The Effects of Jewish Education

THE EFFECTIVENESS of Jewish education is becoming a major concern of the American Jewish community. In the wake of numerous charges about the alienation of Jews from Judaism and its life style,[1] Jewish education has increasingly been perceived as the appropriate medium to provide relief for Jewish identity problems. An assessment of the various forms of Jewish education currently available in this country offers a rational basis for communal planning so that educational programs that perpetuate Judaism can be identified and supported.

For two immigrant generations which grew to maturity before World War II an understandable preoccupation with making a living was underlined by the devastating experience of the Great Depression. The realization that the majority of these Jews had lost meaningful touch with their historic tradition came when their own children became adults in the postwar era. It was then that discerning observers of Jewish life recognized that several generations of Jews had obtained merely fragmentary knowledge about their religious and cultural heritage, and had often transmitted to their children only ambivalent feelings about Jewishness. It became clear that massive new efforts were required to acquaint Jews with their historic past and its implications for the present.

This paper will present phases in the development of the American Jewish community; the institutional modalities which have been employed to cope with social and cultural problems in the past; an overview of past and current educational programs in Jewish life, and an evaluation of their utility in promoting a distinctive, transmittable Jewish life style.

DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

While Jews have been in the United States for more than three centuries, their numbers were limited and they were widely dispersed. Beginning in 1880, this country witnessed a mass ingathering of Jews originating from Eastern Europe, who settled in large numbers in fast-growing metropolitan areas. This immigration continued on a massive scale until 1920, then tapered off after the adoption of restrictive immigration laws. Immigration on a lesser

[1] See, for example, Charles Miller, "The Role of the Jewish Community Center in Planning," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* February 1967, esp. p. 82; Carl Urbont, "The Purposes of the Jewish Center Movement," AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 68 (1967), p. 37.

scale resumed in the 1930's, with some Central European Jews finding refuge from Nazi persecution in this country; millions of others perished.

To facilitate the integration of immigrants into American life, the Jewish community established, before the turn of the century, a network of health and welfare services, including hospitals, community centers, and family counseling programs. These organizations helped newcomers fit into a strange and occasionally frightening environment until they adapted to their new life situation and achieved financial independence.

Since World War II, demographic data have indicated the large majority of American Jews were native-born.[2] Occupational patterns have shifted from manual labor and skilled trades to a wide array of professions, clerical and administrative jobs, and self-employment. The average American Jew was native-born, college educated, and of middle or upper-middle class social status.[3]

Changes in the social characteristics of American Jews have stimulated questions about the usefulness of the existing health and welfare service system for meeting current needs in Jewish life.[4] The appearance in the Jewish periodical literature of critiques of prevailing services and allocation patterns coincided with the emergence of concern about the Jewish identity crisis in America. For the critics the issue came to be posed in rather simplistic terms: whether the Jewish welfare establishment was willing to divert funds from health and welfare agencies and allocate them to educational organizations. Prodded by student demonstrators and by a handful of academics, many welfare federations managed some shift in their priorities and allocated a greater proportion of their funds for education. This shift in policy is likely to continue over time.[5] Perhaps prematurely, some welfare federation executives now prognosticate the abandonment of the "health and welfare model" in Jewish life in favor of what is euphemistically termed a "survival model" emphasizing education.[6]

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[2] Philip Bernstein, "Jewish Social Services," in Harry L. Lurie, ed., *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1965), p. 420.

[3] Nathan Glazer, "Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654–1954, AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 56 (1955), pp. 25–33.

[4] Eli Ginzberg, "The Agenda Reconsidered," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Spring 1966, pp. 274–82; Jacob Neusner, "Jewish Education and Culture and the Jewish Welfare Fund," *The Synagogue School*, Winter 1967, pp. 9–40; Paul Weinberger and Eugene Brussell, "Religious Leaders' Assessment of Jewish Social Service Priorities," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Winter 1967, pp. 184–91.

[5] From 1964 to 1968 federation allocations to Jewish education rose by 43 per cent; centers received an increase of 31 per cent, and family, child care, care of the aged, and community relations services an increase of 28 per cent. See S. P. Goldberg, "Jewish Communal Services: Programs and Finances," AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 285–86.

[6] In a panel discussion of Jewish welfare priorities, conducted by the School of Jewish Communal Service of Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, on July 21, 1970, David Rabinowitz, now executive director of the St. Louis Jewish Welfare

For the serious student of Jewish life the role hastily assigned to existing educational programs as the panacea for Jewish survival calls for careful evaluation. Problems need to be assessed with a view to identifying the current scope of Jewish education and its capacity to cope with the realities of American life.

In the Eastern European *shtetl, Torah le-sh'mah,* learning for its own sake, and religious practices were natural concomitants of a definable way of life, and survival was a result of these normal and natural activities.[7] On the American scene, the process of assimilation and economic betterment placed primary emphasis on secular education as the vehicle for status mobility. Jewish education was relegated to a secondary and supplementary role.[8] Only with such seemingly deviant groups as the Hasidim the notion persisted that a job did not have to flower into a career, but was simply a way of earning a living which would not interfere with one's religious duties and sensibilities.[9] Most Jews have a different conception of the world of work, and Jewish education occupies an ill-defined, not too prominent place in their scheme of things.

