THE TEACHER'S ROLE
IN CURRICULUM REFORM

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What is the appropriate role of the teacher in the process of curriculum reform? Should curricular materials be "teacher-proof," as many argued in the 1970s? Or, alternatively, should teachers be seen as shapers of the curriculum? These questions are perennial; they arise with each wave of curricular innovation, and each new curriculum tends to answer them a little differently. For example, the UAHC curriculum, To See the World Through Jewish Eyes, provides teachers with objectives and an outline of suggested activities, but assumes that teachers will write their own lesson plans. In contrast, the Melton Holiday and *Mitzvot* curriculum provides teachers with fairly detailed "scripts" to follow. The Jewish Values curriculum seems to take a position somewhere between the two, though individual units vary as to their explicitness.

Behind each approach lies a series of assumptions, both ideological and practical, about who teachers are and how much guidance they require. The curriculum writers are likely to have certain opinions of teachers' abilities, based on past experience; in addition, they are likely to have certain beliefs about the ideal teacher and the role of such a teacher in curricular reform. Rarely, however, are the curriculum writer's assumptions articulated in a rigorous and systematic way; nor are they typically grounded in empirical research. This is not surprising, since the field of research on teachers is relatively new and is perhaps the most fertile and exciting area of research in education today.

Research on Jewish teachers is even newer. Our knowledge of who teaches in Jewish schools is still largely anecdotal. Discussions of the qualities of the ideal Jewish teacher have just begun to gather momentum. This paper focuses on the philosophical and empirical underpinnings of two competing conceptions of teaching — profession and vocation. Drawing on the rapidly growing body of research on teaching in secular education, I examine the

implications of each of these conceptions for curriculum development and the organization of schools.

Teaching aś a Profession

If one unifying theme could be found for the vast and ever-expanding literature on public school teachers, that theme would be professionalization. Study after study has analyzed the professional shortcomings of teachers. Proposals abound for upgrading the professional training of teachers, and, more radically, for the restructuring of the profession itself.

In the field of Jewish education as well, discussions of the Jewish teaching profession have begun to gather momentum. For example, the proceedings of a national conference on the status of Jewish teachers, held at Brandeis University in 1986, were published under the title To Build a Profession.[1] In 1987 a special issue of Jewish Education featured a symposium on Jewish teachers. Federations throughout North America have begun to deal with the issue of personnel in Jewish education; a dominant theme in their deliberations has been the need to upgrade the professional status of teachers.[2]

The notion of the teacher as a well-trained and well-respected professional has long been one of the cherished ideals of all those concerned with Jewish education.[3] In this section I examine this ideal more closely: what are the hallmarks of a professional? Are teachers professionals? Should they in fact be professionals? What are some of the barriers to upgrading the teaching profession?

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1 Joseph Reimer, ed., To Build a Profession: Careers in Jewish Education (Waltham, Ma.: Brandeis University Press, 1987).

2 Jonathan Rosenbaum, "The Community Teacher Concept: A Different Approach to Professionalizing Jewish Pedagogues," Jewish Education, vol. 51 (1983), pp. 27-31; "Report of the Task Force on Supplementary Jewish Education" (Monograph, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston, November 1986).

3 Menachem Edelstein, History of the Development of the Jewish Teaching Profession in America (New York: Jewish Education Committee, 1956); Alexander Dushkin, Comparative Study of the Jewish Teacher in the Diaspora (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem Institute for Contemporary Jewry, 1970); Oscar Janowsky, ed., The Education of American Jewish Teachers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

What is a Profession?

Most educational commentators agree that teaching is, or at least ought to be, a profession. Few, however, attempt to define this term; those who do, find that the concept is, to quote Morris Cogan, "shrouded in confusion."[4] The most common way around a definition is to contrast a profession with other, presumably inferior, endeavors. Thus, "professional" is held to be the opposite of "amateur" — that is to say one who is either untrained or unsalaried. Alternately, "professional" is taken to be the opposite of "crafts-person," i.e., one whose practice is not grounded in theory or science.[5] Finally, the term "professional," used as an adjective, sometimes connotes altruism or a higher calling, in contrast to "commercial."

