

Special Articles

Jewish Education in the United States: Recent Trends and Issues

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LONG REGARDED BY EDUCATORS AND THEIR ALLIES as the neglected “step-child”¹ of the American Jewish community, the field of Jewish education finds itself at the close of the 20th century the object of intense scrutiny and great expectations. Writing of the current “plastic moment” in American Jewish education, the historian Jonathan Sarna sees it as one of “abundant innovations, an unlimited number of potential directions, innumerable theories, and vast uncertainty.”² Perhaps never

Note: I wish to acknowledge with appreciation a number of individuals working in the field of education who gave generously of their time and expertise to answer my questions and steer me toward sources of information. At the William Davidson School of Jewish Education of the Jewish Theological Seminary, I consulted with Aryeh Davidson, Barry Holtz, and Carol Ingall. Mary Boys of Union Theological Seminary and Linda Vogel of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary helped me with the larger context of religious education in America. At the Jewish Education Service of North America, Jonathan Woocher and Leora Isaacs conversed with me at length; Paul Flexner and David Shluker provided valuable data. At other Jewish institutions based in New York I was advised by: Robert Abramson of the Education Department at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and Jan Katzew, his counterpart at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Steven Bayme of the Department of Jewish Communal Affairs at the American Jewish Committee; Jerome Chanes of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture; Alisa Kurshan at the Continuity Commission of the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of Greater New York; Yossi Prager and Marvin Schick at the Avi Chai Foundation; Nessa Rapaport of the Mandel Foundation; and Elliot Spack of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education. My key informants outside New York were Adrienne Bank of the Whizin Institute at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles; Shulamith Elster of Hillel in Washington, D.C.; Carolyn Keller of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies in Boston; Sara Lee of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles; Daniel Margolis of the Bureau of Jewish Education in Boston; and Susan Shevitz of the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University. David Behrman shared his knowledge of curricular materials. Two students at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dina Gerber Huebner, a doctoral candidate in education, and Lowell Appelbaum, an undergraduate, served as superb research assistants. The Abbell Faculty Research Fund at the Jewish Theological Seminary helped underwrite some of the costs of my research.

¹Such was the characterization of the field presented by Joseph Schechtman of the Research Department of the Jewish Agency in an unpublished typescript entitled “Jewish Education in the United States: A Working Paper on Facts and Problems,” ca. 1967, p. 31.

²Jonathan D. Sarna, “American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Jewish Education*, Winter/Spring 1998, p. 18. One observer who bemoaned the indifference

before has there been so much talk about investing large sums of communal and philanthropic dollars in the enterprise of Jewish education. And perhaps never before has a Jewish community pinned so much of its hopes for “continuity”—for the transmission of a strong Jewish identity to the next generation—on programs of formal and informal education.

The challenge of strengthening Jewish education is enormous because the field itself is so vast and complicated. Jonathan Woocher, a leading national spokesman on Jewish education, has taken the measure of its expansive dimensions: “American Jews today spend more than \$1.5 billion annually to maintain an educational system that includes 3,000 schools and thousands more educational programs held in a wide variety of institutional settings. The system involves close to 50,000 teachers and more than a million Jews who study regularly—almost half of them young people between the ages of three and eighteen.”³ Since this far-flung network of autonomous schools and programs is primarily governed and funded through local initiatives in hundreds of Jewish communities throughout the United States, the field of Jewish education is highly diffuse. From a qualitative perspective, the situation is even more complex, for, as Woocher also notes, American Jews maintain a “love-hate relationship” with Jewish education: on the one hand, a broad consensus that Jewish education stands as the final bulwark against powerful tides of assimilation; on the other, a “perception of failure and mediocrity in the system,” prompting some to question the wisdom of “pouring additional dollars into the very enterprise that has brought American Jewry to its current sorry condition.”⁴

The upgrading of Jewish education—long a preoccupation of insiders—has taken on particular urgency since the release of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which found that younger American Jews identify less intensely than their elders with fellow Jews, the organizations of the Jewish community, and Israel and, most dramatically, that by the late 1980s, more than half of all Jews were marrying outside the faith. “That figure served as a wake-up call to the American Jewish leadership,” observed John Ruskay, a top executive of the New York Jewish community.⁵

to Jewish education was Isaac Unterman, who claimed that “American Jewry has given abundantly of its thought and wealth to the care of the sick and the aged, to the relief of visible distress and suffering, but it has done nothing, if we except a few attempts, toward grappling with the problem of Jewish education.” (Quoted—with a healthy degree of skepticism—by Sarna, p. 9.)

³“Foreword” to Joseph Reimer, *Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Synagogue Made It Work* (Philadelphia, 1998), p. xi.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁵Quoted by J.J. Goldberg, “U.S. Jewry Pins Its Future on Education,” *Jerusalem Report*, Oct. 6, 1994, p. 26.

Many analysts of the 1990 study also arrived at the conclusion that “the only serious antidote the Jewish community can muster to stem the escalating rate of intermarriage and other forms of assimilation” is Jewish education.⁶ As noted by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, “the responsibility for developing Jewish identity and instilling a commitment to Judaism . . . now rests primarily with Jewish education.”⁷

In light of this assessment, virtually every major sector of the American Jewish community has directed more sustained attention and new resources to the field during the 1990s. The large umbrella agencies of Jewish philanthropy have created “continuity commissions” to plan new initiatives and fund innovative programs. The religious movements of American Judaism have expanded their efforts to address the educational needs of their members, beginning with preschoolers and encompassing various types of formal and informal education for children, teenagers, college students, and adults of all ages. Jewish community centers have strengthened their capacities and their resolve to deliver a strong educational component. Agencies designed to raise money for Jews abroad now offer study opportunities for American Jews. And a number of richly endowed family foundations have begun to invest in educational programs designed to bring about systemic changes.

Not surprisingly, given the high stakes for the future of the American Jewish community and the potentially large financial resources available to be tapped, educational programs and institutions have taken to making extravagant claims to tout their “successes.” Advertisements in the Jewish and general press routinely promote the efficacy of particular solutions. “1,000,000 Jews can now be rescued . . . right here in North America,” reads the banner headline of one ad, which then goes on to claim that “the intermarriage rate drops to 7% for students who complete a Jewish day school education.”⁸ After listing some of the major national agencies of the American Jewish community, another ad asks: “What one cause should you also support to guarantee the survival of all these causes in the next generation? Jewish Day School Ed-

⁶Bernard Reisman, “Needed: A Paradigm Shift in Jewish Education,” *Journal of Jewish Education*, Summer 1993, p. 30. (Note: hereafter the journal will be identified simply as *Jewish Education*.)

⁷*A Time to Act, The Report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America* (University Press of America, Lanham, Md., 1990), p. 15. That this report was issued prior to the release of the NJPS is indicative of a long-standing concern among some sectors of the American Jewish leadership with the need to strengthen Jewish identity and education. This process will be traced below.

⁸From an ad placed by Torah Umesorah National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, *Jewish Week* (New York), Nov. 6–12, 1992, p. 25.

ucation.”⁹ A denominational youth movement promotes itself as “not just a youth movement but an answer.”¹⁰ And advocates of trips to Israel for teenagers and college students seem to suggest that such an experience alone will transform young people otherwise alienated from Jewish life.¹¹ If nothing else, these sweeping claims highlight the yearning of many American Jews to stem rates of assimilation and defection through programs of Jewish education.

The heightened sense of urgency to devise new solutions and shore up existing programs has generated a great deal of ferment in the field of Jewish education. In recent years, new ideas have been promoted, new alliances for change forged, bold new initiatives announced, and new “players” and institutions have joined the undertaking.¹² All of these developments have thrown the field into considerable turmoil. The present essay aims in part to clarify the picture, to serve as a guide to the institutions, programs, key figures, and issues in the Jewish education world.

To place the subject in historical context, the essay opens with a glance backward to the state of affairs in the decades following World War II, a time of massive expansion in the field, when many of the major institutions of and dominant approaches to Jewish education were established. Our historical retrospective will clarify why they eventually came under sustained criticism, and why the field has shifted recently, but will also trace important lines of continuity over the past half century.

The bulk of this essay is devoted to the emerging trends of the past two decades, with a particular emphasis on three critical themes: the changing world of formal Jewish education—the types of schools, student populations, educational personnel, and curricular emphases; the burgeoning field of informal education, with its extensive array of new programs for Jews of all ages; and the creation of new alliances, partnerships, and rivalries with institutions outside the field, which have shifted the balance of power in the struggle for control of Jewish education.

Dynamic conditions in each of these three areas are indicative of great fluidity within Jewish education itself and also of the intensified en-

⁹*Jewish Week* (New York), Apr. 17, 1998, p. 9. The ad was placed by the Avi Chai Foundation.

¹⁰From an ad placed by the National Conference of Synagogue Youth of the Orthodox Union, *Jewish Week* (New York), Nov. 20, 1998, p. 9.

¹¹Laurie Goodstein, “To Bind the Faith, Free Trips to Israel for Diaspora Youth,” *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1998, p. A8.

¹²Jonathan Sarna has pointed to a comparable explosion of new energy in the field of Jewish education and American Jewish culture at the close of the last century. See his *A Great Awakening: The Transformation That Shaped Twentieth Century American Judaism and Its Implications for Today* (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, New York, n.d., ca. 1996).

agement of leaders and the rank-and-file of the American Jewish community with the field. Indeed, there is strong evidence that the inattention to Jewish education on the part of Jewish communal leaders in the past may finally be giving way to a deeper appreciation of its overarching importance.

The present essay, then, strives to delineate the changing contours of the field of Jewish education and to analyze how these changes reflect and, in turn, are reshaping the larger American Jewish community.

THE POSTWAR ERA

Exactly 30 years ago, in a now classic essay entitled "Jewish Education—For What?"¹³ Walter Ackerman summed up the state of Jewish education in the middle decades of the 20th century:

The present pattern of Jewish education in the United States had taken shape by 1930. Six of the 12 accredited teacher-training schools currently in operation were already in existence then. Bureaus of Jewish education had been established in every major city, and the idea of community responsibility was accepted in theory, if not in practice. Curriculum patterns in every type of school had achieved a form and balance which was to change little in subsequent years. A corps of professional educators gained some visibility; a body of literature was in the process of development, and several professional societies had come into being. The essential nature of the Jewish school enterprise was established. A system of supplementary education composed of autonomous one-day-a-week Sunday schools, midweek afternoon schools and day schools, was maintained by voluntary efforts of their clientele.¹⁴

Ackerman's overview serves as a useful point of departure to assess the changing and the constant in the recent history of American Jewish education. Building upon his categories of analysis, we will trace (in reverse order) the major trends during the postwar era until the early 1980s, a period that began with unprecedented expansion and ended in near despair for the future of the field.

A Time of Growth

Like so much else in American Jewish communal life after World War II, the field of Jewish education experienced a massive expansion fueled by the baby boom. The sheer upward spiral of enrollment figures tells the story: it has been estimated that in 1937, approximately 200,000 pupils

¹³Walter I. Ackerman, "Jewish Education—For What?" *American Jewish Year Book* (hereafter AJYB), 1969, vol. 70, pp. 3–36.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

attended Jewish schools; by 1950, that figure had risen to 266,000; it kept rising, reaching an estimated 553,600 pupils in 1958, until it peaked at an estimated 588,955 in 1962.¹⁵ The near trebling of the Jewish student population over a 20-year period necessitated a rapid increase in the number of schools, a growth in the cadre of teachers, and an expansion of the educational infrastructure needed to monitor and shape the field.

THE SCHOOLS

According to a Jewish educational census conducted in 1958, the network of schools in the United States numbered 3,367.¹⁶ These institutions fell into the following categories: schools under congregational auspices that met either once a week—generally on Sundays—or two to three times weekly as afternoon schools; day schools offering a five- or even six-day-a-week course of study that included both Jewish and general subjects; and a small number of schools sponsored by communities or secular organizations that offered a supplementary program during week-day afternoons.

The major development of the immediate postwar period was the ascendance of the congregational school, which offered a supplementary religious education to students attending public schools. As of 1966, roughly 86 percent of all Jewish students were enrolled in a congregational school (almost all the rest were enrolled in day schools).¹⁷ By contrast, American Jewry had maintained a greater diversity of school types earlier in the century: in addition to the synagogue-based programs, there were schools providing a Yiddishist, socialist, or Zionist orientation sponsored by secular institutions; and a network of schools under communal auspices (often known as Talmud Torahs) propagated a pan-Jewish cultural outlook that encouraged identification with the Jewish people (*klal yisrael*). One observer already noted in the late 1960s the important

¹⁵Judah Pilch, "From the Early Forties to the Mid-Sixties," in *A History of Jewish Education*, ed. Judah Pilch (American Association for Jewish Education, New York, 1969), p. 121. The 1958 figure is based on a comprehensive survey conducted by Alexander Dushkin and Uriah Z. Engelman; see Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States. Report of the Commission for the Study of Jewish Education in the United States* (AAJE, 1959), p. 40. The peak figure is taken from "Trends in Jewish School Enrollment in the United States, 1974/75" (AAJE, Sept. 1976), p. 12. Throughout this essay, we will cite data collected by various school census projects and demographic surveys. These should be understood as approximations, since they are sometimes based on extrapolations of data and sometimes "best estimates."

¹⁶Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 95.

¹⁷Ackerman, "Jewish Education—For What?" p. 4. Between 1948 and 1958, the congregational school share of all student enrollment rose from 83 percent to 89 percent. Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 47.

change in focus that had transformed Jewish education: "Postwar Jewish education has been decidedly religious (rather than secularist or communal) in support and orientation. It has almost totally become a sub-system of the Jewish religion, designed to transmit 'religious-ethnic' rather than 'secularist-ethnic' Jewish culture."¹⁸

This shift, then, not only moved the setting of Jewish education from the communal institution to the denominationally affiliated congregation, but also wrought an important ideological transformation, which even found expression in a change in nomenclature: Whereas supplementary programs were conventionally known as "Hebrew schools," because they had been committed to a Zionist ideology stressing the twin aims of Hebraic fluency and Jewish cultural literacy, by the 1960s they self-consciously began to call themselves "religious schools." The significance of this change was explicitly articulated by the leading spokesman for Jewish education in the Conservative movement, as follows: "We are dealing in the afternoon congregational school not with a 'Hebrew school' but, rather, with a 'Jewish religious school.' Fundamentally, therefore, the curriculum should reflect those values, that ideology, and those functional aspects which will enhance and articulate the ideology which the school is supposed to mediate to its children."¹⁹ In short, Jewish education was now defined as religious education, and the transmission of religious tradition was "moved from the home and community to the school."²⁰

The triumph of the congregational school as the preferred and dominant vehicle for Jewish education was insured by a confluence of several factors. To begin with, American Jews overwhelmingly adopted what historian Jonathan Sarna has called the "Protestant model" of education. This model "held that morality, universal values, patriotism, civics and critical skills all should be taught in state-funded public schools to a mixed body of religiously diverse students, leaving only the fine points of religious doctrine and practice to be mastered by members of each faith in separate denominationally sponsored supplementary schools." By

¹⁸Norman L. Friedman, "Religious Subsystem: Toward a Sociology of Jewish Education," *Sociology of Education*, Winter 1969, p. 106. The shift toward congregational schooling had already begun during the interwar era: in New York, for example, congregational schools overtook the communal Talmud Torahs by 1928. See David Rudavsky, "Trends in Jewish School Organization and Enrollment in New York City, 1917-1950," *YIVO Annual*, 1955, p. 51.

¹⁹The writer is Rabbi Morton Siegel, who served as director of the Jewish Education Department of the United Synagogue of America. Quoted in Carol K. Ingall, "The Quest for Continuity: The Hebrew College and the Normal Schools," *Religious Education*, Winter 1995, p. 67.

²⁰*Ibid.*

contrast, the “Catholic model” regarded public schools as instruments for the inculcation of Protestant values, and therefore Catholics created a separate parochial school system of all-day schools that would teach a “minority (dissenting) religious tradition.” Moreover, American Jews regarded it as their patriotic duty to support public education, for it best insured the egalitarianism and tolerance necessary to maintain the American way—and protect Jewish rights.²¹ As one Jewish leader, cited by Sarna, put it: public schools are a place where “the children of the high and low, rich and poor, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews mingle together, play together and are taught that we are a free people, striving to elevate mankind and to respect one another.”²²

The Jewish “love affair” with public education had begun already in the 19th century and helped insure the spread of Jewish Sunday schools.²³ By the middle of the 20th century, two specifically postwar developments fueled the further growth of congregational schools. One was the religious revival of the time that primarily expressed itself through involvement in congregational life. Like their fellow Americans, particularly their suburban neighbors, Jews in record numbers joined religious congregations. But for a great many Jews, the overriding motive for affiliation was to enroll their children in religious schools.²⁴ The sociologists Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum found in their exhaustive study of a prototypical suburban community of the 1950s that nearly all Jews affiliated with a synagogue at some point in their lives, but they deferred membership until their children were of the ages to go to religious school (under 20 percent joined when their children were preschoolers, a figure that jumped to 87 percent when children were in their peak years of religious education).²⁵ In fact, for Jewish parents, the most important consideration in evaluating their congregation was the synagogue school. Several parents interviewed for the “Lakeville Study,” as Sklare and Greenblum called it, were remarkably candid about their priorities: One said of his synagogue:

²¹Perhaps the most influential champion of the “Protestant Model” was Samson Benderly, the leading Jewish educator of the first half of the 20th century. “Shall we withdraw our children from the public schools and establish schools of our own as the Catholics are doing?” he asked. His answer was resoundingly negative: “A parochial system of education would be fatal to [Jewish] hopes” for integration.” Quoted in Nathan H. Winter, *Jewish Education in a Pluralist Society* (New York, 1966), p. 62.

²²Jonathan Sarna, “American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective,” pp. 12–13.

²³For an interesting contemporaneous analysis of why this romance waned, see Milton Himmelfarb, “Reflections on the Jewish Day School,” *Commentary*, July 1960, pp. 29–36.

²⁴The classic account of this resurgence of public religion and its impact on Jews is to be found in Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, N.Y., 1955).

²⁵Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society* (Chicago, 1967), p. 181.

"I like [it]. It gives my boy a good Hebrew education. And they've left me alone—I've never been inside." Another acknowledged: "We joined for the kids. The kids like it, we are satisfied. We feel no need for religion." And a third declared: "It's the only temple that satisfies my need, which is basically a Sunday School for the children." It was quite telling, though hardly surprising, that a significant number dropped their memberships once their children had completed their schooling.²⁶

Synagogues, in turn—and here is the second factor—which were established at dizzying pace in the burgeoning suburbs spreading across postwar America, recruited their members almost exclusively from parents seeking a congregational school for their children. The school, therefore, became the sustaining force of the congregation and often its primary *raison d'être*. Many congregations, in fact, did not bill tuition fees separately from general membership dues, while others charged nominal amounts for tuition, even though the schools accounted for a quarter or more of the congregational budget.²⁷ Synagogues assumed a "pediatric" mission, focusing ever more of their programming on children. This child-centered approach represented a major departure from the orientation of immigrant congregations, which in the first half of the century had focused almost exclusively on the needs of foreign-born, non-native-speaking adults, particularly men. As the actual quality of the postwar synagogue revival became more evident, a prominent rabbi mordantly quipped that the synagogue in America had become "to a large degree, a parent-teacher association of the religious school."²⁸

The mission of the supplementary schools inevitably was shaped by the confused, if not contradictory, expectations of the parent body. On the one hand, parents expected schools to assume a far greater role than ever before in the religious formation of their children: As Sklare and Greenblum wrote in their study of "Lakeville":

Parents who hold to a pattern of minimal ritualism appear to rely primarily, and in some cases, almost exclusively, on the religious school for the Jewish socialization of their children. This dependence on the Jewish school constitutes a radical departure from the traditional approach to the rearing of the Jewish child. In past eras, the effort of the school to transmit the culture

²⁶Ibid., pp. 190, 192–93. See also Leonard Fein et al., *Reform Is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews* (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 1972), chap. 5, especially p. 90.

²⁷I have discussed the impact of these developments on Conservative synagogues in "The Conservative Synagogue," in my edited volume, *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (Cambridge and New York, 1987), pp. 125–29. For figures on school budgets, see "Survey of Synagogue Finances," issued by the Department of Synagogue Administration, United Synagogue of America, Nov. 1963, p. 21.

²⁸This quip is attributed to Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg in Carolyn L. Wiener, "A Merger of Synagogues in San Francisco," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Dec. 1972, p. 189.

(albeit to the male in particular) represented merely a continuation of efforts already initiated by the parents. But among Lakeville residents—so many of whom are at lower levels of observance and who in other ways do not provide a distinctive Jewish environment for their children—the function of socialization into Jewish culture has been separated from its traditional moorings in the family.²⁹

On the other hand, essentially secular parents sought to circumscribe the nature of what was learned in school about religion in order to keep it safely confined to the synagogue precinct—and at a far remove from the home. The sociologist Herbert Gans commented upon this phenomenon in his study of still another suburban Jewish community: “The Sunday school is an institution which transmits norms of ethnic culture and symbols of identification, whereas the home and the family are run by secular, middle class behavior patterns. Parents expected that the contradictions between the concept of the traditional Jewish home implicit in the Sunday school curriculum and that of the actual one would result in family tensions. Consequently, the parents were firm in not wanting the youngsters to bring the traditional patterns, plus the pressures of their youthful persuasiveness, into the house.”³⁰

The primary role of the supplementary school from the perspective of parents was to train boys—and eventually girls—for their rite of passage into adolescence, the bar or bat mitzvah, an event limited to the synagogue precincts. And yet even this mission was not embraced wholeheartedly by all parents. Writing in the mid-1970s, sociologist Harold Himmelfarb identified signs of parental ambivalence:

They wait until the child is about eight or nine years old to send him to Hebrew school, they enroll the child for the least number of days possible so that he will also have time for music lessons or baseball practice, they encourage absence from Hebrew school at the only time for things like clothes shopping or dental visits, and they pressure the school to decrease the amount of time spent on subjects not directly related to Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparation. In this type of environment, it is easy for the child to assume that Jewish education has very low priority.³¹

These minimalist wishes of the parent body played a critical role in shaping the supplementary schools and imposed severe constraints on what the educators hoped and attempted to accomplish.

²⁹Sklare and Greenblum, *Jewish Identity*, p. 298.

³⁰Herbert Gans, “The Origin and Growth of a Jewish Community in the Suburbs: A Study of the Jews in Park Forest,” in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (Glencoe, Ill., 1958), pp. 205–48, esp. p. 217.

³¹Harold Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught: Educating the Culturally Deprived Jewish Child,” *Analysis* (Synagogue Council of America, New York, 1975), pp. 257–58.

Yet for all the difficulties posed by parental indifference or ambivalence, the general desire of parents to celebrate their child's bar mitzvah provided a lever for educators to increase supplementary school enrollments and add hours of instruction to the school program. Through a combined campaign of rabbis, school principals, and administrators of local education bureaus, whose efforts were encouraged by denominational and other leaders in the field of Jewish education on the national level, congregations imposed mandatory schooling as a prerequisite for the celebration of a bar mitzvah in the synagogue. Moreover, congregations also required school attendance for a minimum number of years, with the Conservative movement establishing a threshold of three years and the Reform movement two years. The bar (and eventually bat) mitzvah preparations served, as the sociologist Stuart Schoenfeld has observed, as a perfect match between the needs of the folk and the aspirations of the elite.³²

This arrangement, however, as has been noted astutely by the educator Isa Aron, was significantly flawed in that it did not take into account the dissonance between the parental objective—bar mitzvah preparation—and the educators' goals—the transmission of a Jewish religious and national identity and the nurturing of ritual observance. "Beneath the placid and prosperous image" of the mid-century supplementary school, Aron writes, "lay a problematic fissure." Much to the dismay of educators, the "preoccupation with Bar Mitzvah . . . [and] recitation of some prayers . . . tended to divert attention from the study of subjects which were considered the core of the curriculum—Bible, History and the Hebrew Language."³³

Simply put, the parent body took a minimalist approach to Jewish education, whereas some educational leaders felt compelled to offer a maximalist curriculum, convinced that their young charges would learn about Jewish life either "now or never."

Two census surveys conducted in 1958 and 1966 provided the first extensive data in the postwar period on how these conflicting goals played out in the schools themselves. For promoters of a more intensive Jewish education, the good news was that the one-day-a-week Sunday school was giving way to an afternoon school education that required attendance two

³²This discussion of the bar mitzvah syndrome is based on Isa Aron's analysis. See her essay "From Congregational School to the Learning Congregation: Are We Ready for a Paradigm Shift?" in Isa Aron, Sara Lee, and Seymour Rossel, *A Congregation of Learners* (UAHC Press, New York, 1995), pp. 60–62. See also Stuart Schoenfeld, "Folk Judaism, Elite Judaism and the Role of Bar Mitzvah in the Development of the Synagogue and Jewish School in America," *Contemporary Jewry* 1988, pp. 67–85.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 62–63. The discussion of curricular implications is taken from Pilch, "From the Early Forties," p. 131.

or three times weekly for five to six hours per week. In 1958, 47 percent of pupils were enrolled in afternoon schools, 45 percent in one-day-a-week schools, and 8 percent in day schools. The growth of the afternoon schools resulted, as we have noted, primarily from a push by educators to intensify educational programs—despite the severe opposition of many parents. As early as 1949, Louis Katzoff drew attention to those who were fearful that mandatory attendance for a longer period of time would cause some parents to withdraw their children from the congregational school, a fear that, in turn, motivated the school to follow a policy of “a little education is better than none.”³⁴ Conservative rabbis and educators, nonetheless, promoted mandatory educational programs of five to six hours a week spread out over three days, with one-day-a-week schooling reserved exclusively for children under age eight; the Reform movement’s Commission on Jewish Education also pressed to increase the number of school hours, but was not as successful.³⁵

These campaigns yielded some fruits: by 1958, 60 percent of children enrolled in Conservative congregational schools attended afternoon programs, and the rest attended one-day-a-week schools. In the New York area, the proportion attending afternoon schools almost reached the three-quarter mark. By contrast, the split in Reform schools was 80-20 in favor of one-day schooling; and in New York, 99 percent of children in Reform supplementary schools attended one-day-a-week programs.³⁶ Largely as a result of the efforts by educators to foster the afternoon school, matters looked very different three decades later: in greater New York, only 5 percent of all Jewish pupils attended one-day supplementary schools, 56 percent two-to-five-day supplementary schools, and the rest day schools; and in the country at large (excepting New York), almost three times as many children were enrolled in the afternoon schools as in the one-day programs.³⁷

This expansion of afternoon schooling also entailed some serious compromises. Although they were designed to offer more intensive schooling, the congregational afternoon schools offered a less demanding program as compared to the communal afternoon schools that they had replaced. The communal Hebrew schools and Talmud Torahs in the 1920s

³⁴Louis Katzoff, *Issues in Jewish Education: A Study in the Philosophy of the Conservative Congregational School* (New York, 1949), p. 42.

³⁵Pilch, “From the Early Forties,” p. 137.

³⁶Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 58.

³⁷*Trends: Report on Developments in Jewish Education for Federation Leadership* (JESNA, New York, Spring 1986), p. 2. By 1974, only 7 percent of Conservative children attended a one-day-a-week school, whereas three-quarters of Reform children were enrolled in such schools. “Trends in Jewish School Enrollment in the United States, 1974/75” (AAJE, Sept. 1976), pp. iii, 6–7.

and 1930s had maintained a five-day-a-week schedule, offering eight to ten hours per week, 48 weeks per year, for a total of 400 hours per year. By contrast, the average afternoon school of the 1940s provided half the number of hours (four to five per week) for 36 weeks. (Even more remarkably, the Sunday School entailed no more than 64 hours of instruction per year.)³⁸

The direction and content of the afternoon school programs also left much to be desired, from the perspective of educators. The average afternoon school of the 1940s and 1950s allocated school hours as follows: Hebrew was taught $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours per week; the prayer book $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours; Jewish history for 40–45 minutes; religion and current events for a half hour each; and music for 20 minutes.³⁹ The upshot, according to one early observer of Conservative programs—the predominant type of afternoon school in the initial postwar years—was a schooling that “require[d] . . . pupils [to] be able to participate in the Junior congregational Service, with particular emphasis upon the ability to recite the Torah and Haftorah blessings, to know the various blessings over food, and to possess the knowledge of the customs and ceremonies connected with religious festivals.”⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, there were already serious concerns in the immediate postwar years that the expanding system of Jewish schooling was “like a river a mile wide and an inch deep.”⁴¹

Nor were the children themselves universally enthusiastic. In a 1958 study, 93 percent of the children answered positively to a question about the value of exposing every Jewish boy and girl to an education about his or her religion. But about a third of supplementary school pupils did not like their Jewish school; and a third stated they would not attend if they had a choice in the matter. (A somewhat higher percentage of Sunday school children answered this way.) Three-quarters of supplementary school pupils indicated that their religious schooling interfered with other things they “would like to do”—31 percent minded this “very much” and another 46 percent professed to be bothered “some times.” Significantly, over 90 percent of the same children claimed to like their public schools and answered affirmatively when asked whether they would still attend if given a choice in the matter.⁴²

The responses of parents were even more telling. After surveying over 1,350 parents in communities all over the United States who sent their

³⁸Pilch, “From the Early Forties,” pp. 123–24.

³⁹Ibid., p. 126, which cites a report by Rabbi Simon Greenberg, a prominent Conservative congregational rabbi.

⁴⁰Katzoff, *Issues in Jewish Education*, p. 135.

⁴¹Pilch, “From the Early Forties,” p. 126.

⁴²Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, pp. 71–73.

children to Sunday schools and weekday schools, the census takers found that over one-quarter “could not name *a single subject* which their children were learning” in Jewish schools.⁴³ And when parents were asked why they sent their children to a particular Jewish school, high percentages cited the key reasons as “convenience” and “social considerations.” The authors of the census report conclude that only “a minority of the respondents chose the school for its particular ideological orientation (even if family background and synagogue affiliation is added, the total would be 36.6 percent).”⁴⁴

On the more positive side, it should be acknowledged that the congregational schools played a powerful role in normalizing Jewish education and reaching populations that had previously not recognized the utility of formal religious instruction. Communal schools had never attained the popularity of the congregational programs. The congregational setting, moreover, also provided opportunities to connect formal schooling with both the religious life of the synagogue and with venues for informal education. Many synagogues linked children with denominational or ideologically-based youth movements and summer camps. In these ways, the pivotal location of synagogues within Jewish communities served to connect young people to a range of programs that socialized them as Jews—and that complemented the work of the supplementary school.⁴⁵

ENRICHED SCHOOLING

The small population of ideologically or religiously committed parents who sought to expose their children to an enriched Jewish education insured the growth of two types of schools we have not yet discussed. One of these was the Jewish high school. In the 1930s, high-school enrollments accounted for barely 5 percent of the total Jewish student population. This rose to between 8 and 10 percent by the late 1950s, as students were enrolled in about 100 Hebrew high schools, about half congregationally based and the rest community-oriented. Some 54 day high schools existed by then, too. In addition, 67 Reform temples ran post-confirmation programs lasting through 12th grade.⁴⁶ To be sure, the bulk of the Jewish school population remained inordinately concentrated in the pre-bar and bat mitzvah cohort, which in 1966 constituted almost 70 percent of all enrollments; the rest were evenly divided between pupils in the primary grades and those in high school. Put differently, it was estimated that of

⁴³Ibid., p. 138. Emphasis added.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁵Pilch, “From the Early Forties,” p. 127.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 162.

the total population of Jewish children aged 3–5, roughly 12 percent were enrolled in a Jewish school; among those aged 6–7, the number rose to 21 percent; 70 percent of Jewish children aged 8–12 were enrolled; and then the figure for 13- to 17-year-olds dropped to a mere 16 percent.⁴⁷

The second option for an enriched Jewish education was the day school. Day schools are not a 20th-century phenomenon in American Jewish life: a small network of such schools had existed in the 19th century prior to the emerging popularity and widespread availability of public school education.⁴⁸ The day schools of the 20th century are unique, however, in the mission they have been assigned. That mission has been astutely analyzed by historian Haym Soloveitchik, who observes that up to the middle of the 20th century, it was widely assumed by Jews of all stripes that “Jewishness was something almost innate, and no school was needed to inculcate it.” Jews also were convinced that “their children’s *yiddishkeit* (Jewishness), as their own, was something deep in the bone, and that schools need not—and in all probability, could not—instill it. . . . Until midcentury, the children of immigrants on the right [of the Orthodox world] imbibed their religiosity primarily from home and ethnic neighborhood, much as children of their far more numerous brethren on the left and center imbibed their Jewishness from much the same sources.” The inability of families to play their accustomed roles and the collapse of ethnic neighborhoods, according to Soloveitchik, necessitated the creation of a new type of day school movement predicated upon the assumption that

in contemporary society . . . Jewish identity is not inevitable. It is not a matter of course, but of choice: a conscious preference of the enclave over the host society. For such a choice to be made, a sense of particularity and belonging must be instilled by the intentional enterprise of instruction. Without education there is now no identity, for identity in a multi-culture is ideological. . . . Identity maintenance and consciousness raising are ideological exigencies, needs that can be met only by education.⁴⁹

Twentieth-century day schools were established, therefore, to serve as the critical setting for the transmission—in a highly self-conscious and deliberate fashion—of a Jewish identity that could withstand the corrosive effects of modern society.

