

individualism and personal autonomy have affected even traditional households and families.

A number of social and demographic trends serve to undermine the informal intergenerational transmission of Jewish culture which operated in the past. The increasing geographical dispersal of the population, combined with changes in the household composition and the makeup of families, all tend to undermine the dense network of familial, neighborhood, and ethnic ties which strengthened group cohesion. Today, formal communal institutions have to fill the gap left by the *zaydes*, aunties, Jewish neighbors, and Jewish storekeepers, who no longer live in daily contact with most of the younger generation of American Jews. Moreover, formal institutions not only have to replace these sources of Jewish cultural information, but they also have to offset the influences of gentile friends, neighbors, and grandparents who are part of the lives of many younger Jews. This is in addition to the negative forces, from a traditional Jewish perspective, associated with a seductive consumer culture and the homogenizing forces of the media.

There is also the question of when the inclusion of the peripheral Jewish or gentile population makes sense. It would be inaccurate and unhelpful to exclude gentiles from analyzing household composition, since it would exaggerate the number of one-parent families. The same logic applies to economic and occupational data. Gentile sources of household income cannot be excluded without making the data meaningless. Other cases involve close judgment calls as to the relevance or the inclusion or exclusion of certain sections of the total population. An assessment of what constitutes the "population at risk" may well involve ideological assumptions, but that is inevitable.

The NJPS data reflect what and where the *Yiddisher massn* are today in America. It is only if we recognize and accept them for what they are and "where they are at" that we will be able to begin to move them in the direction we want.

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Measuring the Quality of American Jewish Life

Calvin Goldscheider

A series of community studies over the last decade, culminating in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, has produced an enormously rich body of evidence on the Jewishness of American Jews, their religious and communal activities, ritual observances, and the content of their Jewish identities, including: Jewish education and organizational affiliations, attendance of religious services, support for Jewish charities, and identification with the state of Israel. As a result, we now know more about the behavior, attitudes, identity, and values of contemporary American Jews than Jews anywhere, ever before in history.

Nevertheless, there is a feeling that something is missing: aspects of Jewishness or Judaism do not seem to be fully captured by our surveys; and the data available fail to reveal important, perhaps critical, dimensions of the Jewishness of American Jews.¹ Many Jewish leaders—including rabbis, Jewish professionals, as well as lay persons, and some social scientists—often deny that the quality of Jewish life can be measured with data obtained from surveys. They argue that Jewish quality involves primarily the personal, idiosyncratic, inner dimensions of Judaism and Jewish expressions, the Jewish "soul" or Jewish "heart." These "inner" aspects are elusive and are poorly revealed in the statistical data that we employ. They are joined by policy persons who have had difficulty using data from survey research as a basis for planning, and have not been able to connect the data from surveys to the decisions that need to be made for enhancing the quality of Jewish life.

Indeed, the policy implications of our research findings are often unclear, in large part because we have not identified what determines Jewish quality in the American Jewish community. I will argue that the sources of these determinants have been examined at the individual level, while

policy is designed to shape Jewish quality by focusing on building and strengthening institutions such as schools, families, Jewish community centers, synagogues, Jewish homes for the aged, etc. Until we examine the linkages of these community and institutional contexts to the quality of Jewish life, our understanding of continuities and changes in the American Jewish community will be limited and our policy and planning will not be effective.

I start from a different set of premises about the nature of Jewish quality, its measurement, and analysis. My position is that the patterns of Jewishness that are real are measurable. While we have collected extensive data on the quality of Jewish life, we need to focus on the institutional and communal contexts that shape variation and change. As we reconceptualize the determinants of Jewish quality, we shall need to connect institutional and survey data, and identify new types of data to be collected to fully capture the community contexts that determine individual expressions of Jewishness.

Since our interpretation of every sociological aspect of the Jewish community reflects our assessment of Jewish quality, we need to specify explicitly what it means. The value of examining the demographic structure, stratification, and family patterns of Jewish communities is that we can then link them empirically to the quality and continuity of the Jewish community. We therefore measure quality in order to assess the meanings of Jewishness and Judaism in America, as well as to interpret the impact of the demography and the resources available within the community on American Jewry. So the first, and the most critical, task in the analysis and interpretation of the rich data collected in the 1990 NJPS, and in parallel community studies carried out in the last decade or so, is to face more directly the issue of the quality of American Jewish life. This paper focuses on one central theoretical and methodological issue: How can we use national and community surveys to advance our understanding of the quality of American Jewish life?