Cogan suggests that the ambiguity and imprecision surrounding the term is not accidental, and may be quite functional, for the title "professional" often serves an exhortative, laudatory function. One reason for the undifferentiated use of "profession" may be found in the efforts of many persons and groups to secure to themselves the values clustering around it by simply preempting the title.[6]

Since Cogan's article was written, the literature on professionalism has grown exponentially, and the "sociology of the professions" has become a subfield of its own. Surveying this "scholarly *tsunami*," Bruce Kimball[7] identifies two criteria which sociologists have taken to be the hallmarks of professionalism — legitimacy and autonomy.[8] Legitimacy refers to the special knowledge and expertise to which professionals lay claim; autonomy refers to the control which professionals exert over the ways in which their services are rendered. To be considered a profession, Kimball argues, members of an occupation group must meet both of the following criteria:

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4   Morris I. Cogan, "Toward a Definition of a Profession," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 23 (1953), pp. 33-50.
5   H.S. Broudy, "Teaching — Craft or Profession?" *Educational Forum*, vol. 20 (1956), pp. 33-50.
6   Ibid., p. 47.
7   Bruce Kimball, "The Problem of Teacher's Authority in Light of the Structural Analysis of the Professions," *Educational Theory*, vol. 38 (1988), pp. 1-9.
8   Kimball uses the term "authority," but "autonomy" is the term more frequently used by other writers on this subject.

— they must possess a specialized body of knowledge that distinguishes them from the non-professionals in the field; and,
— they must, as a group or a guild, have the power to shape the conditions under which their work is done.

Some examples may help clarify these criteria. At one extreme, medical doctors are clearly professionals, having specialized academic training and (collectively through their professional organizations) a good deal of control over how medicine is practiced. In contrast, workers on an assembly line may have a certain expertise, but this expertise is not based on a theoretical body of knowledge; furthermore, they have little control over the circumstances under which they work.

In between the two extremes lie a vast array of occupation groups which meet one criterion better than the other, and whose professional status is unclear. Those engaged in business, for example, meet the criterion of autonomy very well, since they contribute to the shaping of the conditions under which they work. In their effort to meet the criterion of legitimacy leaders of the business community have developed business schools and MBA programs, which offer courses in the "sciences" of management, marketing, and administration. A converse situation may be seen in the nursing profession. Like doctors, nurses derive their expertise from medical science; and like doctors, their legitimacy is beyond question. Unlike doctors, however, nurses have very little control over the way in which hospitals are organized; their lower professional status is indicative of their weaker authority.

The Legitimacy of Teachers

"Those who can't do, teach, and those who can't teach, teach education." At the root of this old adage lies an assumption, shared by many, that *anyone* can teach. After all, everyone has spent hours and hours in classrooms of all sorts, and been exposed to a variety of models of teaching. If one knows a certain subject, surely one can teach it. And, if anyone can teach, why should teachers be considered professionals?

The widespread perception that good teaching may require experience and innate talent, but not any codifiable knowledge,

is seen by many as the most serious challenge to the professional standing of teachers.[9]

To counter this perception educational researchers and policy-makers have sought to demonstrate that good teachers operate from a firm knowledge base. Lee Shulman, perhaps the foremost proponent of this view, summarizes this position in the following manner:

> The claim that teaching deserves professional status is based on a fundamental premise: that the standards by which the education and performance of teachers must be judged can be raised and more clearly articulated. The advocates of professional reform base their arguments on the belief that there exists a 'knowledge base for teaching' — a codified or codifiable aggregation of knowledge, skill, understanding, and technology, of ethics and disposition, of collective responsibility — as well as a means for representing and communicating it.[10]

While few researchers or policymakers in secular education would quarrel with the goal of upgrading the teaching profession, either from within (in terms of better training) or from without (in terms of setting benchmarks for accomplishment), a number have questioned the feasibility of such an endeavor, on several counts. After two decades of research, the "scientific basis" of research on teaching amounts to little more than a small number of low-level, common-sense generalizations regarding effective teaching techniques.[11] While Shulman, who employs a different research paradigm, hopes to overcome the narrow technological

9   For a review of this literature, see Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Robert Floden, "The Cultures of Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd edition, ed. M. Wittrock (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 512-515.

