

of Jewish people-
a variety of orga-
world, many of
and vital role to
as a more expan-
on. In a world of
ch alternative that
v is the time. Now
xt chapter in our

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN JEWS

Distinguishing the In-Married, Inter-Married, and Non-Married

BY STEVEN M. COHEN

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York

"All Gaul is divided into three parts. All these differ from each other in language, customs and laws."

Julius Caesar, The Gallic Wars, 58 B.C.

What Caesar said of Gaul may be said of today's American Jews under the age of 40. Those "young adults" (as they are called by members of my now middle-aged generation) may be divided into three, each with its own characteristic pattern of Jewish engagement: the in-married, the inter-married, and the non-married. All these differ from each other, not quite in language, customs and laws, but certainly with respect to Jewish affiliation, knowledge, and interest.

As the Jewish engagement agenda (known alternately as Jewish continuity or Jewish renaissance and renewal) has come to occupy center stage in the organized Jewish community, we would do well to distinguish more sharply among these groups than we generally do. For these three groups — with vastly different rates of institutional affiliation, informal connections, ritual observance, and simple Jewish passion — pose quite different challenges to the efforts of organized Jewry to engage them and demand quite distinctive strategies and practices. Indeed, although not denying the diversity within these groups, they still generally have very different approaches to the very meaning of these terms: Jewish, Jewish identity, Jewish community, and Jewish peoplehood.

THE IN-MARRIED, THE INTER-MARRIED, AND THE NON-MARRIED

Consider the following. Jewish engagement indicators vary widely among those

who are inter-married parents, in-married parents, and non-married (all results taken from the 2000/01 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), for Jews aged 25-39; Kotler-Berkowitz et al., 2003). Of in-married parents, as many as 96 percent celebrate a Passover Seder, as compared with just 46 percent of the inter-married parents and 60 percent of the non-married. For High Holiday service attendance we find a similar pattern (87, 31, and 40 percent), as we do for fasting on Yom Kippur (85, 51, and 39 percent). The differences for synagogue membership are startling and indicative. Over 80 percent of in-married young parents belong to a congregation, as contrasted with just 19 percent of the inter-married and slightly more (22 percent) among the non-married. Regarding contributing \$100 to Jewish charities, the pattern repeats: 60, 16, and 17 percent.

In all ways, in-married parents are far more Jewishly engaged than their inter-married counterparts, with the non-married falling somewhere between these two populations, though generally closer to the inter-married. This pattern in the outward signs of Jewish engagement (ritual observance, communal affiliation) reflects not just the fact that Jewish rituals and institutions are so much better designed for conventional families than for other people (after all, for the most part, in-married parents are the ones who buy, build, and use congregations, schools, and JCCs). The patterns also reflect the inner

online form

A.ORG

contact us at

@jcsana.org

table version

feelings of these people toward being Jewish. Being Jewish is simply more important to in-married parents than to the other two groups and they say so. As many as 66 percent of in-married parents say that being Jewish is "very important" to them, as contrasted with just 30 percent of the inter-married parents and 36 percent of the non-married young adults.

Why do we find these patterns? One reason is the impact of their childhood Jewish education and socialization (the home and community). Advocates of Jewish education have long claimed (with reason) that Jewish education (be it schooling, youth groups, camps, or Israel travel) "works" to reduce inter-marriage, along with other salutary effects. And they are correct: The more Jewish education in childhood and adolescence, the more in-marriage years later.

However, Jewish education also apparently works, in conjunction with other factors, to increase more such traditional family patterns as marriage, early marriage, marital stability, and fertility. All over the world, more religious people, as compared with the less religious (and less religiously educated), are more likely to marry young, marry in their faith, stay married, and have children. Jews in the United States are no exception, as the following results suggest. Of in-married parents aged 25-39, 24 percent went to day school, as contrasted with just 2 percent of their inter-married counterparts and 9 percent of the unmarried. If we take going to Hebrew school or more (i.e., twice-a-week Jewish school or day school) as a standard of more intensive education, the results form a similar pattern: 71, 28, and 39 percent. In other words, by any reasonable standard, about three times as many in-married received a Jewish education as did the inter-married. These are, indeed, very different populations with different Jewish histories, Jewish presents, and, I argue, Jewish futures as well.

In short, as a group (individual exceptions aside), the in-married care more about being Jewish, in part because they have stronger

Jewish backgrounds, than do the inter-married, and the gaps are rather huge, if not colossal in size. The non-married, by similar logic, fall somewhere between these two populations. Of course, many single Jewish adults are destined to divide into the in-married and inter-married at some point in the future.