One response to the limitations and frustrations of using surveys to clarify the quality of life of American Jews, and the difficulties of studying the deeper meanings of the Jewishness and Judaism of American Jews, has been to add more detailed questions about religious practices to our surveys. Thus, for example, in addition to obtaining information on the standard dimensions of Kashrut and synagogue attendance, we have added new questions to the 1990 NJPS on fasting on Ta'anit Esther, celebrating Purim carnivals, and Yom Ha'azmaut (although it is not clear why these were chosen, and not questions on fasting on Tisha B'Av or on the use of Mikvah or Sha'atnez). There has also been an attempt in some surveys to move beyond questions about religious ritual to include questions on belief

in God, revelation at Sinai, feelings about the Bible and the importance of the Torah. These questions have some inherent value in describing the beliefs and religious identities of a select number of American Jews. However, few would argue that they have the potential to add much to our understanding of issues concerning the quality of American Jewish life. Indeed, the skeptics say that you cannot capture beliefs about God in a telephone interview or about Judaism by asking more questions in a survey. So adding in-depth questions in surveys may not be the most helpful solution to the difficulty of obtaining an accurate assessment of quality.

Another response to the dilemma of gaining insight into the quality of Jewish life has been to challenge the survey method of obtaining information. The argument is that since surveys cannot capture the depth associated with the quality of Judaism and the details of Jewishness and Jewish identity, we need alternative methods that probe the deeper meanings of Jewish quality. If one cannot capture God in a community study or a national survey, then perhaps God can be found in a "focus" group with Jewish elites, selected Federation executives, or rabbis; perhaps, the argument goes, we should do anthropological research as a basis for an analysis of Judaism and Jewishness in America.²

There are clearly elements of Jewish life that community and national surveys cannot capture, and alternative methods are useful in adding new insights into the analysis of American Jewish life. However, small, intensive focus groups are hardly representative of the broader American Jewish community, even if they are insightful and thought-provoking; detailed multi-hour interviews with several dozen respondents are not likely to represent anyone but the interviewees. The value of the focus group is to clarify concepts so that they can be included in representative surveys. Small, local, qualitative studies complement the larger national survey but can never be adequate by themselves. These methodological strategies must be linked systematically with representative surveys to portray a more complex and integrated picture. Otherwise, we end up with more questions on our surveys, more focus groups, and more data, yet we seem to know less. As we begin to analyze the results of the latest survey of Jewish life, the most extensive, carefully designed, national survey on Jews ever conducted in the United States, my initial question returns: How do we capture and measure the quality of American Jewish life—of Judaism and Jewishness—toward the end of the twentieth century, and can we do so by using these survey data?

To begin to address this issue, we start by specifying a theory of Jewish life in America that will tell us whether we need new questions for surveys and new methods of data collection, or whether existing surveys can serve as a basis for useful understanding of Jewish quality. In particular, I shall

stress the value of integrating community level factors within our conception of the determinants of Judaism and Jewishness. Community is the context that shapes the personal expressions of Jewish quality: The ideas of Judaism and the content of Jewishness cannot be evaluated without attention to the contexts within which they occur.

I think that we currently have an enormous wealth of information, not everything we want but enough to keep researchers busy until new, perhaps unforeseen changes in community life require another survey. We have asked most of the questions that really matter for indicating the quality of Jewish life among individuals; we need to analyze what we have collected and supplement the survey data directly and systematically in order to understand new features of American Jewish life. These will facilitate the development of policies that could enhance the quality of Jewishness and Judaism. As we begin to analyze the rich lode of recently available data, we must plan to supplement it even before we have digested the results. New data collection efforts, along with coordination among a variety of data sets available, need to begin, in order to avoid missing another critical window of opportunity. The value of the 1990 NJPS, both for evaluating the quality of American Jewish life and for designing policies to enhance and deepen that quality, needs to be spelled out clearly, so that we can know what to expect from the data for analyses and interpretations and creative policy applications.

