

THE NEW JEWISH COMMUNITY, NEW JEWISH SCHOOLS: TRENDS AND PROMISES

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While representing a small percentage of all private, religious schools, Jewish schools are nonetheless a significant presence on the religious landscape. This article analyzes the rapid growth of Jewish schools over the past three decades and examines possible future directions for Jewish schools.

The Jewish community of the United States has undergone major changes in the last 50 years—developments that are now being reflected in the remarkable growth of Jewish full-time (or day) schools and even in the opening in 2001 of America's first non-Orthodox Jewish boarding school in Greensboro, North Carolina. Traditionally, American Jews have lived in major urban centers, communities where Jewish immigrants tended to congregate and where most of the first Jewish day schools were located (Ackerman, 1983; Brickman, 1982; J. Cohen, 1969). Since colonial days, the U.S. has seen sizable Jewish communities in the largest cities; as new urban centers took root, so did their Jewish communities.

All of the initial Jewish day schools in the U.S. in the 19th century were under Orthodox auspices. With the arrival of the 20th century and the growth of the American Jewish community, however, Jewish day schools were sponsored by one of the major Jewish denominations—usually Orthodox, but often Conservative and far less frequently Reform. These schools were often affiliated with a particular synagogue, reflecting the more particular denominational nature of Jewish life in the U.S. (D. Z. Kramer, 1985) and the important role of Jewish schools in maintaining traditional Jewish identity. To date, no Jewish day schools are affiliated with the Reconstructionist move-

ment, a small, progressive Jewish denomination.

As Rauch (1984) explained, "the deep and abiding division separating the Reform from the Orthodox view of religious life is clearly manifest in the style and manner of the schools, but the broad [common] purpose of the Jewish school is to contribute to the continued existence of the Jews as an identifiable group" (p. 133). Until recently, Jewish day schools paralleled these three branches, with Orthodox communities operating the largest number of Jewish day schools or yeshivas, Conservative next, and Reform least. Furthermore, although Orthodox Jews comprise the smallest mainstream segment of American Judaism, historically they have had the greatest number of full-time day schools, whereas Reform Jews, who constitute the largest grouping of affiliated American Jews, had the fewest, if any, day schools. This phenomenon reflects each group's commitment to traditional Jewish education.

This analysis treats four critical issues in Jewish and private education in the U.S., shedding light not only on the development of Jewish schools but also on nonpublic education concerns in general. First, we examine the development of Jewish day schools in number and population over the last 35 years, updating the trends and laying out the changes in comparison to other types of private education. Second, we explore new developments in Jewish education, both the changes within the traditional types of schools and the evolution of new networks and schools as yet unstudied. Third, we relate the population changes in the American Jewish community to the shifts in types and locations of Jewish day schools. Finally, this article looks ahead at the future of Jewish education and Jewish communal life in the U.S. as the community struggles with survival and continuity.

GROWTH OF JEWISH SCHOOLS: 1965-2000

Important factors influenced the dynamic growth in Jewish day school education over the past three decades. Although outside of the scope of this paper to explore fully, the most significant influences warrant mention. Whereas American Jews (with the exception of the most fervently Orthodox) were almost universally educated in public schools a generation ago, the world for Jews has changed in several key directions, making private Jewish schools more attractive. These changes are reflected in (a) a rise in Jewish affluence, (b) the impact of the Holocaust on world Jewry in general and the American Jewish psyche in particular, (c) the birth of the modern State of Israel and its emergence on the international scene, (d) a heightened sense of cultural pride and identification, and (e) widespread, growing dissatisfaction with public education, once a near sacred icon of U.S. Jewish life. Together, these changes in Jewish life have spurred the remarkable growth of all sorts of Jewish day schools.