NATURE OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Evolution and Current Characteristics

Traditionally, Jewish life has been based on the pillars of study, correct living, and showing of kindness.[10] Communal responsibility for the education and welfare of all Jews is an essential part of the Jewish tradition. Organized support for education began in the days of the Second Commonwealth, when the Sanhedrin and Joshua ben Gamala established schools in every town and hamlet of ancient Judea to make it possible for fatherless children to study Torah. Since then, there has been continued concern for both the quality and quantity of education for all Jewish children.

This concern found a variety of new and strange expressions in the United States. Rebecca Graetz and her friends began to conduct Sunday schools on the Protestant model for the children of the poor and needy; the "uptown German" Jews of New York sought to establish Hebrew Free Schools for

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Federation, asserted that a "survival model" was replacing health and welfare services as the main feature of the Jewish communal service system.

[7] Yitzchak Kerzner, "Survival or Life," *The Jewish Parent,* October 1970, p. 12.

[8] Walter I. Ackerman, "Jewish Education—For What?", AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 70 (1969), p. 3.

[9] Jerome R. Mintz, *Legends of the Hasidim* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 57.

[10] R. Travers Herford, ed., *The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 22.

the children of "downtown East European" Jewish immigrants; later, the Eastern European Jews began to establish the first Talmud Torahs for their own children.[11]

Out of these diverse sources the current pattern of Jewish education emerged. It is a system which emphasizes supplementary education through one-day-a-week Sunday schools and midweek afternoon schools. In the past three decades, a smaller number of all-day schools have developed, which are maintained by voluntary contributions from parents, patrons, and sponsoring organizations.

The idea of some form of total community responsibility had also taken hold, often more in theory than in practice and, by 1930, bureaus of Jewish education had been established in most major cities.[12] These bureaus coexisted with congregational schools functioning under Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, or Yiddishist auspices. The bureaus sought to coordinate the community's educational efforts by identifying and extending the elements in Jewish education that are common to all schools. On the other hand, the ideologically committed individual schools aimed to perpetuate a specific religious world view by stressing the unique aspects of their particular program. As a result, the relationships between local bureaus of Jewish education and congregational schools occasionally have been strained.

Enrollment and Auspices

The estimated gross enrollment of students in Jewish schools in 1966–1967 was 540,000, or only slightly more than one-third of Jewish school-age children in the United States at the time. Of these, 43 per cent attended one-day-a-week schools, 43 per cent were in two- to five-days-a-week schools, and almost 14 per cent (75,000) attended all-day schools. The latter were, in the main, affiliated with Torah Umesorah, the (Orthodox) National Society for Hebrew Day Schools.

About 92 per cent of all schools were under congregational auspices; communal schools accounted for 5 per cent of total enrollment.[13] Of the 2,727 Jewish schools of all types found in the United States, 35.7 per cent were under Reform auspices, 34.3 per cent were in Conservative congregations, 21.5 per cent were under Orthodox auspices, and 1.0 per cent were Yiddish schools.[14]

An analysis of enrollment figures for Jewish children considered eligible to receive a Jewish education (the 3- through-17-year age range) showed the following:

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[11] Alexander M. Dushkin and Uriah Z. Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States* (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1959), p. 141.

[12] Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[13] S. P. Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

[14] Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

TABLE 1. ENROLLMENT-POPULATION RATIO BY SCHOOL LEVEL[15]

Level	*Estimated percentage of total Jewish population*[a]	*Eligible Children*[b]	*Enrollment*	*Ratio*
Nursery and Kindergarten (3–5-year-olds)	4.8	263,789	30,572	11.6
6–7-year-olds	3.2	175,989	37,759	21.4
Elementary department (8–12-year-olds)	8.0	443,079	308,833	69.8
High school department (13–17-year-olds)	8.0	439,651	69,484	15.8
TOTAL	24.0	1,318,951	446,648[c]	33.9

[a] The Jewish population of the 455 communities participating in this survey was 5,495,635.
[b] Children in the 3–17-year-age range were assumed to represent 24 per cent of the Jewish population. Therefore, each of 15 age groups was assumed to represent 1.6 per cent of the Jewish population.
[c] Enrollment figures are based on survey tabulations from 2,070 out of 2,727 known Jewish schools; the estimated enrollment for all Jewish schools was 540,000.

Jewish schools were enrolling the substantial majority of elementary-school children, but failed to retain most of them once they reached high-school level. Data on the proportion of college-age students continuing to receive Jewish education are not readily available. Their number is believed to be slight.

Approximately 73,000 high-school students attended Hebrew schools in the United States.[16] Areas of attendance and types of school are shown below.

TABLE 2. HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY LOCATION AND TYPE OF SCHOOL[17]

Type of School	*Location*			
	Greater New York		*Outside New York*	
	Number	*Per Cent*	*Number*	*Per Cent*
One-day school	6,940	29.8	32,468	65.0
Two-day school			5,575	11.2
Three-day school	3,588	15.4	8,143	16.3
Four-day school			227	.5
Five-day school			731	1.5
All-day school	12,800	54.8	2,800	5.6
TOTALS	23,328	100.0	49,944	100.0

[15] Gerhard Lang, "Jewish Education," AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 69 (1968), p. 379.

[16] Azriel Eisenberg, "The Hebrew High School in the United States and Canada: The Present Picture," *The Synagogue School*, Fall 1968, pp. 28–36.

[17] The figures in Table 2 are derived from Eisenberg and have been combined with more recent figures on high school enrollment in Torah Umesorah schools; see *Torah Umesorah Report* (New York, October 1970), p. 3.

