

Linking the Silos:
HOW TO ACCELERATE
THE MOMENTUM IN
JEWISH EDUCATION TODAY

JACK WERTHEIMER

Kislev 5766

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THE RESEARCH TEAM

Steven M. Cohen, Hebrew Union College, New York

Sylvia Barack Fishman, Brandeis University

Shaul Kelner, Brandeis University

Jeffrey Kress, Jewish Theological Seminary

Alex Pomson, York University and The Hebrew University

Riv-Ellen Prell, University of Minnesota

Jack Wertheimer, Jewish Theological Seminary, Project Director

PROJECT CONSULTANTS

Alisa Rubin Kurshan and Jacob Ukeles

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Observers of American Jewry have noted the seismic shift during the 1980s away from communal policies mainly designed to foster Jewish integration toward a survivalist agenda. Communal leaders became less preoccupied with fostering the socio-economic advancement of Jews, and instead set themselves a new challenge: How do we help Jews maintain a strong connection to Jewish life?

The urgency of the new question was powerfully demonstrated by disturbing findings in the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, particularly concerning spiraling rates of intermarriage and declining levels of identification among younger Jews. In response to those alarming trends, communal leaders and funders focused even more sharply on questions of Jewish identity during the 1990s. Many federations established “Continuity Commissions” to strengthen local programs connected to Jewish identity-formation; funders conceived of a series of new initiatives to strengthen Jewish education; and various agencies devised programs to reach under-served populations and Jews at risk.

As many of these new initiatives have been in place now for over a decade and more thought is given to the next steps needed to strengthen Jewish identification, the time is ripe for a re-appraisal of the current moment in Jewish education. Certainly, one way to think of such a re-assessment is to examine the actual learning process. How well are educational institutions doing? How effective are curricula, pedagogy, and educators? Have we improved upon teacher recruitment and retention?

The current study has taken a different tack by examining the broader Jewish environment in which Jewish schools and educational programs function. The project therefore began with a series of questions about the recruitment of learners and the effects

of Jewish education in order to comprehend what brings Jews to enter the portals of Jewish education, the short-term impact of their engagement, and the long-term effects of Jewish education on their lives afterward. By addressing these matters, we hope to situate the field of Jewish education within its larger familial, social, and communal contexts.

In regard to decision-making, we asked: How do Jewish parents choose Jewish education for their children and themselves? What is on their minds when they make such decisions? And what kinds of language do they employ when they talk of Jewish education? What are some of the key variables of social differentiation that affect educational choices—such as denomination, gender, affluence, generation, community, marital status, etc.? What are the factors that complicate the recruitment of learners for Jewish education?

Concerning the impact of Jewish education, we asked: To what extent is the family affected when a child is enrolled in a program of Jewish education? Conversely, what happens when children cease to be enrolled? Do different forms of education have specific effects on particular types of adult Jewish engagement? Are parents who participated in particular educational activities more likely to enroll their own children in those same activities? What, in short, are the cumulative impacts of various types of Jewish education?

These and other evolving questions were posed by a team of seven researchers who employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to arrive at some answers—i.e., the team built upon survey data and intensive interviewing. Members of the team were drawn from a variety of disciplines, ranging from sociology to education, from history to anthropology and social psychology. The study built upon fresh analyses of the National Jewish Population Study of 2000–2001 and a specially designed new survey of parents who are members of Jewish Community Centers in five localities. Simultaneously, five researchers conducted interviews in a variety of communities. Collectively, the research team intensively gathered data in ten localities across the United States. The team then analyzed the intersection of families, learners, various educational programs and the communities in which they are situated. (A brief summary of each research project can be found in Appendix I.)

Our research has led us to challenge a number of widely held assumptions about Jewish education—that a single type of institution will meet the diverse educational needs and preferences of all Jewish families; that schools are exclusively educators of children; that outside of the Orthodox world, denominational identification is a matter of little importance; that efficiency is the best way to strengthen Jewish education and duplication is a wasteful misuse of precious resources; that only the family determines whether Jewish education will succeed. Instead we found that:

- a cluster of educational experiences can powerfully reinforce Jewish identification.
- the availability of educational choices is of great importance to parents.
- adults and their children mutually reinforce each other's Jewish engagements.
- schools play many roles.
- adherents of the various denominations make different educational decisions.
- social and communal contexts can have a major impact on whether Jewish education succeeds.

These findings underscore the need to think and talk about Jewish education in new ways. Jewish schools and settings for informal Jewish education do not work in isolation. Education is not a separate sphere of Jewish life; it is integral to how many American Jewish families live today—in marked contrast to how Jewish education was experienced a generation, let alone two generations, ago. Overlapping circles of learners, parents, members of extended families, fellow synagogue congregants, peer groups, educators, and communal leaders all interact with one another in the activities of Jewish education. This means that beyond the cognitive knowledge and the skills they teach, Jewish educational settings are central to the way American Jews construct their lives and communities today.

Precisely because of these important interconnections in the actual lives of average Jews, leaders concerned with Jewish education must find ways to build institutional linkages between various formal and informal educational programs, between families and schools, between educators in various venues, between the key communal agencies engaged in

support of Jewish education. The field of Jewish education is currently based on a loose, barely connected network of autonomous educating institutions. Each operates as a silo—a term employed by the information technology industry to characterize the uni-dimensional manner in which institutions and fields of knowledge operate in isolation, as vertically organized operations, divorced from constructive, horizontal interaction with others. The current challenge in the field of Jewish education is to link the silos, to build cooperation across institutional lines and thereby enable learners to benefit from mutually reinforcing educational experiences and to help families negotiate their way through the rich array of educational options created over the past decade and longer.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team expresses its appreciation to The AVI CHAI Foundation for entrusting us with this important and stimulating opportunity to study Jewish education in its social context. We have benefited directly and indirectly from the suggestions of members of the staff and board of the foundation.

We are particularly grateful for the active role played by Dr. Marvin Schick at the outset of the project as the team coalesced and formulated its research agenda and key questions, Yossi Prager who carefully read drafts of this report and offered valuable suggestions to strengthen it, and Deena Fuchs who provided helpful feedback as she oversaw its production.

In the closing phase of our work, we met on several occasions for intensive consultations with Drs. Alisa Rubin Kurshan and Jacob Ukeles who critiqued our work and helped us draw together the various strands. They also helped us identify the larger policy implications of our research.

We also benefited from talking with other outside consultants throughout the project. At the outset, we met with a number of educators, communal leaders, and academics in order to identify and sharpen key issues warranting research. These consultants included: Dr. Steven Bayme, Dr. Steven Brown, Prof. Aryeh Davidson, Prof. Samuel Heilman, Prof. Barry Holtz, Dr. Bethamie Horowitz, Prof. Carol Ingall, Dr. Leora Isaacs, Prof. Charles Kadushin, Rabbi Jan Katzew, the late Prof. Charles Liebman, Dr. David Marker, and Dr. Jacob Ukeles.

Prof. Len Saxe of the Cohen Center at Brandeis University played a critically important role as the project took shape. He helped as we formulated the research method and developed the questionnaire for the JCC study. The Cohen Center, under his direction, managed the JCC survey.

INTRODUCTION

Jewish education in the United States has developed in new and surprising directions. The infrastructure of educational programs, both formal and informal, in quite a few communities has attained a new level of maturity and offers children and their parents a range of attractive options.

Families, for their part, relate to educational institutions in far different ways than did Jewish parents of school age children several decades ago. Together, these shifts require us to rethink our understanding of how Jewish education works—and ought to work.

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HOW TO READ THIS REPORT:

This report draws together the key findings and their implications of a research project undertaken by a seven-member team, which examined the intersection of families and educational institutions in ten local communities across the United States. The opening section details some of the conclusions we reached and illustrates those findings through the use of quotations from our informants and data from surveys. This section aims to capture the current moment in the history of Jewish education in this country.

The second and third sections are designed to draw out the implications of our research for educators, philanthropists, communal leaders, and other interested parties. Section II suggests ways that the field ought to respond to the new environment; and Section III poses a set of questions for policy makers to consider as they work to strengthen Jewish education in their communities. Two appendices provide information about our research methods and the contributors.

THE CURRENT MOMENT IN JEWISH EDUCATION

American Jewish life has shifted dramatically over the past 25 years, let alone half century. Will Herberg's classic analysis in *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*¹ no longer applies to current conditions, not only because of a change in the size and fortunes of different religious groupings, but also because Americans conceive of religious identification differently in our own time.

Americans also do not relate to one another, let alone participate in civic culture, as they did in the post-war era. Any analysis of American Jewish life, particularly concerning issues of identity and transmitting Judaism and Jewish culture, must be grounded in an understanding of the American environment because Jews have not only acculturated to it, but have helped to create it. We were particularly struck by the great importance that parents placed on their right and responsibility to make choices for children. This single-minded focus on choice reveals Jews as self-conscious consumers of education and religious experiences, and renders Jewish education quite a different enterprise than it was 50 years ago.

Even though it is widely understood that the ground rules have shifted, thinking in the Jewish community has not necessarily absorbed this reality into our conceptions of Jewish life, let alone into the field of Jewish education. New circumstances now shape the field of Jewish education:

- Mid-twentieth century sociological studies by researchers such as Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum portrayed an environment where a vast population of parents came to the suburbs and enrolled their children in the nearest synagogue supplementary school.² Few other Jewish educational options were available to them, particularly in the suburbs. Over the past half century, communities have developed multiple options. Day schools of various stripes are available, as are Jewish early childhood programs; teens have the opportunity to

participate in youth groups, travel to Israel, and attend overnight camps. The field of Jewish education has expanded quite dramatically in recent decades, a development worthy of celebration and deserving of further encouragement.³

- Families think about Jewish education differently today. Neighbors, friends, and relatives play a far smaller role than they had in the past in placing pressure upon families to provide a Jewish education for children. As the Jewish population decreasingly lives in "Jewish neighborhoods," as the incidence of intermarriage rises, and as religious affiliation is far more diverse, external forces have come to play a declining role in their decisions. Today parents are choosing Jewish education, and are actively involved in insuring the best possible fit between each child and the school they select. They do not hesitate to enroll each child in a different school, provided that the fit is right for the child.

¹ Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*. Garden City, 1955. Herberg understood religion in America as an aspect of Americanization. (He described the three major Judeo-Christian expressions as a "triple melting pot." He also regarded religious identification as a product of social pressures and conformism. In today's America, religious seeking and personal expression are far more pronounced.)

² See especially, Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society*. Chicago, 1967.

³ For a survey of the current scene, see Jack Wertheimer, "Jewish Education in the United States: Recent Trends and Issues," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1999, pp. 3-115.

- A few decades ago, observers of the Jewish community lamented the “pediatric Judaism” promoted by synagogues. Congregational programming tended to focus on the needs of children in the years before *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*. Today we think about Jewish education as an enterprise for Jews of all ages. Family education programs seek to involve parents in their children’s schooling. But even this is giving way to more sustained and robust adult education curricula. Proportionately far more parents are engaged in serious Jewish study than was the case 50 years ago.
- Parents also feel a greater sense of responsibility to reinforce Jewish education than was the case in the past. When Marshall Sklare interviewed parents in “Lakeville,”⁴ he heard from many that the purpose of synagogue membership is to have a place to drop off the children for their religious schooling. Parents proudly announced their intention to avoid setting foot in the building. Today’s parents speak a very different language. Some are motivated by a sense of empowerment—i.e., they will not cede their parental responsibility to supervise every aspect of their children’s lives. Others, however, candidly declare their embarrassment when they cannot answer their children’s questions—and they seek answers by engaging with the school and with Jewish education for themselves.
- Teen education is receiving far more attention—and funding—today. Whereas the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* was viewed as the culmination of Jewish education, educators today are developing creative programs to keep young people in Jewish educational environments through their teen years.
- Today’s educators also appreciate the need for a mix of educational formats—the formal and the informal, the cognitive and skill building coupled with the affective forms of Jewish education. We are far more aware today of the need for clusters of Jewish educational exposures, rather than formal schooling alone.

⁴ Sklare and Greenblum, pp. 190–93.

A MORE PERFECT UNION: FAMILIES AND JEWISH EDUCATION

Today, Jewish families and educational programs do not operate in two separate spheres, but rather mutually reinforce one another. Clearly, family engagement with Jewish education ranges across a spectrum from more to less intense participation, but it is no longer helpful to look at families as divorced from the Jewish educational process, any more than it is useful to imagine schools and informal education as operating independently of families. Instead, there are multiple points of intersection between learners, their families, and Jewish educational settings.

THE EFFECTS OF PARENTS’ JEWISH EDUCATION UPON THEIR EDUCATIONAL CHOICES FOR THEIR CHILDREN

To illustrate this mutual reinforcement process, we begin with the ways in which the Jewish education and informal experiences of parents affect their children’s Jewish educational participation. This operates in two distinct ways: First, parents who themselves had received a more extensive Jewish education tend to enroll their own children in a broader range of Jewish educational settings than do parents who have not had those experiences. And second, in many families the particular educational experiences of parents repeat themselves in the next generation.

When we array the Jewish schooling of parents on a continuum from less to more intensive experiences in their own childhood and adolescent years, we find increased utilization of all forms of Jewish education—formal schooling and informal educational programs—among the children whose parents were educated more intensively, a pattern that is especially dramatic among parents who attended day schools for seven years or more.

Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the strong relationship between a parent having attended day school and his or her children’s enrollment in a day school. Over 90 percent of parents who attended

day schools through high school enrolled their own children in day schools; and 40 percent of parents who attended day school through grade 6 enrolled their own children in day schools. (We may surmise that when both parents had intensive Jewish educational experiences, these figures are even higher.) Parents who attended day schools also were most apt to send their children to programs of informal Jewish education, such as summer camps, youth groups, and trips to Israel.

At the other end of the spectrum, parents who attended one-day-a-week Sunday schools were far less likely to enroll their children in intensive Jewish education or in programs of informal Jewish education. And in the middle of the spectrum, parents who had attended supplementary schooling beyond the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* year tended to enroll their children in more programs of Jewish education than those who did not continue their education. While other factors, such as denomination, play an important role in these decisions, the educational experiences of parents significantly shape their aspirations for their children.

Similar patterns are evident when we examine the exposure of parents to various forms of informal Jewish education. Those parents who participated in Jewish summer camps, youth movements, and

Israel trips are more likely to enroll their children in such programs too. (Figures 1–4; Source: NJPS 2000–01)

THE JEWISH IDENTIFICATIONS OF GRANDPARENTS PLAY A ROLE IN THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED TO THEIR GRANDCHILDREN

Based on the reports of respondents who are parents about their parents and also the Jewish education they gave their own children, we can synthetically reconstruct relationships over three generations. Respondents to the National Jewish Population Study were asked Jewish identity questions about themselves at the time of the survey, about their childhood, and about their children's Jewish education. In effect, they were asked about three generations who could be labeled as the grandparents (those who shaped their Jewish homes when they were children, some 30–40 years ago), the parents (or respondents), and their children.

By drawing upon the small number of questions that portray the Jewish engagement of the grandparents during the years when the parent generation was growing up, we can examine the impact of grandparents' Jewish engagement upon the Jewish education of the respondents' children, in other words, the grandchildren. The effects are quite strong. When the grandparents' Jewish engagements

Figure 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A PARENT'S JEWISH SCHOOLING AND CHILDREN'S JEWISH EDUCATION (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

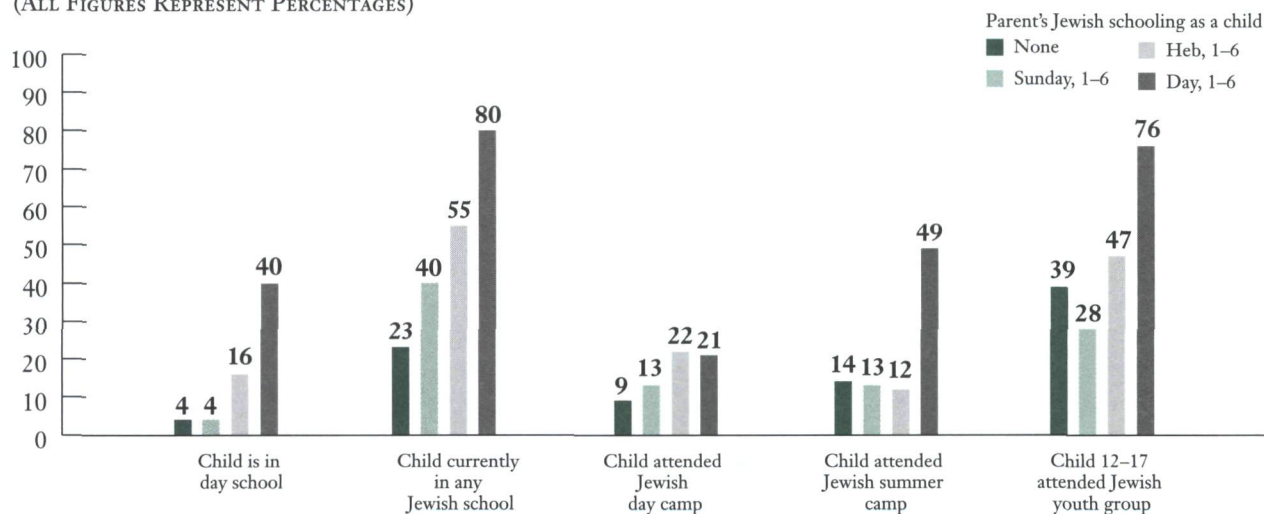


Figure 2: THE IMPACT OF A PARENT'S JEWISH CAMP EXPERIENCE UPON CHILDREN'S JEWISH EDUCATION
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

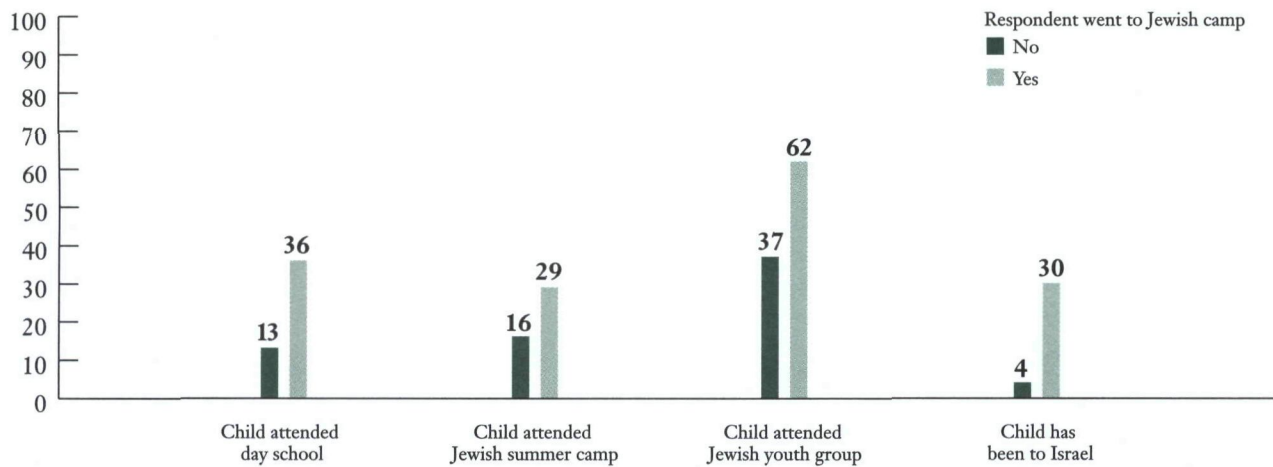


Figure 3: THE IMPACT OF A PARENT'S JEWISH YOUTH GROUP EXPERIENCE ON CHILDREN'S ENROLLMENT IN JEWISH EDUCATION
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

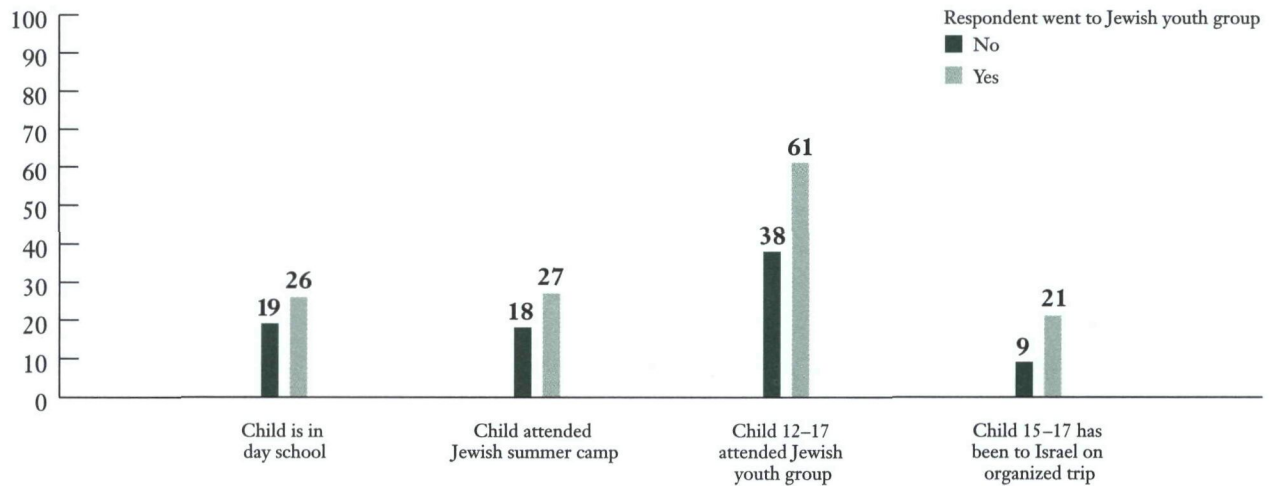
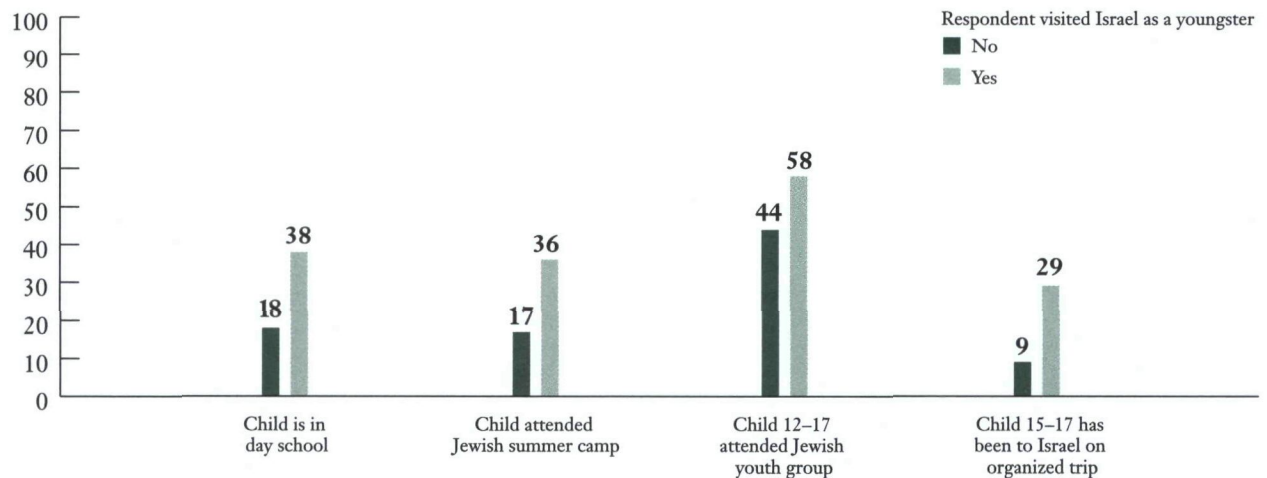


Figure 4: THE IMPACT OF A PARENT'S ISRAEL TRAVEL WHEN THEY WERE STUDENTS ON CHILDREN'S JEWISH EDUCATION
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)



are arranged in four categories of intensity, ranging from “very low” to “high,” the more intense the grandparents’ observance of Judaism, the higher the percentage of grandchildren who attend a Jewish early childhood program (with slightly over a quarter of grandchildren attending a pre-school whose grandparents had a “very low” measurement of their observance, compared to over 60 percent of children enrolled whose grandparents scored “high” in observance). The same pattern obtains for day school attendance, enrollment in a Jewish day camp, youth group involvement, trips to Israel, and current enrollment in formal Jewish education. (For reasons that are not clear, the only exception to this pattern comes when we examine Jewish overnight camping.) These findings testify to the enduring effects of Jewish socialization from one generation to the next—and then to the next. (Figure 5; Source: NJPS 2000–01)

PARENTS REGARD THEMSELVES AS AGENTS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Parents see themselves as the primary agents of Jewish developmental influence. They discuss their family rituals as setting norms for, and sending messages to, their children. Here is how one couple living in a Southern city who enroll their children in a Conservative synagogue’s supplementary school put it:

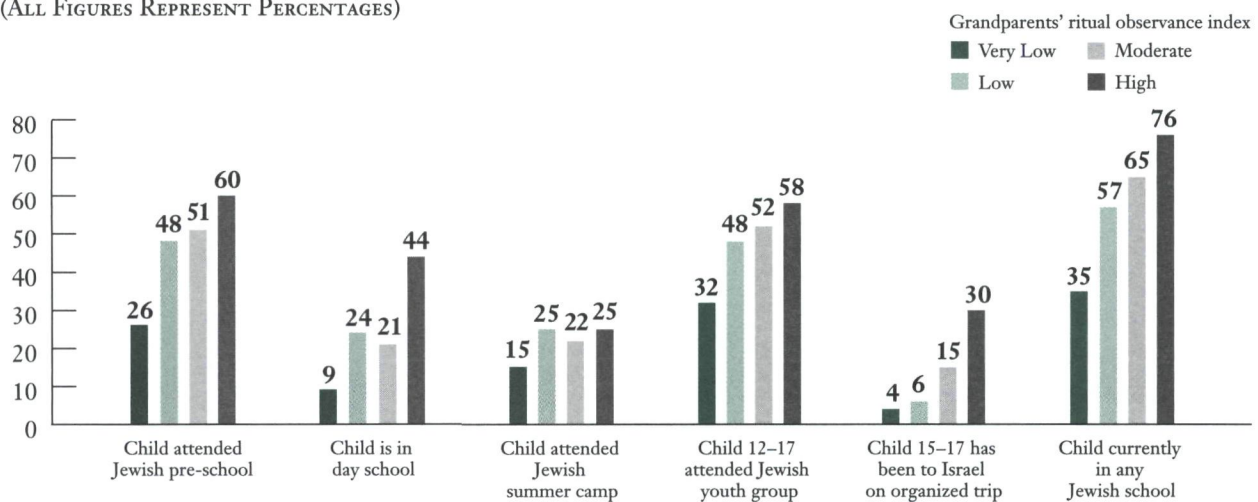
FATHER: “Children learn from parents and by what parents do more than what parents say.... You’ve got to teach by example...I don’t mean you’ve got to stand up there every Saturday and preach to them and yell the words at them. In my opinion, it’s more of a daily example of doing.”

