

## THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND JEWISH YOUTH\*

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IS there an immediate crisis which our Jewish youth is experiencing around college admission, and what can we foresee for the years ahead?

Nationally, over the past two years, a wealth of documented material has accumulated resulting from educational and research studies conducted by various professional and private organizations, all of which point to an impending crisis around college admissions, commencing in the early 1960's and accelerating rapidly through 1975. Official bodies such as the U.S. Office of Education, state boards of education, and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers all agree on the figures. The titles of the studies themselves, such as "The Impending Tidal Wave of Students" (1954) and "The Closing Door to College" (1956) leave no room for doubt. The students who will face these problems have already been born and have been counted. Thus, for example, in my own state of New Jersey, where approximately 50% of our college students presently go to out-of-state colleges, we know that enrollments will triple between 1954 and 1973. In 1962, those present 8th grade students who fall in the second quarter of their high school

class will experience great difficulty, with only one out of two successful in gaining admission. By 1973, New Jersey will have doubled its present college-age youth, an increasingly greater percentage of whom are going on to college. Some 83,000, or approximately one-half of those who are capable and want to go, will at that time be closed out. This conservative estimate takes into account all expansion and building plans for both New Jersey and out-of-state educational institutions.

How do these figures relate to national figures on Jewish youth?

"One of the startling findings of the excellent Third Decennial Census of Jewish College Students, recently completed by the B'nai B'rith Vocational Service, is that the number of Jewish college students has remained virtually stationary during the past decade, at approximately 200,000. The general college population climbed from 2.1 million in 1946 to 2.7 million in 1955. As a result of these changes, the proportion of Jewish students in our American and Canadian college population dropped from 9% to 7.5% over a decade. . . . It is estimated that almost 6%, or about 325,000, of our 5.5 million Jews are in the 18-21 college-age bracket. About 200,000 of these are believed to be in college. . . . The non-Jewish population of college age is about 9.4 million, of

\* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Chicago, Illinois, May 17, 1958.

which only 2.5 million are enrolled in college. In other words, *while 62 out of every 100 college-age Jewish persons are actually enrolled in college, only 27 out of every 100 non-Jews are in college.*

"These figures indicate that the Jewish college population may have reached its near-saturation point a decade or more ago, while the proportion of college youth in the general population was very low and continues to be far behind the Jewish ratio, even though it is slowly rising. We can look forward to a continued increase in the percentage of college students in the general population; and very little increase in the percentage of Jewish youth in college."

In order to get a first-hand picture of the immediate college situation as it is affecting our Jewish youth, I recently sent a questionnaire to all JVS agency executives throughout the country asking for a current appraisal of the situation. Responses were received from thirteen to date, including at least one or more from practically every region of the United States and two from Canada. These included the following agencies—from the Eastern Seaboard: New York City, Newark, Boston, and Miami; from the Mid- and South-West: Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, St. Louis, Minneapolis; from the Far West: Los Angeles; and from Canada: Montreal and Toronto.

The general consensus of opinion was that, while there had been some tightening up and greater selectivity noted in college admissions, generally speaking, little or no difficulty is being experienced by Jewish students who graduate in the first two quarters of their high school class, with third quarter students having to settle for lesser choices, and fourth quarter students just beginning to have some difficulty.

Nevertheless, evidence of greater selectivity appears very much in the offing. Detroit notes that "it has become ap-

parent during the past year that the colleges and universities in this area are becoming more selective and are tightening their requirements both for admission and for retention. At Wayne State University, for example, the practice of accepting less promising students in trial programs, where they would have opportunity to demonstrate better achievement than shown by their high school records, is being discontinued. Some of the smaller colleges, which used to admit routinely, now require entrance examinations and have established probationary periods.

"This tightening has made it necessary for a growing number of Jewish students to accept enrollment in smaller, less demanding colleges. We have not as yet felt any impact with regard to those students who readily qualify scholastically."

Boston sees "an increase in the number of parents who are sending their children to prep schools in order to make it easier to get into college. . . . As a member of a college faculty, I can say that with the increased numbers of young people applying for college, they have become more selective."