The raw figures indicate that close to 40,000 of these students attended Hebrew school classes one day a week; 17,500 attended afternoon Hebrew high schools, and 15,600 were enrolled in Jewish day schools. These facts shed sobering light on the impact of Jewish education on adolescents.

In summary, it should be stressed that fully two-thirds of all Jewish school-age children in the United States were not attending any Jewish school at a given time. Forty-three per cent of the one-third in attendance at a Jewish school were there one day a week; an almost equally large proportion received six or fewer hours of instruction a week, and only some 15 per cent of students in Jewish schools spent more than six hours a week on Jewish subjects.[18]

Aims of Jewish Education

The broad purpose of Jewish education is to contribute to the continued existence of Jews as an identifiable group. Under this general goal, a number of specific objectives have been identified which are considered to be congruent with the religious sensibilities of the three major groups in American Judaism.

Ackerman defines these objectives as follows:[19]

(1) To provide knowledge of the classical Jewish texts and the tradition embodied therein;
(2) To foster a lifelong commitment to the study of Torah;
(3) To develop some form of personal observance;
(4) To develop a facility in the Hebrew language and a familiarity with its literature;
(5) To nurture an identification with the Jewish people through a knowledge of its past and to encourage a concern for its survival and welfare the world over;
(6) To stimulate a recognition of the unique place of Israel in the Jewish imagination, both past and present, and to foster the acceptance of some sort of personal obligation to participate in its development;
(7) To encourage participation in American society, based on a conscious awareness of the relationship between Jewish tradition and democracy; and
(8) To inculcate faith in God and trust in His beneficence.

The formulation of these objectives is implicitly based on a framework which conceptualizes for the Jewish people a special and unique role in the world. While there are ideological differences around the interpretation of this role, Judaism emphasizes practices and responsibilities designed to produce a distinct and pervasive life style for its adherents. This stress on the

[18] *National Census of Jewish Schools* (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, December 1967), Information Bulletin No. 28. See also Amy Malzberg, *Jewish Day Schools in the United States* (New York: American Jewish Committee, November 1970).

[19] Ackerman, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–18. This ranking of objectives is likely to reflect the priorities of the majority of Jewish educators. For those who believe in divine revelation, "To inculcate faith in God and trust in His beneficence" (item 8) probably constitutes the paramount goal.

performance of a vast array of practices designed to guide man's relationship to God, as well as man's relationship to man, produces a way of life in which the focus is on doing rather than on verbal affirmations of belief.

Basically, Jewish education transmits knowledge not for its own sake, but as a guide for achieving desired behavior among Jews. This latent function of Jewish education in which more informal educational ventures, such as summer camps and youth groups, play a vital part can best be described as an effort at socializing the child to a way of life which differs from that of the larger society, and rejects many of its assumptions. The practical implications of this approach test the extent to which parents, who ostensibly wish their children to learn about *yidishkayt,* are themselves steeped in it.

Many social scientists have asserted that Jews join congregations not because of their religious belief and practice, but rather as a means for Jewish identification compatible with American mores. If this is so, the congregational school has the very difficult task of teaching children to adopt a mode of life that is not their parents'. Otherwise, the school, too, would become a symbol of Jewishness rather than the transmitter of an embracive code of distinctive behavior, as religious imperatives dictate.[20]

The problems of the educator, who seeks to mediate between the practices of parents and the imperatives of the religious school, may be illustrated by the following account: A teacher in a West Coast Reform Sunday school informed his third-grade class that Christmas trees were not part of the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah. A week later, several of the youngsters reported having discussed his comments with their parents, who insisted that they had been used to Christmas trees in their homes since childhood and intended to adhere to this custom. The teacher continued to reiterate that the parents were in error, while stressing that respect for parents was an integral feature of Jewish conduct. Similar examples drawn from all types of Jewish schools abound.

The underlying problem is one which has a powerful influence on the potential effect of Jewish education. The problem is that for several generations Jews have lived in an atmosphere where a basic assumption has been that blending in with the majority culture is one of the requirements for making a living. In the Jewish view, habitual behavior becomes second nature (*ha-regel na'seh teva' sheni*).[21] Currently, there are many Jews who make considerably more than just a living,[22] but to whom "fitting in" and the shedding of all forms of distinctiveness have become second nature, an approach totally at odds with the aims of Jewish education. The difference in outlook is well summarized in a story told by a Satmarer Hasid:

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[21] Abraham Amsel, "Is There a Jewish Psychology?", *The Jewish Parent,* January 1970, p. 11.

[22] See, for example, Milton Himmelfarb, "Is American Jewry in Crisis?", *Commentary,* March 1969, pp. 33–34.

> Once when the time came to put the Torah back in the covering it was too difficult to fit in, and the man who was putting it in suggested that they cut the Torah to make it fit. Ridiculous? Of course. You have to cut the covering to shape. We will adjust our environment to fit the Torah and not the reverse.[23]

EFFECTS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

There is an important distinction between assessment of effects, which is the focus of this presentation, and the general public's concern with effectiveness. The distinction lies in the introduction of the concept of values. Studies of effect simply ask, "What happened?". Studies of effectiveness ask, "Was what happened desirable?".[24] Individual conceptions of the desirable will influence evaluation of the effectiveness of various programs of Jewish education.