Recent data indicate that in 1999-2000, the U.S. had 691 Jewish day schools, constituting 2.5% of the 27,223 nonpublic schools in the country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Enrollment in Jewish schools was 169,751 students or 3.3% of the 5,162,638 total students attending private schools in the U.S. in 2000. A further breakdown in 2000 shows that 387 or 56% of the 691 Jewish schools were elementary level, 172 (25%) of the schools were secondary, and 131 (19%) were combined K-12 schools. As shown in Table 1, the growth of Jewish day schools overall has doubled (from 345 to 691 schools between 1965 and 2000). Enrollment has increased at a higher percent, from 73,112 to 169,751 or 132% growth in 35 years.

Table 1
Growth of Jewish Day Schools & Enrollment by Year and Type

SCHOOLS	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Community	Total
1965	321	19	5	-	345
1990	515	58	12	23	608
1995	520	59	19	51	649
2000	530	60	22	79	691
School growth: 1965 to 2000 # and (%)	+209 schools (65%)	+41 schools (216%)	+17 schools (340%)	+79 schools —	+346 schools (100%)
STUDENTS	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Community	Total
1965	68,800	3,489	823	—	73,112
1990	99,440	11,918	3,622	12,210	127,190
1995	105,168	14,589	4,233	18,053	142,043
2000	127,067	15,682	5,781	21,221	169,751
Student growth: 1965-2000 # and (%)	+58,267 students (85%)	+12,193 students (349%)	+4,958 students (602%)	—	+96,639 students 132%

Source: *Private School Universe Survey: 1999-2000*, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

This increase is even more remarkable when compared to the changes in the largest category of private schools, those under sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Church, over the same time period of 1965 to 2000. In 1965, Catholics had 13,292 schools with 5.547 million students attending; by 2000, the number of Catholic schools dropped by 39% to 8,102 schools and enrollment declined by 55% to 2.511 million students. The factors that led to the growth of Jewish day schools and those associated with the decline in Catholic schools are seemingly unrelated. These divergent phenomena, how-

ever, suggest the need to distinguish between the varying forms of independent and religious schools in both academic and practical matters.

The total number of students attending all U.S. private schools during this 35-year period went from 6.3 million in 1965 to 6.016 million in 2000, a small decline of about 4.5%. Hence, while Jewish schools doubled in the period and had enrollments jump by 132%, the overall private school enterprise decreased by 4.5%, mostly because of the serious drop in Catholic school enrollments and numbers. School and enrollment growth is, of course, not unique to the Jewish community and has been experienced in the various Protestant, Islamic, and secular school communities.

CHANGES BY JEWISH SCHOOL AFFILIATION AND TYPE

When analyzed by affiliation and school type, the data are even more interesting. Orthodox schools largely affiliated with Torah Umesorah, the National Society of Hebrew Day Schools, grew from 68,800 students in 1965 to 127,067 in 2000, a rise of 85% or 58,267 students. The number of Orthodox schools, or yeshivas, grew from 321 to 530 or 209 schools (65%) in the last 35 years (1965-2000). This growth can be attributed to a number of factors outside the scope of this paper, ranging from the growth of the Orthodox community to the suburbanization of American Orthodoxy to the very significant efforts made by Orthodox leadership to build and support day schools.

Conservative schools, affiliated with the Solomon Schechter school movement, went from 19 schools in 1965 to 60 in 2000, an increase of 216%. Enrollment, too, grew enormously during this period: from 3,489 to 15,682 students: growth of 12,193 students or 349%. Many of the Solomon Schechter schools arose in the larger Jewish communities—as the first non-Orthodox but Jewish day school option in the U.S., often with the support of a local Conservative synagogue. Reform, the smallest of the Jewish day school movements but the largest Jewish denomination in the U.S., went from only 823 students in five schools to 5,781 students attending 22 Reform day schools, an increase of over 600% from 1965 to 2000. This increase in schools, once attributed primarily to dissatisfaction with the public schools, is today better understood as reflective of the liberal branch of Judaism's renewed emphasis on Jewish education.

