

Outreach to the Marginally Affiliated: Evidence and Implications for Policymakers in Jewish Education*

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The marginally affiliated, in fact, comprise the vast majority of American Jews, and their numbers have been holding steady. Because they are affiliated, they are already located and rather economical to reach. Because they are under-involved, they offer considerable opportunities for identity enhancement.

In the last decade and more, Jewish educators, Center workers, and related communal professionals have begun to talk increasingly of "outreach" to so-called unaffiliated Jews. The unaffiliated include, most prominently, the intermarried, young singles, the divorced, and non-participants in synagogues, centers, and federation campaigns (see, for example, two recent issues of the *Melton Journal*, Fall 1984 and Summer 1985). But, in focusing on these groups, some policy-makers may well have lost sight of the "affiliated," a group which is far larger than the unaffiliated, and arguably even more crucial to American Jewish vitality and continuity. And it is here that the now considerable recent social science research on the Jewish identity of affiliated Jewish adults in the United States suggests some broad policy implications for Jewish educators, be they teachers, principals, rabbis, Center workers, or lay leaders making policy in the field of Jewish education, broadly conceived.

It is probably fair to say that most policymakers and professionals concerned with outreach efforts operate under the following assumptions:

1. that the Jewish world can be divided largely into two broad categories: the affiliated and unaffiliated;
2. that the number of unaffiliated is large, perhaps half or even a majority of the Jewish population, and
3. that the number of unaffiliated is growing, in large part, because
4. too many Jews lack sufficient commitment to Jewish values, and therefore
5. educational efforts ought both to target the unaffiliated, and focus on elevating their Jewish commitment or motivation.

It turns out that most of these assumptions are inaccurate and, in fact, may be producing flawed policies. If so, then those policies and programs need to be rethought and modified. In fact, it may turn out that to have greatest impact, outreach efforts ought to target *already affiliated* Jews, and they should try to enhance their connections with other Jews as much as their commitments to Jewish values. These alternative policy prescriptions stem from a critical examination of the commonly held assumptions enumerated above.

We began with the (mistaken) assumption that the number of unaffiliated is numerically large.

From a variety of research studies accumulated over the last decade and more, we can paint a very general portrait of what we may call "the vast

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majority of American Jews," by which we mean at least two-thirds of adult American Jews.

1. The vast majority of American Jews send their children at one time or another to some form of Jewish schooling. While at any one point less than half of all youngsters are enrolled in Jewish schools, by the end of adolescence almost all (87%) young Jewish men have received some Jewish schooling, as have over two-thirds (70%) of young adult women.¹ These fairly high cumulative enrollment statistics say very little about the quality of Jewish learning; but they certainly testify to the motivation of the vast majority of Jewish parents to perpetuate some form of positive Jewish commitment. And they demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of parents affiliate with a Jewish institution at some time in their lives.
2. The vast majority of Jews celebrate in some way the three seasonal holidays of Passover, Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur, and Chanukah. About three-quarters of Jewish adults appear in synagogue during the High Holidays, as many or more light Chanuka candles, and about 5-in-6 attend a Passover Seder.²
3. The vast majority of adult Jews say they contribute to Jewish philanthropic campaigns, and most (a simple majority) give \$100 or more.³
4. The vast majority claim a passionate and broad involvement with Israel; and the enormously successful direct mail campaigns among Jews for pro-Israel Senatorial candidates bear them out.⁴
5. In intermediate size older cities—such as Cleveland, St. Louis, Detroit, and Baltimore—the vast majority of Jews belong to a Jewish organization and read a Jewish newspaper. This is not to deny that in the larger cities—such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles—only about a third of adults so affiliate.⁵
6. While only about one-half of all American Jews belong to a synagogue, synagogue membership jumps sharply upward when parents have school-age children.⁶ In the New York area, with a synagogue membership rate below the national average, as little as 18% of the never-marrieds have joined as contrasted with 60% of couples with school-age children.⁷
7. And last, while it is true that about one Jew in four marries a gentile, the vast majority, or three-in-four, do not. Of the initial outmarriages, about one-in-six of the

¹ Sergio DellaPergola and Nitza Genuth, *Jewish Education Attained in Diaspora Communities: Data for the 1970s*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1983.

² Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*. New York: Tavistock, 1983; Paul Ritterband and Steven M. Cohen, "The Social Characteristics of the Jews of Greater New York." *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1984, pp. 128-61; Gary Tobin and Julie Lipsman, "A Compendium of Jewish Population Studies, in Steven M. Cohen, Jonathan Woocher and Bruce Phillips (eds.), *Perspectives in Jewish Population Research*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1984.

³ Steven M. Cohen, "Attitudes of American Jews Toward Israel and Israelis." New York: American Jewish Committee offset, 1983.

⁴ Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, *op. cit.*; and "Attitudes of American Jews . . ." *ibid.*

⁵ Tobin and Lipsman, *op. cit.*

⁶ Cohen, *American Modernity* . . . *op. cit.*

⁷ Steven M. Cohen and Paul Ritterband, forthcoming, *Family, Community and Identity: The Jews of Greater New York* (tentative title), Indiana University Press.

gentiles (overwhelmingly, the wives) convert. And of the remainder, most of the mixed-married Jews (many more wives than husbands) say they are raising Jewish children.⁸

Thus, in whatever ways one defines affiliation—be it in terms of children's education, or major holiday celebration, or philanthropic contribution, or Israel involvement, or organizational and synagogue affiliation, or marriage patterns—there are certainly a lot of affiliated Jews out there. But, this does not deny that the quality of their Jewishness, the depth and significance of their affiliation, may leave much to be desired.

The great extent to which the affiliated vary among themselves can be well-illustrated using data from the Greater New York Jewish Population Study. The study questioned over 4,500 Jews living in an 8-county area, a region which comprises 30% of American Jewry, and one with extraordinary diversity. It includes such contrasts as heavily Orthodox Borough Park as well as heavily unaffiliated Greenwich Village; largely lower-income Bronx, as well as affluent Great Neck and Scarsdale; and the established Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens as well as the recently settled areas of Suffolk and the upper reaches of northern Westchester.

Using several measures of observance, communal affiliation, friendship, and marriage, we found that only 4% lacked any sort of connection to Jewish life, and only another 6% had no such ties except by way of having mostly Jewish friends.⁹ At the other extreme, about 17% were "activists"—they were

heavily involved in Jewish organizational life and 10% qualified as "observant" by virtue of claiming to handle no money on the Sabbath. Between these two extreme (the 10% with few Jewish activities, and the 27% with many sorts of connections with Jewish life), lay the vast middle, nearly three quarters of the Jews in the New York metropolitan region. All those in the vast middle celebrated Passover, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Chanuka in some fashion, and most belonged to some Jewish institution (usually a synagogue).

And, among parents age 35–49 with school-age children, the Jewish identity distribution was skewed even further in the direction of greater involvement. Fully 87% (!) were affiliated in some way with the Jewish community, either through keeping some aspect of kashrut and Shabbat, or by belonging to some institution, or by being active in some other significant way. And of the 13% who were unaffiliated, almost all (10%), observed both Passover and Chanuka in some fashion. This means that only 3% of parents age 35–49 in the Greater New York area belonged to no Jewish institution and failed to observe at least two of the most popular holidays!

Not only is the number of unaffiliated much smaller than most suppose, there is no persuasive evidence that their numbers either are declining significantly or increasing. Overall, some trends in American Jewish identification point down, others up, but there is no clear, overall trend in either direction. Thus, the number of unaffiliated is not only small; it does not seem to be growing very much either. And even if it were, there is still clearly a large majority of Jews arrayed along the middle ranges of Jewish involvement.

