STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE JEWISH FAMILY

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The Young Men's Jewish Council

Introduction

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE JEWISH FAMILY was a joint project of the Chicago Chapter of the American Jewish Committee and the Young Men's Jewish Council We wanted to bring to the community a program which would address the social forces and stresses affecting the Jewish family and suggest strategies and programs which could support Jewish families who are experiencing change and stress

Dr Bernard Reisman's keynote address and the panel presentations of Dr Stephen Bayme and Dr Charles Raffel stimulated the thinking of program participants by expanding their knowledge of what is happening in general with the American family and more specifically with religiously affiliated and unaffiliated Jewish families. The papers presented in this publication also highlighted directions that Jewish institutions could follow in creating programs to meet some of the changed, and changing needs of Jewish families.

An outgrowth of this seminar and workshop was the formation by the Chicago Chapter of the American Jewish Committee of The Chicago Jewish Family Network. The Network is composed of lay and professional leaders representing Jewish social service child care and educational organizations. This group continues to study issues which have an impact on the Jewish family with the objectives of creating new responses to support and sustain. Jewish families

The Young Men's Jewish Council was fortunate to secure funding for this program from The Fern Goldstein Shapiro Morris R Shapiro and Charles Shapiro Foundation Inc. We are grateful to the Foundation for its support

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Presentation at the Seminar on Strategies for Strengthening the Jewish Family

May 3 1988 Chicago IL

THE DECLINE AND RISE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH FAMILY

by Bernard Reisman

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It is a kind of a homecoming for me to be here tonight. Chicago is sort of a second home for me. I spent a good number of years here from 1951 to 1967 when I left to go to Brandeis University. I see many friendly faces of people with whom I was associated a couple of decades ago, and I have appreciated this warm reunion.

The subject of Family is one in which I am particularly interested and I am delighted to have the opportunity to do some further thinking about the family and to test out some new ideas with you. This evening I will review recent developments which have affected the family. Tomorrow we meet with professionals in the community to talk about the implications of these developments and how professionals can work most effectively with families today.

Let me identify at the outset my bias about the family as well as my credentials. First and most important I myself was very fortunate to have been part of two very good families of my own. Both my mother s family and my father s family were large warm extended families. I grew up in New York City. To this day those family networks remain very important to me and give me a sense of what family life is about. I am also fortunate to have a family of my own now which is similarly very gratifying and helps me understand the joys and challenges of family life. And recently with the birth of Sara Esther my first grandchild. I have experienced the excitement of the transition of generations.

i also bring credentials as a social scientist to the study of the family and it is largely from that perspective that I try to add some theoretical background to my positive inclinations about family life And lastly as someone who cares about the Jewish community and cares about the Jewish future I feel very strongly about Jewish family life I view the family as the critical ingredient for the Jewish community's future well being

So you will understand that I start as a profamily person. Although in using that expression I have to pause and clarify that I don't use pro-family in the conservative sense. In many respects I think of myself as a conservative but with liberal overtones. I suspect that some of that will become apparent as you hear what I have to say

I entitle my remarks 'The Decline and Rise of the American Jewish Family As I was flying here this morning and going over my notes another title came to mind which was rather alliterative and equally descriptive of what I want to say The second title is 'The Many Phases and Faces of the Modern Jewish Family Both of those titles aptly describe my remarks this evening

THE TRADITIONAL ERA

To begin with it is important to have a brief historic background as a prelude to understand what is happening to the family in our own times. The key reality is that we have moved from a traditional orientation to the family to a modern orientation. It is well to know from where we came in order to understand better some of the awkwardness of the transition to be clear about the challenges today and to think about ways of responding which can be authentically linked to "from whence we came"

I have drawn from the book Life is with People a description of shtetl life in Eastern Europe during the latter part of the 19th Century Some would suggest that it is an idealized treatment Allowing for that possibility the book still gives us some sense of what life was like when our grandparents were growing up Families then were clearly at the center of traditional society. I will read representative quotes about family life in the traditional shtetl. Four important areas will be examined first to understand the traditional perspective and then later to contrast it with the modernist perspective of the family.

ON THE PLACE OF THE FAMILY IN THE SOCIETY

A person is part of the family. There is no fulfillment of one's duties or pleasures as an isolated individual. If a man is not a husband and father then he is nothing. A woman who is not wife and mother is not a real woman.

ON THE ISSUE OF AUTHORITY

"The father has the official authority the final word on matters of moment. "When he talked everybody was quiet and when he slept no one made any noise."

EXTENDED FAMILIES

'There may be quarrels and misunderstandings but in times of crises the family hangs together and cares for its own. If parents cannot give their children the support and help that is their due other members of the family are expected to step in. Perhaps an uncle an aunt a grandparent or even a more remote relative will take responsibility.

AN ORGANIC COMMUNITY

For the shtetl the community is an extended family. Within it are similar interrelationships a similar network of obligations and duties. Within it as within his family a person is highly individualized and at the same time pre eminently a part of the whole. Beyond the shtetl there extends <u>Klal Yisrael</u> the whole of the Jewish people of whom he is also a part.

One might say in summary that family life in the traditional era was unambiguously at the center of one's existence. You defined your identity and your role in society as you learned it in the family. There was no uncertainty everyone was expected to establish one's own family and from it to take support and to learn the key things which were important in one's life. In an economic sense the family was functional because families generated children hands for producing income and for providing security in one's old age in a psychological sense it was in the family that you learned the roles needed to manage your life and the values to guide your behavior And the family existed in a supportive Jewish environment which respected and helped the family accomplish its work there was consonance

I don't want to imply that the status of family life in traditional times was idyllic. Clearly there were problems. But it was not because there was any lack of clarity about the importance of the family. Within some families there was inevitably stress and often there were problems with the tendency of parents to function in an autocratic manner. But overall there was compatibility between what the people expected and what the Jewish community expected of the family.

