Jewish Households, Jewish Homes: Serving American Jews in the 1990s

Jewish Households with Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>First Marriage</th>
<th>Second Marriage</th>
<th>Single Parent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- First Marriage
- Second Marriage
- Single Parent

Sylvia Barack Fishman, Ph.D.
Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
Brandeis University

Policy and Planning Papers 4
April 1990
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This paper on the family would not have been possible without the supportive work environment provided by my own wonderful family. My husband, Philip, has been a committed dual-career enabler and involved father throughout our marriage; our children, Lisi, Elie, and Joseph, delightfully fill our lives with humor, challenge, and "nachas"; my parents, Rabbi Nathan and Mrs. Lillian Barack, thank God, continue to inspire us by their lifelong devotion to each other and to their children and grandchildren. Truly, the whole is more than the sum of its parts.
Introduction

Chaim Grade, in his poignant memoir, *My Mother's Sabbath Days*, provides a vivid picture not only of his saintly mother Vella but also of traditional Eastern European Jewish family and community life under assault by a barrage of “isms” symptomatic of modernity: secularism, romanticism, nationalism, socialism, careerism, and Zionism. Marriage and the establishment of a normative Jewish home obsesses the older generation: Vella, a widow, agonizes constantly over Chaim’s bachelorhood; she feels responsible when Chaim “turns a young girl’s head” without marital intentions; the older widow Vella herself feels constrained to remarry as soon as Chaim is safely matched. Moreover, despite her abject poverty, she contributes as much as she can to communal efforts and causes.

Vella and Chaim’s father-in-law, a rabbi, embody traditional Jewish family values. They pressure their children to marry early and to live in accordance with Orthodox lifestyles. The two in-laws, or “machatonim,” Vella and the rabbi, have a special relationship and treat each other with the utmost respect and cordiality. However, their children stray far from the path they would wish to see them follow, as they embrace the values and mores of the modern world. Vella watches members of their community become secular writers, irreligious businessmen, liberated nurses, social revolutionaries, and Zionist pioneers. She watches them emigrate to Argentina, to the United States, to Palestine. Above all, she sees them become individualists, each deciding for him or herself how life is to be lived, rather than accepting unquestioningly religious prescriptions and communal norms.

The “isms” which work to alter Jewish households have changed significantly from mother Vella’s pre-World War II Vilna to the United States during the last two decades of the 20th century, but the transformation of the Jewish family has continued unabated. Recent studies from more than twenty cities in the United States indicate that American Jewish households have changed dramatically even over the past two decades: while 78 percent of Jewish households in 1970 consisted of married couples, most of whom had or planned on at least two children, only about two-thirds of Jewish households in 1985 consisted of married couples. Just 20 years ago, according to the 1970 National Jewish Population Study, only six percent of America’s adult Jews were single; today approximately one-fifth of them are single, for Jewish population studies of cities around the country reveal never-married figures of between 12 to 27 percent. The singles state, previously seen as a brief interim period between childhood and marriage, has extended into a decade or two of a distinctive culture in the lives of large groups of American Jews, who live alone or in households composed exclusively of singles. Families of not more than two children are the norm, and very small families—one or no children—are not unusual. Divorce, while far less prevalent than in society as a whole, has increased in every wing of American Judaism.
And American Jewish families more and more are physically divided along chronological and marital status lines into homogeneous colonies which are frequently separated by large geographical distances; this polarization inhibits intergenerational interaction and mutual support.2

These phenomena represent extraordinary changes in attitude and behavior. For over 2000 years, Jews as a group have regarded the married state as the only good and productive state for adults; as evidenced by traditional Jewish texts, letters, memoirs, and fictional accounts, the Jewish bias toward marriage and families has suffused Jewish literature, official rituals, and folk culture. Rabbinical literature spelled out in great detail the necessity for early and universal marriage, the manifold responsibilities which parents had toward their children, and the even more extensive personal responsibilities which grown children had toward their aging parents. While not every household lived up to these prescriptive details, Jewish communal institutions have often assumed that their primary clientele and certainly their primary supporters were normative Jewish families.

However, contemporary America’s shifting proportions of Jewish family types and their changed expectations has put new demands on the Jewish community. In order to meet the needs of the broad spectrum of transformed families who make up today’s Jewish communities, Jewish communal planners and leaders must revise the priorities of the communal agenda.

One comprehensive change in priorities has to do with the previously strict division between providing service delivery and strengthening Jewish identity. For many years, Jewish communal workers were taught that service delivery should most correctly be value free. Jewish identity, it was thought, should be strictly limited to appropriate provinces such as the home and the synagogue. However, the same widespread demographic transformations which have radically altered Jewish households, have also profoundly challenged Jewish identity issues within the Jewish community. Value-free service delivery may no longer be a desirable objective in many cases.

First, as we will see when we deal with specific groups, some populations, such as parents looking for Jewish child care, feel that Jewish enrichment greatly enhances Jewish-sponsored child care. Second, Jewish service delivery in the future in many cases will be provided by institutions traditionally in the Jewish identity business, such as synagogues providing singles programming, senior citizen’s lunches, and child care. Third, Jewish institutions cannot survive among populations who are unidentified or only marginally identified. For communal institutional survival, if for no other reason, Jewish communal institutions today must turn their attention to Jewish identity issues as well as changes in the need for Jewish service delivery.
The first step in revamping Jewish communal agendas is to acquire information about each of several family groupings and insight into their current needs. Thus, in sketching a plan for service delivery to the Jewish community, we examine a variety of Jewish households, each of which is one type of the contemporary American Jewish family: the traditional, two-parent family with clearly differentiated masculine and feminine roles; the dual-career two-parent family; singles and divorced households without children; single-parent or reconstituted families; and elderly couples or widowed elder "singles."
Jewish Singles

In every community a growing number of Jewish households can be designated as "single," a category including the unmarried, the divorced, and the widowed. As a group, the young and middle-aged who have never married and those who are divorced with no children have similar interests and needs. We will deal with the needs of the generally older widowed group when we discuss the Jewish elderly.

As seen in Figure 1, unmarried Jews are found in especially large proportions in Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Manhattan, and Denver, cities with the reputation for a varied and attractive singles culture. Primarily attracted by educational or job opportunities and by the promise of an active social life because of the presence of large numbers of singles; few have families in the area. This lack of long-established family and friendship networks may contribute to the length of time which passes before they marry.

Postponed marriage and non-marriage has been more prevalent among West Coast Jews than in other areas of the country throughout the 1980s. In San Francisco (1988) among Jews ages 25 to 34, more than one-half of the men (52 percent) and more than one-third of the women (34 percent) had never been married. Los Angeles (1980) had the smallest percentage of ever-married Jews in the 18-39 age category of any American city; more than one-third of Los Angeles Jewish respondents under 39 years old were unmarried,
and eight percent were divorced with no children. In Denver (1981), a locale with many younger adults, one out of every three Jewish households was made up of unmarried individuals. Just over half of Denver’s Jews were married by age 29, and just under three-quarters of them by age 34; universal marriage was not achieved until age 44.

Eastern communities which offer large-scale educational and employment opportunities to young professionals also have a large proportion of Jewish singles. Boston’s 1985 study of the Jewish population illustrated how much more prominent singles had become in the Jewish community in just one decade: in 1985, only 34 percent of Boston Jews ages 21 to 29 were married, compared to 42 percent in 1975; in the group ages 30 to 39, 69 percent were married in 1985, compared to 88 percent in 1975.

Studies done earlier in the 1980s also showed the trend toward large singles populations and delayed marriage in large Eastern metropolitan areas. The Jewish community of Washington, D.C. (1983), included a large group—27 percent—of Jewish singles, many of whom were attracted by and work in government-related positions. Less than 60 percent of Washington’s Jews had ever been married by age 34; 92 percent had been married by age 44; and universal marriage was achieved by age 55, with 98 percent of Washington’s Jews married. In Manhattan (New York, 1981), one third of the population had never been married, 15 percent were divorced or separated, and 11 percent were widowed.

Although postponed marriage is more striking in the late 1980s and in cities which have special attractions for single professionals, the Jewish singles phenomenon has also been clearly visible in more family-oriented, “middle American” communities even in the first half of the 1980s. A study of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1984), for example, showed that less than a third of all respondents were married by age 29 (30%); 87 percent were ever-married by age 39; and not until the 40-49 age group did universal marriage occur, with 95 percent of all Jewish respondents in the Milwaukee study ever-married.

Some researchers are attempting to delve into the possible reasons for attenuated singlehood among American Jews. Ethnologist Esther Perel, for example, does workshops with New York Jewish singles who harbor “toxic feelings” about Jews of the opposite sex. She has found that many American Jews remain single for a long time because they have deep-seated hostilities toward Jews of the opposite sex, yet they are uncomfortable about the idea of intermarriage. Unable to resolve their conflicts, such singles continue to date non-Jews almost exclusively, but do not marry them. Perel suggests active communal intervention in the form of workshops and public awareness of destructive stereotypes, such as the “Jewish American princess,” the “Jewish mother,” and the “Jewish mama’s boy.”

Jewish singles are an important group in every major metropolitan area, and yet they
often feel left out of Jewish organizational life precisely because of the traditional Jewish emphasis on marriage and the family. In 1978, Nancy Selig asked, “Are Singles Second Class Citizens in the Synagogue?” and found that many singles felt they were left out of synagogue life. They charged that Jewish institutions catered to family members, leaving singles feeling isolated and lonely in religious settings.8

Despite sporadic attempts in some synagogues and other institutions to become more sensitive to desires of their unmarried constituencies for general social networking as well as for meeting members of the opposite sex, unmarried Jews more than a decade after Selig’s article still report feeling “so outside, so rejected by the community and not understood.” Unmarried Jews, like married Jews, require a complete spectrum of religious, social, and cultural programs in which they will feel like complete and valued citizens. Because of their special status, they may even require more.