⁸ Charles Silberman, *A Certain People*, New York: Summit, 1985; and Cohen and Ritterband, *Ibid.*

⁹ Cohen and Ritterband, *Ibid.*

From all these data we learn that sooner or later, almost all Jews affiliate with some official Jewish agency. If so, then the central policy problem may be something other than simply promoting affiliation. It may be something closer to the heart and expertise of Jewish educators, namely what to do with Jews once they are in the door or on the mailing list. And here, the accumulated social science research of the last few years has given us some hints (though certainly no rules) as to how to reach, inspire, involve, and educate these people, the many Jews who in some way identify as such, but who nevertheless are neither especially active nor culturally sophisticated in Judaic terms.

Entry Points

One lesson we learn from that research is that there are certain times when Jews are most open to educators' intervention, when they may actually seek, or at least be open to receiving, some sort of advice or assistance from a Jewish expert or institution. These special times—"entry points"—may be linked to the calendar, to the family life cycle, or to historical events.

Examples of calendrical entry points include the three widely observed holidays of Passover, Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur, and Chanuka. Others may include leisure periods, be they weekends or vacation times. The positive reports of educators and others involved with summer camps, Israel missions, and weekend retreats testify to a greater chance for impact when programs are planned for and during leisure periods.

The entry points connected with the family life cycle include: marriage; the birth of a child; child-rearing transitions such as beginning school, bar/bat mitzvah, and confirmation; death and mourning; illness; and even divorce. These are among those times

when people throughout the West typically look to religious communities, institutions and experts for guidance, instruction, and solace. Intervention at these times can leave lasting impressions and make for important life-long shifts in Jewish involvement.

Finally, we have entry points provided by the course of historical events. The most notable examples include the wars in Israel. Each such war—in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982—provided a potent stimulus for American Jewish involvement. All except the last resulted in significantly larger donations to the UJA and Israel Bonds. And all, particularly the last three, provoked considerable soul-searching and reevaluation on the part of large numbers of American Jews. Other examples, perhaps less potent but nevertheless noteworthy, are the quadrennial presidential election seasons when Jews engage in intense debates over Jewish political interests and their responsibilities as Americans. They are also times when Jews are keenly sensitive to seemingly anti-Semitic or anti-Israel statements by public figures.

Fundraisers and community relations specialists have long recognized these periods as times for maximal effort, as fleeting opportunities to be exploited perhaps for narrow institutional gains, but, ultimately for the good of the Jewish people. Their example ought also to be emulated by more educators who ought to make themselves ready to capitalize on both the planned and unanticipated historical events which are almost guaranteed to heighten Jewish consciousness and public debate.

Motive and Opportunity or Commitment and Community

Crime investigators need to demonstrate two elements to connect a suspect with a crime: motive and oppor-

tunity. They need to prove that the suspect was motivated to commit the crime, and they need to prove the suspect had the opportunity to do so.

As with criminals and crime, so (*l'havdil*) with Jews and Judaism. At one extreme, a small number of Jews are so deeply committed to Jewish life that they are certain to make their life decisions so as to assure their ability to live a rather full Jewish life. At the other extreme, another small number—and, as I have been arguing, a very small number—are so alienated from Jewish life that they have rather little chance of involving themselves in Jewish communal or ritual affairs. For the vast majority however, social circumstances have a lot to do with their opportunities for involvement.

In Judaism, as with other group involvements, the nature of the available community—be it conceived as family, friends, neighbors, synagogues, organizations, or residential locale—is the key to understanding opportunity. Whatever their levels of individual commitment, those Jews who are more involved with other Jews, or who are more attractive to or more recruitable by formal Jewish communities, are also more likely to be involved in Jewish life. In other words, we ought not automatically to associate the presence or absence of involvement with the presence or absence of motivation, or what some term commitment. A compelling community often makes up for lack of commitment; and, most often, commitment without community can not be acted upon.

