

Understanding Jewish Communal Involvement: Theoretical Issues and Policy Implications

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Organizational structure is one of the most distinctive features of American Jewish life in the contemporary era. No other diaspora community rests on an institutional network of such breadth and scope that involves so many individuals as either members, professional staff or volunteer leaders. Not surprisingly, participation in Jewish organizations is assumed to be a critical factor in ensuring continuity of the community. The assumption is that Jewish organizations not only facilitate social contacts but also generate further ties and networks among Jews, in addition to socializing and educating them in various aspects of Jewish life. It follows that the vitality and quality of the American Jewish community depend to a large extent on the capacity of its institutions to generate loyalty and participation; and the actual level of participation can serve as a measure of the community's general state of health.

With this in mind, it is somewhat surprising that research and analysis of the patterns of communal involvement have been relatively meager in recent years. Most studies have focused on identifying what are defined as affiliated, unaffiliated or marginally affiliated Jews, in the hope of finding ways to reach the latter two groups.¹ We will argue that attention might fruitfully be shifted away from the *fact* of organizational affiliation and directed instead toward the *level* and *quality* of that participation. As we will show, most Jews already are, will be, or used to be formally affiliated to the community in some way—but are all but invisible within the Jewish communal structure. As a result, many communities expend a good deal of resources unsuccessfully seeking such unaffiliated Jews when such resources might be better spent in locating and encouraging the vast majority who are already connected, but *underinvolved*, to participate more actively in Jewish institutional life.

This article focuses both on the different ways in which Jews connect themselves with communal institutions and on the level of organizational participation in such institutions. Throughout this article, a distinction will be made between two aspects of organizational participation. On the one hand, there is the *connection* or *affilia-*

tion with Jewish organizations—the linkage established with a Jewish institution through formal membership, utilization of services or programs, or contributions of time or financial resources. This terminology follows much of the empirical research on organizational participation, which has used affiliation as the sole measure of participation. On the other hand, we will refer to *involvement* in Jewish organizations—that is, active participation and support.

The distinction between the concepts of affiliation and involvement corresponds closely to David Horton Smith's differentiation between analytical membership, involving at least some minimal level of participation or provision of services, and official or nominal membership.² The utilization of these two concepts—whatever way they are measured—results in dramatically different portraits of the level of organizational participation in a particular society or community. For example, in their seminal work on political participation in the United States, Sidney Verba and Norman N. Nie³ reported that, while 62 percent of adults in the United States reported *membership* in voluntary associations, only 40 percent indicated some type of *activity* in these organizations.

This article applies the same distinction to the analysis of participation in Jewish organizations. The changing patterns of affiliation and involvement are set against a radically altered American Jewish landscape in terms of demography, religious identity and institutional structure. Each of these factors has a marked effect on the relationship of members to their organizational and institutional activities. We will also analyze a number of structural impediments to greater involvement in Jewish organizations, and conclude with a discussion of some policy implications.

The Demographic and Religious Context of Institutional Participation

Most demographic change in the United States today militates against involvement in Jewish organizations. First, interregional mobility exerts a powerful negative influence. The regional shift of Jewish populations from the Northeast and Midwest to the Southeast, Southwest and West has redistributed the Jewish population into less dense concentrations in such communities as Phoenix, San Francisco, Denver and San Diego. The lack of cohesive ethnic neighborhoods in the emerging metropolises of the West and Southwest makes it difficult to locate institutions centrally, such that many Jews are no longer within short driving distances of Jewish community centers, synagogues and other Jewish agencies. There has also been an unprecedented movement of Jews, many of near-retirement or retirement age, from the Northeast and Midwest to southern Florida. Upon relocating to the new communities of West Palm Beach, Hollywood, Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton and elsewhere, these individuals do not necessarily join Jewish organizations and institutions, even if they were previously involved.

Second, changing patterns of neighborhood living have a negative effect on Jewish institutional life. In the more established communities in the Northeast and Midwest, the suburbanization of Jews (first to the inner suburbs, then to the outer suburbs and now to the exurbs) has also resulted in lowered population densities.

Even in communities such as Cleveland, Detroit and Saint Louis, where Jews are concentrated and not distributed at random, they no longer live in the close neighborhood networks that were characteristic of one generation back, and institutions and organizations tend to be less centrally located than they once were.