⁴⁷Ackerman, “Jewish Education—For What?” p. 4. See also Hillel Hochberg and Gerhard Lang, “The Jewish High Schools in 1972–73: Status and Trends,” *AJYB* 1974–75, vol. 75, p. 235.

⁴⁸Alvin I. Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America* (Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1966), chap. 2.

⁴⁹Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition*, Summer 1994, pp. 89–90, 93.

The growth of day schools began in earnest toward the end of World War II, after a national society called Torah Umesorah was founded in 1944 for the express purpose of establishing yeshivas throughout the United States. At the time, there were roughly 30 day schools in the entire country and only a half dozen of these were outside of New York City. Their total enrollment ranged between 6,000 and 7,000 students.⁵⁰ In 1946, according to data compiled by the American Association for Jewish Education, there were already 95 such schools, with an enrollment of roughly 14,000 children; within two years, the figure rose to 128 schools with 18,654 children; and by 1958 it had risen to 241 schools with 42,651 children. Just four years later, the enrollments topped 50,000 students,⁵¹ and by the early 1970s the figure exceeded 67,000 pupils in 330 day schools. In just three decades, the number of day schools outside of New York rose from a half dozen to include every community with a population of more than 7,500 Jews; even in communities with fewer than 5,000 Jews there were some 20 day schools.⁵²

In contrast to the afternoon schools, which provided children with Jewish schooling for 150 to 200 hours per year over a four- or five-year period, the day schools educated children in Judaic subjects for 800 or more hours each year over at least an eight-year period.⁵³ This significant expansion in contact hours made it possible for day schools to develop linguistic skills, inculcate a commitment to Jewish observance, and socialize youngsters into Jewish life in a fashion that was beyond the abilities of the supplementary school. Over the course of the typical school day, running from 8:30 or 9:00 A.M. until sometime in the late afternoon, students were expected to master general studies mandated by city and state requirements. In most schools, the morning hours were devoted exclusively to Judaic studies, the afternoon to secular studies. Each school's ideological orientation determined a whole range of pedagogical and curricular choices: whether the language of instruction was to be English, Hebrew, or Yiddish; the amount of time to be devoted to the study of the Pentateuch and later biblical books, as compared to the study of Talmud; the emphasis to be placed on instruction in modern Hebrew, Jew-

⁵⁰The precise numbers of day schools and their enrollments during this period are somewhat murky. Most sources estimate the number of institutions during the war years at roughly 30. See Schiff, *Jewish Day School*, p. 49; Stephen Shoenholz, "The Jewish Day Schools at 30," *The Times of Israel*, Mar. 1974, p. 53; and Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction," p. 124, note 71, who bases himself on data compiled by Don Well for the Board of Jewish Education of New York.

⁵¹Pilch, "From the Early Forties," pp. 141-42.

⁵²Alvin I. Schiff, "Jewish Day Schools in the United States," *Encyclopedia Judaica Year Book*, 1973, p. 137.

⁵³Pilch, "From the Early Forties," p. 144.

ish history, and current events, including references to modern Israel; and the extent to which the curriculum would strive to “integrate American and Jewish cultures and to achieve a blending of Judaism and Americanism” through the linkage of topics addressed in the general studies curriculum with material covered during the Jewish studies classes.⁵⁴

Initially, the Orthodox sector was the sole driving force behind the growth of day schools, and within this sector, newly arrived immigrants played a decisive role. In the two decades bracketing World War II, a new type of immigrant had appeared on American shores, as Jews who had never considered abandoning their traditional communities in Eastern and Central Europe were now forced to uproot themselves in order to survive. These highly traditional Jews harbored no allegiance to the public school and quickly established hundreds of day schools to transmit their Hassidic or Mitnagdic traditions. Modern Orthodox types also participated in this expansion, but depended heavily on the new immigrants and the “sectarian Orthodox” (traditionalists) to staff and administer their schools.⁵⁵ Moreover, the parent bodies of Orthodox day schools were disproportionately drawn from the immigrant population: whereas roughly two-thirds of the parent bodies in the afternoon schools were native-born (a figure that exceeded 80 percent for the parent bodies of Sunday schools), barely more than half the fathers of children in modern Orthodox day schools were native born. The ultra-Orthodox schools drew even more of their students from the children of recent immigrants.⁵⁶

Support for these new day schools extended beyond the world of Orthodoxy, however. Conservative, and to a lesser extent Reform, Jews joined in the new venture, as many day schools drew upon a base of families well beyond Orthodox circles. Comparing his own experience as a student in one of the few yeshivas of the interwar era to that of his daughter in a modern Orthodox school of the 1950s, one parent noted the transformation that so captivated him—and his daughter: In the past, wrote Harold Ribalow,

if you were a yeshiva student, it meant you were Orthodox, and that was that. Today, the parents of the children are far from Orthodox, and indeed most of their homes can scarcely be differentiated from those of their Christian neighbors. The yeshivas, consequently, are radically different from those of ten or fifteen years ago. Talmud, for example, is not the single towering subject it used to be. The arts, dancing, painting, drawing, singing, are taught

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 142–43. On the goal of integration, see Joseph Lookstein, “The Jewish Day School in America,” in Israel S. Chipkin, *Jewish Schools in America* (American Association for Jewish Education, New York, 1948), pp. 28–36, and the issue devoted to “Integration in Day School Programs,” *Jewish Education*, Winter 1978, pp. 4–38.

⁵⁵Charles S. Liebman, “Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life,” *AJYB* 1965, vol. 66, p.70.

⁵⁶Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, pp. 86–87.

freely and joyously. . . . Today it is even recognized that attractive classrooms and sufficient lighting do not necessarily block the yeshiva students' ability to absorb Judaism. . . . The child can obtain in the yeshiva a sense of inner security, "sugar-coated," and with few embarrassing compromises concerning school and home environment.⁵⁷

Inspired by what they saw in Orthodox day schools, some educators and parents were moved to establish communal day schools that would attract a broader swathe of the Jewish population.⁵⁸

Gradually, pressure built within the other major denominations to create their own network of day schools. First came the Conservative movement, whose embrace of the day school was tentative, if not ambivalent, in this period. True, the Commission on Jewish Education of the United Synagogue, the congregational arm of the Conservative movement, affirmed its view as early as 1958 that it was "of utmost importance [for] Conservative congregations, singly or cooperatively, . . . to seek to establish Day schools in addition to afternoon religious schools."⁵⁹ And it is also true, as Steven Brown has written, that a small number of Conservative day schools were founded already in the 1950s and early 1960s by "a new generation of professional educators, trained in educational techniques learned as staff in the Ramah camps and enriched by graduate studies in secular education, some possessing advanced degrees in Judaica and education."⁶⁰

But even after an Association of Solomon Schechter Day Schools was established in 1964, support within the Conservative movement remained tepid, at best.⁶¹ The reasons are not difficult to discern: many Conservative rabbis maintained a great faith in the public-school system; many also worried about the potential defection of members who would lose inter-

⁵⁷Harold U. Ribalow, "My Child Goes to Parochial School: A Parent's Report Card," *Commentary*, Jan. 1954, pp. 64–67. See also the letter from a "shocked" reader who expresses deep concern that such an education "makes for arrogance and creates a lack of genuine understanding of the differences among people, [since it] . . . fosters a spirit of exclusiveness, snobbishness, and childish arrogance" (*Commentary*, Feb. 1954, p. 191).

⁵⁸Community day schools gradually emerged in this period. On one such school founded in 1953, see Ephraim Frankel, "The Hebrew Academy of Atlanta, 1953–1978: An Assessment," *Pedagogic Reporter*, Fall 1977, pp. 17–19. See also Geraldine Nussbaum Kasoff, "The Community Jewish Day School: A New Experience in Jewish Education: The Origins and Development of the Akiba School in Philadelphia, the Charles E. Smith School in Washington, D.C., and the Geshur School in Arlington, Va." Unpublished diss., Univ. of Maryland–College Park, 1993. Most of the founders of these schools were Conservative Jews (Kasoff, pp. 192–93).

⁵⁹Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 34.

⁶⁰Steven M. Brown, "The Choice for Jewish Day Schools," *Educational Horizons*, Fall 1992, pp. 45–52.

⁶¹Morton Siegel, "The Conservative Day School: The Solomon Schechter Day School Association," *Pedagogic Reporter*, Fall 1977, p. 11.

est in the synagogue if they had no need for its supplementary school; and still others placed their faith in the informal educational programs of the Conservative movement—its Ramah camps and United Synagogue Youth programs. Only in the 1970s, after a critical mass of schools and enrollments were attained did the consensus swing to support of the day school. (By 1977, 50 Solomon Schechter schools enrolled close to 10,000 students.)⁶²

The day school was even more controversial in the Reform movement. At the convention of the Reform rabbinate in 1950, a keynote speaker denounced the day schools as an instrument of segregation. “The Jewish All Day School,” he thundered, “like Jonah’s gourd, has come up in the night of despair. It will wither in the broad daylight of renewed faith in freedom and the democratic process.”⁶³ When, 13 years later, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, then director of the Commission on Jewish Education of the Reform congregational arm, denied that “there is a shred of evidence to show that the graduates of the all-day Jewish school . . . are less willing servants of the general community than are graduates of the public school,” he was castigated by rabbinic colleagues.⁶⁴ Opposition within the movement focused on four specific issues: (1) Day schools were incompatible with Reform Judaism. (2) Parent education was a preferable response to educational weaknesses. (3) Day schools represented a desertion of a public-school system that Reform Jews were bound to support. (4) Day schools posed a threat to liberty.⁶⁵

It was not until the late 1960s that the question was reopened within the Reform movement, as previous positions were reevaluated in light of the Six Day War and the growing success of Conservative day schools. The first Reform day school was established at Temple Beth Am in Miami, Florida, followed quickly by schools in Los Angeles, New York, and Phoenix. By 1981, nine such schools existed in the United States and Canada.⁶⁶ Yet it took until 1985 for the board of the Reform movement’s congregational arm to endorse “the concept of autonomous,

⁶²Ibid., p. 12. The association of Conservative rabbis did urge in 1962 “the establishment of Day Schools in our congregations wherever possible.” Cited in Schiff, *Jewish Day School*, p. 63.

⁶³Schiff, *Jewish Day School*, p. 216.

⁶⁴Daniel B. Syme, “Reform Judaism and Day Schools: The Great Historical Dilemma,” *Religious Education*, Spring 1983, pp. 171–72. See also idem., “The Reform Day School: Its History and Future Prospects,” *Pedagogic Reporter*, Fall 1977, pp. 14–16.

⁶⁵Syme, “Reform Judaism and Day Schools,” p. 173. See also Sylvan D. Schwartzman, “Who Wants Reform All-Day Schools?” *CCAR Journal*, Apr. 1964, and Samuel Glasner and Elliot D. Rosenstock, “The Case For/Against a Reform Jewish Day School,” *Dimensions in American Judaism*, Summer 1969, pp. 36–39.

⁶⁶Syme, “Reform Judaism and Day Schools,” p. 179.

self-supporting Reform Jewish day schools as a valid educational option."⁶⁷

The ultimate resolution of this long and bitter controversy encapsulated some of the important trends in Jewish schooling during the postwar years. Most of these Reform day schools were initially based in particular congregations, and all were dependent upon congregational, rather than denominational, support. In this sense they reflected the larger trend toward congregational control over formal Jewish education—and a shift away from communal sponsorship. The first Reform day schools, moreover, came into existence due to the initiative of rabbis and educators operating on the local level; only later, after a few such schools had proven themselves, did the national leadership succeed in mustering broader support for so radical a departure in educational strategy. In this sense, too, the Reform day schools mirrored the larger pattern: Jewish education was a local matter, and Jewish schools developed only through the resources of their own communities. The massive expansion of Jewish schooling in the postwar era was a national phenomenon, but it developed through the actions of thousands of autonomous sponsoring institutions.

RESOURCES

Soaring student enrollments and proliferating educational institutions placed an enormous strain on the resources of the Jewish community. A twofold crisis engulfed the field: financial support was barely sufficient to maintain the system, let alone generous enough to improve it; and there was a critical shortage of teaching personnel to staff the schools. The two issues, of course, were intertwined, because, given the inadequate compensation available, it was impossible to recruit enough high-caliber teachers. "Why would a college graduate," one leading educator asked, "embark on a career which is spiritually uninspiring, socially unacceptable and economically unsatisfactory, when many other opportunities knock at his door?"⁶⁸

Susan R. Shevitz, who has traced the history of the teacher shortage in Jewish schools, describes the recurring pattern of response to this crisis: fitful bursts of teeth-gnashing followed by inaction. In 1956, for example, the president of the American Association for Jewish Education

⁶⁷Walter Ruby, "Reform Day School Movement Gains Momentum," *Reform Judaism*, Winter 1994, p. 64.

⁶⁸Judah Pilch, quoted in Benjamin B. Rosenberg and Sidney Z. Vincent, "What Can Federations Do to Strengthen Jewish Education?" *Assembly Papers* (Council of Jewish Federations, Nov. 1966), p. 5.

lamented “the constant shortage of teacher personnel.” “Many communities,” wrote Philip Lown, “have spent . . . millions of dollars to erect up-to-date school buildings. . . . But what benefits can be derived from these splendid structures if there isn’t an adequate supply of qualified teachers to fill these modern classrooms? Nearly every Jewish community . . . is almost stymied in trying to solve the problem. . . . Unfortunately, this aspect has been woefully neglected by our leadership.”⁶⁹ In the same year, a conference devoted to the teacher shortage identified ten causes for the crisis: “(1) inadequate social and economic status; (2) limited opportunities for satisfying work; (3) poor recruitment procedures; (4) inadequate supply from which to draw new teachers; (5) insufficient correlation between teachers’ preparation and subsequent work; (6) improper placement machinery; (7) limited growth opportunities; (8) few chances for advancement; (9) growing enrollment; and (10) unduly large turnover.”⁷⁰

Three years later, a census of Jewish schools provided solid data on the cadre of educators: It estimated a teaching staff of 17,483, with some 7,900 working in afternoon schools and 9,500 in Sunday schools. These were some of their characteristics:

Almost two-thirds of the teachers in *Sunday Schools* were women, and nearly 90 percent were native born. Only one-fifth had any teacher training, and over two-thirds had only an elementary level Jewish education; as for general education, most were college graduates. Only 23 percent had a teaching license. Roughly half were members of Conservative synagogues and 37 percent of Reform congregations.

By contrast, two-thirds of *afternoon-school* teachers were men; 61 percent were foreign born. Over 80 percent spoke Hebrew fairly fluently; and over 80 percent had attended college and received a Jewish education on that level. Over half had taken at least some courses in pedagogy—generally, at a teachers’ seminary or in college. Under 40 percent had a teacher’s license. Half were members of Conservative synagogues, and 44 percent belonged to Orthodox ones. In time, this teaching corps would grow through the recruitment of Israeli-born teachers—especially women seeking part-time employment.⁷¹

Day-school teachers were most likely to be men (70 percent). Sixty-one percent were born abroad. Ninety-two percent claimed to be fluent in Hebrew; 86 percent received a Jewish education on the college level; and

⁶⁹Quoted in Susan L. Rosenblum Shevitz, “Communal Responses to the Teacher Shortage in the North American Supplementary School,” *Studies in Jewish Education* 3, 1988, p. 26.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷¹Ackerman, “Jewish Education—For What?” p. 12.

about 72 percent either attended or graduated from a college. Sixty-one percent had a teacher's license. Ninety-two percent sent their own children to a day school, and 85 percent claimed to be Orthodox.⁷²

The broader finding was that significant percentages of teachers did not regard Jewish education as their main occupation — fewer than half the afternoon school teachers devoted their professional time entirely to Jewish education — and many treated their teaching as a stop-gap or very part-time activity.⁷³

Subsequent research revealed the extent of the disparity in salaries paid to Jewish educators as compared to teachers in public schools, and thereby further clarified why the Jewish field could not attract sufficient numbers of full-time personnel. A study conducted by the American Association for Jewish Education in the 1975–76 school year found that “teacher salaries in Jewish day and supplementary schools are too low to afford a head of family a decent, comfortable standard of living as the sole wage earner.” Data gathered from 382 schools in 31 metropolitan areas revealed that the median maximum salary of a full-time teacher in a supplementary school was \$9,400 and \$13,433 per year for day-school teachers. Put in comparative terms, the latter figure was 13.2 percent below what public-school teachers earned.⁷⁴ Additional research in the early 1970s revealed that full-time teachers in day schools earned a median salary \$2,000 less than their counterparts in public schools in the same 15 cities, and for full-time afternoon-school teachers, the difference was twice as great. Moreover, Jewish educators rarely received “adequate fringe benefits,” and supplementary-school teachers generally received no benefits at all.⁷⁵ Because Jewish schools offered such uncompetitive wage packages, they could not hope to enforce rigorous standards of certification and other professional requirements.

Research conducted during the mid-1970s identified some 1,300–1,400 full-time administrative positions in Jewish schools, bureaus of Jewish education, and national agencies. Reform congregations employed slightly over 1,000 educational administrators, but only a quarter of these worked full time; the rest were part-time educators, rabbis who performed other duties, or lay administrators. In a number of Reform congregations, a single person was in charge of the entire educational function, expected to run such disparate activities as the preschool program and adult education lectures, as well as the religious school itself. Conservative congregations

⁷²Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U. S.*, pp. 113–16.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷⁴Ackerman, “Jewish Education Today,” *AJYB* 1980, vol. 80, p. 143.

⁷⁵Hillel Hochberg, “Trends and Developments in Jewish Education,” *AJYB* 1972, vol. 73, p. 212.

gations employed 350 full-time principals in their supplementary schools. While these personnel were found to be well qualified, the shortage created a bidding competition, leaving many congregational employers feeling they were engaged in a game of “musical chairs.” Even though salary scales for full-time administrators were competitive, the field still did not attract enough applicants to meet the dire personnel shortage.⁷⁶

The natural providers of educational personnel—the key training institutions—produced some administrators and teachers, but could not keep up with the seemingly unlimited demand. Throughout the country, there were 11 such programs; they were either divisions of the major rabbinical schools—such as the Teachers Institutes of both the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva University—or community-based teachers colleges, such as Gratz College in Philadelphia, Baltimore Hebrew College, Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago, the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, and Hebrew College in Boston. (Eventually, new programs were created at the University of Judaism and the Hebrew Union College, both in Los Angeles, and the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University.) Despite their different institutional structures and even ideological commitments, the early teacher-training institutions shared a common goal of training Hebrew teachers. An examination of the curricula of eight such schools conducted in 1935 by Leo Honor found that all placed a common emphasis on teaching the Hebrew language and Jewish national culture; offered a curriculum focused on the study of classical Jewish texts; and set a mission of training Hebrew teachers. Indeed, they had banded together in an association called *Iggud Batei HaMe-drash Lemorim* (The Association of Hebrew Teachers Colleges).⁷⁷

Despite the booming demand for educators, these institutions fell on progressively harder times in the postwar decades. In part, the problem was ideological: as Hebrew schools became religious schools, and as the intensity of study declined, schools no longer needed teachers proficient in Hebrew and well-versed in Jewish texts. Day schools also did not turn to the training institutions for teachers: most men came directly from rabbinical programs, and a great many women from religious programs or directly from Israeli institutions. Moreover, the demographic and economic realities of the teaching profession were such that ever more educators who had never undergone advanced training in Judaica, Hebrew,

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 145.

⁷⁷Aryeh Davidson, “The Preparation of Jewish Educators in North America: A Status Report” (Commission on Jewish Education in North America, June 1990), p. 3. Two early studies of these programs were conducted by Leo Honor, “Comparative Study of Hebrew Teacher Training Schools in the United States,” *Jewish Education*, Spring 1935, pp. 71–90, and L. Hurwich, “Survey of Hebrew Teacher Colleges in the United States,” *Jewish Education*, Winter/Spring 1949, pp. 73–96.

or pedagogy were hired to meet the insatiable demand. As a result, an effect similar to Gresham's law swept the field: since the training institutions could not staff the schools, ever more unlicensed educators overran the profession, thereby eliminating any possibility of raising requirements for educators. Thus, despite the soaring demand for teachers, enrollments in the training institutions remained static in the post-war period. Walter Ackerman found in the late 1960s that the combined enrollments stood at 2,000 students, a figure that included a high percentage of Israelis. Collectively, the teacher-training institutions graduated roughly 200 students annually; of these, no more than 125–150 actually assumed teaching positions. The rest either viewed teaching as a temporary occupation until they completed their training for a different career or never even bothered to enter the field.⁷⁸

Leading educational spokesmen regularly studied the problem and lamented the shortage of personnel; some even proposed remedies. But given the low status and inadequate remuneration of educational personnel, the problem was addressed in only a cursory or piecemeal fashion. In fact, many came to believe that the dearth of trained personnel was endemic to the field and that Jewish education would never attract a large cadre of full-time personnel. As one insider put it: "I do not know of a single school that closed its doors and ceased to exist during the so-called 'crisis.' The heart of American Jewry continued its normal beat, and there was no serious disruption of Jewish education activity in the past 14 years [since the 1956 AAJE Conference on the Manpower Crisis in Jewish Education]."⁷⁹ The message seemed to be, perhaps it is best to shrug and muddle through, since the personnel crisis is intractable.

A similar mood of resignation characterized much of the ongoing discussion about the limited financial resources available to the field. Clearly, the bulk of financing came either from tuition fees paid by parents of day-schoolers or, in the case of the supplementary school, synagogue dues that indirectly taxed all members to shoulder the burden for the congregational schools.⁸⁰ The larger policy question of whether Jewish education

⁷⁸Ackerman, "Jewish Education—For What?" p. 12.

⁷⁹Quoted by Shevitz, p. 41.

⁸⁰Tuition fees in supplementary schools were pegged at "unrealistically low levels for fear that parents might withdraw their children entirely were tuition fees to bear a realistic relationship with the actual cost of educating a child." According to a survey covering the period 1950–1970, the average tuition at supplementary schools rose from \$50 for children of members and \$65 for children of nonmembers to \$85 and \$150, respectively. By 1975 the average tuition in Conservative afternoon schools stood at \$115. Such low tuition fees meant that congregational budgets funded the schools. *Jewish Education: Who, What, How*, Background Papers in Jewish Education (American Jewish Committee, New York, May 1983), pp. 8–9.

ought to become central to the mission of the broader community, rather than be left to the discretion and abilities of individual schools and synagogues, was rarely discussed. A survey of the Boston Jewish community conducted in 1975 shed some light on how average members of a community answered this question. Most responded affirmatively to the statement, "It is important that every Jewish child be given a serious, continuing Jewish education." But when asked to rank different types of services in order of importance, Jewish education came in 13th among 16 categories deserving of communal funding. The study concluded that "while of great importance to respondents . . . [the] sponsorship [of Jewish education] may be seen as a synagogal rather than a . . . [federation or communal] function."⁸¹

In truth, the local umbrella organizations for Jewish philanthropy (generally known as federations) did allocate some funds for Jewish education. The lion's share of such money supported central agencies overseeing education on the local level (see below), but some of this money made its way into the schools as well. There was, for example, a long-standing communal effort to underwrite the education of indigent children, and in earlier years, federations supported communal schools, such as Talmud Torahs. But as Jewish education increasingly moved away from communal schooling to either the congregational or the independent day-school setting, the question of federation involvement became far more complicated. The sheer immensity of the costs and the potential pitfalls of entering an arena rife with contentious ideological and denominational issues had to be confronted. In the view of some community leaders, however, federations could not shirk their responsibility to serve as partners in the enterprise of Jewish education. As Mandell L. Berman, a leading federation volunteer, put it in 1958:

Acceptance of responsibility for Jewish education by a Federation must parallel its responsibility for other functions which Federations finance and plan. Members of the Jewish community have a right to look to the Federation for high standard services in the community hospital, in camping, recreation, child care services, and family counseling. They have the same right in the field of Jewish education.⁸²

The precise nature of this partnership and the extent to which communal leaders would involve themselves in the ideologically fraught area of

⁸¹Quoted from "1975 Community Survey: A Study of the Jewish Population of Greater Boston," in Shevitz, "Communal Responses to the Teacher Shortage," p. 50. The three categories ranked even lower than Jewish education were cultural programs, recreational and athletic programs, and adult education.

⁸²Quoted in Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 149.

Jewish education would bedevil the federation world for a long time to come.

This did not, however, prevent federations from increasing their investment in Jewish education. Rather, it affected the nature of their allocations. According to data compiled from a large number of reporting federations (though not all), communal expenditures on Jewish education continually rose in the postwar period. In 1937, roughly 5 1/2 percent of all sums budgeted for local community needs was allocated for Jewish education. A decade later, the percentage rose to nearly 9 percent, and by 1957, it exceeded 10 percent. But even these increases could not keep up with the expansion of the field: the portion of the costs of elementary and secondary Jewish education covered by federations in 1958 was only 7 percent.⁸³

By the mid-1970s, the costs of Jewish education had skyrocketed. The national budget for Jewish education was estimated at \$260 million, almost three times the allocations for all local spending by federations in the United States. The actual dollar contributions of federations to the field rose from seven million to twenty million between 1966 and 1974, and the percentage of federation allocations for education rose from 17 percent to 21 percent of domestic spending.⁸⁴ Despite these increases, however, allocations by federations continued to support no more than 7 or 8 percent of the Jewish educational enterprise.

As day schools proliferated, the question of federation support for such institutions became a topic of ongoing debate. Strong opposition to communal support came from leaders who argued that day schools served only a narrow band of the population and the interests of particular denominations, rather than the total community. Many federations also rejected requests for allocations because their bylaws prevented beneficiary agencies from conducting their own fund-raising campaigns; the "Catch-22," of course, was that schools could not survive without such campaigns, since federation funding was inadequate to meet their needs. Over the course of the postwar decades, increasing numbers of federations did decide to allocate resources to day schools, persuaded that such schools met local needs and deserved to be considered a community responsibility.⁸⁵

⁸³Ibid., p. 148.

⁸⁴These figures are based on reports issued by the Council of Jewish Federations and are cited in Alvin I. Schiff, "Jewish Education in America: Achievement and Challenge," *Jewish Education*, Spring 1977, p. 14.

⁸⁵"Summary and Interpretation of the Study of Financing on Financing Jewish Day Schools and Related Areas," prepared by Uriah Z. Engelman for the American Association for Jewish Education, Nov. 1962, pp. 10-12.

The dimensions of this shift in policy are evident from the following data: In 1970–71, 56 federations and welfare funds granted allocations to 82 day schools, an increase of 26 schools over the previous year. The mean per-pupil subsidy also rose steadily in this period: from \$113.78 in 1966–67 to \$129.62 in 1969–70, and to \$139.03 in 1970–71.⁸⁶ The implications of these figures, however, were subject to dispute. Writing in 1974, Charles Zibbell, a longtime communal professional, lauded the progress made by federations in support of day schools. Surveying the decade of the 1960s, Zibbell compared the overall increase in the annual campaign (38 percent) and the increase for local purposes (57 percent) with the increase of spending for Jewish education (100 percent). He also noted the pace of increase in support for day schools, which grew at a rate of 20 to 25 percent each year. “We are at the point now,” he observed, “where 30 percent of all of the funds allocated for Jewish education by Federations, go to Jewish Day Schools. As a matter of fact, in some of the smaller communities, Day Schools take close to one-half the funds for Jewish education.”⁸⁷

Zibbell’s interpretation of the figures was challenged by proponents of increased communal funding of Jewish education. Sociologist Harold Himmelfarb, for example, noted that actual dollar allocations to Jewish education had doubled in the seven-year period from 1966 to 1973, but in relative terms, “the percentage of federation local budget support increased by only 4.3% (from 16.8% in 1966 to 21.1% in 1973). Furthermore, if allocations to day schools are indicative of the impact on all Jewish schools, the picture is more clear. While actual dollar allocations to day schools rose, they hardly kept pace with the increases in the day school budgets.” (The overall federation subsidy to day schools remained in the vicinity of 13 percent of school budgets.)⁸⁸

Even proponents of increased communal funding for Jewish education acknowledged the immensity of the task and some of the potential pitfalls for all participants. Insofar as funding for day schools was concerned, it was clear that, even as absolute dollars flowing into day schools kept on increasing, they barely kept pace with rising costs. As one staunch day-school advocate conceded, were federations to make a serious dent in day-school costs by assuming responsibility for half their budgets, the

⁸⁶Hochberg, “Trends and Developments in Jewish Education,” p. 207.

⁸⁷Charles Zibbell, “Federations, Synagogues and Jewish Education in the United States,” *Jewish Education*, Fall 1974, p. 41.

⁸⁸We should note that there was great variation in the proportion received by day schools of funds distributed for education within differing communities. In 1981, for example, day schools in Baltimore received more than a third of all education allocations, as compared to St. Louis, which granted barely a fifth of its educational allocations to day schools. *Jewish Education: Who, What, How*, pp. 8–9.

entire domestic spending of the federated system would have to go solely to fund Jewish education, a completely unrealistic option.⁸⁹

Moreover, the intensified involvement of federations with Jewish education would likely saddle schools with new types of burdens. As Leonard Fein put it at the time: “[I]t is inconceivable that federations would undertake a major expansion of their involvement in educational financing without insisting—as they would have every right to—on substantially increased control over education, either through ‘their’ agencies (i.e.: the bureaus) or through new mechanisms. But there is no reason to suppose that federations have the competence to administer an educational system. Neither their history nor their present staff capability provides them such competence.”⁹⁰ The shortage of educational personnel and of financial resources thus remained a perennial lament, and despite some increase in communal funding for Jewish education, the field remained severely constrained by its limited resources.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Throughout this period, the major beneficiary of communal funding was the network of bureaus or agencies of Jewish education. These bureaus had long served as the central coordinating bodies for Jewish education in local communities and were linked to a number of national agencies. Their hold on educational policy, however, was challenged by new institutions created to meet the challenges of the postwar expansion.

The bureaus themselves underwent a significant transformation during this era. Originally developed as agencies providing educational services to all schools in a locality, the bureaus expanded their scope of activities in the postwar era; they set educational standards, encouraged teacher education and offered in-service classes, initiated and coordinated adult education, and worked closely with the community Hebrew or Talmud Torah schools. The largest of the 40 Jewish education agencies across the country, with 600 schools under its supervision, was the New York bureau. It published textbooks and a children’s magazine (called *World Over*), served as a liaison with the public schools (particularly regarding the teaching of Hebrew), and ran separate departments specializing in music, dance, and the plastic arts. But even smaller bureaus played a role in providing curricular materials directly to schools and connecting local schools with the larger national efforts in the field of Jewish education.⁹¹

⁸⁹Harold Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught,” p. 259.

²Leonard J. Fein, “Suggestions Toward the Reform of Jewish Education in America,” *Midstream*, Feb. 1972, p. 48.

⁹¹Pilch, “From the Early Forties,” pp. 144–45, and *Jewish Education: Who, What, How*, p. 6.

With the massive expansion of schools under congregational auspices, denominational organizations took a far more active interest in Jewish schools. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) and the United Synagogue of America (Conservative) each established a national Commission on Jewish Education to set policy and a Department of Jewish Education to implement policies within their movements. Orthodox groups also supervised schools within their religious movement through agencies such as the National Commission on Torah Education. With the emergence of these agencies, local bureaus had to find a way to coexist with the national denominational arms. A statement of principles issued by the Conservative movement's commission in 1950 sought to define a fair division of labor:

In consonance with their philosophy of encouraging, promoting, and extending the program of all educational agencies and segments in the community, the Bureaus should cooperate with the congregational schools or their groupings in carrying out the programs as effectively as possible. The congregational schools should accept the Bureaus as the central community instruments for educational coordination and consultation in terms of improving standards of achievement and progress.⁹²

If nothing else, the emergence of far-reaching educational arms within the movements limited the monopoly of the bureaus and forced them to tread carefully.

Within the denominational structures, several organizations developed. Each denomination created a separate organization for its own educational administrators — e.g., the Jewish Educators Assembly in the Conservative movement (founded in 1950), the National Association of Temple Educators (Reform, founded in 1954), and separate associations for Orthodox teachers in day schools and those in afternoon schools.⁹³ These groups paid attention to questions of professional standards, served as vehicles for sharing curricular information, and recognized excellence in teaching.⁹⁴ Through the education departments of the denominations, new curricula and workbooks were designed and marketed.⁹⁵ In the Con-

⁹²Quoted by Pilch in "From the Early Forties," p. 147.

⁹³Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 158.

⁹⁴See Alan D. Bennett, "The Reform Jewish Educators—Then and Now," *Reform Judaism*, Spring 1988, p. 13.

