



Sylvia Barack Fishman
and **Steven M. Cohen**

Sylvia Barack Fishman
and **Shlomo Fischer**

Partners and Members of the General Meeting:

David Breakstone

as Deputy Chairman of JAFI

Lester Crown and Charles Goodman

on behalf of Crown Family Philanthropies

William Davidson Foundation

Nathan and Frances Kirsh

on behalf of the Kirsh Family Foundation

Irina Nevzlin

on behalf of Nadav Foundation

Robert Kapito and Jeffrey Schoenfeld

on behalf of UJA Federation of New York

Charles Ratner

as Chairman of the JAFI Board of Governors

Ratner Family

Natan Sharansky

as Chairman of the JAFI Executive

David Silvers

as Chairman of the JAFI Budget
and Finance Committee

The Judy and Michael Steinhardt Foundation

Our thanks to UJA Federation of New York,



The Jewish Federations of North America,
The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago,
The Jewish Federation of Cleveland,
Arlene Kaufman and Sandy Baklor,
Art Samberg and Marc Utay,
Alex Grass z"l and Jack Kay z"l
for their support.

Board of Directors and Professional Guiding Council:

Co-Chairs

Stuart Eizenstat

Dennis Ross

Associate Chair

Leonid Nevzlin

Members of the Board

Elliott Abrams

Yohanna Arbib

Irwin Cotler

Wendy Fisher

Sami Friedrich

Misha Galperin

Eric Goldstein

Dan Halperin

Steve Hoffman

Alan Hoffmann

Vernon Kurtz

Bernard-Henri Lévy

Glen Lewy

Judit Bokser Liwerant

Isaac Molho

Steven Nasatir

Jehuda Reinharz

Doron Shorer

Jerry Silverman

Michael Steinhardt

Aharon Yadlin

President and Founding Director

Avinoam Bar-Yosef

Projects Coordinator

Ita Alcalay

Founding President (Emeritus)

Yehezkel Dror



המכון למדיניות העם היהודי (מיסודה של הסוכנות היהודית לא"י) בע"מ (חל"צ)
The Jewish People Policy Institute (Established by the Jewish Agency for Israel) Ltd. (CC)

Family, Engagement, and Jewish Continuity among American Jews

Sylvia Barack Fishman and Steven M. Cohen

Learning Jewishness, Jewish Education, and Jewish Identity

Sylvia Barack Fishman and Shlomo Fischer

Contributors: Rachel S. Bernstein, Dov Maimon
and Shmuel Rosner

Introduction

By Avinoam Bar-Yosef

The sense of belonging to the Jewish people in these times of fluid and multiple identities is challenged by its margins and the demographic developments occurring especially in the United States, the largest Jewish community outside Israel. The middle, in between the Orthodox and Jews of other denominations and of 'no religion,' including the Conservative and Reform streams, were probably the main contributor to today's Jewish strength. But, in recent decades, this pillar of Jewish life has been in significant decline.

In the New York area, more than 65 percent of Jewish children under the age of 18 are being raised in Orthodox homes, mainly in ultra-Orthodox families. According to Prof. Steven Cohen: the portion of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox children in the U.S. exceeds 27 percent. Today, only 10 to 12 percent of U.S. Jewry is Orthodox, but this new demographic trend shows that the number is quickly rising as a result of high birthrates, in counter distinction to the late marriage and small families in the other streams.

At the other end of the spectrum we see less and less Jewish engagement. Judaism is becoming more significant in non-Jewish environments, but Jewish belonging in the next generations of mixed families is not guaranteed. Their youth are distancing. They are less inspired by their own roots and often over simplify the challenges faced by Israel. Many are attracted to anti-Israel groups on campuses and elsewhere.

The middle is shrinking. Some are moving toward the Modern Orthodox community, but more are sliding out slowly. The general American society is much more open and hospitable to Jews than ever before and this creates competing identification opportunities.

The significant contributions the Modern Orthodox make to the Jewish community, and to Jewish influence generally, is a great asset today. But

still, more than two thirds of the Orthodox are Haredi, and they are not particularly engaged in the established Jewish organizational system, and in the general American society. This poses an urgent need for intervention.

Every Jew who cares should echo the call President Reuven Rivlin made to the North American Haredi spiritual leadership to encourage their constituents to participate in Jewish American life and the broader American society. Rivlin, in his opening remarks at JPPI's 2017 Conference on the Future of the Jewish People, expressed his worry that the ultra-Orthodox community doesn't yet grasp that their growth comes with an increased shouldering of the larger burden of responsibility for Jewish wellbeing.

This era of globalization contributes greatly to making the identity and identification paradigm one of choice. This creates a critical challenge for Israel and the North American Jewish leadership to invest more in the middle in order to mitigate its dwindling. The papers in this publication show the importance of creating a life-cycle strategy, starting with enhanced post b'nei mitzvah Jewish engagement opportunities.

These hard truths are discussed with an action-oriented approach in two papers, one prepared at JPPI by two prominent American Jewish scholars, Professors Sylvia Barack-Fishman and Steven M. Cohen. The other paper published here on the same subject was written by Prof. Barack-Fishman and JPPI's Senior Fellow Dr. Shlomo Fischer. I would like to thank them all for their effort and also Prof. Uzi Rebhun, also a JPPI Senior Fellow, whose input and support was invaluable.

Family, Engagement, and Jewish Continuity among American Jews

Sylvia Barack Fishman and Steven M. Cohen

Abstract

Addressing the concerns of many Jewish policymakers, this paper provides a detailed, data-based delineation of how closely marriage and parenting are bound together with Jewish identity. Analyzing non-Haredi Jews ages 25 to 54, as represented in the 2013 Pew Research Center survey of American Jews,¹ we find that extraordinarily large numbers of them are non-married, intermarried, childless, and/or not raising children as Jewish-by-religion. Moreover, delayed marriage, non-marriage, intermarriage, and declining Jewish child-rearing each poses severe impediments to Jewish identity and connections, both now and in the future. Those with fewer Jewish intimate relationships (again: spouses, children, and friends) exhibit fewer and weaker Jewish connections themselves. In contrast, the presence of Jewish spouses and Jewish children in the household, along with having Jewish friends, reflects and promotes extensive Jewish connections and engagement. Accordingly, certain family patterns might be considered “best practices” in terms of promoting Jewish connectedness for both parents and children.

These findings underscore the critical need for policymakers and practitioners to enhance possibilities for more robust Jewish family formation patterns, specifically earlier marriage, marriage to Jews, and Jewish child-rearing. As we show, all are conducive - separately and even more so together - to deeper and broader Jewish engagement in this generation, as well as Jewish continuity in future generations. Decades of decline in many forms of Jewish engagement derive in large part from abandonment of once-conventional Jewish marriage and child-rearing patterns. In turn, stabilizing or reviving Jewish engagement will depend upon influencing the family-related behaviors of today's young adult Jews.

American Jewish families today

Considerable disturbing evidence points to deeply challenging trends in America's Jewish families -- late marriage, intermarriage, reduced child-bearing and non-Jewish child-rearing. Nevertheless, prominent Jewish thought leaders are sharply divided over the state of the Jewish family and its implications for the Jewish future.