Our understanding of the American Jewish community and our policies to enhance the quality of Jewish life have often been trivial because our conceptions of Jewishness and Judaism have been limited to a focus on individuals. Moreover, we have failed to fully and systematically analyze the extensive data that we collect and have therefore failed to translate the cultural, social, historical, and social meanings of Jewishness and Judaism into goals that are the targets of policies. The lack of translation of conceptions about Jewish life, particularly its communal and institutional dimensions, into analysis has led to ad hoc policies, some of which are insightful and may work. However, they are almost never based on the data we collect. We have become better at suggesting policies than implementing them and better at implementing policies than at evaluating their long-term effects on the quality of American Jewish life.

Nothing is more practical than good theory. Jewish communal policies, whether national or local, have rarely been derived from surveys. There are good reasons why we hardly ever use survey data for policy formulation. First, policies and their implicit ideologies often tell us what to ask, so survey data too often reinforce our policy preconceptions. Second, policies are hardly ever informed by evidence but are largely shaped by politics at the institutional level. Third, survey data are rarely analyzed in any

depth. Almost always the data have been described too superficially and incompletely to be the basis of policy analysis and planning. So we are either constrained by prior conceptions and theories, or we have not exploited the data we have collected at great expense.

Judaism and Jewishness: Re-conceptualization and Measurement

Let us consider briefly the dominant themes that have informed the analysis of data on the quality of American Jewish life by considering the focus of some research on Jewish identity. The social psychological approach emphasizes Jewish identity in terms of individual attitudes and beliefs as measures of Jewish quality. It is inadequate until it places the individual within a community context. In large part, the social psychological approach simply uses Jewish identity as a substitute concept, another indicator of the Jewish quality issue, and hence only restates the issue at the individual level. In my view, the Jewish "identity" of individuals emerges from context, from social structures of the community. Therefore we must examine Jewish identity within those contexts directly. Most importantly, Jewish identity focuses on the individual level and relates to the personal internalization of Jewish values and norms. Since Jewishness and Judaism are only partially individual-oriented, a focus primarily on Jewish identity will miss critical dimensions of the quality issue. Issues of contexts and community networks become the basis of continuity, not an individual identity abstracted from context.

Some have argued that cultural or religious ideological factors have been critical in the maintenance of Jews over the centuries. Among these cultural factors, religion, i.e., Judaism, has been, and must continue to be, the basis of American Jewishness. As a result, our surveys have attempted to measure aspects of the "religion" and religiosity of American Jews. Others have argued that social interaction and community cohesiveness are the basis for the continuity in the Jewish community, in contemporary America as in the past. The emerging social and cultural networks have great potential for communal developments and for the redefinition of Jewish culture and politics in a secular society. We need to merge these two arguments, not treat them as alternatives. Our re-conceptualization of Jewish quality involves the linkage between the cultural content of Jewishness and the contexts within which they occur, connecting the multiple ways that Jewish quality is expressed within the structures, institutions,

and communal networks that reinforce Jewishness over time from generation to generation.

To label the focus on Jewish culture or structure as reflecting the views of optimists and pessimists, or to group one as emphasizing "content" versus "form", is to seriously misstate the arguments and to personalize and trivialize fundamental theoretical differences about the nature of Jewish quality. At issue, I think, are different conceptions of people and society and thus of Jewishness in American society. It is these conceptions that need to be integrated, so that culture and attitude, religion and identity are linked to structure and context, community and networks.

The American Jewish community is strong in some ways (e.g., institutionally and in terms of financial and human resources), and weak in other ways (e.g., regular ritual observances, synagogue attendance, and religious commitments). Israel and the Holocaust have become ideological substitutes for religious ritual, God, and Torah, for example. Commitment to the survival of the community, without a carefully articulated set of Jewish values specifying the content of that survival, has become a higher priority goal than personal piety and textual expertise. Instead of asking what is the content of the American Jewish community today, the questions should be: What are the variety of contexts that shape the range of Jewish expressions? How do institutions and social-cultural networks enhance the quality of Jewish life? What has Jewishness been in its historical and cultural forms so that we can develop analytic models and therefore policies that are more appropriate for American Jewish life in the twenty-first century?

Two hundred years ago in parts of Eastern Europe almost no women attended synagogue services and perhaps, more surprisingly, many men did not attend either. All synagogues may have been filled. However, the proportion of men attending daily or even weekly services was constrained by the structure of residential dispersion in Europe and, thereby, by access to the synagogue. Many Jews lived in rural areas and towns where there were few synagogues and hardly enough men for a regular *minyan*. Attending services required access as well as desire—structure as well as values.