The immediate problem, however, as seen by the majority of JVS respondents appears to be on a different level. The Cleveland JVS, drawing upon extensive experience in educational and career counseling of Jewish youth, states the problem as follows: "One of the chief problems we have encountered in our services to young people, who in the main come from the suburban communities surrounding Cleveland, is an over-emphasis on seeking admission, for social and prestige reasons, to 'name' schools. The high schools of communities such as Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights vie with one another so that they can boast of the numbers from each school who have been admitted to the Ivy League schools, the Little Three, and similar in-

stitutions. Parents in these communities judge the effectiveness of the guidance departments of these high schools, not on the basis of assistance with sound career planning, but rather on their success in effecting admission to 'name' schools."

Chicago replies that "our JVS has encountered some problems in relation to the anxiety of parents and prospective college students. We have not noticed any disparity between availability and demands for higher education. Perhaps in the future there may be some problems; right now the problems are the same as they have been all along—the many youngsters who want to get into Swarthmore have to compromise and go to Harvard, Chicago, or the University of Illinois instead. But this is status and social in nature, not inherent in the educational systems as such."

Minneapolis states that "much of the problem the youngster faces in being accepted by a college is directly related to the particular school or schools he decides to apply to. Based on our experience here, it would seem that the Jewish youngster, in a sense, approaches the problem of choosing a school somewhat in the same manner as he considered choosing a vocation—with a bias. Apart from the socio-psychological reasons for so doing, the youngsters, by and large, will point for the same schools. Just as Jewish families and friends have traditionally accepted certain occupations as "safe" and rewarding for their young people, so it seems, they approach the world of higher education with blinders on—to the extent that they tend to see the same few schools as the ones to be seriously considered by the youngster in question, and the youngster generally follows the lead."

The B'nai B'rith report bears this out, noting that "Jewish enrollment in the so-called 'Ivy League' colleges took an upward swing in the decade between

1946 and 1955. The Jewish proportion in the eight institutions in the prestige Ivy League group increased from 15% to 22.9% in the ten-year period, a 54% jump. In the five out of seven women's Ivy League colleges for which comparable figures are available, the increase was from 10.4% to 15.8%. (The Ivy League is popularly regarded as consisting of Dartmouth, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale Universities. The women's Ivy League counterpart comprises Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mt. Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley.)"

JVSs are reporting a phenomenon with which most of us are quite familiar, but perhaps will meet with on a more intensified scale as the doors of the better colleges swing shut.

Part of the above trend I believe is also due to the tendency of Jewish students to cluster together in the larger universities and better "name" private institutions. Another reason, equally important, has its roots in economic considerations. Thus, for those Jewish youth who wish to enter professional and graduate schools, it is a well-known fact that successful completion of certain undergraduate schools virtually guarantees admittance. For example, for pre-med students, graduation from such schools as Amherst, Franklin & Marshall, or Union College opens the door to medical school. For women, competition will be keener for the good co-ed institution, but here, too, as with men, social and family rivalries tend to make for unusual pressures on Jewish youth.

In summary, then, the picture we get is that there is actually not an immediate crisis, but rather an impending one around college admission.

All this points up the necessity of JVSs' doing more preventive group counseling, with parents possibly even more than with youth. As one of my Board members whimsically remarked recently,

"Speaking as a parent of a teen-ager who faces the choice of a college, I can truthfully say that all parents in this situation are confronted with a serious problem, and both the parent and his youngster can be best described as 'seriously disturbed.'" This statement typifies a kind of panic that appears to have gripped parents of those high school youth who are applying for college admission today.

However, Leslie MacMitchell of Columbia, in a recent interview with the press, termed the situation as one of lack of communication. He stated that actually many colleges were still not filling their admission quotas despite huge increases in applications. He stated that colleges were experiencing huge casualties among those accepted, many of whom were applying to an average of at least six schools and gaining admittance to one of their first three choices.

In this situation, the average high school guidance department is apparently unable to cope with the problems encountered. JVSs currently doing group guidance can help alleviate parents' anxieties around college choice and attempt to broaden their college horizons to include the consideration of the many fine state universities and local institutions with available openings. Equally important, Jewish youth who lack ability to compete on the college level can be given sound vocational counseling about broader vocational opportunities that can be achieved through business and technical school as well as junior college training.