⁹⁵In the Conservative movement, for example, the Education Department of the United Synagogue issued new curricula for congregational schools in 1948 and 1952, with revised editions appearing in 1959; still another curriculum was disseminated in 1978. See Walter I. Ackerman, "Toward a History of the Curriculum of the Conservative Congregational School," *Jewish Education*, Part I, Spring 1980; Part II, Summer 1980; idem., "The New Curriculum: Some Observations," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1978, pp. 43–62; Saul P. Wachs, "The New Curriculum for the Conservative Afternoon School," *Conservative Judaism*, July/August 1981, pp. 64–75.

servative movement, the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education was established at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1960 to create innovative curricular materials based on scholarly research in Jewish studies. By involving academics in specialized areas with educational administrators, teachers, and students, the Melton Center sought to put sophisticated and thoroughly tested curricula into the classrooms.⁹⁶

Several national agencies also linked educators. The National Council for Jewish Education was founded in 1926 to serve as a meeting ground for key leaders in the field of Jewish education, particularly bureau heads. By 1939, this organization was instrumental in founding the American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE) as the national service agency in the field of Jewish education. These two agencies were key national players in the postwar years: the National Council enrolled some 350 members by 1965, drawn from principals of large schools, bureau professionals, and personnel in national organizations dealing with education and culture.⁹⁷ The AAJE assumed several new roles: it linked local bureaus and provided them with important data; it initiated community surveys, completing 100 local community studies and several national ones during its first 40 years; it offered consultation services to local communities, often smoothing over rivalries and competition. In addition, the AAJE concerned itself with the welfare of teachers, the quality of curricula, and the training of educators. In this last area, it assumed responsibility for the National Board of License, the primary agency for awarding certification to teachers and principals.⁹⁸

Rounding out our overview of the educational infrastructure, we conclude with the creation of a major transitional institution, the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE), the most important new institution established by and for educators in the immediate postwar decades. It was conceived in 1973 by young members of the North American Jewish Students' Network who were impatient with the perceived ineffectiveness of the Jewish education establishment. To gather support and further its agenda, the group organized its first conference at Brown

⁹⁶Jack J. Cohen, "New Trends in Jewish Education," in Pilch, *History of Jewish Education*, p. 205. Among the most successful curricular materials produced by the Melton Center were works on teaching Holidays, Mitzvot and Prayer, and curricular material on Bible and history.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 159–60.

⁹⁸Alvin I. Schiff, "A National Jewish Education Agency: Communal Perspectives, A Study of the American Association for Jewish Education," *Jewish Education*, Autumn 1978, pp. 19–20, and Hyman Pomerantz, "The National Board of License," *Jewish Education*, Autumn 1978, pp. 40–41. The board was established in 1941.

University (Providence, Rhode Island) in 1976, attracting some 350 participants.

Three primary goals were set by the planners of the conference: "(1) The conference was to be constructed to meet the needs of teachers . . . (2) The term 'Jewish teacher' was defined to include anyone working in the endeavor of Jewish education whose principal concern was the transmission of Jewish custom, culture and belief. This meant inclusion of all those working in informal Jewish educational settings, lay people, parents and students. (3) The conference was . . . for [all] teachers . . . regardless of ideology or institutional affiliation."⁹⁹ Each of these goals was to adumbrate coming policies in the organization.

The conference program structure—which to a large extent remains fixed to the present—was designed to allow as many teachers as possible to teach and also learn from each other: in-depth training modules coexisted with shorter study (or *Lehrhaus*) sessions; small group sessions for educators with particular interests were matched by plenary sessions. A large number of exhibits permitted participants to peruse teaching materials created by peers. The first conference was such a success that in the following year the number of participants doubled; thereafter, CAJE conferences have been held annually in different localities throughout North America and Israel, drawing 1,200 and more registrants.¹⁰⁰

CAJE was founded to meet a number of needs. Primarily it sought to help educators break out of their isolation by providing a setting in which to exchange information, share pointers on techniques and curricular ideas, and interact with fellow educators. For administrators, it offered a chance to come into contact with counterparts across the denominational divide; no other organization brought together teachers, not even those of the same denomination. It also aimed to break down the barriers between educators working in formal and informal education, between teachers, principals, cantors, and librarians all working in the field, and between teachers of the very youngest children and teachers of senior adults.¹⁰¹

On a deeper level, the educational bias of CAJE participants was toward developing "the affective component of learning as opposed to the

⁹⁹Jerry Benjamin, "CAJE: Our History," program book for Rutgers CAJE Conference, 1979, pp. 16–17.

¹⁰⁰Cherie Koller-Fox, "The Founding of CAJE," unpublished typescript available at the CAJE office. On the founding conference, see also David M. Szony, "Good News from Providence," *Inter Change*, Oct. 1976, p. 2; Gary Rosenblatt, "A New Boost for Jewish Education," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, July 4, 1980, p. 36ff; and Seymour Rossel, "CAJE: From 1976 to 1994," *Jewish Post and Opinion*, Aug. 10, 1994, pp. 4–6.

¹⁰¹Jerry Benjamin and Cherie Koller-Fox, "Reflections on a Movement A-Making," *Sh'ma*, Sept. 1, 1978, pp. 158–60.

purely cognitive.” Was this approach, one critic wondered, mainly a response to the currently faddish “human potential” movement, the preaching of radical school reformers, and the growing permissiveness of American society? Or was it an innovative response to two endemic problems of Jewish education — “the failure of most Jewish schools to impart basic knowledge and the belief that the emotive is the critical influence in the formation of identity?”¹⁰²

The founders of CAJE also had an explicit political agenda. As articulated in their “Declaration on Jewish Education,” CAJE demanded of the Jewish community that Jewish education, long “among the lowest priorities of the North American Jewish community, . . . must now become the highest domestic priority.”¹⁰³ This confrontational approach quickly brought CAJE organizers into clashes with both federation leaders and the established educational organizations. Conference organizers also put forth other politically charged demands—for an end to “sexism” in curricular materials, “Jewish assertiveness training,” greater emphasis on family education, and the relocation of Jewish education “from the classroom into the world.”¹⁰⁴ At its founding, then, CAJE was designed as a forum for those seeking “alternatives.”¹⁰⁵ In time, its change of name to the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education came to symbolize the extent to which this once radical organization had come to occupy a central place in the educational establishment.

¹⁰²Ackerman, “Jewish Education Today,” p. 138. Despite his skepticism, Ackerman tended to the second possibility.

¹⁰³Benjamin, “CAJE: Our History,” p. 18.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19; and the “Special Issue Prepared for the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education,” *Sh'ma*, Sept. 1, 1978, pp. 145–60.

¹⁰⁵We should note in this context that CAJE provided an opportunity for an exchange of information about new curricular fields and the latest trends in educational methods, all of which made their way into Jewish schools to one extent or another. Surveying the scene at the time, Harold Himmelfarb described shifts in curriculum “toward subjects of more contemporary relevance. Holocaust courses and materials abound; there are also new courses and materials dealing with Israel, Soviet Jewry, and the American Jewish community. There are new programs for teaching the old subjects too: Bible, Jewish History, Sabbath and Holidays, Modern Hebrew and even Biblical Hebrew.

“With regard to methods, there is a trend toward individualizing and experiential programs. . . . Thus, for better or worse, we can find practically every new idea that has hit the general field of education at work in some Jewish school: open classrooms, contract learning, programmed lessons, learning modules, mini-courses, socio-dramas, field trips, retreats, volunteer work in Jewish agencies; slides, movies, videotapes, audiotapes, and many more.” Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught,” p. 262.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Several ancillary institutions complemented the work of Jewish teachers and schools. Most prominent among them were youth movements and summer camps, whose agenda was to provide young people with informal education. The B'nai B'rith Youth Organization was founded in 1924 to offer cultural programming to high-school students. In time, each of the denominations established youth auxiliaries: first came the Conservative movement's Young People's League (later United Synagogue Youth-USY), which was started in the late teens of the century; the Reform movement established the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) in 1939; and the Orthodox Union created the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY) in 1959. Zionist youth movements such as Beitar, Young Judaea, and B'nai Akiva also were important settings for informal education in the postwar years. Although it is difficult to assess the extent or nature of the learning that actually took place within the youth movements, their impact was significant because they provided tens of thousands of young Jews with a setting for intense Jewish engagement during their teen years—a time when few engaged in formal Jewish schooling.¹⁰⁶

Some Jewish summer camps played a similar role. Two of the oldest Jewish camps to set themselves such a task, Cejwin (founded in 1919) and Modin (1922), were established by Jewish educators to overcome the problem of “summer forgetting” and to offer an intensive setting for Jewish living.¹⁰⁷ By the 1940s an extensive network of Jewish camps with an educational mission had come into existence, ranging from Yiddishist and socialist camps to JCC and federation camps, to religious and Zionist camps.¹⁰⁸ In 1941, the first Massad camp was established with the express goal of creating a Hebrew-speaking environment.¹⁰⁹ The Conservative movement launched its Ramah camping network in 1947 to socialize young people within a setting that offered religious instruction and He-

¹⁰⁶The critical role of youth movements in the postwar years and their eclipse in more recent decades is a rich subject in search of probing analysis. For a flavor of what such research would yield, see “NFTY After Fifty Years: A Symposium,” *CCAR Journal*, Fall 1989, pp. 1–54.

¹⁰⁷Daniel Isaacman, “The Development of Jewish Camping in the United States,” *Gratz College Annual*, 1976, pp. 111–20; and A. P. Schoolman, “Jewish Educational Camping—Its Potentialities and Realities,” *Jewish Education*, Winter 1966, pp. 71–86.

¹⁰⁸Edwin Cole Goldberg, “The Beginning of Educational Camping in the Reform Movement,” *CCAR Journal*, Fall 1989, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹Meir Havatzelet, ed., *Kovetz Massad: Essays in Hebrew Literature and Thought by Friends of Massad Camp* (Massad Camps, New York, 1978), in Hebrew. See especially the section on “Hebrew Camping.”

brew speaking.¹¹⁰ The model of Ramah's denominational camping prompted the Reform movement to open its first camp in 1951.¹¹¹ And quite a number of Orthodox camps, largely under private auspices, also opened in these years, offering periods of formal religious instruction as well as informal education.

Although the early pioneers of Jewish camping, particularly Samson Benderly and his circle, believed that "two essential problems in Jewish education—time and environment"¹¹² could be remedied through camping programs, research on Jewish camps in the postwar decades yielded only mixed results. Surveying the literature on these camps, Harold Himmelfarb concluded: "Despite the general impression of Jewish educators that Jewish overnight camps have a very strong impact on their campers, and despite the fact that the participants and alumni of such camps generally have great praise for their experiences and feel that the camps have had great impact upon them, there is not much empirical proof of enduring behavioral effects."¹¹³ Still, proponents have viewed such camps as valuable ancillaries of formal schooling and as ideal environments in which to cultivate some of the affective aspects of Jewish identification in young people.

One of the potential settings for informal education that only slowly began to assume an educational role in this period was the Jewish community center, the JCC. Many of the staff members of centers at mid-century were, at best, divided over whether their institutions should serve a nonsectarian or "Jewish purpose." Indeed, when a major survey of JCCs was conducted right after World War II, nearly a fifth of the centers reported "not a single project or activity of specific Jewish content." All told, a quarter offered no program for children with Jewish content, and over a third also had no such program for adults; over half provided nothing of the sort for teenagers. Most staff members had little to offer in any event: over 20 percent had never received a Jewish education, and an additional 40 percent had never gone beyond an elementary Jewish education. Not surprisingly, the survey discovered that the vast majority of JCC staff members viewed Jewish education as either irrelevant or only a minimal qualification for work in a JCC.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Camp Ramah: The Early Years," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1987, pp. 12–41.

¹¹¹Goldberg, "Camping in the Reform Movement," pp. 7–9.

¹¹²Winter, *Jewish Education in a Pluralistic Society*, p. 186 (see note 21).

¹¹³Harold S. Himmelfarb, "Evaluating the Effects of Jewish Summer Camping in the United States," in *Papers in Jewish Demography 1985* (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 392, and Sheldon A. Dorph, "A Model of Jewish Education in America: Guidelines for the Restructuring of Conservative Congregational Education," unpublished diss., Columbia Univ., 1976.

¹¹⁴Oscar I. Janowsky, "A Landmark in the Evolution of Jewish Community Centers," in *The Jewish Community Center: Two Essays on Basic Purpose* (JWB, New York, 1974), pp. 13–14.

Change came gradually to the JCC field. But in the years after the Six Day War, as the American Jewish community grew more concerned with problems of assimilation, "nonsectarianism" gave way in the JCC world to a new responsiveness to the "needs of American Jewry." By 1970, a commission under the volunteer leadership of Morton Mandel issued a mission statement that opened with a declaration urging JCCs to "strengthen . . . Jewish identity and positively affect . . . Jewish survival, including a concern for definitions, enhancing Jewish knowledge and awareness, and permeating Center activity with Jewish character." Gradually, the JCCs began to expand their role as providers of formal and informal Jewish education, an emphasis that would grow considerably in the last 15 years of the century.¹¹⁵

A Field in Crisis

Roughly a quarter century after the onset of its booming expansion at the close of World War II, the field of Jewish education entered into a period of demoralization, bordering on a loss in confidence. Journals of Jewish education spanning the 1970s and early 1980s are replete with references to a "crisis" in the field. In 1972, Leonard Fein, a writer not usually given to pessimism or gloom, set as his point of departure for the reform of Jewish education "an understanding of the sources of its present lamentable condition."¹¹⁶ "Unfortunately," he went on to observe, "the claim that the present educational system makes for itself as a promoter of Jewish identity does not mean that it in fact promotes such identity. Indeed, there has been a failure of startling proportions to derive appropriate educational conclusions from the interest in identity."

As the 1970s wore on, one writer after the next hammered away at those failings: Jewish schools, it was asserted, produced "culturally deprived" children;¹¹⁷ "most Jewish schools," another study concluded, "produce graduates who are functionally illiterate in Judaism and not clearly positive in their attitudinal identification. . . . Graduates look back without joy on their educational experiences."¹¹⁸ Indeed, according to a third study, the clash between parental indifference and the goals of Jewish education constituted an "exercise in self-deception."¹¹⁹ Even the leading

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁶Fein, "Suggestions Toward the Reform of Jewish Education," pp. 41, 46.

¹¹⁷Himmelfarb, "Jewish Education for Naught," p. 256.

¹¹⁸From a report issued by a task force of the American Jewish Committee in 1977, quoted by Isa Aron in "From the Congregational School to the Learning Congregation," p. 64.

¹¹⁹Ackerman, "Jewish Education Today," p. 131.

national spokesman for Jewish education implicitly conceded the point when in 1983 he enumerated “present assets and liabilities” of the field, with the latter far outnumbering the former.¹²⁰

What had happened to evoke such despair? The most blatant symptom of crisis was the precipitous decline in enrollments. After peaking in 1962 at nearly 600,000, the Jewish student population declined by 6 percent in the next four years; by 1970, the rolls were down by an additional 13 percent, with total enrollments in Jewish schools estimated at 547,196.¹²¹ The 1970s brought no respite from bad news: a census taken at mid-decade enumerated fewer than 400,000 pupils,¹²² and by the early 1980s the figure was approximated as 372,000 students.¹²³ Thus in a 20-year period, the Jewish student population had declined by some 40 percent.

Much of this drop was attributable to two factors: the Jewish baby boom had come to an end during the 1960s, and by the early 1970s, Jewish women, inspired by the feminist revolution, had begun to defer child-bearing in order to pursue career goals. These two “natural” circumstances in themselves would have caused a massive decline in enrollments, forcing schools to merge or sharply curtail their programs. Equally disturbing to educators was the noticeable decrease in the proportion of Jewish children who were receiving any Jewish education. The best estimates in the 1950s and 1960s placed the enrollment figure for elementary-age children at 80 percent.¹²⁴ Data from a few large cities indicated that by the mid-1970s, the proportion not receiving any Jewish education had risen to between 25 and 30 percent. In New York alone, according to estimates, over 100,000 Jewish children were not receiving any Jewish education, a figure representing one-quarter of all Jewish youngsters.¹²⁵ When all “potential” students were counted, matters looked even worse. A school census conducted in 1983 estimated that only 41 percent of all Jewish school-aged children were enrolled at any given time.¹²⁶

Beyond the numerical decline, educators were battered by a series of studies demonstrating the failings of the dominant type of Jewish schooling—the supplementary school. Based on his observation of Sunday school classes, Walter Ackerman drew a devastating portrait, con-

¹²⁰Shimon Frost, “Jewish Education: The State of the Art” (excerpts), *Background Papers in Jewish Education* (American Jewish Committee, New York, May 1983), p. 1.

¹²¹Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught,” p. 253.

¹²²Ackerman, “Jewish Education Today,” p. 132.

¹²³*Trends: Report on Developments in Jewish Education for Federation Leadership*, Spring 1986, p. 3; this figure was based on a JESNA-Hebrew University Census in 1983.

¹²⁴Ackerman, “Jewish Education Today,” p. 132.

¹²⁵Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught,” p. 253.

¹²⁶*Trends*, p. 3.

cluding that “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 joke or an act of cynical pretentiousness.” As for the more intensive three-day-a-week school, he wrote:

A recent study shows that even when pupils complete the requirements established by the curriculum, they have no recognizable fluency in Hebrew and cannot understand more than carefully edited texts based on a limited vocabulary. . . . Although 50% of the instructional time is devoted to the study of Hebrew and Bible, the pupil graduates from the school with only the most infantile notions of biblical thought and ideas, and a capability in Hebrew which hardly goes beyond monosyllabic responses to carefully worded questions. The study of history is a pious wish. Understanding and generalization fall prey to the hurried accumulation of disconnected fact.¹²⁷

When a number of scholars began to study the long-term impact of supplementary schooling, they drew even more damning conclusions. Geoffrey E. Bock analyzed the relative impact of Jewish schooling on levels of adult identification and concluded that it had a “greater impact on promoting public expressions of Jewishness—synagogue attendance, support for Israel, participation in Jewish organizations—than on personal expressions, such as home ritual observances, participation in Jewish social networks, and appreciating Jewish culture.”¹²⁸ Harold Himmelfarb examined the effects of schooling on religious behavior and concluded that “there is a threshold below which hours of Jewish schooling have no effect, unless supported by other influences of adult religiosity.”¹²⁹ According to his study, the vast majority of students attending supplementary schools did not reach the threshold. Himmelfarb warned that “fewer than 1,000 hours of Jewish schooling might even decrease religious involvement,”¹³⁰ thus rendering all one-day-a-week education and some supplementary schooling more harmful for the promotion of future religious observance than no Jewish schooling! Such was the degree of doubt engendered by these studies that a leading Jewish educator partially ascribed “the present crisis in supplementary schooling . . . to the fact that [the] perceptible difference in knowledge and in commitment between the product of the six-hour-a-week and the one-day-a-week school has not been demonstrated beyond doubt.”¹³¹

¹²⁷Ackerman, “Jewish Education—For What?” pp. 21–22.

¹²⁸Geoffrey E. Bock, “The Functions of Jewish Schooling in America,” *Studies in Jewish Education* 2, 1984, p. 233.

¹²⁹Harold S. Himmelfarb, “The Impact of Religious Schooling: A Synopsis,” *Studies in Jewish Education* 2, 1984, p. 276.

¹³⁰Himmelfarb, “Jewish Education for Naught,” p. 261.

¹³¹Shimon Frost, “Crucial Challenges to the Non-Orthodox School,” *Jewish Education*, Spring 1983, p. 25.

The most devastating critique came in the form of an ethnographic, rather than a quantitative, study. Based on close observation of a single Jewish afternoon school, David Schoem described the entire supplementary-school system as riddled with internal contradictions, confusion over mission, and self-deception. Schoem portrayed a dysfunctional institution whose rabbinic leadership, administration, and parent body were either blind to or uncomprehending of the yawning gap between the Judaism they were professing and the actual life experiences of the students.

The goals, the values, and the emotions of . . . parents seemed tied to a system that appeared little different than that of the non-Jews residing about them. Although these Jews did identify with a Jewish people, history, culture and religion, they did not in their own suburban American lives live according to any Jewish way of life. It wasn't that these Jews didn't want to be living a Jewish way of life, but rather they seemed to find the demands of modern life uncompromising. The Jewish way, as they understood it for their own lives, could not serve as a standard for living that suited the modern circumstances of life in America. . . . They have been unable to interpret their Jewish heritage so that it makes sense in their American life.¹³²

Although Schoem's study included a number of recommendations for improving supplementary schooling, it was hard for his readers to imagine that this broken system could—or should—ever be repaired.

We should note that a parallel mood of disenchantment with public education was very much in vogue within the larger world of American education at precisely this time. "In the early 1980s," writes one historian of American education, "Americans awoke to discover that their public schools were failing them."¹³³ A flurry of reports issued by blue-ribbon panels were sharply critical of educational failings that had rendered America "*A Nation at Risk*," to cite perhaps the most famous of these calls for educational reform (issued in 1983). Another such report warned that "the nation's public schools are in trouble. By almost every measure—the commitment and competency of teachers, student test scores, truancy and drop out rates, crimes of violence—the performance of our schools falls far short of expectations. . . . Too many young people are leaving the schools without acquiring essential learning skills, and without self-discipline or purpose."¹³⁴ While the criticism of supplementary Jewish

¹³²David L. Schoem, *Ethnic Survival in America: An Ethnography of a Jewish Afternoon School* (Scholar's Press, Atlanta, 1989). The quotation is taken from Schoem's doctoral diss. as cited by Ackerman in "Jewish Education Today," p. 131.

¹³³Joseph Murphy, "The Educational Reform Movement of the 1980s: A Comprehensive Analysis," in *The Educational Reform Movement of the 1980s: Perspectives and Cases*, ed. J. Murphy (Berkeley, 1990), p. 3.

¹³⁴From *Making the Grade*, a report issued by the Twentieth Century Fund in 1983. Quoted in Murphy, *ibid.*

programs did not focus on truancy and crimes, it was consistent with the pervasive dissatisfaction with schooling that was so much in the air.

Perhaps the only sector of the Jewish educational world immune to sharp criticism was the day school. Students in such schools scored higher on achievement tests in Hebrew language, Jewish history, current events, and knowledge of Jewish holidays and observances than children in afternoon schools, leading one study to conclude that “the average nine-year-old in Day schools does much better than the average 13-year-old in the Afternoon school.”¹³⁵ A series of studies on the long-term impact of day-school education all concluded that, while “the Jewish involvement of the home or the parents exerts more influence than the school upon levels of Jewish involvement as an adult, they do show that more Jewish schooling—whether measured in terms of years or total number of hours in Jewish studies—is associated with higher levels of subsequent adult Jewish involvement.”¹³⁶ Not surprisingly, educators were heartened by the steady increase in the proportion of day-schoolers: by 1983, the majority of children receiving a Jewish education in New York were enrolled in day schools, whereas in the rest of the country, around 20 percent of the Jewish student population was in day schools.¹³⁷

There were few other perceived bright spots in the educational galaxy during this period of introspection and worry. The personnel crisis persisted, despite the declining demand for educators. In addition, by the 1970s, most observers had given up on the teacher-training institutions, which in any event were so short on students that they began to refashion their mission. A study completed in 1981 found that these schools

have begun to develop courses, and sometimes entire programs, to meet the needs of the general community, and to enroll more and more students . . . non-traditional learners. . . . This, of course, can be seen as a positive development—a guarantee for the continued growth and viability of these institutions—or as a negative development—a sign of decline and change of mission, with the possibility that Hebrew teacher preparation programs may gradually lose importance in the institutions, and may even disappear.¹³⁸

By 1981, moreover, only 20 percent of the courses at these schools were still conducted in the Hebrew language. Indeed, in the early 1980s, the Iggud itself disbanded and was replaced by a new Association of Institutions of Higher Learning for Jewish Education.¹³⁹

¹³⁵Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, p. 207.

¹³⁶David Shluker, “The Impact of Day Schools: A Briefing Paper on Day School Viability and Vitality” (JESNA, July 1998), p. 3.

¹³⁷*Trends*, 1986, p. 3.

¹³⁸Davidson, “Preparation of Jewish Educators,” p. 4.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

There was also little optimism that the larger infrastructure could solve the problems of the field. Bureaus of Jewish education came under attack in this period for abdicating their responsibilities as educational innovators and becoming instead "heavy-handed licensing boards."¹⁴⁰ And few observers were sanguine that federations would direct significant new sums toward Jewish education. The debate over communal funding for day schools and other forms of Jewish education stood deadlocked, leaving partisans embittered and frustrated.¹⁴¹

One important educator agreed with the generally bleak view of the field, but urged a rethinking that would go beyond the obvious shortage of resources. Writing in 1973, Seymour Fox, an American-born professor of Jewish education who had settled in Israel, argued that the personnel and funding shortages and weak curricula were secondary problems that distracted from the more fundamental issue: "If Jewish education is discussed only in terms of time, money, and space," Fox warned, "or embedded in slogans that ignore complexity and diversity, we can only repel the very people we most need to attract."¹⁴² Instead, Fox contended, "the most urgent problem facing Jewish education . . . is its lack of purpose, and, consequently, its blandness. Therefore, until we engage in serious deliberation aimed at rectifying this state of affairs, we cannot even hope to deal with all the other issues that demand solution."¹⁴³

RECENT TRENDS

In the closing years of the century, the field of Jewish education finds itself in a paradoxical situation. The leadership of the American Jewish community is, as never before, wracked by deep worry about the potential disappearance of large numbers of its population through disaffiliation, intermarriage, and alienation from Jewish life. Much of this decline in identification, significantly, is attributed to the past failings of Jewish education. At the same time, Jewish education has become the beneficiary of an infusion of new funding and personnel, both being channeled into existing educational programs and a wide range of new initiatives designed to expand the range of opportunities for Jews of all ages to further their education. The critical assault on Jewish education, in short,

¹⁴⁰Fein, "Suggestions Toward the Reform of Jewish Education," p. 265.

¹⁴¹Himmelfarb, "Jewish Education for Naught," p. 47.

¹⁴²Seymour Fox, "Toward a General Theory of Jewish Education," in *The Future of the Jewish Community in America*, ed. David Sidorsky (New York, 1973), p. 268.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 261.

has been replaced by a new appreciation of its vital role in rebuilding American Jewish life.

Jewish Schooling and the Crisis of Jewish "Continuity"

Although the surge of concern about Jewish "continuity"—the ability of American Jews to transmit to the next generations a strong identification with Jewish culture, religion, and peoplehood—is generally linked to the findings of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), educators, as we have seen, had agonized over these matters for decades. Studies about the impact of schooling conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, in fact, focused both on the scant knowledge and weak skills young people acquired during their school years, and also on the eventual relationship of Jewish education to adult behavior. Indeed, the term "continuity" itself appeared in the writing of educators worried about the future.¹⁴⁴ NJPS and other demographic studies, then, did not invent the issue of "continuity"; rather, they dramatized the dire nature of the problem and impressed upon the wider Jewish public, including its lay leaders, the need to develop a strategy to confront the serious issues. No sector has been deemed more central to this effort than the field of Jewish education.¹⁴⁵

The point was driven home by a number of studies measuring the long-term impact of Jewish education. Summarizing these studies, the sociologist Sylvia Barack Fishman concluded:

Extensive Jewish education is definitively associated with every measure of adult Jewish identification. Its impact can be clearly seen in every public and private Jewish life. Younger American Jewish adults (25 to 44) who have received six or more years of Jewish education are the group most likely to join, volunteer time for, and donate money to Jewish causes, to belong to synagogues and attend services at least several times a year, to seek out Jewish neighborhoods and Jewish friends, to perform Jewish rituals in their homes,

¹⁴⁴See, for example, Alvin I. Schiff, "Jewish Continuity Through Jewish Education: A Human Resource Imperative," *Jewish Education*, Summer 1980, pp. 5–12.

¹⁴⁵In 1985 a Commission on Jewish Continuity was convened by the Cleveland federation to bring together lay and professional leaders for the purpose of "strengthen[ing] Jewish continuity and identity." Three years later a Commission on the Jewish Future was established in Los Angeles to address "deeply troubling statistics as well as our awareness and concern that intermarriage is increasing, that ever fewer Jewish children receive a Jewish education, [that] affiliation with Jewish religious and communal/philanthropic organizations is dropping and that the sense of identification with Jewish history, tradition, religion and community diminishes with each generation." That same year, a Commission on Jewish Education in North America was convened through the efforts of Morton Mandel and the Mandel Associated Foundations, which brought together key leaders from across the denominational and organizational spectrum. See Walter I. Ackerman, "Reforming Jewish Education," *Agenda: Jewish Education*, Spring 1996, p. 6, and *A Time to Act: The Report of the Commission on Jewish Education* (see note 7).

to visit and care deeply about Israel, and to marry another Jew. When they marry persons who are not born Jews, their spouses are very likely to convert into Judaism and become Jews by choice. And they are the group most likely to continue the pattern and to provide many years of Jewish education to their children.¹⁴⁶

A more detailed analysis of national, as well as local, demographic surveys provides ample evidence of such a strong correlation. The authors of two studies analyzed data from the 1990 NJPS, comparing the current Jewish involvement of adults with the type and duration of Jewish education they received as children. These are the key findings:

Positive Identification. When asked "How important is being a Jew for you?" 75 percent of day-school graduates answered "very important," as compared to 47 percent of afternoon-school alumni, 40 percent of those who had attended Sunday school, and only 22 percent of those who received no Jewish education. Put in terms of years of Jewish education, 70 percent of respondents who had spent 11 or more years in Jewish schools answered "very important," as compared to 41 percent of those who had five or fewer years of Jewish education.¹⁴⁷

Friendship Patterns. Over half the adults who reported having more than 15 years of Jewish education claimed that most or all of their closest friends were Jews, a proportion that dropped to 27 percent for those who had no Jewish education.¹⁴⁸

Endogamy. Seventy-eight percent of day-school graduates married a born Jew, as compared to two-thirds of those schooled in an afternoon program and 57 percent of those who attended Sunday school. Half of all Jews who had received no Jewish education were married to Gentiles.¹⁴⁹ Among baby-boomers, whose rates of intermarriage are considerably higher than older cohorts, intensity of Jewish education correlates strongly with a lesser propensity to marry out of the faith: of those between the ages of 25 and 44 in 1990, nearly 80 percent who attended six or more years of day school were married to a Jew, as compared to slightly over half of those who attended six or more years of afternoon school and even smaller percentages of those who attended one-day-a-week school.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Jewish Education and Jewish Identity Among Contemporary American Jews: Suggestions from Current Research* (Bureau of Jewish Education, Center for Educational Research and Evaluation, Boston, 1995), pp. 5–6.

¹⁴⁷Seymour Martin Lipset, *The Power of Jewish Education* (Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, Los Angeles, Spring 1994), p. 17.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵⁰Sylvia Barack Fishman and Alice Goldstein, *When They Are Grown They Will Not Depart: Jewish Education and the Jewish Behavior of American Adults*, Research Report no. 8 (Cohen Center, Brandeis Univ., Mar. 1993), table 7.