Both the interregional and intraurban patterns of mobility have decreased the likelihood that Jews will be active participants in the organizational life of the community, notwithstanding their "paper" membership. This is because access is the key to involvement; when people move within a community, or move from one metropolitan area to another, the proclivity to reestablish institutional and organizational ties tends to weaken. During periods of adjustment that accompany such moves, many Jews are likely to be either reluctant or unwilling to invest large amounts of time or money, or both, in unfamiliar institutions. Furthermore, if the move is viewed as temporary, because of employment mobility, further educational goals, or other such factors, the desire to become attached is not likely to be strong, since any new ties would soon be broken.

A third demographic change involves the generational structure of American Jewry at the end of the 1980s. A majority of Jews in this country are now third- or fourth-generation, and an increasing number are even fifth-generation. Religious and cultural patterns that were often part and parcel of daily life for first- and second-generation Jews—the synagogue as the center of religious life, a commitment to *zedakah* (philanthropy), support for Israel and for Jewish organizations—frequently have only a tenuous hold on, or are even completely unknown to, third- and fourth-generation Jews. Involvement, active support for Jewish organizations and institutions, must therefore become a "learned" behavior.

The final significant demographic change affecting communal involvement is the transformation of Jewish family structure. Over the past generation, Jews have tended to marry and form families later in life. Thus, the single status has come to occupy a longer period in the life cycle of more Jews. Singles, however, are less likely to become involved with Jewish organizations and institutions. Moreover, many more Jewish women than in the past are today part of the labor force, with the result that the pool of potential volunteers for Jewish organizations and agencies has substantially contracted. In double-income families, the demands on both parents with regard to child care are much greater, so that there is less leisure time to spend with their families—a situation that militates against volunteering. Finally, substantially increased divorce rates over the past generation have resulted in proportionately more single-parent households, usually headed by women. They, too, are less likely to find time to spend in Jewish organizations.

While demographic changes have created an environment in which it is more difficult to develop organizational loyalties, changing religious realities have also played a major role. Most Jews are no longer bound by common ritual observances. Involvement in the life of the Jewish community as a function of religiosity, once a significant factor, has declined as many Jews have abandoned formerly common religious practices. Even if the synagogue remains the center of religious life, it is not the center of everyday life for most Jews. Neighborhood, career, other voluntary organizations, recreation and many additional involvements now compete with, or replace, religion as the focus of their attention and energies. Thus, lack of Jewish

organizational involvement is a direct outcome of the diminished importance of religion in the lives of individuals and families.

Involvement is also a function of in-group cohesion—that is, Jews associating primarily with other Jews, in terms of either friendship circles or marriage. Data consistently show that third- and fourth-generation Jews are much less likely than first- or second-generation Jews to socialize exclusively or even primarily with other Jews. Since friendship circles and peer groups reinforce institutional attachments and involvement—and vice versa—such changes are bound to weaken the links to Jewish organization.

Marriage is, of course, one of the primary religious and ethnic group bonds. Increasingly, however, whether measured by age, generation or date of marriage, Jews are currently more likely to marry non-Jews than at any other time in American Jewish history. In particular, the intermarriage rates among third- and fourth-generation Jews married in the 1980s are very high compared both to those that prevailed among first- and second-generation Jews and to those who married in the 1950s or 1960s. As a growing proportion of the Jewish population consists of intermarried couples, the tendency to become involved exclusively, or at all, with Jewish organizations is diminished.

Prevailing Scholarly Analysis and Policy Prescription

During the last few years, observers of the Jewish community have been using the term “marginally affiliated” to describe those who are underinvolved in the Jewish community but still have *some* attachment to Jewish organizational life. Several analysts have argued that communal effort should be targeted to reach this group. For example, Steven M. Cohen, using data from the 1981 Greater New York Jewish Population Study, found that the large majority of Jews were in the middle ranges of Jewish involvement: A full 64 percent of the New York Jewish community were defined as belonging to the group of marginally affiliated or semicommitted Jews, 27 percent were seen as heavily involved in Jewish life and the remaining 10 percent were located on the periphery of the Jewish community. Cohen suggests that “sooner or later, almost all Jews affiliate with some Jewish agency,” and concludes that the problem is not simply one of promoting affiliation but how to reach, inspire, involve and educate those Jews in the large group of marginally affiliated.⁴