The powerful impact of social circumstances can be seen in a variety of findings. As noted earlier, family stage is the most potent social predictor of involvement levels. In the New York area study, parents of school-age children and parents of grown children were at least *four* times more likely to

qualify as “observant” or “activist” as were the never marrieds (i.e., 36–39% versus only 9% of the latter). Those who have been residentially stable for three years are more active than newcomers. Residents of veteran, intermediate-sized cities are more involved than those living in recent areas of Jewish settlement, large or small. And the more affluent are clearly more active than those with lower incomes. In other words, the composite portrait of a highly active Jew might be an affluent, middle-aged parent of grown children, who has been living for many years in Cleveland. And the portrait of the inactive Jew is a single parent of limited means who has recently moved to Denver. Despite equal levels of commitment, one is bound to be active in Jewish life, and the other not. As one single parent in a study of a Conservative Hebrew school’s parents remarked:

I’m tired of hearing that single parents don’t care about their kids’ Jewish education. It’s a whole lot harder for me to pay for the education and then to get them there . . . I’m so limited in my ability to get places that I don’t allow myself to get interested. It frustrates me. I’d love to do lots of things but I can’t.¹⁰

The importance of sound communities for enabling the expression of Jewish commitment is demonstrated in several of the most notable innovations in American Jewish life of the last two decades. The Havurah movement, for example, explicitly emulated the strong sense of cohesion which has characterized many Orthodox communities.¹¹ For havurot, community-building be-

¹⁰ Susan Wall, “Listening to Parents: A Study of Attitudes Toward the Supplementary Jewish School,” unpublished manuscript, 1984.

¹¹ Bernard Reisman, *The Havurah: A Contemporary Jewish Experience*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977.

came one of the important ultimate ends, on a par with, if not more important than, serious commitment to a certain style of liturgy or to an intense, personalized grappling with religious texts.

The same lesson also can be learned from the UJA's dozens of Young Leadership groups all around the country. Here, individuals in their young thirties, from the same community, and with similar social class background, have been brought together into groups of families which often study, pray, and travel to Israel together with very positive consequences for philanthropic contributions, campaign activism, and elevated ritual observance in the home.¹² Yet another illustration of the powerful influence of community-building comes in the form of the nation's 100 recently formed Jewish political action committees which have coalesced to influence the political process in behalf of Jewish interests. As might be expected, these groups recruit Jews with a specific set of characteristics. They are generally young to middle-aged adults, and most are fairly affluent people who are able to make \$500 and \$1,000 political contributions on top of their already considerable philanthropic support of conventional Jewish charities. Here too, the groups attend to the social relations among their members by holding frequent social functions and by drawing upon commercial and professional connections among their members and new recruits.

¹² Jonathan Woocher, "The 1980 United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Cabinet: A Profile," *Forum* 42/43 (Winter 1981), pp. 57-67; "Jewish Survivalism' as Communal Ideology: An Empirical Assessment," *This Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (1981), pp. 291-303; "The 'Civil Judaism' of Communal Leaders," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1982, pp. 149-69.

If it is indeed the case that active Jewish involvement depends both upon well-functioning communities and upon the commitment of their members to Jewish values of one sort or another, then it seems we have two sorts of crucial tasks before us. One is to improve the social cohesion of Jewish communities, that is, to strengthen the connections among Jews already involved in Jewish communities and to extend networks to relatively isolated Jews, all those who deviate from the composite portrait of the activist drawn earlier. These include the young adults, the not-so-affluent, the singles, the residentially mobile, and the dramatically growing number of well-elderly who generally under-participate in Jewish life. The second broad policy is, of course, to foster commitment to Jewish values among those who are already socially connected.

Historically, the Jewish professional world in the United States has been divided into specialists trained only in one or the other of these two tasks; that is, those trained in community-building (principally the social workers), and those trained in transmitting Jewish values (that is, the educators). Only recently has the Jewish human services field recognized the desirability of supplementing its traditional training with explicit training in Judaica. (Witness the half dozen or so joint or integrated graduate professional programs in social work or social welfare and Jewish studies.¹³)

In ways about which I myself am not at all clear, the Jewish education profession needs to recruit and train people in the arts of community-building, but in ways which are appropriate for educators. It is no accident that the

¹³ Bernard Reisman, "Managers, Jews, or Social Workers: Conflicting Expectations for Communal Workers," *Response* 42 (1982), pp. 41-49.

field of education draws heavily upon such disciplines as psychology (with its emphasis on the individual) and philosophy (with its emphasis on values). The truly successful Jewish educator may well need to transcend the conventional boundaries of the profession to learn to draw upon the skills acquired and practiced by lawyers, MBA's, journalists, and politicians. In other words, attention to community-building may not only be helpful for achieving educational goals, it may be an inevitable prerequisite.

