer, through study and through performance of other mitzvot, sacred obligations—bein adam la Makom, to God, and bein adam la-chaveiro, to other human beings" (Statement of Principles). This call to action was less specific than the third draft so that it would be more inclusive.

The next section, "Torah," stated that "we" respect the Torah, value its words, value studying Hebrew and Torah. After this section established the Torah as the connecting factor among Jews, the focus shifts to how Torah calls Jews to action. It stated, "We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of mitzvot and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as community. Some of these mitzvot have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times" (Statement of Principles). Note that this statement proclaimed "we . . . study . . . mitzvot" and "we" fulfill only those mitzvot "that address us," but does not suggest how to study or how mitzvot may address the reader. This section also stated that "we" bring Torah into the world through "regular home and congregational observance." It then gave the
basic definition of “Shabbat,” “High Holy Days,” and “festivals,” but did not elaborate on how to celebrate them, leaving that decision for individuals and congregations.

The last section, “Israel” was reconciliatory as it stated “we” are committed to the entirety of the community of Israel. It stated that “we are Israel, a people” linked by our ancient covenant and our unique history (Statement of Principles). This section extended the Jewish community to include groups that had not been mentioned in previous platforms. It stated, “we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries” (Statement of Principles). In other words, Reform Judaism attempted to reach out to all Jews in the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Movements as well as Jews who live in Israeli and Diaspora Jews. This section extended the Jewish community to include other groups that had not been mentioned before: those of both genders, all sexual preferences, converts, intermarried people, and non-Jews who are interested in Judaism.

This shift towards including all is continued in the sidebar of the page in Reform Judaism in which the Statement of Principles was published. The editors of Reform Judaism wrote the introduction, which explained that the next stage involved local interpretations of this document, more specifically to “organize study sessions on the new documents and encourage both lay leaders and rabbis to explore the implications of the Principles by writing commentaries to clarify and enrich the text” (Statement of Principles).
Conclusion: A Solution to an Epistemological Crisis

In the early 1970s, the Reform Movement declared that it was too diverse a movement to articulate a collective identity in a platform. Part of the problem was the understood definition of a platform. The movement understood a platform as reflecting a consensus of beliefs. This definition was problematic for a movement that had members with significantly different ideas. In the late 1990s the Reform Movement grappled with defining a collective identity and writing a platform while being ideologically committed to diversity. This third draft, which specifically defined concepts and actions with precise explanation, was rejected by the movement because the Reform Movement constituents and rabbis argued that such a specific articulation was exclusionary and did not value diversity. In response the CCAR created a dialectic between the CCAR rabbis and the Reform Movement constituents. The new draft, written by a diverse committee, gave highest priority to diversity. As such it defined concepts and actions generally and left specifics up to local interpretation. The movement resolved its epistemological crisis by defining a platform as including shared and contested beliefs and wrote a platform to reflect its diverse membership’s possible responses to Reform Judaism.

MacIntyre argues that a tradition attains intellectual maturity if it resolves its “epistemological crisis,” in other words, when it rationally settles its conflict over rival answers to key questions (Whose 361-62). For the Reform Movement, this conflict involved its inability to deal with its members’ differences of opinion about Reform. As the Reform tradition matured, it solved its epistemological crisis by redefining its understandings of its culture to include multiple understandings. The 1999 platform was a
solution to the epistemological crisis because it fulfilled the requirements of a solution to an epistemological crisis (see page 154). First, it created a new conceptually enriched scheme that defined the Reform Movement’s collective identity by the value it places on its diversity of beliefs. The ability to define the movement by the significant areas of disagreement in addition to the areas of agreement solved the problem of representing differences by acknowledging and articulating them. Second, it provided the explanation that the Reform Movement considers differences precious. Third, these two tasks were carried out in a way that shows continuity with the movement’s value of different interpretations that can be traced back to the 1885 platform and the 1937 platform. The 1885 platform was created out of the argument that Reform rabbis could reinterpret traditional Judaism and revise it for modern circumstances. The 1937 platform acknowledged internal debates and worked to include continuously contested ideas that were significant for its Zionist and non-Zionist members.

When the Reform Movement resolved its epistemological crisis, it explained its history as always valuing diversity of belief and practice and defining change as the hallmark of Reform Judaism. Maclntyre claims,

To have passed through an epistemological crisis successfully enables the adherents of a tradition of enquiry to rewrite its history in a more insightful way. And such a history of a particular tradition provides not only a way of identifying the continuities in virtue of which that tradition of enquiry has survived and flourished as one and the same tradition, but also of identifying more accurately that structure of justification which underpins whatever claims to truth are made within it . . . (Whose 363)