Excellent ideas for programming do exist, and some pioneering communities have made a start in meeting the needs of their Jewish singles. The following examples of successful programing would be less than useful if they worked to induce complacency in Jewish communal leaders and planners; they are offered simply to indicate the directions which creative programing can take in serving and reaching Jewish singles. These programs and more must be instituted throughout the American Jewish community, in locales both large and small, if the large number of contemporary American Jewish singles are to be involved in Jewish communal life.

- Late Friday evening services followed by an oneg Shabbat have proved a popular program in at least two very different settings: over 1500 individuals attended such services in one year in Washington, D.C., and 4000 asked to be put on the mailing list of a rotating suburban Friday evening program in northern New Jersey.8

- Jewish dating services, both commercial and not-for-profit, have proliferated in major metropolitan areas. These modern versions of the traditional shadchan utilize “computer matching” of eligible men and women as well as the skills of human interviewers to combine likely prospects for introductions. While private dating services can be very costly, some communities provide subsidized services aimed at clients ranging from college students through middle-aged singles.9

- Some Jewish organizations and federations are expanding divisions geared to unmarried young professionals, enabling talented singles to serve the community while they establish social and professional networks. Professional networking is perhaps one of the new “growth” areas in Jewish organizational life, and one which, if aggressively pursued, might serve to infuse Jewish leadership rosters with talented new volunteers.10
It must be emphasized, however, that at the present time programming for Jewish singles is hardly adequate to the needs of the large proportion of singles among today’s Jewish adults. A broader variety of programs more broadly distributed are crucial in today’s late marrying and more frequently divorcing communities.

Significantly, singles themselves have indicated a strong interest in Jewish sponsorship of singles programs in many communities. The strength of these preferences varies from community to community. In general, the more avant-garde the community, the less the preference on the part of singles for Jewish sponsorship of services; the more traditional the community, the greater the preference. In addition, the more intensely Jewish the attitudes and Jewish communal involvement of the singles involved, the more likely they are to prefer Jewish sponsorship of singles programs. Two very recent city studies illustrate these differences.

In San Francisco, one of the least traditional communities studied in terms of family formation and religious orientation, almost half of the Jewish singles (46 percent) said they had no preference regarding who sponsors singles programs, 11 percent said they preferred non-sectarian sponsorship of programs, and 45 percent preferred Jewish sponsorship of programs. On the other hand, in Dallas, a community which features larger proportions of married Jewish households and larger Jewish families than many communities, much stronger preferences were expressed by singles for Jewish sponsorship of programs. Two-thirds of Dallas Jewish singles (69 percent) said they preferred Jewish programming for themselves; indeed, over one-fifth (22 percent) said they “very much preferred” Jewish-sponsored singles programs and nearly one-half (47 percent) said they “preferred” such programming. Only one-fifth had no preference and only eight percent said they would prefer non-sectarian programming.
Figure 2
Measuring by Importance of Marrying Another Jew
Dallas Jewish Singles' Preference for Singles Programming

Key:
- Very much preferred Jewish-sponsored singles programs
- Somewhat prefer Jewish-sponsored singles programs
- Have no preference for Jewish-sponsored programs

N=2909
Those preferring non-Jewish programs (n=18) and those who refused to answer are not included in Figure 2

Dallas Singles: A Case Study

Among Dallas Jewish singles, those expressing a preference for Jewish sponsorship of singles programs had a much higher Jewish identity profile and Jewish affiliational profile in several significant areas than singles who had no preference:

- **Jewish worldview**

  Dallas Jewish singles who said they “very much preferred” or “preferred” Jewish-sponsored singles programming were far more likely to agree with the following statement: “Being Jewish makes a difference in everything I do.” Nearly nine
out of ten (87 percent) of those who “very much preferred” Jewish singles programs agreed, as did well over half (55 percent) of those who “preferred” Jewish singles programming. In comparison, only 31 percent of singles who had no preference agreed with the statement.

- **Desire to marry another Jew**

Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between the desire to marry another Jew and the preference for Jewish sponsorship of singles programs, as shown in Figure 2. More than four out of five (84 percent) of singles who “very much preferred” Jewish sponsorship of singles programming also said it was “very important” to them to marry another Jew and another 11 percent said it was “somewhat important.” Of those who “preferred” Jewish singles programs, 39 percent said it was “very important” and another 43 percent said it was “somewhat important” to them to marry another Jew. In contrast, of those who had “no preference” for Jewish sponsorship of singles programs, only 14 percent said that it was “very important” for them to marry another Jew and another 40 percent said it was “somewhat important.”

Singles who “very much preferred” Jewish singles programs were twice as likely as those who have no preference, and ten times as likely as those who prefer non-sectarian sponsorship to attach great important to finding a Jewish spouse.

- **Jewish friendship patterns**

Among Dallas Jewish singles who “very much prefer” Jewish sponsorship of singles programs, more than two-thirds (68 percent) said that the majority of their three best friends are Jewish and none said they have no close Jewish friends. Among those who “preferred” Jewish programming, almost two-thirds (64 percent) said the majority of their three best friends were Jewish, over one-fifth (21 percent) had one Jewish friend, and 14 percent had no close Jewish friends. However, among those with no preference, fewer than one-third (29 percent) said that the majority of their three best friends are Jewish and one-third (33 percent) said they have no close Jewish friends.

- **Affiliation with Jewish institutions**

Perhaps most suggestively in terms of Jewish communal vitality, those Dallas singles who strongly preferred Jewish sponsorship of singles programs had patterns of Jewish communal involvement and affiliation which were radically different than those who had no preference and those who preferred non-sectarian sponsorship.
Almost universally (91 percent) Dallas Jewish singles who "very much preferred" Jewish sponsorship of singles services had already used at least one of the five Jewish communal agencies. Fifty-three percent of those who "preferred" Jewish sponsorship, 45 percent of those who had no preference, and 38 percent of those who preferred non-sectarian sponsorship had used the agencies.

Judging at least by current involvement, it seems likely that many future active participants in the Jewish community may be drawn from those singles who have expressed a strong interest in Jewish sponsorship of programs for singles. One can speculate that Jewish communal responsiveness to this preference can only work to enhance the involvement of such singles; one can speculate as well that failure to respond adequately to the needs of singles may work to dissipate such levels of involvement as currently exist. Therefore, for selfish as well as altruistic reasons, Jewish communal institutions and agencies may do well to address themselves wholeheartedly to the Jewish singles population.
## Figure 3*

U.S. Jewish Mothers of Children Under Six Working Full or Part-Time Outside Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro West, NJ</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>49%</td>
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## Dual Career Jewish Families

Dual career Jewish families (sometimes called two paycheck families to avoid the connotation of careerism), once unusual, have become the normative variety of nuclear family in some locations; indeed, the great majority of Jewish mothers of children under six are working outside the home, in most of the cities which have been studied during the past decade. In Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., for example, about two thirds of women with children under six were labor force participants. As Berger and Sternberg note, “the real question is whether Jewish communal organizations and institutions will adapt to these new realities and support Jewish families by responding to the labor force participation and career expectations of Jewish women.”

While some women reject traditional family life in the single-minded pursuit of a career, many Jewish women do indeed feel their familial and professional interests to
be organically related. It is these women who are also most likely to state that their traditional orientation helps them to balance dual responsibilities. Studies have shown that women who are firmly grounded in Jewish life can enjoy great success both in wife-mother roles and in career roles.\(^\text{14}\)

A study of 97 Jewish career women with three or more children in the Washington, D.C., area, for example, found that 86 were members of Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox synagogues, three belonged to havurot, two were Reconstructionists, and only six had no religious affiliation. Over half the women in the study “said that Jewish beliefs and attitudes helped them to juggle their multiple obligations. . . . Several stated that religion and tradition ‘held them together’” as the family worked through crisis situations. One third of the respondents kept Kosher homes, over half had some form of Sabbath observance, and three quarters sent their children to religious school—with one-fifth in day schools. Significantly, strong religious identification was not a factor of being closer to the immigrant generation: religious observance was more pronounced among younger than older respondents.\(^\text{15}\) Consequently, community planners should not consider dual-career families as “marginal.” Indeed, many of the women who aspire to combine work and motherhood are more committed Jewishly than either men or stay-at-home mothers.\(^\text{16}\)

Jewish dual-career families face difficult challenges both at home and at work. Kuzmack and Salomon’s study found that “motherhood, even impending motherhood, created problems on the job.” At the same time, dual careers often created strains within the family: husbands found their wives’ preoccupation with work concerns threatening; career opportunities in different cities pulled husband and wife in different directions; children complained about lack of parental presence and involvement; wives complained about the Jewish “momma’s boy” attitude of men who think household tasks beneath them.\(^\text{17}\)

Although career women said that their Jewish values and lifestyles enhanced familial devotion, stability, and structure, and increased the family’s ability to weather dual-career stresses and strains, they felt that the local Jewish community was sadly failing Jewish dual-career families. Dual career families often find the most enduring difficulty lies in obtaining practical help: sitters, transportation, household help. Washington women voiced the complaint that “the Jewish community is urging us to have more children, but it isn’t willing to help us meet the cost.”\(^\text{18}\)

While full-time homemakers have expressed a desire for child care, perhaps nowhere is the need for such services felt as intensely as among mothers who work outside the home full time or part time. The area of largest dissatisfaction was that of day care and Jewish education. “Mothers of young children . . . complained bitterly about the lack of Jewish day care centers. ‘Children should be raised in a Jewish environment, and day-care is part of that,’ ” said one. Others complained that Hebrew schools, day schools, and
Jewish camps were unwilling to lower tuition fees for large Jewish families unless their income was very low. Jewish organizations, they felt, retained the attitude that Jewish women should have more children and that Jewish women should bear the financial and psychological burden of raising those children.\textsuperscript{19}

