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AMERICAN JEWISH PUBLIC ACTIVITY -- IDENTITY, DEMOGRAPHY, AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE

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Fewer Donors to Jewish Causes

Jews in America have been known to be, in Earl Raab's felicitous phrase, "politically hyperactive." Yet today, the most fundamental indicators of Jewish support -- membership, participation, and contributions -- are on the wane for most of the organizations which have been in the forefront of Jewish activity in the public square in recent decades.

The trend to diminished affiliation began to show up first in the mass-based organizations, notably B'nai B'rith and the historic Zionist groups. More recently, the American Jewish Congress, which has been at the forefront of some of American Jewry's most significant involvement in the public square, has encountered difficulties in sustaining all its regional offices, which depend heavily on local membership dues and contributions. The Los Angeles Congress office has, in fact, separated from the national organization.

Over time, from the 1970s through the 1990s, a smaller proportion of Jews in each decade are affiliated with or giving to Jewish civil organizations and causes.

If we compare the immigrant generation to subsequent generations of Jews, or older to younger Jews in any current cross-section of Jews, we see the same pattern of decreases in both participation and giving. Table 1 documents this trend in studies of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies. The table shows that for every age group below age 65 in 1995, giving levels were lower than they had been a decade earlier, and younger Jews were not "developing" into Federation donors as they grew older.

Of course we are speaking of overall patterns. Many Jews continue to give to Jewish philanthropy, read the Jewish press, and join the mainstream organizations and support their agendas. Indeed, by all indicators, such involved Jews are becoming more engaged, more active, and "more Jewish" than ever before. There are enough activists to keep the organizations going and to provide plenty of compelling anecdotes about "Jewish revival" for the Jewish press. Most current estimates suggest that these activists represent about 20 percent of American Jews, a percentage that is not strikingly lower than in previous decades. What has changed is that the affiliative impulses of the great middle group of American Jews (speaking here of Jews under age 60) -- those who in the past provided the large and supportive underpinning of the civil organizations -- are no longer predictable and reliable.

Table 1
DONATIONS TO BOSTON COMBINED JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES BY AGE,
1985-1995
(in percent)

<i>Proportion Who Donated to CJP in Listed Year</i>		
<i>Age</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1995</i>
18-29	16	14
30-39	34	25
40-49	52	38
50-64	64	52
65+	55	64
Overall	39	38
Number	1446	1200

Source: S. Israel, *Comprehensive Report on the 1995 CJP Demographic Study* (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1997), 60, Table 3.21.

One might conclude simply that distance from the immigrant experience and (relatively) younger Jews' fuller American acculturation have resulted in weakened loyalty to the Jewish community. Jewish life in America, in this view, is doomed to gradual attrition and its impact in the public sector to a predictable fading away. This is the classic "straight-line assimilation" interpretation of American Jewish life. In fact, a large measure of the organized (especially Federation) community's concern about "Jewish continuity" has been as much a response to these documented decreases in affiliation and giving as to the more widely known statistics on intermarriage rates. But this straight-line assimilation view is too simple and it overlooks other important factors.

New Definitions of Ethnicity and Religion

Let us begin by looking at changes in the nature and meaning of both ethnic and religious identity in America. Ethnicity has not disappeared as a category of identification in American life. Rather, its meaning has changed. Increasingly, ethnicity now involves non-exclusive identification and fluidity over the life course. In this new kind of ethnicity, people pick and choose (or ignore and discard) elements from their ethnic backgrounds to fit the rest of their lifestyle, and they have no apparent problem with combining aspects of different ancestral strands as they make these choices. In addition, this kind of ethnicity does not make strong or consistent behavioral demands. Herbert Gans coined the phrase "symbolic ethnicity" to describe the phenomenon. Symbolic ethnicity does not require on-going personal contact with other individuals *or institutions* of the ethnic group. Ethnicity is carried in the individual's head as an inner identity, and it is expressed sporadically, often in response to life cycle or other individually-related stimuli. This suggests that there is a new American way of being a member of an ethnic group. The operative question thus changes from whether this new way is "good for the Jews" given current organizational structures and norms -- which it probably is not -- to whether it can become so.

These new American definitions of ethnicity allow individuals to claim identity without requiring regular public demonstrations of behavior to support the claim, but allowing them as matters of individual choice. From this perspective, Jewish acculturation may be seen not as abandoning Jewishness for an American identity (the usual assimilationist interpretation), but of internalizing the new cultural definitions of ethnicity, which permit and encourage the persistence of an ethnic subidentity and allow for its expression in both private and public ways. American patterns set the basic template, within which Jewishness functions as an enriching addition to be hauled out when occasion or feelings call for it. A young or fourth generation Jew can therefore feel him or herself loyally Jewish,

without feeling obligated to express being Jewish in any ongoing public ways, and sense no contradiction.