In addition to growth in these three denominational groups, we see some interesting new configurations, locations, and networks emerging, all working to fill specific needs in the availability of Jewish education to children living in the smaller communities or holding a particular set of Jewish beliefs or practices. In fact, some analysts have commented on the uniqueness of each

Jewish community, its schools, and the movement nationally. It is the special nature of each such school and its supporting families which make these schools such good barometers of Jewish religious, familial, and communal life today. Lee (1983) explained the reality of Jewish schools as follows:

The nature of the Jewish community and the structure of Jewish education are such that no central philosophy or curriculum guides our educational programs. *Each school is virtually an island unto itself, operating within a particular community, institution and sociological reality that surrounds it* [italics added]. Movements, central agencies, and professional groups in Jewish education provide only the most general guidelines that must ultimately be interpreted for each individual setting. There is little agreement about goals for Jewish education and, accordingly, few measures for evaluating its effectiveness. (p. 519)

NEW DIRECTIONS IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Despite the differences among day schools, Jewish school leaders are banding together as never before around special interests or concerns. Some groups seek to support and guide all Jewish day schools regardless of denominational affiliation. Others have been formed specifically to serve individual groupings of alike Jewish schools. Under denominational auspices, though often independent of them, new Jewish day schools are appearing each year. Jewish schools can be sub-categorized along a number of dimensions, a few of which are described below.

ORTHODOX DIVERSITY

Orthodoxy is not monolithic. In fact, the term *Orthodox* is applied broadly to encompass the numerous Jewish groups who hold to the most traditional scope of practices and beliefs within the continuum of Jewish observance. The Orthodox community includes Jews who align themselves with a "modern" approach to Orthodoxy as well as those who hold to Chasidic or "ultra-Orthodox" customs and who arrange their more insular communities around the leadership of a particular rabbi.

On the more stringent side of Orthodoxy, the ultra-Orthodox send their children exclusively to Orthodox day schools, known as yeshivas, run separately for boys and girls. The day schools of the ultra-Orthodox communities put significant emphasis on traditional Jewish studies (the study of Torah and Talmud), often at the expense of secular pursuits. Many of these schools operate on the presumption that their graduates will continue in Orthodox-only settings.

ORTHODOX OUTREACH

The Chabad-Lubavitch movement has committed itself to Jewish outreach and education. Under its auspices, Jewish education centers, including preschools, summer camps, and in some cases primary day school, have appeared in many Jewish communities of all sizes. As these schools seek to draw Jews closer to Orthodoxy, they attempt to attract children from across the spectrum of Jewish practice; and, in doing so, these schools have in some cases evolved into “community” day schools rather than schools of the Orthodox community alone. But it was the energy and vision of the Chabad-Lubavitch leaders that stimulated community interest in a full-time Jewish school where none had previously existed.

MODERN ORTHODOXY

On the more modern wing of the Orthodox Jewish school community, a new network has been created, called the Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools (AMODS), which boasts about 70 members. Many of these schools are also members of the major Orthodox Jewish school association, the National Society of Jewish Day Schools (Torah Umesorah), which gives them both a large national identity as an Orthodox school and a separate, special identity as a more modern school of this movement. While the AMODS schools are still fully Orthodox in Jewish practices, the modern quality may involve a greater interest in current pedagogy and more emphasis on secular subjects such as math, science, computers, non-Jewish history, and literature. Students, too, are expected to go on to various prestigious colleges, not remain within the yeshiva college system exclusively.

JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOLS

Besides the dynamics of the total Jewish day school effort and the exponential growth of day schools of all types, a new type of school has quietly emerged, one that is substantively different from the traditional Jewish day school. Since the 1960s, the U.S. has witnessed a geographic dispersion of Jews (numbering 6.061 million in 1998) from the great metropolitan centers such as New York City, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, to smaller communities and ex-urban locations—moving from the older cities to the newer ones. Paralleling this great migration has been the emergence of a new synthetic type of Jewish full-time education institution, called the *Jewish community day school*. These schools have the following characteristics that parallel changes in the American Jewish community:

PLURALISTIC

These schools are not identified, as in the past, with one of the major branches of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform). They attempt to serve Jewish children from all denominations as well as those whose families do not subscribe to a particular view of Jewish practice or who may not be observant at all. Often, these smaller towns and communities (with between 2,500 and 12,000 Jews) have insufficient supporters of one movement to have an Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform day school alone. Instead, Jews of different persuasions pool their resources (and children) to create and sustain a local community day school (usually elementary).