How a tradition successfully passes through an epistemological crisis will underscore what it holds most dear and what it will include in how it frames and defines its collective
identity. My analysis of the 1999 platform shows that the process of representing a group is as important as the statement that is produced and helps clarify the collective identity. In the writing process of the 1999 platform, the concepts of difference and the representative dynamics of the collaborative process serve as frames in the collaborations themselves. The writing process for this platform transformed the process of representing the movement into a more broadly representative deliberation, and this transformation changed the nature of the Reform Movement to include a more democratic process. It was through this writing process that the movement defined reform not by the contents of its changes but in the very process of change—the belief in the value of change and diversity.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Thomas Miller calls attention to the recent trend in our field of researchers who look beyond the histories of ideas about rhetoric and examine the rhetorical practices of underrepresented groups, mostly women and people of color ("What" 42). Lynee Gaillot and Miller describe the recent proliferation of studies that examine how others use rhetoric and note that these studies expand our frame of reference and make "social needs and political conditions part of the history of rhetoric" ("Making" 150). Studies that focus on minority groups’ specific historical contexts help explain the powerful cultural exigencies that motivated people in such groups to engage in civic rhetorical practices. But as this study shows, it is also important to examine how the group constructs its collective identity to see how the group positions itself in relation to its material and cultural context. A deeper appreciation of the ways groups articulate their identities is seen in Jen Bacon’s "Getting the Story Straight: Coming Out Narratives and the Possibility of a Cultural Rhetoric," Scott Richard Lyons’ "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What do American Indians Want from Writing?," and Shirley Wilson Logan’s "We are Coming": The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women. These authors analyze these groups through existing classical and contemporary rhetorical analysis methods.

Another approach is to assume that a nontraditional group may employ nontraditional rhetorical practices that would be best analyzed by devising a new
methodology. As Patricia Bizzell points out, research on the history of rhetoric of underrepresented groups opens up "exciting new paths not only in the material scholars can study, but also, . . . in the methods whereby we can study it" (5). Bizzell argues that to write traditionally disenfranchised groups into the history of rhetoric, researchers must raise new methodological questions (7). In *Traces of a Stream*, Jacqueline Jones Royster addresses the methodological questions she encountered in her historical research on African American women's rhetoric. In her concluding chapter, Royster implies that a researcher of underrepresented groups needs to ground her study in both the perspectives of the community that is studied and in the perspective of the scholarly community in which she works (254). She presents a methodology that begins with "careful analysis," which she describes as "the vocabulary, theories, and methodologies" of our field of study (279). But Royster also includes a feminist perspective that values the researcher's emotions and personal experiences in relation to the subject of study. She adds to traditional research the "acknowledgement of passionate attachments," to the people in the study (280), "attention to ethical action" to sustain a sense of accountability and obligation to our various publics (280-81), and "commitment to social responsibility" which reminds us that we are responsible for the uses of the knowledge from our intellectual work and our obligation to use it to empower good (281).

My study adds to this body of research by introducing another methodology that can be used for studying the rhetorical practices of nontraditional groups. Unlike Royster, I did not make my personal experiences part of my methodology. Instead, I discovered that by examining the personal experience of the writers of the platforms and
how they understood the exigencies and a need for a platform, I could explain how they framed the Reform Movement’s collective identity. Additionally by examining the group’s rhetorical practices over 115 years, I could theorize how the tradition develops over time and made the insights from that discovery part of my methodology.

MacIntyre implies that one can judge a tradition’s development by its questions (Whose 355). As a tradition matures, it becomes self-reflective and asks questions about what it values and what it disagrees with to understand and learn from its history. MacIntyre explains that a tradition achieves progress when the adherents of a particular point of view succeed

in elaborating ever more comprehensive and adequate statements of their positions through the dialectical procedure of advancing objections which identify incoherences, omissions, explanatory failures, and other types of flaw and limitation in earlier statements of them, of finding the strongest arguments available for supporting those objections, and then of attempting to restate the position so that it is no longer vulnerable to those specific objections and arguments (Whose 144).

While MacIntyre suggests it is the act of asking questions that reflects development, my research suggests that the kind of questions a tradition asks more accurately reflects its stage of development.

In this study, I argue that how the Reform tradition frames its collective identity depends on the tradition’s stage of development. By comparing the rhetorical practices surrounding these platforms, I found that the tradition was either elaborating or reducing its sense of its own possibilities through centripetal or centrifugal means, by asking questions about external or internal matters. My study shows that in the initial development of a tradition, a community defines itself through questioning the external
audience from which it wants to become distinct. In a tradition’s first stage of development, it does not question its own beliefs and authorities, but it projects an authoritative identity that includes only agreed-upon ideas uncomplicated by internal disagreements. As a tradition develops, the community no longer defers to its own authorities unquestioningly, but becomes self-reflective and asks questions about itself—questions that enable the community to understand the lessons from its history and identify inadequacies, even if it cannot remedy them. The community acknowledges that it includes contested ideas that are continuously significant for its members. In this stage a tradition is at a crossroads: it sees its inadequacies, but does not yet have the resources to remedy them. At this stage any articulation of a collective identity may seem inappropriate since the tradition may not have developed an acceptable way to acknowledge internal differences. In the third stage, reformulations are designed to remedy inadequacies. As a tradition matures, the community redefines its understanding of itself to include multiple understandings of its members. When a community has an epistemological crisis, it must solve its problem of definition. The act of articulating the tradition’s values to solve the epistemological crisis helps a tradition define itself based on its most significant values. It should be noted that while my study can examine the Reform Movement and compare its rhetorical practices at points in time, it cannot predict how the tradition will eventually develop.