MOTHER: “And I would agree with that.... When they see us light the candles and do the blessings at Shabbat or go to services a couple of times a month, or...participate in the holidays...they’re learning...by example to do that as well one day.”

Parents also self-consciously understand the importance of their own roles as models of engagement when they discuss their community involvement, volunteering, synagogue leadership and activity, and other Jewish pursuits outside of the home. Some parents talk about their efforts to structure various Jewish activities for their children as a component of modeling. That is, they discuss the decision to send their child to religious school or a Jewish camp, as demonstrating to their children their own commitment to Judaism.

In the teen study conducted as part of this research project, adolescents perceived their parents as being influential in the initial decision to continue with—or drop out of—Jewish education after *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Parental encouragement was especially important in getting kids started in post-*Bar/Bat*

Figure 5: THE IMPACT OF GRANDPARENTS’ OBSERVANCE UPON THEIR GRANDCHILDREN’S JEWISH EDUCATION (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)



Mitzvah classes. Later, the teens made the decision for themselves. But initially parental involvement and encouragement made a big difference. Parents who insisted on their children attending often had a big impact on their teenagers' internalized values. Teens from those families were more likely eventually to choose to continue Jewish education on their own. In contrast, parents who failed to encourage their teens to continue their Jewish education, but rather capitulated as soon as their children voiced complaints, often seemed, in their children's eyes, to be acting out of their own ambivalence. And indeed, as the interviews with parents show, parents had a dramatically wide range of responses to their teenagers' resistance to continuing with Jewish education, and that range corresponded to their own positive and/or negative feelings. Teenagers were quick to pick up on their parents' attitudes. Our interviews, in short, confirmed that parents are actively engaged in making educational decisions for their children, and the attitudes of parents are often the critical factor affecting how children come to regard their Jewish education.

JEWISH EDUCATION CAN BE A SOURCE OF FAMILY FRICTION

There is no denying that Jewish education also has the potential for engendering negative feelings in the family. For example, the following comments by a mother reflect her frustration with her daughter's complaints about attending a religious school in a Conservative synagogue:

"I honestly can't tell you [about impact]. I think she feels a lot of accomplishment in what she did by being Bat Mitzvah and I think...being around more Jewish kids has helped. But as far as really a Jewish identity, a feeling about the importance of the State of Israel, really understanding all the Jewish heritage, I don't know that she's gotten any of it. I think she's resented every day being there. It's like, 'I'm bored, I'm bored, I'm bored,' but I know from her report card that she participates when she's there. She's a good student. Is this a show for mom and dad? 'Don't make me go. Please can I skip it.' Her first thing after Bat Mitzvah was, 'I don't have to go to Hebrew school anymore. Can I quit tomorrow?' It's like, no you can't."

Religious school attendance can be a matter of dissatisfaction to the child (though the mother above hints at the possibility that her daughter may be having a more positive experience than she lets on to her parents). The experience can result in tension between parents (who might be advocating/ requiring religious education) and children (who might be resisting). This can be exacerbated by schedule conflicts between religious school and other activities (sports, clubs, etc.). While parents report a range of reactions to such conflicts, they frequently claim to be enforcing religious school attendance, with some exceptions made if the conflicting activity is of particular importance (e.g., a parent may not allow a child to miss religious school for a soccer game, but may allow cutting Jewish schooling for the soccer playoffs). Jewish education, in short, can spur internal conflicts within families or become the battleground for other family tensions—still another dimension of the complex interaction of families and Jewish education.

PARENTS ARE CLIENTS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Many parents candidly concede that they themselves are engaged in Jewish education, often in order to remediate what they never learned as youngsters or in order to address questions their own children posed. As one parent said:

"It was important to me to marry someone Jewish, but until we had kids, I kept my distance. So I had some Jewish education as a kid, but I didn't immerse myself in it. I didn't value it. And now, as an adult, I'm coming back and loving learning. I take seminars and courses and lectures, when I can."

The extent to which parents were spurred on to further their own Jewish education and upgrade their own Jewish knowledge is made clear from this sampling of observations by day school parents regarding the impact of their children on their own Jewish engagement and interest in learning:

“They’re leading us on a Jewish journey” [a highly involved Reform mother]

“[My children’s education] has been the most important Jewish experience of my life” [the same mother]

“We’re learning through them” [Reform mother who had converted to Judaism after she married]

“There is more Jewish conversation in the house” [a Reform father, converted from Catholicism]

“You feel stupid when your child knows things that you don’t” [a Reform father who had received a limited Jewish education as a child]

“[Through the children] I’m learning more about being a Jew in this world” [An adult convert to Judaism whose child was enrolled in a Conservative day school]

“Our life is focused around the Jewish calendar because of the school calendar” [a Schechter graduate, a mother whose own children are at a Conservative day school]

“This is the first time that we actually belong to a community of friends” [a newly religious Orthodox mother]

“You’re more careful about things because you want to teach your children” [a modern Orthodox father with children at a modern Orthodox day school]

In quite a few homes, parents have introduced Jewish rituals for the first time, ranging from the traditional to the unconventional. As examples of the latter: we encountered parents and children who recite blessings together when they see an ambulance go by or when they go camping over the holiday of *Sukkot*. More conventionally, a number of parents have started adult study, taking up Hebrew, a review of the weekly *Torah* portion, a study of Jewish history, and other subjects.

Some supplementary school parents talk about either undertaking new rituals in response to what their children have learned or taking special pleasure in Jewish participation as a result of their child’s involvement. The former was alluded to by a parent who reports sitting down for a *Shabbat* dinner only

once every month or two, but never having done so “before the kids started getting involved [with the religious school]....” Or, as another mother of children in a synagogue supplementary school put it:

“...they talked about it in school and they bring things home. ‘Let’s do this mom, and let’s do this dad’.... We’re not going to say no to it if they want to do something like that but it’s nothing that [we] would institute without religious school.”

The latter phenomenon is illustrated by a father who has two daughters in a Reform temple’s religious school:

“We were in services a couple of weeks ago.... I just remember very distinctly having a good, positive feeling sitting between both of my daughters who knew the service and know the prayers and speak it fluently and with ease. It made me feel good. I obviously wouldn’t have had that feeling before they were in school. There wouldn’t have been a service like that.”

A number of parents report that their child’s participation in religious school has led them to become more involved in the synagogue. As reasons for increased attendance at services, some parents mention religious school “requirements” that they attend services occasionally or their feeling the need to “set an example” for what the children are learning in religious school.

Quite a number of parents also attribute their motivation to learn more about Jewish life to their eagerness to explain complicated aspects of Judaism to their children and thereby to “alleviate confusion.” Parents observe that as their children learn more, their questions become more complex, and that places greater pressure on the parents to have the knowledge to answer questions. Several parents also talk about learning from their children, or as one father puts it “we learn as they learn,” from the new information, materials, and rituals the children bring home with them. All this suggests the need for a far more dynamic and complex understanding of who are the learners in Jewish educational programs.

JEWISH EDUCATION CAN BUILD COMMUNITIES

The interests sparked in parents by their children lead not only to a quest for more knowledge, but in some cases to greater participation in Jewish civic activities. On the most basic level, some parents turn to adult education programs to enrich their knowledge, which in turn brings them to synagogues or programs of adult study where they meet other Jewish adult learners. One mother of children enrolled in a Reform temple's supplementary school reported, for example:

"My husband [is] going to Torah study now once a week with the rabbi, which he never did before.... I think it was about two years ago when they [the children in religious school] were starting to do the parshas [Torah portions] and they would come back and I wouldn't know exactly what they were talking about. But...my husband said [we] have to start learning this. Then he went to a Torah study [class].... He does that by himself now.... I mean, if he couldn't answer the questions...that's kind of sad.... My younger one was coming home with all these Hebrew words I didn't know. I said, oh, these are basic and I don't even know them. They banded me a sheet with definitions. I said, OK, let me learn my letters, let me know some basics. So I took [a Hebrew] class. So I think we both started learning more. I think my husband definitely did a lot because he's continuing every week.... I do it once a month."

But the social impact of schools on parents goes well beyond their taking up adult study. Parents talk of being drawn into new social networks through their children's schooling. Among supplementary school parents we studied, when asked specifically about their friendship patterns, approximately half of the respondents report that at least half of their friends have children in this same religious school whom they met because of their mutual association with the religious school. This pattern is even more evident among day school parents interviewed: their children's school has created a social network where

the parents meet peers. In both settings of formal education, parents specifically mention the overlap of the social group formed by both the religious school or day school and the synagogue they attend. Indeed, the synagogue parents attend often dictates the day school they select because they want their children's school friends also to be their *shul* friends. In some cases, the reverse occurs: day school enrollment helps determine the congregation where parents choose to affiliate. Here, as elsewhere, there are multi-directional relationships between the family, the school, and the synagogue.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TOO—THE MORE, THE MORE

For young people, too, Jewish education reinforces Jewish engagement. This happens in two important ways: First, those who participate in more intensive forms of Jewish education tend to be more actively Jewish in their religious observances and likely to befriend other Jews. They bring with them to the classroom, group, bunk or Israel trip higher levels of familiarity with and commitment to things Jewish, which, in turn, engage them in Jewish life far more than those who are exposed to less intensive forms of Jewish education. Various educational experiences can draw upon and build upon a cultural predisposition toward Jewish engagement among participants that derives not only from the home and community, but also from mutually reinforcing Jewish educational experiences. Undoubtedly, the curriculum and educational staff play a significant role, but so do the social networks created by the cluster of programs of formal and informal Jewish education.

Second, more intensive and extensive Jewish education of one type is also associated with other forms of Jewish educational activities. Participation in youth groups, overnight camps, and Israel trips generally increases with the intensiveness of Jewish schooling. For example, merely eight percent of Jews with no formal Jewish schooling report having attended a Jewish summer camp, compared to 31 percent of

Sunday school attenders, 43 percent of supplementary school students, and fully 77 percent of Orthodox day school students attend Jewish summer camp. Moreover, participation in one type of program of informal Jewish education often translates into participation in other types of programs: for example, participants in youth groups were twice as likely as non-participants to attend a Jewish summer camp and to visit Israel. Jewish educational experiences frequently reinforce one another. (Figures 6–10; Source: NJPS 2000–01)

These and other findings suggest the need to think about Jewish education as a set of dynamic interactions. Parents and children certainly engage in much bi-directional interplay, with each shaping the other in important ways. And exposure to a range of educational settings also creates an interactive dynamic. We might wish to visualize Jewish education as a series of overlapping circles or layers, each having reinforcing effects upon the other. The dynamism of Jewish education today is further demonstrated by the complex ways parents think about Jewish educational choices, a subject to which we now turn.

Figure 6: THE CORRELATION BETWEEN JEWISH PRE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND LATER JEWISH EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

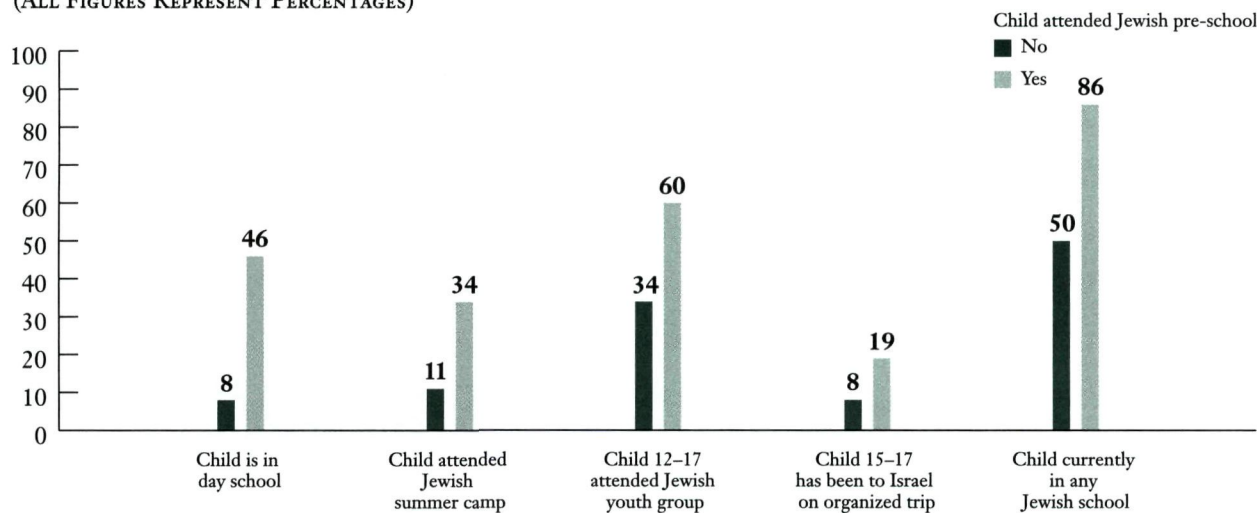


Figure 7: FORMAL AND INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

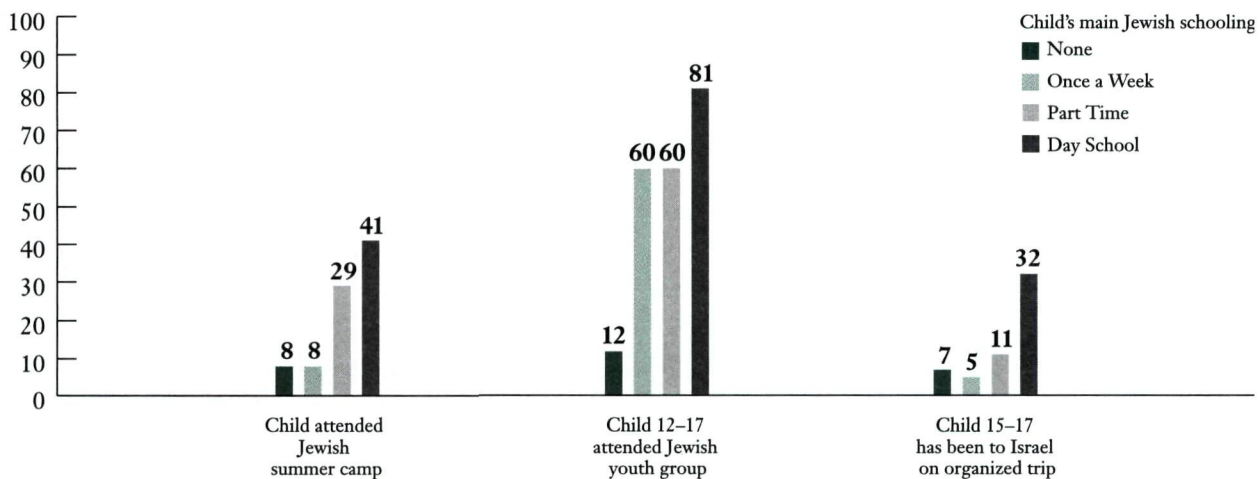


Figure 8: JEWISH DAY CAMP AND OTHER INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)