Shirley Frank suggests that a number of broad attitudinal and practical changes by the Jewish community are needed to support Jewish families. In an prime example of the way future Jewish communal agendas may blend service delivery and Jewish identity programming, Frank insists that Jewish community leaders who say they want larger Jewish families ought to champion expanded after-school Jewish programs which incorporate Hebrew school curricula with recreational programing. They ought to make sure that every community has attractive Jewish day care programs. Every synagogue service, every adult education program, every Jewish social event ought to automatically offer good child care provisions. Children should be seen as a welcome part of Jewish life by the very people who urge women to have more children—and then “openly discriminate against” or “ostracize” families with “restless small children or wailing infants.”\textsuperscript{20}

The Jewish community, says Frank, should function as “a kind of surrogate extended family”:

“...a social and psychological support system beyond the limited bounds of the nuclear family that used to be provided by grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Children whose parents have followed employment opportunities to a new city or whose grandparents have migrated to Florida often can no longer drop in at Grandma's after school; the day care center, ideally, could help to fill the gap–by utilizing ‘foster grandparents’ programs, for instance ... It could also help give children and parents a sense of a caring Jewish community that is hard to come by.”\textsuperscript{21}

The Jewish community has a great stake in gaining a deeper understanding of the dual-career family constellation, and further research and dynamic programing is required to meet their needs. Dual-career couples, as revealed in the studies cited above, are interested in playing an active role in the Jewish community but feel disappointment that the community has not come to terms with their needs. It is unclear if greater communal emphasis on providing a spectrum of day care for professional Jewish women would influence their family-planning decisions toward earlier or larger families, but it is quite clear that dual-career couples have a very strong preference toward Jewish sponsorship of such services, as will be further discussed shortly. It appears that dual-career families are here to stay, and they provide an important challenge to the Jewish communities of which they are an increasingly significant part.
Figure 4
Baltimore Jewish Women
Percentage Who Have Child(ren)

Ages of Baltimore Jewish Women

8% 51% 88% 96%
18-24 25-34 35-44 45-64

Changed Levels of Fertility:
The Communal Impact

Suggestions for community responses to the family/career conflict differ widely. One of the chief points of contention has to do with the impact of careerism on fertility levels among Jews. Uriel Schmeltz and Sergio DellaPergola, Israeli demographers who study trends in the international Jewish population, estimate that married American Jewish women are having about 1.5 children per household; if unmarried Jewish women are included, they estimate 1.3 total fertility for American Jewish women over age 20.22 However, it is very likely that Schmeltz and DellaPergola’s figures underestimate the completed fertility levels of American Jewish women, because they include women ages 20 and over. In contemporary American Jewish society, only tiny numbers of Jewish women marry before their mid-twenties, except in right-of-center Orthodox circles. Thus, it may be valid to begin fertility estimates at age 20 among Jewish women in Israel or other more traditional societies, but among American Jewish women fertility statistics should probably begin with women not younger than age 24.
The size of American Jewish households has shrunk primarily through family planning. Demographer Calvin Goldscheider explains that American Jewish couples have long been distinguished by the accuracy with which they plan their families and use contraceptive devices to implement their plans.²³ Goldscheider and Francis Kobrin Goldscheider, relying on data which deals with expected family size, point out that among Jewish populations—unlike among Protestants, and Catholics—“educational attainment is directly rather than inversely relation to the fertility expectations.” In other words, the more highly educated the Jew the more children she expects to have. Thus, “Jews with doctorates expect 2.2 children and only 11 percent expect to be childless; Jews with ‘only’ college degrees expect only 1.8 children and 21 percent expect to be childless.” In contrast, the reverse pattern is true of Protestants and Catholics present a mixed picture. The Goldscheiders do note, however, that completed fertility patterns do not reveal a high level of fertility among highly educated Jewish women. On the contrary, “there is a direct relationship between educational level and the proportion childless ... as education increases among both Jewish men and women, the proportion with no children increases.” Indeed, “among those with a masters degree ... Jewish have significantly higher levels of childlessness than non-Jews.” The Goldscheiders dismiss this pronounced childlessness among highly educated American Jews as “a temporary postponement of childbearing among the most educated, not a shift toward less than a two-child family size.” They remain convinced that highly educated American Jews will fulfill their family size expectations, albeit somewhat later than similarly educated non-Jews.²⁴

The assumption that older parents are unexceptionally able to complete their expected family size, however, are challenged by other sources, which show that the small size of today’s Jewish families has also been affected by a variety of factors, including unwanted infertility. As maternal populations age, infertility problems increase, and expertise in using contraceptive devices ceases to be a good indicator of whether couples will complete their families with the number of children they hoped to have. Looking both at medical literature and at the proportion of Jewish couples who have no children and pursue adoption procedures, it is commonly estimated that 15 percent of Jewish couples who want children find it difficult or impossible to physically give birth to them.

Sherry Blumberg describes the plight of an infertile Jewish woman in a Hadassah study on Jewish Marital Status:

“I am an akarah, a barren woman. After three years of the latest modern tests and drugs, of artificial inseminations (using my husband’s sperm), of long hours in doctor’s offices, of humiliating tests and frustrated hopes, and of moments of despair, I am still a barren woman ... Soon my husband and I will give up the infertility doctors and begin the next frustrating process of
adoption. There are few babies, hardly any Jewish babies, and we are too old to go through the normal channels. We will join the many others who look for children with lawyers, doctors, rabbis, and friends. We may have to go to another country. We will spend what we need to spend.”

Moreover, recent studies have shown that the birth of a first child may actually signal an increase in, rather than the cessation of, infertility problems, especially for older mothers. “According to the National Center for Health Statistics, as of 1982 some 4.5 million American women either could not get pregnant or could not carry a baby to term; more than half of them already had at least one child … some risk factors do increase with time. Naturally, a couple is older when they try to have children again, and fertility clearly declines with age.” Researchers have found that women who waited until they were over age 35 and then have primary or secondary fertility problems are often filled with anger: “Women feel they have been sold a bill of goods that they can wait to get established in a career and then have a family.” As if to add insult to injury, “some secondarily infertile couples turn to adoption. But by then they may have passed the age limits set by adoption agencies. Some agencies won’t even consider couples who have a biological child.”

The physical and emotional issues brought on by deliberately delaying childbirth and the resulting increase in infertility are a complicated issue for the Jewish community to deal with. Paula Hyman, assistant professor of history at Columbia University, has castigated Jewish community leaders who seem to value women more for their reproductive value than for the contribution which they as individuals can make to the Jewish community.

Without intending to relegate women exclusively to uterine productivity, the fact is that infertility issues have a special resonance for individual Jewish women and for the Jewish community at large. New styles in family formation have created the necessity for new services to Jewish women who are wrestling with these issues. Perhaps the first approach is an attempt at prevention, whenever possible. Blu Greenberg points out that even without special infertility problems, “by delaying childbirth from the 20s to the 30s, we lose an entire generation every three decades. Career counseling with the Jewish people’s needs in mind,” she suggests, “would temper feminist claims with Jewish ones; it would enable couples to consider more seriously the option of having children first and then moving on to dual careers.” However, it is not clear that counseling such as Greenberg recommends could have a major impact on the American Jewish community. It seems more likely that such counseling, however right-minded and well-intentioned, would in fact influence only the family planning decisions of a very small proportion of couples who already have a highly developed sense of Jewish responsibility and involvement. It also would not be particularly useful for those women who, whether through their own
choice or not, do not marry until they are in their thirties.

Counseling to help women and couples deal with their feelings of grief and to come to terms with their inability to bear biological children is certainly a current necessity. National organizations such as RESOLVE have proved very useful to many infertile would-be parents, but they do not deal with the specifically Jewish concerns which often arise: on the most basic level, infertile Jewish couples must learn how to cope not only with their own frustrations but also with those of the potential Jewish grandparents. Jewish couples often struggle not only with personal grief but also with feelings of guilt and disappointment having to do with their lack of participation, via the production of a future generation, in Jewish physical and spiritual continuity. Blumberg articulates the special grief of an infertile woman with an intense Jewish consciousness:

"The hardest thing for me is confronting the tradition. There is a stigma about the akarah—barrenness is seen as punishment ... My rational mind says that my feelings are foolish, based on irrational ideas; the traditional materials and rabbis could not have been so unfeeling. But my feelings are my feelings. I feel the pain of emptiness, the despair of wanting to carry out the mitzvah and not being able. If these feelings are not enough, there are those who say that any couple who does not have at least three children is guilty of addition to the decline of the Jewish population ... When I hear that statement, I freeze. I respond with anger, but what I feel is pain." 29

As a consequence of the special intensity of Jewish suffering over infertility, Blumberg urges, Jewish teachers, rabbis, care givers and communal workers should be educated as to the needs and sensitivities of infertile clients and congregants. "I still cry when biblical portions are read," she notes, stating that couples undergoing problems with infertility also often undergo a crisis in faith which may require increased understanding and perhaps counseling. Alertness to the connotations of language is important: changing rabbinic references on family life from "bearing" children to "raising" children, for example, can make a big difference to adoptive parents and their children. In addition, there are financial considerations: couples who are engaged in extensive fertility testing and experimental procedures are often not covered my medical insurance, putting them into special financial categories despite income levels. 30

Furthermore, and certainly not least, Jewish-sponsored aid to adoption may be called for in many communities. Jewish community studies have only begun to ask questions related to adoption in the most recent surveys of Jewish populations. Clearly, much research is needed and some vigorous, creative programing is required to alleviate the increase of unwanted childlessness within the Jewish community.
Unwed motherhood is still rare among American Jewish women. When it does occur, it has little impact on major demographic trends in the Jewish community, because the numbers of children involved are so small; this is because the Jewish unwed mother is far more likely to be an unmarried woman in her late thirties who hears her biological clock ticking and chooses to have one child than a teen-ager who uses birth-control only sporadically if at all and has several children by the time she reaches her twenties. However, despite the relatively small numbers of children involved, especially in certain communities the phenomenon of Jewish unwed mothers is significant enough to warrant Jewish communal attention.