From another theoretical orientation, Calvin Goldscheider suggests that policies should be targeted toward the very marginal sectors of the Jewish population—the intermarried, the migrants, and those in areas of low Jewish density—in ways that would lead to their greater integration. According to Goldscheider’s analysis, those on the margins do not reveal desires for assimilation or actual disengagement from the Jewish community. He considers group cohesion to be based on the frequency and intensity of the interaction among Jews. Therefore, Jewish communities should concentrate on increasing such interaction and providing the appropriate organizational contexts.⁵

Obviously, the assessment of such policy options rests upon a critical analysis of how the concepts of Jewish affiliation and involvement have been defined and

measured: in other words, what criteria have been used to differentiate the "core" from the "margins" and to categorize Jewish affiliation and involvement. Affiliation has generally been conceptualized in the context of Jewish identification. Multidimensional analyses of Jewish identification have consistently included, *inter alia*, elements of institutional and organizational affiliation. However, since their primary aim has been to develop scales summarizing the multiple aspects of Jewish identification, these attempts have not provided an articulated set of concepts regarding Jewish affiliation and involvement. More important, when communal participation is explored in this analytical context, those measures of affiliation that are used inevitably miss other important ways in which people connect themselves to the organized Jewish community: using community-sponsored social services, for example, or participating in recreational and educational programs, or volunteering time for Jewish organizations (see Appendix).

Admittedly, whichever scale of Jewish identification or involvement is used, decisions on what to include and the weight to be attached to each item are bound to be arbitrary in many respects. Moreover, the particular conceptual framework employed, the nature of available data and the requirements of the statistical techniques utilized all interact to define the analytic strategy of the study (see Appendix). Nevertheless, in what follows below, we seek to minimize these obstacles and deficiencies in measurement by focusing solely on those variables that pertain to organizational affiliation and involvement, omitting other dimensions of Jewish identification.

Our study of the patterns of affiliation and involvement in the Jewish community utilizes data from demographic studies conducted by two Jewish communities: Baltimore and San Francisco.⁶ Although they do not constitute a representative sample of the American Jewish community, they serve as useful case studies that display (in addition to regional variations) very different demographic, institutional and religious profiles. Baltimore is a geographically compact Jewish community. It has a high proportion of Jews who identify themselves as Orthodox. It has a well-developed institutional network and relatively high level of philanthropic activity. Inter-marriage in this community tends to be less frequent than in the Jewish communities of the West and Southwest. San Francisco, in contrast, has a highly assimilated Jewish community. Jews there tend to have been born someplace else, having migrated to the community in the past twenty years. There are relatively low levels of synagogue membership and attendance, and rates of inter-marriage are among the highest in the United States. Baltimore tends to represent the more traditional and conservative Jewish community, and San Francisco the more loosely knit and less identified Jewish community. The data were collected between 1985 and 1986 from these representative communities. Table 1 provides an illustration of the distribution of key variables used in this study.

The criteria that we have employed to define and measure formal connection to and involvement in Jewish organizations were determined largely by the nature of the available data. The dimensions used to build the scales presented below were restricted by the variables included in the demographic studies on which this analysis is based. Data collection designed for direct study of affiliation and involvement is rare, and it would require the employment of more specific survey instruments.⁷

Table 1. Percentages of Institutional Participation Variables

	Baltimore	San Francisco
Contribute to Jewish philanthropies	65.7	60.3
Volunteer time for Jewish organizations	23.1	24.1
Belong to a Jewish organization	52.0	37.5
Synagogue member	53.9	32.7
Adult receiving Jewish education	4.2	3.8
Child receiving Jewish education	37.3	30.8
Used Jewish Federation during last year	49.1	40.3
Received help from Jewish-sponsored service	7.6	7.7

Nevertheless, the Jewish community studies are not only the best empirical material available at this time but, as we shall see, can also produce significant findings when the organizational variables are isolated and analyzed separately.

For our analysis, different types of connections with Jewish organizations were used to measure the extent to which Jewish households are linked to the organized Jewish community. Eight such connections are listed in Table 1: contribution to Jewish charities or causes, volunteer time for Jewish organizations, membership in Jewish organizations, membership in a synagogue, participation of an adult in Jewish education classes, any child in the household receiving Jewish education, utilization of Jewish-sponsored social services and use of Jewish agencies. These variables reflect the ways in which a given household was linked to Jewish organizations during the year previous to the survey.⁸ An index of connections to Jewish organizations based on these variables assigns a score ranging between 0 and 8 to Jewish households, depending on the number of ways in which they are connected with Jewish organizations. The index of connections provides a descriptive measure of the extent to which Jewish households are currently connected in some way to the formal structure of Jewish organizations. It differs from other measures of communal affiliation (see Appendix) in that it eliminates those identification and affiliation factors not related to institutional connections, such as number of Jewish friends, readership of Jewish newspapers, and visits to Israel—all of which do not necessarily reflect formal connections to Jewish institutions. Our measure also excludes the frequency of synagogue attendance, a statistic more related to religiosity than to formal institutional affiliation.