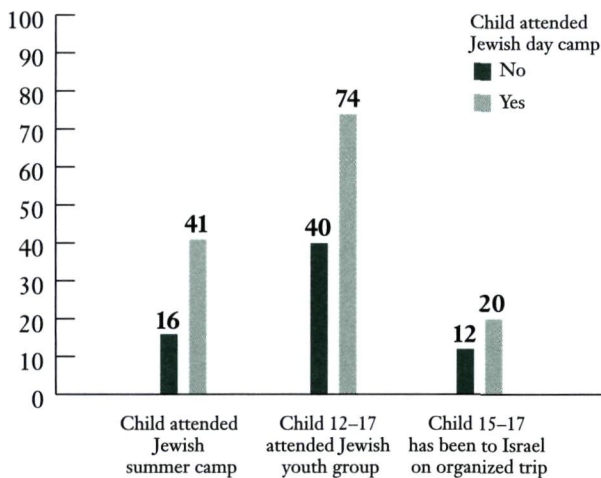
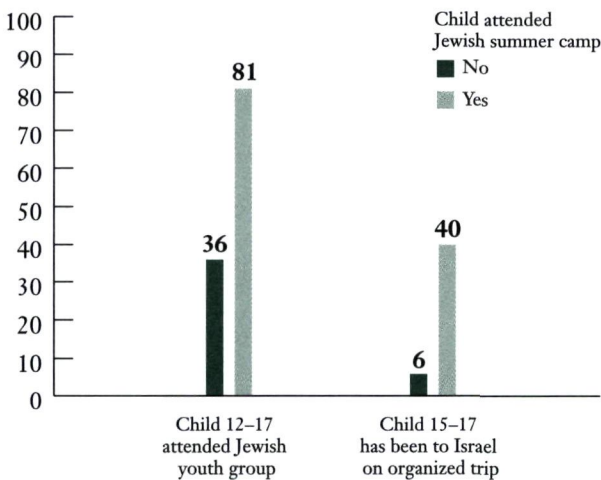


Figure 9: JEWISH SUMMER CAMPING AND OTHER INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)



MULTIPLE CHOICES ATTRACT EDUCATIONAL CONSUMERS

In early 21st century America, choices are critically important to parents. Typically, choice affects families in two separate ways. First, parents strive to be attuned to the individual needs of each child and will therefore tailor their educational decisions with the particular child in mind. This means families are looking for choices to insure the best possible “fit” for each child. Second, it also means that parents’ perceptions of their children’s special needs will trump other

Figure 10: THE CORRELATION BETWEEN YOUTH GROUP PARTICIPATION AND ISRAEL TRIPS
(ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)



considerations—e.g., if a day school cannot meet those needs, parents will look elsewhere. Put into economic terms, parents today are consumers who seek to shop at the boutique that meets their child’s needs. Put in psychological terms, parents invest themselves in each child and see each one as unique.

CHOICE MATTERS GREATLY TO PARENTS

When asked to describe their educational decision-making, parents repeatedly come back to the matter of “choice.” Most parents understand themselves to be exercising important choices by selecting a school for a child. Many parents we interviewed emphasized the values that guide their choosing neighborhoods in which to settle and schools for their children to attend. They sought out “good neighborhoods” where schools had excellent reputations, though they rarely explained what an excellent school was.

If parents have increasingly become “consumers” of education who choose among a variety of options, their outlook is linked to a specific understanding of children, of the role parents should play in raising and socializing children, and in ideas about what schooling must provide their children. Parents seek to exercise mastery and control in their worlds by choosing the right school for their children—and they expect their offspring to develop a similar sense of mastery.

Parents we interviewed highly prized and were deeply concerned about their children's unique qualities—their needs, their learning styles, their self-esteem—and thus they expected the school to respond to those concerns. The parents were not hesitant to challenge authority, and many of them were emboldened to enroll their children elsewhere when they felt the school failed to serve them. Some parents were willing to place three children in two or three different schools, as long as the unique needs of each child were met by the “right” school. This is how a Philadelphia wife and mother described the educational choices she and her husband made for their three children. “Even before kindergarten, the synagogue nursery school was too small for my daughter. It is just that her personality was too big for the school. We chose to send her to a Friends School because it requires independence.” The couple's middle son is in public school because he is less independent than his sister and “he wasn't expected to have as high a level of independence as at the Quaker school.” And the youngest son is at the synagogue pre-school which “is a good fit for him.” His parents have not decided where he will go to school next. “Each child,” the mother explained, “is an individual.”

The current outlook of American Jewish parents is thrown into bold relief when compared to the way one parent not born in this country expressed his indifference to his children's secular education. “We were more interested in the Jewish side,” he explained. “We didn't look at it like Americans look at it. People are really very focused and selective on the schools here. We're not [like] that.” What he most likely meant is that “we” do not value education in the same way—as the critical avenue to becoming a person, to success, and to achievement. He valued, he said, sports and Judaism for his children.

For the American middle class the importance of choice and of children's uniqueness is inextricably linked to the ideal of children's autonomy, their well roundedness, economic success, and ability to maintain a certain social standing.

THE DAY SCHOOL CHOICE

Parents are moved by different sets of considerations when they choose a day school education, as compared to a supplementary school program. Using the data from our survey of JCC members who are both Jewish and parents of children who live at home, our analysis identified attitudes relevant to their decision to consider day schools for their children. (The practical issue of costs was not raised in this context, as we were concerned with perceptions.) The three most significant attitudes that emerged from this study were:

- The aspirations for one child's Jewish development—i.e., the extent to which parents hoped their children would develop a strong Jewish identity.
- The perception of day schools as effective instruments of Jewish education.
- The perception that day schools “ghettoize” their children, and the concomitant fear that children enrolled in day schools do not learn how to relate to non-Jews and that they turn out “too” religious.

All three attitudes exert moderate effects upon the decision to send one's child to day school, with the first two directly related to the decision, and the third inversely related. In other words, the more parents aspire for their children to develop strongly as Jews, the more parents have confidence in the ability of day schools to educate, and the less they fear ghettoization in the day school, the more likely parents are to send a child to day school, or at least to consider it seriously.

Certainly other factors are at play here. But our analysis was also able to dispose of certain considerations. Thus, while Jewish commitment on the part of the parents increases their preference for day schools, it operates solely by way of aspirations—that is, through the hopes one harbors for a youngster to be committed to living as a Jew. In addition, the analysis lent support to the notion that concerns over academic quality are not the sole consideration of parents. A “good enough” academic quality renders the day

schools a plausible option. Other factors make them “desirable” and sometimes “necessary” choices. These other factors might include educational excellence, but will more likely include social and personal factors that make them a good fit.

As day schools of all stripes proliferate, the day school parent body becomes more diverse and parental motivations for enrolling children become more complicated. Increasing numbers of day school parents are not Orthodox, and many adults in the parent bodies of both Orthodox and non-Orthodox schools were not themselves educated in day schools. Frequently, their public and supplementary Hebrew school experiences are in fact the motivating factor in choosing day school. One couple explained that their strong bias in favor of day schools was a result of the fact that both of them had gone to public schools and had “unhappy” Hebrew school experiences.

“My observation was that it hasn’t gotten better; it had gotten worse since I was a kid. There were two or three options, the Reform and Conservative day schools (elementary schools), and the Reform school seemed too small and ideologically inconsistent at the time. The Conservative school seemed to work.”

Logistics can also be a factor in the day school choice. The long school hours at day schools can seem advantageous to working parents who put in long days in the office. Practical considerations, and not only values, come into play. As one day school father explained:

“Besides the fact that both of us are committed to day school in concept, also logistically, Hebrew school isn’t going to cut it for us, because there isn’t anybody to drop [the children] off.”

Our interviews with parents yielded a range of specific items they sought when enrolling their children in day schools. While most day school parents express an interest that there be what they call “a fit” between their homes and the school, for Orthodox parents this is a primary concern. In fact, this aspiration surfaced unprompted in almost every interview with Orthodox

parents. Some indicated that they only decided to move to a city after they had assured themselves they could find a school offering such a fit. One set of parents claimed that they would prefer a public school rather than send their children to a Jewish school where they do not fit. For many day school parents, then, their preference for day schools is tempered by their need to assure themselves that the school provides a good fit for the unique needs of each child and that the school’s Jewish outlook is compatible with that of the family.

Finally, it is striking how much the day school option is in tension with the insistence of many parents on exposing their children to “diversity”—by which they mean providing their children with the experience of dealing with people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Even if they were not afraid of children becoming “too religious,” many parents feared that their children would not know how to function in a diverse group of peers in high school after a day school elementary education. Some believed it was simply un-American to attend a day school. Concern with exposing their children to what they labeled “diversity” was the most widely cited reason for not selecting a day school.

Parents who considered day schools, or who enrolled their children in day schools and then switched them to public school, were asked about their decisions. They offered a variety of rationales for their decisions, with the same parents often giving several explanations. Many cited financial or logistical obstacles (e.g., the day school is too far away). Parents were concerned about whether day schools could address their child’s specific learning issues. Almost all of the parents mentioned the high quality of the local public schools. And then parents discussed their belief in the importance of public school education and the value of exposing their children to diversity as preparation for the “real world” (a phrase used by many parents). Parents expressed fears that day schools promote insularity, as was evident in the following exchange between parents who enrolled their children in a Reform temple’s religious school:

MOTHER: "...and now that [my daughter is] in public school, I actually feel that you have to learn how to..."

FATHER: "...integrate herself."

MOTHER: "Right...and take pride in being Jewish. Whereas, if she was at a day school, she wouldn't think about it.... Everybody would be Jewish. Here she goes to school and she has learned to stand up for being Jewish—I'm proud of this; this is who I am. I don't celebrate Christmas but we can still be friends. Come to my house on Friday night...I'm going to services. Can you come with me?' Their friends come with us to Temple and they get to experience something that they would never have experienced."

There is no denying the profound concern many Jewish parents express about exposing their children to diversity, rather than "ghettoize" them in Jewish day schools with only other Jews as their classmates.

THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL CHOICE

In the current climate of American Jewish life, parents face a real decision whether or not they wish to enroll their children in any program of Jewish education. According to the NJPS 2000–2001, to cite one data set, 28 percent of Jewish children between the ages of six and thirteen were not enrolled in any form of Jewish schooling, and 20 percent of Jewish children receive no Jewish education. The most basic question for parents, then, is whether or not to opt for Jewish education at all. For those who do seek a Jewish education for their children, the next question is: Which setting do I prefer—once a week Sunday school, two or three times-a-week supplementary school, or day school?

Not surprisingly, parents who opted for supplementary school education did not employ a uniform vocabulary to express their hopes and dreams for what their children would take away from their Jewish educational experiences. Supplementary school parents stressed the importance of their children "carrying-on" (a frequently used expression) Judaism into the

next generation, as in these remarks by a married mother whose son was enrolled in a Conservative synagogue's supplementary school:

"First of all, I hope he would marry somebody Jewish and keep the lines going. But I also would hope that he would bring up his children and give them the opportunity to have the identity and the heritage and...have Shabbat and the holidays the way we did with him because we think it's been an important part of their childhood.... Like for example, whether he keeps kosher in college or not, that's up to him.... That aspect of it is not as important to me, even when he gets married, but I think it's important to instill Shabbat in your children and just the identity and the heritage and just the different holidays and things like that."

Parents face a real decision whether or not they wish to enroll their children in any program of Jewish education.