For as noted earlier, the performance of Jewish activities, the demonstration of commitment to Jewish values however they are defined, depends not only upon the extent of motivation and commitment of the individual. Motive without opportunity cannot be acted upon; and commitment in the absence of community can be neither applied nor expressed.

Plural Models of Jewish Knowledge

That which we choose to call "knowledge," as much as any other human endeavor, is a social construct. Every culture in effect decides what constitutes knowledge, what knowledge is important or socially useful or prestigious, and, ultimately, which knowledge ought to be transmitted to members of the culture. Accordingly, Jewish educators, by the very nature of their profession, have had to evolve a working definition of Jewish knowledge, to decide what ought to be included in their curricula.

Even though Jewish educators have generally failed to develop a consensus on what constitutes essential Jewish knowledge, most of them (particularly the rabbis, principals, and classroom teachers) have in their practice defined Jewish knowledge largely as that pertaining to participation in religious Judaism. Thus, the skills that are taught are most often synagogue skills or home

ritual skills. The concepts taught are most often those derived from rabbinic Judaism. The language taught is most often Hebrew. The simple, unadorned word "text" refers almost exclusively to the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, or later rabbinic commentaries.

As we know, the Jewish lives of American Jews consist of many worlds other than what we may for convenience sake refer to as the religious world. In fact, the religious world is the one where American Jews may be the least proficient, and, perhaps even the least interested. Affiliated but not highly committed American Jews are not particularly distinguished by frequent synagogue worship attendance, although they do in fact use their synagogues for many Jewish purposes other than worship. They are not particularly adept at, or for the most part, even acquainted with, text study, although they do read rather prodigiously on Jewish matters in books, newspapers, and magazines. They tend not to devote an extraordinary amount of time or energy to punctilious observance of rituals in the home or elsewhere, yet many do expend considerable time, energy, and money on behalf of Jewish communal causes.

If this analysis is correct, then much of Jewish education as currently conceived fails to speak to the actual Jewish concerns of American Jews, many of whom do possess a sort of Jewish knowledge, though one which many formal educators would fail to recognize as such. For example, most American Jews have a shared understanding of Jewish history, a historical mythos which lends meaning to the events in Jewish history they read about every day in the newspapers. Its elements include a belief in Jewish intellectual and entrepreneurial talents, an assertion of Jews' moral privilege and sensitivity deriving from centuries of per-

secution, ideas about who are Jews' friends or enemies, a sense of obligation to less fortunate or oppressed Jews, a vague notion of a sacred tradition, and an appreciation of the special place of Jews in American society and of America's special meaning to Jews. For the most part, this knowledge is acquired through the experience of participating in the American Jewish subculture. It is not particularly systematic, yet Jewish knowledge it certainly is. (Compare, for example, what the average affiliated Jew knows about Jews and Judaism, with his or her equally well educated gentile counterpart.)

From an educator's perspective, this sort of Jewish knowledge is far from adequate, and leaves much room for improvement. But, if taken seriously, it can be exploited as a useful starting-point for educational enhancement. The thousands of lay leaders and professionals in Jewish communal life would no doubt enjoy a much richer experience, and they may even make for better leaders, were they systematically schooled in the history, thinking, and values which other Jewish communities in other times and in other places utilized in the conduct of their affairs. Few of them have had much exposure to the sort of Jewish texts which they in their current endeavors might find very meaningful. These "texts" includes such items as dialogues and correspondence between communal leaders and gentile authorities, minutes of board meetings, newspapers, community constitutions, *takanot*, and *responsa* literature. Few of today's activists in the political sphere of Jewish life can articulate the diverse range of alternative political strategies and techniques employed by Jewish communities in the past. Currently, the unabashed application of Jewish power, as exemplified by Israeli military might or by American Jewish political muscle,

seems to be the most favored approach to achieving Jewish political ends. Yet such a one-sided commitment to the application of Jewish power ignores a long tradition of the Jew-as-middleman, of *shtadlanut*, of diplomacy, and of coalition-building.