The divisions are well-illustrated by responses to a recent controversial manifesto - "Strategic Directions for Jewish Life: A Call to Action" - signed by 74 diverse American Jewish leaders, rabbis, and scholars.² Highlighting rising intermarriage and low birthrates, the statement provoked strong objections from readers who insisted that changing patterns of family formation are not particularly worrisome, or they are not an appropriate focus for policy discussion.

Some commentators dismissed the urgency of demographic concerns, concurring with Rabbi Aaron Potek who wrote, "By focusing our attention on 'the numbers,' the signatories seem to be more concerned with Jews than Judaism."³ In similar fashion, Boston Hebrew College President Rabbi Daniel Lehman lamented what he characterized as the statement's exclusion of "visionary" and "spiritual content."⁴ David Manchester objected to language used to characterize the intermarried: "Labeling interfaith couples a 'challenge' minimizes the ways in which many of those parents have instilled an appreciation and love of Judaism in their children."⁵ Yehuda Kurtzer faulted the terminology and notion of crisis.⁶ Jonathan Woocher disputed the very assertion of crisis: "Fundamentally, we disagree with the premise that American Jewry is in crisis and that the key issue facing the community is the 'shrinking Jewish Middle,'⁷ a term given to the proximate middle of the Jewish identity spectrum, with

Orthodox Jews on one side, and those who are only marginally engaged in Jewish life on the other. Both the Orthodox and the marginally engaged are growing in number, while those situated between them are in demographic decline.

In short, critics of the statements insisted, implicitly or explicitly, that the number of active Jews in the future is assured (dismissing concerns about marriage and childrearing), or that numbers are not critical to the quality of Jewish life in America.

Consistent with the critics' thinking, one line of research takes a relatively sanguine view of intermarriage and its consequences. For example, a recent report (Sasson and Saxe, et. al. "Millennial Children of Intermarriage") enlarges upon the upbeat findings of high rates of Jewish identification among the youngest adult-offspring of intermarriage reported by Sasson. The former asserts (accurately) that "most children of intermarriage ... were raised Jewish in some fashion." The report points to the high rates with which Jews are "proud" to be Jews, the growing number of intermarried couples' offspring who identify as Jewish, and the effectiveness of Jewish educational experiences among the young adult portion of the intermarried. In so doing, the researchers call into question the traditionally negative assessment of intermarriage and its consequences.⁸

The "Call to Action" provoked considerable dissent and pushback from these and other critics, demonstrating that thought leaders and policy makers lack clear consensus on the research published thus far. Clearly, without the effective communication of hard evidence - one objective of this paper - it will be difficult to mobilize Jewish communal leaders in America and Israel to act vigorously to meet the challenges posed. If we may be permitted to quote from the New Testament: "For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8)

To contribute to this policy-related discourse, we demonstrate below that Jewish social networks (spouse and close friends), Jewish education,

Jewish family formation, and Jewish inter-generational continuity mutually reinforce one another, recalling what JPPI once termed a “virtuous circle.”⁹ Put simply: More Jewish personal relationships nurture more Jewish engagement; and the more Jewishly engaged develop and sustain more Jewish personal relationships. Hence, fewer Jewish relationships mean less engagement and fewer Jews; and less engagement and fewer Jews mean fewer personal relationships among Jews in families or among friends.

Jews - once again - are “like others only more so”

The family patterns of American Jews in many ways resemble those of American non-Jews with comparable socio-economic, educational, and occupational profiles. Researchers of family and religion have long demonstrated that peak ethno-religious involvement is associated with life-cycle status, especially with marriage and children.¹⁰ Across religious groups, maritally-intact couples with school-age children at home display relatively high levels of religious engagement, however that engagement is measured. Conversely, the absence of children – along with divorce, widowhood, and non-marriage – are associated with depressed levels of religious engagement.

Moreover, spouses of any religion who share ethno-religious backgrounds are more likely to raise children who, in turn, grow up to marry and raise children in that particular religious tradition.¹¹ Much like non-married and non-parent Jewish adults, intermarried Jews exhibit lower than average rates of Jewish involvement. It is also accurate to say that they exhibit lower than average rates of Jewish continuity, as indicated by the large extent to which their children fail to identify as Jews and create Jewish families when they become adults.¹²

Dramatic changes in family patterns and characteristics underlie equally dramatic changes in religious behavior in the larger society in the recent past. In the 1950s and 1960s, America experienced a large upsurge of religious affiliation. More and more Americans joined houses of worship, both churches and synagogues, and more of them attended religious services. Church leaders – both lay and clergy – congratulated themselves on the apparent return to religion on the part of their congregants and parishioners. At the same time, some social scientists said, in effect, “Not

so fast!" In their view, the growth in church activity was being fueled and driven not so much by extraordinary church leadership or a newly found hunger in the land for God and religion, but by the post-WWII "Baby Boom." The title of one such article in this line of scholarship is especially illustrative: "A Little Child Shall Lead Them: A Statistical Test of an Hypothesis That Children Were the Source of the American 'Religious Revival.'"¹³ In other words, the growth in marriage, young couples, children, and parenthood all served to stimulate church-joining, church-going, and church-growing.

Just as widespread marriage and a baby boom spurred religious activity in the 1950s, a half century later, several family-related trends have been associated with declining religious engagement. Americans started marrying later or not at all; they divorced more often; they reduced their birthrates or eschewed parenthood altogether. Delayed or non-marriage and a birth dearth were factors that went along with declining religious activity among Jews as well.

Robert Wuthnow notes, "Almost all of the decline in religious observance...has taken place among those young adults who are not married."¹⁴ Amidst this slow and steady decline in religious affiliation, participation and identification in America – especially among young adults – religious leaders (Jews included) have wondered whether they were doing something especially wrong. Sermons, dues, programs, education, prayer, and all manner of religious functioning have come under scrutiny and demands for greater vision and creativity.

Currently, not only has American religious participation diminished, it has become increasingly concentrated among the conventionally configured couples-with-children who themselves make up a smaller fraction of the entire population. It should be noted that among younger Jewish Americans even that minority of "conventional" heterosexual two-parent families with children looks different than its parallels in the 1950s - today the majority include two parents who are labor force participants.¹⁵

Building upon this scholarship and these observations, this paper examines the contours of Jewish family formation today and their relationship with expressions of Jewish identity. More pointedly, with respect to relatively younger non-Haredi American Jewish adults today, it asks questions in five critical, related areas:

- **Marriage:** To what extent are Jews' marriage patterns consistent with that associated, at least in the past, with high rates of Jewish engagement, and to what extent do they tend to depart from those patterns? How many Jews are married to other Jews, and how many are non-married or married to non-Jews?
- **Children:** Similarly, what are the childbearing and religious childrearing patterns of American Jews? How many are raising children as Jews, and specifically as Jews in the Jewish religion - a designation with important implications for the next generation? Alternatively, how many are raising no children, raising children as non-Jews, or raising their children as nominally Jewish, but with no expressions of Jewishness or religion?
- **Family configurations:** Given the variety of possibilities with respect to marriage and childrearing, what are the major family configurations (involving both spouses and children) and to what extent are today's Jews distributed across these configurations?
- **Family influence on Jewish engagement:** Looking at the various configurations of marital status and childrearing, which sorts of Jewish engagement are associated with which types of family configurations? What are the Jewish identity differences between those who are non-married, inmarried, and intermarried, and what are the differences between those raising no children, non-Jewish children, Jewish children without any religion, or children in the Jewish religion?
- **Policy implications:** Finally, in light of these findings, what are the implications for policy? To what extent is it critical to influence the family formation decisions of today's American Jews and what might be done to influence those decisions?