Some supplementary school parents see this sense of connection to Judaism as helpful for maintaining a positive self-image in a predominantly non-Jewish environment. They are aware of living in an area where Jews are a minority, and Judaism is not as available in their neighborhoods in the same way as it might be in an

area of dense Jewish concentration. While parents generally do not speak about anti-Semitism in their own or their children's experience (though a small number describe awkward experiences they or their children endured due to their being Jewish), parents acknowledge that their minority status may have a negative impact on their children's identity. They want their children to feel comfortable and have a sense of pride, despite being "different." A Southern mother whose children were enrolled in a Reform temple's supplementary school expressed her aspirations, as follows:

"I would like them to have a basic knowledge about what it is that they're learning and talking about. I'd like them to feel comfortable about being Jewish. We are not in a highly Jewish population here, so I'd like them to feel comfortable saying, 'Oh, we do things this way.' I'd also like them to just know the routine...[that] is, what we're going to do on this holiday and this is what we're going to do on this weekend."

Some parents speak with pride of their children's ability to maintain a sense of themselves as Jews even in the face of their minority status. For example, the same mother describes how the religious school experience helped her son confront issues of Jewishness with his public school peer group:

"Well, I know for my oldest, a sense of identity and being involved in the religious school for so long and being at the pre-school, he is figuring out why the things he does are different.... He's comfortable in seeing that, and that is okay, and that he's not wrong and that someone else isn't wrong. He's comfortable in saying, 'I do things this way.'"

THE SALIENCE OF DENOMINATION FOR EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

Contrary to recent reports about the declining salience of denomination, our field research and quantitative survey uncovered strong evidence of continued variations along denominational lines. For all measures, Conservative synagogue members report more frequent Jewish educational participation among their children than do members of Reform temples. In two instances, the gaps are rather pronounced: among respondents to the NJPS survey, while 59 percent of Conservative parents report their child attended a Jewish pre-school, just 39 percent of Reform parents did so. Perhaps more significantly, the same survey found that while a substantial minority (25 percent) of Conservative children have been enrolled in day schools, we find hardly any (4 percent) Reform children who had been enrolled in day schools. Orthodox Jews, as is well documented, tend overwhelmingly to opt for intensive forms of Jewish education, especially day schools.

Conservative parents also report their children attending religious school for more days of the week than do parents who are Reform. In addition, as we see from the JCC members' survey, when asked how frequently they would like their children to attend religious school, Conservative parents are largely divided between those preferring two or three days

of the week, while Reform parents are divided between those preferring one or two days a week.

Our study of supplementary school families offers some further refinement of these matters. There was a great deal of overlap in the expectations Conservative and Reform parents had for Jewish outcomes and religious education. Still, the key areas of differences were that:

- Conservative parents (but generally not Reform) mentioned the benefits of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience in helping children learn synagogue skills.
- Some parents discuss the religious school and synagogue as a place where values hold steady in a world that does not always reinforce "good" values. Parents seem uncertain whether there is a "Jewish" aspect to these values or whether these values are more universal or possibly without connection to a specific religious foundation. But Reform Jews are far more likely than Conservative ones to believe the religious school has a mission to inculcate proper values and behavior. Reform parents assume that their schools will impart positive character traits to their children.
- Many parents talk about the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* in terms of their child's growth as a person, gaining self-confidence (emphasized slightly more often by Reform parents), leadership skills, or a sense of accomplishment (emphasized slightly more by Conservative parents) from what they have done.

Our field research uncovered strong evidence of continued variations along denominational lines.

NON-JEWISH PARENTS ARE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN MAKING JEWISH EDUCATIONAL CHOICES AND IN GUIDING THEIR CHILDREN'S JEWISH EDUCATION

Our field research uncovered a rich array of effects that are associated with the phenomenon of non-Jewish parents raising Jewish children, including those children who enroll in Jewish schools and whose families join congregations. Mixed married parents, particularly the non-Jewish partner and even those raising their children as

Jews, think about being Jewish in quite distinctive ways and use a very different language than in-married born-Jews when considering their children's Jewish education.

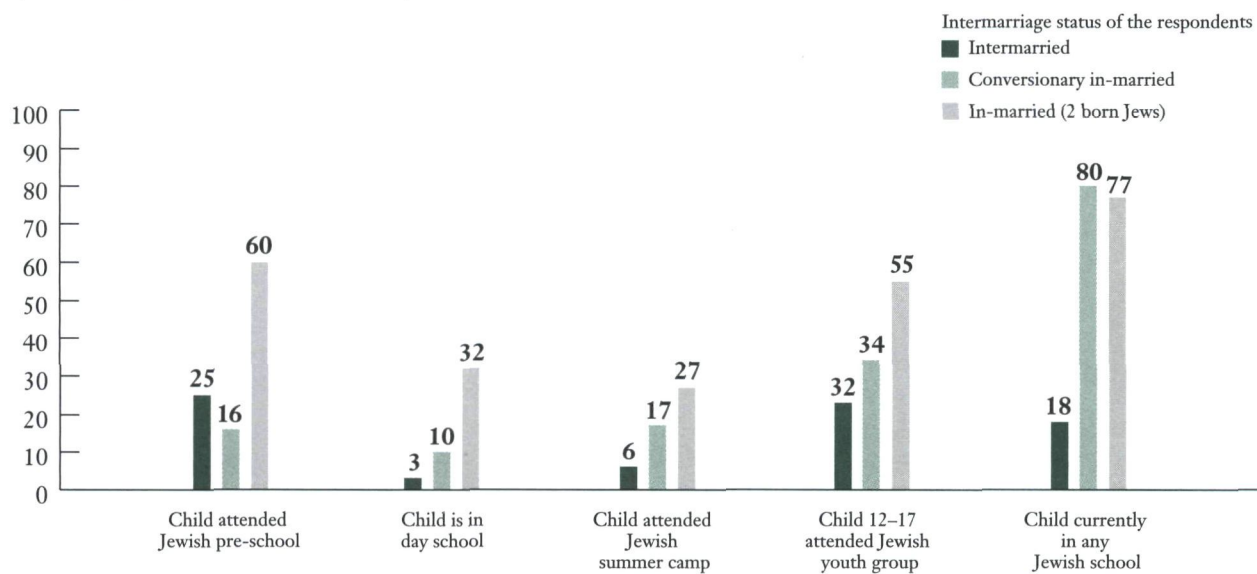
The quantitative aspect of our research examines how three sorts of families (all of whom are married couples raising their children as Jews) differ with respect to the Jewish educational participation of their children. There are large and predictable gaps between the in-married and the intermarried. The children of the former are more than twice as likely as the latter to attend a Jewish pre-school, Jewish day camp, or Jewish youth group. They are more than four times as likely to attend a Jewish summer camp. While 32 percent of the in-married Jews surveyed by the NJPS 2000–01 reported their children are in day schools, less than three percent of the intermarried made the same claim. Overall, over three quarters of the former were reported as currently enrolled in a Jewish school as compared with just 18 percent of the latter.

As striking as these differences may appear, perhaps even more surprising is the considerable extent to which conversionary families lag behind in-married families in their utilization of Jewish educational

programs. Attendance at Jewish pre-schools and day schools is more than three times as frequent among the in-married as among families in which one parent is a convert to Judaism. We find roughly a 2:1 ratio with respect to Jewish day camps, overnight camps, and youth groups. However, both in-married and conversionary families do report equal levels at which their children attend any sort of Jewish school. (Figure 11; Source: NJPS 2000–01)

Beyond these patterns of enrollment preferences, there are questions of religious and educational outlook. Some of the change in language used by parents has been introduced into the community by the growing numbers of non-Jews who play a role in the Jewish education of their children (possibly by converts too, but we have no data as yet on this). According to the 2000–01 NJPS, 10 percent of Conservative children and 20 percent of Reform children are being raised by a non-Jewish parent. Though it would be an exaggeration to claim a uniformity of language in either category, Jews and non-Jews engaged in raising Jewish children brought a strikingly different religious vocabulary to the way they thought about their children's "religious" education. We heard literally two different discourses.

Figure 11: THE EDUCATIONAL CHOICES OF IN-MARRIED, CONVERSIONARY, AND INTER-MARRIED FAMILIES (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT PERCENTAGES)



Often, Christian parents and even some converts offered rationales for giving their children a Jewish education that is strikingly different from the way born-Jewish parents frame their decision. Those raised outside of Judaism anticipate that their children's Jewish education will provide them with a relationship with God, and offer them guidance for their lives. A Philadelphia attorney raised as a Catholic, described herself as "comfortable raising her children under the umbrella of religion" despite her own lack of interest in church.

"I wanted their school to be the place where they would be thinking about the bigger issues, the ethics, the morals and the values. I wish there was more of it in religious school. They get more of a sense of community, ethics, and social action and less information. I think it's a better mix than the opposite, if I had to pick the mix. I think what they don't have so much is this idea of God and spirituality and whatever. Not that you have to be a believer, but I wanted them to be thinking about this as a question."

Another mother, raised with virtually no religion at all, echoed the same sentiments when she spoke of what she would like her children to learn, "Life, death, God, and morality. They get ethics from us and school and various places. But just thinking about these very deep moral issues should happen at their religious school." A Philadelphia teacher raised as a Catholic who once thought of becoming a priest, reported that what he wanted for his four children's "religious training" in a Reform supplementary school was to be "able to identify with some greater thing in the world. "Faith," was what he wanted for his children. He added:

"I don't really look at the religious aspect of it from a Jewish standpoint. It's just that it's the faith we've decided to participate in. I shouldn't say I don't look at it as a way of life because obviously we try to assimilate life within the teachings. It is important that both parents be involved with the children, in religious, and general education, and of course with their lives."

The vocabulary of spirituality and God, in contrast to peoplehood, holidays, and history is not alien to Judaism, particularly at this moment in time when a "religious" vocabulary is increasingly ubiquitous in American society. However, just how extreme the contrast might be was made evident in an interview with a Philadelphia businesswoman who is a Presbyterian. At the Reform temple where her children are enrolled, she chairs the Designated School Program committee, a three-year ad hoc committee whose purpose is to "determine what's working within our religious school and what's not."

"For me the hardest part I have about understanding Judaism is the fact that there are cultural Jews (which for me is bs), and then there are religious Jews. Judaism is a religion to me, as an outsider looking in; it is a religion before it is anything else. A lot of people will argue that with me, including the rabbi and the head of the religious school."

The contrast in outlook of Jewish-born parents and those not born Jewish was often quite dramatic, perhaps best understood as an emphasis upon a Judaism of family and festivals as compared to a Judaism of faith and feelings. When asked "How do you act as a Jewish parent?," families with two Jewish-born adults tended to describe and even list the activities and rituals in which they engaged. For them, the emphasis is on "practice," even when observance is anything but extensive. One Reform stay-at-home mother phrased her approach succinctly. "I am making Jewish memories." She explained:

"By being a role model I'm a Jewish parent. I always make latkes for Hanukah. I even make doughnuts for Hanukah so they'll think 'mom made doughnuts for Hanukah.' I make hamentashen for Purim. I made challah a few times; matzo ball soup. Generally we have a big Sukkah party every year, an open house. We get three baby sitters and have everyone bring kids. My son sets up a Disk Jockey thing and we get glow necklaces. Everyone really looks forward to that. By helping them to build memories around Jewish holidays and events, I'm a role model."

Cumulatively, these findings illustrate the complex ways in which today's parents think about their children's Jewish education—and some of the factors that shape their thinking. Parents seek choices and insist on placing each child in the school that best matches the individual needs of the child and also fits closely with the family's outlook. Today's parents think about such matters in a far more consumer-conscious fashion than did their predecessors. They are also likely to regard schools as settings where important lessons in socialization and values are communicated. And their thinking about Jewish education—the language they use to describe their aspirations for their children and how they choose a school—reflects a range of influences, including their denomination and whether or not they were born Jewish.

COMMUNITY CAN TRUMP DEMOGRAPHY

THE COMMUNITY AS A KEY CONTEXT FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

By situating its research in a range of communities around the country, this project has confirmed the truism that Jewish educational arrangements vary greatly by community. Some important variations are conditioned by local historical and cultural circumstances. In some parts of the country, innovation is constrained by the heavy hand of traditionalism—i.e., “this is the way we do our business.” In other places, a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurial derring-do have produced a sense of forward movement. Communities with a significant influx of new arrivals have an advantage because newcomers seem less constrained. But sometimes even newer Jewish communities are hampered by a culture of indifference and weak civic-engagement. All of these factors affect the extent to which new educational programs are established, whether they are properly funded, and whether champions of Jewish education are likely to emerge in a community.

The commitment of key communal leaders makes a major difference too. In some communities, federation leaders have spearheaded new initiatives, whereas in others, much of what has been built has emerged despite the indifference of the federation. Federations in turn are often at the mercy of the local “culture of giving” that has developed in each community. Some communities have a well-developed sense of communal responsibility, which in itself insures significant levels of giving and also the accumulation of a large endowment fund that is especially helpful for launching new initiatives. In others, volunteering and civic engagement are not valued by the larger community, and local Jews seem reluctant to play a role in support of their own institutions. The efficiency of fund raising in some Midwestern cities, for example, stands in marked contrast to the relatively low levels of giving in many sunbelt communities where there is no shortage of wealthy Jews, but a serious absence of community-mindedness. Our findings confirm the strong correlation between the general “culture of giving” in each metropolitan area and patterns of philanthropy among Jews in those areas. The insufficiency of financing, in turn, has a major impact on what communities can undertake in the educational realm.

