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הוועדה לחינוך יהודי של הסוכנות היהודית
THE JEWISH EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY

Recruiting and Retaining Senior Personnel in Jewish Education: A Focus Group Study in North America

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October 1, 1987

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Commissioned by:

The Jewish Education Committee,
The Jewish Agency

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Elaine S. Cohen and Gail Dorph, in addition, provided detailed and valuable comments on an earlier version of this report. We also received insightful criticism from Ami Bouganim, Prof. Bernard Reisman and Dr. Jonathan Woocher, as well as an extensive written critique by Dr. Sara S. Lee.

Not least, we are grateful to the dozens of respondents from Jerusalem to Los Angeles and many points in between who contributed their time and thoughts for this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings of a focus group study of "Senior Jewish Educators" in the United States and Canada, conducted from May through September, 1987. This study is one of several being conducted under the rubric of a senior personnel policy development project directed by Nativ Consultants of Jerusalem for the Jewish Education Committee of the Jewish Agency.

Nativ Consultants has determined that the number of openings for positions as senior Jewish educators each year far exceeds the number of individuals who annually complete formal training programs for such positions. It is hypothesized that openings arise not only because of what may be called "natural causes" -- i.e. death or retirement at age 65 or later -- but also because of "premature retirement" or "burnout," people leaving the field for other careers. In addition, there are serious difficulties in recruiting the desired numbers of candidates for training programs.

As a consequence, there have been severe problems in finding adequately qualified personnel to exercise professional leadership in Jewish education, and -- without major new policy initiatives -- there is little reason to anticipate significant improvement in this situation. (In this report, "Senior Personnel" refers to such positions as principals of Jewish schools, consultants or directors of bureaus of Jewish education, Jewish camp directors, regional and national youth directors, and other related positions.)

Flowing from a sense of urgency about the paucity of qualified senior Jewish educators, the major research aims of the larger project are to develop policy recommendations which address two related concerns:

(1) How can more highly qualified personnel be recruited to train and/or work as Senior Jewish Educators?

(2) What will induce those who are currently senior Jewish educators to remain in the field?

This study addresses these questions from the vantage point of the senior educators themselves. Thus, the primary source of data for the study consists of focus groups with current senior Jewish educators as well as others such as undergraduates and teachers, representing the types of people who may be induced to enter the field.

PURPOSES OF THIS RESEARCH

The specific research topics we investigated were as follows:

(1) The reasons why and ways in which current senior Jewish educators enter the field; their background and training.

(2) What they find attractive about their work; specifically, what keeps them in the field.

(3) The factors and issues that might cause them to leave the field.

(4) The likelihood of their leaving the field.

(5) Their ideas for helping to recruit and retain high quality senior Jewish educators.

We asked those we interviewed primarily to reflect on their own attitudes and experiences, and only secondarily to talk about how others feel or to propose solutions for others. We wanted to give the Hebrew and Day School principals, the BJE professionals, the youth and camp directors and the others we interviewed the opportunity to express their views in their own words and convey them to the policy makers whose decisions will affect the future of Jewish education in the Diaspora.

In constructing this report, we see our primary purpose as presenting findings; we organize, synthesize, analyze and present the beliefs, images, and attitudes of our respondents. However, where appropriate, we do at times call attention to the policy implications of some of the findings. But we urge that these implications be seen as tentative, and as deriving from only one part of a very large picture which other components of the Nativ research project will bring into focus.

THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD

We relied principally on "focus groups" as the method of data collection on senior Jewish educators and related individuals. This type of research entails bringing together several interviewees and leading them through a structured conversation under the guidance of a trained interviewer. For the last quarter century, focus groups have been used extensively (and apparently with good results) by marketing research and advertising companies to gauge the reactions of consumers to potential or actual products, services, or advertising campaigns. We supplemented our focus group with telephone interviews with individuals. Where appropriate, we also utilize the comments of recognized observers of Jewish education.

Our groups were conducted in several locations: Montreal, Quebec; New Haven, Connecticut; Westchester County, New York; New York City; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; and Jerusalem. Two groups in New York and the student group in Jerusalem brought together respondents from different parts of North America. (See Appendix for the geographic distribution of the respondents.) We conducted five groups ourselves, and nine others were run by the following social scientists and Jewish educators: Elaine Cohen, Gail Dorph, Prof. Samuel Heilman, Ellin Heilman, and Prof. Moshe Sokolow. (For biographical sketches of the moderators, see the Appendix.) We supplemented these groups with a small number of individual telephone interviews to informal educators around the country.

The focus group method allows for a combination of structure and flexibility. We provided all our moderators with the same discussion guide (we used modified versions for the student groups). The guide consisted of open-ended questions -- the kind that call for discursive answers rather than forced choices among pre-determined responses. Not all respondents were required to answer every question. Moderators often utilized initial answers to spark discussions among respondents which elaborated, confirmed, or qualified the earlier replies. We made some questions mandatory, while others were optional, to be asked only if time permitted. Generally, the interviews lasted two hours. (See the Appendix for the discussion guides, instructions to moderators, and related materials.)

Consumer oriented focus group research normally recruits ten to twelve participants per group. On the basis of our experience with the first two groups, we determined that our groups should be limited to six to eight respondents. We found that educators are more verbal than the average consumers who normally participate in the commercial focus groups.

The moderators tape-recorded the sessions. They also engaged secretaries who took detailed minutes of the discussions. About half the groups were conducted in private homes and the others took place at the office of a local BJE or at a university location.

The moderators reported that respondents were universally cooperative, and even sometimes enthusiastic about the process. Many felt they had "a lot to get off their chests," and they were happy

that policy makers were apparently genuinely interested in hearing the thoughts of senior Jewish educators.

The moderators were convinced that the respondents provided candid replies to almost all major questions. One clear exception to this generalization was the question on whether one would stay in the same job or in Jewish education in the next five years. Few respondents were prepared to declare their intent to leave their post in front of their local colleagues; in fact, it was surprising that any would make such declarations, if only because of the drawbacks of lame-duck status which devolve upon anyone known to be leaving a position of professional authority.

The advantage of bringing senior educators together to talk about their professional lives is that they share a common language and can quickly develop common ideas. The disadvantage is that they often work in a network of relationships, sharing expectations of one another and obligations to one another. This circumstance may well color their responses when interviewed as a group. A particular group may move in a certain direction as a result of the comments of a particularly eloquent or influential individual. To some extent the large number of and diverse nature of the focus groups serve to safeguard us against generalizing from idiosyncratic responses. Where appropriate, we try to note the frequency with which certain responses occurred, distinguishing the near universal from the extraordinary comments.

The other major advantages and disadvantages of the focus group method can be highlighted by comparing it with the sample survey, a a data collection alternative.

In contrast with survey research, focus group research:

(1) Allows respondents to answer in their own words, preserving all the richness, nuance and subtleties of their replies, without filtering them through the structure of pre-conceived answers.

(2) Focus group research elicits a wide range of responses; thus, it is especially appropriate for exploratory studies, where not much can be assumed a priori.

(3) Focus groups allow researchers the flexibility to pursue interesting lines of inquiry in great detail and to short-circuit directions which prove less fruitful.

(4) Most critically, focus groups allow respondents to bounce ideas off of one another, thereby generating greater depth and sophistication in responses, usually unavailable in the survey questionnaire. For better or worse (and sometimes both), focus groups are subject to the contagion inherent in any small group process.

Notwithstanding these advantages, the major drawback of focus group research is that it provides little understanding of the extent to which specific answers characterize the population (e.g., how many are thinking of leaving the field); nor can it accurately

estimate the frequencies of certain response patterns in key population sub-groups (e.g., denomination, age, region, etc.).

This drawback can be illustrated with one of our intriguing findings. Contrary to our expectations, we learned that while some senior educators we interviewed complained about their professional status, most felt they either enjoyed high status, or were reconciled to the perceived lack of esteem for their profession. However the few youth group directors we interviewed seemed far more troubled by professional status anxieties. The small number of interviews we conducted do not permit us to take this finding very far. To what extent can we generalize to all school principals (about their seeming denial of major status concerns) or to all youth group personnel (about their expression of such anxieties)? To what extent is the status security of most current senior Jewish educators (at least the ones we interviewed) a result of self-selection? That is, maybe those who stay in the field have made their peace with perceptions of low status. To answer these questions, we would need to systematically survey large numbers of senior educators of different sorts, including a significant youth group professional sub-sample.

In sum, relative to survey research, the focus group method has both strengths and shortcomings. It certainly helps us understand the diverse quality of responses, but not their frequency distributions. We learn more about what people think and feel, and less about how many and which people think and feel certain specific ways.

Focus groups are especially appropriate in the early stages of research when little is known or little can be assumed. In fact, many researchers choose to utilize the focus group as a prelude to more systematic sample surveys. For the research questions this study addresses, a quantitative study would have been premature. Beyond this consideration, it is our understanding that the policy makers in this field have a greater interest in identifying and understanding the range of problems and concerns of Jewish educators, rather than knowing precisely the frequency with which these problems occur. The focus group method is more capable of addressing these goals than a random sample survey.

THE RESPONDENTS

The researchers interviewed fourteen groups in all, thirteen in person and an aggregate of individuals by telephone. Most groups ranged in size from six to eight individuals, yielding a total of over a hundred respondents.

Eleven groups consisted of "core" respondents: current senior Jewish educators. Two others were designed to give us some inkling of population segments with significant bearing upon this research. These included a group of current or recent undergraduates, and a group of those who could become senior educators, whom we will refer to in this report as "potential senior educators."

Taken as an aggregate, the respondents represented considerable diversity along several dimensions. We have already referred to their geographic diversity. But the regional variation we noted extends beyond the fact that the interviews were conducted in six very different communities. Four of the groups consisted of respondents from several North American locations. In all, about a fifth of the senior educators we interviewed lived outside the six metropolitan regions in the U.S. and Canada where the focus groups were conducted. Moreover, the six metropolitan areas themselves represent very different types of Jewish communities. Some have (or are thought to have) very well-developed sources of educational personnel. Others are remote from areas of veteran Jewish settlement which have, in the past, incubated and produced more than their share of senior Jewish educators. Some areas, such as Westchester, are endowed with a rich Jewish institutional life for adults and for children (i.e., synagogues, organizations, day schools and youth movements). Others, such as New Haven (only one hour away from Westchester by car), are seen by local educators as lacking those institutions and types of families which make a Jewish community an especially attractive place for a Jewishly oriented professional to raise a family.

Had resources permitted focus groups in other regions (such as the Midwest, Mountain States or the South), we might have found even more variation. These areas may well report deeper feelings of isolation or even more difficulties in recruitment (of both teachers and senior educators) for example. The excluded areas are also those where Reform institutions are relatively more plentiful than in the Philadelphia to Montreal axis where most interviews took place.