MODERNITY

Let us move to the era of modernity to today A few years back Michael Novak a sociologist from the Chicago area wrote an article which appeared in Harper's magazine. Its title is very descriptive of what has happened in the past generation with the family. The title is "The Family Out of Favor" How is it that the ideal relationship between society and the family which characterized traditional society began to unravel within this century perhaps hitting its nadir a generation ago during the late 1960s? This was the time of the Vietnam War and much questioning of all the traditional social institutions. Certainly the family underwent much questioning

I said earlier the family was economically functional in the traditional society. The family has become economically dysfunctional in contemporary modern society This is a function of the economic system particularly in Western Europe and the United States which are essentially capitalist oriented societies Capitalism needs a mobile work force. A loyalty to family gets in the way of having the type of work force that can move as the economic requirements call for Children and spouse and ties to extended family compete with the expectations of the lob. Another value represented by capitalism is the pursuit of self interest. Do as well as you can economically and you will succeed and that becomes the priority goal it is only a short leap from thinking individually in the economic sphere to applying individual self interest to the social sphere. So one ceases to think in terms of neighborhood or of families or of extended networks or of long term associations because mobility is important if one wants to advance economically. Having large families is like having excess baggage, being free and unconnected gives you a competitive advantage Children relatives networks of friends can be liabilities Moreover in an earlier era extra hands meant extra

income Today children are clearly an economic burden

At my university for example the annual tuition this year is \$12,700. Add to that room and board and the annual cost is \$18 000 This figure doesn't include the cost of books and traveling home to visit family three or four times a year. This means the cost to a family for 4 years for one child at college is about \$80 000 A high proportion of Jewish students don't stop at the Bachelor's degree so add on a few years of graduate school. The cost of just educating a young Jewish child in this era is very high Parents can't even say that it will pay off in their old age. These days in addition to covering the costs of their children's education, adults also have to invest in their own social security and retirement plans Clearly having more kids today is not economically beneficial

CONTRASTING VALUES OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN SOCIETIES

The values of a society indicate what that society considers important. Typically a society shapes its values to be responsive to its economic requirements. Let us contrast the basic values of the traditional society concerning the family with the values of modern times. Perhaps you will see the rather stark difference.

To begin with let us examine the traditional attitude to authority which as I mentioned earlier is a critical ingredient in understanding the differences between the traditional and modern families. Two phrases one in Hebrew the other in Yiddish are representative of the traditional attitude to authority The first is derech eretz, which is to say "that is the way it is done. You understand that phrase to mean respect for families for parents for elders for bosses or teachers or any people in authority. The second phrase might be introduced if one were to entertain the idea of violating "the way it is done or of not adhering to the values of the traditional society. The phrase is Es passt nisht meaning it is not done When I was a child if I would ask Grandpa why can t I do that? He would shake his finger and say Es It just isn't done I understood and passt nisht obeved

Let a modern parent consider offering such a response to a child's inquiry today. The difference

between the traditional and modern era comes into sharp focus

An experience I had a year or so ago well typifies today's attitude to authority. I went to pick up my niece a student at a nearby university as our nuclear family was heading to our extended family home in New York City to attend the Passover seders A friend of my niece drove her to the place where we agreed to meet. On the bumper of his car he had a sticker which read Question Authority I asked my niece what meaning that bumper sticker had for her She said I don't know it just feels right I pointed out that among the authorities she was questioning were me her uncle her parents grandparents and teachers She wasn't too concerned It still felt right for her I understand where her skepticism and lack of trust come from. There are some authorities who are unworthy of being trusted and who should be questioned. I don't think it is merely by occupying an authority role that one is automatically entitled to respect. However and this is the key point when a person in authority exercises appropriate judgment then that person is entitled to respect and his or her judgments should be taken seriously. What is frightening about Question Authority is that it says any authority is suspect. I don't think a society can survive nor can any collective including the family do what it has to do unless it is ready to allocate authority to appropriate individuals. An excessive distrust of authority I suggest is pathological Not only does it prevent collectives from accomplishing their work but it denies individuals the vital opportunity to lean on others when this is needed

A second value to examine is differential views of individualism. In the traditional era the rights of the individual were generally secondary to the rights of the collective, the family the school the job or society. A representative example was the self denying parent. I am not entitled to anything. I don't need any material benefits. I just worry about the welfare of my children.

With modernity that attitude is reversed the individual is first and foremost and the collective is afforded scant priority. The question is whether the individualism of today is so excessive that it becomes problematic. The recent book by Christopher Lasch The Culture of Narcissism focuses on this question Lasch describes the current obsession with the self and with one's gratifications.

"To live for the moment is the prevailing passion to live for yourself not for your predecessors or posterity. We are fast losing the sense of historical continuity the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future. Since the society has no future it makes sense to live only for the moment to fix our eyes on our own private performance to become connoisseurs of our own decadence to cultivate a transcendental self attention."

Lasch's last phrase is a clever and sharp way of calling attention to the excesses of individualism of the current era. It is an oxymoron. Transcendence means rising above the self. Lasch ironically suggests that many people today can only achieve transcendence in terms of themselves. Such a value particularly poses problems for a community such as the Jews who care a great deal about the community about the past and about the future.

HITTING BOTTOM

The combination of changing economic conditions and changing social values have resulted in significant changes in the family of our traditional great grandparents as compared to our families of today. A major societal change is reflected in the different roles of women (and in turn of men) and of children within the family. The sanctity and status of the modern family has dropped considerably as compared to the traditional family. Perhaps the low point in the family becoming out of favor was reached by 1970. It was during that year that a British psychiatrist. David Cooper wrote a book which aptly described the low status to which the family had descended. His book was entitled Death of the Family. This was its credo.