INCLUSIVE

Jewish community day schools tend to operate under an assumption of maximal inclusion, suggesting that all Jewish children and their families, regardless of their level of practice or commitment to Judaism, are welcome members of the school community. This extensive inclusion is frequently available to children from multicultural and multireligious homes, children who are likely to be outside of the purview of Orthodox and Conservative schools, which require that either both parents be Jews by birth or conversion or that minimally the mother be a born or converted Jew, in keeping with Judaism's view of matrilineal descent.

EGALITARIAN

Jewish community day schools provide coeducational settings in which boys and girls access identical programs of study. This equity varies greatly from most Orthodox day schools in which some (and in many cases, all) classes are segregated by gender and where boys and girls may have divergent religious curricula. The egalitarianism of the Jewish community day school is also reflected in the teaching staff, administration, and lay leadership of the school.

INDEPENDENT

Unlike the majority of Jewish day schools in the U.S. that are affiliated with a specific denominational movement of Judaism, the community day school is independent of denominational affiliation and self-identifies as nondenominational, pan-denominational, or pluralistic.

SELF-DETERMINING

Jewish community day schools, unlike movement-affiliated schools, determine their own policies, curricula, and governance structures. In many cases,

these schools turn to the local boards of education for state-determined standards in secular education, although the Judaic program of studies remains the sole purview of the individual school.

IDENTIFYING WITH RAVSAK

The majority of Jewish community day schools in North America align themselves with an organization called RAVSAK (in Hebrew, *Reshet Betei Sepher Kehilatayim*): the Jewish Community Day School Network. RAVSAK serves as a link among the growing number of non-denominational schools, providing resources, professional development, guidance, and support without proscribing policy or curriculum. Of the estimated 79 or more Jewish community day schools in North America, currently 68 schools in 27 states are associated with RAVSAK.

GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION

The authors analyzed the locations of Jewish day schools in relation to Jewish populations and found the following information: 157 communities in the 50 states and the District of Columbia had 2,000 or more Jews (see Table 2); among those cities or communities, those with around 4,000 Jews or more were likely to have day schools. Table 2 reports that only 8 states have no Jewish communities of 2,000 or more people; 18 states have only one large Jewish community (Illinois, for example, has only one region with more than 2,000 Jews—the greater Chicago area with about 261,000); the rest of the states have three or more larger communities that would be expected to have a community day school. Thus, a major demographic change in the U.S. is the dispersion of the Jewish community and the spread of Jewish day schools as a consequence.

Hence, a rule of thumb is that communities with more than 4,000 Jews (and thus with about 700 to 1,000 Jewish school-age children) will be likely to open at least one day school. This includes places like Des Moines, Iowa, which boasts a Jewish community of 2,800 and supports the Des Moines Jewish Academy with 42 students. North Carolina has four large Jewish communities (Charlotte, Raleigh/Wake County, Durham/Chapel Hill, and Greensboro) and three day schools: Charlotte Jewish Day School with 120 students, Durham's Lerner Jewish Community Day School with 91 students, and Greensboro's B'nai Shalom Day School with 168 students, plus the American Hebrew Academy, a new Jewish boarding school that opened in 2001 in Greensboro.