Data and sub-sample

The data for our analysis derive from the survey of American Jews conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2013 (see Portrait of Jewish Americans).¹⁶ To address the most policy-relevant population given our concerns, we focus upon current Jews (as opposed to former Jews, non-Jewish adult-offspring of Jews, or those with some alleged Jewish affinity). That is, we put aside those Pew’s researchers called, “Jews by background” and “Jews by affinity,” the non-Jewish respondents caught by the Pew survey’s wide net, which went beyond those who now identify as Jews. And, for the purposes of this analysis, we also set aside the Haredi population who, by all accounts, are demographically quite healthy – with their exceptionally low intermarriage rates, early marriage, high birthrates, and increasing inter-generational retention.¹⁷

Among those who are currently Jewish but not Haredi, we limit our analysis to the 25-54 age cohort, leaving us with respondents representing 2.1 million Jewish adults out of the nearly 5.3 million total estimated by the Pew researchers. We exclude those under 25 years of age because very few non-Haredi Jews age 18-24 are married, let alone have children – two of the central foci of this paper. Equally significant, since this paper aims in part to contribute to understanding and policy-making connected with younger Jews, limiting the analysis to those 54 and younger seems warranted.

Our study analyzes the broad spectrum of American Jews ages 25-54, from Modern Orthodox Jews at one end of the continuum to non-denominational Jews, who score lowest on measures of Jewish engagement. Many of the latter call themselves “partially Jewish,” often because they are children of one Jewish parent. One third of our respondents (33 percent) had one Jewish parent; 62 percent had two Jewish parents; and 5 percent reported that neither parent was Jewish. Their self-defined Jewish denominations include 41 percent who have no denomination; 36 percent Reform; 19 percent Conservative; and 5 percent Modern Orthodox.

Findings

Fewer young Jews are married

As a group, this generation of contemporary younger Americans is marrying later than the generation of their parents and grandparents, according to numerous previous studies. We may illustrate this trend with reference to almost any local Jewish community study conducted repeatedly over the years (and every such community will differ from a national sample). For example, the Boston Jewish Population Survey conducted every ten years from 1965 onward shows a clear trajectory of declining marriage rates: among 30-39 year olds, 87-88 percent were married in 1965 and 1975, but only 67-69 percent in 1985 and 1995.¹⁸ Today, half (50 percent) of non-Haredi American Jews ages 25 to 54 are currently not married, although some have partners.

Table 1
Marital status by age among non-Haredi Jews, 25-54

				Total
	25-34	35-44	45-54	
Married	27%	71%	57%	50%
Living with a partner	16%	8%	5%	10%
Divorced	4%	7%	17%	10%
Separated		1%	4%	1%
Widowed	.	.	3%	1%
Never been married	53%	13%	13%	28%

Even more (at least 53 percent, though possibly as high as 69 percent if we presume that those with partners have never married) have never been married among the youngest group, ages 25 to 34 (which despite advances in medically assisted reproduction treatments are still physiologically the most fertile years). By the time Jews reach their late 40s and 50s, as Table 1 shows, the number who have ever married reaches only 87 percent. Many in the non-Haredi population in recent years have missed the opportunity to marry during the prime childbearing years. Significantly, in our sub-sample, of the married people, 68 percent have children in their households, as compared with just 2 percent of the never married.

Owing to (some) divorce and (a little) widowhood, the percent who are currently married falls somewhat below the number who are ever-married. Thus, at its peak level - which occurs at age 35-44 - just 71 percent are married and 29 percent are currently single/non-married.

Fewer young JEWS are married to Jews

Among non-Haredi American Jews age 25-54, just 21 percent are married to Jews, while well over twice as many (50 percent) are non-married and 29 percent are intermarried. Percentages of Jews married to or partnered with Jews or non-Jews, compared to those not married or partnered, are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2
Inmarriage,* intermarriage* and non-marriage among non-Haredi Jews, 25-54

	Percent
Non-Jewish spouse/partner	29
No spouse/partner	50
Jewish spouse/partner	21
Total	100

*Includes non-married couples, i.e., partners

Table 3**Intermarriage rates by five-year age intervals, for those now married, non-Haredi Jews, 25-54**

			Total
	Inmarried: Both J by birth or conversion	Intermarried: Respondent Jewish, Spouse not	
25-29	52%	48%	100%
30-34	25%	75%	100%
35-39	27%	73%	100%
40-44	40%	60%	100%
45-49	51%	49%	100%
50-54	55%	45%	100%
Total	42%	58%	100%

Below, in Table 4, we portray a variety family characteristics by five-year age intervals, lending further granularity to our preceding discussion of marriage patterns and our forthcoming discussion of childbearing.

One entry may cause some mystification: The relatively high rate of inmarriage (52 percent) among those 25-29, as seen above in Table 2b. This figure should not be seen as a powerful and sudden turn to inmarriage on the part of younger Jews, but rather as a result of the early marriage tendencies of Modern Orthodox Jews. Accordingly, the Orthodox comprise a larger proportion of younger married Jews (16 vs. 4 percent among those 30 and over who are married) partially accounting for the high rates of inmarried among the small number who have managed to marry by aged 25-29. (To be sure, the case size here is very small.)

Table 4**Family types by 5-year age groups, non-Haredi Jews ages 25-54**

Age 5 year Groups	Ever Married	Married	Inter- married (% of those married)	Any Children	Any Jewish Children at home	Any Jew - by - religion Children
25-29	15	13	60	8	7	4
30-34	53	46	34	29	19	8
35-39	77	69	50	73	54	33
40-44	80	73	44	68	54	32
45-49	81	50	25	47	40	29
50-54	83	65	28	34	31	20
Total	62	50	29	39	31	19

Fewer young Jews are raising children as Jews-by-religion

Among all non-Haredi American Jews 25-54 (not only those who are married), only 39 percent report children in their homes. Just one in five report raising “Jewish-by-religion” children, and another 12 percent are raising “Jewish but not by religion” children; thus just under one-third - 31 percent - of non-Haredi American Jews 25-54 are raising children as Jews in some way. The clear majority (61 percent) have no children at home whatsoever.

Of course, the rates at which people find themselves with children and with Jewish children at home vary over the years, typically rising modestly with age. Table 5 shows that among those aged 25-39, 32 percent have children home, with 13 percent raising children who are Jewish-by-religion, 12 percent raising children who are Jewish but not by religion, and 9 percent raising non-Jewish children. Among those aged 40 to 54, 52 percent have children home, with 28 percent raising Jewish-by-religion children, 13

percent raising Jewish but not by religion children, and 8 percent raising non-Jewish children.