Nevertheless, despite the geographically linked differences in Jewish communities, we found that the basic "story" that our respondents told was essentially the same, or, as far as we could tell, relatively unconnected to their location. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the very tentative way in which we state our findings, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of Jews live in areas typologically similar to at least one of our research sites, we do not believe our most critical findings and recommendations would have been much different had we had the ability to geographically expand the scope of our interviews.

The respondents comprised a diversified group in other ways as well. While most of the current (or former) senior educators worked as day school or afternoon school principals, several worked in other capacities. One focus group as well as a collection of individual phone interviews consisted exclusively of youth group directors and other informal educators. Scattered through the groups were a fair number of BJE personnel. But the vast majority of the senior Jewish educators we interviewed were school principals. Nativ had previously determined that roughly 80% of the population of senior Jewish educators were working as principals of day schools (about 40%) and supplementary schools (the other 40%).

Last, almost all our groups consisted of educators working under the auspices of the three major denominations, as well as a few working for community schools or other non-denominational auspices. The special circumstances which we thought would characterize Orthodox educators led us to organize a focus group consisting exclusively of Orthodox educators. All together, about a third of the educators worked for Orthodox institutions, about a third worked under Conservative auspices, a sixth for Reform institutions, and the rest for community or secularist agencies.

We had a somewhat greater representation of men than women. The vast majority of respondents who were current senior educators were between 35 and 45 years of age. The reason that most were at least 35 is that few senior educators attain that level before 35. The reason that few were over 45 is that we preferred younger senior educators on the assumption that their experiences would be more relevant for policymaking than were those of their elder counterparts. The students, of course, were largely between 18 and 24.

This sampling frame excluded the youngest senior educators, including those who have graduated from graduate programs in Jewish education established in only the last decade. Directors of those programs argue that several key findings characterizing our 35-45 year olds may not necessarily typify their alumni. (In fact, as a result of these comments, we have scheduled a follow-up pilot study with the recent alumni of the Conservative and Reform educators' programs in Los Angeles.)

We cannot argue, nor would we wish to, that our respondents comprise a perfectly representative sample of senior Jewish educators in North America. Rather, the main objective of our sampling procedures was to obtain a reasonably diverse sample, where diversity is defined along the dimensions of region, type of position, denominational auspices, and professional setting. Insofar as certain response patterns repeatedly emerge, we can be relatively certain that these findings apply to large numbers of senior Jewish educators.

Key Characteristics of the Focus Groups

Location	Types of Positions	Denominations	Comments
Montreal	Day School principals BJE staff	Orthodox, Community, Yiddishist	
Montreal	Day school principals BJE staff	Mostly Orthodox	
New Haven	Principals (day & supplementary)	Conservative; Reform	
New Haven	Potential senior educators	All denominations	
Westchester	Mostly Principals	Mostly Conservative	
Westchester	Principals	Orth., Cons., Reform	
New York	Day school principals	Orthodox	Located throughout U.S.
New York	Afternoon school principals	Mostly Conservative	Located throughout U.S. (participants in JTS summer principals' program)
Philadelphia	Principals, BJE	Mostly Conservative	
Philadelphia	Principals, BJE	All	
Los Angeles	Afternoon School Principals	Conservative Reform	
Los Angeles	Mostly youth directors	Conservative Reform	
Jerusalem	Ulpan students	All denominations	
U.S. (telephone)	Youth group & camp directors	Mostly Reform	Chi., Atl., St. Louis, elsewhere

FINDINGS

Becoming a Senior Jewish Educator

Teachers by Intent, Senior Educators by Accident

How did current senior educators arrive at their positions? How and why did they first enter the field? Who and what were the major influences on their career decisions and their development as senior Jewish educators? Understanding the answers to these questions can provide some clues as to how to expand the pool of potential recruits and to induce them to enter the profession.

With this goal in mind, we asked our respondents why they chose to become senior Jewish educators. By far the most common observation people had was that they entered Jewish education more by accident than by intent. Their career decisions were often unconscious or post hoc, often the result of interim employment decisions. They spoke of "falling into the field," deciding late in life, or "after the fact." Almost all began as a classroom teacher in a supplementary Jewish school, perhaps during college or as a part-time job during early child-rearing years.

> When I was a junior in college, I went to Israel for a year. After that I was never **NOT** involved in Jewish education, teaching, sometimes for money, sometimes as a volunteer. I began to invest more and more time in Jewish education over a ten year period. It started out as needing extra bucks to live in the real world. Suddenly, there was a framework within the real world.

> I ended up in Jewish education by mistake. I took courses in Judaica out of interest, but with no career intentions. I went to Israel in June, 1967, fell in love with an Israeli and married him. I lived there for six years and studied at Hebrew University. When I came back to the U.S. 10 years ago, my only marketable skill was Hebrew. I took over as principal a year ago when the principal died.

(Note: Most quotes have been edited for readability; but the essential meaning of the remarks have been retained.)

Some said they were drawn into positions of responsibility in Jewish education. One said, "I needed a full-time job and was asked to apply. I would not have considered it unless it was offered to me." They may have been cajoled into taking a senior job by a desperate hiring committee.

Generally, they said, they were unaware of the very concept of

a "career in Jewish education." (We speculate that things are different today; the growth in day schools has created many opportunities for careers in Jewish education and, to young professionals -- particularly those connected with Jewish life -- the career option ought to be more visible today than it was twenty or more years ago. And yet, interestingly, the college students we interviewed failed to evince much understanding of career possibilities in Jewish education, and underestimated the salaries of senior Jewish educators.)

Even the rabbis -- professionals who spent many years preparing for a career in Jewish life, indeed, Jewish education broadly conceived -- reported their arrival in senior posts in Jewish education was a late decision. Most rabbis attend rabbinical school with the idea of serving in a pulpit; a few initially intend to enter academia. It is only after they reject (if only for the time being) the life of a congregational rabbi that they consider serving as a senior Jewish educator. Some, of course, serve both as pulpit rabbis and as their synagogue's senior educator; generally these are rabbis of small non-Orthodox congregations: "It's [often] part of the job description of a [pulpit] rabbi. I'm not a professional educator, but I do it."

Here the Orthodox differed considerably from the non-Orthodox. For many of the Orthodox, Jewish education had long been a viable career option. Some knew quite early in their lives that they would enter the field.

While some of the informal senior educators -- camp and youth group directors -- also had a background in teaching, many did not. Several arrived at their positions as products of the youth movements or camps they were now leading. But they too voiced the view expressed by a director of a large Midwest Jewish camp: "I don't know anybody -- anybody -- who got into this field intentionally."

Comment: The absence of early career planning points to an obvious programmatic opportunity. Since so few undergraduates think of a career in Jewish education at a time when many of their peers are making career decision, programs which could seriously provoke thoughts about working in Jewish education may well significantly expand the pool of applicants. In other words, the haphazard recruitment of senior educators heretofore ought not be taken as a model to be emulated. Rather, it indicates a planning need that ought to be addressed and redressed.

The finding also suggests a consideration which may have limited the emergence of senior Jewish educators in recent years. Insofar as young Jewish women have become more career-oriented, the pool of late-career-deciders may have shrunk. As one piece of evidence, the undergraduate women in the student group were no less definite than the men about their career objectives. There may well be fewer talented women in the mid-twenties who have not committed themselves to a career who might be recruited to a career in Jewish education.

Aside from the careerism of women, another development may portend shrinkage in the number of women potentially interested in working as senior Jewish educators. The rabbinical seminaries of

the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements now all admit women. As a result, women interested in a Jewish educational career can now opt for the rabbinate rather than education per se. In fact, the heads of the Reform and Conservative graduate education programs in Los Angeles both sense that the rabbinical school alternative has adversely affected their ability to recruit women students.

Committed Jewish Upbringing

Even if their specific decision to enter Jewish education was a happenstance one, certain commonalties characterized almost all our current senior educators. In one way or another the vast majority attested to a rich Jewish upbringing. As one Orthodox day school educational director related, "I always knew I wanted to work in the Jewish world, and thus I turned to education. The question was, could I do it full-time? My primary motivation was caring about Judaism."

A few spoke of their parents having worked in Jewish education. The Headmaster of a day school spoke about how his father was always insistent that his two sons take a position of Jewish leadership; both became rabbis, one serving in a pulpit, the other in education. Some mentioned an academic involvement in Judaica. Of these, some said they went into Jewish education because of the tight academic job market.

Many attested to having been active in Jewish youth groups or having attended Judaic camps (about which more below).

The Montreal respondents were steeped in "Yiddishkeit," even if not the world of Jewish observance. They noted the strong influence of the Yiddishist community (stronger in Canada than the United States), while a few other Canadians attested to a strong non-observant Hebraist background.

As might be expected, a good number were rabbis, or rabbis who left the pulpit, or former seminarians who left rabbinical school. And, more than a few were Israelis, many of whom credited their upbringing with naturally equipping them, at least in Judaic terms, to enter Jewish education in the United States.

Some respondents questioned whether those without a lifelong involvement in fairly intensive Jewish life could acquire the Judaic skills and sensitivities appropriate to a career as a leader in Jewish education. Some voiced the view that coursework alone would be inadequate to provide the necessary Judaic background outside the purely cognitive domain. Some claimed that only a life of "tefilah" and "zemirot" (prayer and religious melodies) could provide the richness and depth of Jewish learning and commitment appropriate for a senior Jewish educator. In other words, one must have a background in Jewish life experiences, but such a background is necessary but not sufficient for adequacy in Judaic skills. One Philadelphia educator noted that Jewish education was "a discouraging and

a hard field to break into unless you're part of the system -- it takes too much. The wealth of Jewish knowledge is too great."

Jewish Education as a Social Challenge

In discussing their entry into the field, many respondents voiced a theme which will appear in other contexts below. They viewed Jewish education as an exciting challenge, as an opportunity to make a significant impact. This was the way they could make the world -- even if just the Jewish world -- a better place. For some, education was a way in which they could act, as it were, as an anti-establishment change agent. An example is provided by one Montreal principal who said she "fell into Jewish education." She had been a sixties activist and an anti-nuclear demonstrator. She wanted to make the world a better place, motivated by "tikun olam" (the principle of "repairing" the imperfect world). She went to a kibbutz, an experience she described as "important and formative," where she worked in the children's houses. This was her first ongoing contact with children, and she liked the experience so much she made a career of Jewish education.