The index of connections to Jewish organizations in Baltimore and San Francisco is shown in Table 2. This index shows that at the time of the survey the vast majority of Jewish households (88 percent in Baltimore and 77 percent in San Francisco) had some type of current connection with formal Jewish organizations. Although these findings clearly challenge the prevailing notion that the rate of institutional participation in the Jewish community is low, they only provide a scale on which the level of association of Jew to the organized community can be represented: They do not provide any assessment of the quality and strength of the involvement.

It also should be noted that this index records a high level of institutional par-

Table 2. Number of Current Connections to Jewish Organizations

	Baltimore	San Francisco
0	12.0%	22.8%
1	15.8%	19.4%
2	19.1%	18.6%
3	21.2%	15.0%
4	18.1%	11.6%
5	9.4%	7.1%
6 or more	4.4%	6.5%
Reliability coefficient		
Standardized item alpha	.65	.69
Unweighted cases	1,117	2,422

participation despite the fact that it excludes past connections to Jewish organizations. Other studies have shown that religious and communal affiliation is significantly affected by the life cycle and family status.⁹ Households consisting of married couples with school-age or older children have been found to have higher levels of participation, which indicates that at some point during their life cycle most Jews have some formal linkage to the Jewish community. Therefore, a study that adjusted for life cycle effects would in all likelihood show even higher affiliation rates.

Factor analysis was completed to assess the index of current connections for theoretical cohesiveness. (This type of analysis is a statistical technique that attempts to represent relationships among sets of interrelated variables; it allows for an examination of the underlying dimensions that explain the conceptual relationship among the eight variables included in our model.) The factor analysis resulted in the isolation of two factors from the eight variables included in the index (see Table 3). The first six variables (synagogue membership; organizational membership; contributions to Jewish philanthropies; time volunteered for Jewish causes; current participation of an adult in Jewish education; and current Jewish schooling for a child) are closely related to the first factor, while the other two variables (services received from a Jewish-sponsored agency and usage of program and services from Federation agencies) are closely related to the second factor.

These results suggest that the eight variables included in our analysis of formal connections to the Jewish community express two very different spheres of formal communal participation. The first one represents variables related to affiliational connections: time commitments; philanthropic contributions; dues paid to synagogues; membership in Jewish organizations; enrollment (or enrollment of one's children) in Jewish educational programs. The second factor refers to connections generated by consumer needs: the use of Jewish services and programs. The fact that our eight variables are summarized by two factors rather than by one has a number of implications that we will now examine.

Table 3. Factor Analysis of Institutional Participation Variables

	Baltimore		San Francisco	
	Factor A	Factor B	Factor A	Factor B
Synagogue membership	.67		.75	
Organizational membership	.64		.65	
Contrib. to Jew. charities	.59		.66	
Volunteer for Jewish causes	.52		.74	
Adult in Jewish education	.54		.29	
Child in Jewish education	.52		.62	
Received help from Jewish-sponsored services		.83		.84
Used Jewish Federation agencies		.65		.69
Eigenvalue	2.43	1.14	2.80	1.11
Percentage of variance explained	30.4	14.2	35.0	13.8
Unweighted number of cases	1,117		2,422	

Levels of Involvement in the Jewish Community

Thus far, we have explored the variety of ways in which Jewish households are connected to Jewish organizations. We have found that in two very different communities the percentage of households with no current connections to Jewish organizations is quite low. However, this pattern of connections to formal Jewish organizations does not inform us about the quality of that participation.

When we shift the focus from *affiliation* (the formal connection or association with an organization) to *involvement* (that is, commitment to its activities), we confront an entirely different problem. What does being “involved” in Jewish organizations mean? What are the standards by which it should be assessed? Both questions are difficult to answer.