Despite many impressionistic articles about the need for more and better Jewish education, there is a dearth of well-designed empirical studies comparing the results of different educational efforts. The material presented here focuses primarily on the somewhat limited findings of empirical research. While individual insight is frequently the basis for fruitful hypotheses, their validation should rest on observations objectively derived from a random sample of respondents.

Study findings are organized under topic headings which reflect the explicit or implicit goals of Jewish education. Topics include the relationship of Jewish education to the observance of *mitzvot* and other aspects of Jewishness, to the attainment of Jewish knowledge, to involvement with Israel and with the American Jewish community, to marriage and family life, and to Jewish identification and the so-called generation gap.

Jewish Education and Jewish Practices

In a recently concluded study of the relationship between Jewish religious orientation and the performance of religious obligations, and Jewish social service priorities, this writer obtained data from 107 adult West Coast respondents, who were donors to, or board members of, the Jewish welfare federation, or were members of a modern Orthodox synagogue.[25] The duration and type of Jewish education received in childhood by study participants, listed by what they considered to be their religious orientation, is shown below:

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[23] Jerome R. Mintz, *Legends of the Hasidim, op. cit.*, p. 355.

[24] Martin Wolins, "Measuring the Effect of Social Work Intervention," in Norman Polansky, ed., *Social Work Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 247.

[25] Paul Weinberger, "An Empirical Assessment of Priorities in Jewish Communal Services," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (in print).

TABLE 3. YEARS OF EDUCATION BY RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Length of Study	*Orthodox*	*Conservative*	*Reform*	*Other*	*Total*
7 or more years	16	16	26	2	60
Less than 7 years	7	18	20	2	47
TOTAL	23	34	46	4	107

TABLE 4. TYPE OF JEWISH EDUCATION BY RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Schools Attended	*Orthodox*	*Conservative*	*Reform*	*Other*	*Total*
Heder or Hebrew school	17	23	16	3	59
Sunday school, other*	6	11	30	1	48

* Yiddish school or other secular Jewish school.

More than two-thirds of Orthodox respondents, as compared with slightly less than one-half of Conservative and somewhat more than one-half of Reform respondents, received more than seven years of Jewish schooling. It was also found that almost three-fourths of the Orthodox and two-thirds of the Conservative study participants had attended a *heder* or week-day Talmud Torah in their youth, while two-thirds of the Reform respondents had been enrolled in a one-day-a-week Sunday school.

When religious self-definition was related to Jewish religious practices, statistically significant differences were found among study subgroups.

TABLE 5. RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AND LEVEL OF JEWISH PRACTICE

		Level	
Identification	*High*	*Average*	*Low*
Orthodox	11	10	2
Conservative	10	19	5
Reform	3	26	17
Other	—	1	3
TOTAL	24	56	27

$x^2 = 25.16$, 6 d.f., $p < .001$.

Since the Reform wing of Judaism does not require of its members the same ritual observances as do Conservative and Orthodox groups, differences in level of practice could have been expected. However, Reform respondents were also significantly less likely to have read the Bible or other religious literature in an average year than Orthodox or Conservative study participants. They were less frequently enrolled in adult Jewish education programs and considerably less likely to be familiar with the Hebrew language. The majority of Reform respondents attended a one-day-a-week Sunday

school. It appears that this form of education seldom attains the objectives that would characterize its graduates as knowledgeable Jews.

Pinsky surveyed alumni of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, one of New York's oldest Orthodox day schools, through a mail questionnaire, which produced a 40 per cent return rate.[26] Graduates generally identified themselves as Orthodox or traditional in orientation. Eighty-three per cent adhered to *kashrut* regulations, 66 per cent did not travel on the Sabbath, and 52 per cent prayed three times daily. Respondents overwhelmingly stated that the school had exerted a positive influence on their ethical conduct, their participation in Jewish life, and their adjustment as Jews in the larger secular society. The strongest identification with Jewish values occurred among those respondents who had received the most intensive Jewish education.

Positive relationships were found between the attainment of high levels of Jewish and secular education, and between the levels of Jewish education of the alumnus and his wife. Two-thirds of the graduates had completed college while concurrently continuing their Jewish education beyond the elementary-school level. One-third of the graduates entered professions, and 20 per cent were in business; only 11 per cent were employed as rabbis, cantors, and other Jewish community professionals.

In another study of day school graduates, conducted at least eight years after graduation, questionnaire responses were obtained from 166 of 472 individuals contacted (35 per cent).[27] It was found that individuals who had continued with their Jewish education on a higher than elementary-school level conformed more closely to Jewish law than those who discontinued Jewish studies after graduation from an elementary day school. Study participants' compliance with Jewish law was significantly related to their home background, particularly the religious background of the spouses they married. Those who chose a mate from a more religious background were more observant than those whose spouses had no background of Jewish piety.

Studying the impact of differing types of Jewish education on religious attitudes, Geller addressed his research to 12-year-old youngsters attending one-day temple schools, communal schools, afternoon synagogue schools, and day schools, respectively.[28] While 25 per cent of Sunday-school students considered prayer important, this figure rose to 82 per cent for day-school respondents. Similarly, 71 per cent of day-school and 66 per cent of synagogue-school study participants considered the abandonment of Jewish rituals a threat to Jewish survival, as compared with 42 and 32 per cent, respectively, for students in communal and one-day temple schools.

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[26] Irving Pinsky, "The Graduates of Rabbi Jacob Joseph School: A Follow-Up Study," *Jewish Education*, Spring 1962, pp. 180–83.