A rabbi made a late decision to go into Jewish education because "education is truly a creative challenge without the synagogue politics of the pulpit." Another reported that Camp Ramah was a "turn-on for me as an alienated teen-ager at a time when I was searching for an anti-establishment, counter cultural environment. It led me to rabbinical school, but education was more meaningful for me than the pulpit."

Comment: Most of our core respondents attended college during the 1960s, a period of vigorous protest against various forms of social injustice. We suggest, therefore, that the social conscience of the period may have led many of our respondents either to choose the field of Jewish education, or, at least, to see it as a way to act out their social or political commitments. Of course, the sixties gave way to a period of ostensibly greater careerism and materialism.

Insofar as this analysis is accurate, the recruitment of Jewish educators may have become more difficult over the last two decades. If the field appeals to those with a social conscience and if the pool of young people with significant social concerns diminishes, then it stands to reason that the number of potential candidate for Jewish education careers has diminished as well. But the appeal of the field may have been limited to the extraordinarily idealistic precisely because of its professional deficiencies such as lack of status, compensation, and articulated standards for entry and advancement. If so, then advancing the professional nature and status of senior Jewish education would overcome the problems of recruitment associated with fluctuations in youthful idealism.

On the other hand, the image of a decline in idealism should not be taken too far. Our small number of interviews with Jewishly motivated students suggested that even they are motivated by con-

cerns other than money or social prestige. Many also spoke of seeking a profession where they could help people, where they could make a significant impact. In short, we are unsure of the immediate implications of the idealistic character or image of the field upon prospects for recruitment. Emphasizing the social contribution of Jewish education in recruitment efforts may heighten its appeal to a certain segment of the population, and may be irrelevant to expanding the pool of potential recruits beyond the socially idealistic.

The Role of Mentors

We specifically asked whether particular individuals served as mentors or were in other ways crucial to the professional development of the senior Jewish educators we interviewed. A large number of our respondents attested to the role of several sorts of individuals.

Some mentioned personal role models, such as parents, pulpit rabbis, and Hillel rabbis. Of these, some encouraged or inspired respondents to pursue careers in education generally, or Jewish education specifically; others served as inspirational role models, indirectly encouraging respondents to deepen their Jewish involvement.

Some interviewees mentioned people critical to their choosing their career and acquiring professional skills and commitment. In fact, several names -- many well-known in the circles of leading Jewish educators -- recurred throughout our interviews. But alongside the familiar "luminaries" of Jewish education, respondents also cited local Jewish personalities from their childhood or adolescent years. They mentioned congregational rabbis or Hebrew school teachers. These often were the "official Jews," so to speak, who seemed to care deeply and very personally about the problems and development of the young Jews who later, as it would turn out, would emerge as senior Jewish educators.

Thus, when we asked about mentors we learned not only about individuals who were instrumental in shaping the early career development of our interviewees; we also learned about inspirational individuals who stimulated the Jewish commitment of the respondents, sometimes quite early in their lives.

Significantly, in asking about mentors, we elicited repeated mentions of certain key Jewish experiences and institutions.

The Role of Intensive Teen-Age Jewishness: Camps, Israel and Youth Groups

Perhaps more often than individuals, our respondents singled out three sorts of experiences which led them either into a life of Jewish commitment generally, or into Jewish education as a career in particular. They mentioned the important role of summer camps

(mostly Ramah, but others as well); travel and study in Israel; and youth groups. As one informal educator said: "I fell into it [Jewish education]. NCSY got me into it. I liked it and stayed there." Another remarked, "After my senior year in high school, I was a waitress at Ramah and began to model my life after people I met there. I then went to JTS [the Jewish Theological Seminary] and into the field [of Jewish education]."

Interestingly, these three experiences share several key characteristics. They typically take place during the high school years. They entail a social or community experience, in which Judaism is learned and acted out in the context of a network of close friends. And they provide an intensive Judaic experience.

Comment: If these sorts of experiences do in fact spawn future Jewish educators, then efforts to recruit Jewish educators can be targeted to appropriate population groups. In other words, it might be wise to promote careers in Jewish education to participants in Israel programs, intensively Jewish summer camps, and the youth groups. But given the recent growth in day schools and Jewish studies courses in universities, these may also provide the identifiable populations from which to recruit future senior Jewish educators.

In other words, the lesson to be drawn from our finding on the background of our respondents ought not be overly limited to Israel programs, summer camps, and youth groups per se. Rather, we propose that the appropriate inference to learn is that potential Jewish educators probably continue to cluster in Jewishly intensive programs and contexts. Those programs undoubtedly change from one generation to the next. In fact, research among Jewish Theological Seminary rabbinical students finds that in contrast with the recent past, many of today's students acquired their deep Jewish involvement during college years rather than in childhood. If we can identify those sorts of programs and experiences, we can focus recruitment efforts on the right populations so as to maximize their impact.

Little Formal Training for the Job

We asked the respondents to reflect on the formal training for their jobs, to speak about the types of skills required and the extent to which their professional training equipped them with those skills. The respondents implicitly identified three skill areas: Judaic learning; education; and management/administration.

Assessments of their preparation in each of these areas varied considerably by area. However, the general impression conveyed by the respondents was one of serious lack of preparation for the job, or, as in the words of one educator-respondent, "I was unequivocally unprepared." Another said, "It's true I wouldn't pass a licensing test, and yet I am in a top position. But I feel I could do a lot better if I had a body of professional training."

Informal educators -- particularly regional directors of youth groups -- claimed that their problems with ambiguous standards for professional training and credentials was even more severe than those of the school principals. While some courses and programs provide some of the skills principals need, there is "no program to help one become a youth director." As we note below, informal educators -- even more than principals -- claim to suffer from a lack of professional status.

In the area of Judaic skills, with the exception of the rabbis (or former rabbinic students), almost all senior Jewish educators we interviewed felt they had significant gaps in their Judaic background. Another observed that most Jewish educators "never reach the point of being Jewishly qualified." In the group of potential senior Jewish educators, one said, "I'd like to be able to improve my background in Judaica. I'm not so sure of myself there." Another in the same group noted, "I have a weak background, but it hasn't been an issue yet. My hang-up is that I should be able to speak Hebrew." The informal educators admitted to and gave a sense of possessing even fewer Judaica skills. However, they reported frequently consulting with congregational rabbis as a way of remedying their shortcomings in Judaic training. Judaica was the one area where most interviewees felt that formal instruction could be highly effective.

Ambivalence Toward Education Courses

While some reported having taken education courses, they also reported dissatisfaction with the courses, which they most often took to acquire formal academic credentials. Many felt that it was the less creative students who enrolled in such courses. The courses, in the words of one respondent, "pulled down their sights, clipped their wings." However, a principal of a large Conservative day school believes that "formal training is of great value. It provides an ideology and an outlook, a sense of meaning for what one is doing." But, at the same time, he claimed he lacked training in technical pedagogy. As our moderator noted: "He said he lacked something that would act as a bridge between formal educational theory and the actual practice of teaching."

All in all, they felt that education courses were not all that helpful. More important were role models in their early careers, early teaching experiences, in-service programs, and all manner of on-the-job training. "I learned most through the school of hard knocks."

Of course, complaints about graduate training is not at all unique to Jewish educational personnel. The literature reports that public school principals and superintendents regularly complain about the shortcomings of their graduate training. Among other complaints they voice is that few courses or programs, it seems, prepare them for the harried, hectic pace endemic to educational leadership. And complaints about professional training abound in

the medical, legal, and business professions as well. All speak about a sharp discontinuity between the world of academe and the world of practice.

Despite the generally downbeat assessments of their formal professional preparation, occasionally there were some bright spots amidst the bleak portrait of formal training for education. "I disagree," one Philadelphia educator commented. "At JTS there were inspiring, top people who taught the ideal of study throughout one's life." Examples of programs which received scattered praise are instructive: the Hebrew University Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora; the Jerusalem Fellows Program; the Jewish Theological Seminary; Boston's Hebrew Teachers' College (now Hebrew College); and Machon Greenberg (an "incredible experience and opportunity"). Of course, lacking a serious study of these institutions, we cannot discern why these (and, in all likelihood) several other programs are regarded as worthwhile by their alumni. All we can say, is that the positive recollections do suggest that the development of successful programs for training Jewish educators is a real possibility. (A cautionary note: The schools and programs singled out for praise may have been especially effective in their time, or particularly for this particular age cohort. Ten or fifteen years from now, interviews with today's youngest educators, the ones now entering the field, might provide quite a different list of praiseworthy institutions.)

Aside from the isolated instances of highly regarded programs, we ought to note one other piece of evidence arguing for the value of education courses, albeit indirect. At the same time as they derided the education courses, they disdained -- if only mildly -- their colleagues who completely lacked them. In like manner, some complained about having to answer to congregational rabbis or about educator-rabbis generally who lack any formal training in education. These remarks indicate that education courses may have intermediate value: they may not prepare one as well as they might for the managerial and administrative tasks performed by most principals; but they probably at least socialize one into the professional community of educators who, like other professional community, share a language, a literature, and a worldview.

Sara S. Lee, Director of the School of Education at the Hebrew Union College (Los Angeles), commenting on an early draft of this report, offered this observation:

> I would add a caveat about the perception that one learns the profession through mentorship, networking and on the job experience. In the absence of a body of theory and conceptual language by which to understand education and institutional leadership, the practitioner is very limited to the model he/she can find and is unable to be reflective about his/her practice.

In contrast with the formal educators, the informal educators with social work degrees spoke positively of their social work training. "Youth work is an art form and a science. . . . My [master's] degree in social work helped me understand what I was seeing.

I went for the degree on purpose: I needed the skill and the piece of paper [diploma]." Or, as another Los Angeles youth director remarked, "I learned the theory of social work in class. I saw the training take on special meaning in the field."

Despite their lack of enthusiasm for formal education courses as university students, many thought that in-service training of one sort or another at this time would be helpful. Some spoke of an interest in returning to school. Others said they could use refresher courses. Many felt a need to talk with other educators about educational issues. "Networking . . . is among the most important elements of training. Talking to other educators about their experience and teaching is crucial for training."

Finally, in discussing teacher training, many emphasized that courses could not "make a teacher." A teaching personality is a pre-requisite to a successful career. Relating to pupils and their parents is an innate skill which can be sharpened, but not created ex nihilo. "You can't make a teacher -- it takes natural talents that you have or you don't."

While several informal educators were professionally trained as educators (by virtue of having taken education courses and/or having taught in the classroom), many were not. All claimed that they were doing Jewish education, and most felt that they, in fact, were doing a more important, if not more effective job than formal educators. One camp director said, "People are identifying camp as a major center in their religious lives. . . . Most educators are jealous of camp directors. They convey success. Kids come home happy with camp as opposed to religious school. In fact, I feel pity for the people who run religious schools." But, despite their understanding of their functioning as educators, most youth and camp directors saw themselves "as a breed apart" from the formal educators. In fact, when questioned about alternate career destinations, they thought of work outside the Jewish community in comparable roles: as camp directors, or leaders of programs for troubled teens.