Ritual Observance. When asked whether they abstain from eating on Yom Kippur, one of the most central of religious obligations, nearly three-quarters of those who had received no Jewish education reported that they do not fast, as compared to 53 percent of Sunday-school graduates, and 30 percent of afternoon- and day-school alumni. Duration of schooling, again, looms large: two-thirds of those with more than 11 years of day school-education fast, as compared to slightly over half of those with five years or less of Jewish schooling, and slightly over a quarter of those with no schooling.¹⁵¹

Attachment to Israel. Fewer than half the population that received no Jewish education felt an attachment to Israel; by contrast, far higher rates of attachment were evident among day-school products (63 percent); afternoon-school alumni were less likely to profess such attachment and Sunday-school graduates were least likely to do so.¹⁵²

Voluntarism. The same general pattern characterizes affiliation with and volunteering service to a Jewish organization: 29 percent of adults who attended Jewish schools for over 15 years report volunteer activities, a figure that declines to 16 percent among those who received fewer than five years of Jewish education, and only 10 percent of those with no formal Jewish schooling.¹⁵³

Philanthropy. An exposure to more intensive Jewish education is associated with a higher likelihood of giving to Jewish causes. Adult Jews with six or more years of supplementary- or day-school education are 20 percent more likely to give to a Jewish cause than those with none at all. And adults with a more intensive Jewish education are more likely to give to a Jewish charity than products of one-day-a-week schools.¹⁵⁴

Synagogue membership. The type and intensity of Jewish education also relates to the decision to join a synagogue. Among men and women, a day-school education of six and more years is related to higher levels of synagogue affiliation than is supplementary-school education; moreover, the correlation between intensive Jewish education and congregational membership is strongest for younger Jews under the age of 45.¹⁵⁵ Among those adults between the ages of 25 and 44 who had studied for six or more years in afternoon schools, 44 percent were synagogue members, a figure that rises to 60 percent among those who studied in day schools for six or more years, and drops to only 28 percent of adults who

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵⁵Lipset, *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 9.

were enrolled for that many years in Sunday school. (Significantly, fewer than a third of adults who studied for three to five years in a day school were synagogue members, as compared to 21 percent who had studied for that number of years in an afternoon school.)¹⁵⁶

Summing up the results of his study, Seymour Martin Lipset concluded that “the iron law of ‘the more the more’ prevails. The longer Jews have been exposed to Jewish education, the greater their commitment to the community, to some form of the religion, and to Israel. The relationships among type of school attended, attitudes, and behavior reiterate this conclusion again and again.”¹⁵⁷

Since the “continuity” crisis came to public attention specifically over the matter of intermarriage, there has been some debate over claims put forth about the efficacy of specific forms of education in stemming the high rates of intermarriage. In his detailed re-analysis of intermarriage trends, the sociologist Bruce Phillips questions “the widely quoted conclusions that only or even mostly day school education reduces mixed

¹⁵⁶Fishman and Goldstein, *When They Are Grown*, table 6.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 26. Other researchers have analyzed the impact of educational experiences by tracking graduates of particular kinds of schools. Alvin I. Schiff and Mareleyn Schneider, for example, surveyed a sample of 8,536 graduates of 26 Jewish day schools in the United States located in 19 communities of various sizes. They found that products of day schools ranging across the denominational spectrum exhibited relatively high levels of Jewish identification: “(1) About three-quarters of Conservative and trans-ideological graduates and nine-tenths of Orthodox school graduates observe *kashrut* at home, somewhat less than the level of observance in their parental homes. *Kashrut* observance outside the home is less, both for graduates and their parents. (2) More than three-quarters of the Conservative school graduates light candles and make or hear *kiddush* on Friday evening; approximately 40 percent of them make (or hear) *kiddush* on Saturday, attend synagogue Friday evening, refrain from travel, and study Jewish texts on the Sabbath. The level of *Shabbat* observance of trans-ideological school graduates is somewhat less. Approximately two-thirds of them light candles and make or hear *kiddush* on Friday evenings. Over 40 percent attend synagogue on Saturday morning; more than one-quarter refrain from travel and slightly less than one-quarter study Jewish texts on the Sabbath. . . . (3) Of those who are married, 4.5 percent married non-Jews. Another 2.7 percent chose to marry spouses who were agnostics or atheists. Of those who married gentiles, a little more than half indicated that their spouses converted. The most noticeable difference between Jewish day school graduates and other American Jews of their age is in the matter of intermarriage; actual experience and attitude toward it. Whereas the majority of Jews who married between 1985 and 1990, according to the 1990 NJPS, married non-Jews, 4.5 percent of Jewish day school graduates, who married between 1975 and 1990, are intermarried and over 80 percent object to their progeny intermarrying.” Schiff and Schneider, *The Jewishness Quotient of Jewish Day School Graduates: Studying the Effect of Jewish Education on Adult Jewish Behavior*, Research Report no. 1 (Azrieli Graduate Institute of Jewish Education and Administration, Yeshiva Univ., New York, Apr. 1994), pp. 9–12. See also Schiff and Schneider’s *Far-Reaching Effects of Extensive Jewish Day School Attendance: The Impact of Jewish Education on Jewish Behavior and Attitudes*, Research Report no. 2 (*ibid.*, July 1994).

marriage.”¹⁵⁸ Phillips especially challenges the view that afternoon education has only a slight impact in deterring intermarriage, arguing that when we factor in the variable of generation—i.e., how many generations has the family been in America?—the picture is more complex. Since most day-school graduates in the NJPS data base are first- and second-generation Americans, while most of the afternoon-school graduates are third- and fourth-generation Americans, one can say that the day schools are as yet untested. Furthermore, says Phillips, among third- and fourth-generation Americans in the survey who attended afternoon schools, the rates of intermarriage are lower than for products of other types of schooling. Phillips also argues that the duration of Jewish education plays a major role: attendance in an afternoon school after the age of bar or bat mitzvah correlates strongly with endogamy.¹⁵⁹

The Phillips study, among others, serves as a corrective to the more exaggerated claims put forth by proponents of various types of educational programs.¹⁶⁰ Upon reflection, it should be apparent that education alone does not guarantee a strong degree of Jewish identification, let alone active participation. It serves as a necessary but usually insufficient motivator of later adult behavior. The role of families in most instances can be even more critical in identity formation. On the most basic level, children will not even have the opportunity to receive a Jewish education if their parents do not themselves have a positive identification: NJPS data indicate that, among those parents who enroll their children in a Jewish school, 78 percent regard being Jewish as “very important” and another 20 percent feel it to be “somewhat important”; no parents in this sample who deemed Jewishness unimportant bothered to enroll their children in a Jewish school. Conversely, almost nine out of ten parents who currently do not enroll their children and also indicate no intention of registering them in the future also contend that being Jewish is “not very important.”¹⁶¹

Still, even with these important caveats, it has been widely acknowledged by leaders of the American Jewish community that the intensity

¹⁵⁸Bruce Phillips, *Re-Examining Intermarriage—Trends, Textures, Strategies* (Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies and William Petschek National Jewish Family Center of the American Jewish Committee, n.d., ca. 1996), p. 16. For a helpful response to Phillips, see Michael Zeldin, “Overselling the Day Schools? The Controversy Lives On,” *In Progress*, Fall 1997, pp. 14–15.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁶⁰For a penetrating analysis of just how problematic it is to determine the relationship between Jewish education in childhood and adult Jewish identification, see Stuart Schoenfeld, “Six Methodological Problems in Forecasting the Impact of Jewish Education on Jewish Identity,” *Jewish Education*, Winter/Spring 1998, pp. 87–101.

¹⁶¹Lipset, *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 40.

and duration of formal Jewish education are critical factors in the formation of future generations of Jews—and perhaps the factors most amenable to communal influence and direction. Given this assessment, it is not surprising that a community preoccupied with its own “continuity” has made a concerted effort to strengthen Jewish schooling.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Although the essential contours of Jewish schooling have remained largely the same over the last quarter of the 20th century, several long-standing trends have become more pronounced. To begin with, enrollments began to rebound in the 1980s from their nadir a decade before. The school population swelled as the children of baby-boomers reached school age (and as older boomers who had deferred child-bearing began to have children.) A school census conducted over the period 1986–88 concluded that some 470,000 children were enrolled in formal Jewish education, an increase of some 100,000 enrollments in less than a decade. Based on projections of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey about the total population of school-aged children, this suggested that, at any given moment, between 35 and 40 percent of that cohort of children were enrolled, a proportion that has remained fairly constant since the late 1960s.¹⁶²

¹⁶²Leora W. Isaacs, “What We Know About Enrollment,” in *What We Know About Jewish Education: A Handbook of Today's Research for Tomorrow's Jewish Education*, ed. Stuart Kelman (Torah Aura Productions, Los Angeles, 1992), pp. 63–64. There is considerable variability from one community to the next in patterns of school enrollment. Demographic surveys conducted by Jewish communities in the 1990s have found that in some communities, such as Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Harrisburg, over two-thirds of 6–12-year-olds are enrolled in Jewish schools, as compared to Atlanta, Miami, and Las Vegas, where the figure is closer to 50 percent. Ira Sheskin, *Geographic Variations in the Results of Local Demographic Studies*, Report no. 10 (North American Jewish Data Bank, New York, Feb. 1997), p. 70.

Responses to the 1990 NJPS suggest that there will be a significant rise in the percentage of Jewish children who receive no Jewish education. When parents of children under six were asked whether they intended eventually to enroll their offspring in Jewish schools, 35 percent answered no and another 24 percent were uncertain; only 40 percent answered affirmatively. Lipset, *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 34.

We may note in this connection the growing movement to offer Jewish schooling to children with disabilities, which in part reflects the desire to increase the proportion of young Jews exposed to a Jewish education. The key settings created for Jewish special education are found in Orthodox day schools and in programs created by central agencies (bureaus of Jewish education in local communities). On developments in the latter area, see Leora W. Isaacs and Caren N. Levine, *So That All May Study Torah: Communal Provision of Jewish Education for Students with Special Needs* (JESNA, New York, Dec. 1995). On the forming of P'tach (Parents for Torah for All Children), see Harris C. Faigel, “Jewish Special Education,” *Hadassah Magazine*, Nov. 1985, pp. 18–20; Natalie Volstad, “Jewish Education for Very Special Children,” *Hadassah Magazine*, Feb. 1979, pp. 14–18; Edward

The distribution of students within the Jewish school system continues to shift in directions that became manifest by the 1960s. Within the supplementary schools, both the one-day-a-week and five-day-a-week schools have experienced a further decline in "market share."¹⁶³ The latter, more intensive form of schooling has been replaced by day schools, and enrollment in the former continues to erode. By 1982 slightly under a quarter of Jewish students were still in Sunday schools, almost three-quarters of them enrolled in schools under Reform auspices.¹⁶⁴

Why do parents choose one form of schooling over another? Based on the 1990 NJPS, new research has focused on the factors that correlate strongly with different Jewish educational choices, "the determinants"¹⁶⁵ of schooling. Some of this research focuses on the current population of adults, identifying several key variables:

The parents' own Jewish educational attainments. The more years of Jewish education parents had received, the more likely those parents were to enroll their children in a Jewish school. Interestingly, the type of schooling parents selected for their children was not necessarily the same as they themselves had attended: 43 percent of current day-school parents had attended such a school, and roughly half of parents sending their children to afternoon school were products of such schools; fewer than a third of Sunday-school children had parents who had attended one-day-a-week school.¹⁶⁶

Generation in America. The more American-born grandparents a child has, the less likely that child is to receive an intensive Jewish education. Roughly a quarter of all children with four foreign-born grandparents received no Jewish education, as compared to 44 percent of children with four native-born grandparents. Conversely, 84 percent of day-school students do not have a single American-born grandparent.¹⁶⁷

Gender. Males are more likely to have received a Jewish education and to have attended a more intensive form of schooling: roughly two-thirds

Shapiro, "Special Education, Yeshiva Style: How One Brooklyn Rabbi Has Made Intensive Jewish Education Available to the Learning Disabled," *Moment*, May 1981, pp. 50–53; and Betsy S. Jacobs, "Teach Your Children, All Your Children: Can Jewish Education Meet the Needs of Kids with Disabilities?" *Moment*, Feb. 1990, p. 34ff.

¹⁶³Leora W. Isaacs, "Four Decades of Jewish Education: A Look Back and a Look Ahead," *Pedagogic Reporter*, Oct. 1989, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 64. A survey conducted in the mid-1990s of supplementary schools under Reform auspices provides somewhat murky findings about the extent to which schools meet more than one day a week and to what extent recent trends represent a shift from the past. See Samuel K. Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling: A Survey and an Analysis of Supplementary Schooling in Congregations* (UAHC Press, New York, 1997), pp. 13–15.

¹⁶⁵These are Seymour Martin Lipset's terms. See *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

of day-school and afternoon-school alumni are males, whereas 62 percent of Sunday-school alumni are women.¹⁶⁸ Some of this gender gap narrows among younger Jews, but it nonetheless persists: thus, only 14 percent of Jewish men between the ages of 25 and 44 claimed to have received no Jewish education as compared to 34 percent of women; among young adults between 18 and 24, this gap narrowed to 19 percent for men and 28 percent for women. Similar patterns are evident when we compare younger and older populations who had received more intensive forms of Jewish education—that is, the youngest women had far more opportunities, but still not as many as males of their own age.¹⁶⁹

Region. There are also significant regional variations in patterns of school attendance. Jews in the Northeast are more likely to have attended day school (7 percent) and afternoon school (42 percent), as compared to Jews in the South (3 percent and 25 percent, respectively). Almost half the Jews in Western states and a third of Southern Jews never received any formal Jewish education, as compared to 30 percent of Northeastern and 28 percent of Midwestern Jews.¹⁷⁰

Denominational identification. In the current adult population, there are significant variations in educational exposure from one religious movement to the next. Among all self-identified Conservative Jews, slightly over one-third claim to have attended either a supplementary or day school for six or more years; this figure rises to 52 percent among self-identified Orthodox Jews, declines to 17 percent among Reform Jews, and rises again to 47 percent for Reconstructionists.¹⁷¹ Overall, around one-fifth of current Orthodox Jews attended a day school, as compared to 7 percent of Conservative Jews and 3 percent of Reform Jews. By contrast, half of all self-identified Conservative Jews attended afternoon schools, compared to 34 percent of Reform Jews. As for Sunday-school attendance, 41 percent of self-identified Reform Jews claim such an educational experience, compared to 16 percent of Conservative Jews and 9 percent of Orthodox Jews.¹⁷² (It is impossible to judge from these figures precisely how adult identification relates to earlier educational experiences—that is, to what extent have large numbers of individuals switched from one denominational identification to another because of their schooling?)

As for the current generation of youngsters, three additional factors determine the extent and nature of the schooling they receive. The first is

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶⁹Fishman and Goldstein, *When They Are Grown*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁷¹Sidney and Alice Goldstein, *Conservative Jewry in the United States: A Demographic Profile* (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, 1998), p. 132, table 19.

¹⁷²Lipset, *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 15.

intermarriage: Children raised in homes where both parents are Jewish are far more likely to receive a Jewish education than those raised in an interfaith family. Only 30 percent of the latter have attended Jewish schools, as compared to roughly 80 percent of the former.¹⁷³ Among children aged six to twelve being raised as non-Jews, roughly 10 percent had received a Jewish education.¹⁷⁴

The second factor is *family income*: Jewish families earning more than \$80,000 a year are considerably more likely to send their children to a Jewish school than are families earning half that income.¹⁷⁵ Income is even more of a factor among non-Orthodox Jews who send their children to a day school. A study of Conservative synagogue members found that among families with incomes under \$75,000, roughly 37 percent had sent their oldest child to a day school; the figure dips to 29 percent for those in the \$75,000–99,000 income range, and then continues to rise for families with an income over \$100,000, peaking at 46 percent for those families earning over \$150,000.¹⁷⁶

The third factor is the parents' *denominational identification*: Alice Goldstein and Sylvia B. Fishman report that "branch of Judaism makes a significant difference in the extent of education among Jewish children. Almost all of those being raised in Orthodox households have had some Jewish education. The percentage is somewhat lower for those living in Conservative or Reform households, 79 percent and 77 percent, respectively. In households that consider themselves 'just Jewish,' only 46 percent of the children have ever been enrolled in programs of Jewish education. Three-fourths of Conservative 16-to-18-year-olds have had six or more years of Jewish education, while this was true of only half among Reform teenagers. Furthermore, Reform teens are more likely to have had no Jewish education."¹⁷⁷ The overall pattern, then, conforms to the conventional wisdom about the spectrum of Jewish engagement: Orthodox Jews are most likely to expose their children to both an intense and long-lasting period of Jewish education, Conservative Jews to somewhat less,

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷⁴Alice Goldstein and Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Teach Your Children When They Are Young: Contemporary Jewish Education in the United States*, Research Report no. 10 (Cohen Center, Brandeis Univ., Dec. 1993), p. 4.

¹⁷⁵Lipset, *Power of Jewish Education*, p. 45.

¹⁷⁶Steven M. Cohen, "Day School Parents in Conservative Synagogues," in *Jewish Identity and Religious Commitment*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, 1997), pp. 22–23. (The dip among families earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 may relate to the fact that they are least likely to qualify for tuition scholarships and yet feel themselves unable to shoulder the tuition burden.)

¹⁷⁷Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*, p. 4.

and Reform parents enroll their children for even fewer years and the least intensive schooling.¹⁷⁸

As is true of so much else in Jewish life today, these tendencies suggest that the more engaged Jews are also the most likely to invest in a good Jewish education for their offspring. "The most highly educated children," report Alice Goldstein and Sylvia Fishman, "are those whose parents also received substantial levels of Jewish education, are in-married, and perform Jewish rituals in their homes, and whose households belong to synagogues."¹⁷⁹

THE SURGE IN DAY-SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

In light of this assessment, it is particularly noteworthy that ever increasing numbers of parents who themselves never attended day schools have been enrolling their children in such intensive programs, thereby draining the supplementary schools of population. It was estimated that by the late 1990s, over 180,000 children attended day schools, compared to 260,000 enrolled in supplementary schools. In absolute terms, this means that the day-school population has tripled over the past 35 years; and the day schools' share of all Jewish enrollments has grown from under 10 percent in 1962 to nearly 40 percent.¹⁸⁰ Still, there are great variations from one community to the next. In metropolitan New York, by far the largest Jewish community in North America, roughly twice as many Jewish children attend day schools as supplementary schools (88,000 versus 37,000).¹⁸¹ By contrast, slightly over one-fifth of Jewish students in cities as diverse as Miami, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Las Vegas attend day schools; in communities such as St. Louis, Richmond, and St. Petersburg, the figure drops to 16 percent; and in some smaller communities, such as Wilmington and the southern part of New Jersey, roughly 5 percent attend day schools.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸⁰The most recent figures appear in David Shluker, "The Impact of Jewish Day Schools: A Briefing Paper" (JESNA, July 1998), p. 2. See also Debra Nussbaum Cohen, "Day Schools Face Funding Crisis Even As the Demand Flourishes," *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, Aug. 27, 1997, pp. 1–2; Rachel Blustain, "Why More Parents Are Choosing Jewish Day Schools," *Moment*, Feb. 1997, pp. 58–62. For some important qualifications about the reliability of data on Jewish school enrollment, including figures for day schools, see Marvin Schick and Jeremy Dauber, *The Financing of Jewish Day Schools* (Avi Chai Foundation, New York, Sept. 1997), pp. 2, 5–7.

¹⁸¹This is based on a report by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York issued in 1993. Stewart Ain, "Growth Spurt," *Jewish Week* (New York), Dec. 10–16, 1993, p. 14.

¹⁸²Sheskin, *Geographic Variations*, p. 70.

A variety of factors account for the continuing growth of day-school enrollments. For one, the most important feeder population for such schools, the Orthodox sector, continues to exhibit rising rates of fertility. Orthodox Jews as a group have a fertility rate twice that of Conservative and Reform Jews, and among the "ultra-Orthodox" or *haredi* population, the figure is perhaps as much as four times as high.¹⁸³ These rates represent a significant increase over trends at mid-century and account for growing demand in the Orthodox community for places within day schools. The influx of immigrants from Iran, the former Soviet Union, South Africa, and even Israel has in different ways also brought new populations into these schools. South African Jews, for example, have a long tradition of favoring day-school education. In the case of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, the American Jewish community has taken a special interest in their "resettlement" and "re-Judaization," such that communities and individual schools have offered day-school scholarships to win over the children of Russian immigrants and thereby gradually bring entire families into positive engagement with Jewish life.¹⁸⁴

The crisis in public-school education, moreover, has encouraged many parents to take a second look at day schools, which offer both superior general studies and an intensive Jewish education. Day schools have benefited from the wavering ardor of the Jewish love affair with public education. Since they generally charge lower tuition fees than other private schools, day schools have become a preferred vehicle among Jewish parents who are abandoning public education in favor of private schooling.¹⁸⁵ Even the longer school hours common in day schools make them more attractive to single-parent families and those in which both parents work outside the home, since they occupy children until late into the day.

We also should not underestimate attitudinal changes toward matters Jewish among baby-boomers. Many who had a less intensive Jewish education are receptive to giving their children opportunities they them-

¹⁸³Chaim I. Waxman, "The Haredization of American Orthodox Jewry," *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints* (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs), Feb. 15, 1998, pp. 1–2.

¹⁸⁴Some communities have even insisted that immigrants place their children in day schools as a *condition* for receiving other forms of family assistance. Private organizations have also tried to encourage immigrants to enroll their youth in day schools. In the mid-1990s, the "ultra-Orthodox" community in New York established an agency called Nechamas Yisrael to subvent the day-school education of over 2,000 youngsters from Bukharia and other regions of the former Soviet Union who had immigrated to Brooklyn and Queens. Nussbaum Cohen, "Day Schools Face Funding Crisis," p. 2.

¹⁸⁵Sylvia B. Fishman, *Learning About Jewish Learning: Insights on Contemporary Jewish Education from Jewish Population Studies*, Research Report no. 2 (Cohen Center, Brandeis Univ., Dec. 1987), p. 37.

selves did not enjoy. Although difficult to quantify, there is ample anecdotal evidence to support the view expressed by a journalist that “anxiety over the effects of assimilation and a realization that most American Jews have at best a watered-down understanding of Jewish history have led many parents to seek a more rigorous Jewish education for their children than they received themselves.”¹⁸⁶ Here the general tendencies of baby-boomers to give their children “more” and “better” than they themselves enjoyed are translating into a desire to give Jewish youngsters a more intensive and enjoyable Jewish schooling.¹⁸⁷ These tendencies cut across the denominational spectrum and have benefited all day schools to one extent or another.

As was true in the immediate postwar decades, the preponderant majority of day-school students continue to be drawn from the Orthodox sector, where virtually all children attend such intensive schooling at least through the high-school years. This in itself is a dramatic development of the past few decades, for until recently, a significant percentage of children reared in Orthodox homes still attended public schools and were educated in afternoon supplementary schools. The school census of 1958 found that 65 percent of Orthodox children attended afternoon or one-day-a-week supplementary schools;¹⁸⁸ and even as day schools grew in popularity in the 1960s, there continued to be a significant drop-off by the high-school years, as evidenced by the fact that there were roughly three times as many Orthodox elementary schools as there were high schools.¹⁸⁹ By the last quarter of the century, few Orthodox synagogues sponsored supplementary-school education any longer, and day school enrollment became well-nigh universal in the Orthodox world, standing at an estimated 99 percent.¹⁹⁰

Despite their small proportion in the total population of American Jewry—some 7 to 9 percent—Orthodox Jews maintain the preponderance of day schools: of the 203 day schools in New York, for example, 192 (or 95 percent) are under Orthodox auspices; seven are Conservative,

¹⁸⁶Blustain, “Why More Parents,” p. 58.

¹⁸⁷Many of these issues are discussed by Alvin I. Schiff in *Jewish Education in New York: A Demographic Report, 1970–1990* (N.Y. Board of Jewish Education, 1991), p. 3.

¹⁸⁸Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the U.S.*, table 18, p. 58.

¹⁸⁹Schiff, *Jewish Day School in America*, table 11, p. 92.

¹⁹⁰Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*. By 1990, for example, there were fewer than 1,000 children enrolled in some 31 Orthodox supplementary schools in New York; by comparison, over 79,000 children were enrolled in Orthodox day schools in New York. Schiff, *Jewish Education in Greater New York*, p. 11. Nationally, according to one estimate, 15,000 youngsters were enrolled in supplementary schools under Orthodox auspices in the early 1990s. See Alvin I. Schiff, “Worlds in Collision or Collaboration: Synagogues, Schools and Yeshivot,” presentation at the convention of the Rabbinical Council of America, June 1993, p. 3.

one is Reform, and three are community schools.¹⁹¹ Nationally, roughly 500 of the 636 day schools are Orthodox.¹⁹²

Other sectors of the Jewish community have expanded their day-school movements, too. As of 1994, 63 day schools were affiliated with the Solomon Schechter Day School network of the Conservative movement, a figure that climbed to 70 in 1998 with the opening of several new day high schools. Twenty day schools under Reform auspices are member of PARDeS, the Progressive Association of Reform Day Schools.¹⁹³ And a network of over 50 transdenominational, communitywide schools form a separate body called RAVSAK (the Hebrew acronym for the Jewish Community Day School Network).¹⁹⁴ Ten new high schools alone opened in September of 1997 and, with the help of several new foundations, still more day schools were being planned.¹⁹⁵

As noted above, these schools are growing because non-Orthodox parents are increasingly receptive to sending their children to day schools. According to the data of the 1990 NJPS, nearly one-fifth of Conservative children attend day schools, another 59 percent are in afternoon schools, and another 20 percent attend only Sunday school. Among Reform families, 8 percent enroll their children in day schools, 40 percent in afternoon schools, and 48 percent in Sunday schools. Even in the population of self-identified "just Jews," 20 percent send their children to day schools, and almost all the rest employ tutors or send their children to one-day-a-week school.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹Ain, "Growth Spurt," p. 14.

¹⁹²Blustain, "Why More Parents," p. 61.

¹⁹³Walter Ruby, "Reform Day School Movement Gains Momentum," Reform Judaism, Winter 1994, pp. 62–64. The amount of time devoted to Judaic studies differs considerably from one type of day school to the next—and even within the schools of a particular movement. Whereas Orthodox and Conservative day schools divide school hours fairly evenly between Jewish and general subjects, day schools in the Reform movement devote one-third of the school day to Hebrew and Jewish studies. See Michael Zeldin, "What Makes the Reform Day School Distinctive? A Question of Practice and Purpose," in *Curriculum, Community, Commitment: Views on the American Jewish Day School in Memory of Bennett I. Solomon*, ed. Daniel J. Margolis and Elliot S. Schoenberg (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1992), p. 77.

¹⁹⁴David Shluker and Leora Isaacs, *Federation Allocations to Jewish Day Schools: Models, Principles and Funding Levels* (Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center at JESNA, May 1994), p. 2. The most recent figures for all these schools are drawn from Shluker, "Impact of Jewish Day Schools," p. 1.

¹⁹⁵Nussbaum Cohen, "Day Schools Face Funding Crisis," p. 1.

¹⁹⁶Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*, p. 28. These figures change somewhat when we take the cumulative enrollment rate into account; thus, 39 percent of members of Conservative synagogues stated that their oldest child had at some point attended a day school between ages 6–17. Cohen, "Day School Parents in Conservative Synagogues," p. 18.

The sheer magnitude of growth and investment of resources in day schools is remarkable. At the beginning of the school year in September 1997, the *New York Times* heralded the booming “resurgence in Jewish education that has seen nearly 40 Jewish private schools open in New York, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, New Haven, Minneapolis, and Cleveland in the last six years with many others on the way. At least ten new Jewish schools opened.”¹⁹⁷ While some of these “new” schools, in fact, result only from the addition of middle-school and high-school grades to existing institutions, others are quite real and represent major new investments in day-school education outside of the Orthodox community.

Unquestionably, one of the great success stories of the past decades in non-Orthodox day schools has been the explosive growth of the schools housed at the Stephen Wise Temple (Reform) in Los Angeles. Under the dynamic leadership of the temple’s spiritual leader, Rabbi Isaiah Zeldin, enrollments have grown exponentially. In 1998, the temple opened a new \$32-million complex housing the Milken Community High School. With 650 students drawn from Reform and Conservative families, it is the only such enterprise funded by a single synagogue.¹⁹⁸

Several day schools in the Conservative Schechter network have also experienced rapid expansion in the past decade: among the largest are the 900-student school located on two campuses in West Orange and Cranford, New Jersey;¹⁹⁹ the 1,100-student Schechter schools in Northbrook and Skokie outside Chicago,²⁰⁰ and the Epstein School in Atlanta; enrollments have increased so rapidly that these and other schools were forced to open classrooms in trailers or find new facilities in order to accommodate the rapid growth. Community-sponsored schools are expanding rapidly too: the Charles E. Smith Day School outside Washington, D.C. is perhaps the largest non-Orthodox day school in the country.²⁰¹ Communities are focusing now on establishing high schools so that youngsters who have attended lower and middle school in an intensive Jewish setting will have the opportunity to continue their studies.

¹⁹⁷Peter Appelbome, “Growth in Jewish Private Schools Celebrates Complex Mix,” *N.Y. Times*, Oct. 1, 1997, p. A24; and Diego Ribadeneira, “New Jewish School Touches a Chord,” *Boston Globe*, Dec. 8, 1997, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸Herb Brin, “Milken High: Rabbi Zeldin’s Shining Dream on a Hilltop,” *Heritage Southwest Press*, May 15, 1998, p. 16. Zeldin’s passionate advocacy of day schools is on display in his article, “A Resounding Yes to More Day Schools,” *Sh’ma*, Nov. 13, 1981, pp. 12, 16.

¹⁹⁹Debra Nussbaum Cohen and Lori Silberman Brauner, “Day Schools Face Funding Crisis Even as Demand Flourishes,” *New Jersey Jewish News—Metrowest*, Sept. 11, 1997, p. 11.

²⁰⁰Juanita Poe, “Jewish Schools—A Show of Faith,” *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 28, 1997, sect. 1, p. 14.

²⁰¹Blustain, “Why More Parents,” p. 98.

All of these schools represent an enormous investment of capital and volunteer hours by lay leaders who often had no personal experience with day-school education when they were growing up. The herculean labors of such lay leaders across the denominational spectrum to establish and maintain day schools is one of the epic—and underappreciated—sagas of late 20th-century American Jewry.

RESOURCES

Quite apart from the organizational aspects of this effort—the process of bringing together disparate forces to keep such schools functioning—the pragmatic challenges of insuring their fiscal stability and the quality of educational personnel have been exceedingly taxing. An exhaustive study of day-school funding conducted by Marvin Schick and Jeremy Dauber concludes that Jewish day schools are “severely underfunded”:

This is evident when their expenditures on a per student basis are compared with per student expenditures in public schools and secular private schools. . . . Per capita expense ranges from \$5,048 in Reform day schools, which primarily have classes in the lower grades, [to \$5,667 in Torah Umesorah Orthodox schools], to \$6,145 at Community schools. In the 1995–96 school year, the mean per capita spending in U.S. public schools was \$5,653, while the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) reports per capita spending at \$10,316 for the 1994–95 school year.

On the income side, day schools generally have tuition and fee schedules which should generate sufficient income to cover their operating costs. . . . The tuition collected from parents is often considerably below what is indicated in the tuition schedules. Torah Umesorah (Orthodox) schools cover only 57.2% of their budgets from tuition and mandatory fees (such as registration fees or building funds). Community schools cover 68.3% of their budgets from these sources, with the percentage jumping to 87.5% for Reform schools and 89% for Solomon Schechter schools.²⁰²

The upshot is that many day schools operate on exceedingly tight budgets and cannot offer the diversified programming, special education, enriched arts offerings, technological sophistication, or state-of-the-art physical plant that would attract even more students. Instead, since they generally hire two faculties—one for Jewish studies and the other for general studies—and run a longer school day than public schools, they devote most of their resources to paying the salaries of educators. (We will discuss below the intensifying debate over the funding of day schools.)

Yet even with their heavy investment in wages for teachers, day schools must also contend with personnel shortages. The reasons are not difficult to discern: a study of Jewish educators in three disparate American

²⁰²Schick and Dauber, *Financing of Jewish Day Schools*, pp. iii, 8–13.

cities found that half the day-school teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries, a higher percentage than among supplementary-school teachers.²⁰³ Perhaps this stems from the fact that day-school teachers have almost a full teaching load—nearly half teach for 25 or more hours weekly, as compared with three-quarters of supplementary-school teachers who spend only one to four hours in the classroom weekly.²⁰⁴ As full-time teachers who view their work as their profession,²⁰⁵ day-school teachers understandably express greater dissatisfaction over inadequate compensation.

The personnel crisis in day schools stems as well from the perennial shortage of well-trained educators that bedevils the larger enterprise of Jewish education. A report on day-school teachers in schools in the Jewish communities of Atlanta, Milwaukee, and Baltimore found that 35 percent had trained in education and Jewish studies, 24 percent had trained in education only, and another 25 percent in Jewish studies only; 16 percent trained in neither.²⁰⁶ The report concludes: “Compared to other settings, day school teachers of Judaica are relatively well prepared, both Jewishly and pedagogically, . . . still, fewer than half have undergone the level of professional preparation that is standard among public school teachers, although day schools generally require their teachers of secular subjects to meet the standard requirements. In addition, staff development opportunities for day school Judaica teachers are minimal, and are fewer than the requirements for day school teachers of secular subjects, who typically meet state requirements for ongoing certification to maintain their teaching licenses.”²⁰⁷ Similarly, a report on day school teachers in Los Angeles found that “[a]lthough a higher percentage of qualified teachers are found in day schools than in supplementary schools, the difference is not as large as one might expect; nor is there a large difference between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Community schools. In Los Angeles, for example, at least 30% of day school teachers (in all our types of schools) have taken no college Judaica courses.”²⁰⁸ Thus, despite their impressive gains within the overall sector

²⁰³Adam Gamoran et al., *The Teachers Report: A Portrait of Teachers in Jewish Schools* (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, New York, 1998), p. 14.

²⁰⁴Ibid., p. 14.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 18. Teachers in Orthodox schools are most likely to view Jewish education as their career.

²⁰⁶Adam Gamoran et al., “Background and Training of Teachers in Jewish Schools: Current Status and Levers for Change,” *Religious Education*, Fall 1997, p. 541.

²⁰⁷Gamoran et al., *The Teachers Report*, p. 10.

²⁰⁸Isa Aron, “What We Know About Jewish Teachers,” in Kelman, ed., *What We Know About Jewish Education*, p. 37.

of Jewish schooling, day schools continue to contend with severely limited financial and personnel resources.²⁰⁹

ISSUES OF IDEOLOGY

Finally, day schools of all stripes must contend with difficult—often intractable—ideological tensions. In recent decades, modern Orthodox schools have been hard-pressed to maintain their fidelity to their founding principles. Alvin Schiff, a leading Orthodox educator, has plaintively asked: “Does the Judaic curriculum reflect the input of the Centrist Orthodox rabbi(s) in the community?” That point of view includes, according to Schiff, the positive evaluation of general studies in the curriculum and a commitment to “the integration of Judaica and secular studies, the role of Israel and Zionism in the school program,” and the offering of special prayers to mark key milestones in the history of modern Israel.²¹⁰

One of the major factors accounting for the abandonment of those principles has been the growing reliance of such schools on ultra-Orthodox or *haredi* educators. Because modern Orthodoxy has been unable to produce enough educators of its own, it has resorted to importing large numbers of its lower-school teachers from Israel and engages rabbis ordained at ultra-Orthodox yeshivas to teach Talmud and more advanced Jewish subjects. Day-school principals are also increasingly products of “‘rightist’ training” or have “‘rightist’ leanings.”²¹¹

But even where modern Orthodox day schools successfully engage the proper personnel, they generally fail to “integrate” Jewish and general studies. Most take the approach advocated by a former president of Yeshiva University, who declared: “Our job is to give the students the materials; their job is to let the materials interact within their minds.”²¹²

²⁰⁹The personnel crisis is especially acute at the top administrative level, particularly in non-Orthodox schools. Rabbi Joshua Elkin, a former Solomon Schechter principal and now the head of a consortium to help found still more day schools, has noted that the field of Jewish day schools in America “has grown so rapidly and has undergone such an increase in sophistication and complexity that it has exceeded the capacity of the Jewish community to recruit and train the needed numbers of people to be able to fill all these positions.” In numerical terms, at least 48 executive positions in Jewish educational institutions around the country were vacant as of mid-1998, according to Paul Flexner, director of human resources development for the Jewish Education Service of North America. Elissa Gootman, “Day Schools Start Scrambling Over Educators of Top Quality: Principals Pursued, Seminary Swamped, As Continuity Crisis Ignites a Frenzy,” *Forward*, May 8, 1998, p. 1.