10 Lee Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 57 (1987), pp. 3-4.

11 Phillip W. Jackson, "Facing Our Ignorance," *Teachers College Record* 88 (1987), pp. 384-89; Karen K. Zumwalt, "Research on Teaching: Policy Imperatives for Teacher Education," in *Policy Making in Education*, 81st Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

bias of previous researchers,[12] his work is too preliminary to serve as the sole basis for professional legitimation.

Even were the components of "teacher knowledge" more clearly delineated, developed, and corroborated, would good teaching be directly related to knowledge acquisition? Noting the special way in which personality enters into teaching, some researchers caution against an undue emphasis on knowledge alone.

As Lightfoot states:

> It is difficult...to disentangle teacher character from teacher competence. The teacher is deeply engaged in his work as a whole person because an effect is required on the student as a whole person.[13]

And as Sykes further elaborates:

> Education...possesses neither a codified body of technical knowledge nor a clear technology nor a small set of measurable outcomes. Rather, special and ordinary knowledge are freely mixed, teaching styles and the solution of core problems are heavily dependent on personality and consequently are idiosyncratic, and outcomes are multiple, protean, and intangible.[14]

The Autonomy of Teachers

The second hallmark of a professional is autonomy, i.e., the ability to control the circumstances and terms under which one's service is rendered. Once again a comparison with doctors, who have a great deal of autonomy, may be helpful. Individual doctors may establish their own office procedures and fee schedules, and collectively they set policies for hospitals, medical schools and various public health organizations. Of course, in a complex industrial society such as our own, most professions are subject to some regulation; a variety of laws and conventions set the parameters within which medical practitioners must operate.

One might, at first glance, assume that teachers, too, have a

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12 Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching," pp. 3-4.
13 Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, "The Lives of Teachers," *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*, eds. Lee Shulman and Gary Sykes (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 250.
14 Gary Sykes, "Caring about Teachers," *Teachers College Record*, vol. 84 (1983), p. 581.

good deal of autonomy. Teachers teach behind closed doors, and within certain limits they can establish their own set of classroom procedures and rules. Though they may be given a curriculum and/or a textbook, they can decide themselves just how the subject at hand ought to be taught.

A closer look, however, reveals that the situation is more complicated, and that most teachers operate under constraints more onerous than those of other professions: unlike the clients of the doctor or lawyer, students do not come to school voluntarily; conversely, teachers have relatively little choice as to who their students will be. In other fields professionals themselves define and promote the services they offer, but in teaching it is the society at large which dictates its expectations to teachers. Major policy issues in education are usually decided through a political process involving school boards and commissioners (or, in the case of Jewish education, lay people and rabbis), very few of whom have extensive professional training. At the school level, policies are usually set by the principal or administrators, few of whom act in consultation with teachers.[15]

What can be done to promote teachers' autonomy? How, despite the inherent constraints in the work situation of teachers, can this aspect of professionalism be enhanced? Researchers attempting to answer this question[16] have focused on that intangible but altogether critical factor, the "culture" of a school. Why do some schools foster teacher autonomy while others, with equally competent teachers, render teachers powerless? After years of trying to account for the differences by enumerating discrete factors which serve as "independent variables," researchers have begun to take a more holistic, anthropological look at schools.[17] They argue that many elements combine to create that unique configuration of shared beliefs and practices which is a school's

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15 John Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), pp. 188-191.

16 Milbrey Wallan McLaughlin and Sylvia Mei-ling Yee, "School as a Place to Have a Career," in *Building a Professional Culture in Schools*, ed. Ann Lieberman (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988); Douglas Mitchell, Flora Ida Ortiz, and Tedi K. Mitchell, *Work Orientation and Job Performance: The Cultural Basis of Teaching Rewards and Incentives* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1987).