[27] George Pollak, "The Jewish Day School Graduate," *Jewish Spectator*, February 1962, pp. 11–14.

[28] Joshua Geller, "The Impact of Jewish Education on Student Religious Attitudes," *The Synagogue School*, Winter 1970, pp. 9–13.

Day school respondents adhered most strongly to religious tenets requiring a definite commitment, such as daily prayer and other religious rituals, and moral behavior.[29] Essentially, they were more in congruence with traditional beliefs and behavior than students attending other types of religious schools.

Attainment of Jewish Knowledge

The day school student obviously acquires more Jewish content than does the Sunday school or afternoon Hebrew school student. Day schools "devote from an average of 11½ hours in the first grade to an average of 20 hours weekly in the top grade to Jewish studies."[30] The total time allotted by supplementary Jewish schools varies between two and seven and one-half hours weekly. At that, only 10 per cent of all afternoon Hebrew school students, those in communal afternoon schools, attend for seven and one-half hours.[31] Thus the time element alone enhances the day school's potential for intensive Jewish education in a totally Jewish school environment. Some day schools attempt to integrate Jewish and secular studies by utilizing the many opportunities for using Jewish themes and experiences in their general studies department, and in this way tend to minimize conflicts between practices of the larger society and those of Judaism.

Basing their opinion on the test results of a New York qualitative survey, Alexander M. Dushkin and Uriah Z. Engelman, authors of a national study of Jewish education, concluded that not only is achievement in the day schools "very much higher than in the afternoon schools (the average nine-year-old in day schools does much better than the average 13-year-old in the afternoon schools), but . . . achievement progresses more regularly."[32]

Many areas of study in the Orthodox day school are seldom covered in the supplementary school. Among them are Bible in the original unabridged text with Rashi and other commentaries, Talmud, Schulchan Aruch (as distinguished from study about holidays and observances), prayer reading and prayer comprehension.[33]

Characteristic of the assessment by Jewish educators of the inadequacy of supplementary schools is the following comment on the one-day-a-week school, which is primarily identified with the Reform wing of Judaism:

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[29] Joshua Geller, "Adolescent Ethnic and Democratic Attitudes as Related to Attendance in Communal, Congregational, Day and Public Schools," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Fall 1969, p. 98.

[30] Alvin I. Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966), p. 143.

[31] Dushkin and Engelman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–79.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 206–7.

[33] Schiff, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

> When judged by even the least demanding standard of what it means to be an educated Jew, it is hard to avoid the feeling that the academic aspirations of the one-day-a-week school are either a colossal joke or an act of cynical pretentiousness. The plethora of subject matter of its curriculum is certainly beyond serious treatment in the available time, and even the most serious and able student cannot hope to acquire more than a hopeless hodge-podge of information. The jump from subject to subject from year to year and even within the same year militates against the serious treatment of any one topic.[34]

The three-day-a-week school, peculiar to the Conservative movement, is vulnerable to many of the charges leveled against the Sunday school. The low achievement level is related not only to the limited number of hours devoted to Jewish studies, but also to the reduced capacity of students for absorbing new material in the late afternoon. The rate of continuation beyond the elementary level is lowest in the Hebrew afternoon school, and may reflect its ineffectiveness.[35]

The inadequacy of the Conservative afternoon schools was one reason for the stress put by the Conservative movement on the development of their Solomon Schechter day schools in the 1960's. However, the movement was also designed to establish a school system in harmony with the philosophy of Conservative Judaism. The Solomon Schechter schools are committed to the purposeful interrelationship of Judaic and general studies departments, including infusion of Judaic-religious facts and concepts into general studies, and the introduction of content and perspectives from the larger society into Judaic studies.[36] Research findings about the effectiveness of this type of day school in promoting a distinctive Jewish life style among its graduates should soon be available in the literature.

Involvement with Israel and American Jewish Community

Irrespective of type of school attended, Jewish teenagers identify with Israel's aspirations and take pride in its development and achievement. They see no conflict between their support of Israel and their Americanism.[37] In a study of high school and college students in New York, Victor Sanua found that a majority of his respondents expressed interest in Israel.[38] Some 28 per cent indicated a desire to settle there; 28 per cent, to visit for a period of one year; 37 per cent, to visit for a brief period of time. Seven per cent expressed total disinterest in a visit. Slight differences in reaction were found among adolescent samples drawn from public high school,

[34] Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[35] Walter I. Ackerman, *An Analysis of Selected Courses of Study of Conservative Congregational Schools* (New York: Melton Research Center, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1968), mimeographed.

[36] Malzberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

[37] Geller, "Adolescent Ethnic and Democratic Attitudes . . . ," *op. cit.*, pp. 97–98.

[38] Victor D. Sanua, "A Comparative Study of the Religious Attitudes and Practices of Different Groups of Jewish Students," *Jewish Education,* July 1969, p. 34.

Sunday schools, afternoon Hebrew schools, and day schools. Of two groups of college students studied, one attending a public municipal college and the other Yeshiva University-Stern College, males at Yeshiva expressed the strongest positive attitudes toward Israel.