One more critical factor differentiates these three populations: the number of Jews who live in their household. As Robert Putnam reports in *Bowling Alone* (2000), a long line of research documents that people in larger households (i.e., more people living with them) report higher rates of community involvement. Married parents are more active in all sorts of arenas than are couples with no children at home, who, in turn participate in community life more than the non-married, be they single, divorced, or widowed. A similar logic applies to Jewish involvement. In-married parents live in homes with over four Jews, as compared with 1.8 for the inter-married (one Jewish adult and 0.8 Jewish children, on average), and 1.6 for the non-married (they often live with Jewish partners or roommates). To the extent that other Jewish family members at home stimulate one's own Jewish involvement, the in-married benefit from about four times as many living, at-home "reasons" (3.2 vs. 0.8) as do the inter-married to be involved in Jewish life.

THREE OBJECTIVES FOR THREE VERY DIFFERENT GROUPS

"Engaging the unaffiliated" is the prevailing watchword among advocates of Jewish communal engagement. This rhetorical expression implies that (1) the unaffiliated (in particular, the largely unaffiliated inter-married) are the critical target group for engagement efforts and that (2) moving Jews from a state of no affiliation to some or any sort of affiliation is the principal objective. However, such a formulation ignores vast differences among the three young adult population groups. In fact, because the in-married widely affiliate, a policy of merely aiming at

affiliation ignores their and sells them short. and policymakers both different objectives wi

For in-married parents are, or ought to involvement in Jewish that, ensuring their participation in school and Jewish education. Their hi with synagogues, JCC tional arenas make the cessible, far more so groups. However, these be a signal for organiz declare victory and go and simple represent: Jewish growth, and no

For the inter-married ish life can best be : about the conversion spouses and, short of their children be raised clusive primary group adults who are offspring parents, but were raised side of Judaism, hardly Hence, efforts to engage that fail to promote Jewish their children are unlikely pact on the Jewish generation.

For the non-married ought to have) two objectives of the rather dismal level ment among the inter community has a strong aging in-marriage and married. Second, in light the under-affiliation of gogues and JCCs, the interest in promoting venues where young Jews will congregate : ish engagement, such time of life.

To be sure, the three degrees of attention, the sheer size in the population

affiliation ignores their Jewish potentialities and sells them short. Instead, practitioners and policymakers both do and should pursue different objectives with each population.

For in-married parents, the prime objectives are, or ought to be, expanding their involvement in Jewish life and, in line with that, ensuring their children's maximal participation in school and other forms of Jewish education. Their high rates of affiliation with synagogues, JCCs, and Jewish educational arenas make them identifiable and accessible, far more so than the other two groups. However, these high rates ought not be a signal for organized Jewry to, in effect, declare victory and go home. Affiliation pure and simple represents an opportunity for Jewish growth, and not its culmination.

For the inter-married, engagement in Jewish life can best be achieved by bringing about the conversion of their non-Jewish spouses and, short of that, by ensuring that their children be raised as Jews as their exclusive primary group identity. Current adults who are offspring of inter-married parents, but were raised by their parents outside of Judaism, hardly ever identify as Jews. Hence, efforts to engage the inter-married that fail to promote Jewish socialization of their children are unlikely to have much impact on the Jewish continuity of the next generation.

For the non-married, we have (or, again ought to have) two objectives. First, in light of the rather dismal levels of Jewish engagement among the inter-married, the Jewish community has a strong interest in encouraging in-marriage among those not (yet) married. Second, in light of that interest and the under-affiliation of this group in synagogues and JCCs, the community has an interest in promoting alternative ways and venues where younger, largely unmarried Jews will congregate and express their Jewish engagement, such as it may be at that time of life.

To be sure, the three groups merit varying degrees of attention, based in part on their sheer size in the population. The non-mar-

ried, with 47 percent of those aged 25-39, represent the largest segment by far, followed in turn by the in-married (29 percent) and the inter-married (24 percent). Alternatively, we may think of the number of Jews in these people's homes as a measure of their relative importance to policymakers. By this measure, the largest group among households headed by someone aged 25-39 is the in-married, with 39 percent of the Jewish population, followed in turn by the non-married with 36 percent and the intermarried with 25 percent. With either calculus, the inter-married constitute no more than a quarter of the relevant young adult population, with far greater numbers associated with the in-married and non-married.

The In-Married: Promoting Engagement and Education

Married Jews, by definition, are subject to the influence of their spouse. The very presence of a Jewish husband or wife, and the extent of their Jewish engagement, clearly influences and interacts with one's own level and manner of Jewish involvement. The arrival of children further stimulates ritual observance and communal affiliation, if for no reason other than Jewish child-rearing is a Jewish act and it brings with it other acts of Jewish affiliation, reflection, and involvement. The sheer presence of Jewish husbands, wives, and children helps make the in-married the most Jewishly engaged of all three demographic segments under the age of 40.