17 Frederick Erickson, "Qualitative Methods in Research in Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, (1986).

culture. This culture serves as a filter for all attempts at changing the status of the teacher's.[18]

The challenge facing the advocates of professionalization through greater autonomy is that this cultural "screen" makes it difficult to isolate the set of ingredients which are the key to transforming a hierarchical and bureaucratic staff structure into what Roland Barth calls "a community of leaders."[19] Throughout the United States a number of experiments have been undertaken whose purpose is to grant public school teachers more autonomy, either individually or collectively. Concurrently, the experiments are being studied, in an effort to identify the common characteristics of those programs which are most successful.[20] As these experiments progress we will obtain a better picture of both the conditions and benefits of expanded autonomy for the teacher.

Legitimacy and Autonomy Reinforce One Another

Though the two hallmarks of professionalism — legitimacy and autonomy — have been discussed independently, it is clear that in actuality they are closely related. Legitimacy serves as the justification for autonomy: the members of a profession are granted control over their practice on the assumption that they, having sole possession of the special knowledge in their field, know best how their practice should be conducted. Autonomy, in turn, allows professionals to establish the standards of legitimacy. Most *bona fide* professions are self-regulating; criteria for membership and methods of evaluation are set by the members themselves.

> This is, in essence, the bargain that all professionals make with society: for occupations that require discretion and judgment in meeting the unique needs of clients, the profession guarantees the competence of members in

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18 Myrna Cooper, "Whose Culture is it Anyway?" in *Building a Professional Culture*.

19 Roland S. Barth, "School: A Community of Leaders," in *Building a Professional Culture*.

20 Ibid., chapters 8-10.

exchange for the privilege of professional control and standards of practice.[21]

Teaching as a Vocation

Is the term "professional" rich enough to embody all that we mean when we think of excellence in teaching? If all teachers were to be fully professional, according to the criteria of legitimacy and autonomy, would we be satisfied with the result? The current debate on teachers has focused so narrowly on their professional standing that these questions have rarely been asked. If, however, one were to think of one's most memorable teachers, "professional" would probably not be the only (or even the first) adjective one would use to describe them.

Good teachers, as Jane Roland Martin has stated, "are shapers not only of their students' knowledge, but also of their students' lives."[22] While knowledge is certainly a necessary ingredient of good teaching, it is not the only one. Following Dwayne Huebner, I have used "vocation" as a metaphor for this aspect of teaching.

> The Latin root of *vocation* refers to a call or summons....To have the vocation of teacher is to permit oneself to be called by children and young people....[It] is to participate intentionally in the unfolding, or perhaps collapse, of this social world.[23]

To view teaching as a vocation is to focus on that aspect of teaching that goes beyond training and expertise to the core of the teacher's being. For *vocational*, as opposed to *professional*, teachers, knowledge and autonomy may be important, but only in the context of their ultimate purpose, their reasons for teaching.

Different teachers are "called" to teaching for different reasons. For some it is a desire to work with children, to nurture and care for developing minds and hearts. For others the continuation of a community or a tradition is the ultimate goal; they teach in order

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21 Linda Darling-Hammond, "Valuing Teachers: The Making of a Profession," *Teachers College Record,* vol. 87 (1985), p. 59.

22 Jane Roland Martin, "Reforming Teaching Education, Rethinking Liberal Education," *Teachers College Record,* vol. 88 (1987), p. 408.

23 Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal: Professional Issues, Personal Choices,* eds. Francis Bolin and Judith McConnel Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), p. 17.

to bring a new generation "into the fold." In religious education, one finds a third group of teachers, "called" to teach in the sense implied by the original meaning of the term vocation — by strong religious feelings.

Each of these motivations suggests a different characteristic of the ideal téacher: First, the teacher should be a caring person. Second, the teacher should be an integral member of the community into which the student is being brought. Third, the teacher should be a spiritual role model.