A parallel shift pervades religious identification in America. Large numbers of Americans of all religions switch their denominational affiliations each year, and Jews are not exempt from this process. In fact, the driving force behind much of this switching is the same elevation of personal choice that we have already seen functioning with respect to ethnic identification. As many have noted, the standard of judgment for religious identity in America, increasingly, is not historic or family loyalty or group cohesion but personal meaning. Because the focus of this kind of religion is more inward and personalistic, religious identification (at least for the non-Orthodox) no longer carries with it nearly automatic expression in communally-related behaviors. The operative framework is not community and tradition but individual autonomy and choice.

Jews By Choice

In today's Jewish world, the new rhetoric of "we are all Jews by choice" sums up these developments. Contrary to the fears of the religious right, the alternative to traditional religion in contemporary American life is neither secularism nor paganism, it is privatization. Charles Liebman has noted that "the rhetoric of ethnicity concentrates on themes such as peoplehood, community, solidarity...[while that of] privatized religion...speaks in softer terms of individual meaning, journeys of discovery, spirituality, and the search for fulfillment." He sees the connection between the rise of a privatized Jewish religion and the decline of public sector Jewish life, and -- writing from within a framework of traditional definitions of what constitutes normative and healthy Jewish communal life -- sees in all of this "a recipe for disaster."

Yet this is the way most American Jews now think about and enact their Jewishness. For increasing numbers of Jews in America, the expression of Jewish identity -- both ethnic and religious -- no longer functions in a protected space. It must compete with many other possibilities in the marketplace, not of philosophic positions but of leisure and lifestyle activities. To declare, as Liebman does, that this is the end of Jewish communal life is to be a pessimist about the staying power of Jewishness in twenty-first century America.

But another perspective calls our attention to the creative energy that this essentially entrepreneurial situation has engendered. It appears that American Jews are now "doing Jewish" in a new and staggeringly wide variety of ways, about which we are only beginning to have reliable information. In her pioneering research, Bethamie Horowitz has begun documenting the existence of Jews for whom Jewish identity remains of central importance but whose expressions of it vary along multiple axes not previously noted in Jewish research.

Liebman is correct in identifying "the search for fulfillment" as a central aspect of the rhetoric of the new privatized ethnicity and religion. What he overlooks, however, is that personal fulfillment can be found by participating in meaningful collective and public activity. Wade Clark Roof, one of the earliest chroniclers of these new trends in the religious realm, has observed that individuals' personal choices can lead them to seek membership in communities. Horowitz's work suggests that Jewish journeys of discovery, made for the most personal of reasons, are ending up in new forms of Jewish group activity, or can be led to do so.

We need to learn more about the ways, if any, that "new identity Jews," these privatistic and differently-attached ones, are connecting with the public square as Jews. We simply do not yet know enough about what touches them, and whether there are or can be things that touch them in the public, not just the personal, realms. What we do know is that the new forms of identity present a challenge to old structures and approaches. As always in times of change, the future is not clear, but we can be sure that a stance of negation will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If new paths are not opened, Jews of this new sort will certainly not be able to walk on them.

New Directions in Research

In most Jewish demographic studies before the 1990s, there was a fairly standard set of questions used to measure Jewish behavior and affiliation. These included items relating to Jewish organizational membership and philanthropy, plus questions about observing traditional Jewish rituals, Jewish education, support for Israel, and belonging to JCCs and synagogues. But sticking with the standard measures would leave us in the dark about possible new developments. Hence, in the development of the next national socio-demographic study of the American Jewish community, NJPS 2000, the sponsoring organization, UJC (United Jewish Communities, the organization formed by the merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Israel Appeal, and the United Jewish Appeal) decided to go into new territory.

To try to capture a fuller picture of the lives of American Jews, the questionnaire will plumb new realms of behavior and feelings. Some of these involve intensely private matters, some more public (or with the potential to become so). Items considered included, for example, attending Jewish film festivals, visiting Jewish Internet sites, going to Jewish exhibits at museums, engaging in environmental activities or volunteering in inner city schools "as a Jew," visiting Jewish sites when traveling, meditating, or having mostly Jewish work associates.