Not many people were educated Jewishly 200 years ago: there were few Jewish schools, no adequate Jewish curriculum, and the tutors-teachers were themselves poorly educated. If judged by partial and anecdotal evidence, these teachers were often more a discouragement to education than a stimulus to knowledge. Tutors were often hired by households more distant from the centers of Jewish life, but they were limited to the wealthy few.³ Most Jewish men and women in the beginning of the nineteenth century were illiterate in any language. So at least in terms of synagogue attendance and the depth of Jewish literacy and Jewish education, we have come a long way.

Correctly, one could be admonished for presenting such superficial historical comparisons: After all, synagogue attendance and formal Jewish education were constrained at that time by limited resources and by geographic distance, communication difficulties, and enforced Jewish segregation. Those are interesting arguments, since they highlight the centrality of institutions in the development of quality in Jewish life. Similar points—if not resources, then certainly geography and access—can be made about contemporary constraints in parts of the United States and in some metropolitan areas. Think about Los Angeles in the 1950's and early 1960's without the complex array of institutions and networks that characterized the long-settled areas of the Northeast and the impact that more recent institutional developments have had on the Jewishness of this community.

More importantly, synagogue attendance and formal Jewish education are not the major factors in understanding the Jewishness and Judaism of 200 years ago. Religious and social communal components of Jewishness were intertwined in the past and were an integral part of the everyday life of the pre-modern European Jew. That too is an interesting point, since the lesson of history lies not in trivial comparisons over time but rather in helping us raise the critical issue about the role of context in shaping the quality of Jewish life and hence in our ability to measure it adequately. We need to ask: What were the major features of Jewishness and Judaism in the recent past? The answer would rest with the totality of Jewish life, the associational ties and the family-economic networks, the constraints of community, and, therefore, the positive impact of segregation and distinctiveness, the communal and the social, the shared life-style and the values. In short, the total round of activity was intensely Jewish in the past, a pattern that is often used as the basis for examining the transformation that has characterized Jewish communal life for the last 200 years.⁴

The totality of Jewish life in the past was intensive and cohesive, reinforcing the values and shared experiences of individuals and resulting in the continuities over time and across generations. These are the distinctive features of world Jewry. In that historical context, the examination of synagogue attendance, formal Jewish education, and the depth of Jewish knowledge hardly reflect the fullness of this totality. So while religion and religious observances were characteristic of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe in the past, these cultural features were the outward symbols of a much deeper set of communal and family ties, of shared history and shared socio-cultural location within a Christian society. We should not confuse the outward symbols with the underlying depths of communal attachments. Poverty and anti-Semitism were additional forces that shaped Jewish life in the past but were not the basis of Jewish quality.

Are synagogue attendance and Jewish education the major features of Judaism that have emerged in the American context? The answer is no more and no less than they were valid indicators of the Judaism and Jewishness of 200 years ago. Then, in the past, the social class composition and the occupational and residential concentration of Jews, the institutions and cultural forms that reinforced a sense of distinctiveness were all critical in shaping the social world of the Jews. So it is in America today, even as the form and content have been transformed. What is critical in terms of continuity is context and community.

We can now raise our central question more precisely: How can we use national and local survey data on the Jewish population as a methodological instrument to capture this total round of Jewish communal and religious-cultural activities for American Jews in the contemporary context? How can we determine the extent to which our assessments of the Jewishness of American Jews inform us about the total round of activities that capture the quality of American Jewish life?

The NJPS Questionnaire as Test and Context

What are the forms of Jewishness and Judaism that emerge from the questionnaire of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey? How does the content of the questionnaire reflect the current conception of Judaism and Jewishness?⁵

Several interesting features of Judaism and Jewishness are implicitly assumed in the survey: Judged by the contents and formulation of the questions, one would assume that the Judaism to be learned about in the survey is a religion of individuals who self identify religiously in terms of denominations and membership. Questions of identification are of critical importance since there is intense interest in the relationship between current denominational identification and that of parents when the respondent was growing up. No other item of religion gets that much "personal" historical reconstruction.

