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TASK FORCE ON JEWISH EDUCATION AT BRANDEIS

DRAFT FINAL REPORT: SEPTEMBER 16, 1997



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Introduction

As the only non-sectarian Jewish-sponsored research university in North America, Brandeis has a great stake in the future of North American Jewry. The university, primarily through the Lown School of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, has been deeply involved in Judaic scholarship and service to the Jewish community in the nearly fifty years since its inception. Indeed, more Brandeis graduates pursue professional careers in the Jewish community than graduates of any other secular institution of higher learning in the country. Moreover, Brandeis is widely recognized for the strong commitment of its faculty to teaching and scholarship, the extraordinary number of faculty members who have national and international reputations, and the intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm of its students. This year Brandeis achieved new heights in a major study, *The Rise of American Research Universities*, published by The Johns Hopkins University Press. The study, one of the first to use empirical data adjusted for institutional size, focused on research achievements in the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities. Among the 11 rising research universities (defined as institutions not previously ranked in the three major studies of 1960-1982, but now among the top universities in the country), Brandeis was ranked number one. Equally remarkable, although barely fifty years old, Brandeis ranks ninth among *all* private research universities in the nation.

In the fall of 1995, Brandeis's president, Jehuda Reinharz, shared with the faculty his conviction that the university as a whole had the potential to play an even larger, more active role in the Jewish community, particularly in the field of Jewish education and in broad-based communal efforts to assure Jewish continuity. President Reinharz said that in order to increase its impact on the community, Brandeis needed a detailed plan that would match the university's assets with specific needs in the field of Jewish education and would also provide a strategic focus for the development of new resources. He announced that Brandeis had received a generous gift from the Mandel Associated Foundations of Cleveland to support the planning activities needed to develop such a plan. He also established a university-wide Task Force, under his direct chairmanship, to serve as the primary deliberative body of the planning process.

The Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis

In December 1995, President Reinharz convened the Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis and charged it with the mission of formulating a plan that *would increase significantly the university's impact on the field of Jewish education broadly conceived and strengthen the vitality of the North American Jewish community.*

The diverse 25-person Task Force was composed of faculty members from twelve departments and programs within the university, local Jewish educational leaders with a connection to Brandeis and two consultants from the Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education, Alan Hoffman and Barry Holtz. President Reinharz appointed Joseph Reimer and Susan Shevitz, two professors from the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, to serve as the body's co-directors. He also appointed a small steering committee, comprised of the co-directors, an assistant director, Susanne Shavelson, who has been the continuing education coordinator at the Hornstein Program, Marc Brettler, a professor

from the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Daniel Terris, the assistant provost for the Rabb School of Summer, Special and Continuing Studies.

The full Task Force met six times during the year-and-a-half-long planning period, which concluded in September, 1997. There were also numerous individual and group meetings with Task Force members, Jewish communal leaders, and experts in the field of Jewish education. In addition, there was an important consultation with a group of key lay advisors. The steering committee met frequently to gather information, synthesize ideas, and formulate many of the Task Force's key questions.

Important Steps in the Planning Process

In order to reach its objectives, the Task Force engaged in the following activities:

- identifying the key principles which characterize all of the university's activities, including those in the area of Jewish education;
- identifying new programmatic structures and an organizational framework;
- identifying the major resources which Brandeis could bring to this effort;
- identifying critical needs in the field of Jewish education in North America;
- suggesting likely matches between the needs of the field and existing and potential resources at Brandeis; and
- creating new initiatives that would increase significantly the university's impact on the field of Jewish education and strengthen the vitality of the North American Jewish community.

Brandeis's Principles and Parameters

One of the Task Force's earliest duties was to identify the key principles and parameters which characterize the university's current academic activities and would also inform any new endeavors created under its auspices. These characteristics are:

- a commitment to the highest level of research and scholarship;
- a commitment to religious and intellectual pluralism;
- a preference for interdisciplinary efforts that bring together experts from different departments and programs within the university; and
- a history of collaborative problem-solving through partnerships between Brandeis and local or nationally-based groups.

In its service to the Jewish community, Brandeis's signature principles are to serve as:

- a model community of diverse Jewish expressions; and
- a neutral meeting ground where Jews of all backgrounds can comfortably interact.