Yet another process contributes to their relatively high levels of engagement. As intermarriage has become more common, a countervailing trend has taken place among the in-married: They have become, as a group, relatively MORE engaged in Jewish life: more learned, more observant, and more communally active. The logic is quite straightforward. Those who marry out derive from weaker Jewish backgrounds in terms of parental observance and Jewish education, as well as from those parts of the country with sparser and more recent Jewish settlement. That being the case, the in-married, by def-

initiation, enjoy the opposing characteristics. When they were children, their parents were more observant, they experienced more extensive and more intensive Jewish educational experiences, and they live(d) in areas with more densely settled Jewish populations and longer histories of Jewish institutional development. In short, they come to their Jewish lives today with greater Jewish cultural, spiritual, and social capital.

They and their offspring have spurred a major expansion in Jewish educational opportunities, with significant growth in Jewish preschools, day schools (both on the elementary and secondary school levels, among most Orthodox and many Conservative families), Israel travel, Jewish studies courses, and adult Jewish education. In comparing the in-married who are aged 25-39 with those who are in-married and roughly their parents' age (55-69), we find marked differences in day school attendance (29 percent vs. 12 percent), Israel travel in their youth (24 percent vs. 10 percent), Jewish camping (42 percent vs. 31 percent), and, if they attended college, taking courses in Jewish studies (44 percent vs. 14 percent). In short, the in-married are far more Jewishly educated than were their counterparts thirty years ago. Signs point to an even further increase in the levels of their own children's Jewish education. These signs suggest that the in-married are riding an inter-generational "up escalator" in Jewish education, if not Jewish engagement as well.

For these families, the seemingly independent units of Jewish education have been working in concert to mutually mobilize and reinforce one another. Consider the following:

- More engaged parents provide their children with more Jewish education.
- More engaged grandparents positively influence their grandchildren's Jewish education.
- Children attending day schools provoke their mothers and grandmothers to engage in adult study (Grant et al. 2004).

- Preschool attendance predicts day school enrollment, youth group participation, Jewish camping, and Israel travel.
- Youth group members more often do Jewish camping and Israel travel.
- All forms of Jewish education (except Sunday school) elevate adult Jewish engagement (and lower intermarriage).
- Several Jewish educational experiences engender interactive and synergistic effects years later (1 + 1 + 1 = more than 3).

These relationships, and more, point to an interactive Jewish educational system. The emerging challenge to policymakers and practitioners is no longer simply to expand available facilities and improve the quality of the experiences, as important as these continue to be. Rather, we must also attend to the linkages between the Jewish educational silos so as to move people from one experience to another, both simultaneously and sequentially.

Undoubtedly, other practical consequences flow from this analysis. However, the key is not to focus merely on the minimalist goal of affiliation. Rather, we need to aim at the upside potential of enriched engagement among the many affiliated in-married, as well as those who are inter-married and non-married and, in contrast with others like them, do in fact affiliate with conventional religious and communal institutions.

The Inter-Married: Beyond Welcoming

As early as 1964, *Look Magazine* ran an article entitled, "The Vanishing American Jew," predicting the demographic decline of American Jewry as a consequence of rising intermarriage. In 1991, analysts of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey estimated recent (1985-90) intermarriage rates at 52 percent, a figure challenged by some (Cohen, 1994) and later revised downward to 43 percent (UJC, 2002), also documenting the large gaps in Jewish engagement between the in-married and the inter-married. As a result, intermarriage specifically, and Jewish

continuity and Jewish generally, rose to greater Jewish communal agencies reach out to the inter-married into Jewish life, and Jewish education so as to diminish the intermarriage objectives.

Over the last 15 years neither has the gap in Jewish education between in-married and inter-married widened, nor has the rate of intermarriage declined. The 2000/01 census showed a slow rise in intermarriage (from 38 percent to 43 percent), owing largely to a large number of Jewishly affiliated inter-faith unions marrying. The intermarriage rate with two Jewish parents remains at a relatively low rate of 10 percent, compared to those married, under the influence of parents' intermarriage. The rate of intermarriage is true for 25 percent intermarriage among Jewish parents versus 10 percent for those with one Jewish parent. (The pattern among other largely American ethnic groups is reproducing one generation produces a much higher rate of intermarriage in the next generation.)