We need to abolish the traditional family and to substitute new forms of human relations. The traditional family limits one's work and love relationships and creates a destructive impingement on the lives of everyone who comes into contact with us.

As the traditional family was being devalued a series of alternatives to the family came on the scene During this transitional period of time evidences of family pathology soared divorce problems in parent child communication childhood suicide abuse of children and women and dependence on

drugs and alcohol Perhaps less dramatic and obvious although no less problematic was the loss of confidence in the family and family life. Children growing up during this period frequently experienced parents who seemed as equally inept at managing their children as they were in getting along with each other This ineptitude set into motion a vicious cycle for the children As they came into adulthood and themselves thought of marrying and having children they remembered their own early family experiences These very highly educated and technically skilled young men and women were loathe to put themselves into a situation marriage and child rearing for which they had no models of success nor memories of great satisfaction. In sum "the family out of favor

THE RESURGENCE OF THE FAMILY

For almost two decades now it appears the family is experiencing a resurgence. On one level this is reflected in changing attitudes of young people who are coming into the age for marriage and having families. Much of the earlier awkwardness fear embarrassment and skepticism about marrying and having children is diminishing. The vast majority of this generation now looks with increasing favor at the notion of establishing their own families. What has changed is that the age of marrying has been deferred on the average seven or eight years later than the pattern a generation earlier. Despite later marriages the Jewish birth rate has remained essentially the same (albeit low) over the past 25 years.

How are we to explain the current resurgence of the family? Two basic reasons come to the fore First the several alternatives to the traditional family have not worked. Whether it was communes serial monogamy living with a partner without marriage liberal divorce or others the ostensible cure generated more problems than the disease Which leads to the second explanation The traditional family husband/father wife/mother and children remaining together in the same household continues to be the most effective social institution for accomplishing vital tasks needed by all societies These tasks are to produce and rear children and to nurture and provide emotional sustenance to people throughout their life span Throughout human history and across all cultures these tasks have been responded to by families Indeed a scholar of the

family and a colleague of mine at Brandeis University Prof Lawrence Fuchs adds that no human culture has survived across time which has not afforded high importance to the family The Jews and the Chinese are two prime examples

Contrary to the view of the British psychiatrist Cooper it is particularly in these modern times that the family can be most important. In the face of the transiency and anonymity of contemporary society the family provides an antidote unconditional love. Robert Frost described unconditional love in this pithy line. Home is when you go there they have to let you in. The phenomenon is also well expressed in the title of Christopher's Lasch's recent book on the family. Haven in a Heartless World.

For all of the above reasons as well as other reasons a stable family life is important for the Jews It has always been assumed that the family is the primary institution for transmitting the culture of a society to the next generation. It is unlikely that there is any other culture which depends as heavily on the family as do the Jews for transmitting their religious/cultural heritage Indeed despite well trained rabbis Jewish educators and access to modern Jewish schools youth groups and camps all of the social science research of the past two decades confirms that it is the family which is the prime deter minant of Jewish identity. This reality is even more apparent in diaspora communities where the Jews are very conscious of their minority status. Because their place in the majority culture may not always be secure Jews are likely to turn to their family for solace and support in the face of their distinctiveness

A PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

In light of the societal changes which have affected changes in family life what policies and programs might the organized Jewish community undertake which would be both helpful in strengthening individual Jewish families and which would contribute to the community's goal of quality Jewish continuity? At the outset let me mention two approaches which despite their popular appeal I don't believe would be helpful. First is the fundamentalist's response. From this perspective our problems with the family (as well as with all other aspects of contemporary society) are attributable to the secularism, the relativism, and the materialism.

brought on by modernity Therefore the fundamentalists argue the resolution must be a return to the ways things were. Such an approach while attractive for its simplicity is also misguided and unlikely to work for the same reason.

A second approach to the malaise of the family with which I am not in accord is to advocate that the community take a relativistic position. That is the reality of modern society is choice. The traditional family is only one of many new and different family structures Those endorsing the relativistic approach urge that the Jewish community afford equal status to the several alternative family structures e.g. remaining single marrying without having children one parent families blended families communal families and intermarried families. While I agree that today there are those several family alternatives and it is the responsibility of the Jewish community to be responsive to all of them I also believe that it is appropriate that the community affirm a preferred alternative. I believe both for the well being of individual Jewish families and for the well being of the Jewish community the traditional family unit is the preferred option. To be clear by traditional family I mean a marriage of a man and woman both of whom are Jewish (or if one is non-Jewish he or she converts) who have children and who maintain a permanent monogamous marriage

I should quickly add that I recognize that it is almost impossible by definition to accomplish both elements of my preferred Jewish family policy—a) to be responsive to all alternative Jewish family struc tures—and b) to have a preferred alternative—the traditional family—Yet—I believe no other policy would be responsive to the realities of today and would better serve the long term interests of contemporary Jews and would assure quality Jewish continuity—With this approach to the Jewish family as an underlying policy—I turn—in this concluding section—to a series of seven program and policy—recommendations for the organized Jewish community to help the contemporary Jewish family achieve its potential

PROGRAM AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 <u>FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES</u> Today making a marriage and family work is one of the most difficult tasks we all face. The Jewish community can help by

making available quality support services which might serve as surrogate extended families. Examples would include havurot baby sitting cooperatives and Jewish family educational programs. Such services would bring together people of similar life situations and Jewish interests to share ideas and to provide each other emotional support in contributing to the success of their families.