Research on North American Jewish settlers in Israel was conducted March-August, 1967.[39] Of 703 potential study participants, data were received from 443 respondents, representing a 63 per cent return rate. Of the respondents, 34 per cent defined themselves as Orthodox, 24 per cent as Conservative, and 8 per cent as Reform; the rest did not indicate a religious preference. With reference to Jewish education, it was found that 37 per cent of the settlers had received a day school education, 54 per cent had attended a Sunday and/or afternoon Hebrew school; 9 per cent received no formal Jewish education. Since, as indicated earlier, about 14 per cent of Jewish students in the United States attend day schools, compared to 85 per cent enrolled in Sunday or afternoon Hebrew schools, the proportion of day school graduates who settled in Israel was significantly larger than that of graduates of other Jewish schools.

In a subsequent study Engel obtained data about American Jews who, after having lived in Israel for at least one year, returned to the United States.[40] The proportion of Sunday and Hebrew school graduates among returnees was significantly larger than that of day school graduates. Orthodox study participants were significantly less likely to return to America than were Conservative or nonreligious respondents. No particular pattern emerged with respect to Reform Jews.

Brandeis Camp Institute is a well-known West Coast summer camp that combines features of the Israeli *kibbutz* with observance of *kashrut* and the Sabbath. The camp has been conceptualized to provide a positive initial exposure to Jewish life, particularly for young Jews whose home atmosphere provided neither knowledge nor practice of Judaism. The camp offers a one-month concentrated Jewish experience for high school and college students in a setting where the intrusion of the non-Jewish world can be kept to a minimum. College students are limited to one session; youths of high-school age may return as many times as they wish.

Preliminary findings derived from a questionnaire survey of those who had attended the camp as college students between 1941 and 1968 indicate that 80 per cent of the 1,449 respondents considered Brandeis a worthwhile experience. Reaction to the completely Jewish environment was overwhelmingly favorable.[41] Figures on participation by respondents in the affairs of

[39] Gerald Engel, "North American Jewish Settlers in Israel," AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 161–187.

[40] Gerald Engel, "Comparison Between Americans Living in Israel and Those who Returned to America: Part I, American Background," *The Journal of Psychology*, 1970, pp. 195–204.

[41] G. N. Levine and R. Joffe, *The Survey of Brandeis Camp Institute Alumni. Preliminary Report and Data Book* (Los Angeles: March 1970), mimeographed.

the organized Jewish community in the years following residence at the camp exceeded those noted by Sklare and Greenblum in a suburban community.[42] For example, while 58 per cent of the suburbanite respondents attended synagogue only on the High Holy Days, the percentage for the Brandeis group was 27. For the same samples, attendance at least once a week was 5 and 10 per cent, respectively; a few times a month, 11 and 16 per cent, and once a month, 13 and 27 per cent, respectively. The effects of the brief Brandeis educational experience on adult Jewish life style merit careful consideration.

Marriage and Family Life

Statistically significant differences in attitudes regarding intermarriage and the relative importance of love and religion as considerations in a marriage were found between 12-year-old youngsters who attended day schools and those of the same age in supplementary Jewish schools. Day-school students were strongly opposed to intermarriage, while pupils in one-day-a-week schools tended to be favorably inclined toward it.[43]

The bulk of day-school students (84 per cent) did not consider love more important than religion as a factor in marriage; other respondents were more divided on this question. A majority of one-day-a-week students (52 per cent) believed love outweighed religion as a factor in marriage.[44]

In Pollak's previously cited study[45] of day school graduates, 70 per cent of 166 respondents were married, none out of the Jewish faith. The religious background of spouses was similar to that of respondents: about half of the graduates had married women from Orthodox homes, while 28 per cent married women with Conservative backgrounds. The others were either Reform or unaffiliated.

Recent studies indicated that the social class status of Orthodox Jews was not significantly different from that of the other segments of the American Jewish community.[46] Although in the general population family size frequently has been found to be related to social class, among Jews family size appeared to be related to religious identification. Students enrolled in all-day schools or in colleges under Orthodox auspices had an average of 2.8 children in their families, compared to a mean of 2.2 children per family among students attending supplementary or public schools.[47]

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[42] Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 49–56.

[43] Geller, "Adolescent Ethnic and Democratic Attitudes . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[44] Geller, "The Impact of Jewish Education . . . ," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[45] Pollak, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[46] Eric Willner, "A Comparative Study of Home Background Factors of All-Day School and Afternoon Hebrew School Students," *Jewish Education,* March 1970, pp. 30–35; also Sanua, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[47] Sanua, *ibid.*, p. 34.

Jewish Identification and "Generation Gap"

Defining what it means to be Jewish poses a problem for youngsters and their parents. An attempt to establish what "being Jewish" meant to a group of adolescents revealed that approximately 10 per cent were not able explain it. For 15 per cent it had a negative connotation; 30 per cent indicated it was something to be "liked" or to be "proud of." The rest could only give the prosaic answer that "it is a religion." This lack of clarity can be attributed in part to the parents' inability to give their children more than a vague understanding of their ethnic origin and its significance.[48] Approximately 40 per cent of these adolescents did not know what "being Jewish" meant to their parents.