Intermarriage poses a challenge not only of religious identity but also of religious participation. The steady decline of religious participation cannot be said for in isolation or collective identity. It is a serious matter for Jewish life to that aspect of being beyond the matter of theological inspiration and group character of Judaism. It is why the communal institutions of Jewish peoplehood all hold

predicts day school
group participation,
Israel travel.

As more often do
Israel travel.

education (except
the adult Jewish en-
intermarriage).

Additional experiences
and synergistic ef-
1 + 1 = more

and more, point to an
national system. The
policymakers and
simply to expand
improve the quality of
important as these con-
must also attend to
Jewish educational
from one experi-
ultaneously and se-

practical conse-
analysis. However,
merely on the mini-
Rather, we need to
ial of enriched en-
ny affiliated in-mar-
o are inter-married
contrast with others
iliate with conven-
munal institutions.

beyond Welcoming

Book Magazine ran an
vanishing American
ographic decline of
nsequence of rising
analysts of the 1990
ation Survey esti-
intermarriage rates at
enged by some (Co-
sed downward to 43
so documenting the
ngagement between
inter-married. As a
cifically, and Jewish

continuity and Jewish education more gen-
erally, rose to greater prominence on the
Jewish communal agenda, sparking efforts to
reach out to the inter-married, welcome them
into Jewish life, and extend the scope of
Jewish education so as to stabilize if not
diminish the intermarriage rate, among other
objectives.

Over the last 15 years, it appears that
neither has the gap in Jewish engagement
between in-married and inter-married dimi-
nished, nor has the rate itself stabilized or
declined. The 2000/01 NJPS documented a
slow rise in intermarriage (from 43 to 47
percent), owing largely to the increased
number of Jewishly identifying children of
inter-faith unions marrying non-Jews in large
number. The intermarriage rate of children
with two Jewish parents held steady at the
relatively low rate of 30 percent. Among
those married, under the age of 40, the im-
pact of parents' in-marriage on the chances
of intermarrying is truly startling: as little as
25 percent intermarriage for those with two
Jewish parents versus as much as 85 percent
for those with one Jewish and one non-Jew-
ish parent. (The pattern resembles that found
among other largely middle-class, white
American ethnic groups.) In short, intermar-
riage is reproducing itself: Intermarriage in
one generation produces children with a
much higher rate of intermarriage in the next
generation.

Intermarriage promotes the eventual dis-
solution not only of individuals' ties to the
group but also of group ties. Although mea-
sures of religious involvement have held
steady over the years and measures of edu-
cational participation have grown, the same
cannot be said for indicators of ethnic cohe-
sion or collective identity. Ethnicity is a se-
rious matter for Jews and Judaism. It refers
to that aspect of being Jewish that extends
beyond the matter of faith, worship, and
theologically inspiring texts. It refers to the
group character of Jews, Jewishness, and Ju-
daism. It is why marriage, neighborhood,
communal institutions, homeland, and
peoplehood all hold a place in Jewish life

with greater salience and centrality than they
do for Christianity in America, which even
lacks, in some cases, parallel concepts.

We may compare Jews today with their
counterparts ten, twenty, or thirty years ago
or we may compare younger Jews with their
elders. Both sorts of comparisons point, di-
rectly or indirectly, at long-term trends.
However we discern these trends, they point
to the fact that fewer Jews are marrying other
Jews, fewer Jews have Jewish friends, fewer
have Jewish neighbors, fewer work with
Jewish co-workers, fewer belong to Jewish
institutions (save synagogues and JCCs),
fewer feel attached to Israel, and fewer feel a
commanding sense of Jewish peoplehood.

All these trends are empirically and con-
ceptually related, constituting what may be
called the "ethnic scaffolding" of Jewish
identity, starting with marriage and family, at
the most intimate, and extending to Israel
and peoplehood, at the most abstract. Al-
though the inter-married score lower than the
in-married on indicators of religious involve-
ment, they score lower still, by comparison,
on indicators of Jewish ethnic involvement.
The increase in intermarriage and the decline
in the commitment to endogamy both reflect
and propel declines elsewhere in the ties that
bind Jews to one another and the sentiments
that underlie Jewish collective identity. A
recent study of the children of interfaith mar-
riages sums up matters thusly (emphasis
added):

Fewer than one-quarter of the respondents de-
scribed themselves as *religious*. When Jewish
holidays are celebrated, the context is typically
one devoid of religious content. Hanukkah,
arguably the least *religious* Jewish holiday, is
the most widely observed Jewish holiday
among this cohort. Furthermore, there is little
evidence that this population, in general, feels
part of a larger Jewish community or feels
connected to Jewish people around the world
or in Israel (Beck, 2005).