Comment: If teaching remains the inevitable entry point to eventual positions as senior Jewish educators, the possibility that teaching ability requires "natural talents" may seriously limit the recruitment pool for eventual senior Jewish educators. In other words, it is possible that only "natural" teachers can conceive of becoming successful Jewish school principals given the current channels of recruitment and advancement. On the other hand, it is significant that the literature on American public school principals reports that they too typically spend the first five to ten years of their professional lives in the classroom. Moreover, a principal without teaching experience may have severe difficulties in gaining credibility as a supervisor of teachers. In short, expanding the pool of candidates for school principals beyond the ranks of current or former teachers may be both desirable and extraordinarily difficult.

Weak Training in Administration and Management

Of all three areas, they felt most untrained in the many skills under the rubric of administration and management: budgeting, scheduling, public relations, personnel, and others. Senior Jewish educators we interviewed indicated they were surprised both by the amount of time and energy they needed to devote to lay boards and communal politics, and by the degree of frustration such work engendered. "I could have used a business background: budgeting, marketing, fundraising, p.r." One said his business courses were particularly helpful and another claimed his degree in political science was more important than his education courses. "It seems to me you need more business skill than Judaica," said one respondent. In addition, some thought prior volunteer work in the Jewish community -- serving on federation committees and the like -- would be a valuable experience for a young managerial level Jewish educator.

Some thought that many of the more crucial gaps in training in administration and management could be addressed in an internship program. The few principals who worked as vice principals early in their careers attested to the value of such an experience. Almost all were favorable, if not enthusiastic, about our suggestion of a formal apprenticeship program for senior Jewish educators. "I think you need an internship with someone already in education. Textbook courses don't prepare you." Under such programs, a beginning senior Jewish educator would work for a period of time (perhaps six months or a year) in different aspects of management and administration under the supervision of an experienced and competent principal.

In general, respondents complained about the lack of a clear articulation about which skills, training and credentials were vital for their positions. Neither the boards which hired them nor, in many instances, the educators themselves were clear about the prerequisites for successful functioning as senior Jewish educators. The lack of standards implied the absence of a genuine profession. And the lack of a professional conceptualization of their field had adverse consequences for their self-image and for their relationships with lay leaders.

Work as a Senior Jewish Educator

The Joys of Jewish Education

Understanding how and why senior Jewish educators enjoy their work is vital to developing policies and incentives to prolong their careers. Job satisfaction generally is a function of both rewards and frustrations; the two are related, but distinct dimensions. It stands to reason, then, that policies to avoid burnout need to strive to both maximize rewards and minimize frustrations.

We asked respondents to identify what they like about their jobs. Their responses can be grouped into four somewhat overlapping areas: (1) seeing children learn; (2) creativity or artistry; (3) perpetuating Judaism; (4) making a difference. (Comment: Interestingly, these are similar to sources of job satisfaction which Jewish school teachers would probably cite as well. Since so many of the senior Jewish educators we interviewed started their careers as teachers, we find the congruence not at all surprising.)

Many responses focused on learning experiences. One respondent spoke of the joy of "the teaching moment." Many said they enjoyed the direct contact with the students, and wished they had more of it. Others said they loved watching their students grow and learn, and enjoyed the opportunity to mold them, "to present a role model, especially for the girls". One noted he "is very happy to be around children." A few said that being able to experience such joys was an essential antidote to the many frustrations inherent in Jewish education. One moderator summarized the responses to the question of what the educators like about their work: "The unanimous verdict was the satisfaction of working with their students and the 'nachas' of seeing them grow and learn."

As noted, several educators spoke of the creative or artistic aspects of their jobs as a source of reward. They spoke specifically of the "creative opportunities," the "challenge of working with different personalities," the variety of problems they encounter, the fact that their jobs were never boring, and the chance to keep learning. One especially enjoyed "putting together something with a teacher." Another spoke of successful special projects.

Fundamental to their perspectives is the sense that they are making a lasting contribution to Jewish continuity, or "the sense of mission," as one put it. They generally hold the view that Jewish civilization is either in danger (generally from assimilation) or, at least that it sorely needs improvement: "In college I saw many who had little [Jewish] knowledge or commitment. I felt it was imperative for people to go into the field." Producing Jewishly well-educated youngsters, therefore, addresses a critical social need. They spoke of "influencing the kids to be proud of being Jewish," or helping "kids feel better about being Jewish." Members of the Orthodox panel spoke of "preserving the Jewish tradition."

Finally, vital to their positive self-image is what social scientists call a sense of efficacy, the feeling that they are ac-

complishing something. One New Haven respondent noted, "the idea of being able to affect lives and affect other teachers attracts me." After noting that what he likes most about his job is "having a direct influence over kids and their parents," a Conservative day school principal added, "The influence that comes with the job." The thought that they are making a significant impact, that things are somehow different and better because of their professional contributions sustain these educators through the difficult times. Another put this dimension succinctly: "I can have more effect on people's lives in administration." When asked under what circumstances she might leave her job, one principal answered, "When I felt I was no longer making a difference." Conversely, the nagging suspicion that the obstacles to their making a notable difference are insurmountable, the idea that they may just be marking time, just "holding down a job" all serve to demoralize some educators some of the time.

Insofar as they can have direct access to pupils learning, that they can put their educational skills to good use, that they can feel that they are in some small way sustaining and enhancing the better parts of Judaism, and that they are making an identifiable impact on their school or community, senior Jewish educators tend to feel better about themselves as professionals and better about their jobs. Insofar as obstacles preclude them from these sensations and experience, they tend to feel frustrated and de-moralized.

Comment: As we noted, the sorts of rewards cited by the principals resemble those which we suspect would be cited by teachers. In effect, at least on the conscious level, they may think of themselves as "super-teachers." Few spoke about managerial joys, such achievements as: balancing a budget, convincing a superb teacher to join the staff, maneuvering one's board to adopt a particular policy, enhancing the public image of the school. This finding may reflect a failure to fully adopt a managerial job definition; or it may simply reflect the fact that managerial achievements are a subsidiary source of job satisfaction for principals. (In fact, it was just one youth director who had only recently moved from a line job to a managerial position who could reflect on the necessity for redefining one's criteria for success and sources of professional reward.)

Major Complaints and Frustrations: Lay Leaders and Time Pressures

Prior to undertaking this research, we had anticipated that educators would complain most vigorously about low occupational prestige and inadequate salaries. We do not wish to under-estimate the importance of status and salaries as determinants of senior educators' job satisfaction and we treat these subjects presently. However, the findings clearly point to two other significant sources of frustration and dissatisfaction: relations with lay leaders, and time demands.

Many respondents complained bitterly about their relationships with their lay leaders, particularly the board members who hire, su-

pervise, and ultimately fire them. The bitterness is well-illustrated by the educator who commented, "Working with congregants is enough to make one anti-Semitic." The complaints were varied in nature, but clearly inter-related.

The respondents complained about having to deal with lay people who don't share their vision of Jewish education. (Orthodox educators, in contrast, claimed this was far less of a problem for them.)

They complained of lay people with no formal training in education wanting (or presuming) to make professional decisions which ought to be clearly in the domain of the principal. "How do you control lay leadership who often know nothing about education from dominating even the most dedicated and highly paid teachers and educators? If you bring in top people and put them under the control of the incompetent lay leadership you will still have a severe crisis in education. There's a need for national standards which .

They said the laity tends to have little respect for educators as people or education as a profession. As one potential educator noted:

> In American society, your status is related to your financial success, but we're selling something people don't want to buy. People think you're religious, kind of creepy. . . . You're still regarded as hired help.

And, interviewees argued, lay people fail to accord the discipline of education the same respect they would tender to their own professions such as medicine, law, engineering, science, or academia. After all, some interviewees noted, the laymen all went to school, giving them (they often suppose) the experience to make sound educational decisions. One interviewee commented that, "Jewish professionals are treated like s--t. Jewish educators are expendable. It is a de-humanizing experience." Another (reflecting all the frustrations of the profession, not only relations with lay men) remarked, "Jewish education eats up professionals and spits them out," adding the Scriptural citation (in Hebrew): "Eretz ohchayl toshveha" (a land which devours its inhabitants).

Interestingly, most informal educators had few complaints about lay boards (their complaints about laity focused on the parents and the community generally). Most reported considerable professional autonomy: "If I decide we try a new program, we try it."

And, finally, the principals resented the amount of time and energy they needed to expend on what they regarded as unnecessary or non-productive evening meetings with lay boards, on paperwork for the laity, and on the politicking essential to keeping the boards informed and supportive. "What repels me is that there is a lot of outside interference -- soothing ruffled feathers, politics, etc. It interferes with education. You can run into a lot of problems. Education gets lost and you become strictly an administrator." Moreover, as noted, little or nothing in the educators' formal training prepared them for the skills and mentality of the businessman or attorney.

Aside from problems with lay people, the other major complaint of the respondents (particularly the principals) concerned the time their jobs demand. They were upset by the number of hours their work entails, by the need to be available nearly around the clock, and by the type of work they were compelled to undertake. One spoke of the "nagging sense of all the things to do, ought to have done, and do not do." Another said, "Your day never seems to end. It's your whole life. You're swallowed up by it. You want to go hide, it's so endless. You're constantly pushing."

To elaborate, the principals spoke of the never-ending nature of their job. They complained about too many night meetings, of trying to juggle too many expectations (of teachers, parents, board members, students, and themselves), and of the excessive physical and emotional demands. One complained of "being on call 24 hours a day and trying to have a family" (i.e., trying to balance commitments to job and home). Some reported parents or board members frequently called them at home late into the evening, even when requested to reserve such calls for emergencies. "Even with Shabbat. I had to say nicely to people, please don't call me on Shabbat."

The huge time demands have an adverse impact on the educators' family lives. A few reported difficulties with spouses -- one only half-jokingly attributed his divorce to his career commitments -- or (alternatively) the appreciation they felt for spouses who "put up" with their emotional and time commitments to their work. Parenting also suffers under the strain of this "greedy" profession.

But, they feel much of the time they do spend as principals is devoted to necessary but petty administrative details, some of which could be handled by vice principals or capable administrative assistants. They feel over-burdened by paperwork and, as noted earlier, seemingly excessive catering to the needs of board members. The net result of the excessive time demands is a mounting frustration with the discrepancy between the time available for serious educational work -- such as curriculum planning or teacher supervision and training -- and the time necessary to make a significant educational contribution.