The point here is not to suggest specific educational or programmatic directions of one sort or another. Such determinations are better made by professional educators than by social analysts. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the disjunction between the interests of those many American Jews involved in philanthropy, social service, and politics, and the main thrust of much of conventional Jewish education which is heavily oriented toward synagogue, ritual, and religious life. Planning to reach affiliated Jews ought to address their Jewish interests outside the religious sphere, and, in so doing, it might compel us to reconceptualize our understanding of what constitutes a Jewish text, a Jewish skill, or, most generally, Jewish knowledge.

From Reproach to Resource: Developing a New Language of Discourse

One of the common experiences of affiliated American Jews is the encounter with official Jews speaking the language of reproach, evaluation, and ultimately accusation. Rabbis chastise their congregants for failing to attend services, to observe ritual practices, to send their children to Jewish schools, or to marry within the faith. Fundraisers exhort the real and metaphoric survivors of the Holocaust to contribute generously to needy, endangered or embattled Jews in Israel and elsewhere. And Israeli emissaries remind them of their ostensible moral responsibility to support Israel politically, financially, and sometimes through migration.

In short, the language of official Jewish life is overwhelmingly a language of demand and chastisement. Such chastisement makes the listener—who more often than not fails to meet the expectations implicit in the remarks—to feel as if he or she is being called a “bad Jew.” As one parent in the study mentioned earlier said:

I have a problem with me and the ideal Jew. A “good Jew” keeps kosher, observes Shabbat, etc. I hear it in the school and I hear it from the pulpit. That’s why we’re leaving the synagogue. I cannot feel like a good Jew because I couldn’t or wouldn’t do those things.¹⁴

In point of fact, the vast majority of Jews—even those who intermarry and in other ways fall short of some of the expectations enunciated above—feel they are “good Jews,” and resent being labelled otherwise. And presumably they also resent the aura of moral privilege which philanthropically generous, or communally active, or ritually observant, or Jewishly knowledgeable Jews arrogate to themselves.

The language of reproach need not be completely abandoned: such a step may inevitably imply an abdication of normative standards altogether. The articulation of norms—the declaration of what’s right and wrong—often conflicts with a policy of welcoming those who fail to meet conventional normative standards. To illustrate, I have no doubt the Reform movement has, in effect, foregone the normative prohibition on intermarriage as an inevitable consequence of its overt appeal to the mixed married.

Any move away from the language of reproach entails certain risks which must be counterbalanced against possible gains in attracting potentially alienated Jews. Nevertheless, some modulation in this language may diminish

the alienation of Jews from Jewish institutions and their leaders. For we may well be facing a situation similar to that which “did in” the Democratic Party in 1984. Pollsters found that the voters liked workers, but not unions; they liked women’s rights, but not feminists; and they liked civil rights, not black activists. Similarly, many of today’s affiliated Jews may well like Judaism and Jewishness, but not the high pressure, demanding, guilt-inducing institutions which they join out of a sense of responsibility and obligation, but, perhaps with deep-seated ambivalence, if not aversion as well.

In place of the language of reproach, Jewish educators and other communal professionals might think about developing a language of resource. The sociologist Peter Berger contends that the transition from traditional society to secularized, voluntaristic modernity has compelled all religions to compete in the marketplace of ideas.¹⁵ If so, then Judaism could be presented not only as a set of obligations, but also as a collection of resources which can benefit their users. Involvement in Jewish life, like involvement in other forms of group life, provides people with several sorely needed benefits. Among them are a sense of belonging to a community in the midst of a frequently alienating and isolating society, a sense of transcendent meaning and location in history for the many who feel bereft of social meaning and historical significance, and, not least, an opportunity to engage in altruistic activity, to feel and be useful, helpful, and important to others in need.