Clearly, the Jewish community has a great
interest in addressing the steady rise in inter-
marriage and its adverse consequences for

distinctive group identity. To date, the major effort of organized Jewry concerning the intermarried has focused on *welcoming*. The Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI), the leading advocacy organization in this area, articulates this approach clearly in its mission statement where the words "welcome" and "welcoming" appear repeatedly (see www.joi.org; emphasis added).

1. The Jewish Outreach Institute seeks to empower and help the Jewish community *welcome* and fully embrace all members of interfaith families into Jewish life. We seek to be a resource and advocate, dedicated to raising awareness in the Jewish community of opportunities inherent in *welcoming* individuals, couples and families impacted on by interfaith marriage. We provide material, intellectual and moral support to Jewish communal institutions and professionals seeking to *welcome* interfaith couples.

JOI, as do many others, advocates that Jewish communal professionals learn better skills to relate to the intermarried so they can make them feel more comfortable in Jewish settings, be they outside or (eventually) inside such conventional venues as the synagogue and JCC. Little of its material argues for advocating in-marriage, seeking conversion, or raising offspring as Jews and in no other faith tradition. One may surmise that, in their view, the clear advocacy of in-marriage, conversion to Judaism, and raising children exclusively as Jews may be seen as impeding their "welcoming" mission.

The practice of welcoming, at least as currently formulated, may well be undermining the articulation of a strong commitment to Jewish group cohesion. If welcoming was working, if it was provoking affiliation, observance, and learning, to say nothing of conversion and Jewish child-rearing, then the relaxation of norms of ethnic solidarity may be a worthwhile price to pay. If insufficient welcoming were truly the obstacle to engagement of the inter-married, then one would expect large numbers of inter-married Jews to complain of feeling unaccepted by

the Jewish community. In point of fact, the opposite is the case: Just 21 percent say they feel either "not very" or "not at all accepted," and these are disproportionately concentrated among the unaffiliated. Among intermarried Jews who are institutionally connected, about 90 percent feel "very" or "somewhat" accepted by the Jewish community. Contrary to the *welcoming hypothesis*, the intermarried have become widely accepted among American Jews and their institutions, if for no other reason than that with a 47 percent intermarriage rate, the vast majority of American Jews are now related by marriage to non-Jews. The rising levels of acceptance cast doubt on whether lack of welcoming is the major impediment to enticing the inter-married to become active in Jewish life, to urge their spouses to convert, and to raise their children as Jews and in no other faith.

For a good many years, parents, practitioners, and policymakers all have had a keen interest in engaging (or re-engaging) intermarried young adults and their families in Jewish life, be it at home or in the community. To date, these efforts have produced, at best, small and fleeting results. One could argue that more expanded and more energetic efforts in this direction will eventually produce the desired outcome, but the available evidence, in my view, fails to support such a claim.

My sense is that the only strategy that holds out any hope of addressing the adverse implications of intermarriage for Jewish continuity is one that focuses on conversion of the Gentile spouse (or better, fiancé). Yet, even achieving the more modest goal of raising the children of interfaith marriages as Jews fails to substantially contribute to maintaining and sustaining attachment to the Jewish group, as so many Jewish-raised children of interfaith unions fail to marry Jews themselves.

With respect to conversion, we have collected little systematic evidence on how and why people convert and how rabbis, parents, and Jewish spouses can work effectively to

encourage conversion, such practice of universal rabbin engaged couples. Until the nity knows more and does fully bring about conversions thereby changing inter-marriages, the adverse demographic impact of intermarriage is unabated. In short, to be true intermarriage has taken place), we need to re-flawed strategy of welcoming practice of stimulating conversion on the part of the real Jewish spouse.

The Non-Married: Impact on Diversity

Non-married Jews, the largest demographic groups among American Jews, are the most diverse, at to the range of their Jewish upbringing. One reason is that they have yet to settle down family or, for that matter, to career and residence. So to settle down with respect style of life. In interviews, their own lives as in transition inter-regnum stage between domestic studies and the beginning of family life. They decisions as to the person be for most of their lives: measure on the person the and marry.

Other reasons account with respect to Jewish diversity, especially as compared with the inter-married. More (whom most will at some time they marry), the non-married range in their levels of Jewish observance and education. Among them with relatively strong Jewish observance sharply outnumber those who are inter-married; for the inter-married case. In contrast, the non-married Jews with all levels of

encourage conversion, such as perhaps by a practice of universal rabbinic counseling of engaged couples. Until the Jewish community knows more and does more to successfully bring about conversion to Judaism, thereby changing inter-marriages to in-marriages, the adverse demographic and cultural impact of intermarriage figures to continue unabated. In short, to be truly effective after intermarriage has taken place (or will soon take place), we need to move beyond the flawed strategy of welcoming to an effective practice of stimulating conversion to Judaism on the part of the real or potential non-Jewish spouse.