Of course, these complaints are not unique to Jewish school principals. The research literature on American public school principals cites many of the same problems. Principals complain about their need to react to the initiatives and needs of others and their inability to undertake their own initiatives; the harried work pace; the numerous interruptions; and the manifold petty decisions.

Jewish youth group and camp directors were less likely to complain about time demands than were school principals. The informal educators did say the demands were cyclical, intensifying around major programs for the youth directors or the summer for camp directors. One regional youth director complained about the amount of travel over a six state region which frequently separated her from her family. Nevertheless, the time-related complaints of many if not most principals were relatively rare among the managerial level informal educators.

Other Complaints: Low Status, Poor Compensation, Problem Parents, & Untrained Teachers

While complaints about lay leaders and excessive time demands were the most severe and widespread, some senior educators also voiced dissatisfaction about several other areas. These include professional status, compensation, parents, and teachers.

The perceived lack of professional esteem felt by a minority of the participants emerged in a variety of contexts. They felt that non-educators failed to view education (and particularly Jewish education) as a genuine discipline and profession. "You're looked down upon," said one Jewish educator. Another commented: "It might help if you could go to Harvard for Jewish education and not only Judaic studies. The field [Jewish education] is not presented in a positive light. It's not offered as a field."

The undergraduates we interviewed clearly ranked the prestige of Jewish education below that of their own career choices (among them: lawyer, clinical psychologist, medical researcher). And, of those who said they might have been attracted to the field, their perception of low status and income would be one factor which would dissuade them from entering the field. (As an aside, the students were surprised to learn that day school principals earn as much as $40,000, $50,000 or more per year.)

We should note that none of the rabbis we interviewed felt a lack of professional esteem, and few, if any, day school principals thought they commanded insufficient respect among their professional peers or in the wider community. The Orthodox educators, in fact, felt highly respected in their Orthodox communities. Rather, as we noted, complaints about status were far from universal and no where near as severe as were complaints about relations with laity or about time demands.

Those most troubled by these issues -- it seemed to us -- were the non-Orthodox afternoon school principals and, even more critically, the informal educators. The latter complained vigorously that hardly anyone understood the value of their work. Many agreed with the respondent who said that most people thought of his job as "kiddy work." One reported being told by a former colleague: "You're still in this kid stuff. Grow up. All your other friends left the business." Another added, "People don't understand what we do; youth workers are not seen as professional enough."

The lack of understanding has real consequences, as one informal educator claimed: "What is there about a Jewish parent who when it comes to their child it's nothing but the best, but who don't want to pay for a youth director?" Whatever the prestige level of educators generally in our society, that of "recreational workers" is certainly even lower. Apparently, Jewish youth group directors may often be seen by the Jewish public more as teen-age recreation workers than as teachers and educators.

Synagogue youth directors were particularly vexed by the attitudes of their congregational rabbis who, they said, failed to recognize their professionalism as informal Jewish educators. (As a relevant aside, the career histories of both supplementary school principals and synagogue youth directors included several stories of career moves instigated by the arrival of a new rabbi whom they felt failed to accord them sufficient professional autonomy.)

To the extent that the educators did voice anxieties about their status, they seemed more concerned about their professional status as an instrument, for what it could produce in their work rather than as an intrinsic reward, that is something valued for itself. In other words, if we can take their idealistic sounding statements at face value (and we feel we can), the respondents said that a lack of professional status is important primarily because it may limit their influence with their boards or in the larger Jewish community; or it may deny them a measure of job security necessary to lead their institutions decisively; or, for many youth group directors in particular, it may mean they are unable to obtain the secretarial assistance to free them for the more professional aspects of their job. With the exception of the informal educators, none seemed deeply affronted or anguished by their perceived lack of professional esteem per se. Most seemed to exude a confident satisfaction in the value of their professional contribution, and viewed whatever lack of professional esteem they may endure more as a sad commentary on the Jewish community than a reflection of their own worthiness.

This view may be contrasted with those of the students we interviewed, most of whom said they would be bothered by the lack of status attached to working as a professional Jewish educator. (Similar views were expressed by a Jewishly committed school teacher who claims to have avoided Jewish education in part because of the low status of the field.)

The senior educators we interviewed expressed mixed feelings about their salaries, placing them in the context of other, more crucial concerns. One Philadelphia educator expressed a fairly common view: "I feel no lack of prestige, the money could be better, but the physical and emotional demands are great." Another felt her salary was respectable but she was not being "paid in proportion to the hours put in" to the job. Most did not regard their levels of financial compensation as inadequate, although some did say they might leave the field to earn more elsewhere. A few connected perceptions of low salaries with perceptions of low status in the community. Some of the day school principals were deeply concerned not about their own salaries, but what they could offer their teachers (see discussion of concerns about teachers below).

The informal educators, though, were almost universal in expressing disappointment with their level of compensation. Several spoke of being able to earn more in comparable jobs outside the Jewish community. They clearly indicated that without a substantial raise in compensation (perhaps by expanding their job definitions), they were preparing to look elsewhere for employment.

One particular personal financial concern centered on provisions for retirement. Some felt their compensation package failed to provide adequately (if at all) for their retirement years and thought that this circumstance might prompt them to leave the field.

Comment: As noted earlier, we ought not immediately draw the conclusion that raising the prestige of senior educators or their salaries will have little impact on recruitment (or retention for that matter). It is possible that the people already in the field are self-selected: they were the ones prepared to accept lower prestige or salaries than that found in other professions. The undergraduates provided evidence that perceptions of low status and income were influential in limiting recruitment of senior Jewish educators.

Another area of major difficulty noted by the educators entailed the parents. Here we find a major distinction between day school principals and other senior educators. The full-time school directors complained about overly involved parents. These parents, they said, are more demanding of special attention (for them and their children), more prepared to "interfere" than they would be in an non-sectarian private or certainly a public school. (Comment: Here, apparently, the familial nature of the Jewish community comes into play, and with adverse consequences for parent-school relations. Rules of professional courtesy and civilized restraint are appropriate to social life in the larger society, but certainly not in the family.) Moreover, day school parents usually constitute active and influential members of the larger Jewish communities in which day school principals and their families participate. As a result, non-school relationships often impinge on the interactions between principal and parent, making for greater complexity and difficulty as well.

Afternoon school principals and youth group leaders had a different sort of complaint: parent apathy. Those with such complaints were troubled by parents who seem to evince little interest in their children's Jewish development, who subtly or overtly manifest their lack of regard for their children's Jewish schooling. As might be expected, far fewer Orthodox educators noted these sorts of complaints, and those who did were mostly found in the Montreal focus groups.

Several educators articulated their problems and worries about recruiting teachers. A few complained that teachers lacked a sense of professional vocation. One spoke of "insincere teachers, those who have no sense of vocation for teaching but who do it simply as a job . . . the presence of teachers who don't love education. . . . If I could choose from a larger pool of teachers I would never use those who have no sense of calling. But I am stuck having to take whoever is available." Another commented, "There are not enough quality teachers around. The level of teaching in the afternoon schools therefore turns out to be abysmally low." One day school principal complained that "there are too many Israelis in the system; although they may know Hebrew well enough, too many of them are lacking in Judaica knowledge and in professional training as teachers."

Beyond these issues, the respondents noted a variety of problems which were either less widespread or less irritating than those mentioned above. One -- with others' concurrence -- spoke of being "the lone defender of the faith." And they were lonely in two respects: professionally and Jewishly. The quality and quantity of colleaguial interaction varied significantly from one community to another. Generally, those with the best networks were BJE consultants and principals in large cities. (Montreal, in fact, seemed to be among the most impressive communities in this respect; the relative stability and longevity of the educators there may partly account for their stronger networks.) Educators living in small communities (particularly) complained about the lack of communal facilities for the Jewish lives of their families. Such communities often lack the critical mass of families deeply committed to Judaism. They cannot provide the range of alternatives in synagogues or study circles. And, for those with teen-agers, such communities often lack attractive Jewish high schools and well-developed youth groups more typical of larger metropolitan areas.

Comment: As we have indicated, not all the complaints discussed above were truly critical, in the sense that they could provoke significant numbers of senior Jewish educators to leave the profession. Some were a source of irritation, but they, in a manner of speaking, "come with the territory." Few senior educators said they would leave over these issues (but, of course, we have little understanding about the extent to which these problems which are apparently less critical to current educators are critical for dissuading others from entering the field).

Rather, as noted, two to three issues stand out as prime irritants of the sort which, in time, might provoke some significant number of educators to either leave the field entirely, or maneuver themselves out of their current jobs into less demanding posts within Jewish education. One such problem entails relationships with lay boards. The other, entails frustrations with demands on one's time. Each of these problems calls out for some attention from policy makers.

Assessing the extent to which side -- lay leaders or educators -- is more responsible for the difficulties in their relationships is beyond the scope of this study, and may be irrelevant to addressing the problem. Whatever the major source of the conflicts and misunderstandings, it is clear that both sides can contribute to improving their relationships. Policymakers, therefore, ought to give some thought to programs which would help educators and volunteer board members understand one another and work together more fruitfully.

Many of our interviewees requested more administrative assistance as a solution, if only partial, to the problem of excessive time demands and excessive responsibility for petty administrative details. Quite simply, this means they would want an administrative aide or an administrative vice principal. But there may be solutions other than the ones explicitly proposed by the respondents

themselves. One idea may be to separate the administrative from the educational responsibilities for running the school, and creating a position as administrative director or business manager to handle such matters as budgeting, fund-raising, purchasing, contracts, building maintenance, public relations, scheduling and related activities. Hospitals, with their division between medical directors and administrative directors may offer a useful example here. However, one danger in such a proposal is that the educational director may fail to adequately control the administrative side to the school. For educators, even seemingly petty administrative functions may have educational import.

Of course, any of these steps would have to surmount several obstacles. Schools would need to expand their budgets to accommodate the new administrative staff, at whatever level. More fundamentally, they would need to redefine the principal's job definition to exclude many tasks which the educators now regard as routine and dilatory, as depriving them of the opportunity to concentrate on purely educational matters.

There is a sense that in recent years salaries for principals have climbed significantly (as an aside, principals in Montreal complained about the unusually small gaps between their salaries and those of their teachers). Lay boards may find that investment in additional support staff may promote recruitment and retention of principals as effectively as substantial improvements in principals' salaries. Clearly, before we can be sure of its merits, this policy recommendation demands more thorough investigation.