- 2 SERVICES TO SINGLES Earlier I referred to the issue of later marriages for Jewish men and women in part this phenomenon occurs because a large proportion of young Jews spend many years in graduate education and in establishing their work careers. Both because of the time invested in establishing one's career the centrifugal flavor of contemporary society, and sensibilities of sophisticated young adults it is difficult for people interested in marriage to find compatible mates. The task for the Jewish community is to organize programs which while attentive to the sensibilities involved afford opportunities for single Jewish men and women to meet.
- 3 SERVICES TO DUAL CAREER FAMILIES The model family type among young American Jews for now and the foreseeable future is the dual career family. There are few precedents available to help the couple who is determined that both the man and the woman will pursue their careers and who also are interested in having children. Both research to understand better dynamics of this new marital status and support services geared to help the dual career couple/family are needed.
- 4 CHILD CARE Whether because both parents choose to work or because there is only a single working parent or because the non working parent in a two parent family wants the support and/or enrich ment of child care it is in everyone's best interests for the Jewish community to provide quality child care in the first instance such quality services will contribute both to helping the marriage and to the sound development of children. Second child care programs under Jewish auspices provide Jewish experiences at the most impressionable years of life.
- 5 RESPONDING TO DIVORCE AND SINGLE
 PARENT FAMILIES The only reliable available data
 on the current rate of divorce pertain to the general
 American public and that figure is 40%. It is also
 known that while the rate of divorce among American

Jews has been low it has been moving closer to the rate for the general population. The Jewish community needs services which help prepare people for the challenges of married life and services which help married couples if and when problems arise. Divorce with some couples may be inevitable and in the best interest of all concerned. In those cases particularly where children are involved the community has an interest in assuring settlements which protect the interests of the children and which seek to maintain civility between the husband and wife. Finally, there are likely to be a good number of problematic marital relationships which can be resolved with sensitive and creative interventions by the Jewish community.

6 SERVICES TO THE INTERMARRIED Another new reality of the American Jewish community is that approximately one out of three Jews now marrying will intermarry. To a limited extent one can set into motion programs for Jewish boys and girls which may lessen the possibility of a mixed marriage. However given the pattern of Jews mixing with non-Jews in their schooling work and living arrangements it is realistic to expect a continuing high rate of intermarriage. An intervention supported by recent research which lessens the negative effects of intermarriage to the Jewish community would be efforts to encourage conversion by the non-Jewish spouse in addition efforts to encourage families where the non-Jewish spouse does not convert to rear children as Jews is a desireable strategy although the research on this issue is less clear as to whether the children will remain as Jews Further synagogues and other Jewish communal organizations need to insure that they reach out to intermarried families with sensitivity and concern Rather than expend energies in essentially futile hand wringing about the soaring rates of intermarriage such community initiatives are likely to result in more of the mixed marrieds aligning themselves with the Jewish community

7 FAMILY POLICIES OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS There is a regrettable discrepancy between the avowed family oriented commitment of the Jewish community and the actual family policies of Jewish communal organizations with their own professional and administrative staff. Jewish communal organizations if they are to be effective in strengthening the family life of their members, must begin with policies which are responsive to the family

needs of their own personnel. One would expect that the Jewish organizations would be in the vanguard of liberal policies concerning such issues as maternity and paternity leaves flex time child care and sensitivity to scheduling which accounts for needs of children

SUMMARY

I have outlined recent societal changes which now confront the American Jewish community and the Jewish family with new needs and challenges. What becomes clear is that the family is no less important in the lives of Jewish people today than it was in the lives of their great grandparents. What is different today is the profile of the family and the way it approaches its prime tasks. But those tasks remain the same providing emotional nurturance to members of the family and serving as the vehicle for the transmission of the Jewish religious/cultural heritage.

The challenge to leaders of the American Jewish community today is to find the balance between sustaining the essence of the traditional Jewish family along with making the necessary adaptations which respond to new needs and to do so in ways which are in tune with the values and rhythms of contemporary Jews. This is not an easy task and yet it is such a blend of conservatism and liberalism of continuity and change which offers a reasonable prospect of helping the Jewish family adapt to the transition from a traditional era to the era of modernity. In so doing the Jewish family will continue to serve as the central influence in assuring the continuity of the Jewish people.

Presentation at the Workshop on Strategies for Strengthening the Jewish Family

May 4 1989 Chicago IL

Overview National Perspective

by Steven Bayme Ph D Director Jewish Communal Affairs Department American Jewish Committee

it is my pleasure to share with you today some of the research projects coming out of the national office of the American Jewish Committee particularly The William Petschek National Jewish Family Center which over the last eight years has published research on the Jewish family with which many of you may be acquainted. The Petschek Center's goal is to become a central resource and address for information on the Jewish family More importantly its goal is to challenge the Jewish community to rethink its policies and its strategy for strengthening the Jewish family to act as a catalyst for groups such as yourselves people on the front lines of family-oriented agencies or agencies who are directly dealing with family issues. The nature of the work that we have done has often been in the glorified atmosphere of a "think tank" but where the real action is is on the front lines where real families are involved and where real family services are involved. We see this as our opportunity to translate some of the materials ideas and findings of the work we have been doing over the last number of years into direct family policy

I d like to focus my comments this morning on four major areas of contemporary Jewish life in each one trying to draw out the policy implications and directions for the Jewish community. The four are heavily interrelated. They concern Jewish marriage patterns. Jewish child bearing patterns or parenting patterns. Jewish divorce patterns and finally the costs of leading a Jewish life. Because of the shortness of time. I may not get through all four topics.