Now, some of the people who reported no children may well go on to have children, and some who are raising children one way may decide to raise them differently. But, assuming only minimal changes such as these it does seem reasonable to estimate that about a quarter of non-Haredi adult Jews now in their 30s may never have children (a number not all that different from the one in five of those in their 40s who have never married).

Table 5
Status of children at home for non-Haredi Jews 25-39 and 40-54

			Total
	25-39	40-54	
Non-Jewish child(ren)	9%	8%	8%
No children	68%	52%	60%
Jews with No Religion child(ren)	12%	13%	11%
Jewish-by-religion child(ren)	13%	28%	21%
	100%	100%	100%

By similar logic, it stands to reason that, based on the small number of 30-somethings who are raising children in the Jewish religion, it may well be the case that a solid majority (perhaps 60 percent) of American non-Haredi Jewish adults will never have the experience of raising children in Judaism. Our data show that not raising a Jewish child has a profound effect not only on the affected children who are or are not raised in unambiguously Jewish homes, but also on the adult Jewish lives of the parents.

Family configurations

The patterns of marriage and childbearing reported above combine to produce rather small numbers of Jews whose family circumstances are conducive to their own Jewish engagement and to the likelihood of their contributing to Jewish demographic continuity. Most strikingly, as we see in Table 6 below, just 15 percent of non-Haredi Jews 25-54 are inmarried with Jewish children at home, and another 8 percent are inmarried with no children. At the same time, 9 percent are raising children as non-Jews, and 17 percent are intermarried with no children. The largest category - almost a third - are unmarried with no children at home and no non-Jewish adults in the household.

Table 6
Family configurations for all non-Haredi american Jews ages 25-54

	Percent
non-Jewish children*	8
non-J Spouse, no children	17
non-J Spouse, J children	13
No Spouse, NJ adults in HH	4
No Spouse	32
Single Parent, Jewish children	4
Jewish Spouse, no children	8
Jewish Spouse, Jewish children	15
Total	100

*Most Jews raising non-Jewish children are married to non-Jewish spouses

Who is more likely to marry Jews and raise Jewish-by-religion children?

All other things being equal, what background variables are most associated with marriage, inmarriage, and raising Jewish-by-religion children? Parental inmarriage is associated with the likelihood of marriage (two-thirds compared to just over half at ages 40-54), inmarriage, having children and having Jewish children, as Table 7 below clearly shows. The likelihood of inmarriage is by extension associated with raising Jewish-by-religion children. Simply put, hardly any children (17 percent) of mixed marriages marry Jews and an almost equally small number (21 percent) raise their children as Jews.

The finding that children of two Jews are more likely to replicate aspects of the home they grew up in comports with the research literature generally showing that more religious Americans and intra-group marriage exhibit more traditional family patterns.¹⁹ While the interwoven causal links are impossible to disentangle, intermarriage, divorce, and low religiosity are all linked, both within generations and across generations. Conversely, inmarriage, marital stability, and higher religiosity are empirically and causally linked as well. Although many readers may regard the percentage of non-Haredi households raising Jewish-by-religion households to be surprisingly low, adult children of two Jewish parents are three times as likely to be raising these children as adult children of one Jewish parent (27 compared to 8 percent).

Table 7**Marital status by parents' in marriage for non-Haredi Jews, 25-54**

	25-39			40-54			Total	
	Parents were inter-married	Both par-ents were Jewish	Total	Parents were inter-married	Both par-ents were Jewish	Total	Parents were inter-married	Both par-ents were Jewish
Married	36%	38%	37%	55%	65%	63%	42%	54%
Ever Married	43%	41%	42%	77%	83%	81%	54%	66%
Intermarried	94%	52%	71%	78%	46%	52%	87%	48%
Any Children	34%	30%	32%	41%	51%	48%	36%	42%
Any Jewish Children	17%	27%	22%	26%	46%	41%	20%	38%
Any JBR Children	6%	18%	13%	11%	32%	27%	8%	27%

Another factor associated with marriage patterns is Jewish education. Even after controlling for parents' denomination, their inmarriage state, as well as respondents' age and sex, Jewish educational experiences in one's youth are predictive of lower intermarriage. Among them are day school attendance for seven years or more (a decline of 16 percentage points), attending Hebrew school for seven years or more (a seven-point difference), and attending an overnight camp with Jewish content (worth 11 points toward improved chances of marrying a Jew). That significant impact is not confined to inmarriage alone; it extends to the likelihood of raising Jewish-by-religion children. Having seven or more years of day school raises such probability by seven percentage points, compared with 15 points for seven or more years of Hebrew school, and seven points for Jewish camping. Similarly, the same three factors are highly associated

with raising Jewish-by-religion children. These findings²⁰ demonstrate that educational interventions can change adult outcomes. Jewish education that extends into the teen years not only makes adult Jews more likely to forge Jewish connections, it makes them more likely to marry another Jew, and to raise Jewish-by-religion children.

Family Influence on Jewish engagement

Marital status and Jewish identity

The intermarried, non-married, and inmarried report very different levels on every Jewish identity indicator available on the Pew survey. The non-married substantially out-score the intermarried, and the inmarried substantially outscore the non-married. As the tables below show, the gaps in Jewish engagement indicators between the Jews who are inmarried and those who are intermarried are truly enormous.

To take a few examples (Table 8): As we move from intermarried to non-married to inmarried, we find increases in feeling that being Jewish is very important: 25 vs. 40 vs. 63 percent; for having mostly Jewish friends: 8 vs. 22 vs. 48 percent; for belonging to a synagogue: 12 vs. 25 vs. 70 percent; and, most critically, for the percent of one's children being raised in the Jewish religion: 20 vs. 46 vs. 94 percent.

Raising Jewish-by-religion children is an extremely significant measure, because it is almost exclusively those being raised as Jewish-by-religion who are provided with some sort of formal and informal Jewish education. This and other studies have shown that providing children with Jewish education has a measurable impact on the Jewish connectedness of the whole family, as well as on the adult connectedness of the children involved.²¹ The percentages of Jewish-by-religion children is only half as high among the intermarried as the non-married, and less than a quarter as among the inmarried. We cannot know the exact extent to which marital status influences Jewish engagement or to which prior levels of engagement influences getting married, staying married, and marrying a Jew or non-Jew. The causal process operates in both directions: Marital status is closely tied to levels of Jewish engagement.

Table 8

Jewish identity indicators for non-married, intermarried and inmarried non-Haredi Jews, 25-54

	Non-Jewish spouse / partner	No spouse / partner	Jewish spouse / partner	Total
Imp Being Jewish	25%	40%	63%	41%
Seder	54%	59%	93%	64%
Yom Kippur Fasting	31%	45%	83%	49%
Attend Hi Holidays	30%	50%	86%	52%
No Christmas Tree	20%	66%	90%	58%
Usually lights Shabbat candles	6%	14%	39%	17%
Attends services monthly or more	8%	15%	41%	18%
Kosher in the home	6%	28%	33%	23%
Synagogue member	13%	22%	65%	27%
Jewish org'n member	10%	20%	53%	24%
Gives to any Jewish charity	36%	36%	84%	46%
Very emotionally attached to Israel	12%	24%	44%	25%
Most friends Jewish	8%	22%	48%	24%
Pct of children being raised as Jew-by religion	20%	46%	93%	48%

The powerful impact of Jewish children

We see similar patterns with respect to Jewish children, and a similar underlying logic of a two-way process at work. We divide our respondents into those raising non-Jewish children, those with no children at home, and those raising children they report as Jewish but not by religion, and those raising Jewish-by-religion children.²² The differences in Jewish identity indicators are very sizable at each increment (Table 9).