Identifying Two New Programmatic Structures

Early in its discussions the Task Force sought to identify programmatic structures and a new organizational framework that would facilitate the management and delivery of new initiatives in the field of Jewish education and draw upon Brandeis's manifold resources. Subsequently two new programmatic structures emerged:

A Major Deliberative Component

The Task Force explored the idea of a *deliberative component* that would bring together Judaic scholars, other academics, communal leaders and educational leaders in the Jewish community, all of whom ordinarily would not have the opportunity to learn from one another. They would gather to reflect over a sustained period of time on the largest issues facing the Jewish people today. This component would focus not on specific practice issues, but on fostering among its participants an extended exchange of ideas about education and the future of the Jewish community.

Program Areas

From the outset the Task Force saw the need for *action-oriented components that would respond directly to pressing needs in the field to transmit Jewish culture to Jewish children, youth, adults and families*. These components would consist of teams of faculty members and practitioners engaged in a coordinated set of activities, including action research, policy analysis, program development, training, education and the dissemination of information, aimed at specific areas in the field of Jewish education, such as educational leadership or youth and adolescence. Initially referred to as focus areas, these components would become known as *program areas* and embody the following characteristics:

- an incorporation of multidisciplinary approaches that foster collaboration between scholars and practitioners in the field;
- a recognition of the importance of research and evaluation;
- a commitment to developing and working with a cadre of capable lay leaders; and
- the inclusion of components that allow for the creation and testing of new ideas and models.

Creating a New Framework: A Center for Jewish Education At Brandeis

After the parameters of the two new programmatic structures were conceptualized, the Task Force came to believe that a new organizational framework was needed, one which could coordinate and integrate activities among the different parts of the university and between the university and the community.

Task force members decided that *a new center for Jewish education* would be the organizational structure with the best potential for realizing their objectives. This decision was based in part on the understanding that:

- 1) the extent of their envisioned collaborative, inter-disciplinary, research and community outreach activities was so great that no existing entity within the university could manage or house them, and
- 2) university-based centers tend to be relatively independent entrepreneurial entities which can quickly bring together faculty from different departments, programs and other universities to engage in action research, educational activities and community collaborations. Centers, when they are properly funded and sufficiently autonomous, are more flexible than the process-oriented, slower-moving universities that house them and are able to respond more quickly to the challenges and opportunities that arise beyond the academy.

The Task Force also determined that the new center will seek *to enhance the field of Jewish education through research, training, innovative program models and community partnerships so as to assure the vitality and continuity of the North American Jewish community*. National in scope, it will be a center where the highest level of work in the content areas of Jewish studies will be combined with the highest level of work in research on and dissemination of ideas on Jewish education, in concert with programs that will actively involve Brandeis in advancing the field.

The center's flexible structure will facilitate the development of a major deliberative component and different program areas while fostering an extremely wide range of activities — from the creation of new certificate programs to the hosting of visiting scholars, practitioners and fellows, from the sponsorship of publications with articles by academics and practitioners to the presentation of graduate and undergraduate fellowships and awards for professional excellence and contributions to the field. The center will also offer new professional development programs for Jewish educators in the field who seek additional skills and knowledge; seminars for lay leaders who seek a deeper understanding of the field and its many challenges; new consulting relationships with communities that seek to restructure their education programs; and new vehicles for communicating innovative ideas in education to Jewish educators and lay leaders.

Embodying all of Brandeis's key parameters, and increasing substantially the university's linkages with the community, it will be the most comprehensive and highly regarded university-based center for Jewish education in North America.

Brandeis's Major Resources For Jewish Education

While identifying the types of organizational and programmatic structures that would be needed, the Task Force also worked to delineate the university's major assets that could be drawn upon for its new endeavors. Not surprisingly, given its Jewish sponsorship and experience in high-level research and scholarship, Brandeis brings a rich and powerful array of resources to the Jewish educational needs of the North American Jewish community. These include:

- **Judaica** — With 18 faculty members teaching subjects ranging from the ancient Near East to contemporary Jewish life, the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis offers an unparalleled opportunity for Jewish educators to learn in greater depth about the Jewish past and present. Brandeis's many centers and institutes for the study of Jewish history and culture also provide rich resources for educators and communal leaders.
- **Hebrew** — The Hebrew Language Program at Brandeis offers a highly developed and widely recognized approach to teaching the Hebrew language in North America that has great relevance for the many Jewish schools and programs that are teaching Hebrew to their students.
- **Research and Scholarship** — Faculty members from across many departments and centers at Brandeis are engaged in high-quality research projects that bear directly on the field of Jewish education. Whether the research concerns the life of Abraham Joshua Heschel, the changing roles of women in religious life, or the evaluation of programs for adolescents, ongoing research at Brandeis can be harnessed as a source of illumination and guidance for Jewish educators and communal leaders.
- **Communal Service** — The Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service offers Jewish educators an integrated approach to using education as a tool for community-building. To date 450 students have graduated from the program. The seven Hornstein faculty members offer expertise in many of the key aspects of professional training that are needed to develop further the field of Jewish education.
- **A Pluralistic Jewish Atmosphere** — The university offers a supportive, pluralistic Jewish environment which attracts a diverse group of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are highly committed Jews. Furthermore, this atmosphere encourages Jewish faculty from many disciplines and departments to pursue their own Jewish interests and commitments. Thus, there is a large pool of scholars from a wide variety of fields with existing personal links to the Jewish community who would welcome opportunities for new or greater professional involvement under the university's auspices.

Equally important, as a Jewish-sponsored university devoted to religious pluralism, Brandeis can bring together students, scholars and practitioners from different Jewish backgrounds and sponsoring institutions to engage in the kind of free inquiry, learning and expression that are essential for the health and survival of the Jewish community.

- **Brandeis's Student Body** — Brandeis students constitute an important potential pool of pre-service trainees and future professional educators which the community so desperately needs. More Brandeis graduates pursue careers in the rabbinate and other areas of Jewish communal service than graduates of any other institution of higher education except Yeshiva University.
- **Outstanding Leadership** — Brandeis is fortunate to have the outstanding leadership of its president, Jehuda Reinharz, a noted scholar in the field of modern Jewish history, who is known for his long-standing commitment to Jewish education and to the Jewish people. Under his stewardship, leaders of the Jewish world have turned to Brandeis to assume a primary role in ensuring the survival and vitality of the North American Jewish community. Brandeis is also very fortunate to have on its faculty many individuals who have served in leadership capacities within the Jewish community and who are consulted on a wide number of issues facing the contemporary world.
- **Local Communal Resources** — The greater Boston area is exceptionally rich in Jewish educational leadership and in innovative educational and communal programming. Brandeis faculty members who have a successful history of collaboration with the local Jewish community are uniquely positioned to draw upon the area's outstanding array of communal resources.

Critical Needs in the Field of Jewish Education

After defining Brandeis's major resources, the Task Force initiated a needs assessment of the field of Jewish education by reviewing *A Time to Act*, a report issued in 1990 by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America. In this report, the Commission focused on three primary areas of unmet need: 1) building the profession of Jewish education; 2) mobilizing community support; and 3) developing a major research capability.

Clearly there have been some welcome developments in the field of Jewish education in the past seven years. Nonetheless, the needs of the field remain vast. Chief among them are the following:

- **Increased opportunities for involvement** — Jewish education has relied too heavily on its elementary day and supplementary schools to serve as the primary point of engagement for most Jewish children and their families. The field needs many more points of entry, offering ways to enter and re-enter the realm of Jewish learning throughout the life cycle. Effectively extending Jewish education to youth and adolescents is a particularly difficult challenge for a community struggling with Jewish continuity.
- **Better-prepared professional educators** — The challenge of presenting Judaism convincingly cannot be met until the Jewish community has many more highly qualified professional educators who can work in a variety of settings. They must be well informed from a Jewish perspective and trained in educational methods that are effective with children and adults in today's rapidly-changing environment.

- **Better-prepared educational leadership** — Our educational institutions need effective leadership to guide them in the contemporary world. The community needs new ways of recruiting and training professional *and* lay leaders who can work together to create institutions that can have maximum impact on the field.
- **Increased opportunities for high-level reflection and deliberation** — Practitioners as well as scholars need opportunities to reflect on important ideas facing the Jewish community that are not tied directly to practice issues and day-to-day demands. We must find new, mutually beneficial ways to bring the academy and community together to extend and enrich the dialogue on the future of North American Jewry.