My study suggests that how the Reform tradition frames its collective identity and represents disagreements in each of its platforms is indicative of the tradition’s stage of development. I used three interpretive categories for my comparison to determine the
tradition’s stage of development. In my analysis of each platform, I first examined how the situation was framed, and how the influential authors of each platform argued within that frame. Borrowing ideas from Erving Goffman and David Snow, I consider a frame a categorizing system that functions to organize experience and influences how people interpret and describe issues and events. I argued that the members of the Reform Movement used their particular historical situation, writing situation, and writing process in their framing as evidence to support their claims for a particular collective identity. I used the concept of framing to look at how the tradition uses what it considers agreed-upon ideas to define itself, its collective identity, in its own terms.

Next, I focused on how the tradition deals with representing differences of opinion in each platform. What I saw in the archives was that there was a lot of argument about that supposedly shared meaning of symbolic actions. So in my dissertation, I introduced ideas from Clifford Geertz and Renato Rosaldo, and I argued that a collective identity, a culture, is not only what is agreed upon by a group, but is also the significant disagreements, contentions, and arguments of a group.

Finally, I examined the dynamics of representation as manifested in the writing processes of these three platforms. I explained the writing process used by the authors of these documents and the members of the social movement and considered how their concept of difference and ideas on representation served as frames in their representative process.

As MacIntyre explains, in the first stage of development, a tradition characterizes its own belief and the contentions of its rivals in its own terms. By situating the
tradition's commitments within the historical situation in which they were created, I show how these commitments are embedded and draw from the larger conceptual frame.

The 1885 platform combined the community's concern about appearing foreign and its belief in the value of modernity to frame the historical situation as an opportunity to revise Judaism. Based on this interpretation, the platform presented traditional ceremonies and customs such as dress and diet as "primitive" and "foreign." The platform suggested that the values traditional Judaism promoted no longer fit with the Reform Movement's constituents because they were reasonable, modern American Jews. The platform used "the views and habits of modern civilization" as the measuring stick with which to evaluate Judaism, and it defined traditional practices as outdated and apt to obstruct rather than further "modern spiritual elevation." The platform thereby reflected Reform Jews' desire to appear "modern." The 1885 platform framed the situation as requiring a new articulation of Judaism and defined its culture as only that which was agreed upon. I argued that the 1885 platform represented the tradition's first stage of development. At this stage, internal beliefs, texts, and authorities are not questioned and the tradition projects an authoritative identity uncomplicated by any disagreements. Kohler authoritatively wrote the platform. He presented a unified front and implied homogeneous consensus of beliefs and did not acknowledge differences of opinion within the ranks of the Reform Movement. So in 1885 Kohler authoritatively declared that Jewish practices were no longer meaningful in the new modern era. The platform did not address the community's significant disagreements about this. The platform
presented a unified front and implied homogeneous consensus of beliefs, and did not show any trace of disagreements within the movement.

As the movement developed and grew, it began to understand itself as a collective and was able to question its internal beliefs and its direction as well as celebrate its distinctiveness. The movement became established enough to acknowledge internal debates and articulate discrepancies between beliefs of its earlier stage and contrasts it with the world as it has come to understand it. By 1937, the Reform Movement had grown more diverse and included factions that disagreed over fundamental issues. As the tradition developed, the community no longer deferred to authorities unquestioningly, but became self-reflective and asked itself questions that enable the community to identify inadequacies. So as the Reform tradition developed, it acknowledged internal debates and continuously contested ideas that were significant for its members. The 1937 platform was written with a more collaborative writing process to articulate an inclusive collective identity. This time eleven rabbis participated in writing the platform. Every member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis was asked to make comments and suggestions on the draft. The writing process of the 1937 platform was an attempt to be inclusive of all the factions in the Reform Movement in the writing process, but the goal was still to come to a consensus and maintain a coherence of beliefs within multiple interpretive communities in the actual platform.

In 1999 the movement attempted, unsuccessfully, to deal with the dynamics of representing differences in its writing processes and platform. The Reform Movement could not resolve disagreements of belief and articulate a collective identity that included
multiple understandings. Part of the problem was the understood definition of a platform. The movement had understood a platform as reflecting a consensus of beliefs. This definition was problematic for a movement that had members with significantly different ideas. To solve the movement's epistemological crisis, the community developed a new writing process that did not try to lead to a consensus, but allowed the community members to reflect the differences in beliefs in the platform. The group made sense of itself with an individual author Levy and his controversial Third Draft providing the occasion, but not the frame. Ultimately, the solution to this crisis was to invent a new writing process and a new definition of a platform. The Movement created a new writing process for articulating the differences of beliefs: a more democratic process to represent not only shared ideas, but significant contested ones as well. The writing process of the 1999 platform ultimately included not only rabbis, but, thanks to the Internet, potentially all 1.5 million Reform Jews, and it was dialectical in that it worked to articulate contradictory positions and to value the diversity in the movement, not consensus. It was through this writing process that the movement defined reform not by the contents of its changes but in the very process of change—the belief in the value of change and diversity.