The Teacher as a Caring Person

Research on teachers has consistently shown that they tend to value the intrinsic rewards of teaching over the extrinsic rewards, which is not surprising, since the extrinsic rewards of teaching are rather limited.[24] High on the list of intrinsic rewards is the teacher's perception of having "reached" students, of having made a difference in their lives. The following excerpt from the letter of an experienced teacher to her former student exemplifies this feeling:

> Ultimately, teaching is nurturing. The teacher enters a giving relationship with strangers, and then the teacher's needs must give way to the students' needs....My days are spent encouraging young people's growth.[25]

By reflecting on one's own experience as a student, one can probably remember vividly certain teachers who seemed to care about students in a special way. These are teachers who took an interest in their students as people, not just as takers of tests or writers of essays. In her book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Nell Noddings describes this quality:

> When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, she receives not just the 'response' but the student. What he says matters, whether it is right or wrong, and she probes gently for clarification, interpretation, contribution. She is not seeking the answer

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24 Feiman-Nemser and Floden, "The Cultures of Teaching," p. 510.
25 Margaret Metzer and Clare Fox, "Two Teachers of Letters," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 56 (1986), p. 352.

> but the involvement of the cared-for. For the brief inter-
> val of dialogue that grows around the question, the
> cared-for indeed "fills the firmament." The student is
> infinitely more important than the subject matter.[26]

The phrase "fills the firmament" is borrowed from Martin Buber, and echoes Buber's concern with relationships in which there is genuine encounter and dialogue, relationships in which people meet one another as "Thou"s, rather than "It"s.

Noddings argues that the overriding purpose of all schools ought to be the development in young people of the ability to care for each other and for the world around them. "Teaching is a constitutively ethical activity. It is a moral type of friendship in which teachers and students work together to achieve common ends."[27] This is not to say that the learning of subject matter is not important, but that subject matter must be taught in a way that enhances, rather than diminishes, care.

Is possible for a teacher to care for an entire class of students? How can a teacher meet all these students as "Thou"s, rather than "It"s? Noddings' reply is that it is, of course, impossible to care for every student every minute, but that this type of caring is neither necessary nor appropriate. A large part of the student's day is rightfully taken up by his or her interaction with materials or with other students. When, however, the student does interact with the teacher, that encounter must be characterized by caring:

> [The teacher must] be totally and nonselectively present
> to the student — to each student — as he addresses me.
> The time interval may be brief but the encounter is
> total.[28]

If we value caring as a quality, and if it is important to us that teachers be caring individuals, then at least three things must happen. First, we must begin talking about caring a great deal more than we have. We must state quite explicitly that caring for children is one of the most important qualifications for a teacher to have. We must validate the superior social commitment of

26 Nell Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 176.
27 Nell Noddings, "Fidelity in Teaching, Teacher Education and Research for Teaching," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 56 (1986), p. 505.
28 Noddings, *Caring*, p. 180.

teachers in general, as well as individual instances of caring in teaching. Second, we must take a close look at how schools are structured, and the ways in which these structures promote or inhibit caring. Is there time in the schedule for teachers to interact with students more informally? Is it feasible for a teacher to stay with a group of students for more than one year? Third, and most important, we must care for and about teachers. School boards, principals, parents and members of the community at large must extend themselves to teachers, and encounter them in the way we would like them to encounter students.

The Teacher as an Integral Member of a Community

The ideal environment for the education of children would be a homogeneous and well-integrated society, a society in which family, school and a web of civic and religious organizations were interwoven, each reinforcing the values and norms of the other. Historians and anthropologists have spent a great deal of time debating whether or not such harmonious societies have ever existed, in any time or place. Clearly, however, few communities of this sort have survived industrialization, modernization, and the other forces that have shaped contemporary American life.

In our own time the institutions most naturally suited to enhancing the process of education are embattled. Social mobility has all but eliminated the extended family. The rising rate of divorce, along with the entry of an unprecedented number of women into the work force, have sapped the strength of the nuclear family. Social and religious organizations of all kinds face stiff competition from both work and leisure activities. As a result of the mass-media and mass-marketing, America as a whole has become more homogeneous than ever before; but this surface homogeneity has come at the expense of the integrity and vitality of local communities.