The questions were addressed to one person in the household with less information collected on the Judaism and Jewishness of the other members of the household, and about other family members not living in the household.⁶ The key "religious" elements of this Judaism are: observing Kashrut (two questions—on purchasing Kosher meat and on separating meat and dairy dishes); synagogue attendance and membership, fasting on Yom Kippur and Ta'anit Esther, lighting candles Friday night, celebrating Hanukkah, Purim, and Yom Ha'azmaut, participating in a Seder, hav-

ing a Christmas tree, handling money on Shabbat, and having some feelings about the Bible-Torah (not how many hours one studied or studies Bible, or whether anything about Judaism is known). Questions on Jewish education are rather straightforward and deal with type and years. No attempt is made to address either the quality of instruction received, the amount learned, subjective evaluations of the experience, or the perceived impact on later education and knowledge.

Except for self identification, Judaism in the questionnaire is a household religion based on selected religious rituals that are presumed to be shared by all members of the unit; it is static over the life course, making the assumption that current behavior is indicative of the past and the future. Jewish institutions are important to the extent that people belong to them or participate in them. The presence or absence of institutions and organizations at early points in the life course, the location and access to these institutions currently, or previous associations with them are not relevant. Nor is it important to know whether these institutions are geographically near the family-household or their proximity at earlier stages of the life course. The basic assumption of this "questionnaire Judaism" is that a focus on Jews and their behavior and attitudes will reveal the basis of cohesion of the community. In addition, there is no need for a Jewish community to learn directly about its distinctiveness through specific comparisons with non-Jews.

The constraints of surveys conducted over the telephone are well known. In addition, the survey's budgeting constraints limited the number of questions included. Some issues were omitted not necessarily because they were unimportant but because there was no simple way or consensus on whether or how to ask them; some were asked for selected sub-populations only.

What we miss from the survey is some indication of the role of community and networks, the role of institutions at previous points in time, as we do not have information on the access that people have to these institutions at the present time. We accept the constraints of surveys that are focused on telephone interviews and require us to shape questions that are limited to one respondent for the household. Nevertheless, are we satisfied to read back into the results the contours of the Judaism that the methods we select impose on us? Instead of overemphasizing the limitations of the conception of the questionnaire about Judaism and Jewishness in America, and in lieu of rejecting the survey a priori, let me share some constructive thoughts about the data that were collected. More precisely, let me suggest how to build onto the survey information that will in part allow us to better capture what Judaism and Jewishness in America are about.

Orientations to Measuring and Understanding Jewish Quality

There are various points of orientation toward issues of Jewish quality that are derived deductively from the nature of Jewishness and Judaism, and not inductively from the survey.⁷ Six are listed as a point of departure, to examine their implications in the context of the ways in which the survey of the national Jewish population in 1990 can help us clarify issues related to the quality of Jewish life in America. The lack of attention to these parameters have made our past surveys less useful for policy formulation, and less convincing as a basis for analysis. Specifically, research should be oriented to community, generational continuity, longitudinal study, organizations and institutions, Jewish distinctiveness, and Jewish complexity.

Community

The first aspect of Judaism of critical importance is that it is a communal religion not solely focused on religious ritual. To investigate Judaism and the quality of Jewish life in its religio-cultural dimensions, we must deal directly with the community setting as well as the broader range of social, cultural, and institutional activities of Jews.

The most powerful source of Jewish continuity is, therefore, community, that is institutions and networks. The salience of cultural, religious, and ideological ideas in a social-communal vacuum is not what sustained Jews in the past. However powerful ideas and ideologies were, they always operated in a context. The content of Judaism and Jewishness for American Jews is a combination of religious and ethnic elements, together with important negative supports derived from the European Holocaust, perceptions of anti-Semitism, and Jewish distinctiveness in a Christian society. Whether the lack of a more traditional, well-articulated ideology precludes Jewish continuity needs to be the basis of our research, not asserted as a conclusion.

The importance of community to American Jewish continuity needs to be reflected directly in our measurement of Jewish quality. If community is important in a multi-dimensional way, then it follows that community is a variable that can be stronger and weaker, that changes over time, and varies among different subgroups and in different places. The greater the sources of commonality and interaction among Jews (i.e., networks and connections), the stronger the community. The more the bases of connections—whether they are family, work, social, neighborhood, religion, life-style, or education—the greater the likelihood of reinforcing the cultural, historical, and religious content of Jewish identity. Moreover, the

importance of institutions and networks needs to be studied directly, not simply asserted from our theories. Thus, we can examine the circumstances under which community networks reinforce the quality of Jewish life.