The Non-Married: Dealing with Diversity

Non-married Jews, the largest of the three demographic groups among those aged 25-39, are the most diverse, at least with respect to the range of their Jewish education and upbringing. One reason is that the non-married have yet to settle down with respect to family or, for that matter, often with respect to career and residence. So too have they yet to settle down with respect to their Jewish style of life. In interviews, they often portray their own lives as in transition, a kind of inter-regnum stage between the end of academic studies and the beginning of conventional family life. They believe that their decisions as to the person and Jew they will be for most of their lives depends in good measure on the person they have yet to meet and marry.

Other reasons account for their diversity with respect to Jewish engagement, especially as compared with the in-married and the inter-married. More than either group (whom most will at some point join, when they marry), the non-married display a wider range in their levels of Jewish socialization and education. Among the in-married, those with relatively strong Jewish upbringings sharply outnumber those with weak upbringings; for the inter-married, the reverse is the case. In contrast, the non-married comprise Jews with all levels of Jewish home and

education experiences. After all, this is the group that has not yet undergone the sorting-out process in which Jews divide, in part according to levels of Jewish education and socialization, into the in-married and the inter-married.

The diversity among the non-married, though, goes beyond their widely disparate levels of Jewish education and the unsettledness of their lives. Because the non-married are so infrequently attached to conventional institutions, Jewish or otherwise, they experience not only greater diversity with respect to their Jewish expression but greater fluidity as well, moving in and out of episodic engagement with their Jewishness somewhat more readily and frequently than their parents or their married friends.

In research I am conducting with Ari Y. Kelman on behalf of the Andrea & Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, we learn that a significant portion of the non-marrieds' Jewish lives is experienced and expressed outside of standard Jewish institutional locations. Beyond Jewish life in their parents' families, they attend musical and other cultural events; they read books, magazines, and newspapers with Jewish import; some volunteer for community service; a few participate in salon or salon-like discussion groups; almost all use the Internet to connect with friends, events, information, and the news; and, some, generally those who are more well educated Jewishly, participate now and then in congregations with a special appeal to people in their twenties and thirties. In due course, when they marry, and especially if they marry Jews, most will join synagogues JCCs, and/or Jewish philanthropic endeavors. However, for now, for the most part, they find their Jewish identity expressed elsewhere, outside the institutional network. They are drawn to "scenes" and like-minded crowds, but they have little need for conventional, formal institutions to express their Jewishness.

The events, programs, and activities that seem to hold special appeal to non-married

(and other) Jewish adults in their twenties and thirties share certain characteristics. These characteristics tell us something about the ways in which members of the next generation conceive of being Jewish and, by implication, suggest the sorts of programs and endeavors with greater chances of appealing to younger adult non-married Jews, particularly in the large metropolitan areas where so many of them reside.

Not long ago, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2005) coined the term "participatory journalism" to refer to the practice of younger adult Jews creating and sharing their news reports via Jewish-oriented blogs and similar Web sites. Rather than receiving their news from a single source, these Jews are creating and exchanging their news of Jewish import, in which the readers and viewers are also the journalists. Their experience (and her nomenclature) immediately suggests "participatory Judaism," as a useful and communicative sound-byte-size way to characterize the current modalities in Jewish approach and expression among Jews under 40. Their Judaism is inventive, creative, contemporary, and social. They are engaging in the invention of new expressions of their Jewish commitment, they are blending received norms and cultural elements with contemporary aesthetics and current concerns, and they are exploiting the flexibility and freedom in innovating, inventing, and doing things Jewish. Expressing this freedom, one interviewee told us, "If it's not Jewish, you can make it Jewish."

To put this phenomenon in a larger context, cultural and social commentators have noted how contemporary Americans (and others in the West) are engaged in repeated acts of sampling from different cultures and assembling highly individualized cultural experiences and identities. They readily piece together music, symbols, texts, and other cultural elements from once isolated if not disparate traditions, seeing the process as an act of creativity and expressive of their own individuality. In similar fashion, younger adult Jews (and, of course, their elders, as

well) feel inclined to sample and assemble traditions and representations from various Jewish subcultures (Israeli, Hassidic, Reform, etc.).