Let me begin with the question of marriage. The most encouraging aspect of contemporary Jewish life is the persistence of marital mores. Jews continue to marry in large numbers. The traditional view of marriage articulated in the Book of Genesis is that it

is not good that human beings live alone Better that they should join onto one another in one way or another has been internalized by the majority of American Jews whether they are aware of the implications of the Book of Genesis or not In 1984 for instance 93 8% of Americans over age 25 were married in terms of Jews 95% of Jewish females married by age 34 96% of Jewish males married by age 39 Lest you think that's only the current generation we also did a poll of Jewish college students in 1982 and we found that two-thirds 65% indicated there was no question in their minds but that they would marry So in that respect it's clear that marital norms do persist. Jews continue to value marriage as do Americans generally. What has changed I think are two other things. Number one our attitudes towards diversity have changed. In other words we accept marriage as the norm and we then say we have to have room in our system for those within our community who for one reason or another do not fit that norm. In short, there has been a greater tolerance to diversity of lifestyle but at the same time a recognition that marriage remains the ideal or the basic goal that people aspire to lt is a basic statement that all of the alternative family structures so widely ballyhooed in the 1960s and 70s have by and large not served nearly as well as the family in terms of the three basic things we demand out of family life namely nurturization nurturing that which Christopher Lasch called A haven in a heartless world socialization of the young and transmittal of our values to the next generation

The second thing that has changed and her Jews probably are somewhat more in the vanguard than Americans generally is that the age of marriage has been going up If we could speak for instance of the 1960s 45% of Jews age 18 to 24 were married That is quite a young age for marriage. It means almost one out of every two Jews had been married before age 25 Take a look ten years later In the 1970s only 25% one out of every four Jews had been married by age 25. That correlates with the general rise in the age of first marriage. Jews are probably right now about three years ahead of the general community in that Jews tend to marry about three years later than the community at large In other words if the average age of American males for marriage is about 24 1/2 for Jews it is about 27 1/2

That does raise some interesting Issues One is--and I do want to dwell on it a bit later on that it does raise questions of fertility. To the extent that marriage is delayed it often raises questions as to what extent does the biological clock "tick down I will get back to that

Stable marriages have historically been correlated with a later age for marriage. The sense of a realistic expectation of what marriage is all about makes for a stronger and healthier relationship. So in that sense the delay in the age of marriage while it does raise some interesting issues in terms of fertility in some measure does mean that Jews enjoy a more stable marital relationship. There are other reasons for this Among Jews the degree of satisfaction within a marriage is heavily correlated with the degree of self-esteem In other words Jews Protestants and Catholics look alike in the sense that they all want to get married--i e in the persistence of marital norms generally Where Jews differ is that Jewish marriages have a positive impact upon self-esteem. In other words Jews look to their marriages as sources of basic support nurture of self-understanding as a person That in turn-and I think this to some extent goes a long way towards explaining the so called Jewish divorce deficit that we'll get to a bit later on this morning-that in turn means that if marriage is valued so much as a source of self esteem people are going to work an awful lot harder at making marriages work. And that goes back to what I said earlier about cultivating realistic expectations of what s involved within a marriage

Thirdly the role of Jewish tradition which in some ways is only limited to that portion of the community that can harness tradition is a factor Jews who are most involved in some form of traditional Jewish life are far more likely to enjoy a stable marriage. The evidence to that is overwhelming. One out of every three Jews who are unaffiliated are likely to have been divorced or to be divorced in the future.

Among Jews who <u>are</u> affiliated it is one out of every eight. In other words, Jewish tradition <u>does</u> <u>cement marriage</u>. Moreover it increases with the degree of traditionalism. The more traditional one is the lower the rate of divorce. What is the reason for this and what are the policy implications? Jewish tradition stands as an incredibly powerful source for cementing marital ties. It is a family oriented religion

Its rituals bring people together across generations. The very notion of the Friday night dinner or the Friday night synagogue service is one in which the family is brought together around Jewish issues around Jewish concerns. In that respect it is clear to me (the evidence is overwhelming) that Jewish tradition can be a very powerful motivating force or a powerful resource for cementing marriage. The policy challenge is that most of our people especially our young couples do not have the wherewithal and the knowledge to be able to harness that tradition for purposes of cementing marrial ties and for the purposes of strengthening marriage.

The key weakness in the marriage scene if you will is that many Jewish marital patterns relate to the very difficult issue of intermarriage. Here are I think a few facts that have to be faced much as they are painful to do so Intermarriage remains a problem as it relates to a declining Jewish identity, a weakness of transmitting Jewish values within the intermarried home I suggested last night and I would repeat it think we have entered into a series of different norms regarding intermarriage. We went through a period when people lamented intermarriage and engaged in hand wringing. We went through a second period in which we said Look we have a problem. What can we do about it? But currently in the late 1980s especially since the publication of the book by Charles Silberman A Certain People 10 we have entered into a third period where intermarriage is no longer regarded in many circles as problematical Now for many people it is not. The problem is in terms of the overall Jewish community that the evidence regarding intermarriage shows it is harmful to future Jewish identity and future Jewish continuity The one aspect of hope is in the case of conversion When a conversion takes place then the intermarried couple looks pretty much like the rest of the Jewish community their home looks like a Jewish home which is the way it should be according to Jewish tradition. We make no distinction between those who were born Jews and those who have chosen to enter into our covenant. Then having said that it would seem the policy implication should be to regard intermarriage as opening up windows of opportunity to bring Jewish families into the Jewish community That means outreach to intermarried couples But at the same time. I think the challenge is also to clarify and articulate that our ideal model is intramarriage rather than intermarriage

What does that mean in terms of positive policy implications?