Translating the community level emphasis to the Jewish quality dimension means focusing our analysis on residential, social class, family, and household networks. It means that the measurements of Judaism and Jewishness have to focus on communal expressions and not only on "self" identification. These expressions are multi-layered, linking individuals to families, to neighborhoods, to communities, to national and international connections, both ethnic and religious.

The data from the NJPS is structured to allow some of this multi-layered analysis. These include the direct linkage between individuals within households (the employment patterns of co-residents, for example), the linkage between households in neighborhoods, and in communities; the linkage between local and regional data, and national patterns. An emphasis on networks emerges from an analysis of residential and occupational concentration rather than a focus solely on rates of occupational mobility and migration. The limited data of the NJPS on these residential and occupational patterns could be supplemented by local studies, where they are more detailed. This is particularly important since it is likely that these networks operate more at the local than national level. Suggested below are other ways in which the data can be further enhanced through supplementing it with additional network data at the local level. Policies are largely based on this kind of hierarchical and contextual analysis and that should be emphasized in research.

Generational Continuity

Judaism is dynamic in the generational sense—linking the current with the next as well as past generations. In studying the quality of Jewish life, therefore, the examination of the extent of generational continuity becomes critical.

Which aspects of the quality of Jewish life are transmitted generationally? Unfortunately there is little in the NJPS that can examine this at the family level. The relationship between the generations is critical, and unfortunately has been studied only indirectly at the aggregate level. A poor and indirect substitute is to examine age variation. A better strategy is to make systematic comparisons between NJPS 1990 and previous surveys and compare other data sources. We shall probably have to seek more local surveys to supplement the national data. The examination of this dimension should become the highest priority for both the analytic and policy phases.

It follows from the community and generational basis of Judaism that the examination of the quality of Jewish life cannot focus exclusively on Judaism as an individual-based religious system, even though it may have such elements. Community-level data are therefore our primary "independent" variable, those that shape and explain the variation in the measures of Jewish quality. To address the issue of quality, one must therefore link the community to the individual level.

The Importance of Longitudinal Studies

Judaism changes over the life cycle of persons and over the generations. It means different things to younger persons than to older persons; to the married with children than to singles; to those in and outside of families; to women than to men. Over time, communities and neighborhoods change as well. Some age and others are renewed; some grow, others decline in population. Variations in the quality of Jewish life occur in the contexts of these changing communities, their organizations and institutions, their demographic growth and distribution. Individuals, families, and communities are linked together to share different experiences, and thereby change over time.

Attitudes, practices, and beliefs vary over time, both because people at different life stages face different contexts and because times change. Unfortunately, the NJPS data do not provide satisfactory means to disentangle the cohort from the period effects. Changes need to be studied as they unfold. One cannot simply continue to take cross-sectional, static snapshots when examining a dynamic, moving picture. It is necessary to initiate a carefully designed and systematically monitored longitudinal study to probe changes over time for a cohort of young adults. Without longitudinal analysis, we cannot disentangle cause and effect; without knowing cause and effect, our policies and programs will be unable to specify whether they are addressing the problem or the symptom.

At a minimum it is necessary to examine how previous patterns affect later ones and how some environments improve while others detract from Jewish quality. Having never measured successes, the Jewish community does not know which policies work and which do not, and therefore, cannot choose the variety of models that will help shape future policies. (By success I mean, of course, in terms of improving the quality of Jewish life and not in terms of per capita giving to Jewish organizations.)

No subject demonstrates more clearly the need to use a longitudinal approach than intermarriage. We cannot infer either from the rates of intermarriage or from current cross-sectional patterns of identification what the patterns of identification among the partners, or among the chil-

dren, will be over time. No data set currently available has been designed to examine these processes as they unfold. Despite the continuing concerns expressed by organizations and researchers about the costs of intermarriage, we have not developed adequate national or local data sources to study these patterns. A clear understanding of the Jewish costs and benefits of intermarriage requires a longitudinal design. Unfortunately, the NJPS can clarify the intermarriage issue no better than other studies that are cross-sectional.

The influence of past on current patterns within a person's life course can be examined further by linking past synagogue attendance and subsequent religious and Jewish commitments; seeing how the exposure to Hillel institutions at the college level influences Jewish organizational commitments at a later point in life; and by asking similar questions about the longer term life course influence of visits to Israel, Jewish camps, and Jewish educational experiences. Our truncated, snapshot view of Jewish life has prevented us from considering the differing outcomes of Jewish educational experiences, which vary in terms of the number of years and type of school, for the quality of Jewish life in college, when persons marry and have children of their own.