²¹⁰Schiff, “Worlds in Collision or Collaboration,” p. 3. Significantly, Schiff never answers the question.

²¹¹Alvin I. Schiff, “The Centrist Torah Educator Faces Critical Ideological and Communal Challenges,” *Tradition*, Winter 1981, p. 285.

²¹²Samuel Belkin as quoted in Jack Bieler, “Integration of Judaic and General Studies in the Modern Orthodox Day School,” *Jewish Education*, Winter 1986, p. 19.

Thus, an “integrated” curriculum remains, at best, a pious wish in most schools, which helps account for the ongoing problems of “compartmentalization” in the modern Orthodox world.²¹³

Day schools of all stripes also struggle with the broad range of families that have diverse outlooks on Judaism. According to one estimate, in the early 1990s there were between 30,000 and 40,000 children from “non-observant homes in modern Orthodox day schools.” Such schools must find ways to socialize and integrate these children into the religious culture of the institution.²¹⁴

In community day schools, diversity creates other tensions, since these schools tend to draw students from the entire spectrum. Whose version of Judaism should be taught? The answer often is a bland, lowest-common-denominator version, which also leaves many parents disappointed. Yet even in denominationally run day schools, conflicting versions of Judaism must be negotiated. The Conservative movement’s Solomon Schechter schools, for example, struggle with a gap between the normative view of Judaism espoused by the leadership and the far less structured understanding of Judaism common among many of the folk. “There are a lot of people in the Schechter community with lots of ideas about their Jewishness and how they want to be, and for me that’s a plus,” says one parent. But for others, the growing diversity brought by mounting enrollments is “a mixed blessing.” “It used to be a like-minded community of parents, but it’s turning into a sort of Jewish public school,” complains another parent. “Now you have kids planning parties on Shabbat, which excludes half the class. You’ve got debates over equality for girls in the morning minyan—and the newcomers don’t even have an opinion. If you’re sending your kid to school just to get ‘an exposure to Judaism,’ you don’t care about the nuances. I do.”²¹⁵

After studying one particular Solomon Schechter school, the educator Carol Ingall noted the consequences of trying to bridge a widely disparate parent population. “Rather than appealing to the transcendental, the

²¹³The ultra-Orthodox schools are beset with variations on the same issues: Are “general studies” taken seriously enough so as to provide students with the skills to find gainful employment? And to what extent are ultra-Orthodox schools intentionally leaving their charges ill-equipped to enter the workforce so as to prevent them from venturing out of the religious enclave? These issues are rarely discussed, let alone studied, except in the context of recent discussions of the impoverization of the *haredi* community.

²¹⁴Schiff, “Worlds in Collision or Collaboration,” p. 4.

²¹⁵All the quotations in this paragraph are from J.J. Goldberg, “U.S. Jewry Pins Its Future on Education,” p. 31 (see note 5). On this theme, see also Cohen, “Day School Parents in Conservative Synagogues,” pp. 18–23.

school keeps its message vague," she observes, "allowing parents . . . to attend religious events with the mind-set of a parent attending a piano recital." Not only parents, however, are treated to bland fare. The school, generally, Ingall contends, is "ambivalent about its religious message . . . [and] is reticent about articulating it. When the message is articulated, why is it garbed in functionalist, folk religion terms?" Rabbi Robert Abramson, director of the Conservative movement's department of Jewish education, acknowledges, "As the schools grow, there's got to be some implications for observing less. . . . In an atmosphere as pluralistic as ours, the principal tends to be much more susceptible to pressure." Thus, the very "success" of day schools in capturing the allegiance of a broader band of Jewish parents in recent years has brought with it some quite serious strains. Even worse, many administrators and board members in such schools seek to avoid dealing with these strains and seem "religiously embarrassed to impose [the school's] view upon its parents." The challenge, then, as Ingall observes, is for the school "to refine its message, to firmly fix it to the supernatural and spiritual, without scaring away significant numbers of its parent body."²¹⁶

Day schools in the Reform movement are beset by similar issues. Such schools of necessity tolerate a wide diversity of behaviors and beliefs since the denomination itself is highly "pluralistic." But the upshot, as one educator has noted, is that the 20 schools in the Association of Reform Day Schools differ widely in approach. "For example, each school approaches the teaching of Bible differently. Some schools teach Tanakh in Hebrew while others teach Bible in English. Some schools use the Biblical text, some teach 'Bible stories.' Some have a daily Bible class, some integrate Biblical studies into the weekly celebration of the Shabbat." The lack of a uniform curriculum appears to be the direct result of such wide diversity of approach within the Reform movement itself.²¹⁷

THE RENEWED INTEREST IN SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Perhaps the least anticipated trend of the past decade in the realm of schooling has been a resurgence of serious interest in reviving and even recreating supplementary education. Most observers of the postwar afternoon and Sunday schools, as we have already noted, portrayed such programs in the most dismissive of terms—as an irredeemable Jewish wasteland. Some reports on the long-term impact of such an education

²¹⁶Carol K. Ingall, "Soul-Turning: Parent Education in a Conservative Day School," *Conservative Judaism*, Summer 1993, esp. pp. 62–65. Abramson is quoted in J.J. Goldberg (see note 5).

²¹⁷See Zeldin, "What Makes the Reform Day School Distinctive?" p. 69.

even argued that “supplementary education was the same as having received no schooling.”²¹⁸ And yet the late 1980s saw the emergence of intensive new research focusing on supplementary schools that “succeed” and a popular body of literature on the “best practices” of such schools. Both efforts were designed to identify and describe model programs worthy of emulation.²¹⁹ Suddenly, the supplementary-school system—long regarded as the most pedestrian, if not hopeless, setting for Jewish education—became “hot,” as Jewish educators rushed to reconceive the entire enterprise in bold, if experimental, terms.

What accounts for this turnabout? On the most practical level, few educators were prepared to scrap the largest school system in the field of Jewish education.²²⁰ “Even in the face of . . . ‘hard,’ seemingly incontrovertible evidence,” Isa Aron comments, “few leaders of the organized Jewish community were willing to advocate the dismantling of the . . . ‘system,’ which accounts for more than two-thirds of the enrollment in Jewish schools.”²²¹ Although the proportions changed over time as day school enrollments continued to grow, the fact that the majority of Jewish children continue to enroll in supplementary schools—and in all likelihood will continue to do so for the foreseeable future—has made it unrealistic to give up on supplementary education, for it would mean abandoning most Jewish youngsters to no Jewish education.

Beyond this pragmatic consideration, a second look at the entire system prompted a reconsideration of basic issues. For one thing, the contention that “a little Jewish education is worse than none”—a conclusion drawn from studies claiming that children not exposed to a basic threshold of schooling (as defined by hours of instruction) were no more likely in the long term to live as committed Jews than children who had never received any Jewish education—seemed to defy common sense. When the sociologist Steven M. Cohen reanalyzed data on the impact of schooling, his findings supported the commonsense view that “no Jewish education is the *least* effective, that a lot of Jewish education helps

²¹⁸Aron, “From the Congregational School to the Learning Congregation,” p. 67 (see note 32).

²¹⁹Barry W. Holtz, *Supplementary School Education: The Best Practices Project* (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, New York, 1993; rev. ed., 1996).

²²⁰For an exception, see the powerful critique offered by Yehiel Poupko and his suggestion that the Jewish community needs to invest in the education of current and future parents (adults between the ages of 25 and 40), and only later focus on the needs of children. Yehiel E. Poupko, “Needed: Standards for Jewish Education,” *Jewish Journal of Education*, Fall 1991, pp. 29–34.

²²¹Aron, “From the Congregational School to the Learning Congregation,” p. 67. The most recent figures suggest that the supplementary schools now account for approximately 60 percent of Jewish student enrollments. See above, note 180.

Jewish identity *a lot*, and, of course, a little Jewish education helps Jewish identity *a little*.”²²² This prompted Donald Feldstein and Barry Shrage, two leading federation professionals, to warn against “writ[ing] off the great middle group of Jewish children who get a limited Jewish education. While day schools continue to provide optimal Jewish education, we should not despair of improving the quality, time and content of Jewish supplementary schools to where they do a little more good than they are doing now. It is not hopeless, and our reliance on limited data may have led us astray.”²²³

The reassessment of the supplementary school also took another direction. Some educators contended that supplementary education was being judged unfairly and on the basis of the wrong criteria. David Resnick, an educator actively involved in the work of JESNA, objected to assessments of supplementary-school education that took as their point of departure the goals of school principals (who often judged their own schools quite harshly). Instead, Resnick argued, such afternoon and Sunday programs “are not schools at all, but settings for Jewish socializing.” Ironically, to bolster his case, Resnick invoked all the stock arguments usually hurled at such schools by their detractors: they are characterized by “weak involvement and low expectations by both students and their parents, untrained staff, rudimentary or nonexistent curriculum, unsupportive or hostile organizational environment.” But for Resnick, it is precisely these circumstances and the absence of explicit goals articulated by schools that necessitate a very different type of evaluation of supplementary programs, for they are already places of informal education and do not really set an explicit goal to transmit information or deep skills.²²⁴

One conclusion drawn from this new approach is that much greater attention needs to be directed at the affective, rather than the cognitive, side of schooling in the supplementary setting. Writing from such a perspective, the ethnographer Samuel Heilman concluded his study of one af-

²²²Steven M. Cohen, “Outreach to the Marginally Affiliated: Evidence and Implications for Policymakers in Jewish Education,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Winter 1985, pp. 147–57. Cohen found that when older women who had received no Jewish education but were often highly engaged in Jewish life because of the socialization they had experienced in embracing Jewish neighborhoods were removed from the population of those who never received a Jewish education, the latter group scored lower in levels of engagement than those who had received a minimal Jewish education.

²²³Donald Feldstein and Barry Shrage, “Myths and Facts for Campaign Planners,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Winter 1986, pp. 98–99.

²²⁴David Resnick, “Jewish Supplementary Schooling Misperceived,” *Contemporary Jewry* 13, 1992, pp. 14–17. See also an earlier call for reassessment: Norman L. Friedman, “On the ‘Non-Effects’ of Jewish Education on Most Students: A Critique,” *Jewish Education*, Summer 1984, pp. 30–33.

ternoon school as follows: "I am convinced that to know, one first must believe; that feeling and being actively Jewish may be a prerequisite to becoming more so; that the number of volumes of the Talmud we have gone through may be less important than how many of them we have let get through to us."²²⁵ Based on such a perspective, educators now counseled a different set of goals for the supplementary school, goals that would nurture a positive attachment to Judaism and Jewish peoplehood, rather than focus primarily on the transmission of information and the development of skills.²²⁶

Some educators have gone even further, urging a radical rethinking of the relationship between the supplementary school and the congregation that sponsors it. "What would it look like," asks Isa Aron, "if education were seen as the concern of the entire congregation rather than being relegated to its school(s)? Who would be the learner? Who would be the teacher? In what settings and through what modalities might synagogue members learn about being Jewish? . . . Each and every congregation must answer for itself."²²⁷ Here, then, is a "paradigm shift" in the very conception of congregational schooling that suggests a number of potential new options: First, the goal of Jewish schooling needs to be redirected from "instruction" to "enculturation." In the absence of an embracing environment supportive of Jewish educational goals, the school must offer "a loving induction into the Jewish culture and the Jewish community."²²⁸ Second, the Jewish community must strive to create a norm of "lifelong Jewish learning," a process in which all its members must participate. Schools would then be seen as but one component of a communal agenda. Third, synagogues specifically must reconceive of their mission and transform themselves into "learning communities."²²⁹

The goal of this paradigm shift undoubtedly is to address some of the deep flaws of congregational schooling, particularly the gap between the message of the school and that of the home. Educators intent on reforming supplementary education now aspire to join the congregation and the school in a highly self-conscious and structured fashion. Minimally, they strive to incorporate a large component of Jewish family education into the life of the congregation and its school—to educate parents and

²²⁵Samuel Heilman, "Inside the Jewish School," in Kelman, ed., *What We Know About Jewish Education*, p. 329. The study was published originally by the American Jewish Committee in 1983 and subtitled "A Study of the Cultural Setting for Jewish Education."

²²⁶See, for example, Larry Cuban, "Changing Public Schools and Changing Congregational Schools," in Aron, Lee, and Rossel, eds., *A Congregation of Learners* (see note 32), pp. 119–38.

²²⁷Aron, "From the Congregational School to the Learning Congregation," p. 68.

²²⁸Ibid.

²²⁹These last two goals form the backbone of Aron, Lee, and Rossel's *A Congregation of Learners: Transforming the Synagogue into a Learning Community*.

children, both separately and together, so that young people observe their parents engaged in Jewish learning, and parents acquire knowledge and skills to nurture their children. (We will have more to say about Jewish family education in the next section.) To create such programs, however, requires a major institutional commitment by the congregation and especially by its professional and lay leadership. But certainly, since the late 1980s, outspoken advocates have promoted "synagogue change" as the key to the rebuilding of supplementary schooling.²³⁰

There is no single method employed by congregations to restructure their relationship to Jewish schooling. Most observers, in fact, contend that no such effort at "synagogue change" can succeed unless it takes into account the unique and particular culture of the synagogue. A recent report on one such effort illustrates some of the new thinking and also some of the inherent problems in the venture. A large Conservative synagogue in Baltimore introduced a second educational program to run parallel to the existing supplementary school. In its first year, Project Mishpacha, as it was called, enrolled 113 children (in 80 families); an additional 307 children remained in the mainstream three-day-a-week program. In the second year of the pilot program, Project Mishpacha increased its enrollment to 158 (in 120 families), and the number of children in the mainstream program decreased to 286. The new program offered a mix of formal and informal learning opportunities to children and their parents, with a particular emphasis on informal activities. According to the best estimates, "the total number of hours per week spent by children in Project Mishpacha dealing with Jewish topics at home, in the synagogue and at school exceeded that of children in the conventional three-day-a-week in school program. In addition, parents noted that their children were spending 'quality time' on their Jewish studies." From the perspective of synagogue leaders, Project Mishpacha also encouraged more parents to attend Sabbath services and other events, and generally increased participation in the life of the synagogue.²³¹

²³⁰There is no shortage of articles on experimental congregational programs. For more sustained discussions of these issues, see Joseph Reimer's ethnography of one congregation in *Succeeding at Jewish Education* (see note 3); Aron, Lee, and Rossel's *Congregation of Learners*, and Adrienne Bank and Ron Wolfson, *First Fruit: A Whizin Anthology of Jewish Family Education* (Whizin Institute, Los Angeles, 1998). The major initiative toward sustained and coordinated synagogue change is called "Synagogue 2000," a program funded by several major foundations and headed up by Lawrence Hoffman and Ron Wolfson. See Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Imagine: A Synagogue for the 21st Century," *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1996, pp. 21–25, and Ron Wolfson, "The Front Line Is the Bottom Line," *Sh'ma*, Apr. 17, 1998, pp. 3–5.

²³¹Mark Loeb et al., "The Politics of Change: Transforming a Congregational School Through Family Education," *Agenda: Jewish Education*, Fall 1997, pp. 18–22. Jewish news-

One of the challenges, however, was to sustain a program that required so much planning and coordination. The program required a highly varied approach that would appeal to the broad “diversity of family life styles; Project Mishpacha is finding that the more options it can provide by which families can fulfill their obligations, the more pleased are the parents.” Moreover, as the program evaluator, Adrienne Bank, conceded: “The second challenge is that of repeatability—how to keep the new cohorts of parents, who were not participants in the enthusiastic pilot group, interested and motivated. The third challenge is maintaining the balance between educational change and educational stability so that the professional staff can continue to make steady incremental improvements in the Project Mishpacha program without experiencing burnout and a sense of fatigue.”²³² Simply put, ambitious programs for “synagogue change” require an enormous investment of time, personnel, and energy. Many synagogue schools cannot marshal these resources, and those that do may have difficulty sustaining them for long.

There are also two big unknowns when it comes to the new thinking and restructuring of Jewish education in the supplementary school. First, it is too early to ascertain the extent to which an emphasis on feeling Jewish is purchased at the expense of Jewish knowledge and skills, and what the consequences might be for such a trade-off. Will young people with even the most positive of Jewish feelings, yet lacking in Hebraic skills and Jewish knowledge, find themselves capable of observing Judaism, a religion that requires an extensive understanding and expertise? Second, no one knows whether the heightened synagogue and school morale evident in “learning congregations” will result in greater Jewish engagement in the long run. Joseph Reimer concedes as much at the conclusion of his positive ethnographic study, *Succeeding at Jewish Education*:

Will this Judaism, this religion-in-the-making, prove convincing and moving to their members? Will the children and adults whom I observed take this Judaism to heart and make it a living part of their lives? That, after all, is the ultimate educational question. But ethnographies cannot answer ultimate questions. Until the record is more complete, answering that question will remain a matter of faith.²³³

Despite the doubts, many educators concerned with supplementary education are prepared to leap into the unknown with experimental “change” programs, convinced that only a radical new initiative will res-

papers have become far more interested in recent years in innovative supplementary schools. See, for example, Michael Shapiro, “Building the Future: Six Hebrew Schools That Break the Mold,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, May 29, 1992, p. 52ff.

²³²Ibid., p. 22.

²³³Reimer, *Succeeding at Jewish Education*, p. 185.

cue the supplementary school from its long-standing flaws and internal contradictions.

Although they are the beneficiaries of these good intentions and a significant infusion of new energy and ideas, supplementary schools continue to struggle with several perennial challenges. One is the resistance of parents to a three-day-a-week format, at least in part because late 20th-century social and living patterns make it difficult to deliver children to the synagogue three times a week. These patterns include the tendency of Jews to reside far from their congregation; the daunting logistics of car-pooling when both parents are likely to be working; and the long-standing interest of Jewish parents in enrolling their children in extra-curricular school activities, sports teams, music lessons.²³⁴

In response to such pressure, a significant percentage of Conservative and Reform supplementary schools either offer only a twice-a-week school program and/or now schedule school meetings for the Sabbath morning. A wide-ranging study of Reform temples conducted in 1996 found that over 94 percent of member congregations sponsor Sunday schools that meet only once a week. This is true especially of congregations with 165 or fewer memberships (which represent 43 percent of the affiliates in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations). Slightly over 60 percent of member congregations also conduct two-day-a-week afternoon schools, and 8 percent of the religious schools meet on Saturdays.²³⁵

It is more difficult to come by data on patterns in Conservative supplementary schools, but knowledgeable insiders estimate that no more than 70 percent of congregations still require three-day-a-week attendance.²³⁶ Moreover, among these there is a strong trend toward counting a Sabbath morning program—junior congregation, joint service for parents and children, or a study group—toward the five to six hours of weekly schooling. Describing one such Conservative religious school at a West Coast congregation, Lisa Malik writes: “It is no accident that . . . [the] school meets on *Shabbat*; it reflects the school’s emphasis on Jewish ritual and observance. . . . Both the school and the synagogue have an informal participatory culture; both emphasize religious skills.”²³⁷

²³⁴Debbie Slevin, “The 1-2-3 Day-A-Week Hebrew School Dilemma,” *Jewish Standard* (New Jersey), Oct. 30, 1998, p. 6.

²³⁵Samuel K. Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling: A Survey and Analysis of Supplementary Schooling in Congregations* (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), pp. 13–15.

²³⁶Interview with Dr. Robert Abramson, director, Department of Jewish Education, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Jan. 5, 1999.

²³⁷Lisa S. Malik, “The Institutionalization of Synagogue Change: Case Studies in Jewish Family Education,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, forthcoming (typescript, p. 12).

Indeed, if the primary goal of religious schools is to prepare young people for their bar or bat mitzvah and other forms of participation in synagogue life, mandatory school attendance on the Sabbath is a highly efficient strategy to foster religious socialization: young people whose parents would not otherwise bring them to religious services now are required to attend school and inevitably observe worship in the main sanctuary on a regular basis.²³⁸ The youngsters are generally asked to assume some responsibility for the service, either in the main sanctuary or in a youth service. Thus, Sabbath schooling, a widespread phenomenon in churches, insures congregations of a youthful presence on Saturday mornings, a time when it is difficult to woo more than a minority of members into the synagogue, and it provides an opportunity to integrate youngsters into the religious life of the congregation. Whether the informal learning that takes place on the Sabbath morning is an adequate substitute for formal education remains to be seen.

Personnel and Curriculum

The severe limit on the number of school hours in supplementary schools is matched by another perennial shortage, namely the continuing personnel crisis. As we have seen, this deficiency has a long history, and there is little reason to dispute the bald assessment offered a decade ago by Isa Aron and Adrienne Bank that “the most serious challenge facing Jewish education today is the recruitment and training of supplementary school teachers who combine Judaic knowledge and pedagogic expertise with enduring personal dedication to Jewish teaching and learning.”²³⁹ In fact, the weaknesses remain much as they were 50 years ago: a large percentage of educators working in supplementary education lack adequate credentials in Judaica and/or pedagogy. A large proportion do not regard their teaching as a career. Few are assigned enough teaching hours to make a living in Jewish education. Large numbers, of necessity, teach only on a part-time basis, and quite a few are volunteers rather than professional educators. And few teachers receive any in-service or continuing education to further hone their skills and expand their knowledge.

²³⁸It appears that parents of supplementary-school children continue to drop off their youngsters at the curb—whether school meets on a weekday or on the Sabbath. Malik writes of the Sabbath program: “You see some parents and children dressed up to go to *shul* in the sanctuary. At the same time, you see many religious school parents dressed in sweat pants or shorts who never get out of their cars to come to services; they just drop off their children for school and pick them up when it is over.” *Ibid.* (typescript, p. 11).

²³⁹Isa Aron and Adrienne Bank, “The Shortage of Supplementary School Teachers: Has the Time for Concerted Action Finally Arrived?” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Spring 1988, p. 264.

The preponderant majority of teachers are women, although males are more likely to take positions in high schools, a pattern that exactly matches trends in public education.

All this has been exhaustively documented in a number of recent studies.

A wide-ranging study of the 15,000 teachers working in Reform religious schools found that high percentages are college-educated, and many have a master's degree. A third of the teachers are or have been secular-school teachers. They overwhelmingly tend to identify as Reform Jews; two-thirds are members of the congregation in which they teach; and 72 percent are women.²⁴⁰ "Avocational teaching," in short, is the norm in all but the largest of congregations.²⁴¹ Only 16 percent of the teachers in Reform schools hold a master's degree in Jewish education, and only 30 percent hold credentials as Reform Jewish Educators (RJE), a form of certification within the Reform movement.²⁴²

A detailed study of supplementary-school Jewish educators in Atlanta, Baltimore, and Milwaukee, cutting across the denominational spectrum, arrived at many similar findings. Eighty percent of the supplementary-school teachers had earned a college degree; but only 18 percent had certification in Jewish education, and 12 percent had earned a degree in Jewish studies. Fewer than a quarter had studied in a day school or in Israel prior to age 13; but 40 percent had themselves attended a supplementary-school meeting two or more days a week.²⁴³ Only 4 percent of these supplementary-school teachers worked in Jewish schools more than 12 hours per week. Unsurprisingly, only a bit more than half (56 percent) indicated they planned to continue working in the same position in the future. Quite remarkably, only 26 percent expressed dissatisfaction with their work — perhaps because they had had only limited expectations in the first place.²⁴⁴

The authors of still another local study conclude: "Teachers in Boston area Jewish schools are overwhelmingly female, American-born, 'young middle-aged,' not particularly well-trained academically in Judaic stud-

²⁴⁰Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling*, pp. 24, 34.

²⁴¹Isa Aron, "From Where Will the Next Generation of Jewish Teachers Come?" *CCAR Journal*, Fall 1988, pp. 51–65, which examines how Reform congregations recruit and train "congregant-teachers." Aron notes that "the deliberate recruitment of avocational teachers seems to be much more common in schools affiliated with the Reform, rather than the Conservative movement." The main reason for this is that "a teacher in the Reform religious school would not have to know Hebrew, could teach only on Sundays, and could therefore more easily be recruited from the congregation" (p. 60).

²⁴²Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling*, p. 37.

²⁴³Gamoran et al., *The Teachers Report*, pp. 5–7.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 14–19.

ies, though well-educated secularly. . . . Two-thirds of those currently teaching feel that Jewish education is their career, though there is some uncertainty about how firm a commitment this may be. . . . There is a large amount of fluidity in the field, with teachers not remaining in their current jobs very long, nor staying in the field over time, either.”²⁴⁵

The similarity of these findings confirms the fact that supplementary-school education continues to suffer from many of the same liabilities as were noted half a century ago. If anything has changed, it is the greater inclination of bureaus, religious denominations, and training institutions to develop programs to recruit and nurture avocational teachers and provide in-service training to increase the competence of supplementary-school educators—that is, to work with the existing personnel rather than bemoan the shortage.²⁴⁶

Severe financial constraints encourage congregations to seek “avocational teachers” who are either volunteers recruited from within the congregation or teachers paid a minimal salary. School budgets are preponderantly paid out of the annual budgets of congregations, rather than through tuition fees. In Conservative synagogues, for example, in 1995, annual tuition fees for three-day supplementary schooling ranged from \$230 to \$440 per student. Such fees alone would hardly even cover the salaries of teachers, let alone administrative costs, supplies, textbooks, or special events. As currently structured, congregations are caught on the horns of a dilemma: they need to allocate significant amounts of the congregational budget to underwrite the religious school because the school is vital for the recruitment and retention of members; at the same time, congregations are afraid to ask parents to shoulder tuition fees that would pay for a superior Jewish education, lest those parents balk and abandon both the school and the congregation. The upshot is that religious schools are underfunded, yet their budgets drain congregational resources; this breeds resentment of the schools for their failings, even as those schools must function with inadequate funding.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵Naava Frank, Daniel J. Margolis, and Alan Weisner, *The Jewish School Teacher: Preliminary Report of a Study* (Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, Center for Educational Research and Evaluation, 1992), p. 27.

²⁴⁶For reports on some of these efforts, see Paul A. Flexner, “The Goals of Staff Development: An Overview,” *Pedagogic Reporter*, Mar. 1989, pp. 3–5; Saul B. Troen, “The Teacher Development Institute,” *Pedagogic Reporter*, Mar. 1989, pp. 19–21; Carol K. In-gall, “Teaching Teachers: One Community’s Experience,” *Pedagogic Reporter*, Fall 1991/Winter 1992, pp. 16–17; Barry W. Holtz, Gail Zaiman Dorph, and Ellen B. Goldring, “Educational Leaders as Teacher Educators: The Teacher Educator Institute—A Case from Jewish Education,” *Peabody Journal of Education*, Spring 1997, pp. 147–66.

²⁴⁷On tuition fees at Conservative synagogues, see Maurice Potosky and Martin S. Kunoff, “The United Synagogue Databank Survey: An Initial Report,” *United Synagogue Review*, Spring 1995, p. 21. Tuition in Reform congregations ranges from \$233–\$533 for nonmem-

In addition to suffering from serious limitations of time and personnel, many supplementary schools also are weakened by unclear curricular goals. In fact, the actual, as compared to the prescribed, curriculum is one of the most obscure aspects of supplementary-school education. What is actually taught in such schools? To be sure, the education departments of the Conservative and Reform movements have developed curricular plans, and bureaus of Jewish education on the local level strive to define curricular goals. But it is acknowledged by most observers that schools are highly autonomous and often must shape their curricula to accommodate the abilities and limitations of their educational personnel.

A detailed survey conducted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations provides valuable data on the curricular emphases in Reform supplementary schools. Holidays and the Bible are the most frequently taught subjects from kindergarten through grade 5, after which material on Jewish history, liturgy, and the Jewish life cycle is gradually woven in. In the middle-school years, some attention is devoted to rabbinic Judaism through the study of Midrash, rabbinic commentaries, and ethics. In the high-school years, the curriculum includes a potpourri of material ranging from sex ethics to comparative religions to comparative Judaism. The same schools also claim to teach Hebrew for prayer services for an average of 100 minutes per week, and two-thirds of the schools also claim to offer worship as part of the religious school. Since these schools meet only twice a week, it is far from clear when they have time to offer so broad a range of courses.²⁴⁸

An additional prism through which to view curriculum is the record of the textbooks that schools actually purchase. In the past 15 years, Behrman House, a trade publisher, has gained firm command of the field, taking orders from an estimated 70 percent of Reform supplementary schools;²⁴⁹ in all likelihood, Conservative schools do not lag far behind in using materials produced outside their denomination. (Another house, Torah Aura Productions, has also captured some of this market.) Behrman House publications are generally the most handsomely produced on the market. They incorporate many of the newer production techniques, such as sidebars, boxes containing arresting statements, illustrations, and a magazine-like format.

bers and averages \$343 per student; members presumably pay less. See Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling*, p. 17.

²⁴⁸Joseph, *Portraits of Schooling*, pp. 53–60. Only a tiny percentage of congregations claim to teach Hebrew primarily for conversation (table 26.1, p. 60).

²⁴⁹Interview with Rabbi Jan Katzew, director, UAHC Department of Jewish Education, Jan. 14, 1998.

According to the publisher, David Behrman, the key curricular emphases have shifted in the 1990s to the “3 H’s”—Hebrew, History, Holidays.²⁵⁰ Hebrew is primarily taught to prepare children to perform within the synagogue setting, especially at the celebration of their bar or bat mitzvah—that is, Hebrew is taught as a language of prayer, not as a language of modern communication or textual study.²⁵¹ This approach apparently satisfies parents and many rabbis and cantors charged with the responsibility of preparing young people for their bar or bat mitzvah, but it leaves products of supplementary schools sorely lacking in Hebrew language skills. Those who attempt to take Hebrew on the college level are rudely shocked when it becomes apparent, as the head of one such program has put it, that they “do not demonstrate any knowledge of the language, and consequently are placed in classes for complete beginners.”²⁵²

The focus of teaching about the holidays is again to prepare children to participate in synagogue and home rituals.²⁵³ The teaching of history includes Bible stories and current events, with a focus on great heroes whose lives serve as a “hook” for human-interest stories and “Jewish values.”²⁵⁴ The consequence of this approach to history was made manifest in a study of recent bar and bat mitzvah celebrants who had been educated in a Conservative setting. When asked to name a Jewish hero, they overwhelmingly chose biblical figures or modern Israeli leaders; few identified a Jewish hero of the Middle Ages—or a woman.²⁵⁵ The coming generation in all likelihood will have fewer positive Israeli role models to call upon, because all the evidence suggests a declining amount of instruction devoted to Israel. Judging by the interest in curricular materials, ethics and Jewish values are replacing Israel as key subjects in the supplementary school.

²⁵⁰Interview with David Behrman, Dec. 18, 1998.

²⁵¹Hence, Behrman House Hebrew textbooks have titles such as *Hebrew Through Prayer* (Terry Kaye, Karen Trager, and Patrice Goldstein Mason, 1994; revised 1996) and *The New Siddur Program: Hebrew and Heritage* (Pearl and Norman Tarnor, 1990). Most recently published, *The New Hebrew Primer* (Pearl Tarnor and Carol Levy, 1999) focuses almost exclusively on synagogue Hebrew.

²⁵²Ruth Raphaeli, “The Melton Curriculum and the Melton Hebrew Language Program for Afternoon Hebrew Schools,” *Studies in Jewish Education* 4, 1989, p. 127, note 9.

²⁵³Ruth Lurie Kozodoy, *Jewish Holidays* (revised ed., 1997).

²⁵⁴Barry L. Schwartz, *Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values: Living Mitzvot in Today's World* (1996)

²⁵⁵Barry A. Kosmin, “My Hero—Insights into Jewish Education,” in Wertheimer, ed., *Jewish Identity and Religious Commitment*, pp. 12–14. Kosmin poses the question: “Where have all the female heroes gone?” In fact, there have been ongoing efforts to redesign curricula to take gender into account, ranging from the language of prayer to the choice of classical texts that include women’s experiences, to teaching “gender sensitivity.” See, for example, Janna Kaplan and Shulamit Reinharz, *Gender Issues in Jewish Day Schools* (Women’s Studies Program, Brandeis Univ., 1997).