Among those raising their children as non-Jews, levels of Jewish engagement are truly quite low. None of these respondents reported synagogue membership, and just 3-5 percent belong to a Jewish organization, have mostly Jewish friends, feel very attached to Israel, or feel being Jewish is important to them. Somewhat larger numbers attend a Passover Seder (28 percent) and give to some donation to a Jewish charity (15 percent).

Perhaps surprising to some, those with no children uniformly score higher - sometimes dramatically - on measures of Jewish engagement than those with non-Jewish children at home. Consider, for example, seeing being Jewish as very important (39 percent for the no-children group, vs. 4 percent for the parents of non-Jewish children). Other indicators with sharp contrasts include fasting on Yom Kippur (47 vs. 9 percent), belonging to a synagogue (25 vs. 0 percent), and feeling very attached to Israel (25 vs. 5 percent). The bottom line: Childless adults are far more active in Jewish life than those raising their children as non-Jews.

The data also strongly illuminate numerous and profound differences between parents raising children Jewish but not by religion and those raising children Jewish-by-religion. As Table 9 illustrates, parents raising Jewish-by-religion children are more than twice as likely to feel the importance of being Jewish (66 vs. 29 percent), to feel very emotionally attached to Israel (38 vs. 13 percent), to belong to any type of Jewish organization (45 vs. 14 percent), or to attend services on the High Holidays (82 vs. 31 percent). Table 9 shows that 85 percent of those raising children Jewish not by religion sometimes have a Christmas tree in their homes. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent of families with two Jewish spouses who are raising Jewish-by-religion children have Christmas trees. And as for having mostly Jewish

friends - a key marker of group cohesiveness - we find far more among Jews raising Jewish-by-religion children than among those raising children as Jewish with no religion (48 vs. 7 percent).

Table 9

Jewish identity indicators among those with no children, non-Jewish children and Jewish children, non-Haredi Jews, 25-44

	Non-Jewish child(ren)	No children	Jewish child(ren) No Relig// By Relig
Imp Being Jewish	4%	39%	29%/66%
Most Friends Jewish	4%	21%	7%/48%
Seder	28%	58%	69%/96%
Yom Kippur Fasting	9%	47%	31%/82%
Attend Hi Holidays	11%	50%	31%/87%
No Christmas Tree	12%	65%	15%/79%
Usually lights Shabbat candles	1%	15%	1%/39%
Attends services monthly+	2%	15%	7%/42%
Kosher in the home	8%	26%	11%/25%
Synagogue member	0%	25%	13%/67%
Jewish org'n member	4%	21%	14%/45%
Gives to any Jewish charity	15%	38%	32%/88%
Very emotionally attached to Israel	5%	25%	13%/38%
Pct of children being raised as Jewish-by-religion	0%		<u>0%/99%</u>

As might now be expected, those with Jewish children at home in turn out-score those with no children, and even more substantially out-score those with non-Jewish children in their households. In every measurable way, the presence of Jewish children - and raising children as Jewish-by-religion - both reflects a prior commitment to Jewish life and, as well, the positive influence of Jewish children upon Jewish engagement. Engaged Jews raise Jewish children, and parents of Jewish children are more engaged in Jewish life.

Marriage and children work together

We have seen that the presence of Jewish spouses and children each is associated with higher levels of Jewish engagement, while non-Jewish spouses and children in the home each seem to diminish the likelihood of Jewish engagement. Younger adult Jews with greater Jewish socialization and education are more likely to marry Jews and have Jewish children. At the same time, the presence of Jewish family members provides cause and motivation for increased Jewish involvement. To explore the matter further, we developed an 8-category classification of the respondents based upon their marital and parenting statuses (Table 10). As might be expected, we witness steady increases in Jewish engagement as we move from circumstances where family members are non-Jewish, to where they are not present, to where they are entirely Jewish (inmarried parents, raising Jewish children).

The entirely Jewish, multi-person family is truly the “gold standard” of Jewish family configurations. Among non-Haredi unmarried Jews with Jewish children at home, we find the following high levels of Jewish engagement indicators: seder attendance (95 percent); fasting Yom Kippur (84 percent); attending High Holiday services (87 percent); belonging to a synagogue (72 percent); and giving to Jewish charities (87 percent). On all these indicators, the unmarried with Jewish children home out-score all other family configurations. The next most active groups are the unmarried with no Jewish children at home and single parents raising Jewish children.

Table 10

Jewish identity by family configuration, all non-Haredi Jewish Americans ages 25-54

	Non-Jew- ish child	Non-J spouse, no child	Non-J spouse, Jewish child	No spouse, Non-J adults	No spouse, no child	Single parent, Jewish child	Jewish spouse, no child	Jewish spouse, Jewish child
Imp Being Jewish	4%	33%	38%	22%	39%	66%	63%	63%
Most Friends Jewish	4%	4%	14%	22%	25%	24%	40%	54%
Seder	28%	50%	74%	21%	59%	95%	95%	95%
Yom Kippur Fasting	9%	39%	44%	12%	47%	56%	78%	84%
Attend Hi Holidays	11%	37%	45%	16%	54%	67%	74%	87%
No Christmas Tree	12%	40%	19%	42%	74%	53%	88%	91%
Usually Shab candles	1%	9%	4%	10%	16%	25%	27%	44%
Services monthly+	2%	8%	10%	0%	17%	32%	27%	44%
Kosher in the home	8%	15%	7%	19%	30%	20%	35%	31%
Synagogue member	0%	11%	22%	13%	25%	42%	65%	72%
Jewish org'n member	4%	9%	18%	2%	25%	17%	42%	53%
Gives, Jewish charity	15%	34%	48%	11%	36%	64%	71%	87%
Very attached to Israel	5%	14%	16%	19%	26%	30%	51%	40%
Pct of children raised as Jewish by religion	0%		32%			54%		96%

Raising Jewish children has a profound impact on personal Jewish identity. For decades, research showed that American Jews become more involved with Judaism after they marry and especially after they give birth to and begin to raise their children, a pattern felicitously discussed in Marshall Sklare's pioneering work in the early 1960s.²³ Informants in Fishman's 2004 study of 254 men and women, Jewish and non-Jewish spouses in intermarried, conversionary, and inmarried households revealed that many intermarrying as well as inmarrying spouses - Jewish and Christian - are surprised by the strength of their own responses with the arrival of children. Those who thought their religious identities didn't matter to them when they were dating, or even when they were married without children, discover that religion does matter to them as parents, as they need to decide which religious identity/identities to transmit to their children. In inmarried households, the mutual discovery that Jewishness matters to both spouses reinforces the likelihood that they will join a synagogue and enroll their children in Jewish schools. In intermarried households, in contrast, the discoveries that Judaism and Christianity matter more than previously thought sometime opens up tense conversations. Rather than pursuing sore subjects, many parents retreat from the topic of religion altogether, raising children of "no religion."²⁴