Ruth Mason, for example, reports that in the New York chapter of Single Mothers by Choice most of the members are Jewish. Many of these women name their children in the synagogue, send their children to Jewish day schools and Jewish supplementary schools, and raise their children quite Jewishly. Others, however, fear censure by the Jewish community and hover at the outskirts instead. “If single mothers’ ranks keep swelling and if more of them turn to the Jewish community, synagogues and other institutions will have to begin to examine and come to an understanding of this new type of Jewish family,” says Mason.31
Jewish Single-Parent Families and Blended-Parent Families

Today, a surprisingly large proportion of Jewish children live in households in which divorce has played a role. About one-third of Jewish children in many cities live in households where one or both parents have divorced and remarried or in single-parent households. In Baltimore and New Orleans, for example, more than one-fifth of households with children are second marriages, as seen in Figure 5.
The majority of single-parent Jewish families are comprised of the formerly married; divorced women, rather than unwed mothers, are the typical household heads in Jewish single-parent families. Single-parent families make up comparatively small percentages in the number of all Jewish households in each community, but they comprise a significantly greater proportion of the number of households with children in Jewish communities. For example, although only five percent of Jewish households in San Francisco (1988) are single parent households, 12 percent of Jewish households with children fall into that category. Similarly, only five percent of Miami (1982) Jewish households are headed by a single parent, but 18 percent of the households with children are single parent families. In Pittsburgh (1984), five percent of all households are single parent families but 12 percent of households with children fall into that category. While in Denver (1981) only four percent of Jewish households are single parent families, one out of every seven Jewish families with children under 18 in Denver is a single parent household. Moreover, in Central Denver and in Aurora, well over one-third of Jewish families with children are single parent families. Thirty percent of New York’s (1981) Jewish households fall into the traditional two parents with children configuration; only four percent are single parent families—but that four percent represents 27,300 single parent households.

Most single-parent households, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, are headed by a woman. Her problems in finding practical help are even greater than that of the dual career family—and they are often exacerbated by financial difficulties and what she perceives as community indifference or approbation.

The devastating financial effect of divorce on women, as compared to men, is revealed in data from the Jewish population studies. These data compare divorced men and women, not exclusively divorced single parents, but given the fact that divorced parents with children have more extensive financial responsibilities than those who are childless, the gap between divorced Jewish men and divorced Jewish women has important implications for policy planning vis à vis single Jewish parents.

In Boston (1985), for example, twice as many divorced women as divorced men reported annual incomes of under $15,000 a year. All but 15 percent of Boston’s divorced Jewish women made under $50,000 a year; in comparison, almost one-third of the divorced men made over $50,000 a year. In Rochester (1987), similarly, well over half of divorced Jewish women made less than $20,000 per year—while virtually none of the divorced Jewish men made less than $30,000 a year. Indeed, about half of divorced Jewish men made between $30,000 to $40,000 a year, compared to 11 percent of the divorced women. Forty-four percent of the divorced men made between $40,000 to $74,000 a year, compared to about one quarter of the women.

Such figures underscore the importance of financial assistance for single-parent mothers
as they deal with the Jewish community. More than any other group, single-parent mothers may be affected by financial factors as they decide whether to join a synagogue or Jewish community center, whether to send their children to Jewish camps, and whether to provide their children with supplementary school or day school Jewish education. It is incumbent on Jewish communal institutions, therefore, to be cognizant of and to anticipate the special financial situation of such family units.

Moreover, contrary to popular misconception, single parent households are more, not less likely to be affiliated with Jewish community. More than three-quarters of single parent families attend synagogue more often than only for holidays. Indeed single mothers often look to the Jewish community to provide emotional and Jewish enrichment to their households.

The special needs of single-parent families of course go beyond the financial arena, and some single-parent families have in fact derived great emotional help from the Jewish community. They say that religious services and community activities give their lives important structure and warmth, and that their children have found missing role models among adults within the congregation.37

Single parenthood has unexpected benefits, say some, in the closeness it promotes between parents and children. One mother noted that there is

"a lot of joy in being a single parent; you develop a special relationship with your child; you're like a team ... he is also not getting the arguments or the conflicts over values and decisions that often happen in marriages."38

Robert S. Weiss acknowledges that single parents are often closer to their children than couples in conventional nuclear families, but he explains that this closeness is not always appropriate and can cause problems. Single parents tend to be very open with their children, to share confidences to with them which they might otherwise share only with adults. They also depend on children to assume adult-like responsibilities at an early age, and frequently make them part of the family decision-making process. As a result, single parents are often hesitant to enforce restrictions or limits, because the balance of power has shifted and parent-child power hierarchies are no longer in place.39 When Jewish family and children's services and other Jewish agencies servicing Jewish singles parent families formulate special programs for these families, it may well be useful for them to assign programming priority to assisting single parents in balancing their desire for closeness with the child's needs for structure and authority in adult figures.

Both single parents and their children have special social needs vis a vis the Jewish
community. When the Jewish single parent reaches out to the Jewish community, she may have difficulty finding a supportive peer group. “The divorced woman with children does not quite fit in with the couples or the child-free singles,” writes Sheila Peltz Weinberg of her divorce, at 30, with two young children. “My agendas are different from the first (I am somewhat of a threat, even here), and my energy does not mesh with the others. I fall into self-pity and spiral downward.” Divorced Jews with children to raise are in a complicated situation indeed, for their commitments to their children often seem at direct odds with the opportunities of the singles life. They may feel fenced off from the promised joy of singlehood both by familial responsibilities and by the darker realities of single life past young adulthood.

Single parents often complain that they are ignored or ostracized both by synagogue personnel and by other congregants. Barbara Kalin Bundt theorizes that much of the coldness which divorced persons perceive in the synagogue may be the result of anxious projection on the part of the divorcees. She speculates, “the congregant, who really is feeling guilt and shame, is using the rabbi as a scapegoat” when s/he claims: “The rabbi was absolutely useless during my divorce,” or “Every time he sees me he turns away,” or “I feel like a second class citizen.” Bundt urges synagogue personnel and other congregants to adopt an attitude of persistence. She believes rabbis and congregants should initiate and repeat attempts to overcome the divorcees’ feelings of rejection, anxiety and resistance through both personal and institutional warmth and hospitality:

“By being aware of the source of this verbal rejection, the rabbi and the congregation may be more willing to extend the initial invitation of reconciliation that can ease the single parent’s return to the synagogue … synagogues should initiate contact with its members upon hearing of a marital separation. Synagogues should not remain aloof, afraid of interfering. Letting the parties know that the rabbis is available as a willing, nonjudgmental friend can result in the much-desired and need nontherapeutic ‘someone to talk to.’ In this early period of separation, an invitation to a Shabbat or holiday dinner might be appreciated.”

To be sure, Jewish single parents have vociferously demanded more sensitivity and attention, as well as a broad spectrum of services, from the Jewish community. An Oakland, California group suggests that mothers emerging from divorce “should get help in finding affordable housing and day care—the same help immigrant families get. Single mothers are the new poor in the society.”

Weinberg describes some of the difficulties: “The needs of a single mother—the pressure for money, the lack of time, the need for help with housework, home and car repairs,
child care, the need for some respite from the lonely burden, are the needs writ large of most families living in the urban machine. They are often exacerbated by vengeful ex-husbands, and money and energy soaking legal embroilments.” Weinberg also feels that the traditional Jewish emphasis on family stands in the way of Jewish institutional response to the needs of those who do not fit the mold:

“There is within the Jewish communal structure an apparent reluctance to develop outreach assistance to single parents. This stems, in my opinion, from the fear that if we support them, we are validating them. They are after all, unlike traditional widows and orphans, self inflicted pariahs.”43

Such observations on the punitive attitudes toward divorcees among certain elements in the community are borne out by anecdotal evidence. When the author of this paper was addressing a Conservative synagogue in New Jersey on service delivery to Jewish families, for example, one gentleman objected to her insistence on the necessity for helping divorced Jewish parents: “If Jews care so much about the family, why do they choose such a destructive method of dealing with their problems?” he demanded. “If they really cared about the family, they would learn to compromise and get along instead of tearing up the family and putting the children in a bad position,” he said.

Weinberg speculates on the attitude of community leaders who are afraid to give their seal of approval to non-traditional Jewish households. She believes they feel:

“If we treat singles or divorcees or gays or intermarrieds with respect—even with love, perhaps as images of God—we run the risk of losing the next generation of Jews. After all, how can we affirm those who fail at or flaunt the Jewish family which we know has been responsible for the survival of the Jewish people.”44

Indeed, the emphasis on organic family interaction is not merely institutional, but part of the fabric of traditional Judaism, and children of non-conventional Jewish families sometimes have difficulty dealing with the Jewish emphasis on family. These difficulties afflict not only single parent families, but blended families as well. When single parents remarry, a new, reconstituted family unit is formed—and the blending of parents, children, ex-spouses, and other family members is often fraught with ambivalent emotions.

“Stepfamilies are often beset by jealousies and conflicts of loyalty not found in traditional families. Sometimes, children who resent the experience of
Blended families, perhaps even more than single parent families, have been proliferating in the Jewish community, for divorced Jews have a very high rate of remarriage. Children of blended families, like children of single-parent families, have special sensitivities around the issues of family. Indeed, contemporary research reveals that the children of divorce—even older children of divorce—may suffer more and longer from the disruption of their families than experts had previously thought. A thoughtless institutional insistence upon assuming that all children live in conventional families can cause the children of divorce often untold and unsuspected grief.