The decision to expand the scope of the survey is not just a matter for technical specialists of survey design. It reflects a commitment on the part of key

organizations of the Jewish civil polity to investigate the community's fundamental assumptions about the nature of Jewish identity in America and its contemporary expressions. It will be of great interest to discover in the results of NJPS 2000 if there are new discernible patterns of outward engagement that complement or replace the older forms; if the choices Jews make to meet personal and private needs might be leading them to new forms of Jewish expression which can be harnessed toward the concerns of the public square.

Some Countertrends

In fact, it is not the case that all the institutions of Jewish engagement in the public square are fading. Some are flourishing. The most conspicuous non-denominational examples are the Simon Wiesenthal Center, ADL, and American Jewry's newest significant voice in the public square, the Holocaust museums and memorial groups. All of these are issue, not membership, organizations.

A return to the Boston data can offer some help in understanding these countertrends. The data support the notion that Jewish attachments have not disappeared among younger and more acculturated Jews. Rather, they are becoming more differentiated. The 1995 Boston study included for the first time a new set of questions related to Jewish attitudes and sentiments. One subset of five questions delved into "Jewish values." Respondents were asked how important to them personally are "the existence of the State of Israel," "keeping people aware that the Holocaust took place," "Jewish ideals of social justice," "opposing anti-Semitism in the United States," and "protecting Jews in foreign lands from persecution." Respondents could say they found a particular item to be "extremely," "very," "somewhat," or "not at all" important. An analysis using a variety of demographic variables is revealing. Two tables are reproduced here, showing the proportion of each subgroup who answered "extremely important."

The first thing to note is that respondents did not give the same response to all five items, that is, they were not just giving some kind of global or knee-jerk Jewish-values response, either positive or negative. As to substance, what stands out is that "defensive" values commanded the highest and nearly unanimous assent. Jews of all ages, generations, length of residence, denomination, of both genders, and with and without children -- variables that differentiate responses to most of the other Jewish categories encompassed by this study -- agreed in their assessment of the high importance of keeping people aware of the Holocaust, opposing anti-Semitism in the United States, and, although at somewhat lower levels, of protecting Jews in foreign lands from persecution.

Assuming that Boston's Jews are reasonably representative of American Jews generally in these matters, we can note that the current successful public sector

Jewish organizations are precisely those whose missions resonate with the personal values of younger as well as older Jews. These successful organizations represent the communal analogue of that new phenomenon in the world of advertising and the media, "narrowcasting." They are identified with one agenda, which they pursue with vigor and very good media exposure.

Table 2
 JEWISH VALUES BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, RESIDENCY, AND
 DENOMINATION, 1995
 (in percent)

<i>Proportion Who Say "Extremely Important"</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Household Income</i>					<i>Years in Current Town</i>			<i>Denomination</i>			
		<i>to \$15K</i>	<i>\$15-35K</i>	<i>\$35-50K</i>	<i>\$50-100K</i>	<i>\$100K+</i>	<i>to 5</i>	<i>5-9</i>	<i>10+</i>	<i>Orth.</i>	<i>Cons.</i>	<i>Reform</i>	<i>None</i>
Keeping people aware of Holocaust	74	80	75	70	78	69	76	72	74	74	75	75	64
Combating anti-Semitism in U.S.	66	66	64	70	68	66	66	66	67	74	69	65	56
Protecting Jews in foreign lands	56	60	51	63	58	54	65	66	67	69	57	57	44
Existence of Israel	53	49	45	53	51	55	46	51	57	81	65	50	39
Jewish ideals of social justice	41	34	38	45	38	45	37	44	42	67	45	39	28
Number	1200	120	112	132	327	271	316	187	695	422	394	491	62

Table 3

(in percent)

<i>Proportion Who Say "Extremely Important"</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Age</i>				<i>Generation</i>				<i>Children in Household</i>		<i>Gender</i>	
		<i>18- 34</i>	<i>35- 50</i>	<i>51- 64</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
Keeping people aware of Holocaust	74	76	74	72	76	84	76	71	74	76	73	71	77
Combating anti-Semitism in U.S.	66	63	69	65	66	60	67	66	67	67	66	64	68
Protecting Jews in foreign lands	56	53	57	56	51	61	57	57	52	62	53	51	60
Existence of Israel	53	48	51	57	61	66	64	50	45	51	54	53	52
Jewish ideals of social justice	41	32	42	43	49	40	49	40	37	41	41	41	42
Number	1200	297	485	245	158	104	303	361	416	433	767	527	673

Source: S. Israel, *Comprehensive Report on the 1995 CJP Demographic Study* (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1997), 90-91, Tables 4.4 A and 4.4 B.