Although Jews in the past inevitably absorbed the cultural aesthetic of their surrounding environments, the insular character of many such populations, in conjunction with somewhat effective rabbinic opposition to the appropriation of identifiably non-Jewish cultural elements, worked to limit that absorption. In that context, perhaps never before have Jews been so enthusiastic about melding the distinctively Jewish with an aesthetic that is identifiably other. Music (or other art and entertainment forms) that is both Jewish and reggae, hip-hop, folk, gospel, Arabic, Sufi, Oriental, etc. exemplifies what may be called cultural hybridity. Even fairly traditional Orthodox educators, performers, and artists are engaging in the process, lending a contemporary look and feel to traditional messages, and in the process, subtly changing the context and very meaning of "Jewish."

Their tastes in culture, which run to mixing diverse elements from within and outside the specific domain of Judaism, find a parallel in their tastes for people. Not long ago, a Jewish event or a Jewish crowd or a Jewish place was one in which all or almost all the participants were Jewish. Hotels, summer camps, urban streets, law firms, and charitable or fraternal organizations that were identifiably Jewish met this condition of social exclusivity. Today's younger Jewish adults define socially Jewish as places in which most participants are Jewish, but many are not. They often want environments where non-Jews can comfortably attend, regarding Jewishly exclusive environments with disdain, distaste, or both. They accept ethnic boundaries, but prefer porous boundaries to those that are hard and fast. They place a premium on inclusiveness, diversity, and comfort. And how can it be otherwise? With an intermarriage rate of 47 percent, with years of dating and cohabitation preceding marriage, we live in a world in which the

vast majority of American Jews are young, loved and intimate with family, depending on the experience of their parents' or even grandparents' experience with family, largely remained within totally Jewish neighborhoods.

Related to the notice of the program is the primacy of adult participants in Jewish life. Those who strongly prefer the program in downtown Manhattan synagogues and JCCs. Jewish life in social service are active under the auspice of Jewish education. In short, venue is important. Expression takes place in Jewish education. What sort of Jewish education and many find specifically uncomfortable, simply identifiably Jewish venues.

Place and program are important because of the people involved. In short, people are important. Adults judge the value of Jewish activity in terms of who are present or expected. They are fashionable (hip, fashionable, materialist, from the right demographic, professionalized, social, etc.) or the "usual suspects" of Jewish events? Are they consisting of Jews (and their families and lovers) from various backgrounds? They are fairly routine and Jewish under 40, in contrast to their time, more important ideology are important. The "scene." They rely on exclusiveness, a sense of mentalism and are under stress on politics, even in which they may share.

In a vibrant and innovative generation invents new institutions. Innovation with distancing and technique, ambivalence, in a culture to establish new

vast majority of American Jews have been loved and intimate with non-Jews, totaling upending the experience of our grandparents' or even parents' generation, whose experience with family, love and intimacy remained within totally Jewish confines.

Related to the notion of porous boundaries is the primacy of place. We find young adult participants in Jewish musical events who strongly prefer the same clearly Jewish program in downtown performance spaces to synagogues and JCCs. Many Jews engaged in social service are adverse to volunteering under the auspice of Jewish agencies. In short, venue is important: Where Jewish expression takes place is almost as critical as what sort of Jewish expression takes place, and many find specifically Jewish venues uncomfortable, simply because they are identifiably Jewish venues.

Place and program are important, in part because of the people or the crowd they draw. In short, people are important too. Younger adults judge the value and attractiveness of Jewish activity in terms of the types of people who are present or expected to be present. Are they fashionable (hip, cool)? or stodgy, old-fashioned, materialist, and dogmatic? Are they from the right demographic (under 40, highly professionalized, socially progressive, non-parent) or the "usual suspects" one anticipates at Jewish events? Are they a diverse group, consisting of Jews (and their non-Jewish friends and lovers) from varied backgrounds, or are they fairly routine and homogeneous? To these Jews under 40, in considering how to spend their time, more important than institutions and ideology are informal networks and style, or the "scene." They remain suspicious of ideology, exclusiveness, agenda, and apparent judgmentalism and are uncomfortable with an overt stress on politics, even on those issues with which they may share a consensus.

In a vibrant and healthy culture, each generation invents new symbols, expressions, and institutions. Innovation is inevitably suffused with distancing and differentiation, using critique, ambivalence, irreverence, irony, and ridicule to establish new patterns of Jewish be-

havior and expression. My own generation took aim at patriarchy in Jewish life, assimilationism in Jewish federations, passivity in synagogues, ultra-nationalism in Israel, among other targets of our youthful critique. Today's active younger Jewish adults are engaging in similar endeavors, albeit around different substantive and stylistic issues.