The platform was redefined as an opportunity for Reform Jews to reflect on their beliefs and practices. The 1999 platform was presented as a model of the type of inquiries individuals and congregations were encouraged to conduct--inquiries that place a high value on change and varied understandings. The new vision of the platform was for it to provide framework of governing conceptual paradigms of Reform Judaism so rabbis and laypeople can fill in the details on where they stand on issues. This platform defined
concepts and actions generally and left specifics up to local interpretation. The platform illustrated an understanding that meaning is not confined to the narrow intentions of the author or rabbi, but rather is generated within the experience of the reader or congregant interacting with the text. The 1999 platform also reflected an awareness that meaning is not stationary, but implicated by the local context.

My personal local context of Judaism has become frighteningly different since September 11th. Now, a year and a half after September 11, 2001, security in my family's synagogue is very tight. Members have to walk past barricades designed to prevent a car from driving through the building and past police officers standing guard. To get to the sanctuary, members now walk through the metal and glass bulletproof doors with automatic locking mechanisms that replaced the beautiful, carved wooden doors. To get to the religious school, members need to walk in a locked door with a note apologizing that the office staff can only "buzz in" people they know and that the gift shop, which always welcomed all, is now only for members. Inside the first door to the religious school is the areas commonly referred to as the fishbowl, where one is encased in glass and observed by cameras. To get to the classroom hallway, one needs to go through another door. Children in religious school do not have any outdoor activities as suggested by the police department because the synagogue received unusual letters threatening the safety of its members. When outdoor activities resume, all male teachers will stand guard along the outside perimeter of the playground fence and all female teachers will line the inside perimeter of the fence while the children play.
Other synagogues and Jewish affiliated organizations throughout the United States are responding to threats with similar measures. For example, when my son goes to the annual regional convention of his Jewish youth group in Los Angeles this May, the Israeli Army will be there to guard the hotel. As experiences like these become more commonplace for Jews in America, the initial shock they present wears off, and they become normalized. Still, the next time the Reform Movement articulates a new platform, it will need to take experiences like these into consideration. Luckily, as this project shows, the rhetorical practices of the Reform Movement are not static, but are dynamic, changing to accommodate not only different circumstances, but the development of the tradition as well. As such, the Reform Movement represents a tradition that has much to teach us about how to learn from others and represent a collective identity.
APPENDIX A: THE 1885 PITTSBURGH PLATFORM

1885 Declaration of Principles

1. We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

2. We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as the priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and at times clothing its conception of divine Providence and Justice dealing with men in miraculous narratives.

3. We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding only its moral laws, and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

4. We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity, and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.

5. We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.
6. We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam, being daughter religions of Judaism, we appreciate their providential mission, to aid in the spreading of monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore we extend the hand of fellowship to all who cooperate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

7. We reassert the doctrine of Judaism that the soul is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward.

8. In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.
APPENDIX B: THE 1937 COLUMBUS PLATFORM

The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism
Columbus -- 1937

In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles. It presents them not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of Jewry.

A. Judaism and its Foundations

1. **Nature of Judaism.** Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people. Though growing out of Jewish life, its message is universal, aiming at the union and perfection of mankind under the sovereignty of God. Reform Judaism recognizes the principle of progressive development in religion and consciously applies this principle to spiritual as well as to cultural and social life. Judaism welcomes all truth, whether written in the pages of scripture or deciphered from the records of nature. The new discoveries of science, while replacing the older scientific views underlying our sacred literature, do not conflict with the essential spirit of religion as manifested in the consecration of man's will, heart and mind to the service of God and of humanity.

2. **God.** The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source and mankind its ideal of conduct. Though transcending time and space, He is the indwelling Presence of the world. We worship Him as the Lord of the universe and as our merciful Father.

3. **Man.** Judaism affirms that man is created in the Divine image. His spirit is immortal. He is an active co-worker with God. As a child of God, he is endowed with moral freedom and is charged with the responsibility of overcoming evil and striving after ideal ends.

4. **Torah.** God reveals Himself not only in the majesty, beauty and orderliness of nature, but also in the vision and moral striving of the human spirit. Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and of holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the
teachings of the Torah to its basic needs in consonance with the genius of Judaism.

5. **Israel.** Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition, a bond which still unites them with us, we maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community. In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. Throughout the ages it has been Israel’s mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, Justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

B. Ethics

6. **Ethics and Religion.** In Judaism religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. Seeking God means to strive after holiness, righteousness and goodness. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one's fellowmen. Judaism emphasizes the kinship of the human race, the sanctity and worth of human life and personality and the right of the individual to freedom and to the pursuit of his chosen vocation. Justice to all, irrespective of race, sect or class, is the inalienable right and the inescapable obligation of all. The state and organized government exist in order to further these ends.