The composition of a community also affects its commitment to Jewish education. Where Orthodox Jews are represented in higher percentages, they constitute a lobby for Jewish education. By contrast, communities with an inordinately large percentage of Reform Jews tend not to be nearly as interested in Jewish education. In some communities, Conservative Jews have created a range of day schools and other educational institutions; in others, they have been relatively insular, focusing mainly on their own congregational schools. In all cases, new interventions have made a difference, particularly in the form of adult education programs. Alumni of the Wexner Heritage Program have become lobbyists for improved Jewish education; and there is some evidence that adult students of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-Schools and the Meah program based at the Boston Hebrew College are also activated as champions of Jewish education.

And then there are the serendipitous factors, usually related to the influence of a few key people who happen to take a strong interest in Jewish education. In some cities, the educational commitment of a JCC executive makes all the difference; in others, the JCCs are virtually non-players in the field of Jewish education, largely due to the lack of interest of key staff people. Yet here too our story is complicated by local values and traditions. In several communities, key federation leaders who wanted to invest more resources in Jewish education were thwarted by advocates of the social service agencies; they could not move the system, despite their best intentions. It is therefore not only a matter of having the right person in place who makes Jewish education a priority, but that individual also needs a communal support system which is receptive to educational investment.

Beyond historical and cultural patterns and also communal priorities, our survey of communities also highlights vast differences in the types of educational programs supported and encouraged. In most communities, day schools receive the lion's share of funds for Jewish education, while congregational schools benefit from virtually no communal assistance. A number of the central agencies we have encountered deliberately understand their mission as one of aiding congregational schools because the latter are treated as stepchildren by the federation. Some of these bureaus will concede that they are not set up to aid day schools since the community never gave them the resources to reach into day schools in a serious fashion. Others will justify their investment in congregational schools by noting that for too long such schools were left to their own devices, even though they continue to educate the majority of Jewish children. Some bureaus of Jewish education serve valiantly as the central address in town for thinking about and coordinating Jewish education; others are marginalized and ineffective.

There are also differences in the way communities address informal Jewish education. Some invest heavily in early childhood programs, while others promote adult education; and some focus on both areas, regarding pre-school children and their families as the best investment for educational outreach. When it comes to programs for the post-*Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* set, some communities invest most heavily in Israel trips for teens, whereas others have worked to bolster youth programming or summer camp opportunities. Few communities consistently invest in all three options. Indeed, the way in which communities channel resources to the range of informal educational programs and the type of program each favors most are among the distinctive features of the various cultures of Jewish education we have studied.

Despite these important culturally and historically conditioned variations from one community to the next, and the serendipitous effects of some key leaders, there are also generic challenges shaping communal responses to Jewish educational needs. A great many communities are facing some or all of the following challenges: an ever-widening geographic dispersal of Jews within localities, a stagnant level of funding available through federation campaigns, a dearth of champions of Jewish education who use their financial and political clout to elevate Jewish education within the priorities of the community, and the modest impact of national bodies upon local educational developments and programs.

Despite the complex variations from one community to the next, anyone interested in Jewish education must face a fundamental reality: all Jewish education is local. Local circumstances and needs shape the educational options available; local support plays a vital role in channeling learners to programs; and inadequate local support systems undermine the effectiveness of Jewish education. This point is dramatized by our analysis of the significant communal variations in how Jewish educational programs are utilized.

HOW COMMUNITIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Not only do the Jewish educational options and resources vary from community to community, but the likelihood that people will use these options varies as well. It is not accidental that in some communities far higher percentages of teens enroll in formal schooling, and participate in youth groups, Israel trips, and overnight camping than in others. Some communities foster such participation through a serious investment in programs for training educators, upgrading the quality of programming, and marketing the programs. Not surprisingly, these efforts pay off when we look at the numbers of learners recruited. For example our JCC survey in five localities shows that in some communities, a majority of JCC families have sent their children to day school (59 percent in Baltimore) whereas in others only about a quarter have (26 percent in San Francisco). (This difference is not attributable solely to the higher percentage of Orthodox Jews in Baltimore.)

Although communities differ, they do not always do so in consistent ways. For example, whereas Baltimore is a leader and San Francisco is a laggard in terms of day school enrollment, the communities

do equally as well at recruiting JCC children to overnight Jewish camps. Detroit, meanwhile, is a leader both in day school and camp enrollment.

A key question to consider is whether overall trends in Jewish life across the country are so strong that they overwhelm the ability of local communities to shape their own conditions. Evidence from the JCC survey offers grounds for optimism: Some communities appear to have met greater success in reaching out beyond the base and in recruiting people to Jewish education who, were they living elsewhere, might not be involved.

In each community we studied, the parents with stronger Jewish upbringings are more likely to enroll their children in educational venues like day schools and camps. But what about those with weaker Jewish backgrounds—are they impossible to reach? The JCC survey suggests that communities can and do succeed at outreach. Strong day school communities like Baltimore and Detroit are better not only at attracting their base, but also at expanding beyond their base—that is, they recruit families who are low in their prior Jewish commitments. (Figures 12, 13)

Figure 12: COMMUNITIES' DAY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATES (BY RESPONDING PARENT'S JEWISH UPBRINGING AND CONTROLLING FOR EXOGAMY AND EDUCATION)

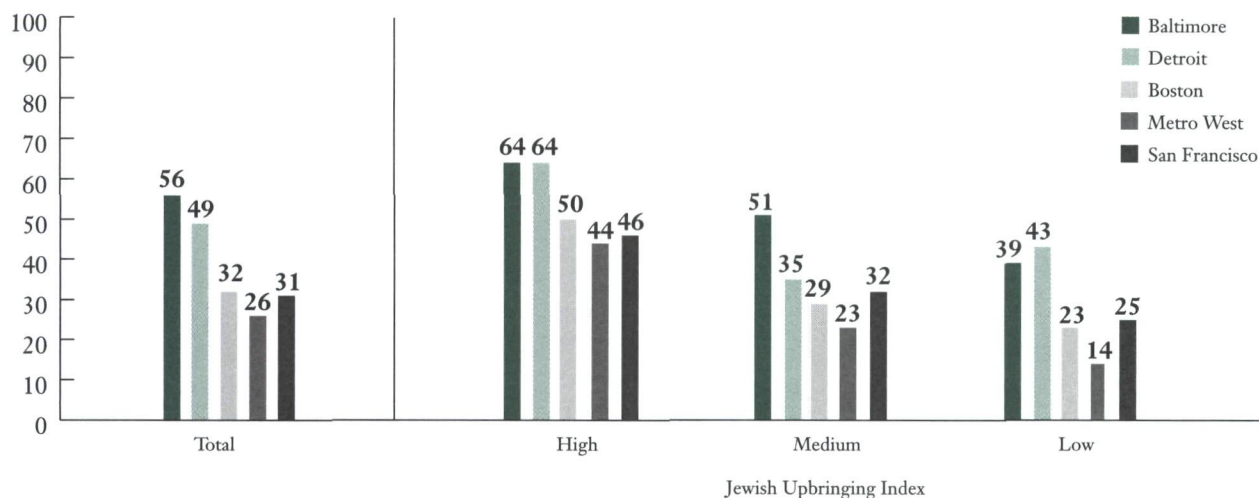
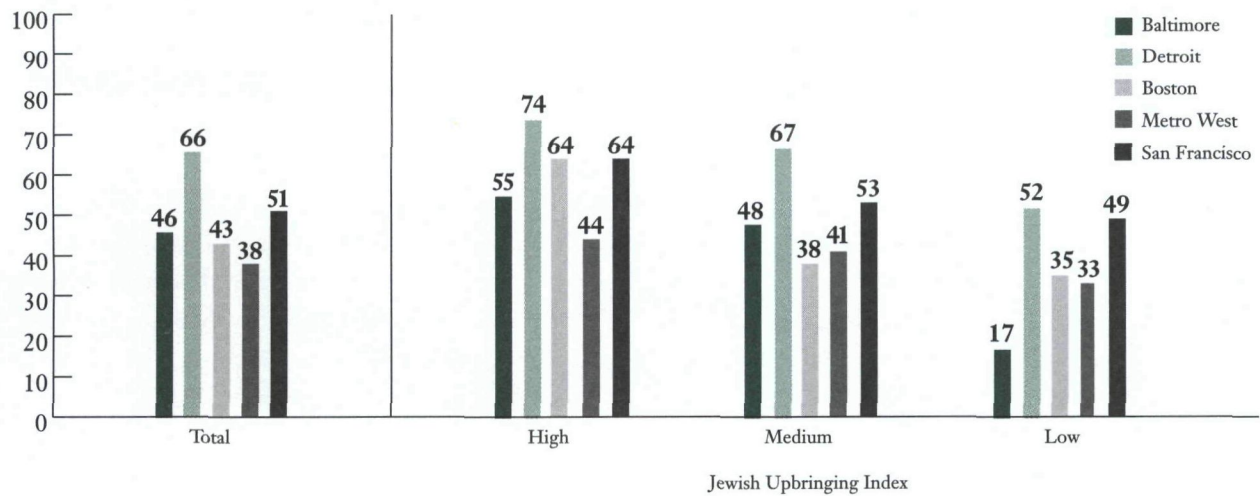


Figure 13: COMMUNITIES' OVERNIGHT CAMP ENROLLMENT RATES
(BY RESPONDING PARENT'S JEWISH UPBRINGING AND CONTROLLING FOR EXOGAMY AND EDUCATION)



Local communities provide a range of schools and programs, which operate for the most part as *autonomous institutions*. Under the best of circumstances, these institutions are loosely coupled; in most communities they are barely connected. Few communities have either professional or lay leaders who channel families to the range of educational opportunities. Even communities with a large network of schools and programs fail to think systemically or strive to coordinate educational opportunities. When they do set their minds to enhancing a particular form of Jewish education,

such as day school education, teen trips to Israel or overnight Jewish camping, communities can create a hospitable climate and can provide the incentives to make these options popular. They can reshape the thinking of families. Through their constructive engagement, communities can—and do—affect the way local Jews utilize various forms of Jewish education. Simply put, not all communities are the same: the ways some go about their business makes a great difference in how many learners take advantage of particular educational opportunities.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The hard work and investments of the past few decades have built a momentum in Jewish education. We do not have to create something from nothing, but rather to sustain and further build the momentum. The good news about Jewish education is that we can substantiate the cumulative effects of Jewish education and the powerful impact of informal Jewish education.

We know about the value of more intensive Jewish education—more years, more exposures, more time devoted to such enterprises. All of these factors engage young Jews and draw them into social networks that reinforce Jewish participation.

When communities invest in a range of programs and enhance educational efforts, they are making a long-term investment in the Jewish future. Those that do not are shirking their responsibilities to nurture a next generation. We need to find incentives to encourage communal investment in the range of programs. And perhaps we should find ways to pressure those communities that are remiss in not making such an investment in the future.

PARENTAL CHOICE AND THE MARKETING OF DAY SCHOOLS

Parents are speaking a new language today when they talk about Jewish education. As we have noted, they certainly focus on the needs of each child, and will avoid enrolling their children in schools that do not meet their unique needs. Even as parents make educational decisions for what is best for their children, they simultaneously consider the efficacy of the educational environment for their own purposes. Jewish education, in short, is an investment for their children and also for themselves.

Mothers particularly see their school choices and their involvement with schools as defining characteristics of their own identities. (Our research confirms the central, though certainly not exclusive, role women play in Jewish educational decisions and in bringing their children to school.) The educational decisions of parents are therefore not based solely on what is best for the child, but on the setting that also meets the needs of the parents. Day school parents, for example, decide on a school based on what is acceptable within their own community and among their peers. They seek a school where they, the parents, will feel comfortable with other parents. True, there are boundary-crossers: some Modern Orthodox parents send their children to a Schechter or community day school; some Conservative and even Reform parents send their children to Orthodox schools. That usually happens only if a peer group of parents in the school makes it comfortable or if the child's needs are so clear that the decision comes down to "what is best for my child." The same holds true to some extent for supplementary school parents, who regard the enrollment of their children in a synagogue school as part of a larger family investment in a congregation. They too seek a peer group among the congregation's members.

One potential implication of these tendencies is that the merging of smaller day schools into one larger one will not necessarily appeal more to parents who are looking for very particular types of schooling

for each child. More parents may opt out of Jewish schooling, especially day schools, if niche schools are unavailable. Moreover, as long as day schools cannot offer serious programs for the most gifted and those with learning difficulties, day schools will be at a disadvantage. Clearly, there are important cost considerations, and communities must weigh the cost-benefits of larger communal day schools. In some locales, such schools have proved a beneficial replacement for failing smaller ones; in communities we have studied, parents have expressed a strong preference for placing their children in schools whose ideological or pedagogic language suits their family's needs.

Local communities have understandably placed a premium on minimizing duplication and maximizing efficiency. To achieve these goals, they have pressed day schools to merge, and they have favored the creation of community day schools at the expense of denominationally oriented schooling. These inclinations toward streamlining are understandable, but they may be short-sighted in an age of boutique shopping by consumers of Jewish education. Parents seek niche schools for their children, and unless larger schools can provide tracks for children with different interests and abilities, they may in the aggregate attract fewer children than an array of smaller schools with more clearly defined missions.

As they engage in recruitment, day schools will have to pay more attention to the language employed by parents and to their aspirations for their children. Many day schools and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (a supporting agency for day schools) speak of excellence as an end in itself. This seems to be the focus of much day-school advocacy work: how to achieve excellence and market it so as to increase student numbers. Our research confirms that day schools will struggle to recruit among non-Orthodox families if they are not at least as good as local public schools. (Good, note, rather than

excellent). But it shows that because school selection depends not only on rational choice (the search for a good enough school), the schools must focus also on other issues: how to access parents' social networks and how to engage with the personal and ideological dimensions in school choice. "Excellence," or whichever term we use to indicate good-enough educational quality, makes day schools a plausible option; other factors make them desirable. Schools need to listen to parents to hear what they are seeking beyond a quality education for their children; many different values are at work as parents make their decisions.