Children of single-parent and blended families sometimes have difficulty dealing with the Jewish emphasis on a conventional family, particularly around Sabbaths and holiday time. If information on the Sabbath and holiday customs are pegged to gender divisions and to stereotypical images of the normative family, the child of a single-parent or blended family may well assume that these celebrations are not for him or her and may simply tune out. These problems can be minimized if Jewish educators adopt the attitude that Jewish customs and ceremonies belong to all Jews. For example, Jewish children and adults can be taught that it is appropriate for Sabbath candles to be lit to begin the Sabbath, and the ceremony belongs to the Sabbath, not exclusively to either sex. Indeed, according to rabbinical law, Sabbath candles should be lit by a Jewish male when no Jewish female can light them. Similarly, Jewish women are equally responsible for reciting the Kiddush as Jewish males; thus, even if a girl resides with a single parent mother or with a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father, the girl and/or her mother are fully entitled (and expected) to recite the Kiddush. When Jewish educators convey this information, Jewish children living in single-parent and blended families are more fully empowered to participate in their spiritual birthright as Jews, insofar as they desire to do so.

“When we teach basic family words, like mother, father, sister, brother, we are opening up a Pandora’s box and we never know what will come out,” said Susan Rodenstein, Educational Director of Kehillath Israel in Brookline, Massachusetts. “The hidden curricula of the school, the subtleties of attitude, must be adapted to new facts of life.”

Other problems arise when the “weekend” parent in a shared custody arrangement sometimes resents bringing a child to Sunday school, either because he or she views
it as an infringement on already limited time with the child, or because of underlying hostility toward the educational institution. Such conflicts over religious behavior and education exist even when divorced and/or remarried parents are co-religionists. They are often even more intense when the cast of parental characters includes both Jews and non-Jews. Sometimes the custodial parent is a born non-Jew who originally pledged, before the first marriage foundered, to raise the child as a Jew. After the dissolution of the marriage, especially if the non-Jewish or converted custodial parent has remarried a non-Jew, promises to provide the child with a Jewish education are often abandoned. As Rosenstreich and Schneider point out, “some interfaith couples use their religious differences as a convenient file into which they can lump all disagreements.”

It should be noted that conflicts over the religious identity of the children of divorce do not automatically become resolved after remarriage. Indeed, such conflicts are often exacerbated by the presence and influence of yet another set of religious attitudes. Rosenstreich and Schneider note,

“Several studies show that a remarriage following divorce is, as likely as not, going to be an interfaith marriage. Raising children of two different religious backgrounds in one household is complicated indeed, more so if the partners have not decided on one religion for the home.”

They urge Jewish parents whose children are being parented by a non-Jewish person to “be assertive about maintaining whatever aspects of life are important for the Jewish family members.”

Non-custodial Jewish parents who feel strongly about the education of their children as Jews may require advice or support from the Jewish community when such situations arise. As in other areas relating to the non-traditional Jewish household, raising the consciousness of Jewish educators, synagogue personnel, and Jewish communal workers is the first step in providing outreach to families who are struggling to reach a modus vivendi with personal and institutional Jewish life.

The rising tide of intermarriage often further complicates sibling relationship in blended families. Anne Bernstein, a psychologist, family therapist – and stepmother – describes the interactions of siblings who are brought together in a blended marriage and then must adjust once again as the parent bear a biological child from their new reunion. She advises parents on a blended households to discuss issues with each other and with all the children involved early on in the relationship. For example, “It’s important to talk how observant you are going to be ahead of time so if you have differences, you can iron them out,” she suggests.
Particularly difficult for both blended and single-parent families are the Jewish life cycle celebrations. Weinberg remembers:

“...for several years before my daughter Abby's bat mitzvah, I had a muted anxiety. How were the two sides going to relate? How could we allow this event to be a totally positive one for our daughter? How could her parents, who had sadly exchanged more hostility than goodwill, allow an atmosphere of blessing and serenity to pervade the event? ... We did try very hard to keep a constant intentionality of shalom before us at all times.”

Jewish life cycle celebrations can pull children in two directions.

“One principal related the story of a very bright student who suddenly began 'climbing the walls' as his Bar Mitzvah neared. Teachers were at a loss to explain his anxiety, for his Bar Mitzvah preparations were going exceptionally well. A little tactful private questioning, however, revealed the problem. His mother, the custodial parent, had bought him a beautiful suit for the occasion. His father, who lived out of town, has also sent him a lovely suit. The child had kept the knowledge of the two suits to himself, and was in agony trying to decide what to do: the suits had come to represent the love of each parent.”

In some communities, Jewish institutions have begun special counseling programs to help the children of divorce work through their feelings and/or support programs to help broken families arrange life cycle celebrations with a minimum of trauma. In Boston, for example, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations runs a Divorce Counseling and Referral Service which specializes in providing assistance to “divorced parents desiring guidance in planning the Bar-Bat Mitzvah of children.” In Baltimore, the Jewish Family Service offers a “Families of Separation and Divorce Project that works to get parents and their children back on track as soon as possible.”

These two programs are indicative of very important directions in which Jewish communities across the country should move. Neither of these programs fits the more commonly offered pattern of classic individual or generic family counseling. Such creative responses to divorced and remarried families are long overdue and much needed. When programs work, Jewish family and children’s services often find themselves helping families in pain to deal both with expected and unexpected problems. Ironically, for example, remarried couples often become quite attached to their stepchildren—and feelings of attachment last even when the remarriage fails. Jewish counseling services have been helpful in aiding divorced and remarried families to deal with the hurt feelings of both stepparents
and children in the wake of multiple divorces. However, the fact is that the great majority of divorced and blended families do not choose to avail themselves of Jewish sponsored family counseling. The Jewish community most often interacts with divorced and remarried Jews and the children of divorced and remarried Jews in settings which have not been specifically devised to meet their needs, and it is in these settings that awareness, concern, and outreach to non-conventional family unites needs to be drastically improved.

Provided that teachers, rabbis, temple administrators, and individuals within synagogues and Jewish organizations treat them with warmth, kindness, and sensitivity, single-parent families are sometimes able to reach out to Jewish institutional life and to derive great comfort and strength from traditional activities. “I think that due to my Jewish involvements, re-entering the world was, perhaps, a little easier than for others,” comments Rhea Karlin, who sends her three children to a Solomon Schechter Day School.

“I had my committees and board meetings to go to. I had also made the decision to begin attending Sabbath morning services six months earlier, following my mother’s death … It seemed like a restful, comforting thing to do … I began to look forward to being there every Shabbat morning, just to hear the lesson of the week–how those ancient stories pertain to my life today …”

Single-parent families have a particular need for Jewish commitment and community.

“A single-parent family may offer greater traps where self-pity and narcissism may enter,” Weinberg notes, “leading to angry acting-out behavior. But the channels of a tradition of concern and compassion that are fed by rich intellectual and emotional streams offer people set adrift something to hold. My children worry about others and have learned to perform small acts of caring in the context of their education. They also feel part of something special, and that feeling strengthens their self esteem.”

Weinberg adds that deprived of two adult figures in their daily lives, the children of divorce can find their own role models within the congregation:

“One of the joys of a Jewish community that celebrates together is the opportunity for children to develop independent relationships with other adults. I am surprised and delighted to observe this happening. Occasionally, my
children connect with people that I don’t particularly find appealing, but who have a quality that meets the children in their world.\textsuperscript{58}

Some parents and some children react to divorce by becoming more involved with Jewish religion and ritual; some, on the other hand, turn away. Tom Cottle, investigating “Divorce and the Jewish Child,” found that in some cases children turned to “religious indoctrination” or to a Jewish institution to provide stability, tradition, and comfort they felt had been lost in their family lives. “If Mommy or Daddy failed, perhaps the temple won’t.” Parents too may find strength in “the adherence to highly articulated rituals and religious ceremonies and laws.”\textsuperscript{59} Rabbis and teachers report, however, that divorce often has the opposite effect; both parents and children can feel alienated from institutional Jewish life. This is particularly true in communities where the non-conventional Jewish family unit is made to feel aberrant and unwelcome.\textsuperscript{60}

Without conscientious outreach efforts such as financial aid (doing away with humiliating personal pleading as part of the application procedure), and transportation to and from Jewish educational and social activities, single parent families often become more “marginal” to the Jewish community than they really want to be. In addition to Jewish communal consciousness-raising about the sensitivities of divorced and blended families, many Jewish single parent families need a broad spectrum of services in the areas of social life, service delivery, and specialized counseling. If the Jewish community can function, as much as possible, as a kind of extended family for fragmented families, it may reap the additional benefit of keeping them and their children involved with and committed to Jewish life.
Changes in the Traditional Jewish Family

Jewish communal leaders sometimes make the claim that even though household types have shifted substantially, it is the “old fashioned” traditional, normative family types who carry the burden of and are the true clientele of Jewish organizations and institutions. Statements such as these can conceivably be used to justify resistance to institutional change. However, such statements are misleading, for even traditional Jewish families have been radically transformed and have different interests and different needs than they did 25 years ago.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of shifting types of Jewish households can be seen by examining the percentage of Jewish households with children living at home in the
cities across the United States. No more than one-third—and in many cities considerably fewer—of Jewish households include children under 18 living at home as seen in Figure 6. Among the approximately one-third of United States Jewish households with children under 18 living at home, a small but significant minority are single-parent or blended households. And among the two-parent families, the majority are dual career parents.

Traditional Jewish families—that is children living with their own father and mother, with father as main breadwinner for the family, have certainly not disappeared. They are, however, more numerous in some middle-sized Jewish communities and in many suburban areas. In Pittsburgh (1984), one of the most demographically traditional communities, for example, more than half the Jewish mothers with children under six stayed at home full-time, and 42 percent of women with children under 18 were full-time homemakers.

One—but by no means the only—reason for this transformation has to do with the domestication and ubiquity of feminist attitudes and behaviors among even the most traditional and avowedly antifeminist elements in the Jewish community. Contemporary traditional Jewish mothers tend to have received much more formal education, both secular and Jewish, than their mothers did, and they often are consciously concerned with providing for their own interests, needs, and fulfillment.