Marriage to Jews and the raising of Jewish-by-religion children are key to the current and future Jewish vitality of American Jewry, as well as to its transmissibility. The family first, and then community and friendships, create the conditions for formal and informal Jewish education to take place. The impact of spouses on each other, and of parents and children on each other, and of close and even loosely tied friendship circles, continues to matter.²⁵

Policy implications

Communal implications of reduced marriage and fertility

Numerous studies, including a recent qualitative study of Jewish fertility goals, show that most Jewish women continue to hope to have children “someday.” However, many do not assign childbearing chronological priority, and encounter unexpected infertility, often having no or fewer children than their expected family size.²⁶

Moreover, beyond personal disappointments in not finding a suitable spouse or parenting children, the Jewish communal implications of the marriage and childrearing patterns reported above are rather grave, for four related reasons: (1) With so much non-marriage and late-marriage, a significant segment of adult Jews lacks the incentive that typically propels both Jews and non-Jews to engage in religious community life: a spouse. (2) Without marriage and parenthood, younger Jewish adults are measurably less involved in Jewish life and have fewer Jewish connections. (3) Fewer Jewish children are being raised as Jewish-by-religion, being provided with Jewish education, and being prepared for creating their own Jewishly connected households in adulthood. (4) The disruptive effect of these marital patterns is not limited to non-marriage and very late marriage, but is exacerbated by intermarriage. Synagogues and other Jewish institutions, long heavily reliant upon inmarried Jews with children for members and participants, may be wondering: Where are the 20-somethings, let alone the 30-somethings? These results provide part of the answer to their questioning: only a very small minority of 20-somethings are inmarried as is a minority of 30-somethings. Most of these young adults are “off-line” Jewishly in the sense that only a minority are both married and married to a Jewish spouse. But marriage provides only part of the answer to the mystery of the missing Jews.

The absence of children - particularly children being raised in the Jewish religion - represents yet one more missing incentive to Jewish communal engagement. Since religious childrearing has been a major stimulus for religious engagement in general and for Jewish engagement as well, major portions of the adult Jewish population not only postpone such experiences, but - not coincidentally - pass through their adult lives without experiencing a familial-based need to affiliate with synagogues or other Jewish institutions. Clearly, it is critical to understand the factors making it more likely that younger American Jews will marry, create unambiguously Jewish homes, and raise Jewish children.

Our findings demonstrate that educational interventions in childhood can change outcomes in adulthood. Jewish education that extends into the teen years not only makes adult Jews more likely to forge Jewish connections- it makes them more likely to marry another Jew, and to raise Jewish-by-religion children. Moreover, Jewish education is a strategic intervention that can be very much influenced by imaginative and energetic communal efforts.

Supporting Jewish education and Jewish social networks

Jewish family, Jewish social networks, and Jewish education have a mutually supportive - even symbiotic - relationship with each other. Statistically, marriage to Jews and Jewish parenting (i.e., raising children as Jews, ideally with a Jewish religious identification) elevate Jewish engagement; at the same time, Jewish engagement promotes marriage to Jews and Jewish parenting.

The connection between Jewish engagement and Jewish parenting can be seen in the far higher rates of Jewish engagement expressed by those raising their children in the Jewish religion, as this paper has shown. On all indicators of Jewish engagement, parents raising “Jewish-by-religion” children ranked far, far higher than those raising “non-Jewish” children, as well as those not raising children at home.

Now, a cross-sectional survey cannot allow the analyst to disentangle whether Jewish parenting brings about more Jewish engagement, or whether Jewish engagement brings about more Jewish parenting. We do know from other studies that in the case of affiliating with synagogues, for example, parenthood usually precedes affiliation. Rather, we believe BOTH processes are at work: Family decisions affect Jewish identity and Jewish identity affects family decisions.

The major policy implications of our findings is that interventions in two broad areas can help promote successful Jewish outcomes among the next generation of (non-Haredi) American Jews. One critical policy intervention is developing and supporting a range of Jewish educational endeavors. The second critical intervention entails promoting Jewish social networks for adolescents and single young adults. Jews who know Jews tend both to marry Jews and to be recruited for further Jewish engagement. Extending the years of formal education through the high school years is critically important.

In fact, to go beyond the current data, one reason why we believe Jewish education “works,” is that schools, camps, youth groups, and Israel experiences all establish and deepen friendships among Jewish adolescents and young adults, and they carry those friendships forward for years if not decades.

Fortunately, our research not only shows the depth of the challenges but also points to ways to meet those challenges. The organized Jewish community cannot compel earlier marriage and should not appear to be interfering in any way with free personal choice. (It would be wise to articulate its concerns tactfully.) But it can work to enhance the opportunities for young Jews to create social networks (i.e., create Jewish friendships) - which in turn will exert a positive impact upon Jewish engagement before marriage, and elevate the likelihood of Jews marrying Jews. Insofar as strong Jewish social networks support and sustain Jewish engagement, these social networks may be facilitated through a diverse range of programs that promote and enhance the Jewish social networks of Jews in their 20s and 30s.

American Jewish thought leaders, policy makers, philanthropists, and practitioners have paid scant attention to the centrality of the family to

Jewish vitality. Many regard all Jewish journeys and family configurations not only as equal valid, but as equally valuable for Jewish engagement and continuity.

In contrast with such avowedly non-discriminatory and non-discriminating thinking, our study demonstrates that Jewish spouses matter, Jewish children matter, and, more generally, the configuration of Jewish families matters a great deal for current Jewish engagement and future Jewish continuity. The resistance to studying and discussing the declining numbers of Jewish families and declining numbers of children raised as “Jews-by-religion” precludes the readiness to respond to that challenge. Moving forward to confront this challenge to Jewish families is critical. The data are clear: Jewish families raising Jewish children are central to a viable next generation for tomorrow and a vital Jewish community for today.

Endnotes

- 1 A report by Luis Lugo, Alan Cooperman, Gregory Smith et. al., *A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Finding from a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. Jews* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2013), analyzed some of the findings of the Pew survey. Our study is cognizant of this “Portrait” report, but most of the data we utilize and discuss has been newly generated by Steven M. Cohen from the larger data set.
- 2 “Strategic Directions for Jewish Life: A Call to Action.” Posted on October 4, 2015, www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com.
- 3 Rabbi Aaron Potek, “Beyond the Numbers, Towards the Soul,” Posted on October 4, 2015, www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com.
- 4 Daniel Lehman, “The vitality of American Judaism will depend nurturing talented and thoughtful people.” Posted on October 18, 2015, www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com.
- 5 David Manchester, “An Argument for Optimism,” Posted on October 8, 2015, www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com.
- 6 Yehuda Kurzer, “Between Crisis and Content,” *Times of Israel*, October 7, 2015.
- 7 Jonathan Woocher, “The ‘Statement on Jewish Vitality’: One Foundation’s Response,” Posted on October 12, 2015, www.eJewishPhilanthropy.com.
- 8 Theodore Sasson, “New Analysis of Pew Data: Children of Intermarriage Increasingly Identify as Jews,” *Tablet* magazine, November 11, 2013; Theodore Sasson, Leonard Saxe, Fern Chertok, et. al., *Millennial Children of Intermarriage: Touchpoints and Trajectories* (Waltham, MA.: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2015).
- 9 Shlomo Fischer, commenting on the *Jewish People Policy Institute 2013-2014 Annual Assessment of the Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People* (Jerusalem: JPPI, 2014), “Developments in 2013-14 in Jewish Identity and Jewish Identification,” pp. 103-112.