Table 2
Jewish Census Data for Communities of 2,000 Jews or More (2000)

State	Number	Name and Estimated Jewish Population
Alabama	1	Birmingham (5,300)
Alaska	1	Anchorage (2,300)
Arizona	2	Phoenix (60,000); Tucson (20,000)
Arkansas	0	[Little Rock (1,100)]
California	18	Los Angeles (505,000); San Francisco Bay (210,000); San Diego (70,000); Orange Cty. (60,000); Alameda Cty. (32,000); Contra Costa Cty. (23,000); Sacramento (23,000); Riverside (21,000); Ventura Cty. (15,000); Long Beach (15,000); Palm Springs (14,000); Santa Barbara Cty. (7,000); Pomona Valley (6,750); Santa Cruz (6,000); San Bernardino (3,000); Monterey (2,300); Fresno (2,300); Riverside (2,000)
Colorado	1	Denver (63,000)
Connecticut	9	Hartford area (25,200); New Haven area (24,300); Bridgeport (13,000); Stamford/New Canaan (9,200); Norwalk (9,100); Waterbury (4,500); Greenwich (3,900); New London (3,800); Danbury/New Milford (3,200)
Delaware	3	Wilmington (7,600); Newark (4,300); Kent/Dover (1,600)
District of Columbia	1	Washington, DC plus suburban VA and MD (25,500)
Florida	16	Broward/Ft Lauderdale (213,000); Miami-Dade (134,000); Boca Raton/Delray (93,000); Palm Beach (74,000); St. Petersburg (24,200); Orlando (21,000); Tampa (20,000); Sarasota (17,000); Ft. Meyers (7,500); Jacksonville (7,300); Brevard County (5,000); Stuart/Port St. Lucie (4,300); Naples (3,800); Daytona Beach (2,500); Gainesville (2,200); Tallahassee (2,200)
Georgia	2	Atlanta metro (80,000); Savannah (2,800)
Hawaii	1	Honolulu/Oahu (6,400)
Idaho	0	[Boise (800)]
Illinois	1	Chicago metro area (261,000)
Indiana	2	Indianapolis (10,000); Gary (2,000); [South Bend (1,950)]
Iowa	1	Des Moines (2,800)
Kansas	1	Kansas City, KS and MO (19,100)
Kentucky	1	Louisville (8,700); [Lexington (1,850)]
Louisiana	1	New Orleans (13,000)
Maine	1	Portland (3,900)
Maryland	3	Montgomery/Prince George's Cty. (104,500); Baltimore (94,500); Annapolis area (3,000)
Massachusetts	8	Boston metro area (227,300); Worcester (11,000); Springfield (10,000); Pittsfield area (3,500); Cape Cod (3,250); Andover (2,850); New Bedford (2,600); Lowell area (2,000)
Michigan	3	Detroit metro area (94,000); Ann Arbor (5,000); Lansing area (2,100)

Minnesota	2	Minneapolis (31,500); St. Paul (9,200)
Mississippi	0	[Jackson (550)]
Missouri	1	St. Louis (54,000)
Montana	0	[Billings (300)]
Nebraska	1	Omaha (6,350)
Nevada	1	Las Vegas (55,600)
New Hampshire	2	Manchester (4,000); Nashua (2,000)
New Jersey	15	Bergen Cty. (83,000); Essex Cty./Newark (76,000); Monmouth Cty. (63,000); Camden/Cherry Hill (49,000); Middlesex Cty. (45,000); Morris Cty. (33,500); Union Cty. (30,000); Passaic-Clifton (17,000); Atlantic City (15,800); Ocean Cty. (11,000); Jersey City (6,000); Sussex Cty. (6,000); Trenton (6,000); Sussex (4,100); Princeton (3,000).
New Mexico	1	Albuquerque (7,500)
New York	13	NYC metro (1.450 million); Rockland Cty. (83,000); Buffalo (26,000); Rochester (21,000); Orange Cty. (15,000); Albany (12,000); Syracuse (7,500); Sullivan Cty. (7,425); Schenectady (5,200); Kingston (4,300); Poughkeepsie (3,600); Binghamton (2,600); Ithaca (2,000)
North Carolina	4	Charlotte (7,800); Raleigh/Wake Cty. (6,000); Durham/Chapel Hill (4,000); Greensboro (2,500)
North Dakota	0	[Fargo (500)]
Ohio	7	Cleveland (81,000); Cincinnati (22,500); Columbus (15,600); Toledo (5,900); Dayton (5,500); Akron (5,500); Youngstown (3,600)
Oklahoma	2	Tulsa (2,650); Oklahoma City (2,300)
Oregon	2	Portland (25,000); Eugene (3,000)
Pennsylvania	9	Philadelphia metro (206,000); Pittsburgh (40,000); Bucks/Chester Cty. (34,800); Lehigh Valley (8,500); Harrisburg (7,000); Wilkes-Barre (3,200); Scranton (3,100); Lancaster area (2,600); Reading (2,200)
Rhode Island	1	Providence (14,200)
South Carolina	2	Charleston (4,500); Columbia (2,750)
South Dakota	0	[Sioux City (500)]
Tennessee	2	Memphis (8,500); Nashville (6,000)
Texas	6	Dallas (45,000); Houston (42,000); Austin (10,000); San Antonio (10,000); Fort Worth (5,000); El Paso (4,500)
Utah	1	Salt Lake City (4,200)
Vermont	1	Burlington (3,000)
Virginia	3	Alexandria (35,100); Norfolk/Virginia Beach (19,000); Newport News (2,400)
Washington	2	Seattle (29,300); Tacoma (2,000)
West Virginia	0	[Charleston (975)]
Wisconsin	2	Milwaukee (21,300); Madison (4,500)
Wyoming	0	[Cheyenne (230)]
TOTAL	157	