Organization and Institutions

Judaism has important institutional and organizational components that include local, national, and international religious and communal organizations. These organizations promote social activities, focus on formal Jewish education, and have cultural and religiously oriented objectives.

This parameter of Jewish quality is often treated by viewing organizational and institutional components too narrowly and in individualistic forms. Data concerning the patterns of belonging and organizational leadership, the number of memberships and the extent of knowledge and awareness of these institutions, are collected and examined. However, we have not systematically linked the presence and type of these institutions, and their distribution, to the distribution of population. Consequently, we do not know how the presence of these institutions is connected, if at all, with the quality of Jewish life within their community. Does it matter whether there is a Jewish family service, a Jewish home for the aged, or a Jewish community center? Or if there are five or 25 synagogues? Does playing golf in a Jewish country club or swimming at a Jewish Community Center enhance the quality of Jewish life, intensify shared values and commitments, or increase the social, family, and economic networks that sustain the continuity of the Jewish community? Those questions are not trivial and can be studied by linking, longitudinally, organizational and

population based data at the level of community. They focus our attention on the impact of these institutions on the quality of Jewish life for the community as a whole and not only on the programs provided. We often know if people have heard about Jewish institutions and whether they use their services or expect to do so. Still, we have not studied their communal impact, and that is what policy experts need to learn. We should move away from the oversimplified "marketing" approach in the analysis of the importance of Jewish organizations and institutions.

The NJPS would be enhanced enormously if contextual information of this sort was attached to the study's parallel individual and household data. Such organizational data are readily available for most communities. We know how many Jewish institutions—including synagogues—there are and where they are located. These organizational locations can be linked to the zip code addresses at the household level. Together, these newly created data would be most powerful from both policy and analytic points of view; they would allow, for the first time, the systematic analysis of Jewish institutions within the community, their distribution, and their current impact.

The Distinctiveness of Judaism

Judaism means distinctiveness. While influenced by the religious forms of other churches, synagogue and church attendance are not simply interchangeable forms of attending religious services in different religious traditions. Judaism and the synagogue are related to each other in ways that are fundamentally different from the relationship between Christianity (Protestantism or Catholicism) and the church.

The distinctiveness of Jewish communities extends to almost every other facet of their social and institutional lives. Indeed, even as Jews and their communities have been thoroughly assimilated politically and economically as full participants in American society and are, perhaps, at the forefront of many aspects of American culture and society, they live in communities that are distinctive in almost every way—from their continuing voluntary residential and occupational concentration to their educational attainment, organizational and political activities, family patterns, and values. We need to examine this distinctiveness, in all of its forms even as it changes; it is a key component of Jewish continuity and community.

Only a systematic comparison of Jews and non-Jews will reveal the special distinctive qualities of the Jewish community in the broadest sense. While there were reasons behind the focus of the NJPS on an only Jewish sample, there were costs as well, both analytically and in terms of policy.

Many of the issues of Jewish distinctiveness, except at the most superficial level, cannot be satisfactorily addressed.⁸

By examining Jews only, we cannot know whether the patterns that we find are special and reinforce Jewishness, or are common among others who share some—but not all—features of the Jewish community. Our interpretations and policies on Jewish quality issues will also be limited, since it will remain unclear whether what we are observing reflects some aspects of Jewish distinctiveness, and hence some Jewish quality, or the quality that characterizes others in similar economic and social positions.

There are no easy ways around this limitation except through a concerted effort to make comparisons with other available information. The General Social Survey or the U.S. Censuses are of particular help since many of the items in the NJPS parallel data from these sources.

Complexities within a Pluralistic Society

One consequence of considering these aspects of the quality of Jewish life is that it requires a view of Judaism and a Jewishness that is complex, multi-dimensional, multi-layered, and changing. Lone indicators will not capture that complexity; simple descriptions should not be expected to adequately reflect the complexities and diversities within a pluralistic and heterogeneous society. If Judaism is complex, then our measurement and analysis of Judaism must be complex as well. Policies cannot be based on simple descriptions that are at best useful for public relations and politics.

An elementary and obvious point is that our analysis must be multivariate. That point is taken for granted by social scientists and researchers using empirical evidence. Most Jewish community surveys and their reports unfortunately limit analysis to simple distributions and bivariate cross-tabulations. We have hardly done the minimal in analyzing the data, and we certainly have failed to exploit the rich community data sets that we have collected.