Matching Brandeis's Resources with Needs in the Field

Designing A Deliberative Component

Subsequent discussions and research confirmed that Brandeis's new center would be ideally suited to create and sponsor a major deliberative component to cut across organizational, denominational, and professional lines and engage scholars and practitioners from different disciplines and professions in extended dialogues about the most critical issues bearing on the vitality of North American Jewry. Ultimately this component would be called the *Colloquium for Education and the Jewish Future*.

The Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future

The Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future has been designed to address the need for a high-level deliberative venue in the field of Jewish education. It will be an ongoing feature of the center for Jewish education at Brandeis. With the long-term goal of changing the way the relationship between Jewish education and society is understood, it will provide the context for deliberation about the largest ideas and forces facing the Jewish people which affect how Jewish identity and identification are construed and transmitted.

Each colloquium theme will relate to a core issue of a current program area. For example, the theme *Jewish Identity In a Changing World* would be central to a program area on Youth and Adolescence. A potential deliberation under this theme is "multiple identities," an exploration of the ways in which American Jewish identity is shaped by an abundance of factors. This theme would engage scholars from a variety of fields with teachers and youth educators to, for example, explore the complex identities of children who see themselves as primarily Jewish, children of intermarried parents who see themselves as half Jewish and half Christian, and children for whom Jewish identity is relatively unimportant. Educators are often uncertain about how to discuss identity issues with these differing groups. A deliberation of this nature can provide many opportunities for practitioners and scholars to explore how these issues have played out in Jewish literature, film, history, art and other areas of the humanities; examine literary and social theories centering on identity issues; investigate empirical social science research on youth, identity and other relevant issues; and develop new responses to this dilemma in Jewish youth education. Other major themes that might be chosen for analysis are *Change in the Jewish World*, *The Impact of Pluralism on Jewish Identity* and *Emerging Spirituality in the Jewish Community*.

The Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future will embody a multidisciplinary approach, representing different academic disciplines and professional perspectives. The meetings will be designed to foster discussion among academics and practitioners who do not necessarily share a common professional vocabulary, but whose involvement in the inquiry often represents personal, as well as professional interest. The Colloquium will meet several times each year, sometimes in a retreat setting, at other times for a single day on campus. Most of its members will participate for several years so that a core of knowledge and a network of professional relationships will develop. Over time its meetings will yield an expanded understanding of the ideas being explored and their implications for Jewish life and education.

The Colloquium would seek to influence how Jewish education broadly conceived is conceptualized and practiced. This would be accomplished through the production and dissemination of new ideas about Jewish life and identity; the identification of connections between these ideas and the Jewish educational mission; and indications of the next steps for translating these ideas into action for change in the field.

Several ways in which this could be accomplished include commissioning and publishing innovative papers from colloquium members, inspired by colloquium deliberations. Some papers might be co-authored by teams of scholars and practitioners. The colloquium will also host conferences and other public presentations and forum. Colloquium deliberations and products will be disseminated to the field through a variety of media, including electronic forums and publication of papers and conference proceedings. Colloquium results would then be used to develop specific projects for colloquium members, educational leaders and/or community groups.

The Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future is designed to attract some of the most renowned scholars and practitioners in North America with an interest in Jewish education, become the most prestigious and highly regarded forum of its kind, and serve as a model for other initiatives.

Selecting An Initial Program Area

In order to decide which program area Brandeis should develop first, the Task Force selected three critical areas in Jewish education and for each one briefly described the *nature of the problem*, the *resources which Brandeis could bring to bear*, and the *program area outline*. While these are not the only areas of pressing need, they are ones for which Brandeis has considerable resources and experience.

The three areas are: *Youth and Adolescence*, *Educational Leadership* and *Pre-Professional Training*:

Youth and Adolescence

Nature of the Problem

- There is an exodus of Jewish youth from organized Jewish life, beginning in the post-bar/bat mitzvah years and continuing through college.

- There is a field which is fragmented.
- There are demographic imperatives.