The problems encountered by parents in defining their Jewish identity were revealed in an interview survey of a sample of Jewish mothers. These women were described as going through the motions of such selected Jewish practices as lighting Hanukkah candles or attending *seder* on Passover, but their relative ambivalence in the matter of formal religion did not make Judaism particularly convincing to their children.[49] Responses such as, "I would like my son to be confirmed because I don't want him to be different from the rest of us. But if he didn't want this, I wouldn't care, especially now that his grandparents are not alive," led the authors to conclude that these women's attitudes toward Judaism were less than positive, though they appeared to be positive about almost everything else:

> Some wives spoke vaguely of how the Jewish religion would somehow endow their children with "security" for the future, but they made it sound much like an umbrella for somebody who is already bundled up in a raincoat. Certainly, the *laissez-faire* attitude they generally expressed about their children's future religious orientation was quite different from the zeal that the same women displayed when it came to making their children practice the piano.[50]

Other investigations showed that "positive family attitudes and parental support are essential if Jewish children are to be committed to Jewish life."[51] Adolescents who were highly identified with the Jewish group were likely to come from homes which they viewed as being similarly highly identified. The youngsters' psychological well-being was found to be positively related to the degree of identification. Supporting this finding was a report that *yeshivah* students showed a greater degree of emotional security, more positive

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[48] Victor D. Sanua, "The Jewish Adolescent: A Review of Empirical Research," *Jewish Education,* June 1968, p. 39.

[49] Gwen Gibson Schwartz and Barbara Wyden, *The Jewish Wife* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970), p. 266.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

[51] Allen Rutchik, "Self-Esteem and Jewish Identification," *Jewish Education,* March 1968, pp. 40–46.

attitudes toward themselves, and a greater degree of self-acceptance than did Jewish children attending secular schools.[52]

A comparison of religious observance by families of day-school and afternoon Hebrew-school students showed that the proportion of fully observant families was significantly greater in the day school group, and that the proportion of nonobservant families in the Hebrew-school group significantly exceeded random expectations.[53]

The Jewish identification of parents is a pertinent variable in the study of the relationship between Jewish education and a child's identification with Judaism. A range of studies showed that:

1. Synagogue attendance of adolescents appeared to reflect frequency of attendance of their parents.
2. Of the adolescents with an extensive Hebrew education, 50 per cent indicated that dietary laws were observed in their homes. This response was given by only 25 per cent of the adolescents with a limited Hebrew education.[54]
3. Little difference was found between the extent and degree of "religiousness" of parents and their children. There was no evidence to support conflicting views between the two generations.[55]

Absence of generational conflict around adherence to religious tradition was illustrated by alumni of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School.[56] Over one-half of the respondents to a questionnaire considered themselves equally or more observant than their parents. They devoted some time during the week to Jewish study while pursuing secular careers, and managed to cope with pressures which might have deterred them had they not been sufficiently motivated.

There also was no "generation gap" in religious identification and practices between religiously oriented settlers in Israel and their parents.[57] They did not share the growing alienation from Judaism of each new generation as it sought to align itself with a religious group making fewer demands for ritual observance and a distinct mode of life.

In summary, these findings show that there is only a very slight difference in religious practices between the generations. The frequently mentioned hypothesis that the younger generation is breaking away from the Jewish tradition is not supported by the available research evidence. A different

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[52] Samuel A. Weiss, "Emotional Security in Jewish Children," *Jewish Parent,* December 1957, p. 3.

[53] Eric Willner, "A Comparative Study of Home Background Factors of All-Day School and Afternoon Hebrew School Students," *Jewish Education,* March 1970, pp. 30–35.

[54] Victor D. Sanua, "The Relationship Between Jewish Education and Jewish Identification," *Jewish Education,* Fall 1964, p. 48.

[55] Sanua, "A Comparative Study of the Religious Attitudes . . . ," *op. cit.,* p. 34.

[56] Pinsky, *op. cit.,* p. 182.

[57] Engel, *op. cit.,* p. 163.

hypothesis might fruitfully be studied: that the practices and attitudes of the young accurately reflect those of their elders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Widespread alienation from Jewish life, particularly noticeable among young people, has increased uneasiness in segments of the American Jewish community that are dedicated to Jewish survival. More and more, education has been perceived as the most promising tool to remedy Jewish identity problems.

While American Jewry has enthusiastically seized on secular education as an appropriate vehicle to further career aspirations and facilitate upward social mobility, Jewish education has remained a peripheral enterprise for most American Jews. Preoccupation with secular education, to the exclusion of all else, was understandable for immigrants and first-generation Jews, whose primary goals were to make a decent living and become integrated into American society. Although these goals have now been fully achieved, Jewish education continues to remain peripheral.

Jewish education offers a body of knowledge which serves as a guide for ethical behavior and for a distinctive minority life style. Disillusionment with the marketplace values prevalent in American life has helped make deviant life styles more attractive. But the growing interest in such ethnic subcultures as the black and brown movements by nominally Jewish intellectuals does not yet extend to their acceptance of an identifiable Jewish subculture. While latent Jewish self-hatred is related to this curious bias, trends in the larger society are pressing for ethnic differentiation, and may force a shift in orientation among the intelligentsia.

A realistic assessment of Jewish education in America leads to the inescapable conclusion that supplementary Jewish education is a poorly conceptualized afterthought utilized by parents as a placebo for any guilt feelings they might otherwise have about their failure to expose their offspring to "the Jewish heritage." The day-school movement constitutes a distinct entity which provides a more complete Jewish educational experience. It meets the needs of Orthodox and other Jews who consider Jewish learning central to their lives.

Parental ambivalence about the importance of Jewish education is reflected in high drop-out rates from supplementary schools at the secondary level when the demands of music lessons and other extracurricular activities lead to the abandonment of Jewish studies. Even though attending Sunday or Hebrew school requires an investment of no more than two to four hours a week, only 16 per cent of youngsters of secondary-school age are enrolled in these schools.