Source: *American Jewish Yearbook*, 2000.

Thus, when one compares the location of the community day schools to the population of those areas, one finds that the 79 community day schools are typically located in these smaller cities: Nashville, Tennessee, location of the Akiva School, has 6,000 Jews; Oregon has Portland with 25,000 Jews and the Portland Jewish Academy enrolling 250 students. Texas has six cities with more than 4,000 Jews and five Jewish community day schools: Austin Jewish Community Day School, El Paso Jewish Academy, Eleanor Kolitz Academy in San Antonio, the Emery/Weiner School in Houston, and the Fort Worth Hebrew Day School. Dallas, the sixth Texas city with more than 4,000 Jews, is planning a new Jewish community high school.

JOINING A SCHOOL IN LIEU OF SYNAGOGUE AFFILIATION

As part of the movement toward interdenominationalism, community day schools are independent of a particular branch of Judaism and separate from the local synagogue. In fact, many families may enroll their children in the community Jewish day school without being active or even having membership in a temple or synagogue. This affiliation with the school may in part take the place of synagogue membership and activities, with families utilizing the school as a religious, social, and cultural center rather than joining a local synagogue. Parents may, in fact, be trying to connect themselves and their families with Judaism by enrolling their children in a day school, acknowledging that their children may soon know more than their parents do about the religion, about Hebrew as both a modern conversational language and a language of prayer and study, and about Jewish identity.

In a sense, then, the community Jewish day school is throwing a Jewish lifeline to those Jews who have strayed from affiliation, identification, and participation in Jewish worship and life. Whereas this phenomenon is also true of the denominational schools, Jewish community day schools reach out to the largest and fastest-growing segments of the American Jewish community: the intermarried and the unaffiliated.

CURRENT TRENDS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Whatever the nature of Jewish education and wherever it is located, day schools share several characteristics that define the programs and point to the future. All Jewish schools work to offer students skills, concepts, specific content, and dispositions to live meaningful Jewish lives and to share in the best of American society. All schools work to define a place in the lives of children that is uniquely Jewish and special in a fast-paced, multi-purpose technological world where children are bombarded by conflicting values and forces for assimilation. Day schools serve to provide settings where being

Jewish and being American are not seen as conflicting value statements but rather as mutually reinforcing.