Against this background, many of the innovations in public schools over the past three or four decades can be seen as attempts to have the school assume functions which were traditionally fulfilled by the family, church, or other local organizations. Head Start, moral education and sex education are but some of the programs introduced into schools in an effort to compensate for the waning influence of the family.

Thus, the school, whose original mandate was limited to formal instruction, has increasingly been asked to take on a larger and more elusive educational function, which, following Westerhoff's analysis, might be called "enculturation."[29] However, the typical school, which is organized according to age-graded and self-contained classrooms and adheres to a subject-oriented curriculum, may not be the appropriate vehicle for teaching students values and attitudes in more than a superficial way.[30] With the exception of a small number of exemplary programs, schools have not been particularly successful at "enculturating" students.[31]

The expectation that the school will somehow cure social ills has filtered into the Jewish community as well, where education is seen as "the key to Jewish survival." Indeed, the need to have Jewish schools perform functions which relate more closely to "enculturation" than to instruction is even more urgent in the Jewish community. From the outset, Jews in America were deeply ambivalent about the extent to which they wished to identify as Jews, and practice the rituals and traditions of "the old country."[32] The immigrant generation had the luxury of choosing if and when to activate rituals and customs which lay dormant within them. Succeeding generations, not having been steeped in these traditions from childhood, have had fewer resources to draw upon. To make matters worse, social mobility has largely eliminated the ancillary agents of Jewish enculturation, the extended family and the Jewish neighborhood.

The children currently enrolled in Jewish schools, who are predominantly fourth and fifth generation Americans, receive little Jewish education at home. In a recent study of supplementary school students conducted by the Board of Jewish Education

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29 John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

30 Isa Aron, "Instruction and Enculturation in Jewish Education" (Paper presented at the Conference on Research in Jewish Education, Los Angeles, June, 1987).

31 Jerry Debenham and Michael Parsons, "The Future of Schools and Families: Three Scenarios and a Recommendation," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 59 (1978), pp. 442-46.

32 Charles Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973).

of Greater New York,[33] only 19% of the respondents indicated
that either they or their parents attend synagogue services on
Shabbat or on holidays other than the High Holidays. According
to the report, in only 61% of the students' homes does someone
light Shabbat candles, even occasionally.[34] While one might ex-
pect students enrolled in day schools to come from homes with a
richer Jewish environment, the impressionistic data collected by
many educators suggests that this is not always the case, espe-
cially in non-Orthodox day schools.[35]

If Jewish education has any chance for success, we must con-
sider very seriously the differences between instruction and "en-
culturation." We must acknowledge that instruction in a subject
matter (be it mathematics and literature or Hebrew and Bible) is
predicated on some prior enculturation, which provides both the
motivation for learning, and opportunities for its consolidation.
Students in public schools, for example, have daily opportunities
to see adults using language and computation skills; in addition,
even the youngest have some conception that success in school is
connected to success in adult life. In contrast, Jewish students
rarely see adults praying, speaking Hebrew, or reading the Bible;
nor is competence in these areas linked to future success in the
secular world.

If Jewish education is to be taken seriously, if the survival for
which it is the supposed key is to be cultural and spiritual, rather
than merely demographic, Jewish schools must be restructured
and reconfigured to become agents of "enculturation." They must
become places which model, for young people, what it means to
be Jewish. In short, they must become communities.

What would it take to turn the Jewish school into a community,
to change its orientation from instruction to "enculturation?"
Elsewhere,[36] I have outlined five steps which such a transforma-
tion would require, including the involvement of parents at all
levels of the school's operation and the creation of many more

33 Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, *Jewish Supplementary
    Schooling: An Educational System in Need of Change* (New York: Board of
    Jewish Education, 1988).
34 Ibid., p. 93.
35 Burton Cohen, "New Educational Responsibilities for the Conservative
    Synagogue," *The Melton Journal*, no. 14 (Spring 1982), p. 24.
36 Aron, "Instruction and Enculturation."

opportunities for informal learning. Of the five steps, the most relevant to this paper is the one that requires a school which wants to be the core of a community to have teachers who are deeply involved in that community.