7. **Social Justice.** Judaism seeks the attainment of a just society by the application of its teachings to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. It aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife. It advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice, and the creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. It pleads for the safeguarding of childhood against exploitation. It champions the cause of all who work and of their right to an adequate standard of living, as prior to the rights of property. Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity, and strives for a social order
which will protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment.

8. **Peace.** Judaism, from the days of the prophets, has proclaimed to mankind the ideal of universal peace. The spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its essential teachings. It abhors all violence and relies upon moral education, love and sympathy to secure human progress. It regards justice as the foundation of the well-being of nations and the condition of enduring peace. It urges organized international action for disarmament, collective security and world peace.

C. Religious Practice

9. **The Religious Life.** Jewish life is marked by consecration to these ideals of Judaism. It calls for faithful participation in the life of the Jewish community as it finds expression in home, synagogue and school and in all other agencies that enrich Jewish life and promote its welfare. The Home has been and must continue to be a stronghold of Jewish life, hallowed by the spirit of love and reverence, by moral discipline and religious observance and worship. The Synagogue is the oldest and most democratic institution in Jewish life. It is the prime communal agency by which Judaism is fostered and preserved. It links the Jews of each community and unites them with all Israel. The perpetuation of Judaism as a living force depends upon religious knowledge and upon the Education of each new generation in our rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Prayer is the voice of religion, the language of faith and aspiration. It directs man’s heart and mind Godward, voices the needs and hopes of the community and reaches out after goals which invest life with supreme value. To deepen the spiritual life of our people, we must cultivate the traditional habit of communion with God through prayer in both home and synagogue.

Judaism as a way of life requires in addition to its moral and spiritual demands, the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.

These timeless aims and ideals of our faith we present anew to a confused and troubled world. We call upon our fellow Jews to rededicate themselves to them, and, in harmony with all men, hopefully and courageously to continue Israel’s eternal quest after God and His kingdom.
APPENDIX C: THE 1999 THIRD DRAFT

Ten Principles for Reform Judaism, Third Draft
Elul 5758 / August 1998

Preamble: Who Are We Reform Jews?

Much has changed in the Jewish world since the Central Conference of American Rabbis issued its Centenary Perspective 100 years after the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. Then as now we have been a movement of varying beliefs and practices, strengthened by our diversity yet increasingly in search of common themes that can deepen the religious life of the Reform community. We do not attempt to legislate a code of belief or conduct for Reform Jews, nor presume to advocate a single mode of religious expression for all. As Reform Jews we are open to the entirety of our tradition, commanded to engage in the study and practice that will embody that tradition in a manner appropriate to our different situations.

As rabbis dedicated to a Reform Judaism that can transform through holiness the lives of individuals, the Jewish people and ultimately humanity, the CCAR offers these responses to those who seek to know: Who Are We Reform Jews—where are we going, what can we believe and what can we practice—at a significant moment in Western history, the dawn of a new century.

Toward God

First: Created by the Holy One, We Are Seekers After God

Reform Judaism embraces the story of the Jewish people which tells of three great encounters with God: Creation, our standing together at Sinai, and our redemption from Egypt. These encounters, re-enacted throughout the Jewish year, lead us to seek our own relationships with God, however different our beliefs, experiences and questions may be. Based on traditional liturgies and our movement’s creativity, we pledge to create texts and worship environments that will enable us as individuals and communities to drink deeply from the Fountain from which our lives spring, and regularly to praise, thank, celebrate, petition, sing to, argue with and cry out to the Ribono shel Olam, the Great One who presides over all time and all space.

Second: Having Stood at Sinai, We Respond to the Call of Mitzvot Amid Modernity

Standing at Sinai, the Jewish people heard God reveal the Torah. Through study, we become aware of God’s mitzvot, commandments, that call to us even though we live in modernity. In the worldview of Reform Judaism’s founders, modernity was the center, the scale on which we measured what was valuable and enduring in Jewish practice and belief. Looking back at a century which has witnessed some of the greatest gifts and the most awful consequences of modernity, we proclaim that the mitzvot of the Torah are our center, and Judaism is the scale by which we shall judge the modern world.
Though all the mitzvot are open to us as to all Jews, the Reform movement believes that changing times affect the way we understand the mitzvot. We respond to the call of Torah in two ways: out of the ever-growing body of interpretation by Keneset Yisrael, the eternal community of the Jewish people, and out of our individual understanding of what is holy in our own time. Study, prayer and reflection on our actions will help us offer informed responses to the Torah’s call to do God’s will in our days. Such responses will help us transform a life too often lived exclusively in a state of chol, ordinariness, into a life filled with kedushah, with holiness. We want to deepen the Jewish content of our lives not only to enrich our own existence, but to enhance the quality of the communities and the lands in which we live. Reform Judaism calls us to help transform our culture and our world.