An Organizational Disconnect

What they also represent is the fact that if American Jewish institutions can demonstrate, in a world of competing marketplace choice, that their purposes and activities are relevant to the private concerns of the Jews whom they wish to claim as members and supporters, they will find ready listeners. In fact, however, this task is problematic for many of the historic organizations. The dominant public organizations of American Jewish life were shaped in earlier eras when Jewish belonging was a given, and they were formed to deal with the issues of the day, which were not those of personal meaning and relevance but relief and rescue, social service, and mediation between the Jewish minority subculture and the majority Christian American culture. There is, therefore, a mismatch between the needs and perceptions of most Jews and the basic assumptions

and programs of most of the communally-based American Jewish organizations. It remains to be seen whether the existing organs of Jewish engagement in the public square can find ways to reconnect with more inwardly-looking Jews or to bring those inner searches into contact with more external and public concerns.

There are some interesting beginnings. At the local level, some Jewish Community Relations Councils have begun responding in just these ways, appealing to the individual language of *mitzvah* to motivate public action, and connecting their activities explicitly with individual Torah study.

No Decline in Synagogue Affiliation

The synagogue as an institution is not experiencing the affiliation declines of most of the realm of the civil Jewish polity. The majority of American Jews continue to affiliate with synagogues, although most do not join until they are married and begin to have young children. This pattern is consonant with what we have noted about the changing definitions of Jewish identity in America, for, of all the institutions of American Jewish life, synagogues are those most charged with dealing with individual needs, most able to respond to individuals' search for personal meaning and even spirituality. To be sure, many synagogues, perhaps even a majority, are still focused on the more peoplehood-oriented functions they served a generation ago. This discrepancy accounts for the development of several new initiatives in this sphere, such as the Experiment in Congregational Education and Synagogue 2000, designed to help synagogues change so they may become more effective in realizing these more personal aspects of their missions.

Synagogues in America are the quintessentially local organizations of the Jewish polity. Their focus is inward, to the personal lives of their members and the symbols and substance of congregational governance. Those congregations that mount social action programs tend to do so in their local communities, and on a small -- that is, personal and interpersonal -- scale. Even the major apparent exception, synagogue political efforts on behalf of freedom for Soviet Jews, mostly took the form of bar/bat mitzvah twinning or letter writing to refuseniks.

The Impact of Jewish Mobility

Another set of "disconnects" which are relevant to understanding the decreases in Jewish affiliation and organizational support are demographic. The tendency of today's Jews to relate to Jewish (and other) organizations with a marketplace mentality is compounded by geographic mobility. Residential stability is an important basis for Jewish organizational loyalty. People who reside as adults in

the communities they grew up in are more likely to continue earlier generational patterns of affiliation and support. Belonging is more of a given, "what we do," and less a decision to be made based on personal choice and the capacity of the institution to meet current individual or family needs. Conversely, mobility disrupts affiliation. Newcomers to a Jewish community are less likely to contribute to a Federation or to belong to its communal institutions than are long-time residents. Estimates of how long it takes Jews to connect with the Jewish institutions of their new places of residence -- how long "newcomer" status lasts -- range from three to five years (Orthodox Jews and families with pre-bar/bat mitzvah-age children are the major exceptions to this situation). Jewish community centers, which are highly dependent on member and user fees and thus became aware of these trends before most communal organizations, now routinely have marketing consultants or even in-house marketing professionals to help them figure out how to attract members. The same cannot be said of the advocacy organizations.

As the 1990 NJPS demonstrated, Jews are among the most mobile of Americans. If Jewish affiliation were a very high priority, newly arrived Jews would seek out and join Jewish organizations when they entered new communities. In fact, this does happen with synagogues; for Orthodox Jews, very quickly, for others, when their children reach religious school age. But, as we have seen, most Jews do not need public demonstrations of Jewish connection in order to feel Jewish, and so Jewish mobility compounds the already existing fundamental changes in Jews' relations to organizational life.