At the very least we need to develop more complex models of Jewish life in order to analyze the complexities that characterize the community. For example, we have often found that recent migrants to communities have the weakest institutional links to their new communities. (We rarely ask them about links to the community of origin.) We need to examine whether these links vary by age and sex, length of stay, religious background, and education, in order to detail their community connections. In the past, we often carried out these variable analyses by addressing them in some simple statistically descriptive way. On the basis of these crude findings we often suggested policies of community outreach to newcomers.

More detailed and multivariate modelling might have shown that the low levels of community participation are short-term and may be more characteristic of men than women, so that "outreach" may not be necessary. We need to develop more inclusive models in order to examine the complexities of the quality of Jewish life in systematic ways.

What does this all add up to? We can obtain a clearer picture of the quality of Jewish life through surveys, but we shall have to work at it. It will not emerge "naturally" from the cross-sectional data we have collected. The data will not automatically provide the facts for planning. All data are political, as are data analysis and policy formulation. Nevertheless, the NJPS, along with survey data already collected at the local community level, set up a window of opportunity to begin to systematically examine the major issues involved. If we have not been successful in identifying the quality of Jewish life in America from our surveys in the past, it is a consequence of the limited analytic-theoretical questions that we have asked, not the survey method itself.

All of us, policymakers and researchers, scholars and laypersons, optimists and pessimists, need to address the complex issues concerning the quality of Jewish life. We will evaluate the policy implications of the 1990 NJPS by the extent to which issues of quality are clarified and examined. We can more successfully carry out that goal by linking local communities to the national patterns; by connecting Jewish communities to the non-Jewish context, which for many is their reference group. Current patterns need to be compared to the past; individuals need to be linked to households and neighborhoods; we need to invest in continuous monitoring through longitudinal data collection and to link institutions and their distributions to households and individuals. We need to analyze the data in ways that enable us to make policy judgments about the costs and benefits of diverse Jewish quality issues, and therefore allow us to take the first steps toward enhancing the quality of life of American Jews and their communities.

Community is a context that determines the quality of Jewish life. Policymakers have been justifiably confused by their inability to use data collected in the past as a result of the failure to study contexts systematically. Researchers must meet their policy goals by paying closer attention to theory and to the determinants of Jewish quality in analysis. Institutional and community data must be added to survey analysis so that policy makers can examine the ways institutions can generate a higher likelihood of Jewish continuity.

The research and policy challenges are great, the financial and human resources have already been committed, and the stakes are high for the future of the American Jewish community.

Notes

1. This feeling with regard to Jewish identity was expressed in several papers at a 1989 Wilstein conference. See Gordis, David and Yoav Ben-Horin (eds.) *Jewish Identity In America*, Los Angeles, Wilstein Institute, 1991.
2. Steven M. Cohen in particular has made this suggestion, even though he has, more than others, relied almost exclusively on survey and poll data for the analysis of Jewish issues. See Cohen in Gordis and Ben-Horin, op. cit.
3. See Goldscheider, Calvin and Alan Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984.
4. Ibid.
5. I think that the underlying conception was developed implicitly without much theoretical forethought, a comment and criticism that is not specific to the formulators of that questionnaire since I was involved in shaping its contents.
6. The major exceptions were questions about spouses and their Jewish parentage or conversion, and questions about the Jewish education of younger persons.
7. I do not want to define the theological or substantive content of American Judaism or American forms of Jewishness, in large part because there is little consensus on the content, i.e., the content is diverse and changes over time. There is little to gain from forcing a common agreement about content that would end up to be too abstract from the lives of most Jews and hence not measurable anyway. Here we specify primarily the parameters within which aspects of the quality of Jewish life should be analyzed. Some earlier attempts in other contexts to broadly consider the quality of American Judaism and Jewishness were made in Goldscheider and Zuckerman, 1984; and in C. Goldscheider and J. Neusner, "Introduction," *Social Foundations of Judaism*, 1990.
8. See the discussion by Calvin Goldscheider, "Including Non-Jews in Jewish Community Samples: Substantive and Methodological Issues" in Cohen, Steven, Jonathan Woocher and Bruce Phillips (eds.), *Perspectives in Jewish Population Research*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1984.