Proliferation of subject matter, limited number of hours per week for instruction, and a variable teaching staff have been cited as reasons for the low retention rate in supplementary schools. Without trying to minimize

these reasons, this review of research on the effectiveness of Jewish education makes it abundantly clear that the interest and meaningful involvement of parents in Jewish life is a vital ingredient in the success of Jewish educational efforts. College-educated parents are experiencing difficulty in defining for themselves how to live as Jews, and this has put a strain on what Jewish education can accomplish with and for their children.

Despite these limitations, research findings clearly indicate that duration and intensity of Jewish education in childhood are positively related to an identifiable Jewish life style among adults, as they are to performance of *mitzvot,* synagogue attendance, and involvement with Israel and with the Jewish community. There was a difference between day school and supplementary school graduates in the extent of Jewish knowledge as well as in their adult life style. Day school graduates were strongly opposed to intermarriage. One survey of married day school graduates showed that not a single one had chosen a non-Jewish spouse.

While these results might have been anticipated, the finding that a disproportionately large percentage of American Jewish settlers in Israel were graduates of the day-school movement and/or religiously observant is not widely known. They not only came in greater numbers, but they were also more likely to remain in Israel permanently.[58] Their childhood exposure to a total, positive Jewish school environment stimulated a desire to spend their adult life in a more total Jewish atmosphere. Also, the uncompromisingly traditional teaching in day schools promotes an orientation in which Jews are identified as a Chosen People with a special mission and with a country of their own—Israel.

The importance of a total Jewish environment is underlined by ideologically oriented summer camps. The Brandeis experience illustrates that in the space of a month a camper, who was removed from the ambivalence and occasional Jewish self-hatred of his family and had not previously had the opportunity to live in a Jewishly meaningful setting, could acquire a positive outlook toward Judaism.

This review found no evidence of a generation gap in Jewish identification and practices. On the contrary, the research findings indicate a high degree of congruence between the practices of parents and children in such areas as synagogue attendance, extent of "religiousness," and observance of ritual. Children of religious Jews were found to be as observant as their parents. One is left with the uncomfortable conclusion that the behavior of nonreligious young Jews often reflects the low level of their parents' Jewish involvement.

This conclusion finds support in the literature. Many parents consider

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[58] 57.6 per cent of permanent settlers, compared to 45.3 per cent of returnees, considered themselves to be religiously observant. See Gerald Engel, "Comparison Between Americans Living in Israel and Those who Returned to America: Part II, Israeli Background," *The Journal of Psychology,* 1970, p. 247.

formal adherence to Judaism to be mostly a gesture toward their children's more devout grandparents. For others, it is a matter of pride in a historical people, but not too much else. According to sociologist Manheim Shapiro, Jewish children are often aware that their parents are saying, in effect, "Be as I say, not as I am," and that they want religious schooling "to make their children Jewish, but not too Jewish."[59]

This ambivalence, often interlarded with Jewish self-hatred, poses a massive problem for the Jewish educator who is confronted, in the main, with a group which might be characterized as practicing "negative" Judaism. They have been born Jews and are gamely trying to make the best of it, although their Jewish educational background has provided them with only the most superficial knowledge of what Judaism is all about. As a result, Judaism offers them little that is positive. They look upon it as a burden to be carried, for it would not do to turn one's back on the Jewish people after the Holocaust and in the face of the constant threat to Israel's survival.

One positive approach to this endemic problem in Jewish life lies in the expansion and creation of educational facilities which not only dispense knowledge, but also provide a setting for acculturation to Judaism. In addition to the kind of day school now operating, the Jewish community requires boarding schools, particularly at the high-school level, that can serve as centers for Jewish socialization and house students from small Jewish communities who are being denied a Jewish education because of lack of boarding facilities. The socialization potential of summer camps for children with limited prior exposure to Jewish education has already been discussed. Among the more widely known camps with a clear ideological orientation are the Conservative movement's Ramah camps; the Histadruth Ivrith-sponsored Massad camps, and the Bnei Akiva camps of the Religious Zionists.

In areas of Jewish population concentration there is also a need for informal half-way houses where Jews of all ages, having a limited Jewish background, can correct the imbalance between their secular and their Jewish education. Here, children beyond elementary-school age and adults who become interested in Jewish studies but know no Hebrew can be provided with crash programs that will quickly allow them to study with their peers in a day school or adult education program. It has been suggested that day school expertise and teaching skills be applied in running these half-way houses.[60]

Jewish community centers which, in the past, spurred assimilation[61] could provide the physical setting for current efforts to further Jewish learning.

In the Talmud it is written that the Jewish people and the Torah are like fish and water: the Jews cannot survive when taken out of the living waters

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[59] Quoted in Schwartz and Wyden, *op. cit.*, pp. 264–266.

[60] Jacob Breuer, "An Urgent Inter-Yeshiva Project," *The Jewish Parent,* January 1971, p. 22.

[61] Urbont, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–50.

of the Torah.[62] Graduates of traditional Jewish educational institutions were found to have both more knowledge and greater motivation to perpetuate Judaism than did those who completed other Jewish educational programs. This writer's survey of empirical research findings provides validation for the wisdom of the Sages. Hopefully, it will also stimulate greater community support in our time for institutions that are truly dedicated to Jewish survival.

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[62] Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brochos, 61b.