The organized Jewish community has been slow to recognize the national (or, more accurately, continental) nature of contemporary Jewish life. In relation to synagogues, Federations may be the "cosmopolitan" organizations of their own metropolitan areas, but viewed from a wider perspective, Federations are intensely local. Although many of the issues assailing the American Jewish community can be dealt with successfully only nationally, it has been extremely difficult to mobilize Federation commitments to efforts that cross local boundaries. Only two nationally planned Federation programs have been completely successful: support for loan guarantees to Israel and funding for refugee resettlement. Two other trans-communal issues -- equitable funding for Hillel foundations and scholarship aid for graduate training for Jewish communal professionals -- have garnered only partial support. The very slow pace of the creation of the UJC as a fully functional organization, which has been a more publicly visible process, is also in large part a reflection of the tensions between local and national/international perspectives in the Federation world. As for the impact of mobility, it is not even on local Federations' agendas. A system to systematically pass along information about Jews as they move from one part of the country to another would be a way to keep Jews on the community's institutional rolls under conditions of high mobility. It is not hard to imagine how to do this in today's electronic environment, but suggestions in this direction have received no effective organizational responses within the Federation or advocacy

worlds.

The Change in Age of Marriage

The second demographic factor connected in fundamental ways to decreases in Jewish affiliation is the change in the age of marriage, with a host of concomitant consequences. Here, too, the organized community's responses have been meager. American Jewish organizational structures reflect a different time, not just with respect to the content of Jewish concerns but also with respect to life cycle patterns, specifically, the duration of single status.

Until the 1960s, the vast majority of Jews married in their twenties. This reflected a general American pattern, although because Jews attended college at higher rates than most other American groups, the Jewish marriage age was slightly older than the national median. In any case, young Jews moved very quickly from their parental homes through college to their own homes. They would connect to the organized Jewish community first through their parents, then on the college campuses through Hillel, and then, soon enough, as young marrieds in a variety of available organizations, most notably the synagogues but also other community organizations. If there was a gap in appropriate institutional availability, it was at most, say, five years, usually not enough time to have gotten deeply engaged with other, competing enterprises. In addition, the non-Jewish world and its organizations were not very welcoming of Jews, again reinforcing Jewish engagement with Jewish institutions.

Americans in general have been postponing the age of marriage. Much of this change is connected to increases in higher education. Jews, and particularly Jewish women, now represent the most highly educated of all American subgroups. The average age of first marriage for non-Orthodox Jews is now 31. But few mainstream Jewish organizations have changed in ways that recognize this new set of circumstances. Programs and fee structures continue to be built around the interests, values, schedules, and financial situations of settled adults. Even if organizational goals might appeal to young single Jews, the social milieu in which they are cast is not appropriate to their life stage.

What this means is that a major gap has now emerged in which there are almost no appropriate institutional venues for single young adult Jewish participation in most mainstream Jewish organizations. But there is lots else -- not Jewish -- out there for single young adults to do and to connect with, and all of it is now open to Jews in once unimaginable ways. By the time our young Jew has married and has children -- that is, fits into the mold for which participation in most of our organizations is designed -- he or she has found other things to do, and perhaps, increasingly, a non-Jewish partner to do them with. In addition, of course, the young Jew now lives at a distance from his or her family and community of origin.

All of this adds up to a loss of the "plausibility structures," the life gives that create a sense of necessity that *Jewish* organizational participation is the way to satisfy any needs for affiliation and social contribution that he or she might feel as a more settled family person. In fact, we would identify this lack of appropriate structures and venues for post-college under-40 singles as the most glaring organizational lack in American Jewish life today.

In the late 1920s there was a new development in American Jewish demography -- the presence for the first time of numbers of Jewish college students on campuses away from their parental homes. The communal response was the founding of the Hillel Foundations -- the creation of a new institutional setting appropriate to the age group. But for the now huge numbers of unmarried Jews in their late 20s and 30s, no one has appeared with the equivalent of the vision that founded Hillel; and if they did appear, it is not at all clear that there is an institution able to mobilize local affiliates under a national umbrella, as B'nai B'rith could do at that time of Hillel's founding.

Some Local Responses

There are some local attempts to provide new avenues of Jewish participation suitable for young and not-so-young, but still single, Jews. A web search turns up listings of "young adult" or "young leadership" activities sponsored by almost every major Federation, the local affiliates of some national organizations in the larger urban areas, and some synagogues and other local groups. But a more careful analysis reveals a piecemeal approach. Most of these attempts involve only sporadic programs, often targeted across the full span of singles (despite ample evidence that younger singles will not come to programs that 40-year-olds attend), or, in a continuation of the old patterns, designed and advertised for both singles and the partnered. Furthermore, in spite of all we know about the lack of institutional loyalty among today's younger Jews, competition and attempts at exclusivity, not city- or area-wide coordination, are the norm. Equally seriously, there is no linking between programs across metropolitan boundaries, in spite of all we now know about the great mobility of Jews in this life cycle stage. To the best of our knowledge, no national organizations in the civil realm have devoted anything resembling serious resources to an attempt to respond to the combined effects of these new demographic realities.