As parents get more engaged, they will serve as important role models to their children.

Marketers of day schools, particularly outside of the Orthodox community, must also address concerns parents have about the lack of "diversity" in Jewish schools. They will have to dispel fears that day school graduates are unable to function as good Americans or somehow receive an inferior preparation for living in a pluralistic society. Those who promote day school education will not only have to appeal to the high aspirations parents have to raise children who are committed to Jewish life, but also to overcome what some parents regard as the negative aspects of day schools—e.g., their inability to expose children to "diversity."

Finally, day schools and supplementary schools must develop programs to acknowledge the parents as learners, and focus not only on the education of children. Everything we have learned about the bi-directional interplay between parents and children suggests that as parents get more engaged, they will serve as important role models to their children; and as children get more involved, they may be able to draw their parents into greater engagement. Schools are already stretched to serve the needs of youthful learners, but to succeed, they will have to develop the resources to address their adult learner population too. Ideally, this task could be accomplished were institutions to work cooperatively so that schools for

children can rely upon sustained adult education programs to address the needs of parents. Here is a patently obvious case where linking the silos, bridging isolated institutions, could do much good.

INVESTING IN SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOLING

As the educators of the majority of Jewish children, supplementary schools are significant players in the field of Jewish education. But for a variety of reasons, they receive only limited support. For one thing, they are generally tied to congregations, and therefore it is (incorrectly) assumed that the religious denominations offer them curricular support and direction. In fact, supplementary schools operate in isolation and derive only limited benefits from the educational arms of the religious movements. For another, the sheer numbers of supplementary schools are daunting. Housed in thousands of synagogues and other semi-private settings, they seem impervious to supervision. And for another, the track record of such schools in teaching basic skills and Jewish literacy relegates them to second-class status. If supplementary school graduates exhibit such low levels of Hebraic and Judaic literacy, and their long-term engagement with Jewish life tends to be weaker than day school products, why bother with them? The answer is that with the exception of the Orthodox population, only Conservative families send a significant minority of their children to day schools. Unless we are prepared to write off the majority of young Jews, we must find ways to strengthen the field of supplementary Jewish education.

Supplementary high schools are particularly worthy of new support. They already tend to attract teens whose personal commitments and family background have disposed them positively to Jewish engagement. In our JCC survey, 62 percent of day school dropouts in Boston continue their Jewish education in a supplementary program. Some go on to high school. (Close to one-fifth of students enrolled in the Prozdor, the trans-denominational school of the Boston

Hebrew College, which enrolls 1,000 high school students, are former day school students.) Others who drop out of day schools after the 5th or 6th grades continue their Jewish studies in the years leading up to their *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* in a supplementary program. Moreover, those who continue into high school tend to come from families that encourage Jewish involvement. Significant percentages of such teens also participate in youth movement activities, trips to Israel, and summer camping. Students in supplementary high schools are resisting the post-*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* dropout syndrome. They deserve a strong education. Unfortunately, few communities know how to address this population. There is a critical need to develop a supplementary high school initiative to offer curricular and programmatic guidance to help communities around the country bolster their programming for Jewish teens. With some creativity, supplementary high schools can also expand their base by appealing to the preoccupations of teens: one community, for example, is experimenting with opportunities in informal education to help young people flesh out their CVs with community service work that then enhances their college applications.

At the other end of the spectrum are children who are enrolled in the least demanding form of Jewish schooling—one day a week Sunday schools. These schools have the poorest track record of producing literate and committed Jews. Graduates of such schools tend to be the least engaged; and so too are their parents. Where possible, families should be encouraged to move their children from such schools into religious schools offering a program meeting at least twice a week because Sunday schooling has little positive impact over the long term. But when that is not possible, children in Sunday schools must be offered opportunities for enrichment through specially designed programs that will complement their Sunday school experiences. Perhaps, we need a separate track of programs for these kids. The danger of isolating them is that they will not be exposed to children who take Jewish education more seriously, and their parents will not

meet peers who will reinforce engagement. But currently, as the engaged are getting better and more meaningful programs, the disengaged are exposed to inferior programs. We must move the minimally engaged onto a track designed to expand their Jewish horizons.

Families with children in two or three day-a-week supplementary schooling also deserve more support. By talking with parents who enroll their children in congregational schools, we learned that while some are minimalists and mainly want their children to endure as they did in religious school or to learn just enough to celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, a significant population of supplementary school parents has far more serious Jewish aspirations for their children. Quite a few talk about passing Judaism and Jewish connection on to their children; others talk about Jewish literacy; some even talk about Hebrew competency. And still others aspire to “create Jewish memories” for their children, often through music, the smells of cooking and so on.

It will not do to dismiss the entire lot as people who are not serious Jews. Certainly, intensive Jewish education is a low priority for some supplementary school parents. But others opt for supplementary schools because they regard such an education as the best they can afford; and still others believe the combination of public or non-sectarian private school education coupled with supplementary school programs offers the best all-around education for their children. Day school tuition remains an impediment to some Jewish families who do not want to apply for help or go through what they regard as the humiliation of asking for assistance. Moreover, some supplementary school parents are participating in serious adult education programs to improve their Jewish parenting abilities, and also for their own growth. The interaction of such positively inclined parents with one another, both in the supplementary schools and in adult education settings, is fostering heightened participation. Finally, some parents of supplementary school children also enroll their children at Jewish summer camps,

in youth movements, and in Israel trips. They clearly are exposing their children to more than a bare minimum. If nothing else, our study highlights the need for fresh research on supplementary Jewish education and the families who utilize this form of schooling.

By listening to parents, we have discerned an interest among a sector of the supplementary school parent body in giving a Jewish education to their children. Are they as serious as day school parents? Perhaps, only a minority are. But even if most parents of supplementary school children are not as serious, they ought not to be written off as hopelessly indifferent. On the contrary, we must develop ways to educate parents about educational options, about ways to deepen their children’s participation, about ways for the parents to engage in adult education, about ways that Jewish education makes them, the family, and their children better. After all, Jewish parents want “better” for their children. It behooves us, therefore, to invest in supplementary education to make it better, and to provide enrichment for children in supplementary school in the form of summer camping, youth movement programs and the like.

THINKING SYSTEMICALLY

Most medium-sized and large Jewish communities offer a range of programs in formal and informal Jewish education. These include early childhood programs, day schools, supplementary schools, youth movement programs, summer camps, teen programs, and Israel trips. (They also sponsor a variety of adult education opportunities.) Over the past 10–15 years, funders have launched a number of new initiatives to strengthen one or another of these educational settings: PEJE works with day schools; the Foundation for Jewish Camping helps Jewish summer camps; the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative is beginning to look into early childhood programs, etc. On the funding side, one

or another of these programs has won national champions, such as The AVI CHAI Foundation, which has invested heavily in day school education and summer camps. And on the local level, individuals and foundations have helped raise more funds for day schools or for local teen programs or for Israel trips. The question we repeatedly came up against is: who links the various programs to each other? True, quite a few central agencies for Jewish education are now bringing all local day school educators together or all supplementary school principals. But who is cutting across the various types of institutions? Who is linking the silos?

This question is not academic. Much research suggests that the mix of Jewish educational experiences, the combination of formal and informal programs, has a differential effect on people as they grow older. Children who attend supplementary school but also go on to post-*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* schooling and youth programs or who attend Jewish summer camps along with their supplementary schooling tend to be more actively engaged as Jews when they get older. The mix of experiences affects the types of involvement in adulthood—e.g., whether the adult will be strongly committed to Israel or Jewish ritual observance or attendance at religious services.

But who in Jewish communities invests effort in channeling children into a range of programs? Who is informing parents of the options? Communities offer numerous stand-alone institutions. They offer little guidance to help parents negotiate between them and little open encouragement of children to move naturally from one to the next. Informally this happens, so that day school families who can afford the costs send their children to the Jewish summer camps that the peers of their children prefer. But families without strong connections are often unaware of such opportunities, and are not “naturally” steered to them by peers.

To put this into less abstract language: Imagine a bus is driving from the pre-school to the day school or supplementary school and then to the summer camp, teen programs and Israel trips. Who is working to get parents and children to board the bus, rather than remain fixed in only one institution? The advantage of such a bus route is that parents will be shepherded from one place to the next—and in the process will talk to other parents on the same bus who may draw them into Jewish educational programs. Our research indicates that this happens haphazardly. Few communities offer such a bus service and few education professionals think it is their responsibility

to play the role of bus driver, announcing the stops and encouraging riders to get on and off the bus at as many stops as possible. A telling example: we learned of a new initiative designed to strengthen early childhood programs, but the organizers have made no provision to work with pre-schools on channeling their kids to day schools or other Jewish educational programs! What could be more central to the purpose of pre-schools?

The field of Jewish education has reached a level of maturity where serious resources should be directed at creating the linkages between educational programs.

The field of Jewish education has reached a level of maturity where serious resources should be directed at creating the linkages between educational programs. We should recruit the bus drivers who will usher people from one place to the next. We should teach those bus drivers how to channel people and to think about the entire network of education from pre-school through high school. We should train and motivate the professional personnel in schools and informal education settings and in central agencies to channel their people to other programs. Undoubtedly the personnel or agency providing such services will differ from one community to the next, but in each community some educators must be trained to think systemically. Jewish education should be an organic system, not merely a network of loosely connected institutions. The creation of such a system will require attention not only to the parts, but also to the connections.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICY MAKERS TO CONSIDER

Our analysis has thus far suggested a number of implications flowing from our research. What follows are a set of questions directed at funders, federation leaders, central agency personnel, and educators to consider. These questions have programmatic implications.

1. There is a clear role for federations and foundations to play in incentivizing linkages. The linkages needed are both vertical and horizontal. Part of the job of early childhood educators, for example, is to steer families to the next stage for their children—either to day school or supplementary school. Teachers of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* age children have a responsibility to encourage their students to enroll in high schools and a range of informal education programs. Currently this happens haphazardly, if at all. Can we conceive of incentives to spur educators to play such a role in making vertical connections?
2. More broadly, who will serve as the bus driver in communities, picking up parents and children, encouraging them to make stops to sample other educational opportunities? Who will make the horizontal linkages between the silos of Jewish education? And can we conceive of programs to reach into communities to identify potential bus drivers and train them to play such a role? How can we overcome some of the natural obstacles impeding such an effort—i.e., the competition between federations, central agencies and educational institutions to get credit for success? Perhaps the first step is to develop a pilot program to ascertain whether personnel are open to taking on the task.
3. Parents are responsive to choices defined by denominational difference. Particularly when it comes to Jewish educational decisions, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews in the aggregate make very different decisions from one another. Each denominational population has a distinctive profile of Jewish educational choices. When day schools offer clear and authentic alternatives (along denominational or educational lines) their general appeal increases greatly.
4. Choosing a Jewish day school for one's children can have social and emotional consequences for parents that day school educators frequently overlook in their interactions with their adult clients. These effects can be life changing, and can lead to the school assuming a place in parents' lives that was once occupied by synagogues. The challenge for schools is to determine the extent to which they should try to cultivate such effects still further. School professionals are often uncomfortable with acting as parent educators. Most educators became teachers in order to work with children, not with adults. Who will help schools assume a greater role as parent educators? Can we conceive of partnerships between schools and adult education programs that will relieve schools of the burden, while addressing the real interests of parents?
5. Recognizing that parental choice for their children's Jewish education affects the parents' educational choices for themselves, how can we develop stronger connections between parents and formal and sustained programs of adult Jewish learning? The AVI CHAI program to aid families with children enrolled in

- pre-schools to engage in the Melton Adult Mini Program serves as a valuable experiment in this regard. But it needs to be expanded to address all parents with children enrolled in schooling.
6. Our research has highlighted the special role assumed by many mothers in their children's Jewish education. While husbands and wives who were interviewed seem to make all decisions for their children together, mothers tend to implement them and to play the larger role in the schools. Should we develop programs to acknowledge this reality? Should we create venues to work with mothers, taking into account that some are employed full time, others part-time, and still others are not in the labor force?
 7. How can we build effective supplementary high school programs geared to the special needs and interests of teens? Ample research attests to the enduring positive impact of engagement with Jewish peers during the teen years. Fortunately, a number of communities have upgraded their supplementary high school programs. But currently no organization monitors their effectiveness. Who will serve as a clearing house of information on such efforts? And who will assess programs to develop best practices models?
 8. How can we involve serious supplementary school families in more Jewish education for parents and children, to move young people through a network of informal and formal education? How can we learn more about the pressure points in supplementary schooling that can be pressed to achieve more positive outcomes?
 9. Efforts to recruit parents for day schools must directly address two significant obstacles we uncovered: a) The sense that day school education will deprive children of the ability to function successfully in a multi-ethnic and socially diverse society. b) The sense that day school education really does not produce youngsters who are more deeply committed as Jews. Day schools require help to formulate adequate responses to these fears. Who will help schools tackle these concerns forthrightly and develop a language and rationale to address parents' deepest concerns?
 10. Can we conceive of enrichment programs for those on the least intensive track of Jewish education—the Sunday school? One option is to develop a concerted effort to sway congregations to eliminate this track all-together. But barring such a confrontational approach, can we develop programs that will diversify and multiply the experiences of young people exposed to so inadequate a form of Jewish education? Should we begin to think about special camping experiences for Sunday school children? Or should we develop incentives and support to enroll such children in programs where they will be exposed to more intensively educated peers?
 11. How can we help local communities nurture champions of Jewish education? Our research in seven communities confirmed the impact of the Wexner Heritage Programs in creating a cadre of committed day school champions in some communities. But the cause of day school education, generally, let alone of other forms of Jewish education is weakly supported in most communities, with few obvious financial backers and lobbyists staunchly advocating within their communities. We must create programs to develop a cadre of women and men who appreciate the vital necessity of nurturing the next generation as educated, literate, and engaged Jews, so that the successes of Wexner can be replicated and expanded to the entire field.
 12. How can we educate and cultivate future federation leaders and others to appreciate the importance of exposing young people to a range of educational experiences? Whether a community stands behind teen trips to Israel or summer camping or early childhood programs, and other forms of Jewish education is a hit-or-miss proposition. Some communities fund a few of these and let the other options languish. What kinds of programs can we develop to raise consciousness to support the complete range of teen options? Can we design vehicles to reach into communities to educate the key opinion makers who make funding decisions?