Jewish tradition stands as I said earlier as a powerful resource for strengthening Jewish family life Most Jewish couples intermarried or non intermarried do not have the knowledge the background the wherewithal to be able to inject the Jewish components into their marriages. I do not think there is any objection to doing so If anything the reasons for intermarriage have shifted from what might have been once been called ideological rejection of the Jewish community People today marry out of propinguity out of nearness to Gentile neighbors There is no ideological hostility to Jewish identity That means in that home and in the intra married home the Jewish tradition could be maximized in terms of strengthening the marriage and the family Individuals especially the intermarried but also the intramarried are not fully aware of the potential for using Jewish tradition to strengthen their marriages The challenge to Jewish communal policy is to develop resources and avenues whereby a Jewish component can be injected into the home to bring it closer to the Jewish community In some measure we have begun to think along these lines special media techniques special family education programming within the synagogues special Shabbat retreats among young Jewish couples and their children But this variety of programming has to become a central component of what the Jewish community is offering. My colleague Steve Cohen of Queens College has often argued "We have to replace a language of reproach with a language of resource It is one thing to say You are bad people You are not going to get very far satisfying as that may be to some of us It is far more productive to say "You are what you are I have my opinions about it Even more important is that the Jewish community is open to providing you with resources for enhancing the Jewishness of your homes This is especially important in dual career homes which I do want to dwell on for a few more minutes As an overall policy standard we should regard Jewish heritage and tradition as valuable resources in maximizing Jewish family life. The question then becomes how to translate that into the lives of Jewish young couples

Let me spend a few minutes on Jewish parenting The first most obvious fact is that Jews do

not have large numbers of children. We are a small people we always have been. But the most blatant thing about American Jewish families today is the relative paucity of Jewish children In Los Angeles one of the most important Jewish communities in the United States a recent demographic study found that only 28% of Jewish families had any children under 18 in the home. That is an incredible statistic. That means only one out of four families currently has small children or school-age children. There are some who argue that we are replacing ourselves. We are just having children at later ages. Fertility is only delayed not eliminated. I question that on a number of grounds One reason is that delayed fertility is often associated with infertility Frequently longer delays mean more difficulties in conceiving and carrying fetuses to term

Secondly and more importantly is that people make their choices about children on a one at a time basis. It is a sequential choice. Couples have one and then decide if they want to have another one. Even if couples state that they expect to have two prior to starting their family this does not mean very much at all. It just means that they have a norm of two children which is true. Whether they will actually have the two children depends on a whole range of circumstances.

Thirdly is the issue that we never as a community have gone beyond American fertility rates As a community we have always lagged behind Currently American society as a whole is not replacing itself_except through immigration. You should read the important book by Ben Wattenberg called The Birth Dearth 11 which basically argues that Western society as a whole especially America is simply not replacing itself. Wattenberg argues that it is somewhat naive to expect that Jews are going to do better than American society as a whole So that is one fact to live with. We can talk about what can be done about it But unfortunately there is not all that much that can be done about it Small Jewish families have become the norm. The exception is the Orthodox community

In terms of parenting patterns. Jews seem to be doing much better. They tend to be upper middle class parents who are very concerned with the welfare of their children and very involved with their children. They spend considerable time with their

children The myth of Jews not spending time with their kids because they are so hard working does not seem to be borne out by the research

One published study¹² by a University of Illinois at Chicago economist Barry Chiswick argues that Jewish mothers are far more likely than Gentile mothers to stay at home while the child is in preschool. With children under the age of three the likelihood is that Jewish mothers will not be working full time. They either are juggling part time work and part time home care or are staying at home entirely. For example, according to the Pittsburgh Jewish. Federation study in Pittsburgh over 50% of the Jewish women with children under age six were stay at home mothers.

This characteristic is highly correlated with others. Jewish parents are noted for their high degree of warmth and support coupled with and this is very important—a high degree of so called independence training. Jewish parents want their children to get out in the world to have some very quick socialization experiences. In that respect going back to Pittsburgh's demographic statistics while over 50% of the Jewish mothers are stay at home mothers 83% of Pittsburgh Jewish children are involved in some form of pre school activity. What that means is that Jews want settings to be created where their children can have pre kindergarten educational experiences. That is part of the so-called independence training.

Related to this is the question of the dual career family. Many Jewish couples report highest levels of gratification and highest levels of communal affiliation not when both partners are working full time but rather with one full time worker and one part time worker. In other words, part time employment would seem to be a very important model for the Jewish community to think about, and creation of opportunities for part time work to enable people to balance work and family responsibilities would seem an appropriate avenue of communal policy.

Regrettably part time opportunities are few and far between receive poor compensation levels and carry with them minimal career benefits. Efforts are underway in the corporate sector to upgrade the status of part time employment opportunities. There should be models here for the Jewish community to emulate as well

To be sure for many couples two full time incomes are an absolute economic necessity. These will of course require full time surrogate care preferably care that approximates the values of the home. However before we commit ourselves to the notion that the dual-career home is the wave of the future we should be looking at how for many Jewish couples the most satisfactory arrangements relate to part time employment and seek to build upon those models of satisfaction through greater availability of employment opportunities and greater availability of part time surrogate care.

The one exception to all this is the Orthodox Jewish family. We have two reasons. Because of the cost of Jewish living certainly in the New York area study. Orthodox couples tend to be both full time employed. There are many gradations of that fact but basically what is surprising is that there are so many families where both partners are working. This is due to the high cost of Jewish life. Day school tuition averages around five to six thousand per child. With three or four children per family an enormous amount of dollars is spent on the Jewish education of one's children. I think it is more than just the high cost of living though.

First of all the Orthodox family tends to be the strongest in terms of family ties It is the clearest answer to the question posed earlier Does Jewish tradition cement marital ties? It does because it is a family-oriented religion Secondly Jewish communal norms are important. If marriage and family are viewed as commandments of the highest order they are more likely to be fulfilled Implementing these commandments results in building the strongest families Thirdly the norm as a result of these commandments is that the Orthodox have three children per family This is not exactly coincident with Jewish law Jewish law would argue "There are no limits Birth control in most cases is not regarded as desirable from the Orthodox point of view. The fact is that most Orthodox Jews do practice one form of birth control or another. Yet there is an asset or a gain if you will of more children in the Orthodox home than in the non-Orthodox home

What does this mean? What are the implications of this?