**Third: We Were Redeemed from Egypt to Help Repair the World**

Central to the calling of Reform Judaism from its inception has been a commitment to the prophetic task of tikun olam, increasing the spiritual dimensions of our material existence in ways that can repair our shattered world. In our learning, in our daily striving to increase the holiness of our existence, in the private and public spheres of our lives, we pledge to work for the cause of the poor and oppressed as the Torah commands us, and for the protection of the earth and all the creatures God vouchsafed to us. Mindful of our own redemption from Egypt, we commit ourselves to help redeem the new century in modernity, striving to transform it into a realization of Israel’s great messianic hope for the establishment of truth and justice, for moral and spiritual discipline, compassion and integrity, and at long last, a world repaired, a world at peace.

**Toward Torah**

**Fourth: We Are Committed to Shabbat, Which Elevates Our Work and Frees Us From It**

To strengthen our calling, we commit ourselves to observance of the mitzvot of Shabbat, which our tradition has seen as mey-eyn olam ha-ba, a foretaste of the world to come, a world transformed. Standing at the climax of the week, Shabbat and its holiness inspire us to bring the highest moral values to our weekday labor and our interactions with other human beings. Shabbat also liberates us from the obligations which our work places upon us that we may focus on our obligations to God.

Shabbat offers us the opportunity to participate in the sanctity of our synagogue community and to sanctify our homes through shamor, the mitzvot of refraining from ordinary weekday acts, as well as zachor, the mitzvot of welcoming the special Shabbat rituals into our lives.
Fifth: We Are Committed to Learning and Seasonal Celebration

An informed response to the call of the mitzvot requires a disciplined commitment at every stage of our lives to learn Torah in the widest sense—biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern texts, history, literature, philosophy, art, music and dance; and by encouraging our children and our friends to learn and interpret these with us.

Because Torah needs to be studied in an environment of kedushah, we commit ourselves to steer the course of our lives by creative celebration of the seasonal festivals and the other commemorative days of our calendar, delighting in the special foods and observing the somber fasts that nourish our modern souls. We will celebrate the seasons of our personal lives as well, through traditional and creative rites of entrance into the brit, God’s covenant, for girls and boys, at stages in children’s maturation, at marriage, at other milestones in the adult life cycle, at creative ceremonies of commitment to those closest to us, for healing, and in death. Conscious always of our mortality, we are committed to filling our days with the joy of living as Jews.

Sixth: We Are Open to Expanding the Mitzvot of Reform Jewish Practice

As we strive to admit a greater degree of holiness into our own lives and those of our communities, we commit ourselves to some mitzvot that have long been hallmarks of Reform Judaism, and, in the spirit of standing at Sinai with all other Jews, we know we may feel called to other mitzvot new to Reform Jewish observance. We also respect the Jewish beliefs of the past, and are open to explore how they may be applied to each new generation’s search. As part of Reform Judaism’s classic belief in ongoing revelation, we know that what may seem outdated in one age may be redemptive in another.

Thus we renew our classic devotion to chinuch, to Jewish education, some of us sending our children to Jewish day schools, others to supplementary schools, but all striving to participate actively in our children’s Jewish schooling. We renew our commitment to tzedakah, to setting aside a portion of our earnings to provide justice for those in need, and to engage in regular acts of gemilut chasadim, showing by our caring presence our love for those in pain.

In the presence of God we may each feel called to respond in different ways: some by offering traditional or spontaneous blessings, others by covering our heads, still others by wearing the tallit or tefillin for prayer. Some will look for ways to reveal holiness in our encounters with the world around us, others to transform our homes into a mikdash me-at, a holy place in miniature. Some of us may observe practices of kashrut, to extend the sense of kedushah into the acts surrounding food and into a concern for the way food is raised and brought to our tables. Others may wish to utilize the mikvah or other kinds of spiritual immersion not only for conversion but for periodic experiences of purification. Some of us may discover rituals now unknown which in the spirit of Jewish tradition and Reform creativity will bring us closer to God, to Torah, and to our people.
In the spirit of early Reform Judaism, we too hope to fulfill our mission as an or lagoyim, a light to the nations we live among, by creating communities of learning, celebration, moral rectitude and respect for diversity.

**Toward Israel, Land and People**

**Seventh: We Are Members of a Holy People, From Whom We Learn, Whom We Can Teach**

Seeking to draw from the wisdom of the *am kadosh*, the people to whom God imparted a particular measure of holiness, we wish to strengthen our ties with Jews from all the movements in Judaism. Reminded that we all once stood at Sinai together, we seek to work together in mutual respect, aware of our many serious differences, trying to understand the motivations that lead to our divergence. While our solutions may radically differ, we all face common problems. If we can only listen to each other, we can learn much.

Perhaps our greatest common concern is the consequences of the successful integration of Jews into our society. While this often seems an invitation to assimilation, our Reform commitment to let Judaism help transform society leads us to see this integration as a challenge to expand individuals’ knowledge and practice of Jewish tradition. Because of Reform Judaism’s openness to Jews from patrilineal and other untraditional backgrounds, we believe that by filling the minds, hearts and souls of seeking Jews, we can assist Jewish life on this continent too fulfill its great potential.