APPENDIX I

THE METHOD AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECTS UNDERGIRDING THIS STUDY

THE NATIONAL JEWISH POPULATION STUDY OF 2000-01

Steven M. Cohen analyzed data in the National Jewish Population Study to address several themes: a) the long term effects of Jewish education upon adult identity; b) the impact of grandparents' Jewish engagement on the education their grandchildren received; c) the utilization of different forms of Jewish education; and d) the correlation between income, gender, and denomination on Jewish educational choices.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE JCC SURVEY

In order to supplement the NJPS with more detailed information on Jewish educational decision-making and impact, a new survey was conducted with more than 2,000 parents of Jewish children under the age of 18. All the subjects of this survey are members of a Jewish Community Center in one of five localities (Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, Metrowest New Jersey, and San Francisco). The survey was administered from October 2004 through March 2005 via telephone by native English-speaking interviewers at Bezeq Online Ltd., a Tel Aviv-based call center. A survey design team that included Steven M. Cohen, Shaul Kelner, and Leonard Saxe collaborated on questionnaire design and methodological decisions. Cohen and Kelner analyzed the data. The survey focuses on Jewish pre-schools, day schools, supplementary schools, Israel programs, and summer camping.

The decision was made to survey JCC members because JCCs are found in virtually all areas of the country, and their membership includes a broad spectrum of those who identify as Jews. Most JCC members are synagogue-affiliated (75 percent in the current sample), and they represent all denominations. JCC lists are particularly advantageous because they are heavily weighted toward families with children.

Several themes were explored based on this new survey: a) the aspirations of day school parents; b) how families decide upon a Jewish early childhood education and what effects this decision has; c) the role of gender and denomination in educational decision-making; and d) the effects of community on recruiting populations to various venues of Jewish education.

A TEEN STUDY, SYLVIA BARACK FISHMAN

Sylvia Barack Fishman's study of teen Jewish education looks at the ways in which Jewish teenagers, their parents, and their educators perceive diverse Jewish educational experiences and milieus. The purpose of this study is to shed light on 1) the decision-making process through which teenagers choose Jewish educational directions; 2) the role of teens, their parents, and their educators in the decision-making process; and 3) the impact of these choices on teenagers and their families. Teens discussed their experiences in pre- and post- *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* educational settings, including formal classrooms, youth groups, summer camps,

and Israel trips, as well as talking about their homes and other aspects of their lives. Parents interviewed were also asked to discuss their children's educational choices, their goals, and their feelings about these choices. Educators were asked to reflect on their educational and institutional goals, and to define what success would mean to them vis-a-vis their student population.

With these goals, Fishman and her team analyzed interviews and focus group conversations with 81 teenagers, 20 parents, and 15 Jewish educators and educational thinkers, conducted in and around Newton, Massachusetts, a suburb of greater Boston with an estimated Jewish population of approximately 50 percent. Participating teens included both those who chose to continue their Jewish education past *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* into their teen years, and those who have not continued. Newton was chosen as a primary site of exploration because of the plethora of rich educational offerings in the area. Unlike studies that expose the dearth of Jewish educational choices, this study explores the decision-making process in an environment in which educational opportunities are manifestly available.

SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL CHOICES, JEFFREY KRESS

Jeffrey Kress studied supplementary school children in a southern community with a relatively large Jewish population. He chose two primary study sites—one Reform and one Conservative synagogue—based on criteria including: age of the synagogue (aiming for the 20–40 year old range—old enough to be “established” but young enough that they are less likely to attract families “because they grew up there”), the size of the school (to include classes averaging 20–40 per grade), the reputation of the program (those considered by local experts to have quality programs), and geography (synagogues in the same general area, particularly near the same array of secular and day school options). In order to provide a broader overview for the researcher, focus groups were conducted at an additional synagogue and a

community day school as well. Leaders at all sites were invited to participate in the project and were assured of the intention to keep the schools and the participating families anonymous.

In total 34 family units (in some cases one parent, in some cases both parents) agreed to participate in this project. The average age of participants is approximately 43 years old, with ages ranging from 34 to 56. They have lived at their current address for an average of approximately 7 years. Most of the respondents' children were enrolled in multi-day supplementary schools. Parents were asked a range of questions about their: a) own religious backgrounds; b) current Jewish involvement; c) expectations of the religious school; d) longer-term Jewish aspirations for their children; and e) the process by which they made decisions about choosing a synagogue and schools.

PARENTAL DECISION-MAKING, RIV-ELLEN PRELL

This study of 20 households with school-aged children in Philadelphia and its suburbs focused on two central issues. How do mothers and fathers think about and ultimately decide on schooling for their children? And how do men and women think about and ultimately decide how to divide up the responsibilities for their families' paid labor, responsibility for children, creating a Jewish home, and family? The study intentionally approached families who have made a range of choices about how they practice Judaism, their children's educations, and the ways they organize their households.

Three interviewers spoke to 36 adults who formed 20 households. We interviewed dual career, one earner, divorced, and single-parent households. The people to whom we spoke were Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. We interviewed intermarried families as well as conversionary ones. And we interviewed parents who exposed their own children to very different Jewish educational experiences depending on how these parents assessed each child's needs. All interviews were with individuals rather than couples.

The hour-long taped interviews focused on how the parent chose schools, practiced Judaism growing up and within adult families. Parents were also asked what it meant to them to be Jewish parents. In addition, the interviewers asked about how parents divided tasks around children and the household, how they thought about work and career, and the balance between family and work. The study located families through supplementary and day schools in Philadelphia and its suburbs, and it assured them of anonymity.

DAY SCHOOL CHOICES, ALEX POMSON

This study first examines why and how parents choose Jewish day schools for their children. Then, it explores the ways in which parents and schools interact with one another once children have been admitted as students. The study is grounded in two assumptions, one empirical, one theoretical: first, that American Jewish day schools, as private schools that depend on (substantial) parent involvement, occupy a prominent place in the lives of parents who actively select schools based on their individual preferences. The second (theoretical) assumption behind this inquiry is that adult identities are constantly being made, unmade, and remade in response to and as a direct result of the dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definition. From this perspective, parents are necessarily influenced by their involvements in their children's schools. How they involve themselves in their children's education will have some effect on who they are as adults, since their performances not only express who they are, but also change them.

Data for the study came from a sample of families whose children attend one of four different Jewish elementary schools in Centreville, a pseudonymous mid-west American city with a Jewish population of some 60,000. Over a two-month period, the author spent three days in each of Centreville's Jewish elementary schools. He interviewed a cross-section of between six and ten faculty members in each school, as well as other community informants. He collected documentary artifacts produced by

children, parents, and teachers. He participated in a variety of school activities, including morning prayers, a sample of classes, and other events in and around the school. A research assistant conducted intensive semi-structured interviews with 30 sets of parents from the four schools who were selected so as to represent a cross-section of the schools' population.

COMMUNAL CULTURES OF JEWISH EDUCATION, JACK WERTHEIMER

Jack Wertheimer's project, entitled, "Cultures of Jewish Education: How Communities Address Local Educational Needs," seeks to understand how local communities go about the business of providing a Jewish education. To what extent do they coordinate the work of various institutions? Do they conceive of Jewish education locally as a system or rather as a set of loosely linked, if not entirely uncoupled, schools, programs, and institutions? Have some communities created a measure of integration, and if so, have those efforts made a difference?

In order to examine these questions, seven Jewish communities of various sizes and in different regions of the United States were selected for analysis and comparison, the communities of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Saint Louis. Data on these communities were collected through a series of site visits to a range of institutions where local education professionals, lay leaders, and community officials were interviewed between April and October 2004. These interviews were further augmented through a perusal of official budget reports, school census data, newspaper accounts, local histories, brochures, and other written documentation. The study developed portraits of how each of these seven communities "do" Jewish education, and how a range of historical, regional, and cultural factors have shaped their particular approaches. The focus then shifts from the unit of the individual community to broader challenges confronting the Jewish educational enterprise across the country and the factors that affect the ability of communities to develop a measure of coordination for local programs of Jewish education.

APPENDIX II

THE RESEARCH TEAM

Steven M. Cohen, is Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at Hebrew Union College, New York. With Arnold Eisen, he wrote, *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America*. He is also the co-author with Charles Liebman of *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences*, as well as *Cosmopolitans and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America*, with Samuel Heilman. His earlier books include *American Modernity & Jewish Identity*, and *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* He recently co-authored a book on the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School. He can be reached via email at steve34nyc@aol.com.

Sylvia Barack Fishman is Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department at Brandeis University, and also co-director of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute. Her newest book, *Double Or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage* (Brandeis University Press, 2004), has been the subject of lively discussion by scholars and Jewish communal professionals. Prof. Fishman is the author of numerous articles on Jewish education, the American Jewish family, changing roles of Jewish women, and American Jewish literature, film and popular culture, as well as three previous books: *Follow My Footprints: Changing Images of Women in American Jewish Fiction*; *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*; and *Jewish Life and American Culture*. She can be reached at Fishman@Brandeis.edu.

Shaul Kelner is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University. Previously, he served as Senior Research Associate at Brandeis University's Maurice and Marilyn

Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the City University of New York. His earlier work has addressed both informal and formal education, particularly Israel experience programs and Jewish day schools. In addition to the current project, Dr. Kelner recently completed an important study of the Jewish sector's workforce, written with a team of Brandeis University researchers that he led. He can be reached at s.kelner@vanderbilt.edu.

Jeffrey S. Kress is Assistant Professor of Jewish Education at The Jewish Theological Seminary, and Senior Research Associate of The William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education. He co-authored *Building Learning Communities with Character: How to Integrate Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002) and has written a chapter in the upcoming volume of the *Handbook of Child Psychology*. His work is focused on building Jewish values and identity by using principles of social and emotional learning to augment Jewish education. He has also conducted research in the areas of program implementation and adolescent identity, with a focus on religious and spiritual development. He can be reached at jekress@jtsa.edu.

Alex Pomson was Koschitzky Family Chair of Jewish Teacher Education at York University, Toronto where, until July 2004, when he made *aliyah* with his family, he coordinated York's Jewish Teacher Education Programme. Before moving to Canada, he was the founding head of Jewish Studies and vice-principal of the King Solomon High School, a community Jewish high school in

London, England. He is currently a research fellow at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University. He also serves as chair of the North American Network for Research in Jewish Education. He is presently engaged in a longitudinal study funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of the Canadian Government entitled, "Parents and their children's schools: An ethnographic inquiry into the purposes and practices of Jewish schools". His work has been published in numerous academic journals, including: *Teachers College Record*, *Educational Research*, *the Canadian Journal of Education*, and *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. He can be reached at apomson@edu.yorku.ca.

Riv-Ellen Prell, an anthropologist, is Professor and Chair of American Studies at the University of Minnesota where she also teaches in Jewish studies and women's studies. She is the author of *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender and the Anxiety of Assimilation*, *Prayer and Community: the Havurah in American Judaism*, and co-editor of *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*. She has written over 70 articles and essays on American Jewish life and has been awarded the National Jewish Book Award and a Critics Choice Award of the American Education Association. She serves as the Editor of the Association for Jewish Studies' newsletter, *Perspectives*. She serves on the

Board of Directors of the Association for Jewish Studies, and the academic advisory boards of the Center for Jewish History, the Jewish Women's Archive, the American Jewish Historical Society, and many other scholarly organizations. She can be reached via email at prell001@tc.umn.edu.

Jack Wertheimer serves as Provost and Professor of American Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Among his books and edited volumes are: *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, *Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and Their Members*, *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, and *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*. His essay "Jewish Education in the United States: Recent Trends and Issues," was featured in the 1999 *American Jewish Year Book*, and his essay "The American Synagogue: Recent Issues and Trends," will appear in the 2005 volume of the same annual. He can be reached at jawertheimer@jtsa.edu.

CONSULTANTS:

Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan currently serves as Vice President of UJA-Federation of New York for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources. She can be reached at KurshanA@UJAFEDNY.ORG.

Dr. Jack Ukeles, heads Ukeles Associates, a policy and research firm. He can be reached at Jacku@ukeles.com.



USA
The AVI CHAI Foundation
1015 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10028
Phone: 212-396-8850
Fax: 212-396-8833
E-mail: info@avichaina.org

Israel
Keren AVI CHAI
31 Haneviim
95103 Jerusalem
Phone: 02-624-3330
Fax: 02-624-3310
E-mail: office@avichai.org.il

www.avichai.org.il