Sid Groeneman found that Jewish women in 1985 as a group placed a much higher priority on education, independence, ambition, and intelligence than non-Jewish women but placed less priority than non-Jewish women on spirituality, sociability, and neighborliness. Similarly, Schwamm’s 1984 study of Dallas Jewish women leaders who volunteer found that contemporary traditional Jewish women were highly motivated by intellectual challenge or altruistic goals when they volunteer. The vast majority of Jewish female communal leaders studied by Schwamm were quite emphatic about the fact that they did not consider themselves to be feminists, and yet well over half of them stated that “intellectual stimulation” and “dealing with problems that are challenging” were “very important” incentives to volunteer. They did not consider the “opportunity to meet other community leaders” or “social recognition” as “very important” motivations for volunteerism.

Furthermore, contemporary Jewish mothers who do not work outside the home have sometimes expressed their resentment against a society which they feel expects them to shoulder far more than their own weight in Jewish communal volunteerism and leadership—and yet is unsupportive of the traditional lifestyle they have chosen.

Today’s Jewish fathers, moreover, have had their consciousness raised about the importance of family time. Contrary to popular misconceptions, however, in returning to involvement with their children, contemporary American Jewish fathers are not breaking from but returning to a time-honored Jewish traditional of paternal involvement in
the guidance of children. Indeed, according to rabbinical prescriptions Jewish fathers were considered responsible for a number of specific tasks in child rearing, including the transmission of Jewish texts, providing a child with training for an occupation, and teaching a child to swim. While American Jewish fathers may perceive their specific involvement somewhat differently than did Talmudic sages, their level of involvement is in some ways a resumption of a traditional role which was broken when immigration to the United States forced fathers into the often backbreaking economic burden of propelling their families forward and upward into the middle class.

Because of the social and psychological pressures which “the new Jewish father” in the “thirtysomething” generation feels to be, in Magida’s words, “sensitive, nurturing, strong, caring,” contemporary American Jewish fathers often appear less willing than their own fathers to surrender large amounts of scarce leisure time to restricted male activities. This new sensitivity to the primacy of family time may be contributing to the fact that many synagogue leaders find that formats such as synagogue sisterhoods and brotherhoods no longer attract the same numbers from their core constituencies in many areas; it is conceivable that couples and family activities, which give families time together as well as benefiting the organization, may be more likely to prosper. Further research is needed to explore the most successful and useful formats for serving the traditional Jewish family.

The fact is, that even traditional Jewish families have different values and behaviors and different service needs than they did 25 years ago. In many ways, traditional Jewish families share in the same needs as the proliferating non-traditional Jewish families do. Traditional Jewish families, like two-paycheck Jewish families, single parent Jewish families, and blended Jewish families have expressed urgent desires for Jewish sponsorship of services which support the family. According to data from the Jewish community studies, traditional Jewish families, many of whom belong to the so-called “sandwich generation” and must cope simultaneously with the needs of their children and the needs of their aging parents, have expressed strong needs for:

- Jewish sponsored pre-school programs and child care.

- Jewish sponsored after-school programs for school-age children.

- Jewish sponsored religious, social, and recreation programs for teen-agers.

- Jewish sponsored housing for the elderly and other programs for the Jewish elderly.
Childcare: Serving America's Youngest Jews

One of the most pronounced changes in styles of childrearing is the ubiquitous use of child care in even the most traditional communities. In Jewish communities large and small, from coast to coast, the demand for Jewish-sponsored formal schooling for pre-kindergartners is now legion. In Pittsburgh (1984), one of the most traditional Jewish communities studied, "child care usage for preschoolers is high. Eighty-three percent of all pre-school children are or will be in child care facilities, including both pre-school and day care programs. Two-thirds of them are using Jewish-sponsored facilities."
In Milwaukee, one-quarter of the Jewish children were enrolled in formal nursery school programs made up almost entirely of children whose mothers were not in the labor force.\textsuperscript{70}

Indeed, Berger and Sternberg's 1988 comprehensive study of demands for Jewish child care shows that nearly half of the Jewish mothers with children under six who expressed a need for child care were full-time homemakers in Essex and Morris Counties, New Jersey, and Phoenix, as were one-third of the Jewish mothers asking for child care in Rochester, New York and one-quarter in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{71} Clearly, even "traditional" Jewish families have adopted non-traditional approaches to the notion of quality care for their children.

Child care represents one of the largest--and most promising--challenges facing contemporary Jewish community planners. In order to illustrate the dimensions of that challenge, we present data from one of the most recent Jewish community studies as a case study. Dallas, Texas, represents an ideal case study in the need for Jewish sponsored child care precisely because it is not one of the "big six" in terms of female professionalism. Unlike Boston, Manhattan, Washington, D.C., Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, Dallas Jewish women tend to be very traditional vis a vis family structure. They marry earlier and have more children than Jewish women in cities which offer a comparatively broad spectrum of career opportunities. Even in this rather traditional, family-oriented community, the demand for child care--and for Jewish-sponsored child care--in Dallas is overwhelming.

**Child Care Needs in Dallas--A Case Study**

Like most American Jewish communities, Dallas Jewish households with young children express an urgent need for day care programs. With the growing tendency of American Jewish women to maintain labor force participation even during their children's pre-school years, and with the strong belief in contemporary American communities that educational stimulation and peer group interactions are important for even young children, use of day care has mushroomed among Dallas parents.

A projected 3194 children under age six live in the Dallas metropolitan area. Among Dallas Jewish households with children under age six, only 38 percent of respondents said their households had no need for day care services; 21 percent said they needed day care services and received it through Jewish-sponsored programs; 34 percent said they needed day care services and received it through programs which were not Jewish sponsored; and seven percent said they had not been able to locate the day care they needed.
Contrary to many popular misconceptions which assume that “good Jewish mothers” don't use day care, households which used day care were more likely to be affiliated with the Jewish community than households not using day care. They were more likely to belong to synagogues and to Jewish organizations. The great majority of Jewish parents of young children, 75 percent, preferred to enroll their children in Jewish-sponsored day care programs. However, out of the 1702 respondents who preferred Jewish-sponsored child care for their children, only 467, 21 percent of all young families, actually had their children enrolled in Jewish-sponsored programs. The need for Jewish-sponsored day care far outstrips the current availability.

Dallas Jewish households with children under six not only preferred to send their children to Jewish sponsored child care, they also believed that Jewish child care currently available is superior to other private child care programs. Well over half of young Dallas families — including households with children enrolled in non-Jewish-sponsored programs — believed Jewish sponsored day care is better or much better than other programs. Interestingly, the only group answering they believe that Jewish sponsored day care to be worse or much worse than other private programs were households which did not need or use day care at all.

The overwhelming need for pre-school and day care programs held true of all the Jewish denominations, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Once again, contrary to popular misconception, the most religiously traditional women were more, not less, likely to want full-time day care for their children under age six. Between half and two-thirds of each of these groups of parents of children under six said full day care programs were especially in demand (61 percent of Orthodox, 52 percent of Conservative, and 57 percent of Reform).

The vast majority of households needing institutional child care—that is, pre school or day care, preferred Jewish-sponsored services. Preferences were not nearly so strong, however, where extremely young infants or employment of individuals were involved: half of the households needing part-time sitters, for example, had no preference for Jewish sitters. Similarly, respondents needing pre school or day care were far more likely to evaluate Jewish preschools as being superior than were persons needing infant day care or part-time sitters.

While the need for and use of day care is a widespread phenomenon among Dallas Jewish households, the use of Jewish-sponsored child care was largely a middle class and upper middle class phenomenon. The majority of every income group except those making less than $20,000 and those making between $30,000 to $39,000 per year expressed needs for day care. It is probable that persons in those income groups represent very young families with only one wage-earner, often with more than one young child in the home. Married couples with young children who are in middle-income ($41,000 to $59,000) households are
more likely include a mother working outside the home than are lower-income households. Middle-bracket households may feel both that they need a second income to maintain their middle-class lifestyle and that the second income justifies the expenses of day care.

In households in which one spouse (still usually the husband) makes more than $60,000 a year, a young family may feel it can forgo a second income during the pre-school years. In households making less than $30,000 per year, lower household income is both a contributing factor to and a result of the household living on one paycheck. In lower-income married households mothers may decide to opt, at least temporarily, for a full-time role as parent and homemaker. The great expense represented by day care programs often plays a role in this decision: unless take-home pay substantially exceeds day care expenses, dual-career lifestyles may simply not be feasible for households with modest incomes during the pre-school years.

For single parent mothers, such full-time motherhood is usually not an option. Single parent mothers, as a group, have the lowest incomes in the Jewish community. Although single parent mothers are more likely to be involved in low-pay, low-status employment than either married women or single or divorced childless women, they often have no choice but to work and make whatever less costly child care arrangements they can find. Partially for this reason, the children of low-income and single parent households have only a very tiny representation within Jewish-sponsored child care programs in Dallas.

Among other policy planning recommendations, Jewish communities across the country would do well to consider training Jewish women with young children to provide home-based family day care for other Jewish families. Family day care is often the child care of choice for parents of young children. Increasing the number of Jewish women involved in providing this service would increase the family income of Jewish child care providers while helping to alleviate the severe shortage of child care with Jewish environments in most Jewish communities.

To summarize the insights on Jewish child care needs yielded by the Dallas study which are representative of Jewish child care needs across the country.

- Three out of five Dallas Jewish households with pre-school children said they needed child care programs.
- One out of five such households used child care programs under Jewish auspices.
- Three out of four Dallas Jewish households with young children preferred Jewish-sponsored child care programs.
- 57 percent of families sending their children to non-Jewish-sponsored child care
programs would have preferred to send their children to Jewish-sponsored child care programs if they had been available.

- Two-thirds of synagogue members said they needed day care for their young children, compared to just over half of non-members.
- Three-quarters of Jewish organizational members said they needed day care, compared to just over half of non-members.

Problems in Jewish Families

While wife battering, child abuse, substance abuse, and homelessness are not epidemic in the Jewish community, they do occur—as evidenced by more than one recent, widely publicized sensational child abuse case involving Jews. On a far less publicized level, Jewish communities have become increasingly aware that problems exist within Jewish families, as in other families, without respect for socioeconomic level or denominational affiliation.