We are cheered that by the close of the 20th century Jewish life has been reborn across Europe. We pledge to help provide Progressive congregations around the world with rabbinic service, to share insights with each other, and to respect our common membership in Keneset Yisrael. We promise to be vigilant in helping Jews around the world protect ourselves against renewals of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

**Eighth: Members of a Holy People, We Are Rooted in a Holy Land**

After 2000 years of statelessness and powerlessness, the restoration of *Am Yisrael*, the people of Israel, to its ancestral homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel, represents an historic triumph of the Jewish people and of modern Zionism, which created *Medinat Yisrael*, the State of Israel. We wish to help create a State which promotes full civil, human and religious rights for all its citizens, and in which no religious interpretation of Judaism takes legal precedence over another. We wish to help the State work unceasingly for a mutual atmosphere of peace, justice and security with Palestinians and other Arab neighbors.

While Israeli and Diaspora Jewry are both creative and vibrant communities, independent yet responsible for one another, we encourage Reform Jews to make *aliyah*, immigration to Israel, in fulfillment of the precept of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, settling the Land of Israel,
in a manner consistent with our Reform commitments. We call upon Reform Jews everywhere to dedicate their energies and resources to strengthening an indigenous Progressive Judaism that can help transform Medinat Yisrael.

**Ninth: Members of a Holy People, We Are Heirs to a Holy Tongue**

 Seeking holiness, we echo our people’s belief that God endowed the Hebrew language with a particular measure of *kedushah*. Hebrew binds us to Jews in every land, and especially to our brothers and sisters in the State of Israel. We shall strive to read it, to let it help articulate our prayer and inform our study, to speak it. The more Hebrew we use in our prayer and our study, the more we shall share in the holiness of our people’s heritage.

**Tenth: We Are Committed to the Equality of All the People of God**

 We have all benefited from the growing fulfillment of Reform’s historic promise of equality between women and men. Jewish women and men alike have been strengthened from the admission of women to the rabbinate, the cantorate and other positions of Jewish religious leadership. Listening to women’s voices in our tradition has taught us all a new language to encounter faces of God once hidden from us, new ways to encounter God’s presence in our lives, new ways to relate to each other and conduct our institutions. We shall encourage Jews in all the movements to learn from these voices as well. We all commit ourselves to honor the different contributions men and women can make to our movement and to ensure that the women and men who lead us, whether professionals or laypeople, are able to fulfill their calling with appropriate recognition and respect.

 We affirm that all people, regardless of gender, age, belief, physical condition, or sexual orientation, are all created in the image of the Holy One. In whatever ways we can, we shall strive to help all the children of God and all the peoples of God fulfill their divine potential to contribute to a world transformed, the world of our people’s storied dream.

*Ken y’hi ratzon.* May this be God’s will.
APPENDIX D: THE 1999 PITTSBURGH PRINCIPLES

A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism
Adopted at the 1999 Pittsburgh Convention
Central Conference of American Rabbis
May 1999 - Sivan 5759

Preamble
On three occasions during the last century and a half, the Reform rabbinate has adopted comprehensive statements to help guide the thought and practice of our movement. In 1885, fifteen rabbis issued the Pittsburgh Platform, a set of guidelines that defined Reform Judaism for the next fifty years. A revised statement of principles, the Columbus Platform, was adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1937. A third set of rabbinic guidelines, the Centenary Perspective, appeared in 1976 on the occasion of the centenary of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Today, when so many individuals are striving for religious meaning, moral purpose and a sense of community, we believe it is our obligation as rabbis once again to state a set of principles that define Reform Judaism in our own time.

Throughout our history, we Jews have remained firmly rooted in Jewish tradition, even as we have learned much from our encounters with other cultures. The great contribution of Reform Judaism is that it has enabled the Jewish people to introduce innovation while preserving tradition, to embrace diversity while asserting commonality, to affirm beliefs without rejecting those who doubt, and to bring faith to sacred texts without sacrificing critical scholarship.

This "Statement of Principles" affirms the central tenets of Judaism - God, Torah and Israel - even as it acknowledges the diversity of Reform Jewish beliefs and practices. It also invites all Reform Jews to engage in a dialogue with the sources of our tradition, responding out of our knowledge, our experience and our faith. Thus we hope to transform our lives through קדושות (kedushah), holiness.

God
We affirm the reality and oneness of God, even as we may differ in our understanding of the Divine presence.

We affirm that the Jewish people is bound to God by an eternal בְּרִית (b’rit), covenant, as reflected in our varied understandings of Creation, Revelation and Redemption.

We affirm that every human being is created בְּזֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים (b’zelem Elohim), in the image of God, and that therefore every human life is sacred.
We regard with reverence all of God's creation and recognize our human responsibility for its preservation and protection.

We encounter God's presence in moments of awe and wonder, in acts of justice and compassion, in loving relationships and in the experiences of everyday life.