The limited ability of the denominational arms (the Reform efforts were more successful than Conservative ones) to produce popular textbooks has led to a homogenizing effect, since it is now the publisher and the market that determine the essential goals and worldviews that are to be conveyed in supplementary schools. Educational leaders in both the United Synagogue and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations remain committed to shaping the curricula of schools within each of their denominations and aspire to recapture the market for curricular and text materials.²⁵⁶ But until they succeed in producing, let alone distributing, their own materials widely, the texts that are used are not likely to include strong normative statements. Thus, workbooks on prayer expose young people not to the liturgical works of their own religious denomination, but rather to a neutral and inoffensive rendering of commonly used prayers. If there is any controversial question facing the nondenominational publisher today it is whether to picture boys and girls both wearing a skullcap—because some consumers require neither to don a yarmulke, others require only boys to do so, and still others require the equal treatment of boys and girls. As for the content of Jewish educational texts, the goal is to downplay what is particular to each movement.

Apart from the issues of time, personnel, and adequate textbooks, there is one additional drain on the resources of supplementary schools that stems, ironically, directly from the increasing success of day schools. As the latter have expanded, they have siphoned off many of the most engaged Jewish families and educators who in the past had invested themselves in supplementary education, thus depriving the schools of the most energetic and committed leadership. Moreover, the decision of leaders in the Conservative movement, especially, and to a lesser extent in the Reform movement, to speak out publicly in favor of day-school education has created a crisis of morale among the parent bodies of many supplementary schools. When the rabbi, educators, and denominational leaders favor day-school education over the congregation's own program, parents who opt for the synagogue school are left with a very ambiguous message. Should they listen to the religious leadership and send their children to a day school? Or should they send their children to their synagogue's school, which after all absorbs so much of the congregation's budget? As day-school education has spread in the Conser-

²⁵⁶Both Rabbis Abramson and Katzew (who head up the education departments of their organizations) stated their intentions to produce such materials for their movements. On the planned new Conservative curriculum, see Robert Abramson and Steven M. Brown, "Synagogue School Curriculum Initiative for the Conservative Synagogue School," *Melton Gleanings*, Winter 1998, p. 1ff. The Reform movement's department of Jewish education disseminates new curricular ideas and material in a handsomely produced journal called *Torah at the Center*.

vative and Reform movements, the gap within congregations between families who enroll their children in day schools and those who use the supplementary school has grown, thereby fragmenting many congregations at precisely a time when educational reformers seek to revive the supplementary school by winning assent for congregational "change."²⁵⁷ Thus, even as educators are calling for its regeneration, the supplementary school is faced with a range of troubling dilemmas and ongoing limitations.

THE BRANCHING OUT OF FORMAL JEWISH STUDY

The last decades of the century have also witnessed an important growth in Jewish schooling during the years bracketing bar and bat mitzvah. Early childhood, long understood by psychologists and educators to be a formative period, has received new emphasis. "These are the magic years in which we can lay the foundation for a positive Jewish identity in our kids," says one parent. "At this age, they love learning about the holidays, singing Hebrew songs, and learning some Hebrew words . . . and it carries over into our family, too. They go around the house singing what they learned in school, and we celebrate Shabbat and holidays more because they demand it. . . . We hope that this positive attitude will be a solid foundation when their studies have to be more serious and when other interests and pressures may distract them."²⁵⁸ Indeed, a limited amount of research has substantiated the claim that family observance of Jewish religious rituals increases when parents enter their children into child-care programs rich in Jewish content.²⁵⁹ One study found greater observance of home rituals, such as lighting Friday-night candles and reciting the *kiddush*, and even increases in the number of Jewish friendships reported by parents.²⁶⁰

Preschool and early school programs have been growing apace both at Jewish community centers and in synagogues. Indeed, many of the latter regard such programs as vital feeders of the congregational schools—and thereby as a vehicle for recruiting new members. It is not unusual for synagogue-based preschool programs to enroll an average of 250 children

²⁵⁷Cohen, "Day School Parents in Conservative Synagogues," pp. 18–23.

²⁵⁸Leora Isaacs, "Jewish Schools of Thought," *Hadassah Magazine*, Mar. 1989, p. 32.

²⁵⁹Fishman, *Jewish Education and Jewish Identity*, p. 8, citing a study conducted by Ruth Pinkenson Feldman in Philadelphia. See also the latter's unpublished doctoral diss., "The Impact of the Jewish Day Care Experience on Parental Identity," Temple Univ., 1987.

²⁶⁰Ruth Pinkenson Feldman, "What We Know About Early Childhood Education," in Kelman, ed., *What We Know About Jewish Education*, esp. her reference to another study by Ruth Ravid and Marvell Ginsburg that arrived at similar conclusions based on a study conducted in Chicago; pp. 82–83.

in ten or more classrooms. Jewish community centers have also bolstered their programming for preschoolers, viewing it as a “portal” of entry into the organized Jewish community for many unaffiliated families. In short, early-childhood Jewish schools are booming, enrolling an estimated 50,000–70,000 preschoolers by the later 1980s, including some as young as 18 months, but mainly targeted at three-and-four-year-old toddlers.²⁶¹

The major limitation of such schools is one of personnel. Due to the unusually low salaries commanded by early childhood educators, it is difficult to recruit well-trained teachers. A study of educators in three communities, for example, found that more than half of the early childhood teachers had no Jewish education beyond the age of 13, and nearly a quarter had received no Jewish education before age 13 either. Preschool programming, moreover, is a sector of Jewish education that employs large numbers of non-Jews.²⁶² Until this shortage of suitable personnel is solved, the growth of Jewish preschool programs may amount to a lost opportunity for the field of Jewish education—and the community at large.

Early childhood programs are also experiencing surging enrollments. Until the 1980s, only a small percentage—in the vicinity of 15–20 percent—of six-and-seven-year-olds were receiving a Jewish education, and those who were enrolled in programs either attended brief one-day-a-week sessions or day schools. Most parents were afraid to start their children too young, fearing they would grow bored quickly.²⁶³ Due to the surge in enrollments in day school, a form of Jewish education that begins with kindergarten, and the greater receptivity of parents to Jewish schooling during the early childhood years, by the early 1990s approximately 55 percent of six- and seven-year-olds were enrolled in a Jewish school.²⁶⁴

The high-school years also offer the potential for serious study, but once students pass the age of bar and bat mitzvah, their levels of enrollment begin to plummet. Overall, it is estimated that among Jewish teenagers aged 16–18, fewer than one-quarter are involved in Jewish educational programs: 44 percent in day high schools, 29 percent in afternoon schools, and 27 percent in Sunday schools.²⁶⁵ This stands in marked contrast to

²⁶¹For some interesting accounts of model programs and curricula in some schools, see *Early Childhood Jewish Education*, ed. Barry Holtz (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, New York, 1996).

²⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶³Isaacs, “Jewish Schools of Thought,” p. 32.

²⁶⁴Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*, table 1, p. 8. Some 38 percent of these children are in day schools, and most of the rest are in Sunday-only programs (p. 11).

²⁶⁵Fishman, *Jewish Education and Jewish Identity Among Contemporary American Jews*, p. 6; and Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*, p. 28.

the approximately 75 percent of children aged 8–13 who are enrolled in Jewish schools.²⁶⁶ A comparison of enrollments in different communities reveals the following drop-off from ages 6–12 to 13–17: In Milwaukee the decline is from 83 percent to 28 percent; in St. Louis, by contrast, the decrease, not as sharp, goes from 72 percent to 52 percent; in Atlanta the figure drops from 54 percent to 25 percent; and in St. Petersburg, from 40 percent to 23 percent.²⁶⁷

This variability from one community to the next suggests that the two key factors determining whether teenagers will continue their Jewish education are the availability of schools and the expectations of parents and the local culture. The shortage of non-Orthodox day high schools renders it unlikely for teenagers to continue their intensive Jewish education (unless they are prepared to enroll in Orthodox high schools); in fact, the absence of such schools reflects and also encourages a culture of dropping out after the completion of lower- and middle-school education among day-schoolers. But it is also evident that some communities and synagogues are far more effective than others in winning over young people and their parents to sustaining Jewish education well into the teenage years, even if it is through supplementary schooling.²⁶⁸

Beyond the high-school years, a significant percentage of college-age Jews continue to enroll in formal Jewish schooling. In the Orthodox community, study at advanced yeshivas in Israel has become *de rigeur*, usually for a year or two before entering college. Most Orthodox day high schools encourage their graduates to pursue such study, viewing it as a kind of “finishing school” experience.²⁶⁹ It is difficult to come by data on the precise count of such students (some estimates put the figure at 3,000 students annually by the mid-1990s), but certainly a majority of young Orthodox men and women study at Israeli yeshivas for the first year after high school.

Returning students and quite a number of others also study at advanced yeshivas in the United States. Depending on their ideological out-

²⁶⁶Goldstein and Fishman, *Teach Your Children*, p. 8. Interestingly, only 71 percent of boys and 86 percent of girls enroll during these peak years, possibly suggesting, as Goldstein and Fishman note, the strong peer pressure on boys to engage in team sports.

²⁶⁷Sheskin, *Geographic Variations*, table 59, p. 72.

²⁶⁸A recent study of education in Reform temples indicates that “nationally, there is an average 21% drop-off in religious school between grades 7 and 10, a 60% drop-off between grades 7 and 11, and a 63% drop-off between grades 7 and 12. It is probable that students leave the school once the bar/bat mitzvah is over (during grades 7 and 8), so that fewer congregations have post-bar/bat mitzvah classes.” Indeed, half of all schools in Reform temples do not offer classes for 11th- and 12th-graders. Joseph, *Portraits of Jewish Schooling*, pp. 7, 66.

²⁶⁹For a study of students from modern Orthodox high schools who went on to spend a year in a yeshiva in Israel, see Shalom Berger, “A Year of Study in an Israeli Yeshiva Program: Before and After,” unpublished diss., Yeshiva Univ., 1997.

look, they may devote the daytime hours to religious study and pursue their college education in the evenings. Numerous advanced yeshivas function in the New York metropolitan area—the Lakewood Yeshivah in New Jersey is one of the oldest—and other such programs can be found in communities as far-flung as Baltimore, Cleveland, and Memphis.²⁷⁰ To these must be added undergraduate programs at Yeshiva University's colleges for men and women and Touro College, which also offer advanced Jewish studies and studies leading to a bachelor's degree. A novel development of recent years is the opening of advanced yeshivas for women, such as Drisha in New York.²⁷¹ Smaller but significant programs of full-time college-level study are offered by the List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary and some of the Jewish teachers' colleges, usually in a joint-program format with a nearby university or college.

To round out our discussion of post-high-school options, we should note the burgeoning of Jewish studies programs at colleges and universities. Since the 1960s, young Jews spanning the denominational spectrum have been able to continue formal Judaica studies while in college. These programs, with their rich offerings in Hebrew language, classical texts, Jewish history, literature, and culture, represent a remarkable efflorescence of Jewish learning. Writing in the *American Jewish Year Book* in 1966, Arnold Band enumerated a total of 60 positions for academics in Jewish studies; by the late 1980s, this figure had multiplied tenfold, and today it is even greater.²⁷²

It is not clear, however, what percentage of young Jews avail themselves of these courses or whether those who enroll are already among the more committed to Jewish life. A study conducted by the National Association of Professors of Hebrew in 1989 claimed an enrollment of 5,000 students in all Hebrew-language courses out of a Jewish undergraduate population of 240,000.²⁷³ In the early 1980s, Hillel directors at

²⁷⁰A valuable listing of "Known Yeshivot Providing Intensive, Post-High School Talmudic Study in the United States" is appended to Charles Liebman's trailblazing essay, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," pp. 93–97 (see note 54). See also William Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New York, 1982). One of the leading advanced yeshivas currently is Ner Israel in Baltimore, which in 1992 enrolled 400 post-secondary-school students. Gary Rosenblatt, "Opening the Yeshiva Doors," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Nov. 8, 1991, p. 67.

²⁷¹See a description of this college and graduate-level program in a profile of Drisha's founder, David Silber, "Opening Traditional Texts to Women," *Moment*, Aug. 1989, pp. 33–34.

²⁷²Arnold J. Band, "Jewish Studies in American Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities," *AJYB* 1966, vol. 67, pp. 3–30; idem., "Jewish Studies: A Generation Later," *Sh'ma*, Dec. 8, 1989, p. 17.

²⁷³Gilead Morhag, "Language Is Not Enough," in *Hebrew in America: Perspectives and*

14 campuses polled Jewish students and discovered that 42 percent had taken courses in Judaic studies.²⁷⁴ It appears, therefore, that such courses supplement the Jewish education of but a minority of Jewish collegians.

Far more difficult to quantify is the correlation between enrollment in such academic courses and later forms of engagement with Jewish life. Certainly, courses do not explicitly prescribe how students ought to behave. University norms of dispassionate scholarship and academic freedom militate against professors' assuming an overt role in socializing young Jews to abide by communal norms.²⁷⁵ Thus, from the perspective of this overview, Jewish studies on campuses should be regarded as "a parallel or independent entity," outside the structure of Jewish education. "Even though many programs were initiated because of the interest and financial support of a local Jewish community, once established," as Walter Ackerman has observed, "they are part of another world."²⁷⁶ Even though many Jewish studies programs have local governing boards, they are guided by the requirements of the academic world and do not serve the Jewish community. Therefore, we will merely acknowledge this rich and important ancillary to the field of Jewish education and leave it to others to examine its contours and impact.²⁷⁷

Informal Education

By the middle of the century, as we have previously noted, a number of ancillary programs already complemented the extensive network of Jewish schools. These included summer camps, youth movements, campus programs, trips to Israel, and the like. For the most part, however, formal and informal education were viewed as distinct entities: Jewish schooling was "responsible for teaching the basic building blocks of Jewish literacy and knowledge," and informal Jewish education was thought

Prospects, ed. Alan Mintz (Detroit, 1992), p. 193. My discussion of Jewish studies programs draws upon a rich, unpublished paper written by Lisa Grant, a doctoral student in education at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

²⁷⁴Lawrence Sternberg, "A Profile of Hillel Leaders" (B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation and the Cohen Center, Brandeis Univ., Aug. 1990), cited by Lisa Grant in her essay "Companions in Conflict: Jewish Studies and the American Jewish Community," Spring 1996.

²⁷⁵See, for example, the symposium on "Jewish Studies in the Jewish Community," *AJS Newsletter*, Fall 1996.

²⁷⁶Walter I. Ackerman, *The Structure of Jewish Education, A Report to the Commission for Jewish Education in North America*, May 1990, p. 8.

²⁷⁷In this context we note as well the range of training institutions that prepare professionals for leadership in the Jewish community—rabbis, cantors, educators, communal workers, and academics. The programs of such training institutions also warrant separate treatment.

to focus on “Jewish sociability and identification.”²⁷⁸ By the 1980s, educators began to rethink the relationship between the two. In part, the distance between these two areas of Jewish education narrowed because many educators themselves straddled both: summer camps, for example, were often administered by school principals, and teachers often led trips to Israel. But on a deeper level, a change in thinking had begun to take place in the 1970s that blurred the lines between formal and informal education. As Bernard Riesman, a leading authority on the American Jewish community, put it: “Informal Jewish educators have been increasingly seeking to upgrade the priority given to formal Jewish content in their programs; formal Jewish educators have been increasingly attentive to utilizing informal educational values and methodology as means of better achieving their educational goals.”²⁷⁹

What, then, is informal Jewish education? Its objective, according to educator Barry Chazan, is “to enable people to participate—usually with others—in a diverse series of Jewish life experiences for the inherent value in them. It is aimed at affecting Jewish attitudes and experiences of a person in the present, with the hope that these patterns will continue in the future.” Informal education takes place in a structured and planned setting, but is far more focused on interactivity and student participation than is schooling.²⁸⁰

Some have interpreted the new receptivity to informal education as an act of desperation. In the words of one educator, the change in outlook “emerged from the growing sense of frustration with existing models and from a sense of success with some new alternatives.”²⁸¹ Others, however, have argued for change on the grounds that Jewish education must not be understood as an analogue to public education; instead, as the former head of Jewish education in the Reform movement claimed, “We’re simply not in the same business as the public schools. Our business is to teach how lives should be lived.”²⁸² Given such a holistic and encompassing goal, it is argued, Jewish education must embrace Jews, especially young people, in a rich and interconnected network of settings for Jewish living and learning.

²⁷⁸ Barry Chazan, “What Is Informal Jewish Education?” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Summer 1991, p. 304. Chazan takes exception to the use of the terms “schooling” and “formal education” as synonyms, since the former refers to an organizational structure and the latter refers to an educational approach. The point is well taken, but this essay will continue to use the terms interchangeably.

²⁷⁹ Bernard Riesman, *Informal Jewish Education in North America* (Commission on Jewish Education in North America, Dec. 1990), pp. 5–6.

²⁸⁰ Chazan, “What Is Informal Jewish Education?” p. 304.

²⁸¹ Barry Chazan, as quoted in Riesman, *Informal Jewish Education*, p. 9.

²⁸² Quoted by Janet Marder in “The Trouble with Jewish Education,” *Reform Judaism*, Summer 1993, p. 19.

FAMILY EDUCATION

Given this objective, it is hardly surprising that educators have been paying increasing attention to the family, the most important setting for all learning. The premise of Jewish family education was enunciated already in the late 1970s by Bernard Riesman, who argued that American Jews have adapted so well to the American scene that “Jewish families today have to work at Judaizing their lives just as their parents and grandparents had to work at Americanizing theirs.”²⁸³ Such a goal could be attained only through a deliberate educational program that would help narrow the oft-remarked-upon gap between the family and the school. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, demographic changes also created some new opportunities for family educators. For one thing, the baby-boom generation now began to have children. “Many of these parents,” Joseph Reimer observes, went “through childbirth classes, read the extensive literature on raising children and [were] in general more ready to be involved in their children’s education. They also, on the whole, have weak Jewish educations that need refreshing if they are to keep up with their children’s Jewish learning.” In addition, a significant population of converts to Judaism and interfaith families clamored for opportunities to educate themselves sufficiently so that they could participate actively in their children’s Jewish upbringing. Jewish family education thus arose as a response to a particular *zeitgeist* and the needs of very specific populations.²⁸⁴

Jewish family education has developed in a variety of settings—including Jewish community centers,²⁸⁵ day schools, and retreat centers—but it has been most prominently practiced within congregations and in conjunction with supplementary schooling. The primary goal of Jewish family education is to involve parents in their children’s Jewish education. As one pioneer in this field explained, Jewish family education rejects the conventional strategy of Jewish education that asserts: “Send us your children and we’ll send you back Jews.” Rather it offers a different message: “Please take your child to his/her classroom. After roll-call, the class will join us for a program from the ‘Curriculum of Caring.’ You and your child will learn about. . . .”²⁸⁶ Or, as another educator puts it: “Instead of doing the traditional Sunday school child drop-off, the Jewish family

²⁸³Bernard Riesman, “Jewish Family Education,” *Pedagogic Reporter*, Spring 1977, p.

²⁸⁴Joseph Reimer, “Jewish Family Education: Evaluating Its Course, Looking to Its Future,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Summer 1991, pp. 269–70.

²⁸⁵For a discussion of Jewish family education within the JCC setting, see Harlene W. Appelman, “Mission Mishpacha: A Continental Agenda for Jewish Community Centers,” *JCC Circle*, Oct. 1991, pp. 8–9. See also Bernard Riesman’s discussion of different venues for family education in *Informal Jewish Education in North America*, pp. 32–42.

²⁸⁶Harlene W. Appelman, “Parents and Children Find Judaism Works,” *Moment*, Aug. 1993, p. 46.

education specialist wants parents to park their cars once in a while and spend the afternoon learning with their children."²⁸⁷ Jewish family education, in short, builds upon the investment that parents are already making in their children's education to encourage more intensive parental engagement in the actual process of learning.

Although there is no unanimity on the exact definition of Jewish family education, certain basic elements are commonly accepted. First and foremost, the programs regard the family as the unit receiving an education and, accordingly, seek to involve every member of the family in the process.²⁸⁸ They strive to give parents the skills and information they will need to live as Jews and thereby serve as Jewish role models for their children. However, the primary goal is neither the transfer of skills nor the acquisition of knowledge, but change in behavior within the family setting. Family education strives to communicate the need for lifelong engagement in Jewish study and other forms of Jewish living; it offers "props" and other materials to enhance the Jewish home; and it seeks to create a "non-judgmental," highly pluralistic setting in which participants will not feel coerced.²⁸⁹

In practice, most Jewish family education programs work to link families in joint celebrations and activities so that adults and children develop peer groups that reinforce each other's participation. Practitioners also strive to create settings in which parents interact with their children while learning about Jewish holidays, history, and culture. The most complicated goal, however, is to educate parents seriously on an adult level while simultaneously engaging in family education.²⁹⁰ Some programs create parallel learning opportunities for parents to develop a sophisticated understanding of the material their children are studying in their formal school settings.²⁹¹

Although it has caught on in congregations around the country, Jewish family education is hardly without serious deficiencies. The absence of a strong curriculum and structure results in an improvisational quality, and provides no means to enable adults or children to engage in

²⁸⁷Teresa Strasser, "Teaching Judaism Is Family Enterprise, Educators Say," *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, Feb. 7, 1997 (from the Web site).

²⁸⁸Some programs seek to involve grandparents and other members of the extended family. On these and other issues in Jewish family education, see Leora W. Isaacs and Jeffrey Schein, *Targilon: A Workbook for Charting the Course of Family Education* (Jewish Education Service of North America, New York, Feb. 1996).

²⁸⁹Harlene Winnick Appelman and Joan S. Kaye, "Curricularizing Jewish Family Education," *First Fruits*, pp. 491–92.

²⁹⁰Reimer, "Jewish Family Education," pp. 271–72.

²⁹¹On an early experiment with such parallel learning for adults, see David Brusin, "The Promise of PEP," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1981, pp. 53–55.

graded learning designed to help them progress from one level to the next. Thus, when educators refer to the goal of “lifelong learning,” they rarely can point to a defined structure of study that builds upon earlier stages of learning. In addition, while it is well and good to encourage parents and children to learn together, it is an entirely different matter to structure programs that can challenge both simultaneously. Jewish family education programs also attract significant populations of interfaith families, but they do not necessarily address the unique challenges within such family structures. It is also far from clear whether family education is directed at all families, including those with preschoolers or empty nests, or solely at families with school-age children.

The personnel issues that beset other forms of Jewish education bedevil this field too. When teachers of young children are suddenly asked to work with adults too, they may find themselves out of their depth. At a minimum, family educators require very different sets of skills than do teachers of children—although it is not always apparent what kinds of skills and training family educators require. Finally, while there is much excitement about family education, it is not a well-tested field and little is known about its impact.²⁹²

ADULT EDUCATION

Much of the same weakness and murkiness is evident in adult education programs. Adult study has proliferated helter-skelter in a wide variety of Jewish settings—congregations, JCCs, elderhostels, retreat centers, and the like.²⁹³ Indeed, a great many institutions have invested heavily in adult study opportunity. To name just a few: Hebrew Union College runs a “Kollel” with adult education lectures; the Jewish Theological Seminary sponsors “Havruta” programs all over the country focused on classical texts; CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, sends Jewish educators to teach federation leaders about Judaism; Hadasah and other women’s organizations promote study within chapters and for leadership groups; Holocaust museums offer public lectures; and the

²⁹²These dilemmas were outlined by Joseph Reimer in the early 1990s (“Jewish Family Education,” pp. 275–77). On more recent efforts to address some of these issues, see the useful collection co-edited by Adrienne Bank and Ron Wolfson, *First Fruits*.

For an interesting dissenting view that frets over the “use of children as a lever to change adults” and argues that parental involvement may subvert the goals of the educational institution, see Fishman, *Learning About Learning*, citing the views of Samuel Schafner, p. 43.

²⁹³Betsy Dolgin Katz, “What We Know About Adult Education,” in Kelman, ed., *What We Know About Jewish Education*, p. 99.

Florence Melton Adult Mini-School program has established 34 sites around the country for its two-year, 120-hour course.²⁹⁴

Many Reform and Conservative synagogues sponsor not only adult education courses that meet weekly, but also specific courses of study, including classes for potential converts to Judaism. Among the most popular have been special courses for women leading to celebration of an adult bat mitzvah; these programs, which entail intensive study over a year or two, enable women who never had much Jewish education or the opportunity to become a bat mitzvah to acquire key synagogue skills, such as reading Torah and leading the prayer services.²⁹⁵ Within the Orthodox world, a Daf Yomi ("page a day") project that encourages daily Talmud study has attracted ever larger number of participants all across the country, some of whom meet in corporate and law office suites during the lunch hour.²⁹⁶

An entire industry also serves what has come to be called "outreach" — an imprecise term that may refer to bringing moderately engaged Jews into forms of greater participation, or to reaching the unaffiliated, or to reaching interfaith families. In the first category is the National Jewish Outreach Program founded by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald, which offers crash courses in Hebrew, Judaica, and prayer. The NJOP claims to have reached 100,000 Jews in its first six years. A number of other Orthodox groups, ranging from the Lubavitch Hassidic movement to the Jewish Learning Exchange of Ohr Somayach to Aish ha'Torah, also seek to appeal to non-Orthodox Jews and lead them to become "*baalei teshuvah*," "returnees" to Orthodox Judaism. Generally these programs score their greatest successes with Jews who have had some involvement with Jewish life and a Jewish education, that is, with the already moderately engaged. At the other end of the spectrum are programs to reach interfaith couples and their children. These may meet in JCCs or in synagogues. Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me, for example, offers two years of Jewish education for free to children of intermarried couples. In between are many programs offered by local institutions to attract the unaffiliated but curious.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴For a good survey of the range of programs available, see Debra Nussbaum Cohen, "In Growing Numbers, Jewish Adults Are Seeking to Fill a Knowledge Gap," *Charlotte Jewish News*, Sept. 1998, p. 31. On the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, see Betsy Dolgin Katz, "Creating A Learning Community: It Doesn't Just Happen," *Jewish Education News*, Spring 1998, pp. 26–28.

²⁹⁵Stuart Schoenfeld, "Ritual and Role Transition: Adult Bat Mitzvah As a Successful Rite of Passage," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Jewish Theological Seminary and Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 349–76. According to one estimate, approximately 70 percent of Reform temples sponsored such programs. See "To Learn and To Teach," *Agenda: Jewish Education*, Fall 1997, pp. 29–30.

²⁹⁶Alfred I. Neugut, "Moonlighting as a Daf Yomi Student," *Sh'ma*, Mar. 20, 1998, pp. 3–5.

²⁹⁷Rahel Musleah, "The Identity Superhighway," *Hadassah Magazine*, Mar. 1994, pp. 10–13.

In recent years, enterprising Jewish groups have begun to harness the new electronic media to offer Jewish adult education. First came cable television programs with Jewish content in cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, Miami, and Los Angeles. Often sponsored by local federations of Jewish philanthropy, these cable stations carry programs for youngsters and also adults. At the same time, the VCR revolution provided the opportunity to market educational tapes on Jewish holidays, the Hebrew language, and many historical subjects.²⁹⁸ Most recently, there has been an explosion of Jewish Web sites on the Internet offering Jewish news and commentary, text study, formal Jewish courses, and even distance learning for college credit.²⁹⁹

The range and number of courses and lectures and computer learning opportunities offered across North America clearly attest to the interest of adults in further Jewish study. However, research is needed to assess their efficacy as educational instruments and their long-term effect on learners.³⁰⁰

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER MOVEMENT

Aside from the synagogue, no other Jewish institution in this country attracts as many members and participants as the Jewish community center (JCC). It is estimated that the 265 JCCs and their affiliated camps serve between one and one-and-a-half million Jews in some 120 cities of the United States (and nine in Canada).³⁰¹ JCCs offer a range of recreational activities—usually including a gym, work-out room, and pool—and sponsor programs and classes for all ages, especially crafts, drama, and the arts; most JCCs also run preschool programs, teen groups, and camping programs. Given this enormous reach and scope, it was a noteworthy development, indeed, when the JCC movement embraced Jewish education as a central feature of its mission.

²⁹⁸Moshe Waldoks, "Jewish Television," *Hadassah Magazine*, Feb. 1990, pp. 34–36.

²⁹⁹For some assessments by educators of the possibilities and pitfalls of Jewish distance learning, see the essays of Eli Birnbaum, Debbie Findling, and Burton I. Cohen and Judith Z. Abrams in *Jewish Education News*, Spring 1998, pp. 36–43.

³⁰⁰A survey conducted by the Syracuse federation found that adults were far more willing to engage in informal than formal Jewish education, particularly as the former is more adaptable to their needs and time constraints. Rae W. Rohfeld and Louis J. Zachary, "Participation in Adult Jewish Learning: Some Implications for Strengthening Jewish Identity and Continuity," *Jewish Journal of Communal Service*, Winter/Spring 1995, pp. 234–41.

³⁰¹Richard Greenberg, "JCCs Soft-Sell Judaism: The Fine Line Between Jewish and 'Too Jewish,'" *Moment*, Apr. 1997, p. 34ff., offers a fine introduction to these issues. See also Steven M. Cohen and Barry W. Holtz, *Jewish Education in JCCs* (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, New York, 1996).

As noted above, JCCs came late to the field of Jewish education and had to overcome considerable internal resistance before they could take on a mission to offer serious Jewish education. A number of JCCs began to move in this direction during the 1970s, but the turning point came in 1984 with the publication of a report by the Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers (known as COMJEE). The commission adopted a platform that defined

the Jewish Community Center in North America [as] uniquely qualified to function as a Jewish educational instrumentality of the Jewish community by providing a format of experiences, programs and services addressed to: (a) developing and reinforcing Jewish identity; (b) motivating and enabling the acquisition of Jewish knowledge; (c) developing and strengthening Jewish involvement; and (d) enhancing Jewish practices and participation based on Jewish values and pride.³⁰²

The commission went on to recommend specific goals to help members and their children understand the importance of Jewish schooling, learn more about a range of Jewish topics, identify more strongly with the Jewish people and Israel, and so on. To put some teeth into this new agenda, the commission urged JCCs to direct funding to Jewish education and to hire personnel capable of carrying out the new mandate.³⁰³

A follow-up task force convened in 1995 assessed the extent of changes after ten years and sharpened the educational mission further. Its "Vision Statement" urged the JCC movement

to maximize the use of the programs and services, the position in the community, and the accessibility of the Jewish Community Center to welcome all Jews, to help each Jew move along a continuum of Jewish growth, and to build Jewish memories. The ultimate goal is to create a community of learning Jews who are consciously Jewish; who are respectful of Jewish differences; who are knowledgeable of and committed to Jewish values and practice; who participate in synagogue life and in Jewish communal and cultural life; who make Israel a central component in their identities as Jews; and who manifest their Jewishness in lifestyle, life choices, and life commitment, thus creating a Jewish community capable of continuing creative renewal.³⁰⁴

One can hardly imagine a more dramatic change in direction from the positions of the JCCs just 40 years earlier.

What accounts for this about-face? Certainly, it is possible to read these documents as responses to the altered mood within the American Jewish community at large. Beginning in the late 1960s, a series of events in this

³⁰²Report: *Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers* (JWB, New York, Sept. 1984), p. 6.

³⁰³Ibid.

³⁰⁴COMJEE II: *Task Force on Reinforcing the Effectiveness of Jewish Education in JCCs* (JCC Association, New York, May 1995), p. 9.

country and abroad redirected the weight of Jewish concern from its earlier integrationist agenda to a survivalist mission, a change from a primary emphasis on fitting into American society to a new preoccupation with insuring the inner strength of the Jewish community. The leadership of JCCs could not help but take notice of this shift in orientation. Moreover, as the JCCs were dependent upon local federations of Jewish philanthropy for considerable sums of communal money, they had to justify their importance to the Jewish community as more than a place for Jews to engage in recreational and social activities, but also as a setting with the capacity to strengthen Jewish life at home.³⁰⁵ What better way than to redefine themselves as agencies vitally involved in a Jewish educational mission! Hence, the JCCs' new direction can be read as an astute adaptation to the changing mood of the American Jewish community, on which they have depended for considerable financial support. The second COMJEE vision statement, in fact, makes it dramatically clear that JCCs now project themselves as allies of other Jewish institutions, committing themselves to fostering greater support among their members for synagogues, Israel, and other forms of Jewish participation. Indeed, they portray JCCs as unique "entry points" for minimally affiliated Jews who are gradually encouraged by JCC personnel to deepen their involvement with other sectors of the organized Jewish community.

But there is also considerable evidence suggesting that the JCCs were undergoing an internal revolution, driven by a new type of leadership intent on remaking the centers. The new outlook was captured in 1986 in the following analysis: "The days when JCCs were primarily institutions for recreational activities with relatively incidental Jewish education qua Jewish education is no longer sufficient to meet the changing needs of today's Jewish communities in a world marked by computerization of the human condition and the trivialization of the Jewish ethos. The old type of JCC is obsolete and an albatross around the neck of the Jewish community."³⁰⁶ This new outlook, moreover, preceded the so-called continuity agenda by six to seven years, suggesting a rethinking of JCC priorities well before the results of the 1990 NJPS created a bandwagon effect. Under the leadership of national leaders such as Morton Mandel and a cadre of local professionals, the JCC movement reinvented itself as an institution committed to a Jewish educational mission.

In the early 1990s, the extent of the changes that had taken place was measured in a survey commissioned by the JCC Association. Among the

³⁰⁵I have written at some length on this theme in my essay, "Jewish Organizational Life in the United States Since 1945," *AJYB* 1995, vol. 95, pp. 31–83.