As for individual synagogues, with the exception of a few congregations in the largest cities with easily identifiable heavily young adult areas, in this respect most are still living in the 1950s. Activities, structures, and even membership forms reflect an assumption that the target population is married. The Reform movement's national organization is the only one to pay heed to the facts of Jewish mobility. It created the "Privilege Card," designed to reach out to younger single Jews by allowing the transfer of membership to any participating

congregation when a person moved, without paying extra dues. The program was targeted precisely to the demographic combination of long single status and high mobility. It has been renamed "New Jewish Connections," with the new title signifying an attempt to also offer program and marketing ideas to help participating congregations be more effective in reaching the target audience. At the time this is being written, some 400 congregations were enrolled in the program.

A Misguided Analysis

While some institutions are beginning to experiment with new organizational forms, most of the effort has been in another direction. The Jewish community's attempts to respond to the decreases in affiliation and Federation philanthropy (and, of course, to the rise in intermarriage) have been almost entirely under the rubric of what is called "Jewish continuity." The emphasis has been on "strengthening Jewish identity." Yet, if our analysis is correct, this response is at best partial and, at worst, misses the boat. It is partial in its lack of full understanding of the new ways in which Jewish identity is being expressed, and it is off the mark in overlooking the interaction of demographic factors with organizational structural realities.

The "continuity response" is characterized by what social psychologists call the "fundamental attribution error." In brief, this explanatory rubric notes the common tendency to attribute others' behavior mainly to their internal states, to the kinds of people they are, even if we would have a different and more charitable view of our own behavior in similar circumstances. For example, if you are late to a meeting with me, it must be because you are inconsiderate, or our meeting does not really matter to you, or some similar explanation whose locus is internal to you. If I am late, however, it is not because there is something wrong with me. It is because the phone rang, or traffic was bad, or something else external to me came along to make me tardy.

In the same way, the organized American Jewish community has been approaching the increasing non-affiliation of the newer cohorts of Jews as if the issue is only internal: if today's Jews are not attaching themselves to Jewish community and Jewish organizations, it is because they are not "Jewish enough." The result has been an emphasis on strengthening Jewish identity as essentially the sole approach to ensuring Jewish continuity. It is as if, having recognized one paradigm shift -- the one having to do with individualism and choice -- most community decision-makers cannot think about the other things that are also going on, specifically, increased mobility and the young adult institutional gap. While fostering strong Jewish identity is surely useful in light of the increasingly optional nature of ethnic and religious identity in America (although our analysis suggests it could use many more pathways than are usually involved in

Federation Jewish identity efforts), it is not sufficient.

The problem lies at least as much in the organizational realm, specifically in the possibilities available (or not) for Jewish communal expression. Behavior equals motivation *plus* opportunity. The once nearly automatic link between Jewish identity and Jewish participation has been broken not only because younger Jews do not *want* to connect, but also because the right kinds of opportunities for connection simply are not there at the right times. "Right kinds" will involve both content (a wide variety of paths to connection, targeted to the increasing variety of ways Jews integrate their Jewishness as an aspect of their personal identity) and form (designed for single, young, mobile Jews). If Jewish participation in the public square is to remain vigorous, institutions must reshape themselves to recognize the new realities of identity and demography in America. Doing so is no guarantee of success, but not doing so will be a self-fulfilling prophecy of the impossibility of change.

Putting It All Together

If the possibility of coherent Jewish activity in the public square remains desirable, the organized community must pay better attention to the entirety of what is going on in the arenas of ethnic and religious identity and its expression, and to the changed demographics of Jewish lives. Jewish identity, even if it can be "strengthened," no longer automatically implies communal participation. If and when collective activity will be one of the forms in which Jewish identity is expressed, it is as likely to happen in ways not yet even imagined as on past generations' paths. And if it is to happen, there must be venues that recognize new life cycle patterns and that are committed to communicating and coordinating efforts across organizational and community boundaries.

All of these are matters for institutional structural change, not instead of, but alongside of, and as necessary as, any attempts to have an impact on individuals' Jewish identities. The challenge to the organized Jewish community is to re-vision attachment and affiliation through a multiple-focused lens. If it does not, it may be left with *rebbe*s without enough *hasidim*, a set of organizations that are much clearer about how they want to represent Jews and Jewish life in the American public square, but fewer and fewer Jews engaged in the enterprise with them.

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