First of all in terms of the birth rate itself these are private decisions which are very difficult to affect. What the community can do is first of all articulate its values If we say that three children is desirable or create a climate that is more conducive to children and that we value children as assets in and of themselves that will to some extent serve to internalize a norm that it is good and desirable to have larger families Secondly on a much more practical level we have to minimize the costs the career costs of having children We need to create more avenues more flexible policies to enable people to both have children and pursue their careers whether it involves part time work leaves of absence or opportunities to do additional career training while engaged in full time care at home. We have to think more imaginatively about a different model of employment policy that will enable people who are extremely accomplished in their career-oriented lives to balance work and family Sociologist Robert Bellah has argued this should be true of America as a whole that Americans suffer from a split between their public lives and their private lives between their work and family roles. We have to think more in terms of avenues that can bring the two together

Finally and I think most difficult for us to come to grips with but by no means unimportant is the entire question of abortion and adoption policies within the Jewish community. As a community we have accepted a pro-choice position for very solid reasons. What we have not explored sufficiently is what are the opportunities for adopting children within the Jewish community? In terms of the number of people who are actually having abortions at least have they been given the real choice, of perhaps putting the baby up for adoption to a Jewish couple who would want it?

I just want to throw out two more themes In terms of divorce as I indicated earlier Jews have a divorce deficit. They divorce about two-thirds as frequently as Catholics and one-half as frequently as Protestants despite the very strong religious proscriptions against divorce in the Catholic tradition. That says a great deal about the strength of Jewish marriages. The trouble is that divorce rates are on the rise. If they are about 15% for Jews who are over the age 65 they are about 8% for Jews under age 35. That means in the next thirty years that 8% is going to mean more divorces. They will probably exceed the number of divorces of the previous.

generation In this respect we lag very significantly behind our Protestant and Catholic colleagues in terms of education for marriage. They are way ahead of us in terms of training programs cleric—clergy counseling before marriage, and inculcating realistic expectations of what is involved in a marriage. If our expectations are that of romance and a bed of roses then they quickly get dashed. If we cultivate expectations of the real work involved in making a marriage work we are far more likely to succeed.

What about our comments about the economic cost of Jewish living? This is again a matter of choices. We all choose to decide how much of an investment we are going to make. There are very real trade-offs. One can speak of a maximal form of Jewish involvement in which salaries of \$80,000 to \$90,000 a year are probably insufficient to meet the costs of leading a Jewish life especially if one is talking about day school education for three children.

There are a couple of basic criteria, though that we should articulate. One is the importance of choices People have to make their own personal choices as to where they are going to make their primary investment. But there should be special considerations for the single parent's home. There is not all that much we can do about the psychological consequences of divorce on children Religion however can serve as an anchor of values in a home that has undergone marital trauma. There is also a lot we can do for the economic consequences of single parenthood. Special consideration within the Jewish community for single parent homes should become a primary policy focus. Allied to that is special consideration for large families If we value children as an asset then families with a greater number of children should not be regarded as the burden of the Jewish community. They should be regarded as an asset

Presentation at the Workshop on Strategies for Strengthening the Jewish Family

May 4 1988 Chicago IL

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD CARE

by Dr Charles Raffel Director William Petschek National Jewish Family Center American Jewish Committee

I would like to start by confessing that I m also a statistic. I am part of a dual-earner couple both personally and professionally concerned about high quality child care

I would like to offer an overview of day care on the national scene then talk about Jewish day care particularly with reference to policy recommendations

President Nixon, who I'm sure did not consult his astrologer vetoed the previous National Child Care Bill in 1972 and on the national scene we are again poised now at a very crucial moment. There is a bill in Congress at the present time that has a two and a half billion dollar ticket on it to support child care The ins and outs of this bill which I have been trying to follow with the help of our Washington office are a story for another day long conference in and of itself It has a rather problematic church state issue tied in with it. However, we of the American Jewish. Committee have been supporting this bill and I am going to mention at the close of my remarks that I would urge you all to support it we may then discuss why Whether or not the Jewish community will benefit directly from this bill I think is a matter open for discussion. However, the infrastructure within all of our communities will be so elevated by the passage of this bill that I think that it makes it a closed case that we must be behind and even in front of this bill

Needless to say child care is a hot issue. A recent national conference that had four hundred places for people involved in the business community considering day care received eight hundred con firmed requests for registration. On the last day of that conference a press conference for the presidential candidates to discuss their platforms for

child care was scheduled. I had a press pass because I write for our Family Center to get into an early press conference and there was a great deal of rushing going on as we realized that none of the candidates was going to show up. None of the aides was going to show up either and the only person who was there Pat Schroeder who had long ago bowed out of the race gave a keynote address in which in part her remarks focused on what s happening on the national scene why child care is not an issue in the presidential campaign. Perhaps child care is too hot. I think there has been movement however when in The New York Times of April 25 William Safire writes a piece saying it's time that the Reagan Administration and even George Bush take a stand on child care let us know what his thinking is because as Safire has noted "We need something. We need something whether it's on the Federal level or the state level. His preference would be on the state level of course. So I think there is a national awareness that this issue the issue of child care is the issue of the 1990s, and I have it from no less an authority than Phil Donahue who moderated one of the sessions at a conference and closed his remarks by saving child care is the issue of the 1990s

Now where are we in terms of Jewish child care? In terms of the statistics the Federation study of 1984 with which I m sure many of you are familiar need not be reviewed. Rather than dealing with those statistics. I think I can boil it down by saying. We re not doing enough. In other words we are aware of the need but by no means are we doing enough. I would like to focus my time this morning by making the case for the impact of Jewish child care on parental identity.