According to a recent survey of persons who called the National Cocaine Hotline, for example, 14 percent of callers were Jewish—while Jews comprise less that three percent of the United States population. Jewish physicians, in particular, have recently been cited for their greater than average tendency toward chemical additions: in Atlanta’s Georgia Impaired Physicians Program, 23 percent of the addicted physicians are Jewish doctors referred to the program for mandatory treatment by the New York State medical society. Moreover, a recent article in the Jewish Social Work Forum reported that about one-third of all alcoholics and addicts in treatment facilities are Jewish. This high proportion of Jewish in treatment may indicate that the proportion of addicts in the Jewish community is higher than that in the general population as well, according to Rosen the author.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Stephen Bailey, director of clinical programs at the Chabad Residential Drug Treatment Program for Men in Los Angeles, testifies that “being Jewish doesn’t protect you from drug abuse.” However, Jewish denial of problems can make it hard for individuals to seek help and for communities to provide appropriate and adequate programs. A Jewish alcoholic quotes Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, a Chassidic rabbi and psychiatrist, that, “Any diagnosis is more acceptable to a Jewish family than alcoholism, even schizophrenia.” And yet members of Jewish problem families often want specifically Jewish structures to help them in regaining control over their impulses and lives.

Indeed, Rabbi Twerski himself recalls, “One women told me that when she could no
longer deny that alcohol was the culprit she came to the conclusion that she must have been adopted! If she was indeed alcoholic, then she must not be Jewish.” Rabbi Twerski notes that “we have so long believed that ‘shikker is a goy’ that denial is the major obstacle to dealing with substance abuse in the Jewish community.”

Ironically, because “masculine” male behavior was not accepted as a Jewish norm, problems stemming from the violent and/or alcoholic husband and father were ignored for many years. Rabbis and Jewish social service professionals simply assumed that they didn’t exist and ignored any evidence to the contrary. Indeed, women who approached their rabbis with complaints of abuse were often assured that “it isn’t so bad” and told to return home and to maintain shalom bain, domestic tranquility—partially because rabbis didn’t really believe that Jewish husbands could behave in this fashion.

Similar reactions can await the Jewish victim of sexual abuse by family members. Dr. Sharon R. Lowenstein recalls that she felt treif, depressed, and guilty because her father—a generous, religiously observant, synagogue going man—molested her from infancy until she left home for college. She comments, “denial—which is nowhere greater than in the Jewish community—inflicts heavy penalties. Most adults who were sexually victimized suffer pains of depression and self-destructiveness.”

With a growing awareness that serious problems afflict Jewish families, a scattering of Jewish communities in major metropolitan areas are establishing Jewish substance abuse programs, shelters for the homeless, halfway houses for emotionally disturbed Jewish persons, and shelters which meet the particular needs of the battered Jewish woman. Interestingly, those few Jewish-sponsored programs of this type which do exist have often been founded by members of the right-wing Orthodox community, perhaps because they often live in less affluent areas where persons with marginal Jewish lifestyles are more visible, and perhaps because they feel a strong personal and communal commitment to saving Jewish souls; thus, those few programs which have been established are often kosher and are staffed by persons familiar with Jewish tradition. Thus, the women who staffed the mikveh, the family purity ritual bath, in Far Rockaway, New York, were the moving forces in establishing a kosher shelter for battered women in that community.

In another example of similar motivation, the Orthodox-sponsored Ohel program in Borough Park, Brooklyn, provides a network of halfway houses for recovering psychiatric patients.

One exasperating factor Jewish marital counselors attempt to deal with is the process for obtaining a get, a Jewish divorce, which depends on the cooperation of the husband. Such divorces are often difficult, for men who beat their wives and children are seldom cooperative in granting them their freedom through divorce.
More Jewish-run programs for the entire spectrum of Jewish problem families are desperately needed. Rabbi Jacob J. Hecht, Executive Vice President of the National Conference for the Furtherance of Jewish Education warns that it is crucial to send substance abuse counselors into Jewish schools, where “the problem is much more prevalent than we realize.” He stresses “playing ostrich will not make the drug addiction and the alcoholism in our schools disappear.” An organization called Jewish Alcoholics and Chemically Dependent and Significant Others (JACS) provide multiple retreats in the Catskill Mountains each year for recovering Jewish addicts and their partners. Brooklyn based Operation Survival educates Jewish communal professionals as to the prevalence and how to deal with Jewish problem families. They also refer Jewish substance abusers and their families to appropriate programs.\(^{82}\)

Mimi Scarf, who founded a kosher home for Jewish battered women in Los Angeles, noted that “those battered women who do choose to seek help—most likely at a non-sectarian shelter because there are so few Jewish-run sanctuaries—find themselves treated as something exotic. It’s been reported to me, by these women, that they were approached by counselors and non-Jewish battered wives who found it hard to believe that a Jewish man would beat his wife. In most cases these women were treated as an oddity... It was as if they were being victimized all over again.” In Miami, where no such shelter exists, kosher women who apply to the non-sectarian shelter are given paper plates and money to buy kosher food. A case worker in Dade County notes that Jewish women seem to suffer especially from verbal abuse on the part of their husbands.\(^{83}\)

For the Jewish homeless, the lack of Jewish facilities can be particularly bitter. Most inner-city shelters and soup kitchens operate under Christian auspices, and clients are often subjected to Christian testimony or music while they eat. When they do, Christian organizations can be quite responsive: the YWCA in Baltimore, for example, housed an Orthodox Jewish family and provided them with meals. However, many of the Jewish homeless, like many of the homeless in general, suffer from mental illness, and do not have the self-esteem and poise to speak up about their needs.\(^{84}\)

Some family problems, such as obtaining a get from a recalcitrant husband, are peculiarly Jewish in nature. Many other problems, such as increased substance abuse and increased homelessness, are not particularly Jewish and may be, on the contrary, part of the dark side of acculturation. As the Jewish population becomes more and more like the general American population, sharing in the many opportunities offered by an open society, it will no doubt continue to share in the problems precipitated by an open society as well. With more diverse and scattered Jewish populations, it is easy for troubled individuals and family units to “fall through the cracks,” unless the Jewish community intervenes with appropriate programs. Communal efforts on behalf of Jewish problem families will surely need to be maintained and expanded.
The Jewish Elderly

The elderly are the fastest growing group among the American Jewish population: in almost every city surveyed, elderly Jews comprised more than the 16 percent Jewish population over age 60 and seven percent over age 70 reported by the National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) in 1970; the percentages of Jewish elderly also surpassed the 12 percent elderly in the general population recorded by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in
It is not surprising that certain sunbelt cities have an especially high proportion of Jewish elderly as illustrated in Figure 8. The elderly represent over two-thirds of the Jewish population of Palm Beach (1987) and well over one-third of the Jewish population of Dade County (1982), for example. Similarly, in Phoenix (1984), one out of every five Jewish households includes at least one person over age 65. In Milwaukee (1984) as well, one out of three households includes at least one elderly person. Almost 40 percent of households in St. Louis (1982) had at least one member over age 60. The St. Paul Jewish population included approximately 21 percent age 65 and over.

Like other older Americans, elderly Jews tend to be more polarized financially and geographically than any other age group. This polarization can result in misconceptions about the elderly and possible underestimations of their needs. Even within the confines of one geographic area, Palm Beach, for example, elderly Jews span the gamut from very wealthy to poor. The median income for persons living in Palm Beach North (1987) was over $100,000 a year; the median income for persons living in Century Village, Golden Lakes, was $19,000 a year.

The great majority of elderly Jews, both couples and widows, live in their own households rather than with relatives or in institutions. However, given the high rate of Jewish mobility, a surprisingly large proportion of elderly Jews live in the same geographical area as at least some of their children, especially in midwestern communities. Only one-quarter of the respondents over age 60 in St. Louis (1982), for example, report no children living in the St. Louis area. Only 11 percent have no other family living in the area. In addition, more than half of St. Louis elderly Jews surveyed said that they saw family members at least five times a month. Eighty-seven percent saw family members at least once a month, which roughly corresponds to the 89 percent who have children or other family members in the area.

But large numbers of older singles live far from family. When they are lucky, they live close enough to persons similar to themselves to form family-like support networks. They may live in nearby apartment buildings or may find a congenial spot in a local library or Jewish community center to socialize. Barbara Myerhoff described such a family-like society of elderly Jews in Venice, California. For the elderly poor, a Jewish community center can become a kind of tribal meeting place, a locale in which lonely people can eat, talk, play cards, sing, get angry and argue, maintain deeply-felt friendships and feuds, and care about each other.

Not all elderly Jewish singles are poor, of course, and affluent persons are able to relocate to the more desirable neighborhoods of the urban areas they have always lived in or to spend part or all of the year in luxurious communities in the sunbelt. When they remain in their own communities, wealthy older Jews frequently make increased community work...
an effective substitute for waning family involvements. When they move to the sunbelt, however, they often choose to live in restricted communities with others of the same chronological and socioeconomic status. Like impoverished inner city elderly Jews, the middle class and wealthy older Jews of the sunbelt thus socialize in homogeneous colonies. While community planners may theorize about the superiority of a multi-generational population, a substantial number of elderly Jews evidently have chosen to live in the tranquility of a child-free environment.94

Even in the sunbelt, however, large numbers of Jews live at or near the poverty line. The poorest of this group tend to be widows living alone. In Palm Beach (1987), for example, the poorest of all Jews were widows who reside in the Palm Beach area throughout the year. Elderly females living alone had a median income of $16,000 a year; married couples over age 65 had double that median income, $36,000 a year, and married couples over age 74 had median incomes of $27,000 a year. Similarly, the elderly women living alone had drastically lower net worth than married elderly couples: 77 percent of elderly Jewish women living alone had a net worth of under $100,000, compared to only 29 percent of married couples ages 65 to 74 and 42 percent of married couples over age 75.95

Some elderly Jews are not fortunate enough to find a community life of any kind. Left behind in decaying urban areas, they may be childless or their children may have moved far away. Isolated from daily human contact, their physical and emotional health can deteriorate rapidly. Jewish community organizations in some cities actively search for such isolated persons and try to provide them with "friendly volunteers," who can bring quasi-family interactions back into their lives.