Voluntary “citizenship” is a basic characteristic of Jewish life in America, where Jews often define their religious or ethnic identity in communal activity. Defining the criteria for “active” citizenship thus becomes a matter of prime importance for understanding the organized Jewish community.¹⁰ Jewish organizations must secure members’ commitment in order to hold members and channel their efforts toward organizational goals. Members’ commitment is particularly crucial for voluntary associations such as Jewish organizations that derive most of their necessary inputs from the contributions and activities of members but do not pay members for that input. A critical expression of organizational commitment is the degree to which members provide the continual infusion of resources necessary to the survival and efficacy of organizations: participation, money, time and efforts. Members’ support for organizations is thus a critical factor in sustaining the organization’s capacity to mobilize resources for collective action. We suggest that central to the concept of

Table 4. Factors of Communal Involvement

	Baltimore Factor A	San Francisco Factor A
Synagogue membership	.70	.73
Organizational membership	.74	.71
Amount contributed to Jewish charities	.67	.71
Hours volunteered for Jewish causes	.65	.73
Eigenvalue	1.91	2.07
Percentage of variance explained	47.8	51.8

involvement will be not only joining but also contributing time and resources to Jewish organizations.

We measured *involvement* in Jewish organizations through an ordinal scale that included only those variables that reflected active participation and support for Jewish organizations: membership in a Jewish organization or a synagogue; the level of financial contributions; and the amount of time volunteered for Jewish organizations. Although the first two items were also included previously in the index of formal connections to Jewish organizations, we now substituted for general categories the *amount* of money contributed and the *hours* volunteered. This makes it possible to give expression to different degrees of involvement. The results of the factor analysis presented in Table 4 give additional empirical support to our contention that these variables are positively linked.

The first category of involvement includes those who belong neither to a Jewish organization nor to a synagogue, do not volunteer time for Jewish causes and do not make contributions to Jewish charities. The second, which we call the "partially involved," refers to those households that do belong to a synagogue or to a Jewish organization but contribute less than one hundred dollars annually or volunteer less than four hours a month. Finally, there is the "involved" group, which includes those households that belong to a synagogue or to a Jewish organization, contribute one hundred dollars or more to Jewish philanthropies and volunteer at least four hours per month for Jewish organizations.¹¹

The portrait that emerges from Table 5 differs sharply from our previous analysis of institutional connections to the Jewish community. Previously, we observed that the majority of households (88 percent in Baltimore and 77 percent in San Francisco) have some type of current formal connection to Jewish organizations. When we focus our attention on variables that denote institutional *involvement* or active *support* for Jewish organizations, however, we find that the largest category is formed by those households partially involved in institutional Jewish life. The percentage of those not involved in the life of Jewish organizations increased slightly compared with the percentage of those households that have no connections to Jewish institutions. The percentages of households having no current formal connections to Jewish organizations are 12 percent in Baltimore and 23 percent in San Francisco, while

Table 5. Level of Organizational Involvement in the Jewish Community

	Baltimore	San Francisco
Not involved	17.6%	30.5%
Partially involved	70.9%	59.9%
Involved	11.5%	9.7%
Reliability coefficient		
Standardized item Alpha	.63	.69
Unweighted number of cases	1,117	2,422

the percentage of households not involved in the life of Jewish organizations are 18 percent and 31 percent, respectively. The most interesting finding, however, is the small percentage of households actively involved in the life of the Jewish community: Between 9.7 percent and 11.5 percent in both communities, in spite of the intentionally minimal criteria used to define active involvement.

Although the high rates of Jewish households with present connections to Jewish communal organizations constitute grounds for cautious optimism, the low rates of active involvement raise some serious questions for Jewish policymakers. It appears that, while Jewish organizations are successfully serving some needs of the Jewish community, they may be failing to generate a minimum level of commitment and loyalty—a problem we will now examine in some detail.

Institutional and Organizational Barriers

Although it is difficult (if not impossible) for Jewish communal initiatives to alter the demographic and social factors that negatively affect the level of institutional involvement, another set of negative factors—institutional and organizational barriers—may directly or indirectly derive from the manner in which Jewish organizations currently operate. These, clearly, may be within the capacity of the Jewish community to change.

One such institutional factor relates to the increasing role of professionals in voluntary organizations. Many tasks previously undertaken by volunteers are now the province of salaried executives and staff who are often trained in fund-raising, social work or other similar fields. The growing dominance of professionals in the voluntary sector brings with it attempts to delineate separate roles for volunteers and professionals. Since involvement often leads to increased commitment or to larger financial contributions, the need to define volunteer roles wisely is of critical concern.