- 10 Marshall Sklare, *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958); Dennison Nash and Peter Berger, "The Child, the Family, and the Religious Revival in Suburbia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 2, No. 1 (Autumn, 1962): 85-93; Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- 11 Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).
- 12 Steven M. Cohen, *A Tale of Two Jewries: The 'Inconvenient Truth' for American Jews* (New York: Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation); Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or nothing? Jewish families and mixed marriage*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2008).
- 13 Nash and Berger, 1962, op.cit.
- 14 Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, pp. 86-87. 55.
- 15 Harriet Hartman and Moshe Hartman, *Gender and American Jews: Patterns in Work, Education & Family in Contemporary Life* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009), p. 99. These patterns are supported in the Pew 2013 Portrait of Jewish Americans, as analyzed in Harriet Hartman, "The Jewish Family," *American Jewish Year Book* 2015.
- 16 <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.
- 17 <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/08/26/a-portrait-of-american-orthodox-jews/>.

- 18 Morris Axelrod and Floyd Fowler, Jr., et. al., *Population Survey of the Greater Boston Jewish Community* (1967), p. 39; Sherry Israel, et. al., *Population Survey of the Greater Boston Jewish Community* (1985), p. 18; Sherry Israel, et. al, *Population Survey of the Greater Boston Jewish Community* (1997), pp. 20-21.
- 19 Naomi Schaeffer Riley, in *Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage Is Transforming America* (Oxford, 2013).
- 20 Documentation is available from the authors upon request.
- 21 Many chapters in Jack Wertheimer, *Family Matters: Jewish Education in an Age of Choice* (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 2007) speak to these patterns, but see especially Steven M. Cohen, "The Differential Impact of Jewish Education on Adult Jewish Identity," pp. 34-36.
- 22 In point of fact, those raising Jewish children consist of two sub-groups: a minority raising their children as Jews not by religion, and a majority raising children in the Jewish religion. The former consist primarily of the intermarried with a number of non-married who presumably were once intermarried. On most measures of Jewish engagement, those raising children Jewish but not in the Jewish religion report scores very similar to those with no children. Rather than complicate matters and exclude parents of no-religion Jewish children, we include them in the "Jewish children" category. However, we need to recognize that those raising their children in the Jewish religion score even higher on the Jewish engagement indicators than the more embracing category reported in the table.
- 23 Marshall Sklare, "Intermarriage and the Jewish Future," (1964) reprinted in Jonathan Sarna, ed., *Observing America's Jews: Marshall Sklare* (Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press, 1993).
- 24 Fishman, *Double Or Nothing?*, op. cit.
- 25 Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler, *Connected: How Your Friends' Friends' Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do* (Boston: Back Bay Books/ Little Brown and Company, 2009); Charles

- Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Shaul Kelner, "School friends and camp friends: The social networks of Jewish teenagers," Association for Jewish Studies paper, Los Angeles, 2002; Harriet Hartman and Ira Sheskin, "The Influence of community context and individual characteristics on Jewish identity: A 21-community study," *North American Jewish Data Bank* 24-25 (50) (2011): 60.
- 26 Michelle Shain, "Dreams and Realities: Understanding American Jewish Young Adults' Decisions about Fertility," in Fishman, *Love, Marriage, and Jewish Families*, *op. cit.*, summarizes the recent demographic studies and adds qualitative voices in her analysis.

Learning Jewishness, Jewish Education and Jewish Identity

Executive Summary

Sylvia Barack Fishman
and **Shlomo Fischer**

Contributors: **Rachel S. Bernstein, Dov Maimon**
and **Shmuel Rosner**

Click here to read the full article or scan
the QR code



Executive Summary and Policy Directions

Introduction:

This position paper, prepared at JPPI under the lead of **Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman (Brandeis) and Dr. Shlomo Fischer (JPPI)**, in cooperation with the Institute's experts in the field, summarizes the latest quantitative and qualitative research on Jewish identity formation for each point of intervention along the Jewish life cycle: early childhood, elementary and middle school, adolescence, college years, and emerging adulthood. The research findings in the paper are analyzed in light of the theoretical perspectives of social networks and social capital.

Points for policy consideration

- Developing and enhancing social networking components in Jewish educational strategy.
- Structuring the educational framework of cumulative Jewish experiences and serendipities.
- Prioritizing funding for programs delivering high quality Jewish content.
- Initiating mixed social networks for Jews and their non-Jewish friends and colleagues for college students and young adults.
- Jewish education for emerging adults and young parents supporting Jewish cultural expressions.
- Reviving Jewish “social capital” for Jewishly “identity impoverished” families through formal and informal Jewish educational experiences in neutral, non-threatening environments.

Summary of findings and analysis:

- 1. The Importance of Social Networks.** One factor which the majority of research and, hence, policy planning in the field of Jewish education has not paid sufficient attention to is social networks. Our research shows that American Jews may say they feel disconnected from other Jews; yet, they are actually influenced by their Jewish social circles. Similarly, educators have tended to emphasize the role of parents in making educational decisions for their child and overlooked the importance of Jewish social networks in motivating children to continue their Jewish education. Our research shows that Jewish friends and social networks, especially during the teen years, influence decisions to attend Jewish schools and Jewish educational programs. This new understanding of the power of social networks suggests that the direction of influence in the teen years is from friendships to education to family involvements. A strong Jewish social network in the teen years is a predictor of college friends and choice of Jewish marriage partners.
- 2. The Importance of Cumulative Educational Programs.** Our research shows that the successful formation of Jewish identity through Jewish education is the result of cumulative serendipities: Jewish family connections, Jewish formal education, Jewish friends and social networks, Jewish informal education, and travel programs. All of these work together and reinforce one another to produce identified and attached Jews. The greater the number of Jewish educational activities and experiences, such as Jewish supplementary school combined with Jewish summer camp, the more impact each one of them has on the given child and on the family. The combination of youth group, camp, and Israel trips also is correlated

with an 80 percent in-marriage rate. This is especially the case in the school-aged years. A major policy challenge is to seek out and support the serendipities, so that they are no longer left to chance, but become, instead, one of the primary strategies for promoting the future of Jewish life.

3. The Most Important Point of Intervention Is the Teenage Years.

In terms of predicting adult Jewish connections, statistical studies show that every year past the bar mitzvah year “counts” more than the year before. Receiving formal Jewish education from age 16 to 17 more accurately predicts adult Jewish connectedness than receiving formal Jewish education from age 15 to 16. Quantitative and qualitative research suggest that having mostly Jewish friends in high school is a motivator for continuing formal and informal Jewish education and a predictor for marrying or partnering with a Jew and forging strong Jewish connections. Conversely, when teenagers stopped attending Jewish schools after bar and bat mitzvahs, both they and their parents (in separate interviews) reported that their family Jewish observances and activities such as Shabbat service attendance gradually declined.