³⁰⁶Murray Zuckoff, "JCCs: The Jewish Connection," *JTA Daily News Bulletin*: part 1, May 12, 1986, p. 3; part 2, May 13, 1986, pp. 3–4.

key findings: (1) Virtually all JCCs included adult Jewish learning in their programming, and over half offered classes on Basic Judaism and Basic Jewish Literacy. Half also ran programs for interfaith families. (2) Three quarters ran Jewish family education programs. (3) One-third sponsored trips to Israel with a Jewish educational objective. (4) The vast majority publicly recognized Jewish holidays and decorated their facilities to mark these festivals. (5) Significant percentages displayed the Jewish component of their work in visible ways—by having a Jewish library, Hebrew signs, exhibits of Jewish art, and the like. (6) Over 80 percent sponsored Jewish book fairs and sold Jewish art. (7) Growing numbers of JCCs encouraged their staff members to enhance their own Jewish education and to study in Israel. “The most important change,” the survey researchers concluded, “has been the metamorphosis of a culture whereby ‘things Jewish’ have become more rather than less of a norm in the Center world.”³⁰⁷

Perhaps the most tangible change has come in the area of staffing. In 1994, 45 percent of JCCs reported that they had hired a Jewish educational specialist.³⁰⁸ By 1997, JCCs employed 70 full-time specialists in Jewish education, including a growing number of rabbis. As the former director of Jewish educational services put it: “We don’t provide Jewish education because it is popular but because that’s what we’re about. We have to show our customers that we’re taking Jewish education as seriously as Nike takes its shoe customers.”³⁰⁹

This bold assertion also highlights some of the weaknesses of the JCC agenda. To begin with, as a half-billion-dollar a year enterprise, the JCC movement has no choice but to pay attention to its customers—and a growing number of these are not even Jewish. In order to qualify for government funding, all the major JCCs have altered their membership policies to admit members regardless of religion.³¹⁰ One can only wonder how a strong Jewish educational push squares with the open-door policy. But even among its Jewish members, educational programming is not a high priority. When JCC directors were asked in 1982 and 1988—that is, before and after the COMJEE initiative was begun—to list the key reasons

³⁰⁷Barry Chazan and Steven M. Cohen, *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers—The 1994 Survey* (JCC Association, New York, Oct. 1994), pp. i-iii. See also the earlier study of Bernard Reisman, *Social Change and Response: Assessing Efforts to Maximize Jewish Educational Effectiveness in Jewish Community Centers in North America* (JCC Association, New York, 1988).

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. ii.

³⁰⁹Greenberg, “JCCs Soft-Sell Judaism,” p. 38.

³¹⁰Gary Rosenblatt, “For the JCCs, A Quiet Change,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Oct. 16, 1990, pp. 22–24; and Alan Hitsky, “Last Jewish JCC?” *Detroit Jewish News*, Oct. 30, 1992, p. 1.

why members come to centers, programs with Jewish content were listed as a distant third choice.³¹¹

The nature of such programs is also much in dispute, especially the extent to which they ought to address normative questions. One longtime Jewish professional, Gerald Bubis, flatly declares that “a center can never be prescriptive”; its ideology, he contends, “has been not to *have* an ideology.” Instead, centers will always offer “Judaism on demand, rather than demanding Judaism.” But the implicit message of JCCs does suggest a normative direction, for when an ever-rising percentage of JCCs remain open on the Jewish Sabbath³¹² and run programs that do not serve kosher food, a certain type of Jewish ideology is being communicated—the ideology of secular Jewish culture. This approach is rejected by Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, director of the Pritzker Center for Jewish Education at the Chicago JCCs, and the chief proponent within the JCC movement for a more demanding Jewish content. Poupko has fought for a stronger emphasis on God and Torah within the JCC setting, for without them “there is no Judaism, no effective Jewish civilization, and there is no transmission of Jewishness from generation to generation.”³¹³

Summing up their findings on “the Jewish educational effectiveness of the centers,” Steven M. Cohen and Barry Chazan acknowledge the significant distance JCCs have traveled on their own road to heightened Jewish identification, but they also concede that “Jewish education has [not] conquered the local JCC”—despite the best intentions of the national leadership of the movement. According to Chazan and Cohen:

Many Centers still engage high proportions of non-Jewish staff. Most Jewish staff remains Jewishly ignorant or modestly knowledgeable at best. The funding of Jewish education remains an ambiguous area. . . . Boards are still unclear about their role in the process—and in some cases, as to whether the process is their responsibility. . . . All executives are not ideologically committed to the cause.³¹⁴

Thus, despite its heartfelt embrace of a more positive Jewish mission and its self-conscious agenda of infusing center programming with Jewish learning, the JCC movement continues to struggle with what it means to “have special Jewish educational opportunities and obligations.”³¹⁵

³¹¹Reisman, *Social Change and Response*, “Summary of Findings,” p. 3.

³¹²Chazan and Cohen, *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness*, p. 16.

³¹³Bubis and Poupko are quoted in Greenberg, “JCCs Soft-Sell Judaism,” pp. 74–75.

³¹⁴Chazan and Cohen, *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness*, p. 37.

³¹⁵From *COMJEE II*, p. 8.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Jewish organizations have built a sprawling infrastructure of summer camps, youth programs, travel programs, and campus groups to offer young people attractive environments for informal Jewish education. These networks have assumed greater importance in recent decades as alarm over the “continuity” crisis has grown, particularly since their programs seem to produce more engaged Jews. Unfortunately, they reach only small proportions of the populations for which they are intended. Thus, despite their considerable potential to build and strengthen Jewish identity among youth, they exemplify the division of the Jewish community between those who have opportunities to become socialized and educated as Jews and the far larger population that is deprived of such learning experiences.

Perhaps the most powerful vehicle for informal Jewish education is the summer camp, an embracing institution that offers round-the-clock Jewish living. “The ability to impact on a kid in an emotional way can only happen at a camp where you develop personal relationships with the kids and they feel they have role models,” says one camp director. “It’s not taken out of context, like leaving Little League to go to Hebrew School and sitting and listening to someone teach you about Judaism, and then going home to watch television. Every activity we do relates to Jewish life. Campers experience it. They feel it. It makes the internalization that much more powerful.” Not surprisingly, each of the major Jewish religious movements sponsors a network of Jewish summer camps, including day camps and residential ones. So, too, do a number of Zionist organizations and of course the JCC movement and federations.³¹⁶

There is ample anecdotal evidence that camp experiences have shaped the Jewish lives of individuals who went on to become leaders in the American Jewish community. The title of an article in *Moment* magazine says it all — “Making Machers” — and in truth, quite a few rabbis, communal leaders, and other prominent individuals claim that their lives were transformed by intense camp experiences. For many young people, summer camp is their first exposure to a community dedicated to Jewish living, something they never witnessed in their own home communities. A tearful youngster bidding farewell at the end of a camp season is reputed to have remarked that “until next year, I won’t see 300 Jews together on Shabbat.” At their best, summer camps afford new opportunities for

³¹⁶Jessica Davidson, “Summer Time and the Living Is Jewish,” *Moment*, Feb. 1993, p. 57ff. The same journal publishes an annual directory listing the various Jewish camps and the locations of specific sites run by major Jewish organizations. See, for example, *Moment*, Feb. 1993, pp. 60–77.

glimpsing Jewish possibilities, especially for young Jews growing up in an environment bereft of a strong Jewish culture.³¹⁷

Unfortunately, only a small percentage of Jewish youngsters enjoy the chance to experience Jewish camping—perhaps fewer than 10 percent. A directory published by the Jewish Community Center movement enumerated slightly over 100 summer camps under organizational sponsorship. The Conservative movement's Ramah network of ten camps has enough beds for 4,000 campers; the Reform movement's camping network serves about 2,600 children. Both camping movements, in fact, have grown smartly in the past ten years. Orthodox camps and various Zionist and cultural ones are also burgeoning.³¹⁸ Yet even if we add in camps under private ownership that have some Jewish dimensions, there are probably no more than 55,000 young people attending Jewish residential camps annually, out of a potential population of some 600,000 Jewish youngsters between the ages of 8 and 17. One recent estimate put the number of children attending "the 100 overnight camps in North America run by Jewish religious or Zionist movements and communal organizations" at 30,000 annually, which amounted to some "4 percent of the camp-age population."³¹⁹ While cost is certainly a factor, many camps sponsored by Jewish agencies, in fact, offer scholarship assistance. And so, as we shall see, with other settings for informal education, the relatively low rate of enrollment results more from parental indifference than anything else.³²⁰

³¹⁷Julie Greenbaum Fax, "Jewish Summer Camps: Making Machers," *Moment*, Feb. 1994, pp. 50–52. Clearly, this field warrants far more sophisticated examination. For an example of such research tracing the impact of the Conservative movement's Ramah camps, see Steven M. Cohen, "Camp Ramah and Jewish Identity: The Long-Term Influence on Conservative Congregants in North America," forthcoming in a volume to be edited by Sheldon Dorph.

³¹⁸E.J. Kessler, "'It's A-Camping We Will Go' Rings Out From the Woods," *Forward*, May 1, 1998, p. 1.

³¹⁹Julia Goldman, "Bunks and Bug Juice: Boosting the Camp Trail to Jewish Identity," *JTA Daily New Bulletin*, Feb. 12, 1999, p. 1. This figure excludes children who attended privately owned camps that offer Jewish programming. Significantly, the article reports on the formation of a new Foundation for Jewish Camping designed to help camps create partnerships within the Jewish community and train counselors.

³²⁰Livia Bardin, "Are Jewish Camps Educational Stepchildren?" *Moment*, Feb. 1992, pp. 23–25. The article offers a valuable corrective to some inflated numbers that had appeared in Reisman, *Informal Jewish Education in North America*, pp. 44–46.

One of the more unusual camps catering to young people aged 18–28 is the Brandeis-Bardin Institute in Simi Valley, California. It offers a powerful educational program designed to challenge "disaffected young Jews to discover a Jewish world 'with depth, variety, passion and great meaning.'" Thomas Fields-Meyer, "When Generation X Asks 'Why?'" *Moment*, June 1995, p. 25ff.

Jewish youth movements also dot the landscape of the organized Jewish community. As previously noted, the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox streams each sponsor youth movements, as do a few non-ideological organizations, such as the B'nai B'rith, and Zionist organizations. Among the latter, Hadassah's Young Judaea and the Orthodox B'nai Akiva are the most successful. According to one count taken around 1990, as many as 75,000 young people actually join, and perhaps another 25,000 occasionally attend programs of these teen-oriented movements, leaving at least two-thirds of Jewish adolescents without any youth movement involvement.³²¹

Although data are hard to come by, it appears that rates of membership have plummeted in recent decades, and many youth organizations are mere shadows of their former selves—in both size and vigor. A spokeswoman for the Reform movement recently estimated that by 1998 no more than 15 percent of Reform youth were joining the North American Federation of Temple Youth.³²² An estimated 6,000 youngsters are members of Young Judaea, the youth movement of Hadassah.³²³ The National Conference of Synagogue Youth (Orthodox) claims to serve 30,000 preteens and adolescents in 13 regions and several hundred chapters across North America.³²⁴ And the youth programs of the Conservative movement claim a membership of 10,000 preteens in the Kadima program and 15,000 teens in United Synagogue Youth.³²⁵ These figures indicate that only a minority of youngsters affiliated with these denominations join their youth movements. In fact, when a demographic survey of New York Jews conducted in 1991 examined participation in youth movements and summer camps, it found that 56 percent of Jewish children between the ages of 6 and 18 joined neither type of program, and only 12 percent were members of a Jewish youth group.³²⁶ Thus, at precisely the time when young Jews become most keenly susceptible to peer pressure, most are not

³²¹Reisman, *Informal Jewish Education in North America*, p. 31.

³²²Eric J. Greenberg, "Reform Targets Teens," *Jewish Week* (New York), Dec. 18, 1998, p. 8.

³²³Rahel Musleah, "Jewish Youth: Get with the Program," *Hadassah Magazine*, June/July 1995, p. 32.

³²⁴Nathalie Friedman, *Faithful Youth: A Study of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth* (NCSY, New York, 1998), p. 19.

³²⁵Data provided by United Synagogue Youth from its Annual Report, 1998.

³²⁶Bethamie Horowitz, *1991 New York Jewish Population Study* (UJA-Federation, New York, 1993), p. 125. (The study found that 23 percent had attended a Jewish camp.) *A Jewish Youth Databook* compiled by Amy L. Sales and produced under the auspices of Hadassah, JESNA, Jewish Community Centers Association, and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston managed to locate virtually no information on the numbers of teenagers in youth programs (Brandeis University, 1996).

involved in a youth movement that could channel them toward positive Jewish experiences in a program specifically geared to Jewish teens.³²⁷

CAMPUS PROGRAMS

The remarkable revival of Jewish campus programs in the 1990s stands as a dramatic counterpoint to the relatively anemic condition of contemporary Jewish youth movements. After nearly sliding into oblivion during the 1970s and 1980s, campus programs have received a significant infusion of new energy and capital. Impressive new Jewish centers have been rising on campuses across the country; and, even more important, a new generation of professional and lay leaders is transforming the entire field.

Jewish campus life has long been dominated by the Hillel network, which began with an organization founded at the University of Illinois in 1923 and then spread to many more colleges and universities. For much of its history, the B'nai B'rith Hillel system offered programs of disparate quality. On some campuses, Jewish student life was well organized, with a highly visible central address; in other instances, college campuses were in close proximity to strong Jewish communities where students could find services. But large numbers of Jewish students were situated on campuses where they could benefit from neither.³²⁸ As a result, the campus was often seen by Jewish leaders as a place where Jewish identity would attenuate rather than gain strength.

As admission barriers to Jews dropped in the postwar decades, the sheer scope of the challenge to serve Jews on campus grew beyond the capacity of the B'nai B'rith, the parent organization of the Hillel network. It has been estimated that 80 percent of all Jewish college students are located at 109 universities with Jewish student populations greater than

³²⁷Recent research on alumni of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, an Orthodox youth movement, concludes that the long-term impact of such programs can be quite beneficial in strengthening the Jewish commitments of young people. Although the population that joins NCSY is drawn from a narrow band of the already engaged, and respondents to the survey were self-selected, thereby insuring—as the author concedes—an overly positive set of responses, the findings are sufficiently intriguing to warrant further research on the immediate and the long-term impact of youth groups. See Friedman, *Faithful Youth*. There is an urgent need for programs to train and support youth workers who staff youth movements or work in synagogues or JCCs. A recent study found that most youth workers feel inadequately prepared and burn out quickly. See Gary Tobin and Meryle Weinstein, "Leadership Development and Professional Training of Jewish Youth Professionals," a joint publication of the Institute for Jewish and Communal Research and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Nov. 1998.

³²⁸See the survey *Campus and Community: Strengthening the Identity of Jewish College Students* (Ukeles Associates, New York, n.d.), p. 7.

1,000;³²⁹ yet hundreds more campuses attract smaller Jewish student bodies. Even at its apogee of strength, B'nai B'rith could not reach all these students. And then, in the 1980s, the parent organization went into a decline and was forced to slash its allocations to Hillel by 50 percent. It is therefore all the more remarkable that during the 1990s Hillel severed its ties to B'nai B'rith—renaming itself Hillel—The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life—and not only rebounded but gained unprecedented vigor. By the late 1990s, it encompassed 120 Hillel foundations and affiliates at an additional 400 campuses.³³⁰

Under the energetic leadership of Richard Joel, Hillel has won support from major Jewish family foundations and local federations of Jewish philanthropy, both to build impressive new facilities and to underwrite new ventures. In recent years, spanking-new Jewish centers have risen on campuses such as Harvard, Columbia, New York University, the University of Maryland, and in Houston, one for students at Rice and the University of Houston. Its “Campaign for a Jewish Renaissance” raised \$37.5 million in 1998 alone.³³¹ And new programs funded by large Jewish family foundations are expanding the scope of Hillel’s work, which includes professional development courses for Hillel staff members, sponsored by the Schusterman Foundation; study trips to Israel for staff members, sponsored by the Gruss Life Monument Funds; the Steinhardt Jewish Campus Service Corps, a program to nurture Jewish student leaders on campuses; the National Jewish Student Service Campaign, funded by the Cummings Foundation for the purpose of encouraging Jewish students to design social action programs on campuses; and the Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning, which aims to establish batei midrash, traditional Torah study centers, albeit for men and women equally, and for the entire range of Jewish students on campuses.³³²

All of these programs are designed to create opportunities for Jewish learning that will complement formal courses of study offered by Jewish studies programs on campus. The distinctive experience Hillel aspires to offer is a form of traditional Jewish learning explicitly aimed at nurturing Jewish identification, an aspiration few Jewish academics would set for their courses and probably could not accomplish in any event. As the director of Princeton’s Hillel observed: “There is no substitute for the

³²⁹Ibid.

³³⁰From a promotional booklet, “Hillel: The Campaign for Jewish Renaissance,” n.d., ca. 1998.

³³¹*Communities: 1998 Hillel Annual Report*, p. 10.

³³²Ibid., p. 6. *A Week in the Life of Hillel: 1997 Annual Report*, p. 9. And “Hillel Takes Torah to College,” *Forward*, Nov. 21, 1997, p. 5, on the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning.

kind of curricular critical analysis that Jewish Studies provides. Rabbis and the Jewish community do not 'own' the study of Jewish tradition and institutions. In the total economy of Jewish life on campus both Jewish Studies and Jewish Learning are requisite; both have their place and their role." Whether these two modes of Jewish study will coexist easily remains to be seen. But Hillel surely is intensifying its capacity to deliver informal Jewish education, and has set for itself a goal of nothing less than "a Jewish Renaissance."³³³

That task, as Hillel leaders would readily concede, is enormous. A survey conducted in 1990 found that only 15 percent of the 400,000 Jewish students on college campuses were affiliated; another 25 percent were thoroughly alienated and probably unreachable; and about 60 percent were inactive but potentially reachable.³³⁴ By 1998 matters had not improved: a survey found that almost three-quarters of Jewish students rated their Jewish campus activity as minimal, and fully one-third did not participate at all; still, 8 percent claimed to be fully satisfied with their Jewish campus life, and another 32 percent said their Jewish campus organization sponsored many interesting activities.³³⁵

With its renewed energy and important new funding, Hillel is laboring to reverse these trends by reaching the inactive population while continuing to work with its core of affiliated members. Its leaders fervently embrace a mission to overcome the "Jewish illiteracy" of vast numbers of otherwise bright and well-educated young people who never had the chance to acquire a solid Jewish education prior to arriving on college campuses.³³⁶

ISRAEL TRIPS

Study trips to Israel, the last type of program of informal Jewish education to be discussed, are sponsored by over one hundred agencies within the American Jewish community. These trips have been touted as a "new

³³³James Diamond, "Creating a Culture of Jewish Learning on Campus," from a draft of "Toward an Educational Philosophy: Informing Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning," Dec. 1997, pp. 24-25.

³³⁴Sales, *Jewish Youth Databook*, p. 31. We may note in this connection that Hillel often works in conjunction with campus organizations sponsored by the three major Jewish religious movements. But the Hillel foundations and their affiliates carry the major responsibility of reaching Jewish students on campuses.

³³⁵"It's Greek to Us," *Jewish Week* (New York), Feb. 12, 1999, p. 3. This study confirms that only a narrow band of young Jews participate in campus life, and of those who do, an overwhelming 75 percent had either attended a Jewish summer camp or youth group; some 29 percent also had attended a day school.

³³⁶Alvin Mars, "A Plurality of Learners," in "Toward an Educational Philosophy," p. 10.

rite of passage” critical for strengthening the Jewish identity of the coming generation.³³⁷ According to one study, between 1992 and 1996, approximately 36,500 Jewish teenagers participated in an “organized educational trip” to Israel. This means that 2 percent of all Jewish youth aged 13–19 visit Israel on such a program in any given year, and that, overall, approximately 14 percent of teens participate.³³⁸

Most sober observers understand that a two- or four-week trip cannot serve as a substitute for a highly deficient Jewish education. It is not an elixir that will magically transform an alienated young person. For some visitors, however, particularly those who come with proper preparation, such a trip can be deeply moving and even transformative. During such trips, young people, if receptive, are confronted with profound questions of Jewish identity, morality, and peoplehood. They come into contact with a sovereign Jewish state, a Jewish army, and of course *eretz yisrael*, a parcel of land rich in religious and historical meaning to the Jewish people. For some participants, the experience serves as a critical opportunity to enlarge their Jewish self-understanding—but no one can guarantee such an effect.³³⁹

Research on these programs indicates that they are rated highly by participants. Measuring their long-term impact is a bit more complicated. Some studies suggest a kind of “domino effect,” whereby “going to Israel leads to other positive Jewish experiences which . . . eventually leads to a more intense Jewish lifestyle.” Others view it as part of a “cluster” of Jewish experiences that collectively shape a positive Jewish identity. And still others suggest that such a trip itself can have an independent positive influence.³⁴⁰

Still, such travel programs draw upon a relatively narrow band of the American Jewish community. For example, a study of teen programs found that one-third of participants had already been to Israel at least once before and that virtually all had a Jewish education and were already affiliated with the Jewish community. The most likely participants in teen programs are day-school students or alumni of such schools, members of synagogues and Zionist youth movements, alumni of Jewish summer camps, children of parents who have been to Israel, and products of rit-

³³⁷“The Most Complete Guide to the Israel Experience 1998,” a supplement to the *Jerusalem Report*; David Breakstone, “Holy Land or Disneyland? The Israel Experience,” *Moment*, Dec. 1995, p. 58ff.

³³⁸Barry Chazan, *What We Know About the Israel Experience* (The Israel Experience, New York, n.d., ca. 1997), p. 5.

³³⁹Breakstone discusses these issues quite sensibly in “Holy Land or Disneyland?”

³⁴⁰This research is summed up in Barry Chazan with Arianna Koransky, *Does the Teen Israel Experience Make a Difference?* (The Israel Experience, New York, Nov. 1997), pp. 12–14.

ually active families of some financial means.³⁴¹ In 1992 more than 6,000 Jewish high-schoolers and more than 1,000 college-age students participated in study programs in Israel, out of a pool of 350,000 potential participants.³⁴²

In recent years, a number of local federations and synagogues, as well as national Jewish organizations, have made stipends available so that every Jewish college student can undertake the journey. These subventions are predicated on the assumption that financial costs deter many young Jews from traveling to Israel. No doubt this is true in some cases; and even in families of some means, a free trip might tip the balance in deciding to send a child on one of these programs. Still, there is substantial evidence that a great many young Jews simply are not open to the idea. One such program sponsored by the New York Jewish community offers free round-trip airfare annually to as many as 300 Jewish college students who wish to visit Israel for the first time. Finding takers proved to be so much more difficult than expected that the program surveyed students to learn why they had declined the offer. Almost all the students who indicated that they would be traveling to other countries instead of to Israel also pleaded poverty when it came to the Israel trip—despite the fact that they would be given a free ticket. Others expressed fear: “I don’t go to Bosnia, and I don’t go to Israel,” one of them told a recruiter. And still others expressed a different anxiety: a trip to Israel “might be ‘transformative’”; it might lead them to become “too Jewish.”³⁴³

Israeli institutions of higher learning also sponsor programs of more sustained study for college-age students. In 1998–99, approximately 1,800 college students from the United States enrolled at Israeli universities for a semester or a year, and, as we have noted earlier, around 3,000 also studied at a yeshivah in Israel. By comparison, it is estimated that in the same academic year, between 20 and 30 percent of the 67,000 American students matriculated at universities abroad were Jews. Clearly, study programs in Israel attract only a fraction of current Jewish undergraduates seeking to broaden their horizons.³⁴⁴

And again, those who choose to study in Israel represent the most Jewishly engaged population of young people. A study of students enrolled in 1987–88 found that half had studied in a day school, 31 percent in an

³⁴¹Sales, *Jewish Youth Databook*, p. 27.

³⁴²Arthur Vernon, “An Educational Context for the Israel Experience,” *Agenda: Jewish Education*, Fall 1992, p. 35.

³⁴³See Leora W. Isaacs, “Evaluations of Programs of the Israel Experience Center of UJA-Federation of New York” (JESNA, New York, Oct. 15, 1996). See also Samuel G. Freedman, “Why Birthright Israel Can’t Work,” *Jewish Week* (New York), Dec. 25, 1998, p. 22.

³⁴⁴Information provided by Moshe Margolin of the Lowy School for Overseas Students, Tel Aviv University.

afternoon school, and 19 percent in a Sunday school. The preponderant population came from Conservative homes, and 51 percent of these had attended a day school. (A high proportion also had attended a Ramah camp.) Moreover, a disproportionately high 20 percent of collegians from the Reform movement had also attended a day school. The researchers concluded that “prior Jewish education . . . turns out to play a dominant role in the students’ socio-demographic profile. The year of study becomes in effect part of a wider process of Jewish socialization involving schools, youth groups, and prior visits to Israel. The one-year program is a link in a chain.”³⁴⁵

This last image is perhaps a fitting one with which to conclude our discussion of informal Jewish education. Most programs draw upon populations that are already linked to formal Jewish schooling — and the more intensive the formal education, the more likely that younger Jews will also participate in informal settings for Jewish learning. For children, the key determinant is the disposition of their family — that is, whether their parents will deliberately decide to immerse their children in a range of Jewish educational settings that will, like links in a chain, reinforce one another. As these youngsters reach the age when they make more independent decisions, those who opt to place themselves in settings of informal Jewish education are generally continuing on a path they had begun to traverse at earlier ages. In turn, those engaged in such programs are most likely to mature into committed Jewish adults.³⁴⁶ Unfortunately, many of the young people who most need informal educational settings to substitute for a weak Jewish schooling are the least likely to be given such opportunities.

Jewish Education as a Communal Endeavor

The field of Jewish education, as we have noted, has long suffered from insufficient coordination among the numerous autonomous schools, programs of informal education, and various communal agencies. Most in-

³⁴⁵Dov Friedlander, Penina Morag Talmon, and Daphne Ruth Moshayov, *The One Year Program in Israel: An Evaluation. North American Jewish Students in the Rothberg School for Overseas Students at the Hebrew University* (American Jewish Committee, New York, Feb. 1991), pp. 3–4. Relatively few Orthodox students were in the sample, presumably because they opt to study at a yeshivah rather than a university.

³⁴⁶The impact of these various programs on rates of intermarriage is assessed by Bruce Phillips in *Re-Examining Intermarriage*, pp. 14–41. Phillips concludes that “the lowest rates of mixed marriage by far are found among respondents with the most intensive and longest continuing formal Jewish education who also participated in non-formal Jewish educational experiences” (p. 32). He places special emphasis on high-school dating patterns as determinative of future marital choices (pp. 35–40).

stitutions in the field fend for themselves, coping on their own with the challenges of maintaining financial solvency, hiring educational personnel, shaping curricular goals, and defining their roles within the larger Jewish community. There have been some efforts to overcome this, but for the most part, there has been more diffusion than coordination in the field. Moreover, until recently, Jewish education was not able to recruit enough strong advocates to argue its case within the leadership circles of the organized Jewish community—the local federations and the national umbrella organizations. As a result, the needs of Jewish education have never benefited from the kind of financial investment and passionate advocacy that the American Jewish community mustered in behalf of the great campaigns to rescue and defend needy Jews abroad or even the struggle to influence American public policy on matters of Jewish interest.³⁴⁷

All that has begun to change in the last 15 years. Precisely as the field reached its lowest point of morale, a number of wealthy and powerful patrons embraced the cause of Jewish education. Quite by design, these benefactors have fostered new partnerships between Jewish foundations and local federations to fund programs of formal and informal Jewish education. The cumulative impact of these communal and philanthropic initiatives has been to infuse the field with a new vitality and optimism—and to draw attention to its needs.

The goal of the new benefactors is not only to remake particular educational programs, but to achieve something much more ambitious—the creation of new partnerships between the field of Jewish education and other sectors of the larger Jewish community. In short, a new kind of thinking seeks to minimize the diffusion and replace it with something approaching a strategic plan. This means, in the first instance, that educators seek to recreate American Jewry as “a community of learners.” As one writer has put it:

There is growing recognition around the country that the total community ought to become the learning environment for Jews (adults as well as children). Yet, there has yet to develop a serious, integrated, systematic approach to education within the Jewish community context. This . . . ought to be the main agenda for Jewish educational and community professionals and lay leaders—dreaming and designing a Jewish community in which all its institutions are educative, in which all the settings in which Jews live and work and play meet to capitalize on their educational potential for enriching Jews and Jewish life.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷On the evolving agenda of the organized Jewish community and the emergence of new types of organizations to address changing needs, see Wertheimer, “Jewish Organizational Life in the U.S.”

³⁴⁸Ronald Kronish, “Jewish Education: Schools and Society,” *Religious Education*, Winter 1987, pp. 37–38.

Jonathan Woocher, the field's leading communal professional on the national level, has embraced this goal and called for "more Jewish *community*, not just more Jewish *programs*," for only "a holistic Jewish education, anchored in the life of real Jewish communities and capable of interpreting and communicating the depth and complexity of that life, is . . . likely to have a decisive impact on the development of Jewish identity."³⁴⁹

In order to achieve this strategic goal, it is now argued, new alliances have to be forged between institutions, including schools of various types, synagogues, Jewish community centers, the religious denominations, federations of philanthropy, and major foundations. Rather than continue to live with great diffusion of energy, these agencies are now urged to orchestrate "the interplay of various institutional actors so that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts."³⁵⁰ Given the strong centrifugal forces generated by American voluntarism and individualism, these efforts will in all likelihood fail to achieve widespread coordination, but in the short term, some remarkable new partnerships have been formed that have made it possible to experiment with new approaches and to imagine bold new educational ventures.

THE NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH FOUNDATIONS AND FEDERATIONS³⁵¹

Much of this new thinking has been promoted by a cadre of professionals working for federations of Jewish philanthropy and grants officers at large family foundations. The latter institutions, in fact, have emerged in the last years of the century as major vehicles for funding Jewish activities and encouraging new endeavors. According to one estimate, some 3,000 Jewish family foundations had been established by 1996, a number that undoubtedly continues to increase.³⁵² Many of these foundations allocate virtually none of their resources to Jewish causes, and even those that do contribute to Jewish institutions still direct the bulk of their funding to nonsectarian philanthropies. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of foundations offer grants to Jewish institutions and projects so as to make a difference, especially in the field of Jewish education, which has managed for so long on a bare-bones budget.

³⁴⁹Jonathan Woocher, "Toward a 'Unified Field Theory' of Jewish Continuity," in Aron, Lee, and Rossel, *A Congregation of Learners*, p. 33 (see note 31).

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁵¹For a broader analysis of family foundations and donor-advised funds under federations, see Jack Wertheimer, "Current Trends in American Jewish Philanthropy," *AJYB* 1997, vol. 97, pp. 15–18, 73–78.

³⁵²Evan Mendelson, "New Ways of Giving," *Sh'ma*, Sept. 6, 1996, p. 3.

A parallel effort has also been launched by quite a few federations of Jewish philanthropy to channel new money to local educational institutions. Some federations have increased the amounts they allocate for Jewish educational programs from the funds they raise annually. In addition, a number of federations have tried to direct new money to the field from endowment funds and foundations under their purview. The latter include donor-advised funds and supporting foundations, which are incorporated under federations of Jewish philanthropy. Collectively, these endowment and other so-called participatory funds amounted to \$6.2 billion by 1998; rising sums of money from these funds are channeled to Jewish agencies in the form of grants, including to educational institutions. With these funds and new allocations from their annual campaigns, local federations have helped underwrite educational projects and have created “continuity commissions” to devise new educational programs and coordinate existing ones.

The various private foundations and those under federation auspices often work closely together with federations and other agencies of the Jewish community. In part, this cooperation is based upon pragmatic needs: family foundations must rely on existing institutions to implement programs, since the federation agencies have the direct contacts with key communal institutions and leaders. Many foundations also prefer to “leverage” their money by offering “matching grants”; they see a benefit in working with partners so as to maximize the impact of their giving. Equally important, a number of wealthy donors wish to foster cooperation between different sectors of the community and various institutions because they are convinced that a more comprehensive strategic plan will best serve the interests of the field.

Given the overlap among funding sources, it is sometimes difficult to disentangle the various funders of programs. A case in point is some of the Hillel and Israel travel programs discussed in the previous section, many of which are funded by local federations, synagogues, and Jewish community centers, as well as foundation sources. All of these institutions are helping to underwrite the costs of programs—and often they do so cooperatively. What follows then is an attempt to identify some of the more interesting new educational ventures and the types of funding they are drawing upon, including foundation money, federation allocations, and a mixture of the two. Our purpose is to illustrate some of the larger trends, rather than to provide a comprehensive survey of every program.

FOUNDATION INITIATIVES³⁵³

Wealthy Jewish families have long served as benefactors of Jewish educational institutions by supporting the ongoing work of schools, training programs, seminaries, summer camps, and the like. Much of the infrastructure of Jewish education continues to rely upon such largess. In recent years, however, a number of larger family foundations have attempted to move beyond the funding of an individual school or program to tackle broader issues in a more systematic fashion.