If possible, this group counseling should start with parents at the eighth grade level and above, in an attempt to forestall the rapid growth of the tremendous pressure we know is typically making "nervous wrecks" out of our youth, who get caught in the competitive strivings of their parents, without reference to their academic potential. In

order to do this effectively, the JVSs must establish closer ties with both high school and college guidance and admissions departments. As a start in this direction, the JVSs can help overworked and understaffed high school guidance departments by offering their services or consultation around students who have special problems or need intensive individual service, which high school guidance departments are ordinarily unable to provide. The Newark JVS is presently using this approach; and as a consequence has been able to develop positive relationships with a number of suburban high schools serving Jewish youth in the area. This in turn facilitates further work with parents. The benefits of closer ties to college admissions departments are obvious.

Since Sputnik, a tremendous national push is under way to direct promising students into the sciences and technology and to provide additional guidance, counseling, testing, and scholarship and fellowship opportunities. Witness the bills pending in Congress—H.R. 10381 (National Defense Education Act of 1958) and S. 13163 (Educational Development Act of 1958) which provide matching grants to the States for the foregoing, in order to spot able students in the lower grades and help them obtain higher education. Those of us who are professionals in the field of vocational guidance and counseling have a special responsibility in this regard.

In response to the recent questionnaire, all JVSs replying went on record as endorsing the stand taken in December, 1957, by the Executive Council of the American Personnel and Guidance Association regarding freedom of choice for students as against the push toward the sciences and technology.

Because of the importance of this statement to all of us, whether as professional guidance workers, community relations workers, educators, or members of the community at large, I should like

to read a portion of this statement, signed by leading counselors and educators of high schools, colleges, and private and public agencies. I quote, "This generation has been called upon to make a decision that will shape the destinies of many future generations. At the heart of this decision lies one of this nation's basic freedoms—freedom of choice.

"Faced by a tragic shortage of scientists and technologists, we are strongly tempted to solve the manpower problem by channeling outstanding high school and college students into scientific and technical careers. Here lies the danger of tampering with freedom of choice. If the top academic potentiality of this nation were to be forced into a single, selected career pattern, generations of youth would lose the privilege of freely choosing their life careers—a privilege cherished by youth throughout the history of this nation. Such a course of action might not solve even part of the problem, for a lack of educated talent persists in all areas of our national life. The solution, therefore, must be viewed from a broader perspective, and we must aim toward utilizing every available talent. Only then will the demand for scientists and technologists be met, along with the demand for educated talent in all fields.

"The present waste of human resources must be alleviated. It can be. This nation has an obligation to assure the maximum growth of all individuals, both for their own satisfaction and for the benefit of all society. With guidance, our youth can make their choices in freedom, and they can meet the human resources shortages in all areas of our democratic life."

As the Federation Employment and Guidance Service in New York City expressed it, "JVS agencies are counseling services and not recruiting agencies. As a matter of fact, as I see one of the major problems here, the push to give

status to the sciences means, automatically, that lesser status will now be accorded to the social sciences and the humanities. Just as youngsters who may not be accepted by Ivy League colleges may feel rejected when taken into perfectly sound colleges of another kind, so a wise individual decision to select a non-science field may begin to carry the coloration of second-level status."

I should like to briefly touch on JVSs' relationship to guidance and educational authorities in the area of scholarships and fellowships. As you know, many JVSs have developed informational and other services in this regard. The questionnaire revealed there was no firm agreement as to the role JVSs should play. Most respondents felt more could be done and noted fellowship opportunities were decreasing with the business recession. The approach taken by the Detroit JVS, with which I am somewhat familiar, I feel is worthy of further consideration as it may be helpful in the pressured days ahead. The scholarship program there for which JVS does screening and makes recommendations is geared to serve the less than outstanding, but nevertheless deserving Jewish youngster of ability who needs financial help, but would not be able to obtain it readily in competition with other outstanding youngsters. This group will probably increase in numbers as college costs and competition increase.

Since career and college choice relate to employment opportunities for Jewish youth, I would like to review briefly this changing picture. "The Decennial Census of Jewish College Students shows an increase between 1946 and 1955 for ten professional fields in the percentage of all Jewish students who were preparing for professional careers.