The study that I m referring to is the study that we helped sponsor by Dr Ruth Pinkenson Feldman in Philadelphia. Dr Feldman asked "What is the difference between the parental identity of those who choose Jewish day care versus parents who choose day care under secular auspices? ¹³ Now what I promise is to make her study available to anybody who is interested. I am going to highlight some of the data from the questionnaire that she developed. Her summary statement is that quality Jewish child care contrary to what may have been popular opinion is not a detriment to the Jewish family but is a great strengthening device for the Jewish family.

Now as I read to you from a table in terms of ritual observance a question of parental involvement prior to Jewish day care versus parental involvement prior to secular day care is analyzed. The two factors which show a dramatic increase in terms of ritual observance of the parents are mezuzah and the lighting of Friday night candles and along with that kiddush. One notices a dramatic increase in terms of those ritual observances which are taught in the day care curriculum.

Now what Dr Feldman also factored into her study outside of these behaviors is the subjective attitudes of the parents while they are involved in the day care experience. How do they perceive their relationship to the Jewish community? Let us go over some of these statistics.

Do you feel that you are involved Jewishly? With the Jewish day care the response is "Yes 63% Non sectarian is 17% Less involved Jewishly 1% in the Jewish day care 8% in the non sectarian

More aware of the Jewish calendar? In the Jewish day care 69% Non sectarian 14%

More child centered in observances? Jewish day care 65% Non sectarian 24%

More aware of feelings about being Jewish? 50% in the Jewish day care as opposed to 26% non sectarian

Interested in learning more about Judaism? 44% in the Jewish sponsored day care non sectarian 20%

Now these factors point to a correlation Dr Feldman is careful to say that there is not a casual relationship here. But what I think is unmistakable is that there is an increase both measurable in terms of behavior and most significantly in terms of attitude.

Dr Feldman also began to examine how this attitude translates into other types of involvement and then found for example that the charitable giving of those parents involved in Jewish day care was higher

One factor which disturbed her which caused her to send out a different part of her questionnaire was that synagogue affiliation of those parents did not necessarily increase. What she then found after

differentiating according to income level was that there was a break-even point where parents who were involved in Jewish day care felt for example that at the time of the study if synagogue member ship cost them \$300 a year they were willing to do it If it cost \$550 they had doubts about it and if it was \$700 they said. Forget it because their involvement in terms of expenses was child-oriented. Now I can speak of my own experiences when my children were involved in a pre school which did involve an extended day period the synagogue made a very attractive offer which meant that if I enrolled my two children there membership would cost me about \$150 for that year because of the membership discount. The point is that scaling of dues emerges. as an attractive option from Dr Feldman's study

I would like to draw your attention to AJC s Spotlight on the Family¹ which includes background essays and an extensive section on family policy. It also includes a lengthy essay on Jewish traditional attitudes toward the family. What I would like to focus on now for a few minutes is the ten page statement of recommendations produced by the AJC Task Force on Family Policy with particular attention to the section on child care.

First information and referral services must be coordinated within Jewish communities so that new parents and those who are new within the area have the ability of finding out which services are offered and particularly what kind of options are involved

Second making sure that there is an availability of alternative day care arrangements in other words increasing the supply of day care perhaps extending within existing pre school programs so that there is an option beyond the 9 to 12 half day that might extend till 6 o clock

Thirdly and most significantly to develop regulations which aim toward ensuring the highest quality care within the day care facilities

Fourthly is upgrading the job of caring for children increasing the status and financial rewards for the child care providers. This is something which deserves more than lip service. In general the AJC document may serve to focus our concerns to become a kind of rallying point for the issues that we would like to work on to see realized.

What I am going to now suggest is my own advice beyond the Task Force document in terms of pursuing other kinds of initiatives within the child care arena.

I think we should actively support Federal and State legislation that is involved with child care even if we would not directly benefit from it I spoke vesterday to Judy Golub of the Washington office of the American Jewish Committee and I said I wanted to be upbeat about the bill Can I be upbeat? And she said "You can't be upbeat. Get people to support it because the bill is in trouble. In other words there is haggling going on over a wide variety of issues For example as the states will apportion the money how will sectarian institutions be allowed to receive that funding. What will this mean for synagogues and churches which will have historically played a major role? There is concern over the language of the bill yet it seems as though a piece of this bill is going to pass

I would also suggest an emphasis within the community education on early childhood training. I am not familiar with the program at Spertus College but I ve heard that there has been major strengthening within that area. I think that the community only benefits from that

Centralizing the coordination of child care services within the community is another significant step A wonderful example is within Fairfax County Virginia where a professional is responsible for all the child care facilities that are provided within the area She has a central telephone number a support staff an extensive budget and coordinates child care programs for latch key children programs for preschoolers using the existing local facilities. Her office receives hundreds of call per week asking not only where may my three year old go but I am pregnant Where may my child go? What kind of options are available? How much is it going to cost? And she is able immediately through her staff to give an answer to even make the contact with another parent within the area to guide this person through the ropes of planning and evaluating options

Now within the Jewish community I would urge that there be some kind of central clearing house to avoid duplication and to provide a needs

assessment of what exists in a particular area so that the community as a whole can strengthen itself

Finally we need to make the case for high quality child care options. We need to bring together child-care providers and theorists with policy makers to make the case that quality Jewish child care is a forward looking option which strengthens the Jewish family. Only once that case has been made will policy change within the community. I would urge all of you here today to make the case. In other words be annoying if that s what it takes. Let the evidence speak. We will provide you with information which I think makes a rather startling and convincing case to educate our lay leaders and policy makers to sensitize them to family and communal needs.

I would like to close by asking us all a question which deserves our collective attention. How are we as representatives of the Jewish community going to plan to take care of our obligations to family and our obligations to work? I think that it is time that we within the Jewish community address this challenge with our sharpest vision and the fullness of our collective energies.

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