Ambivalent Advice to Young Prospective Educators

We asked the respondents what sort of advice they would give talented Jewishly committed young persons contemplating a career in Jewish education. The question allowed our interviewees to provide more synthetic, global reflections on their careers, and to reveal several new sorts of concerns and problems. But, most important, the question allowed the respondents to speak about the profession without having to defend or support their own personal career choices.

The question invariably evoked anxious laughter and uncomfortable tittering. The dominant reaction was one of ambivalence. A few times, when some participants initially answered that they might support the decision, other respondents caught them up short with the more pointed question of whether they would give the same encouragement to their own children.

The source of ambivalence was clear. Respondents were torn between their commitment to the ideals of Jewish education, on the one hand, and their deep frustrations with the conditions of their work, on the other. A minority even said they would try to dissuade the young adults. An even smaller minority said they would encourage them. As one respondent, speaking of his daughter said: "I would kiss her and tell her to go for it!"

Most would feel obligated to make the young person adopt realistic expectations. The educators would want to make sure the young adults were truly committed to Jewish education for, without that commitment, the frustrations would be impossible to bear. They would explain that one would need the idealism to survive in the field and might suggest the youngster explore other ways to contribute to Jewish continuity. And they would want to make sure the person was qualified, not just for the person's happiness, but to protect the field from unqualified Jewish educators.

Among the drawbacks they cited was the current career opportunity structure which requires one to start as a teacher, and work one's way up to managerial level positions. Does this structure dissuade prospective senior educators, with managerial and administrative talents, who may have no desire to work as teachers? Respondents noted there was no way to prepare for a career as senior Jewish educator, that there was no explicit career ladder leading to principal or leading to positions beyond principal.

Others cited the frequent turnover in the field and other problems of job mobility. The problem can be illustrated by principals who want to change schools, for whatever reason. Except for the largest metropolitan areas, there are only a few senior positions in any one community, and the job market is sometimes further limited by denominational boundaries which may restrict educators to Orthodox or Conservative or Reform schools. Often the only way to change jobs is to move the family to a different community -- an unattractive option, to say the least. The consequences of this set of circumstances include educators who feel trapped in their jobs, educators who leave the field for lack of job opportunities in their own communities, or families who must uproot themselves to facilitate educators' job mobility.

The limited job opportunities within a given community also exacerbates anxieties about job security reported by many of our respondents. Some -- particularly afternoon school principals -- regarded their tenure as subject to the whims of a fickle and unprofessional lay board. They told stories (generally second hand, i.e., about other educators) where an aggrieved influential parent or a change in the chairmanship of the education committee resulted in the dismissal of an otherwise capable educator. One reported he was planning to leave his Reform afternoon school after over twenty years as principal because a new, young assistant rabbi whom he disliked was installed as his supervisor. One of our student-respondents -- destined for a medical career -- echoed a sentiment expressed by many of the educators: "My father is an Orthodox rabbi, and one thing he impressed upon me: Never work for the Jewish community."

Respondents in several groups would recommend that their hypothetical young person acquire alternate academic degrees or professions to fall back on, in part to diminish feelings of job insecurity, in part to have a viable career destination in the event of burn-out, and in part to enhance their own self-esteem as professionals. For example, the rabbis thought it was wise to get a rab-

binical degree; and the (secular) school teachers recommended working only part-time in Jewish education.

Last, some respondents, reflecting their frustrations with the administrative responsibilities, would caution young people to acquire a good background in administration (possibly through business courses) and/or to make sure they are supported by a qualified administrator.

Looking to the Future

Leaving the Job and the Field

We asked respondents whether they expected to be working in the same job or even in the field of Jewish education in the next five years. Only a few gave unambiguous affirmative answers indicating they will, in all likelihood, be found in the same institution or somewhere in Jewish education. (We cannot be sure, but it seemed to us that principals were less likely to give unambiguous affirmations of their intent to stay in the field than others.)

For the most part, though, respondents were ambiguous or equivocal about their prospects for remaining Jewish educators. Some groups were almost silent about their plans, or, in others, many reported a large number of "don't know" or "who knows?" responses, as well as a variety of "maybe" answers: "maybe here," "maybe Israel." Some were only a little less vague: "I'll need a change;" "maybe something more reflective, like studying or teaching."

As noted in our methodological remarks in the introduction, this was the one question which probably elicited less than fully candid replies. Jewish educators working at the height of their careers are unlikely to admit to thoughts of leaving the field in front of professional colleagues from their own communities. That is why the large number of ambiguous replies (very possibly from a majority of our respondents) is all the more impressive (or distressing). That so few could bring themselves to articulate an intention to remain within the field in the foreseeable future, even in the presence of colleagues, may indicate that some large number may well be thinking of leaving.

To be sure, the impact of the group may work in the other direction. Cynicism may also be infectious. Educators may feel it a betrayal to their colleagues in the room to exude a starry-eyed idealism reflected in a commitment to remain in the field for the foreseeable future. We cannot be sure about which way the group interviews colored the responses; but we can say that the few individual interviews and the small number of follow-up private conversations moderators had with focus group respondents uncovered considerably greater readiness to admit to leaving the field than we found in the group context.

One person answered in a way which may portend a significant and ominous trend: "I wish I had other skills when burn-out hits." If this comment reflects a generalized phenomenon, then we may be speaking not only about the loss of some senior educators from the field, but an equally troublesome phenomenon. At some point late in their careers, experienced senior educators may feel they have little energy or initiative to give their jobs, but realize they have no where else to go. As a result, the field may acquire (if it has not already done so), a large number of once energetic, and now professionally exhausted incumbents in positions of significant leadership. In fact, one forty year old in informal education ad-

mitted he would like to leave the field, that he feels too old for the job; unfortunately, he realizes he has no skills other than working with Jewish youth groups.

The reasons why senior educators might leave their jobs or even the field are diverse. Some relate to frustrations mentioned earlier, others relate to entirely new concerns.

Among the hypothetical immediate reasons for leaving:

The "job is too high risk," or "I don't want to be prey to every whim of the board or synagogue." (the job security issue).

The "job isn't doable;" or "I'd leave if I felt I wasn't making a difference" (the efficacy issue).

Several mentioned "burnout," "boredom," or an end to "personal growth."

A few talked about change in life, aging, and new family circumstances, most of which were connected with children.

Some spoke about the paucity of opportunities for change or advancement, that there are not enough top positions in Jewish education available.

A few spoke of financial pressures, and the need to start making more money.

(As an aside, when asked about friends who were thinking of leaving the field, respondents gave the same sorts of answers: "burn-out," no clear lines of advancement, money, autonomy.)

If they would leave, they spoke of disparate destinations: Israel, the pulpit, business, and academia were among the most frequently mentioned alternatives. Business is more lucrative; academia offers an opportunity for intellectual growth.

On the other side of the coin, we asked what sorts of developments would make them more likely to stay. Again the answers were diverse, but they related to many of the issues raised earlier. That is, the replies spoke of the opportunity either to maximize rewards or to minimize frustrations. Consistent with their love of the "teaching moment," one respondents said she gets a "rush seeing success stories among the kids -- I'd want to leave, but I can't because of it."

Others said they would stay if they could:

-- obtain better job security;

-- earn a better salary;

-- have a year's sabbatical;

-- enjoy higher status;

-- have the sense the the Jewish community values Jewish education;

-- become a communal spokesperson for Jewish education;

-- periodically redefine the job or take on new challenges.

Interestingly, the respondents generally failed to address the two main complaints they had voiced earlier in the interviews: problematic relations with laity and the oppressive time demands. We can only speculate as to the reasons for the omission, but that speculation may be instructive. It is plausible that this question, asked late in the interview, evoked the pat answers that educators often give when asked about how to improve their jobs. Possibly, only when they have the opportunity for reflection and discussion (as occurred in the early parts of the interview), do educators address their more complicated and sensitive concerns. After all, complaints about relationships with lay leaders and managing one's time are delicate issues; insofar as the complaints can be attributed to inadequacies in oneself as a professional, admitting to such difficulties reflects poorly on the educators personally. Another reason respondents may have failed to mention these problems is that they yield to no simple, discrete solutions. Proposals for better job security, a year's sabbatical, higher status, or better salaries are rather straightforward and easier to quickly articulate.

As a last question in this line of inquiry, we asked how they think some educators stay in one position for many years. The responses fell into two categories. Some spoke of such people inventing new tasks and challenges (the personal growth issue again). In other words, some manage to retain the opportunity be creative and artistic, one of the four key rewards we noted earlier. Among youth directors, in particular, this stratagem was cited as especially crucial. One synagogue youth director supplements his job (and income) by rotating different "portfolios" every year or two, working with singles one year, or with young couples another.

Other informal educators -- camp directors and youth group directors -- said they derive enormous pleasure from writing, lecturing and informal consulting with other communal professionals. Such activities bestow a sense of professional worth and recognition which is generally otherwise lacking in their jobs.

Of course, some communities (such as Montreal, it seems) are characterized by stability in the Jewish population generally and among communal professionals as well. This circumstance means that keeping long-term educators fresh, creative, energetic, and inspired is an enduring challenge.

Other respondents spoke of colleagues who maintain lower educational expectations, or lower their earlier loftier standards, to avoid frustration and burnout.

Comment: The Ethics of the Fathers defines a rich man as someone who is happy with his lot. Clearly, one way to avoid disappointment and frustration is to adopt minimal educational goals.

Indeed, in the course of our research we heard several stories of principals who lasted for years in their jobs, apparently reasonably satisfied, who functioned more as competent administrators than as inspired educators. That is, they made sure that their schools were in good working order, so to speak, but they generally failed to project an educational vision or enact an educational agenda. (On the other hand, we do not wish to claim that all long-term incumbents in a single job are "burnt out" and waiting to collect their pensions.)

This circumstance leads to a few paradoxical situations from a policymaking perspective. One way to assure career longevity is to recruit professionally mediocre educators whose lack of vision insulates them from frustrations and disappointment. On the other hand, training programs which develop high goals and expectations without providing the tools to deal with the frustrating process of change can have adverse consequences. They may produce educators with a lofty vision, inescapably committed to far-reaching changes, but deeply frustrated by their inability to quickly bring about significant educational improvements.

Participants' Reactions to Some Solutions

In some of the groups, we asked the educators we interviewed to propose their own ideas to help recruit and retain senior Jewish educators, and then we asked them for reactions to some of our own ideas. We report the reactions below, without respect to priority.

One group talked about the need to re-educate board people to the role of principal as an educational leader, much as the rabbi is seen (sometimes) as a spiritual leader. These educators, ideally, would want to work with a community of leaders who are personally committed to their own Jewish education. Related to this sentiment, some spoke of the need for more Jewishly committed parents. Or, as one respondent laughingly put it, "Change the Jewish community."