Brandeis's Resources

- The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies — The Cohen Center has carried out empirical studies both on Jewish teens and on the professionals who work with them. The Center's current research includes studying new training models for youth professionals that have worked successfully in contexts outside the Jewish community.
- The Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare — Several faculty members within the Heller School pursue research interests specifically concerned with the evaluation of programs for American adolescents.
- The International Research Institute On Jewish Women — This new Institute's mission is to conduct and disseminate new studies about Jewish women. By examining the attitudes and aspirations of Jewish women through interdisciplinary research and collaborations with the community and its organizations, the Institute will inform each of the program areas.
- Genesis at Brandeis University — A residential summer program for high school students, Genesis synthesizes the Humanities, the Arts and Jewish Studies and offers the *first* university-based summer program for Jewish adolescents.
- BBYO University — a three-year university-level training program for the professional staff of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and a joint venture between Brandeis faculty and the leadership of BBYO. It is the *first* program of its kind in North America to offer sustained training for youth professionals in Judaica, adolescent development and management.
- Acharai — A series of workshops for a variety of "gatekeepers" to the Israel experience. The workshops are designed to help these lay and professional audiences become more adept at encouraging Jewish teens to consider attending a summer program in Israel. Additionally, President Reinhartz will chair a task force on youth and education that will advise Israel Experience, Inc. on revisioning the educational components of the Israel experience for Jewish youth.
- The New Jewish High School — A non-denominational Jewish day high school that opened in September 1997. It is located on the outskirts of the Brandeis campus and draws upon the resources of the university. This school represents opportunities for collaboration between Brandeis and the community in the area of youth and adolescent education.

Program Area Outline

The program would combine research about Jewish youth and adolescence in contemporary society with some training components, a conceptual seminar, and the generation of new program models including consultation and evaluation.

Educational Leadership — Professional and Lay

Nature of the Problem

Professional

- There is a severe shortage of well-trained, effective professional leaders in all sectors of the Jewish educational world.
- This shortage is likely to increase as more institutions (e.g. Jewish community centers) are increasing their activities in Jewish education and more day schools are being founded.
- There are few pre-professional training programs which focus on educational leadership.
- There are no sequenced, ongoing, coordinated professional development opportunities for people who are already in the field.

Lay

- There is limited training and orientation of lay leaders for Jewish education on a national, regional or local level.
- Leadership is often segmented by denominational or institutional affiliations and leaders are often unaware of the broad range of issues and opportunities.

Brandeis's Resources

- The Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare — The Master of Management Program at the Heller School offers a full range of courses that prepare leaders for the management of non-profit organizations. In partnership with the Hornstein Program, the Heller School has a specialty in management for Jewish communal service which also serves the field of Jewish education.
- The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies — The Cohen Center's many published studies on the impact of Jewish education are essential to preparing both lay and professional leadership. In addition, the Center's research on lay leadership can be a guide to further training for leaders in Jewish education.
- Sherman Seminar for Outstanding Young Professionals — Planned and run for many years by the faculty of the Hornstein Program, the Sherman Seminar provides the only

professional development opportunity of its kind for professionals in Jewish communal service and Jewish education who show potential for leadership. As a model for professional development, it has significant implications for leadership programs in Jewish education.

- Distinguished Leaders' Institute — A pioneering effort in lay leadership education, the DLI brings together each summer a large group of lay leaders for an intensive seminar in Jewish studies. This group has remained together for many years (while welcoming new participants) and illustrates how a university-run institute can work with a cadre of leaders in a field like Jewish education.
- Institute for New Principals — Support from the Wexner Foundation made possible this institute which offered new Jewish school principals from around the country the opportunity to learn the skills of school leadership. Using multiple modalities of adult learning and support, the institute illustrated how a university-based program can make a marked contribution to enhancing professional skills and confidence for school leaders.
- Humanities and the Professions program — These seminars gather professionals from varied fields to examine important questions of professional values and ethics. Using literary works as a basis, participants reflect together and develop peer links. The seminars can serve as an important component of leadership training for both lay and professional leaders in Jewish education.
- Brandeis Faculty — Faculty from many disciplines throughout the university have extensive experience in leadership development. Their talents may be drawn on for training of Jewish educational leaders.

Program Area Outline

The program would initiate a series of diverse, sequenced and inter-related professional development institutes for educational leaders. Research would focus on the nature of their work, identifications and growth. Diverse models of professional development programs would be generated and evaluated. Residential certification programs would be initiated.

Models of lay leadership development would be initiated in collaboration with specified communities; research about the experiences and identifications of lay leaders over time would be initiated.