By linking the practice of the norm to the voluntary consumption of a benefit, the language of resource respects

¹⁵ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969.

¹⁴ Susan Wall, *op. cit.*

the right of the individual Jew to choose as much or as little Jewish involvement as he or she wants without fear of moral stigma, or claim to moral privilege.

Conclusion

The conventional understandings of the contemporary Jewish situation ought to be replaced with a more sophisticated and accurate set of ideas about the affiliated adult Jew in the United States.

First, rather than dividing the Jewish world into two classes, we ought to see Jews as arrayed on a continuum ranging from high to low levels of involvement. If, for policy purposes, we need to divide that continuum, we may be best off using not less than three categories. Thus, instead of simply the affiliated and the unaffiliated, we should think of the "highly involved," the "marginally affiliated" (or those whom some educators call the "semi-committed"), and the "unaffiliated."

The marginally affiliated, in fact, comprise the vast majority of American Jews, and their numbers have been holding steady. Because they are affiliated, they are already located and rather economical to reach. Because they are under-involved, they offer considerable opportunities for identity enhancement.

The techniques educators and other practitioners develop to reach this large and numerically stable group of marginally affiliated Jews ought to take into account the great extent to which social factors, primarily the availability of community, determine levels of involvement. That is, motivation and commitment alone do not guarantee involvement; and absence of involvement is in itself no sure sign of lack of commitment. Moreover, the widely varying levels of Jewish activity asso-

ciated with the calendar, the life cycle, and certain historical moments suggest "entry points," times when educators' interventions may be particularly effective. The excellence with which American Jews perform in certain communal spheres, and their lack of enthusiasm for other areas, should suggest some expansion of how we conceptualize Jewish knowledge and Jewish education. Finally, the individualism and voluntary nature of American Jewish society may mean that presenting Jewish involvement only as a moral imperative, when speaking with the marginally affiliated, may create more alienation than involvement. Presenting Judaism as an option, an opportunity, or as a resource, may have quite the opposite effect.

For years, Jewish communal life has operated within what may be called the politics of fear. To mobilize communal energies, lay and professional leaders conjure up frightening images of the most awesome outcomes, the worst eventualities. They play on fears of anti-Semitism, on the tragic imagery of Israel's physical destruction, and, most recently, on the awesome possibility of an American Jewish community decimated by the ravages of intermarriage and assimilation.

Practitioners of the politics of fear are well-intentioned. They presume that an otherwise complacent American Jewry needs to be roused from its obliviousness to the most pressing problems of the day. However, they ought to realize that fear can paralyze as well as mobilize, and it can depress as well as excite. For no one, and, not least, extraordinarily successful American Jews, are eager to be associated with losing or impossible causes.

Fortunately, the politics of hope offers a practical alternative to the politics of fear, and, in this case, one which

is buttressed by the evidence. In the case of American Jewish identity today, there's plenty of reason to be hopeful; there's plenty of reason for policymakers to see their task as elevating the Jewish identity of American Jews rather than trying to hold back the ostensibly advancing tide of assimilation. For the

large middle group of marginally affiliated American Jews comprise an ever-present feature of American Jewish life. For educators, communal workers, and others concerned with creative Jewish survival, these Jews present both risks and opportunities, and offer a challenge as well as a source of hope.

**Twenty-five Years Ago
in this Journal**

Within the past few years our existing resources have had to be evaluated and extended or changed to provide service to a different type of child and parent. Qualitatively and quantitatively we have seen a difference in symptomatology, degree of disturbance, and configuration of problem within both the child and the family; both because of the undoubtedly increased numbers of disturbed people in the world today as well as our own increased diagnostic skills and earlier detection of pathology. This past decade could well be characterized as the era of the emotionally disturbed child in placement. We have in the past served emotionally disturbed children but not in such high proportion or with such deep pathology.

ESTHER SIMON
Winter, 1960