At the heart of these efforts are several unusually creative cultural and social entrepreneurs. Typically, these are Jewishly educated individuals, generally in their early thirties. They have initiated a wide variety of endeavors in areas as diverse as music, film, drama, social service, spirituality, education, and, not least, the Web, now home to millions of pages related to Jews, Judaism, Israel, and related matters. These entrepreneurs are notable for their dedication, persistence, passion, and conviction; notwithstanding their high levels of Jewish background and education, they resist being seen as too closely aligned with the conventional Jewish institutional infrastructure.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Three processes have characterized Jewish history since its inception:

1. Change of Jewish religious, cultural, and social patterns over time, inevitably dividing the population into supporters and opponents of the old and the new
2. Assimilation of elements from other cultures and societies, with a potential both for enrichment of Jewish life and the dissolution of its boundaries
3. Diversity of approaches to being Jewish at any point in time, reflecting both healthy productivity and the possibility of fragmentation or schism

These processes, of course, continue in our own time, albeit at a far more rapid pace and with more sweeping effect than in the past. Jews in America and elsewhere continue to evolve, changing with the times, acquiring the forms, ideas, and aesthetics of

their surrounding cultures, thereby producing a highly varied and hybrid culture that contends with the twin challenges of maintaining Jewish authenticity and modern relevance simultaneously. It is by now commonplace to observe that the world is marked by more rapid change, more frequent and intensive encounters of once-distinctive cultures, and the wider production of greater diversity and individual idiosyncrasy. By extension, we may expect that Jewish life today is undergoing more rapid and thorough change, assimilation, and diversity than it has in the past and that the pace and extent of change will continue and intensify. How are custodians of the Jewish community to respond to this circumstance?

In writing about the adaptation of religious cultures to modernity, social theorist Peter Berger (1979) articulates three ideal-typical responses:

1. The Deductive Option, by which he means deducing or bringing down and standing firmly behind received religious traditions and, in so doing, to withstand, as best as possible, the challenge of potentially destructive and subversive changes in the larger society
2. The Reductive Option, by which he means reducing the demands, sweep, and claims of the religious culture, so as to remain relevant to the public and resilient in the face of major social change
3. The Inductive Option, by which he means inducing new responses that draw on the authenticity of the old and received, and, at the same time, comport with the newly emergent conditions

In point of fact, for Jews today, in America and elsewhere, the increasing pace of change, the extent of cultural assimilation (for well and for ill), and the depth of diversity will (and do) require a combination of all three approaches: deduction, reduction, and induction. We will need to know which standing truths and authentic traditions to preserve, which we can abandon with little

harm to the Jewish body politic, and how to invent new ways of being Jewish that are both authentically tied to the past and compelling and relevant for the future. The proper mix of these approaches will differ from time to time and community to community. Accordingly, Jewish communal policymakers and practitioners will need to contend with and adapt to a world that demands lines of action that are customized to circumstance, diverse in their approach, and shifting in their application.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Work on this paper was supported by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. My thanks as well, to Marion Blumenthal and Ari Y. Kelman for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article and to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for our productive conversations.

REFERENCES

- Beck, Pearl. (2005). *A flame still burns: The dimensions and determinants of Jewish identity among young adult children of the intermarried*. New York: Jewish Outreach Institute.
- Berger, Peter. (1979). *Heretical imperative: Contemporary possibilities of religious affirmation*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cohen, Steven M. (1994, December). Why intermarriage may not threaten Jewish continuity. *Moment*, 54.
- Grant, Lisa D., Tickton Schuster, Diane, Woocher, Meredith, & Cohen, Steven M. (2004). *A journey of heart and mind: Transformative Jewish experiences in adulthood*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. (2005, June). Participatory journalism. *Sh'ma*, 35(622), 1-2.
- Kotler-Berkowitz, Laurence, Cohen, Steven M., Ament, Jonathan, Klaff, Vivian, Mott, Frank, & Peckerman-Neuman, Danyelle. (2003). *The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: Strength, challenge and diversity in the American Jewish population*. New York: United Jewish Communities.
- Putnam, Robert. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

ISRAEL FOI I

MODERN RE

The issues facing the are unprecedented. tions ago, Jews through of whom were new imm the United States, Eurc the Soviet Union, or Au basic economic and sor curity. These external th first half of the 20th cent well, prevented the Jew truly confronting mode on Jewish life. Tod throughout the world ha economic and physical lacked, an entirely nev emerged.

The Jewish commur paralleled success in a time. When top educati bodies opened their doc quotas, the Jewish com access to the ultimate This mobility allowed J every segment of the st United States, the Jew most politically powerf the economic arena, Je highest positions in a v sions ranging from me ness. The kinds of soci just 50 years ago have belong to some of the vate clubs, museum b institutions. Although certainly still exists, same existential threat ago.

In under a century community has manag its grandparents' dre: these incredible succ