4. The Second Most Important Point of Intervention Is Emerging Adulthood (the post-college years).

This is a growing group. Successive studies have underscored the fact that in 1960, 77 percent of American women and 65 percent of men below the age of 30, had accomplished the five sociological milestones of adulthood--“completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying and having a child.” Today, fewer than half of women and one-third of men fit that fully adult profile. The proportion of Americans aged 25 to 34 who have never been married exceeds those married. The Jewish identity gains that result from a Jewish education during the teenage years are significantly undermined when young

American Jews remain single for a decade or longer after college. These young American Jews between the ages of 22 to 35 require programs tailored to their distinctive form of Jewish attachment. In contrast to prior generations of American Jews, who sought out co-religionists and preferred to socialize among Jews, this generation speaks about “not wanting to be restricted to the tribe,” or to divide the world into “us” and “them.” For these young American Jews, content is more compelling than kinship. They define Jewish social values, religious rituals, and cultural forms of Jewish expression, such as Jewish music and literature, as the primary expressions of their Jewishness. At the same time, many of them also seek community and friendship circles - but do not want to feel these are being forced upon them.

5. **Jewish Education For Mixed Social Networks.** Young American Jews have more porous boundaries than the previous generation. The social networks of young American Jews are mixed, especially beginning in their college years. They wish to enjoy and benefit from Jewish content and Jewish culture in the company of non-Jewish friends. Fully one quarter of Jews populate Jewish Studies courses in American colleges. Jewish Studies courses are successful both because they are content-driven and because they offer a mixed social network experience. Similarly, they want to enjoy informal Jewish educational and cultural events (films, concerts, etc.) in the company of non-Jewish friends. A fourth of those who were raised in non-Jewish or mixed households, of those who had minimal Jewish education growing up, and of those who consider themselves secular Jews find their way into Jewish Studies.
6. **The Special Needs of Jewishly “Impoverished” Families.** Jewish populations are divided into two groups. One group has “high Jewish social capital,” i.e., Jewish social connections, friends and networks,

educational and communal activities. This group is involved in a virtuous circle: a mutually revitalizing synergy that reinforces Jewish identity. The second group has “low Jewish social capital.” For example, Jews who are geographically isolated from other Jews in childhood or do not get sent to Jewish camps, have few Jewish friendship circles. Others within this group are the children of weakly identified Jewish parents. Some are children of intermarried families, especially of families where the mother does not identify as a Jew. Weak Jewish identification often gets worse with each generation that is remote from Jewish social networks and Jewish education, creating a cycle of “poor Jewish social capital.” As Steven Cohen put it in his *A Tale of Two Jewries: The “Inconvenient Truth” for American Jews*, “The intermarried homes with school-age children stand in sharp contrast. As compared with the in-married, only half as many of the intermarried observe Passover, Chanukah or Yom Kippur, or belong to a synagogue. Just 7% have mostly Jewish close friends (as compared with 53% of the in-married). Only handfuls (from 9-14%) attend services at least monthly, have been to Israel, light Sabbath candles, keep kosher at home, or volunteer in Jewish contexts as compared with about four times as many among their in-married counterparts.” One of the largest challenges facing Jewish educational policy is to formulate programs that can appeal to these low Jewish social capital groups.

7. **Research Gaps on Critical Issues.** Our research suggests that there remain critical research gaps in the field of Jewish education. Some of the most crucial questions include: What is the impact of post-denominational by design schools on Jewish identity? What is the relative impact of Jewish education versus family on Jewish identity? To what extent do Jewish educational enterprises focus on incorporating Jewish approaches to meaningful issues preoccupying contemporary Jewish students? Do traditional Jewish pedagogical techniques – argumentation, hevruta learning – increase Jewish identity? How do we overcome resistance to learning Hebrew?

Suggested policy directions

In light of our analysis of the quantitative and qualitative research on Jewish education and Jewish identity formation, our conversations with key figures in the field of Jewish education, and the theoretical literature we have reviewed, we suggest the following policy directions.

- Each Jewish educational program should aim to include a social networking component as part of its Jewish educational strategy. For example, early childhood programming should include programs for joint activities and networking among families. High school programming could include trips to Israel that create stronger existing and new social networks.
- Cumulative Jewish educational experiences must be structured into the educational framework and not left to chance. For example, Jewish supplementary schools should sponsor Jewish summer camp experiences or promote youth group attendance.
- Jewish educational programs delivering high quality Jewish content should become a funding priority, especially beginning with the high school years.
- Jewish educational programs that can be enjoyed by a mixed social network should be expanded, especially for college and young adult populations.
- Jewish education for emerging adult populations should be conceived as necessarily including support for Jewish cultural expressions.
- A primary goal of formal and informal Jewish education should be the revival of Jewish social capital for Jewishly “impoverished” families through the establishment of new Jewish social circles. Priority should be given to programs that offer high quality intellectual content or experiences, such as Jewish Studies courses in universities or Birthright trips in Israel, in a neutral and non-threatening environment.

- **Funds should be allocated for further targeted research on Jewish education to close the critical gaps in knowledge listed in point 7 above.**

About JPPI

The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) is an independent professional policy planning think tank incorporated as a private non-profit company in Israel. The mission of the Institute is to ensure the thriving of the Jewish people and the Jewish civilization by engaging in professional strategic thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry. Located in Jerusalem, the concept of JPPI regarding the Jewish people is global, and includes aspects of major Jewish communities with Israel as one of them, at the core.

JPPI's activities are action-oriented, placing special emphasis on identifying critical options and analyzing their potential impact on the future. To this end, the Institute works toward developing professional strategic and long-term policy perspectives exploring key factors that may endanger or enhance the future of the Jewish People. JPPI provides professionals, decision-makers, and global leaders with:

- Surveys and analyses of key situations and dynamics
- "Alerts" to emerging opportunities and threats
- Assessment of important current events and anticipated developments
- Strategic action options and innovative alternatives
- Policy option analysis
- Agenda setting, policy recommendations, and work plan design

JPPI's publications address six main areas of Jewish People challenges and well-being: Geopolitics Impacting World Jewry; Community Bonds; Identity and Identification; Demography; Material Resources; and, Intellectual and Cultural Achievement. A full set of major publications can be found on our website: www.JPPI.org.il.

JPPI is unique in dealing with the future of the Jewish people as a whole within a methodological framework of study and policy development. Its independence is assured by its company articles, with a board of directors co-chaired by Ambassadors Stuart Eizenstat and Dennis Ross – both have served in the highest echelons of the U.S. government, and Leonid Nevzlin in Israel – and composed of individuals with significant policy experience. The board of directors also serves as the Institute's Professional Guiding Council.



THE JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE
(Established by the Jewish Agency for Israel) Ltd. (CC)

www.jppei.org.il

Givat Ram Campus • P.O.B. 39156 Jerusalem 9139101
info@jppei.org.il

Tel: 972-2-5633356 • Fax: 972-2-5635040