"In 1946, 17.4% of all Jewish students reported in a specific professional curriculum were in education, while in 1955 it rose to 18.9%. Comparable fig-

ures for other fields which showed increases were engineering, law, medicine, pharmacy, social work, home economics, architecture, osteopathy, and nursing. The modest increases in the proportion of all Jewish professional students in each of these ten fields may be due to a combination of factors. The increased employment opportunities undoubtedly have drawn a proportionately greater number of Jewish students to some of these fields than to others since 1946. In other cases, there may not have been any change of interest, but rather an improvement between 1946 and 1955 in the opportunities afforded young Jewish people to train for these professions. Several fields declined in popularity with Jewish youth between 1946 and 1955. These included fine arts, dentistry, music, and optometry. In the case of the fine arts and music, the declines may represent a falling off in interest. Many students, particularly women, major in these fields only for avocational reasons. With the rising proportion of women in the labor force, more and more college women today are preparing themselves for vocations.

"It should be pointed out that this Decennial Census by no means gives the complete picture of trends in vocational interests of Jewish college students. We know that there is a great interest on the part of Jewish youth in fields which are not taught in separate professional schools. The survey accounted for the specific vocational interests of only one-fourth of the approximately 200,000 Jewish college students. There are still an estimated 100,000 Jewish college students interested in preparing for careers in fields not reported, such as chemistry, psychology, economics, biological science, physics, geography, languages, geology, sociology, to mention a few."

The Census findings corroborated JVS reports that Jewish students have

shown a decided preference, which is increasing slightly, for the independent professional fields which offer self-employment and in which economic discrimination is minimized. The professional fields of medicine, law, dentistry, pharmacy, and business administration (30%) made up 50% of Jewish students. Increases have taken place in student education, which made up an additional 19%. Engineering followed with 17%, a considerable increase over the 8.9% in 1935, with emphasis on chemical and electrical engineering. In numbers or popularity, Jewish students have chosen the following: 1. business administration; 2. education; 3. engineering (chemical and electrical); 4. law; 5. medicine; (7.6%); 6. dentistry (biggest decline); 7. music; 8. social work; 9. home economics. Law shows a marked decline. Decreased percentages noted in dentistry, law, and other professions are apparently at least as much a matter of statistics and not due to discrimination.

A. Abbot Rosen of ADL, at the 1956 National Conference of Jewish Communal Service session on "Discrimination in Higher Educational Institutions," stated that he believed that college admissions would become more selective and that this in turn might once again breed quotas and discrimination. Nevertheless, he stated that, "except perhaps in the case of the student of marginal ability, in the year 1956 the task of the counselor is very little, if at all, affected by the persistence of discrimination in our institutions of higher education . . . discrimination against Jews in college and university admissions is not the problem today it was several decades ago . . . employment discrimination against Jews is not nearly as serious as it was in earlier decades, and that the alleviation of the former problem is not unrelated to broader job opportunities for Jews . . . the Jewish student today has almost an equal chance

for college and university admission." Rosen accounted for the general easing of the situation by the comparatively low birth rate during the depression years of the 1930s, which removed much of the competition for admission to schools of higher learning 18 and more years thereafter.

While this still appears to be the situation today, we can reasonably expect, as college admissions and the job market tighten further, that we will once again more overtly experience discriminatory college and job quotas. While it is true that both some new and old fields of endeavor are newly open to Jews, such as the field of atomic energy, engineering, and the sciences, we must be alert to the possible "closing of the gates." Occupational information as to trends in the labor market can be very helpful to both college and non-college bound Jewish youth. Thus,

for example, opportunities for training and employment on a technician's level in very many fields are becoming increasingly noteworthy; and as automation increases, training for jobs beyond the high school and sub-college level will be more imperative.

In summary, it appears that the JVS and community relations fields will have to face decisions related to the new pressures created by the gradual tightening and intensive competition we can now foresee in opportunities for higher education and job opportunities for Jewish youth. I have indicated problem areas in which most JVSs are now giving service, which will undoubtedly have to be increased, and additional services which could be given or further implemented. We must anticipate these problems and make plans to meet them on an organized basis in order to effectively serve our Jewish youth.