Low levels of active involvement may result partially from the lack of interesting, rewarding or meaningful tasks assigned to volunteers. Since much of the voluntary sector is now professionally managed, some of the more interesting and challenging

roles are no longer filled by volunteers. Jewish organizations have not necessarily been very creative in the face of this challenge. Often, volunteers are relegated to committee or board work that many find either repetitious or unproductive. Moreover, as Jews have gained more open access to non-Jewish organizations and agencies, rewards for civic and voluntary work are no longer to be obtained solely from Jewish organizations. Many universities, museums, symphonies and other organizations that previously did not welcome Jewish involvement now actively compete for Jewish contributions, volunteers and commitments. Indeed, as more Jews find greater satisfaction and status in non-Jewish organizational and institutional networks, a severe burden will be placed on Jewish organizations, institutions and agencies. Unless more creative volunteer roles are developed with specific and meaningful ends, many Jews will simply not become involved.

Again, many individuals become impatient with the way in which voluntary organizations work. Volunteers who have professional or executive occupations tend to be accustomed to a more expeditious process of decision-making and more efficient managerial methods. The cumbersome and time-consuming pattern of consensus-building common to many Jewish organizations deters many potential volunteers.

Yet another organizational barrier derives from the tendency of many Jewish institutions to produce leadership cadres with long years of tenure in office. To the extent that cadres of this type appear to those on the outside to be too closed, cliquish, or tight-knit, the incentive for voluntary involvement will be dampened.

Jewish organizations and institutions would be well advised, likewise, to examine their internal structures. For example, many synagogues and temples still maintain separate sisterhoods and brotherhoods, men's clubs and women's auxiliaries. For younger people who are hard-pressed by the multiple demands of two-career families and by the desire to spend more time with their children, the idea of separate-gender activities may not be as appealing as joint couple programs.

Finally, Jewish organizations and agencies must also begin to examine their rewards. Very often these are structured on the old model of bestowing titles upon outstanding volunteers or feting donors at dinners within the Jewish institutional and organizational orbit. Such recognition may no longer offer as much status as it once did, and different reward structures may have to be established that involve both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds in a way that confers status in both.

Policy Implications

A basic assumption of communal policy is that the provision of social services and recreational programs encourages greater communal involvement. Our data, however, suggest that this assumption is questionable. Through which processes or channels do receipt of Jewish-sponsored social services or participation in Jewish recreational programs lead to more active involvement in Jewish organizations? When do services, programs and organizations interact in order to achieve their potential as real springboards, increasing involvement in the institutional life of the

Jewish community? Do programs designed to meet the needs of different social groups, or strategies formulated to provide specific services tailored to segments of the community, transmit a clear message regarding the type of active participation and commitment desired from community members?

It has not been the goal of this study to answer these questions and we are unable to judge the impact of such programs and services on increasing institutional involvement: This cannot be achieved by community population studies but rather requires the design of complex evaluation studies. However, the findings of this study do show that variables related to use made of Jewish-sponsored social services and recreational programs do not necessarily go hand in hand with those variables that reflect affiliation to Jewish organizations (see Table 3). Therefore, we suggest, they refer to distinct *dimensions* of Jewish communal participation that are related neither empirically nor conceptually. These findings suggest at the least a need for further studies concerning the validity of the assumptions that are central to much of Jewish communal policy in the United States.

Expanding the delivery network of human services could be one means of increasing communal involvement. The provision of valuable services such as day care or housing for the elderly, for example, may link people to the Jewish community. However, it must be stressed that since most people use these services as consumers, such a result is not likely to occur unless mechanisms are structured to bring service users into another level of involvement. In other words, Jewish-sponsored services may be a reasonable mechanism to elicit people's interest in the organized Jewish community, but they will encourage organizational involvement only if they are strongly associated with efforts to promote activity in other areas of Jewish organizational life as well.

Unfortunately, the data do not allow for differentiation between leaders—those most active in the Jewish community—and the Jewish public. Likewise, the data provide no information about what kinds of volunteer roles people engaged in, or for which organizations, other than to differentiate between Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Questions about the nature of volunteer work; how one enters the volunteer world; how leadership roles are determined; or how certain organizations or titles prove attractive are beyond the scope of this discussion.