The Teacher as a Religious Role Model

It would be difficult to find anyone who would argue that teachers in Jewish schools ought not to be religious role models. But what do we mean by religious? And what is a role model? These are questions which must be answered before we can discuss how important it is that our teachers have this quality, and how this quality can best be encouraged by the school.

Contemporary writers on religion, such as William Alston and Clive Beck, have pointed out that the phenomena which most people call "religious" are so varied as to elude straightforward, stipulative definition.[37] They offer, in place of a definition, a view of religion as the confluence of a number of religion-making characteristics; any particular religion would have some, but not necessarily all, of these characteristics. Clive Beck offers this type of definition, but focuses on the religious person, rather than the religious tradition.[38] A religious person, according to Beck, is one who typically:

— has a system of supernatural beliefs;
— engages in rituals and other practices related to those beliefs;
— is associated with a tradition of such belief and practice;
— participates in a community committed to this tradition;
— derives from the tradition a worldview, and
— a relatively complete way of life.

The virtue of this definition is that it accommodates the variety of ways in which people can be said to be religious. One person, for example, may not believe in God, but may still practice the rituals associated with a certain religious tradition; according to this definition, that person would still be considered religious. A second person might believe in God, but might practice the rituals

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37 Michael Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987).
38 Clive Beck, "What Then is Religion?" (Manuscript, O.I.S.I.E., 1986).

of several religious traditions, and might not be involved in a community committed to any of these traditions; that person too, would be considered religious. Of course, not all of these ways of being religious will be acceptable to all Jews, a point to which I will return, after a discussion of religious role models.

"Role model" is a sociological term, which has rapidly become part of everyday vocabulary, because it points to a factor in contemporary life which had no parallel in more traditional societies. In the hypothetical homogeneous society discussed in the previous section, children would form their notions of what makes a successful adult from observing their relatives and neighbors. In such a society the number of potential "roles" to which one could aspire would be quite limited; the roles assumed by one generation would probably be attractive to the next. Changes in contemporary society, however, have eroded the viability of certain traditional roles, such as housewife and shopkeeper, and contributed to the creation of new roles, such as working mother and office worker. A young person growing up today faces a confusing array of possible futures — some traditional, some current, and some of which are as yet unknown. In this context the child's potential role models go far beyond family and neighbors to embrace public figures of all sorts, including even virtual strangers.

In contemporary Jewish life, the role of the teacher is critical, because teachers, along with rabbis, youth group leaders and counselors, are often the only Jewish role models available. As the evidence of the demographic studies and ethnographies discussed above indicates, the number of Jewish activities that marginally affiliated families actually perform is quite small.[39] While roughly 75% of American Jews celebrate Hanukkah, Passover, and the High Holidays in some fashion[40] and while as many as 85% affiliate with some Jewish organization at some point in

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39 Steven M. Cohen, "Outreach to the Marginally Affiliated," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, vol. 62 (1985), pp. 147-57.

40 Ibid.

their lives,[41] a much smaller percentage live a life that might be considered religious, by any of Beck's criteria.[42]

If Jewish education for the children of the marginally affiliated is to be anything other than an exercise in futility and hypocrisy, Jewish teachers must serve as models for how one can lead an involved and attractive Jewish life.

In the words of Jonathan Omer-Man,

> A religious person today is a person who has made certain choices; and a teacher of religion is a person who has made certain choices and whose task is to educate young people who face an even wider range of choices....The student has to be taught to make certain profound existential choices as an individual, and to live with these decisions in circumstances that are not always easy. In order to do this, the teacher has to present himself as a role model, as a person who has made such choices, and with whom the student can identify.[43]

It is important to note that not all of the role models for living a full and committed Jewish life need be religious. Some may be more oriented towards the cultural, ethnic, or secular-Zionist aspects of Jewish life. However, to the extent that a predominance of Jewish schools are synagogue-based, and that many of those that are independent still include religious subjects in their curriculum, one would expect a large number of teachers to serve as religious role models.