Another proposed solution was, simply, "money." By "money," they meant not merely increased salaries for themselves, but, also even more often, more support for the system of Jewish education: Money for teachers' salaries, money for equipment, and money for programs. Referring to financial matters, one said "we feel constrained" by budgetary limitations; while, representative of a contrasting theme, another respondent claimed, "If I need money, I can find it." Clearly, the financial situation is a mixed picture.

Other items on their wish list included a plea for more good teachers. "Without good teachers, you're dead in the water," noted one supplementary school principal. In groups where the issue arose, most agreed that finding teachers was becoming increasingly difficult. They felt that fewer college students today were equipped to teach in the supplementary schools, and/or fewer needed the part-time work to supplement their income. Moreover, the increasing careerism of Jewish women meant that there are fewer intellectually qualified women seeking part-time work as supplementary

school teachers or looking to re-enter the labor force as full-time teachers after the demands of motherhood recede.

A few respondents also spoke of the need to have more time to read and study, be it during the school year or in concentrated periods such as on a sabbatical.

One group, reflecting a theme noted repeatedly in this study, recommended the creation of new administrative positions in Jewish schools to ease the administrative burdens on the principal. They also thought it worthwhile to create a new tier of middle management positions subordinate to the principal.

We asked for their reactions to a built-in sabbatical, perhaps devoted to improving Judaic, pedagogic or administrative and management skills. Most were enthusiastic about the idea, but felt their boards "would never go for it." A few said they would use a sabbatical to get away from Jewish education, to, in a sense re-charge their batteries with a total escape from their profession.

Reactions were mixed to the idea of a two-week in-service training program in Israel or elsewhere. Some were open to the idea; others would resent any professional intrusion into their sorely needed vacation time.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

We separate this summary of findings from the summary of policy recommendations which follows.

Put most concisely, here are the main points derived from the focus groups:

1. Most non-Orthodox senior Jewish educators reached their positions "by accident" rather than through a long period of training and advancement.

2. Most started in the field as part-time, supplementary school teachers or youth workers.

3. Most had strong Jewish upbringings (e.g., as Orthodox Jews, Israelis, or Jewishly strong non-Orthodox homes) punctuated by an intensive experience of one sort or another, particularly youth groups, Jewish educational camps, or a trip to Israel.

4. Many reported the influence of mentors who inspired them to deepen their Jewish commitment, work as educators, enter the field of Jewish education, or develop professionally in the field.

5. They conceptually divided the component skills of their jobs into three areas: Judaica, education skills, administration and management skills.

6. Except for the rabbis, many felt they had significant gaps in their Judaic knowledge and skills. But beyond the intellectual sphere and academic preparation, many felt that a strong Jewish upbringing was essential for senior Jewish educators.

7. Many had taken courses as educators but, with notable exceptions, found them not particularly helpful in their work. At the same time, they regretted the lack of educational professionalism among their colleagues and superordinates (rabbis, boards) who lacked any formal training in education. Rather than education courses, respondents viewed on-the-job experience as having considerable value.

8. Under the rubric of administrative and management skills, the respondents reported several significant gaps in their training, among them dealing with board and communal politics, budgeting, fundraising, and personnel management. They thought that training for this area could be provided by: case studies in education courses, internships with experienced senior educators, and volunteer work in Jewish communal governance.

9. The major felt rewards of working as a senior Jewish educator could be grouped into four categories: watching students learn; having opportunities for creativity; contributing to Jewish continuity; and making an impact.

10. Their complaints were numerous and diverse.

The most severe and widespread complaints were about:

a. Relations with lay boards whom, they claimed, failed to adequately respect the professionalism of the field or the educator (fewer Orthodox educators reported this sort of difficulty).

b. The excessive time demands, particularly among principals; in particular, the harried and hectic pace of decision-making, the need to react to demands and the inability to engage in longer-term planning and execution of policy.

Other complaints, less widespread and less keenly felt, were about:

c. The excessive administrative responsibilities, many of which demanded skills few educators were trained for and many of which were petty and time-consuming.

d. Overly intrusive parents (in the day schools); and uninvolved parents (in the supplementary schools).

e. Lack of professional prestige, particularly among youth group directors, but also among some supplementary school principals who feel they occupy the bottom rung of the synagogue prestige hierarchy.

f. Inadequate financial compensation as well as pensions and retirement plans.

g. Budgetary limitations for teachers' salaries, equipment, and programs, reflecting inadequate community support for quality Jewish education.

h. Difficulty in finding and keeping qualified teachers.

i. Absence of the trappings of a profession: clear standards for training and credentials, a career ladder, collegiality and opportunities to advance beyond the principal level.

j. Job insecurity.

k. Congregational rabbis who supervise supplementary school principals and some youth group directors, but who lack educational training.

11. Most respondents were ambivalent about whether they would recommend a career in Jewish education to their own children or other young people.

12. Many, if not most, failed to express an unambiguous intention to remain in the field of Jewish education five years hence.

13. Many were unclear about their job destinations in five years; those who might leave the field and could speculate reported: the pulpit; Israel; Jewish communal service; and business.

14. Respondents were enthusiastic about the possibility of a sabbatical. They also reacted very positively to the idea of the field developing new positions as administrative assistants, vice principals, middle managers.

SUMMARY OF POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We emphasize that these implications and recommendations should be seen as tentative for several reasons. We have not conducted a comprehensive policy analysis; rather we have interviewed extensively only one constituency relevant to the formulation of policy. Thus, the findings of this report need to be integrated with other investigations to arrive at a more trustworthy basis upon which to proceed.

The most salient and significant implications to emerge from this study are as follows:

1. Recruitment efforts ought to target those who are or have been involved in intensive Jewish programs: youth groups, Jewish camps, Israel trips, day schools, and Hillel Foundations. Such efforts should be undertaken during the undergraduate years when many are making their career decisions.

2. The large number of senior educators who were once pulpit rabbis, afternoon school teachers, and public school teachers suggests that these populations may continue to serve as a pool for Jewish educational leadership. If so, then systematic recruiting of and training programs for these groups may be productive. (This study could not address the utility of recruiting among population segments which have not provided large numbers of senior educators. These first two recommendations, therefore, ought not be seen as exhausting new, unconventional reservoirs of talent.)

3. A systematic program of internships or apprenticeships in senior Jewish education may have immediate and significant impact on the number of qualified senior personnel and the status of the profession. Younger educators would receive individualized training from veteran educators and would benefit from actual experience in the field. Not only would such a program bring more qualified candidates into the field; it also would serve as a powerful morale-booster for the senior educators who would serve as mentors and supervisors. (Note: We regard this recommendation as the most urgent and productive policy suggestion to emerge from our research.)

4. Senior educators and lay leaders need instruction in how better to relate to one another.

5. Schools (particularly day schools) need to explore alternative administrative structures so as to allow principals to concentrate more on education, and to reduce their excessive time demands.

6. Increasing status and financial compensation of senior Jewish educators may help retain as well as recruit a number of people to the field. These problems are particularly acute among youth directors and small school principals.

7. Sabbaticals would constitute a major incentive for many senior educators. There was some interest expressed in summertime in-service courses of short duration.

8. The feelings of job insecurity by principals need to be addressed.

9. Principals in particular would react favorably to efforts to overcome their professional isolation.

10. The professionalism of senior Jewish educators and networking among them could be significantly enhanced through a program of consultative visits to one another's schools. Currently, only BJE and denominational movement consultants regularly visit several schools. Principals rarely have the opportunity to observe other schools in action or to serve as professional advisors to their colleagues in the field.

11. Federations and other community agencies ought to make special efforts to include and involve senior educators as board members and as honored guests at community functions; that is, to treat educators with the same respect accorded influential congregational rabbis.

12. Rabbinical schools ought to include some formal training in education in their curriculum both for the rabbis who eventually serve as educational directors and for the many more who supervise educators. In addition, in-service workshops for rabbis, or possibly rabbis and educators together, may be valuable.

Other suggestions can be drawn from the body of this report.. The ones listed above seemed to us to be among the most significant, most substantiated, and most urgent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

We have two reasons for presenting these recommendations. First, we honestly believe these research lines will benefit the formulation of policy. Second, by outlining where further research would be useful, if not necessary, we delineate the limits of this study.

1. This study only begins to comprehend the frustrations experienced by senior Jewish educators. Each of the major areas we have uncovered -- gaps in training, poor relations with lay boards, excessive time demands -- all require further exploration and development.

2. We need to examine how lay leaders contribute to the frustrations of school principals. In particular, we should begin by studying the attitudes and images of some lay leaders themselves. (One such focus group is already scheduled.)

3. The recent alumni of the graduate programs in Jewish education may well report different patterns of recruitment, training, professional rewards and frustrations. They ought to be examined closely for possible clues as to the value of the programs they attended. (One such focus group is already scheduled.)

4. We need to explore the feasibility of recruiting senior educators from the conventional populations as well as from some unconventional sources such as: elite university students, public school teachers and administrators, and those contemplating mid-life career changes.

5. We need to explore ways to improve the recruitment patterns of the several graduate programs in Jewish education.

6. We need studies to develop and evaluate individualized programs to train Jewish educators, such as the internship model discussed in this report.

7. As a general principle, innovations undertaken as a result of this report ought to be subjected to systematic and critical evaluation.

APPENDICES

Biographical Sketches of Moderators

ELAINE SHIZGAL COHEN is a lecturer in Jewish Education in the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University and Acting Director of the Jewish Teacher Training Program there. She is completing a Doctorate in Education in Counseling Psychology at Rutgers University.

STEVEN M. COHEN is Professor of Sociology at Queens College, CUNY. His recent books include American Modernity and Jewish Identity (1983), Perspectives in Jewish Population Research (co-edited, 1984), The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality (co-edited, 1986), and American Assimilation or Jewish Revival? (forthcoming, early 1988). He is also the author of several studies of American Jewish political and social attitudes for the American Jewish Committee. He has been a Visiting Professor at Brandeis University, and The Hebrew University, and, in 1987, was the Blaustein Professor of Judaic Studies at Yale University.

GAIL DORPH is the Director of the Master of Arts in Education Program, the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. She is also a curriculum writer and teacher educator for the Melton Research Center, the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is also a doctoral candidate at JTS.

ELLIN HEILMAN is working as a psychologist with special education pre-schoolers. She has taught in public schools, Jewish day schools and afternoon schools.

SAMUEL HEILMAN is Professor of Sociology, Queens College, CUNY, where he has also served as Chairman of Sociology and Director of the Jewish Studies Program. His books include Synagogue Life (1976), The People of the Book (1983), The Gate Behind the Wall (1984), and A Walker in Jerusalem (1986).