Training of Pre-Professionals

Nature of the Problem

- There is a need for more and better trained Jewish education professionals.
- There is a lack of quality pre-professional training programs at all levels and sectors.

Brandeis's Resources

- See above, *Leadership and Youth and Adolescence Resources*
- Large number of Brandeis undergraduates and graduate students with interest in Jewish life
- Hebrew Language Program — As one of the largest programs of its kind, the Brandeis Hebrew Program is nationally acclaimed as a leader in teaching Hebrew. The Program has developed Hebrew proficiency guidelines, new curricula and comprehension materials. The faculty are a resource for training Hebrew teachers at all levels of Jewish education.
- Education Program — The Education Program prepares undergraduates for teaching at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels. Students in the Program have prepared themselves to teach in Jewish day schools. There is capacity to expand that training, and in cooperation with other departments in the university, prepare more students for careers in teaching in Jewish schools.

Program Area Outline

The intention is to develop pre-professional training programs in areas in which the work of the other program areas takes place; these would emerge as more knowledge about program models and community needs is accumulated through the other program areas.

Among the certificate and/or degree programs to be developed are training programs for:

- youth workers
- school principals
- teachers for Jewish schools.

The Selection Of Youth And Adolescence

As indicated earlier, all three selected areas of need were deemed important. However, after a great deal of deliberation and an important consultation with lay leaders, **Youth and Adolescence** emerged as the *initial program area* of choice. The Task Force also decided that the *second program area* to be developed would focus on **Educational Leadership**.

The decision to select Youth and Adolescence as the initial program area was based on the following key factors:

- Identity formation is a critical developmental task of adolescence. Research suggests that participation in both formal and informal Jewish education programs during the high school years may promote a long-lasting commitment to Judaism.

- Research also indicates that at present, participation in Jewish education programs during the critical post-bar-and-bat-mitzvah years declines significantly.
- Jewish teens are a large, diverse and growing segment of the of the North American Jewish population. There are currently about a quarter of a million Jewish students of high school age, and this number will increase.
- Youth and adolescence is one of the least developed areas in the field of Jewish education which bears so directly on Jewish continuity.
- As cited earlier, Brandeis has numerous resources which can be marshaled to create and assess new strategies and interventions to reach Jewish teens, including several new cutting-edge education programs.
- A fully-developed program area in Youth and Adolescence could be integrated with several other key areas of need, including Educational Leadership and Pre-Professional Training.

A fuller rationale for the selection of Youth and Adolescence as the first program area appears below.

Youth and Adolescence

The demographics of the Jewish community indicate that, beginning in the mid-1990s and extending for a least a decade, there will be a surge in the number of adolescents nationwide. As they reach the age of bar and bat mitzvah, they face the choice of continuing in their Jewish involvements or turning elsewhere. Current trends strongly favor their turning elsewhere.

At present, the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony constitutes the culmination and end point of the Jewish education of the typical American Jewish teen-ager. Research shows that during the years leading up to what is now regarded as a major social as well as religious event, the majority of children growing up as Jews participate in some form of Jewish education.

However, immediately after having achieved this important milestone, most of these young adolescents, often with parental approval, cease their Jewish studies forever.

Adolescence is the time when one's emergent identity, including a religious identity, is shaped, and when one's intellectual horizons and capacities broaden and mature. Unfortunately, this exodus occurs just as these thirteen-year-olds are starting their search to discover who they will become and how they are to live, *and before* they have matured enough to grasp or be exposed to the depth and complexity of Jewish thought and traditions. **To allow this formative developmental period to pass without meaningful exposure to Jewish learning and experiences, is to send young people out into a secular, assimilation-prone society with only a limited sense of what Judaism, as a way of life, has to offer.**

How prevalent is this trend? According to Alice Goldstein and Sylvia Barack Fishman, who have analyzed the data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS), by age 12,

78% of children who have grown up as Jews have enrolled in some form of Jewish education, and 90% of those have remained enrolled. However, *by age 16, only 20% remain enrolled*. Participation in informal Jewish education yields greater involvement. Thirty-eight percent of these teens report having participated in a Jewish youth group, camp or both. But we do not know how intensive or extensive is their participation. In fact, one hears anecdotally from professionals in Jewish youth organizations that although more and more high school students sign up for informal activities, they are unlikely to devote much time to Jewish programs due to competing secular opportunities and demands.