COMMITMENT TO JEWISH CONTINUITY

Dershowitz (1997) believes that since "Jewish learning must *compete* with other learning in the marketplace of ideas, . . . we must take advantage of every Jewish talent, experience, successes, and resource to ensure Jewish continuity and growth" (p. 34). Unfortunately, religious education for many Jewish children is weak and often stops when they become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or "Son/Daughter of the Commandments," at the age of 12 or 13. It seems clear from the surveys of S. M. Cohen (1988), Kelman (1975), Bock (1976), and Himmelfarb (1977) that years of Jewish education are strong predictors of (and forces for) Jewish religious identity and practice. S. M. Cohen found, as have others, that "consistent with previous studies, full-time [Jewish] education, controlling for family observance, is associated significantly with higher levels of Jewish identification in adult life" (1988, p. 91).

Somehow, religious and cultural education must extend throughout high school, college, and into adult life if Jewish identity and participation are to thrive. Serious Jewish schooling must capture the best and brightest educators, employ cutting-edge pedagogic theory and practice, build significant philanthropic support, and use the latest technology. Why not create a 24-hour-per-day Jewish television station and educational web sites? Even though Jewish day school education has emerged as a significant interest of Jewish philanthropy, the field is facing a major shortage of qualified teachers and administrators, is often lacking in new pedagogy and state-of-the-art technology, and struggles to raise local resources to grow and sustain its schools.

NEW COMMUNITIES, NEW SCHOOLS

It is the last group, the community Jewish day schools, that are of particular interest to us in this study and into the future since they are indicative of changes in the nature of Jewish life and reflect an effort by newer, smaller Jewish communities that lack sufficient Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform subcommunities to support a single-denominational Jewish school for their children (M. N. Kramer, 2000). While the Orthodox community and its schools have continued to maintain their traditional urban presence (in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and Los Angeles), the newer community schools are likely found in the smaller, newer towns where Jews have not traditionally been so plentiful. These new schools are important for several reasons.

First, these community day schools demonstrate a rising concern among contemporary American Jews to give their children a Jewish education, even

if the family is not traditionally very observant at home. Second, these schools are scattered in virtually every community with 4,000 or more Jews, meaning that Jewish cultural and communal life is shifting—as is the Jewish population—from north and east to south and west.

Third, community schools indicate a new interdenominationalism, a willingness of Jews from various religious positions to band together, not only in their support of Israel and general Jewish philanthropy, but around a common school for the benefit of all their children. Although it may be the desire of a particular community to have denominationally organized schools, these communities are recognizing that such an insistence could undermine the ability of smaller communities to provide adequate resources needed to operate a full-time day school. Fourth, community day schools have for an increased number of Jews replaced the synagogue as the center of their Jewish life. For the majority of American Jews who are not affiliated with a synagogue, the community day school might represent an exciting entrée into meaningful, organized Jewish life.

Finally, and more interestingly perhaps, the new Jewish community day school is more tolerant of the internal religious and social pluralism and multiculturalism of the Jewish community, as evidenced by a general willingness to accept children who may not traditionally have been considered Jewish. This striving for maximal inclusion has helped to foster new growth in this sector of day school education, for these schools not only open their doors to otherwise excluded children but also open Jewish communal participation simultaneously to excluded families and the much-needed support these less active, isolated Jews may bring.

These schools, too, are grass-roots expressions of the centuries' long urge among Jews to pass their beliefs and practices to the next generation, as Jewish continuity becomes an ever-greater concern. With intermarriage rates between Jews and non-Jews estimated at 65%, Jewish leaders are becoming increasingly concerned about the future of Jewish identity. Thus, the day school becomes a powerful vehicle for building and maintaining Jewishness in an increasingly secularized society.

The Jewish day school, enrolling close to 16% of Jewish school-age children, up from 5% 20 years ago, is fast becoming a significant institution for increasing Jewish identity, knowledge, and commitment. Yet, the incredible growth of Jewish day schools also highlights the many paradoxes of being a modern Jew in a modern world:

the ambiguous feelings of the Jewish community, its desire for change and permanence, its wish to become part of America and still be faithful to its own past, its pride in a newly discovered world, and its fear for its waning identities. (Rauch, 1984, p. 157; see also Berkson, 1920)

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