Much of the research and policy development in the Jewish community has focused on the various levels of Jewish affiliation in an attempt to uncover the factors that account for those different levels. It has also sought ways to describe the patterns of relationship to the Jewish community—who is inside, who outside and who on the periphery—with the aim of defining the priorities to be set in outreach programs.

This paper suggests that the research and policy focus be moved from communal affiliation to *involvement* in the Jewish community at its various levels. A change of direction would then follow. Research on social involvement and organizational commitment in voluntary organizations suggests that the two key determinants are, on the one hand, positive motivation and, on the other, the removal of barriers to active participation. Motivation and barriers—as functions of perceived benefits and costs—interact to activate or discourage active participation.¹² In addition to

social incentives, the primary determinants of willingness to participate are individuals' attitudes toward the goals and values of organizations and their expectations about the efficacy of organizations in achieving their goals.

Research on successful voluntary organizations shows that these organizations offer their members widespread opportunities for decision-making and influence. When members feel able to affect organizational policy decisions, they are likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment.¹³ Lack of involvement and active participation in Jewish organizations is partly due to the competition from secular society but also may be based on members' perceptions that they do not have a major stake in the life of those organizations.

Hence, the critical questions become: (1) What kind of incentives do Jewish organizations offer in order to motivate participation and commitment? (2) What are regarded by the organizations themselves as acceptable levels of involvement, participation and commitment? (3) How do Jewish organizations make their expectations and incentives known? (4) How is the efficacy of Jewish organizations assessed by the community members? (5) What are the obstacles to increased levels of involvement among the underinvolved? Federations, synagogues, Jewish centers and other Jewish organizations must ask themselves these questions as a first step in considering new policies.

Jewish community organizations throughout the United States are confronted with a vital challenge as they approach the twenty-first century: how to strengthen the level of active participation in, and commitment to, Jewish institutional life. We have discussed a number of demographic and religious factors that militate against this goal. Changing demographic and religious characteristics of Jews in the United States require that Jewish organizations adapt to this new environment, as they have done in previous decades. As large number of Jews have adopted a consumer approach toward Jewish organizations and institutions, the tasks of cultivating organizational loyalty and commitment become increasingly difficult. How well the Jewish community responds to this challenge will increasingly depend on its capacity to create vibrant and flexible structures and contexts in which new and transformed expressions of Jewish identity can be cultivated and developed.

Appendix

Measuring Jewish Identification and Involvement: Methodological Issues

Harold Himmelfarb has suggested that the various dimensions of Jewish identification can be categorized by the objects of their orientation: supernatural, communal, cultural and interpersonal. In Himmelfarb's analysis, the communal orientation of Jewish religious involvement (that which focuses upon the people as a collective) includes affiliational and associational dimensions, such as extent of membership and participation in formal Jewish organizations.¹⁴

In a more recent analysis of Jewish identification among American Jews, Bernard Lazerwitz distinguishes between items related to Jewish religious involvement and

indicators of Jewish communal involvement. The former includes Jewish education of adults, religious denomination, synagogue membership, frequency of synagogue attendance and religious practices observed, while the latter embraces number of memberships in Jewish organizations, number of Jewish best friends and visits to Israel. While the distinction between indicators of Jewish religious involvement and those of Jewish communal involvement permits us to differentiate these domains or arenas of activities, together they account for just two types of connections to formal Jewish organizations: synagogue membership and number of memberships in Jewish organizations. Such an approach misses other important types of formal ties to the Jewish community.¹⁵

In developing his typology of Jewish communal involvement, Steven M. Cohen groups together variables measuring formal affiliation and variables related to social and religious involvement, on the assumption that these various behavioral dimensions represent different expressions of Jewish identity, connection and commitment. For example, the communal affiliation index includes the following variables: synagogue membership, Jewish organizational membership, contribution of one hundred dollars or more to a Jewish charity, travel to Israel and reading a Jewish newspaper. The interpersonal index draws upon the number of the three closest friends who were Jewish, as well as the religion of the spouse, when applicable. Because different dimensions are used to create this typology of Jewish involvement, specificity in regard to organizational involvement is lost. For example, financial contributions to Jewish organizations are not a requirement in this typology for high level of involvement (those belonging to the "Activist" or "Observant" types): 25 percent of the group called "Activist" and 49 percent of the "Observant" do not make financial contributions to Jewish charities.¹⁶