MOSHE SOKOLOW, a Jerusalem Fellow, is Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University. He is also consultant for curriculum and instruction for the Torah Education Department of the World Zionist Organization. He writes and lectures widely on Biblical scholarship and teaching Bible in Jewish day schools.

SUSAN WALL, a Jerusalem Fellow, is principal of Ezra Academy, the Solomon Schechter school in New Haven, Connecticut. Previously she served for several years as educational director of the Beth Hillel-Beth El religious school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is a doctoral candidate in education at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

INSTRUCTIONS TO MODERATORS

We may have asked you to organize groups along very specific lines (e.g., day school principals, BJE consultants, etc.). Others are conducting mixed groups which will allow you some flexibility in grouping participants. When thinking about how to divide your groups, think about which divisions will yield the most comfortable groups. There may be a particular network of friends whom you will want to interview together. You may want to divide people along lines of type of school (day versus all other), or religious denomination, or seniority, or formal/informal, or some other reasonable criterion. The point is to provide a setting for the most open conversation.

For each group, you want to invite enough people so as to assure an attendance of eight-to-ten. You ought to aim for ten or eleven confirmed participants as of two weeks prior to the session.

Be sure to do a round of phone calls one to two days prior to the session to remind everyone to come. If the group is definitely less than six people, reschedule. Also confirm your recorder.

Conduct the focus groups in a living room or in as informal setting as possible.

Have readily available some sort of modest refreshments (juice, coffee, soda, fruit, nasherai, etc.)

Bring extra cassettes in case of a technical difficulty, or you go over the time allotted.

Arrive at the interview site sufficiently ahead of time to greet any early-comers. Prepare and distribute name cards or stickers, as appropriate.

The purpose of a focus group is to have several people express their thinking on any one topic - allowing them to interact and play off of one another's answers. The moderator's role is to raise issues and to keep the discussion flowing. The group should be kept to the general topic, although allowing the group to respond to what others say is very important.

You will probably not finish all the questions in the discussion guide. (Do not cut off valuable discussion in order to do that.) However, you should try your best to do all those questions that have an asterisk next to them. Other questions should be introduced if there is time. (However, try to stay in order. If you are moving slowly, begin to skip those questions without the asterisk).

Role of the moderator: Your job is to facilitate rather than participate. As such, your own experiences should rarely be brought into play (and only in a planned way so as to clarify issues or introduce a new subject). Speak as little as possible - allow for

pregnant pauses if it's a hard question. Try to involve as many people as possible - without putting too much pressure on the participants. In a "Whip" question -- where everyone is asked for a quick off the top of the head answer -- you want to go around the group in order. You can give them the opportunity to pass if they prefer. With other questions if several have spoken , but not all, you might want to turn to the others and ask them if they would like to comment before you move on. (Some people are more hesitant, but will respond when directly addressed.)

LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE RESPONDENTS

Department of Sociology
Queens College, CUNY
Flushing, N.Y. 11367

May, 1987

Dear

We're writing you to ask for your participation in an international social scientific research and policy project on "Senior Personnel in Jewish Education."

As you may be well aware, there is a significant problem in recruiting well-trained personnel to fill such positions as principals, vice-principals, professors of Jewish education, BJE consultants, and the like. It seems that there are over 4,000 positions for senior Jewish educators worldwide, and only a few dozen people are enrolled in formal training programs in Jewish education; in addition, some unknown number of our very best, seasoned educators leave the field every year, often in the prime of their career.

It now appears that a coalition of significant policy makers in Jewish life has emerged to address the problem of recruiting, training, and retaining adequate numbers of senior Jewish educators to secure our collective Jewish future. The sponsors of this coalition include Israel's Ministry of Education, the Jewish Agency, and the World Zionist Organization. Its key personnel consist of a group of Jewish philanthropists worldwide led by Mort Mandel of Cleveland, as well as a small number of academic specialists in Jewish education including Prof. Seymour Fox of the Hebrew University. Thus, it now seems possible that, for the first time, significant policy changes for senior Jewish educators -- involving millions of dollars and, eventually, scores if not hundreds of Jewish educators -- may well be on the horizon.

This coalition of government officials, philanthropists, academics, and Jewish educators are prepared to consider a wide range of ideas and proposals. But as the first step in this policy formulation process, they want to hear from the senior Jewish educators themselves -- those who are in the field, those who have left the field, and those who may well consider entering the ranks of management-level Jewish educators. And that's why they have turned to us -- Steven M. Cohen (a sociology professor who specializes in the study of Jewish life) and Susan Wall (a Jerusalem Fellow who is a day school principal) -- to undertake an international research effort on senior Jewish educators.

To learn about the thoughts and feelings of past, current, and potential senior Jewish educators, we are conducting what are called "focus groups," where a small group of individuals discuss relevant

issues guided by a trained moderator. We're conducting a number of these groups in the United States, Canada, Latin America, France, and Israel. We've selected our panelists (you) to represent diversity along a number of lines: career stage, type of job, location of job, and Jewish denomination. That's why although we're interviewing about 200 educators around the world, every single panelist is critical to our study -- if it is to adequately represent educators like yourself, we're going to need to hear from you.

On the attached sheet we've provided the details of the session of the upcoming focus group in your area. You'll be meeting with a small, select group of professionals like yourself. In a few days either one of us or another member of the research team will call you to ask if you'll be attending. If you like, you may immediately call the moderator whose phone number appears on the attached sheet. (If you know that you definitely cannot attend the group, please call immediately so that we may ask someone to take you place in the focus group.) We do hope you'll be able to make the meeting.

If you would like to talk with us, please call us at our home (yes, we're married) at: 203-389-9475, collect. The best time is in the evening, Monday through Thursday.

We want to thank you in advance for participating in this important study. We think you'll enjoy this opportunity to discuss your thoughts with other Jewish educators, and we know it will make a significant contribution to the advancement of the profession.

Sincerely,

Steven M. Cohen
Professor of Sociology
Queens College, CUNY

Susan Wall
Principal
Ezra Academy, New Haven

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(For current Senior Jewish Educators)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome. My name is XXX and I [give occupation, job, location]. I'm the moderator for this group tonight. [Any other comments to warm the atmosphere.]

As you may know, the purpose of this research is twofold. First, we want to learn how to attract more high quality senior Jewish educators. Second, we also want to learn how to keep those who are now senior Jewish educators in the field.

Whatever will be discussed here will be kept confidential, unless you specifically request otherwise. We will record your comments, but please understand that no one will be cited by name in the comprehensive report which will be read by the major policy makers who have commissioned this study. I ask that in your responses, you try to be as honest and forthright as possible -- candidly addressing any concerns you might have.

[Have people introduce themselves briefly]

[Note on format: Starred questions are essential; unstarred questions are desirable but not essential; those marked OPTIONAL have the lowest priority and you should ask them if you feel you have time and, based upon the answers you have heard, they will provide useful information. Indented questions -- labeled PROBE: -- are to be asked only if they have not been otherwise answered by the preceding questions.]

DISCUSSION

*I'd like to begin by asking you to think back and tell us what first got you into the field of Jewish education. Why did you choose this field?

*Was there any particular person or mentor who was crucial to your becoming a Jewish educator, or to your early development in the field?

[REMINDER: PROBE questions are to be asked only if not answered already.]

PROBE: What other fields had you considered, other than Jewish education?

*Now I would like you to comment a little bit on your formal training for your current job. In what ways was it useful, in what ways were there serious gaps in your preparation for the position you now hold.

Now let's move from the past to the present.

*The next question is called a "Whip" question. We're going to have a few more this evening. For whip questions, I'm going to go around the room quickly and I want everyone to give a brief, succinct answer; but if you feel strongly you would like to pass, please do so. First, I'd like to know, what is the one thing you like most about your job?

*Now, answering the same way, I'd like each of you to tell me the one thing you dislike most about your job.

*[MODERATOR: Now initiate a short discussion. Ask participants to comment on others' likes and dislikes, as well as expanding on their own likes and dislikes, rewards and frustrations.]

*PROBE: Do you feel adequately compensated financially for the work that you do?

*PROBE: Do you feel you receive adequate recognition and status for the work that you do?

*PROBE: Do you feel you have reasonable working hours?

*PROBE: Do you feel your relations with the staff, parents, or children are especially frustrating or rewarding?

OPTIONAL PROBE: Do you feel you have enough time to think about Jewish educational issues?

OPTIONAL PROBE: Do you feel you have enough contact with supportive colleagues with whom you can brainstorm and share ideas?

Why do you think some people do in fact become senior Jewish educators? What attracts them to the field?

*If a Jewishly committed and talented young person were to come to you and ask for your advice about entering the field of management-level Jewish education, what would you tell him or her?

Why do you think more such people don't enter the field?

Now let's take a look at the future.

*If you were to leave your job, why would you leave? [IF ANY POTENTIAL LEAVERS]: What would it take to get you to stay?

*If you were to leave your job, what would you do next? Would you stay in the field of Jewish education or would you leave the field entirely? And whether you stay in the field or leave entirely what kind of work do you think you would do?

OPTIONAL: There are many types of senior positions in Jewish education. Aside from principal or vice-principal of a school, these include BJE directors and consultants, camp directors, regional or national youth movement directors, and others. Of those which are different from the type of job you now have, in which could you see yourself one day? Why?

*Are any of your friends in the field in similar positions thinking about leaving their jobs? Are they thinking about leaving Jewish education? (IF YES): What are the most important reasons these people have for leaving their jobs or leaving the field?

OPTIONAL: Some people seem to be able to stay in one position for many, many years, perhaps even a lifetime. How do they do it? Do you feel you could do that? Under what circumstances?

*What single change do you think is most important to get more high quality people to become senior Jewish educators?

*What single change in the field of Jewish education do you think is most important to get more senior educators to stay in the profession?

OPTIONAL: I'm going to mention a number of ideas which might make some of you feel better about staying with your job for an extended period. If you have any strong reactions either way about each of these, please let me know: [MODERATOR: Participants may want more specifics. Say these are only very initial ideas; we're just interested in their basic reactions.]

--The first idea is a built-in sabbatical every seven years in which you would be paid to study with a group of educators, either here or in Israel.

--What about an annual 2-week program either during the school year or the summers for study and sharing with colleagues?

--What about having a confidential advisor, a senior person in the field who is working with a dozen or so senior educators on their problems and ideas?

--What about hiring an assistant who would take over some of your functions? [FOLLLOW-UP]: Do you think you could easily find such a person?

--Would more salary, better benefits, or an enhanced retirement plan lead you to consider more seriously staying in your job?

--How about more money to spend on ideas for re-designing your school or agency?

--And last, what about a restructuring of your job? (Any specific ideas?)