Not only the impoverished, but middle-income and even wealthy older Jews can suffer from social and ethnic isolation. The importance of the Jewish element in friendship services for the elderly cannot be overemphasized. Elderly Jews in settings as disparate as luxurious garden apartments for the elderly to residents of nursing homes have asked longingly for the opportunity to participate in Jewish content programs with other Jews. As Mrs. Rose Agar, resident of a non-sectarian retirement community in Waltham, Massachusetts, remarked in commenting on "Generations Growing Together," a multi-faceted social service network which links college students on seven Boston campuses with the senior citizens in their communities, "It's not like I'm really wanting for anything physically. But I get so lonely for other Jews. I'm surrounded by Christmas trees and Easter eggs. I want to see young Jewish faces and hear Jewish songs." Nancy Bloom, director of volunteers at Boston's Jewish Family and Children's Service, has noted that social interaction conducted under the Generations program and JF&CS's regular program of friendly visitors, has noted that the stimulation and comfort offered by Jewish content programing for the elderly often has a beneficial impact upon the physical and mental well-being of the Jewish elderly.96
However, the number of households seeking these services vastly exceeds their availability. In Philadelphia (1984), for example, between 3,000 and 7,000 households said they needed senior citizens clubs, elder special housing, and/or transportation for the elderly, and yet between one-third and one-half of those needed these services did not receive them. With the exception of transportation for the elderly, Philadelphia Jews expressed a strong preference for Jewish-sponsored services.  

Problems with transportation increase as the population ages. Even simple tasks, such as supermarket shopping, become onerous when transportation is unavailable. Trips to the doctor are fraught with the extra trauma of trying to arrange transportation. Often social activities are forgone because the hassle of getting there looms too large. In Palm Beach, women—one-third of whom do not drive at all—outnumber men five to one among those who have problems with transportation. The need for transportation for the elderly is also strongly tied to income factors: the poorer the group, the more likely they were to request transportation for the elderly. For example, in Palm Beach (1987), almost half of the persons requesting transportation for the elderly had annual incomes of under $10,000 and another 41 percent had annual incomes of between $10,000 to $25,000. Well over half of the persons requesting this service were elderly women living alone: 28 percent were over age 75 and 24 percent were ages 65 to 74.  

Most elderly Jews who have their own apartments say they prefer that arrangement; however, declining health can endanger the ability to live independently. Even walking the stairs can become difficult or impossible. Almost one in five both of Palm Beach Jews over age of 75 and of those who live alone said they had trouble walking the stairs. About half of Palm Beach elderly respondents had needed a home health care professional during the past year, and almost one-fifth of them had been hospitalized during the past year.  

Especially in areas of the country with large numbers of Jewish elderly, the disabled Jewish population is overwhelmingly elderly. Of disabled persons in Palm Beach, 39 percent were between the ages of 65 to 74 and 38 percent were over age 75. 21 percent were persons living alone, 18 percent were women ages 65 to 74, 26 percent were women over age 75, and one-third were couples over age 75. Well over half of these disabled persons had a household income under $25,000 per year, and almost one-fifth of them had households incomes under $10,000 per year.  

Quality of life and preservation of vitality is almost directly related to helping elderly persons maintain as normal a life as possible. When disabled persons or persons needing other types of care do not live in an institution, someone must help them with their daily needs. While family members, when they are available, are often willing to help, very few of them are able to function as full-time caretakers. In order to enable family members
to maintain their elderly relatives in non-institutional settings, respite services, which
offer day care or occasional overnight programs, are invaluable. In Detroit, for example,
the Jewish Family Service offers a Respite Care Program which “can hardly keep up
with the demand,” according to Arlene Sukenic, coordinator. The program focuses on
“those cases when the caregiver is most at risk. These are people who are mentally and
physically exhausted and are endangering their own health because of their tremendous
burden in caring for an elderly parent or spouse.”\(^{101}\)

In Jewish communities, as in American communities at large, such respite programs are
extremely scarce. Samuel Learner, executive director of Detroit’s JFS, notes that “People
are living longer and the older frail population is increasing rapidly. Many families simply
can’t afford to hire someone to provide private respite care. This is particularly true for
the elderly. How can you afford to pay someone $7 an hour when your own income is $500
a month? Home care services and respite care are going to be increasingly needed.”\(^{102}\)

The needs of elderly Jews range from actual service delivery to counseling to helping with
social networking. One of the primary goals in planning for elderly Jewish households is
aid in keeping them independent and out of institutions for as long as possible. Physical
needs—actual service delivery—are important, but so are counseling and the avoidance
of social isolation; widows and widowers in particular can benefit from workshops on
productive single living as well as from planned social events. Providing transportation
for medical visits and daily errands make a big difference to elderly people who do not
see family members frequently. Jewish drop-in centers have gained popularity with the
mobile elderly, and shut-ins enjoy kosher meals on wheels and visits from social workers
and volunteers, especially if they speak their mother tongue. Jewish apartment complexes
for the elderly, which allow them opportunities for both privacy and socializing, are an
important priority.

Although most Jewish communities make these services available to some extent, in
almost no community is the extent of services for the Jewish elderly commensurate with
the growing need. As the Jewish population continues to age and the proportion of frail
elderly becomes more prominent with each generation, Jewish communities will feel an
increasingly urgent need for expanded services for the elderly. In order to meet this need,
it is necessary now to step up communal emphasis on elderly Jews as part of the larger
Jewish family.
Conclusion: Avoiding Stereotypes and Serving Family Units

While the Jewish community continues to value families and to attach great importance to them, only a small minority of individual Jews in the United States today lives in what was once considered the normative Jewish family—working father, homemaker mother, and several children, with grandparents and other family members living nearby. In many locales, about one-fifth of the adult Jewish population has never been married. Another 10 to 20 percent or more are divorced or widowed. Only about one-third of American Jewish households consist of father and mother with children under 18 living at home, and the majority of those households include a mother who works outside the home. From 10 to 20 percent of Jewish children live in single-parent households. Clearly the client population of the Jewish community has changed, probably for the indefinite future.

All too often the Jewish communal commitment to the normative family has been, in part, responsible for inadequate service to a number of non-normative contemporary family units. Some of the most pressing service needs of today’s Jewish households include:

- Adequate opportunities for high-quality Jewishly enriched child care, beginning with infants and pre-schoolers and extending to after school programs.

- Financial and other practical aid to single-parent families, including appropriate help with fees and tuitions for Jewish schools and camps, and with transportation.

- Sensitivity on the part of Jewish educators and synagogue personnel to the Jewish issues confronting non-normative households, especially divorced persons, infertile couples, single parent households, and blended families, including both special programs tailored to such families and conscientious efforts to incorporate them into existing programs.

- Comprehensive and consistent programing for the teen years and the single young adult years, probably the two most vulnerable periods in terms of Jewish identity.

- Shelters, counseling, and other programs for the victims of wife and child abuse and of substance abuse and alcoholism.

- Appropriate programs for the Jewish elderly of all ages, marital status, and financial levels, including the needs of the newly retired and/or newly widowed and the often quite different needs of older, frailter groups; such programs should address both the preservation and enhancement of physical health and the avoidance of psychological
isolation. Attention should be given to the generic needs of the elderly for items such as help with transportation and to their specifically Jewish needs for items such as kosher meals on wheels and Jewish content programming.

Contemporary Jewish households, even those which seem traditional, and especially the growing numbers of non-traditional households, differ significantly from the homes of even 25 years ago. Indications are that Jewish households will continue in their diversity for some time to come. Although their needs differ from households of the past, contemporary Jewish families need Jewish institutions. Some of their needs are typical of contemporary American life, and some of them are specifically Jewish; however, Jewish households across the country have expressed the strong preference that many family support services—not just the specifically Jewish ones such as Jewish education for children and kosher meals on wheels for the elderly—be offered under Jewish auspices.

Jewish communal leadership has only recently begun to absorb the full import of contemporary demographic changes upon Jewish families in the United States. Further research is crucial, so that we may identify and analyze Jewish family units with unmet or inadequately met needs. Serving today's Jewish families, both normative and non-normative, provides a substantial and critical challenge in the 1990s for a Jewish community which has always cherished and championed the family.
Footnotes


2. For a more extensive exploration of these phenomena, see Sylvia Barack Fishman, “The Changing American Jewish Family in the 80s,” Contemporary Jewry 9, No. 2 (Fall 1988), pp. 1-34.

3. Forty-three percent of Denver’s Jews are between the ages of 18 and 34, compared to 29 percent in Los Angeles.


33. Pittsburgh, 1984, pp. 8, 22.


36. Sherry Israel, personal communication based on the Boston, 1985 data, April, 1989.


40. Ibid., p. 5.


42. “Single Parents,” op. cit.

43. Ibid., p. 6.

44. Weinberg, op. cit. p. 78.


49. Ibid.


52. Fishman, op. cit., p. 8.

53. From an ad in the TAB, September 7, 1981.


59. Thomas J. Cottle, Divorce and the Jewish Child, pilot study for the National Jewish Family Center of the American Jewish Committee, 1980.


68. Magida, *op. cit.* , cover illustration.


71. *op. cit.*, p. 36.


76. Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twersky “Denial” *The Jewish Homemaker* (December, 1989) pp. 20-21


85. Chenkin and Tobin, *AJYB* 1985, *op. cit.* , pp. 162-163. The authors of the 1980 Los Angeles study point out that “this is not because Jews live longer; rather it is a function of the lower Jewish birth rate and delayed childbearing ” (p. 23).

86. Palm Beach, p. 23.
90. St. Louis, 1982, p. 43.
92. Palm Beach, p. 62.
95. Palm Beach, pp. 65.
98. Palm Beach, pp. 182-185.