In an analysis of interrelationships of community participation in the Philadelphia Jewish community, William Yancey and Ira Goldstein initially included seven measures of social participation: synagogue membership, organizational membership, volunteering for at least five hours a week, having at least half of one's friends Jewish, receiving the local Jewish newspaper, use of the Jewish community center and visiting Israel. In order to present responses to individual variables in a single scale measuring the overall pattern of participation in the local Jewish community, they created a Guttman Scale of community participation. However, since synagogue membership, visits to Israel and use of the Jewish community center did not conform to the criteria required by this statistical technique for inclusion, they had to be excluded from the scale. As a result, those who had visited Israel, belonged to a synagogue or attended activities at a Jewish community center, but did not participate in the community in any of the ways included in the scale, were considered as having no communal participation.¹⁷

Notes

1. Steven M. Cohen, "Outreach to the Marginally Affiliated: Evidence and Implications for Policymakers in Jewish Education," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 62 (1985), 147-157.

2. David Horton Smith, "Altruism, Volunteers, and Volunteerism," *Journal of Voluntary Action Research* 10 (1981), 21–36.
3. Sidney Verba and Norman N. Nie, *Participation in America* (Chicago: 1972).
4. Steven M. Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* (Bloomington: 1988), 130. For further discussion of Cohen's typology, see Appendix.
5. Calvin Goldscheider, *The American Jewish Community: Social Science Research and Policy Implications* (Atlanta: 1986), 19.
6. These two samples were drawn using sampling methods that are accepted practice in Jewish population studies. The Baltimore study used a two-frame sampling methodology: Two samples were drawn using random digital dialing and distinctive Jewish names techniques, and were combined so as to produce an unbiased representative sample of the Baltimore Jewish community. The San Francisco study's sample used a three-frame sample methodology: random digital dialing, distinctive Jewish names and a list sample. Utilization of these different sampling frames ensures the inclusion not only of Jews living in areas of low Jewish density but of intermarried households, while keeping sampling costs to an affordable amount. For additional explanation of sampling methodology in Jewish population studies, see Gary Tobin, "Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Perceptions About Jews," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 4, *The Jews and the European Crisis, 1914–1921*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York and Oxford: 1988), 227. For further details regarding sampling and methodologies used in these population studies, see *idem*, "A Population Study of the Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore," Associated Jewish Charities and Welfare Fund, Baltimore, Maryland, 1986; *idem* and Sharon Sassler, "Community Development Study of the Bay Area Jewish Community," Jewish Community Federations of San Francisco, the East Bay and San Jose, 1988.
7. Robert Nash Parker, "Measuring Social Participation," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983), 864–873; David Knoke, "Incentives in Collective Action Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 53 (1988), 311–329.
8. Some of the questions were asked for each member of the household, while others were asked only for the respondent. When at least one of the members of the household answered positively to a question, that household was counted as a "yes" answer for that question.
9. Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?*, 103–104; Steven Huberman, "Understanding Synagogue Affiliation," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 61 (1985), 295–304.
10. Jonathan S. Woocher, "How the Community Governs Itself," *Face to Face—An Inter-religious Bulletin* 9 (Fall 1982).
11. In spite of the desirability of having more categories within our ordinal variable in order to reflect a continuum of involvement, the distribution of the variable and the small number of cases that fell into higher levels of involvement (for example, those having some Jewish institutional membership, making contributions of at least five hundred dollars and volunteering eight hours per month or more account for 2.4% of Jewish households in Baltimore and 3.9% in San Francisco) precluded our original intention. This, of course, reveals much about current levels of involvement for most Jews.
12. Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema, "Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Towards Participation in Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987), 519–531.
13. David Knoke and James R. Wood, *Organized for Action: Commitment in Voluntary Associations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: 1981).
14. Harold Himmelfarb, "Research in American Jewish Identity and Identification: Progress, Pitfalls, and Prospects," in *Understanding American Jewry*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New Brunswick: 1982); *idem*, "Measuring Religious Involvement," *Social Forces* 53 (1975), 606–618.
15. Bernard Lazerwitz, "Trends in National Jewish Identification Indicators: 1971–1985," *Contemporary Jewry* 9 (1987–1988), 87–103.

16. See Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival*.
17. William Yancey and Ira Goldstein, *The Jewish Population of the Greater Philadelphia Area*, Pamphlet of the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia, 1985.