We respond to God daily: through public and private prayer, through study and through the performance of other mitzvot, sacred obligations — bein adam la Makom, to God, and bein adam la-chaveiro, to other human beings.

We strive for a faith that fortifies us through the vicissitudes of our lives — illness and healing, transgression and repentance, bereavement and consolation, despair and hope.

We continue to have faith that, in spite of the unspeakable evils committed against our people and the sufferings endured by others, the partnership of God and humanity will ultimately prevail.

We trust in our tradition's promise that, although God created us as finite beings, the spirit within us is eternal.

In all these ways and more, God gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

**Torah**

We affirm that Torah is the foundation of Jewish life.

We cherish the truths revealed in Torah, God's ongoing revelation to our people and the record of our people's ongoing relationship with God.

We affirm that Torah is a manifestation of ahavat olam, God's eternal love for the Jewish people and for all humanity.

We affirm the importance of studying Hebrew, the language of Torah and Jewish liturgy, that we may draw closer to our people's sacred texts.

We are called by Torah to lifelong study in the home, in the synagogue and in every place where Jews gather to learn and teach. Through Torah study we are called to mitzvot (mitzvot), the means by which we make our lives holy.

We are committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of mitzvot and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and as a community. Some of these mitzvot, sacred obligations, have long been observed by Reform Jews; others, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention as the result of the unique context of our own times.
We bring Torah into the world when we seek to sanctify the times and places of our lives through regular home and congregational observance. Shabbat calls us to bring the highest moral values to our daily labor and to culminate the workweek with קדושה (kedushah), holiness, מנוחה (menuchah), rest and עלג (onég), joy. The High Holy Days call us to account for our deeds. The Festivals enable us to celebrate with joy our people's religious journey in the context of the changing seasons. The days of remembrance remind us of the tragedies and the triumphs that have shaped our people's historical experience both in ancient and modern times. And we mark the milestones of our personal journeys with traditional and creative rites that reveal the holiness in each stage of life.

We bring Torah into the world when we strive to fulfill the highest ethical mandates in our relationships with others and with all of God's creation. Partners with God in תיקון עולם (tikkun olam), repairing the world, we are called to help bring nearer the messianic age. We seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world. We are obligated to pursue צדק (tsedek), justice and righteousness, and to narrow the gap between the affluent and the poor, to act against discrimination and oppression, to pursue peace, to welcome the stranger, to protect the earth's biodiversity and natural resources, and to redeem those in physical, economic and spiritual bondage. In so doing, we reaffirm social action and social justice as a central prophetic focus of traditional Reform Jewish belief and practice. We affirm the מצווה (mitzvah) ofצדקה (tsedakah), setting aside portions of our earnings and our time to provide for those in need. These acts bring us closer to fulfilling the prophetic call to translate the words of Torah into the works of our hands.

In all these ways and more, Torah gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

Israel

We are Israel, a people aspiring to holiness, singled out through our ancient covenant and our unique history among the nations to be witnesses to God's presence. We are linked by that covenant and that history to all Jews in every age and place.

We are committed to the מצווה (mitzvah) of א⁄הד יב ⁄וז (ahava Yisrael), love for the Jewish people, and to כל יسرائيل (k'la Yisrael), the entirety of the community of Israel. Recognizing that כל יהודים בעולם (kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh), all Jews are responsible for one another, we reach out to all Jews across ideological and geographical boundaries.

We embrace religious and cultural pluralism as an expression of the vitality of Jewish communal life in Israel and the Diaspora.

We pledge to fulfill Reform Judaism's historic commitment to the complete equality of women and men in Jewish life.
We are an inclusive community, opening doors to Jewish life to people of all ages, to varied kinds of families, to all regardless of their sexual orientation, to גרים (gerim), those who have converted to Judaism, and to all individuals and families, including the intermarried, who strive to create a Jewish home.

We believe that we must not only open doors for those ready to enter our faith, but also to actively encourage those who are seeking a spiritual home to find it in Judaism.

We are committed to strengthening the people Israel by supporting individuals and families in the creation of homes rich in Jewish learning and observance.

We are committed to strengthening the people Israel by making the synagogue central to Jewish communal life, so that it may elevate the spiritual, intellectual and cultural quality of our lives.

We are committed to מדינת ישראל (Medinat Yisrael), the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in ארץ ישראל (Eretz Yisrael), the land of Israel, and encourage העלייה (aliyah), immigration to Israel.

We are committed to a vision of the State of Israel that promotes full civil, human and religious rights for all its inhabitants and that strives for a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors.

We are committed to promoting and strengthening Progressive Judaism in Israel, which will enrich the spiritual life of the Jewish state and its people.

We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship to the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities.

We are committed to furthering Progressive Judaism throughout the world as a meaningful religious way of life for the Jewish people.

In all these ways and more, Israel gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

ברוך אSpacer ויהיה עולם (Baruch she-amar ve-haya ha-olam). Praised be the One through whose word all things came to be.

May our words find expression in holy actions.

May they raise us up to a life of meaning devoted to God's service And to the redemption of our world.
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