One such challenge that has received perhaps the greatest amount of attention is the funding crisis within day schools. A comprehensive study of this issue by Marvin Schick and Jeremy Dauber found that day schools expended between \$5,400 to \$5,600 per student in 1995–96.³⁵⁴ In order to raise these funds, they must rely upon tuition income, fees, and fundraising. Yet, with all this, most day schools remain underfunded and cannot offer the types of facilities, sophisticated technology, “enrichment programs,” and extracurricular activities found in many other private and public schools. The funding crisis also creates a dilemma for schools: Should they continue to increase tuition fees in order to offer as enriched a program as possible (thereby attracting only families that can afford to pay steep tuition), or should they work to make it affordable for as many families as possible to send their children to day-school—and do away with frills in favor of scholarship assistance?

Orthodox schools tend to stretch their resources to the limit in order to avoid turning anyone away, and they then pay a price in reduced salaries for their teachers, shabby facilities, and so on. Non-Orthodox day schools offer somewhat less scholarship assistance, with the result that some middle-class families reluctantly decide against day-school education for their children because they cannot afford to pay tuition for several children in addition to other household expenses. Making such hard decisions is often quite painful to schools and families. “This letter is extremely difficult to write, as it marks the end of a dream,” wrote one parent to the principal of a Solomon Schechter school, “the dream of our children receiving a Jewish day school education.”³⁵⁵ For ardent proponents of intensive Jewish education, such a letter is heartbreaking—and shameful, if not hypocritical, in a Jewish community preoccupied with

³⁵³My discussion of foundations draws upon a graduate school paper, “Jewish Family Foundations and Their Role in Jewish Day School Policy,” written by Dina Huebner Gerber for a course I taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

³⁵⁴*The Financing of Jewish Day Schools*, p. 9.

³⁵⁵Lisa Hostein, “The Cost of Jewish Education,” *NCJW Journal*, Fall 1992, p. 4.

insuring its “continuity” but unable to marshal the resources to offer an intensive Jewish education to every child who wants it.³⁵⁶

Several foundations have begun to address the tuition crunch. The Samis Foundation in Seattle, for example, determined that high tuition was a serious deterrent to enrollment in the local day high school. It therefore developed a program with the school whereby tuition was capped at \$3,000, and the foundation agreed to pick up the tab for the difference.³⁵⁷ The idea proved so attractive that the Avi Chai Foundation, based in New York, which has a strong interest in promoting day school education, initiated voucher programs in Cleveland and Atlanta entitling families to \$3,000 of free tuition a year, provided that children are not currently attending a day school or have not been enrolled in recent years. The goal, clearly, is to attract new families to day schools by helping them with tuition costs.³⁵⁸

Similar efforts have now been launched by private donors in a number of local communities. Eight individuals in Northern Virginia founded the Jewish Education Fund to make a day-school education financially accessible. In a number of communities, such as Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Chicago, proponents of day-school education are threatening to organize a campaign to discourage giving to federated campaigns in favor of support for special endowments that will underwrite day-school costs.³⁵⁹ Indeed, George Hanus, an outspoken leader in Chicago, has challenged the local federation to establish such an endowment and to help him raise \$50 million to underwrite scholarships for children.³⁶⁰ (His

³⁵⁶For a good overview of these issues, see Marilyn Henry, “Jewish Education at a Price: A Re-Examination of Day Schools Is Under Way,” *Manhattan Jewish Sentinel*, Jan. 29–Feb. 4, 1999, pp. 6–7. The funding crisis in day schools and the inability of many middle-class families to afford tuition costs has prompted some rethinking in the American Jewish community about school vouchers and other forms of government aid to parochial schools. For some discussion of these controversial issues, see the contributions by Daniel J. Elazar, Martha Minow, Jacqueline Kates, and Steven Brown to a symposium in *Sh'ma*, Dec. 1998 (vol. 29, no. 557). See also Alan M. Fisher, “Jewish Attitudes Toward Private Schools Vouchers: A Research Note” (Wilstein Institute, Fall 1993).

³⁵⁷*Parent/Student Update—Special Edition*, a publication of Northwest Yeshiva High School, Nov. 1997.

³⁵⁸“Nurturing Jewish Education,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Sept. 12, 1998, p. 1F, and Susan Bernstein, “\$1 Million Voucher for Atlanta Jewish Schools,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Apr. 10, 1998, p. 8. Not accidentally, given its strong interests in day-school education, the Avi Chai Foundation sponsored the Schick/Dauber study.

³⁵⁹“Baltimore Federation Is Faulted As Schools Struggle Moves East,” *Forward*, Dec. 19, 1997, p. 1; Elissa Gootman, “Tensions Flare Over Day Schools,” *Forward*, Apr. 24, 1998, p. 1.

³⁶⁰George Hanus, “Tuition’s True Costs,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Apr. 17, 1998, p. 8; Cohen and Brauner, “Day Schools Face Funding Crisis,” p. 11 (see note 196).

organization is known as the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee.)

Equally noteworthy was the creation in 1997 of an \$18-million fund by leading Jewish philanthropists to help underwrite the start-up costs of 25 new day schools around the country. Known as the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, the new fund offers challenge grants to developing day schools of every denomination, and expects to make average grants in the vicinity of \$300,000. The partnership has drawn attention because it brings together a number of major Jewish philanthropists in a collaborative effort with the UJA-Federation of New York. As such, it not only represents a new infusion of capital into the day-school sector of Jewish education, but also tangibly furthers the goal of greater coordination among schools, federations, and foundations. Each of the donors to the partnership already has a track record of giving to favorite causes; the decision of major donors to band together also symbolizes the new desire to further Jewish education by bringing together key institutions and leaders to work in concert toward larger ends.³⁶¹

Supplementary-school education has won foundation support of a different sort. Since almost all supplementary schools operate out of congregations, a number of foundations have developed programs aimed at "synagogue change." Among the first of these was the Experiment in Congregational Education sponsored by the Mandel Associated Foundations and the Nathan Cummings Foundation. Based at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, this program worked exclusively with schools in Reform temples.³⁶² The ongoing efforts of Synagogue 2000, by contrast, cuts across the denominations and receives substantial funding from a number of foundations. Designed to foster a broad-gauged "transformation of synagogue structure and culture" by employing business and management techniques, Synagogue 2000 has, inevitably, also addressed learning within the congregation.³⁶³

Finally, we may note various programs to develop educators at both

³⁶¹Debra Nussbaum Cohen, "Heavy Hitters Pledge \$18 Million to Create New Jewish Day Schools," *JTA News Bulletin*, Oct. 22, 1997, p. 1. See also *The North American Jewish Day School Challenge Grant* (Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, New York, July 1997). The partnership also provides services and information to help the new day schools with curriculum and staff development. Contributors to the partnership are Leonard Abramson, the Avi Chai Foundation, Charles Bronfman, Edgar Bronfman, Harold Grinspoon, Erika and Michael Jesselson, Morton Mandel, Charles Schusterman, Michael Steinhart, and Leslie Wexner.

³⁶²See Aron, Lee, and Rossel, *A Congregation of Learners* (note 31).

³⁶³The overall goals and mission of Synagogue 2000 are described in "Synagogue 2000—Facts at a Glance," issued by the organization.

supplementary and day schools, funded by the Mandel Associated Foundations (through the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, CIJE), the Avi Chai Foundation (especially in the field of family education), and the Covenant Foundation, which seeks to nurture leadership through its awards program.³⁶⁴ In most instances, these foundation-funded programs required grant recipients to work cooperatively either with parallel institutions in other Jewish communities or with agencies within their own communities. These efforts demonstrate how an independent foundation “unrelated in any formal way to communal organizations nor constrained by their investment in what is, can mobilize an entire community in the name of Jewish education.”³⁶⁵ Such is the power of the purse.

Several foundations are also investing heavily in leadership development within the field of Jewish education. The pioneer in this area has been the Wexner Foundation, which has run fellowship programs since 1988. With probably the most sharply focused program of any foundation working in this area, the Wexner Foundation annually awards fellowships to graduate-level students entering programs of study for the rabbinate, Jewish communal service, Jewish education, and Jewish academic studies. It has also supported programs at training institutions.³⁶⁶

Finally, several foundations have invested heavily in programs of informal Jewish education. Among those that have won the widest attention are study programs in Israel. A consortium of the UJA-Federation of North America, the Jewish Agency, and the Charles R. Bronfman Foundation was established in 1996 to double the number of participants in study programs in Israel. Subsequently, Michael Steinhardt, a leading Jewish philanthropist, announced a program called Birthright Israel; its goal is to make it possible for every Jewish youngster to participate in a study trip to Israel.³⁶⁷ A different consortium of private foundations, led by the Koret Foundation and several family foundations, has

³⁶⁴On the CIJE, see Barry Holtz, Gail Dorph, and Ellen Goldring, “Educational Leaders as Teacher Educators: The Teacher Educator Institute—A Case from Jewish Education.” On the Avi Chai Foundation, see the report *Avi Chai 1995–97*. And on the Covenant grants, *The Covenant Awards 1997: The Spirit of Jewish Education in North America*.

³⁶⁵Ackerman, “Reforming Jewish Education,” p. 13. Ackerman was specifically describing the Lead Community Project of the CIJE.

³⁶⁶Steven M. Cohen, Sylvia Barack Fishman, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Charles Liebman, *Expectations, Education and Experience of Jewish Professional Leaders: Report of the Wexner Foundation Research Project on Contemporary Jewish Professional Leadership*, Research Report no. 12 (Cohen Center, Brandeis Univ., Apr. 1995) and *The Wexner Foundation: Marking a Decade*, 1997. We may note in this context a \$15 million endowment given by William Davidson to establish a school of Jewish education at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the largest gift to a training institution for Jewish educators.

³⁶⁷Julia Goldman, “Israel or Bust: Philanthropists, Educators Join to Make a Trip to the Holy Land Integral for Youth,” *Manhattan Jewish Sentinel*, Oct. 9, 1998, p. 13.

teamed with the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties to provide Jewish teenagers with a variety of opportunities to “enhance their Jewish identities through synagogues and organizations serving Jewish youth.” The Teen Initiative, as it is called, includes trips to Israel, but focuses primarily on a range of programs sponsored by local groups to embrace teens in Jewish activities.³⁶⁸

FEDERATION EFFORTS AND “CONTINUITY COMMISSIONS”

The participation of the federation world in Israel study programs is illustrative of the increasing role such communal agencies are playing in the field of Jewish education. Much of the federation investment in Jewish education is channeled either through the traditional conduit of bureaus or central agencies for Jewish education or through newly created Jewish Continuity Commissions. The latter were established primarily in response to the “continuity crisis” identified by the 1990 NJPS; but in fact several continuity commissions had begun to function in the mid-1980s.

According to a survey conducted in 1993 of 158 Jewish communities, 42 reported that they had established a communitywide planning process on Jewish continuity, identity, or education (sometimes this was directed by a standing agency and in other cases by a newly formed commission). Among the concerns of these commissions were the “ability to identify and reach the unaffiliated; avoiding duplication of efforts by congregations, agencies and institutions [and] reaching consensus regarding priorities and/or special initiatives (e.g., a community in which there was some feeling that there was too much emphasis on the Israel Experience).” After studying quite a number of mission statements issued by these agencies or commissions, Walter Ackerman concluded that “Jewish continuity means different things in different places. In some communities continuity was equated with Jewish education, values and culture; in others it was comprehended as ensuring the vitality of the Jewish community; another group thought of it as promoting the Jewish identity of individuals.”³⁶⁹

A number of communities have in fact developed ambitious programs to channel federation money into Jewish education. Here is a sampling of some of the diverse programs devised by continuity commissions: In New York, the Jewish Continuity Commission has been awarding grants to a range of institutions since 1994–95. The goal is to fund “institution

³⁶⁸“The Teen Initiative: Year Two Plan for Comprehensive Teen Programs” (Bureau of Jewish Education, San Francisco, Mar. 5, 1999).

³⁶⁹Ackerman, “Reforming Jewish Education,” p. 8.

wide initiatives, not programs" falling into four categories—block grants to institutions, target population grants, professional or volunteer leadership development grants, and special initiative grants. During the first five years of the program, some 80 institutions were awarded grants of up to \$75,000 each, mainly to reach marginally affiliated Jews. Recipients included synagogues that won grants to hire special personnel, such as artists-in-residence, to fund teen programs, and to create new forms of study, including those harnessing new technology; schools were awarded grants to reach new immigrants and serve populations with special needs; Jewish community centers benefited from grants for creating Jewish museums, family education programs, and centers for immigrants from the former Soviet Union.³⁷⁰

The Boston Commission on Jewish Continuity has developed three major initiatives: (1) A two-year adult study program called Me'ah offers 100 hours of learning over a two-year period. The program is cosponsored by the commission and the Boston Hebrew College and is aimed at adults. (2) Sh'arim is a program to provide families with direct access to family educators. (3) A Youth Educator Initiative trains professional youth educators and places them in settings where they work with teenagers. (The latter two programs strive to create full-time positions for teen workers and family educators and then allocate workers to a number of institutions.) All of these programs are designed to work with synagogues, day schools, and JCCs; as of the spring of 1998, 29 such institutions participated in some or all of these efforts.³⁷¹

In Philadelphia, a strong emphasis has been placed on developing early childhood programs and building cooperation between federations and synagogues to strengthen congregational schools.³⁷² The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit has proposed a \$10-million "Millennium Campaign" to fund "innovative" educational programs in synagogues. "The creative survival of our Jewish community into the 21st century," asserts the Detroit federation's executive director, Robert Aronson, "will depend upon two partners working together: the federation and the synagogue." The goal of the Detroit campaign is to "create a model in how federations and congregations can work together to strengthen the synagogue as a whole and the educational system in particular."³⁷³

In the San Francisco Bay Area, the federation has established a special

³⁷⁰*Jewish Continuity: 1995–98 Grants of the UJA-Federation Jewish Continuity Commission* (UJA-Federation, New York, n.d.); and *Jewish Continuity: 1996–99 Grants of the UJA-Federation Jewish Continuity Commission* (n.d., ca. 1998).

³⁷¹*To Be Continued . . . An Update from the Boston Commission on Jewish Continuity*, Spring 1998, p. 1.

³⁷²*Networking for Planning Information 6, 1994–1995 Update* (JESNA, Aug. 1995), p. 69.

³⁷³Elissa Gootman, "Charities Shifting Focus, Are Starting New Drive for Jewish Renaissance," *Forward*, Feb. 5, 1999, p. 4.

umbrella campaign to help fund educational programs such as the renovation of the Stanford University Hillel and an \$11 million development plan for the community day school.³⁷⁴ The Jewish federation in Chicago has agreed to help manage and supplement a \$30-million endowment fund specifically for day schools. One aspect of this program will enable individual schools to organize their own endowment campaigns with staff help from the federation; a second prong will be an effort by the federation itself to encourage individuals to contribute to a federation-run fund through planned gifts or outright gifts.³⁷⁵ And in Minneapolis the Continuity Commission initiated its efforts by developing programs to reach and educate uninvolved business people and also interfaith families.³⁷⁶

The significance of these efforts and many others across the country is twofold: First, federations are managing to channel additional money to Jewish education out of a mix of allocations from annual campaigns and various endowments and philanthropic funds under their auspices. In 1997, for example, the New York UJA-Federation made grants of over \$3.3 million to its Jewish Continuity efforts above and beyond its allocation of over \$2.7 million to Jewish education. Similarly, Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies gave out grants of over \$900,000 to its Jewish Continuity programs in addition to over \$2 million allocated to ongoing educational programs; in Washington, D.C., over three-quarters of a million dollars went to "continuity" efforts in addition to the nearly \$1.3 million allocated to schools. Put in relative terms, this means that in a few communities, special educational funds for Jewish continuity efforts equaled anywhere from 50 to 100 percent of regular allocations for Jewish education, a considerable supplement.³⁷⁷

Second, through their new vehicles of support, federations are also connecting institutions that often worked in isolation from one another—and sometimes were sharply at odds. Federations are funding synagogue school programs and informal education for teenagers and families;³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴Ibid.

³⁷⁵Sid Singer, "Chicago Leads the Way: Federation Launches Day School Endowments," *JUF News*, Oct. 1998, p. 7; Elissa Gootman, "Continuity Crisis Inspires Chicago," *Forward*, July 24, 1998, p. 1.

³⁷⁶*Networking for Planning Information* 6, pp. 84, 86.

³⁷⁷1997 Allocations for Jewish Education Agencies," CJF Research Department, Oct. 20, 1998. I am grateful to Donald Kent for providing me with these data. (We should note that these special funds were allocated by only a select group of the larger and intermediate-size federations; smaller federations gave far smaller amounts in absolute and relative terms.)

³⁷⁸The evolution of synagogue-federation relations and an examination of model programs of collaboration for formal and informal education between the two types of institutions are detailed in *Planning for Jewish Continuity: Synagogue-Federation Collaboration*, a joint publication of JESNA, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and the Council of Jewish Federations. An earlier ex-

joint ventures between synagogues and JCCs are now planned; and educators are offered full-time jobs in which they divide their time between day schools and congregational programs. In brief, a higher level of coordination and cooperation is being built through federation initiatives.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Not all institutions are benefiting from these new alliances and structural changes. Among the biggest losers have been bureaus or central agencies for Jewish education. In Detroit, the United Hebrew Schools, described by Walter Ackerman as "perhaps the only real communal system of education in the country," was replaced by the Agency for Jewish Education. Chicago's Board of Jewish Education gave way to the Community Federation for Jewish Education. New York's Jewish Continuity Commission works independently of its large Board of Jewish Education. And in communities as diverse as Baltimore, Cleveland, and Atlanta major structural changes have weakened or reorganized the bureaus.³⁷⁹

A number of factors account for the hard times that have befallen many central agencies. To begin with, the bureaus invested heavily in supplementary education, playing a far more significant role in Sunday and afternoon schools than in day schools. Now they are paying a price for this investment. As David Shluker has observed:

There has been especially harsh criticism of the supplementary schools (both elementary and high). . . . The bureaus, which have been extensively involved with these schools, are being held accountable for them, even for the congregational schools where their influence is limited. With day schools, on the other hand, where quality varies and educational, financial, and governance problems also often exist, there is a great deal of satisfaction. They are viewed as highly effective with substantially increased enrollments over the past few years. Yet many bureaus provide only limited services to day schools. . . .³⁸⁰

In short, the bureaus bet on the wrong horse: "Having contributed significantly to the demise of the communal school," writes Daniel Elazar, "they are now dying with their creatures because they have little or nothing to offer the day school movement as they are presently constituted."³⁸¹

Second, central agencies have encountered stiff competition in those

ploration of these questions was edited by David Resnick, *Communal Support for Congregational Schools: Current Approaches* (JESNA, New York, 1988).

³⁷⁹Ackerman, "Reforming Jewish Education," pp. 8–9.

³⁸⁰David Shluker, "The Communal Education Restructuring Conundrum," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Spring 1992, p. 245.

³⁸¹Daniel J. Elazar, "The Future of the Central Agencies for Jewish Education," *Jewish Education*, Fall/Winter 1990, p. 9. This entire issue is devoted to the relationship between the central agencies and the federations. On the total dismissal of the agencies by the Orthodox Torah Umesorah day-school movement, see the contribution of Joshua Fishman,

communities that also have teacher-training institutions—in Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, and others. These schools, as we have seen, suffered serious losses in enrollments in the 1970s and 1980s and, in order to survive, remade themselves as institutions serving the wider Jewish community—by offering adult education courses, opening their libraries to the wider community, and providing other services that placed them at the center of Jewish education in their localities. Leaders of the teachers' colleges also promoted themselves as authorities on Jewish education. When the dust settled, a number of central bureaus were either restructured or shunted to the side because they had lost out in the competition with the local Jewish teachers' colleges.³⁸²

Most important, bureaus have fallen on hard times because federations have become increasingly involved in the field of Jewish education—and have forced the bureaus to restructure.

As Daniel Elazar puts it:

Jewish community federations, which rose to their present prominence at the same time that day schools did, have moved from being the framing institutions of the Jewish community, concerned primarily with the fund-raising and community planning, to a more proactive stance in matters of particular concern to them. Jewish education has become one of those matters. Federations . . . are now becoming more centralized in their own operations, less willing to see the bureaus as educational policy-making bodies and more as service agencies designed to carry out educational programs developed within the federations themselves. Thus, bureau directors have increasingly been faced by the dilemma of whether they should be educators or federation planners. More than that, the question of who should decide the future of Jewish education, educators or federation planners, has moved to center stage.³⁸³

Many bureau executives balked at federation demands that they engage in planning. Yet, as David Shluker has noted, when some bureaus develop an expertise in planning, they are often shunted aside anyway by federations.³⁸⁴ We may note that, in smaller communities, the agencies have less competition and have fared far better. It is in the larger communities, where competing institutions now vie for a leadership role, that quite a number of the bureaus have lost ground or have been put out of business.³⁸⁵

"The Bureaus and the Denominations," which concludes: "Let the Zionists teach Zionism in the schools; let the Orthodox teach orthodoxy; and let the bureaus not compete among the name denominations and passions which distinguish American Jewry" (p. 32).

³⁸²See Carol K. Ingall, "The Quest for Continuity" (note 19). I have also learned about this subject during conversations with Prof. Ingall.

³⁸³Elazar, "The Future of the Central Agencies for Jewish Education," p. 8.

³⁸⁴Shluker, "The Communal Education Restructuring Conundrum," p. 245.

³⁸⁵In a few cities, such as Boston, Hartford, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., central agencies have managed to maintain or redefine their roles.

By contrast, the Jewish Education Service of North America, the national agency that was to have served as an umbrella for local bureaus, has been highly adept at working with the new communal realities. As the continuity agenda has risen in importance within the federation world, JESNA has seized the opportunity to coordinate national and local continuity initiatives. In addition to playing its historical role as a central address for the exchange of ideas among communities and as a resource for evaluating and planning programs, JESNA quite self-consciously announces its role in “building coalitions with partners in North America and Israel to develop and implement high quality educational programs and to promote broad scale organizational and communal change.”³⁸⁶ JESNA has adroitly become a key instrument in education efforts of the national federation leadership and has made itself an indispensable resource to continuity commissions.³⁸⁷

Aside from the central agencies, the other big losers in the new communal arrangements are congregational schools. True, in some communities there is now an effort to provide such schools with communal funds to help pay for special programs.³⁸⁸ But formal schools now must compete with a wide range of informal educational programs for funding, and they are usually deemed less deserving or efficacious. The continuity grants of the New York UJA-Federation, for example, are far more likely to go to a JCC, a camping program, outreach to the unaffiliated, and the like than to a supplementary-school program. With the elevation of informal education to a high status, Israel trips and campus life are far more likely to garner communal funding than the schools that still educate the majority of Jewish children. More generally, the greater involvement of the community with educational matters has, ironically, pushed educators to the periphery: they often are not even at the table when continuity commissions deliberate. Thus, the new communal engagement with Jewish education has not necessarily been beneficial to many educators or their schools. As strategic thinking unfolds about engaging all sectors of the Jewish community in the process of education, it will have to find

³⁸⁶*Vibrant Jewish Life Through Jewish Learning*, JESNA brochure, n.d., ca. 1998.

³⁸⁷There is, of course, a price to be paid for such a close relationship. JESNA was instrumental in forming a National Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity convened by the Council of Jewish Federations. After laboring for three years, it produced a “Call for Action” endorsing a wide range of programs. The Council of Jewish Federations then decided not to hearken to “the call” and never responded with any national program. The mission document, called *To Renew and Sanctify: A Call to Action*, was released in Nov. 1995.

³⁸⁸For a useful inventory of such programs, see *Planning for Jewish Continuity: Synagogue-Federation Collaboration*.

ways to bring these marginalized groups and institutions into that process.³⁸⁹

The shifting fortunes of various institutions in the field of education can be measured in the breakdown of allocations made by federations. In 1997 the largest allocations to educational programs in the big and intermediate-size communities went to day schools, while congregational schools in most cases received no funding or only a small fraction of the amounts given to day schools. The following are examples from the few communities that allocated any sums to congregational or communal supplementary schools: In Atlanta, supplementary schools received 6 percent of the Jewish education budget, the day schools 76 percent. In Baltimore, the split was 7 percent for the former and 33 percent for the latter; in Boston, supplementary schools received 13 percent and day schools 37 percent; and in Philadelphia, the former received about a quarter of the Jewish education budget, whereas the latter received almost 50 percent. Moreover, in virtually every large and intermediate-size community, the day schools received considerably more funding than the central agency for Jewish education: in Atlanta, 76 percent versus 8 percent; in Baltimore, 33 percent versus 26 percent; in Boston, 37 percent versus 25 percent. Indeed, only in a few communities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Metrowest (New Jersey), and St. Louis, did central agencies receive the lion's share of Jewish education allocations.³⁹⁰

At present it is not yet possible to tally the sum of new dollars flowing into the field of Jewish education—or to assess the impact this new infusion will have upon institutions. The enterprise of Jewish education is sufficiently mammoth to preclude immediate transformation, even when several tens of millions of dollars of new money is flowing into its institutions from federations and philanthropies. To put matters into some perspective, let us note that in 1994 the day-school sector alone was estimated to require a billion dollars a year—that is, just for the maintenance of regular operations. Federation allocations came to an average of 12.5 percent of day school budgets, a figure that varied greatly from one community to the next.³⁹¹ Even with the infusion of new money since 1994, the need for student scholarships and direct grants to schools remains

³⁸⁹This discussion is based heavily on the insightful analysis offered by Ackerman, "Reforming Jewish Education," p. 10.

³⁹⁰"1997 Allocations for Jewish Education Agencies," CJF Research Department, Oct. 20, 1998. In communities as diverse as Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis, Washington, Dallas, and Kansas City, as well as many others, the federations allocated no funds for supplementary schools, except indirectly through their continuity commissions.

³⁹¹Shluker and Isaacs, *Federation Allocations to Jewish Day Schools*, p. 3; and David Shluker, *Day School Finances: A Briefing Paper Prepared for the CJF Task Force on Day School Viability and Vitality* (JESNA, New York, Aug. 1998), pp. 2, 9–10.

enormous. To this must be added the supplementary-school system, itself an enterprise costing several hundreds of millions of dollars, and the various programs for informal Jewish education. It is not evident yet whether the Jewish community is prepared to channel vast new resources to restructure the financing of Jewish education—or from where these sums will be diverted. Still, these are heady times for the field. It now has the support of a new generation of communal leaders and philanthropists intent on creating ambitious new plans to coordinate and fund Jewish education, and it is winning over powerful advocates to argue the merits of its case in the decision-making circles of communal leadership.

Conclusion: Great Expectations

It is instructive to situate our discussion of Jewish education within the larger field of American religious education. To what extent are the concerns of Jewish educators different from those of their Christian counterparts? And how does the system of Jewish education compare to Protestant and Catholic structures?

A recent listing of 19 religious high schools—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—in the Seattle area³⁹² provides an illuminating perspective on the second question. Among the data presented are enumerations of the hours per week students engage in mandatory religious instruction. Only one of those schools reported that it required more than ten hours per week—the Northwest Yeshiva, the only Jewish day school in the sample. Three others offered six to ten hours, and the rest five hours or fewer, of religious instruction. Virtually all Protestant and Catholic religious high schools in this sample thus offered the same or fewer hours of religious instruction as do Jewish supplementary schools that meet two to three times per week—and only a fraction of the hours devoted to such subjects by Jewish day schools. While it is extremely difficult to get national statistics, a few surveys of Protestant and Catholic religious schooling suggest that there is nothing unusual in the Seattle figures. A study of Catholic parochial high schools in different sections of the country found that only one period per day was devoted to religious instruction—the equivalent of under five hours per week.³⁹³

Jewish supplementary education is also more intensive than its Christian equivalents. Indeed, as the figures on religious day schools make evident, most Jewish students enrolled in such schools receive a more intensive education—five to six hours per week—than do Protestant and

³⁹²“An In-Depth High School Guide,” *Seattle Times*, Nov. 20, 1996, pp. 17–18.

³⁹³Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), p. 110.

Catholic children enrolled in private religious all-day schools. Supplementary religious education in Christian settings tends to be limited to Sunday school. By contrast, one-day-a-week religious education has steadily eroded in the Jewish community in favor of more intensive forms of Jewish education.

The major weaknesses of Jewish education are evident in Christian schools too. A wide-ranging survey of religious education in six mainline Protestant denominations, encompassing a sample of over 560 churches, estimated that only 60 percent of children in churches are involved in religious education.³⁹⁴ By contrast, the percentage of all Jewish children receiving a Jewish education — not only ones who affiliate — is higher. Moreover, the dropout rate from church schools is exactly parallel to the pattern in Jewish schools: in both there is a steep decline during the junior and especially senior high-school years. In Protestant mainline churches, some 17 percent drop out between grades nine and ten.³⁹⁵

Christian religious schools also have reshaped their curricula to strengthen the affective dimension of education at the expense of more rigorous cognitive learning. When asked to describe the greatest strength of Protestant mainline schooling, respondents noted the “warm and positive feelings” engendered by discussions and activities; only a small amount of time is devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. Commenting on this finding, a Protestant educator bemoaned the tendency to engage in “fun and games” at the expense of more challenging and demanding study.³⁹⁶

The perennial bane of Jewish education, the crippling shortage of trained religious educators, is even more severe in Christian church schools. Some 91 percent of teachers in Protestant mainline churches are women, mainly engaged in avocational — unpaid — teaching. Only the religious educators — i.e., the principals — are paid, but many churches cannot afford to hire such personnel. The predictable result is that only a third of religious teachers for youth ever studied educational theory, and fewer have received serious training.³⁹⁷

Thus, when viewed against the backdrop of American religious education, Jewish schooling is no less intensive and no more troubled than its counterparts in the Christian communities. To a significant extent,

³⁹⁴Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* (Nashville, 1993), p. 27.

³⁹⁵Ibid.

³⁹⁶Ibid., p. 74–76. Since 1965, Catholic schools have also replaced textual study and the memorization of the catechism with discussions of ethical issues. Bryk, Lee, and Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, pp. 110–13.

³⁹⁷Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, chap. 7.

Jewish children receive a more extensive and demanding religious education. Indeed, Christian educators periodically have cited developments in the Jewish community as worthy of emulation. Over 30 years ago, a Catholic periodical ran an article tellingly entitled "What Can We Learn About the Religious Education of Youth . . . from the Jews?" The author, a rabbi, observed: "At a time when some Catholics would be satisfied to develop merely a limited after-school program for Catholic students, Jews are pressing hard to increase the already substantial number of hours that are devoted to weekday Jewish religious education. Without demur most Jewish leaders consider a one-day-a-week program of after-school religious instruction to be a complete failure."³⁹⁸

While such a comparison might reassure some within the Jewish community about the relative health and vitality of the field of Jewish education, it should, in fact help clarify the extent to which the enterprise of Jewish education differs radically from Christian religious schooling. Simply put, Jewish education addresses a multiplicity of goals and therefore must provide students with many more skills, greater know-how, and more wide-ranging understanding than does Christian religious education. In part this results from the complex nature of Jewish identity, a mix of religious and ethnic components — both of which must be integrated into the lives of young people. And in part it results from the nature of Jewish life in the United States, where Jews constitute a minority striving to sustain a distinctive religion and culture.³⁹⁹

The multiple goals of Jewish education inevitably create much confusion in the field, as has been aptly noted by Jonathan Woocher: "If Jewish education is vague, unfocused and often over-ambitious in its goals, it is primarily because those concerned — parents, professionals, institutional leaders, religious authorities — can rarely agree on what is important to achieve. What do we want our educational efforts to produce: A Jew who prays? One who can speak Hebrew as well as an Israeli? One who can read a *blatt* [folio] of Gemara [Talmud]? One who will give to UJA, [the United Jewish Appeal]? One who won't intermarry? All of the above, or none of the above? Without consensually validated goals education becomes a medium of mixed messages, and nothing gets accomplished."⁴⁰⁰

Yet, for all these serious shortcomings, the field of Jewish education is currently the object of great expectations. Much energetic effort is now

³⁹⁸*Ave Maria*, Apr. 22, 1967, p. 30ff. The author was Rabbi Arthur Gilbert of the Anti-Defamation League.

³⁹⁹On this theme, see David Resnick, "Jewish Multicultural Education: A Minority View," *Religious Education* 91, no. 2, Spring 1996, pp. 209–21.

⁴⁰⁰Jonathan Woocher, "Jewish Education: Crisis and Vision," in *Imagining the Jewish Future: Essays and Responses*, ed. David Teutsch (Albany, N.Y., 1992), p. 65.

directed toward a mammoth, if somewhat chaotic, effort to revamp and expand the field and integrate it more directly with other sectors of the Jewish community. Although not nearly as popular with the masses of American Jews as previous campaigns to rescue endangered co-religionists abroad, the present drive to revitalize Jewish education is drawing upon a small but well-heeled cadre of philanthropists, passionately engaged lay and professional communal leaders, sophisticated educational thinkers within the field and in the academy, and a newly energized parent body.

To be sure, many observers question the wisdom of current priorities and the very process whereby decisions are made. Others express justifiable skepticism about the ability of new initiatives to reverse long-term trends away from Jewish identification. Undoubtedly, expectations are inordinately great. There is little doubt, however, that over the course of the past 15 years, the mood of demoralization has lifted, giving way to a more hopeful and expansive era. The field of Jewish education today, perhaps as never before, is arguably the most dynamic sector of the American Jewish community.