What kind of religious role models do we expect Jewish teachers to be? Do we expect them to believe in God? To observe a minimum set of rituals? To have a particular world view? These questions cannot be answered without reference to the particular school. Some schools, especially those affiliated with the Orthodox movement, may expect their teachers to adhere closely to a set of beliefs and a code of practices. Others of a more liberal persuasion may allow, and even value, a plurality of belief and practice, hoping to offer their students a variety of ways of being

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41 Donald Feldstein and Barry Shrage, "Myths and Facts for Campaigners and Planners," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* vol. 63 (1987), p. 98.

42 Steven M. Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

43 Jonathan Omer-Man, "The Teacher as Role Model," *The Melton Journal,* no. 14 (Spring 1982), p. 22.

a committed religious Jew. All schools ought to consider these questions seriously, and to attempt to articulate the types of religious commitment they will expect from their teachers. All of them ought to think seriously about the way in which the structure and policies of the school promote or inhibit the teacher's religiosity.

How Professional and/or Vocational are Jewish Teachers?

Truly exemplary teachers, the teachers imprinted in our memory or featured in movies, see their work as both a profession and a vocation. Like Jaime Escalante, the hero of the movie *Stand and Deliver,* they cook for their students while coaching them on the fine points of calculus. Like Eliot Wigginton, the originator of the Foxfire project, they have strong roots in the community, but are ready to travel far and wide to promote and refine a new method of teaching. Like my son's Hebrew teacher, Amy Wallk, they are both relentless in their search for the best methods and deeply involved in the lives of their students.

To what extent are Jewish teachers professional? To what extent are they vocational? To what extent can we enhance the sense of vocation among the professionals, and improve the professional skills of those who are "called" — but untrained? And what of the teachers who fall into neither category? These questions, which are critical to both school improvement and curriculum reform, can only be answered by an extensive research effort.

I would like at this point to explore briefly the implications of the foregoing analysis for the process of curricular innovation. The professionalism of the teacher is, of necessity, a critical factor in determining both the format in which a curriculum is presented and the nature of the training which is offered. A teacher who has both legitimacy and autonomy, for example, can and should be an active partner in curriculum design. A teacher who meets neither criterion requires both more training and more explicit guidance.

The problem is, of course, that teachers in different schools, and even different teachers in the same school, are likely to vary greatly in terms of both legitimacy and autonomy. How can these variations be taken into account in the process of curriculum

design? I would imagine that the authors of the Jewish Values curriculum had many interesting debates on this issue; it would be valuable to have a record of those debates. Even more valuable might be some carefully monitored experiments based on different formats and different modes of training.

The extent to which teachers vary in their sense of vocation is also relevant to the process of curricular reform, and this is an area in which we know very little. Would a teacher for whom caring, membership in the community, or religiosity is paramount, be more or less likely to adhere to the curriculum writer's intent? One could imagine a sense of vocation serving as a powerful positive force in enhancing the curriculum. Alternatively, a sense of vocation might serve as a screen or filter, resulting in significant distortion. Here, again, some record of changes in the curriculum as it is taught by various types of teachers might prove enormously helpful.

Clearly, a great deal of research is called for to help us understand the degree of professionalism and "vocationalism" of teachers in Jewish schools. As a quantitative beginning, the Los Angeles Teachers Census has provided valuable data.[44] However, quantitative research is most powerful in combination with qualitative research modalities such as interviews and actual classroom observations. A pilot study of this kind has already begun, and my intention is to engage in much more qualitative research in the coming years. Following Lee Shulman's notion of a "union of insufficiencies,"[45] we expect that a research program of this type could yield a wealth of information for curriculum planners.

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44 Isa Aron and Bruce Phillips, "Findings of the Los Angeles BJE Teacher Census" (Paper presented at the Conference on Research in Jewish Education, New York, June, 1990).
45 Lee Shulman, "A Union of Insufficiencies: Strategies for Teacher Assessment in a Period of Educational Reform," *Educational Leadership* (November 1988), pp. 36-41.