A number of studies on Jewish identity formation suggest that continued participation in effective formal and informal programs during the high school years can make a life-long difference in terms of adult Jewish involvement. One of the biggest challenges the North American Jewish community faces in terms of education and continuity is to determine how to keep its growing numbers of Jewish youth from relinquishing their Jewish pursuits during this critical period in their lives.

This is a complex challenge that Brandeis University is prepared to meet.

Some of the key needs in Jewish youth education which Brandeis intends to address are listed below.

A Summary of Key Barriers to Continued Jewish Adolescent Involvement

- **Lowered expectations** — Much of the Jewish community has accepted as natural a state of lowered expectations for Jewish adolescents. After bar or bat mitzvah we expect secular education to be their primary focus and for Jewish learning to be secondary or tertiary. We assume that our rabbis and best-trained educators will focus their energies on different parts of the community.
- **Low communal investment** — Most Jewish communities do not generously invest in resources for Jewish adolescents. It is rare to find a community that has said: How can we mobilize our community-wide resources to provide our youth the finest educational opportunities available?
- **Insufficient numbers of well-prepared professionals and professional development opportunities** — Few Jewish professionals work full-time directly with youth. There are the administrators (high school principals, camp directors, regional directors of youth movements), and the few day high school teachers and youth professionals who work on a local level in a synagogue, JCC or youth office. Besides the top administrators, these individuals are generally not well paid or afforded much status in the community. Usually they are provided with only minimal opportunities for the kind of professional development which promotes advancement. They often work long hours and love their work, but burn out after a few years on the job. Not surprisingly, it is rare to find youth professionals who have remained in the field for an extended period of time. While there will always be room for volunteer and “amateur” help, the long-range health of a serious educational program depends on professional leadership and expertise.

- **Increasing competition for discretionary time** — A growing array of interesting secular educational, athletic, travel, and community service opportunities are competing for the time and attention of Jewish adolescents.
- **A fragmented field** — There are national Jewish youth movements that provide vibrant, informal Jewish experiences for adolescents but are hampered in their efforts to improve their programs and involve more youth by a lack of financial and human resources. This lack of resources limits their capacity to work together on common goals such as staff training, developing educational materials, and recruiting youth.
- **Under-utilization of research** — Very little of the existing research on adolescent development, high school education and youth services informs current educational practice in the Jewish community.

Brandeis is prepared to embrace the opportunities listed below that may promote increased involvement of Jewish adolescents.

A Summary of Key Potential Opportunities for Jewish Adolescent Involvement

- **Jewish identity imperative** — Recent research has indicated that adolescence is a critical time for the formation of a Jewish identity and suggests that continued participation in meaningful Jewish activities during the high school years promotes a long-lasting affiliation with Judaism. This knowledge has helped to foster renewed interest in the teen population.
- **Demographic imperative** — After two decades of very low adolescent population growth, children of the “baby boom” generation are now reaching adolescence. The surge has begun and will continue for another decade. This trend has also encouraged Jewish communities to turn more of their attention to the adolescents within their midst.
- **Receptivity and creativity in the field** — During the past few years there has been a resurgence of creativity in the field of Jewish youth education, as embodied in the Maccabiah games, summer camp programs, Israel programs, and the beginnings of new communal high schools.
- **The emergence of Hillel as a model national leadership organization** — A recently-revitalized Hillel can serve as a leadership model and partner for pre-college Jewish youth education.
- **Research** — There is a rich body of research on adolescence that is available for application to Jewish education.

Objectives and Outcomes for the Program Area on Youth and Adolescence

The overarching goal of the program area on Youth and Adolescence will be to increase the capacity of the Jewish community to engage seriously larger numbers of

pre-college Jewish youth in meaningful educational activities to promote the vitality and continuity of North American Jewry.

Listed below are the key long-term objectives that this program area will meet in order to achieve that goal, along with anticipated outcomes:

- **To heighten greatly communal awareness, understanding and expectations with regard to the importance of Jewish youth education and its relation to long-term Jewish identity.** Anticipated outcomes include: increased interest on the part of parents, lay leaders and educators in Jewish youth education opportunities; greater parent encouragement for post-bar and bat mitzvah involvement in Jewish education (assuming the availability of quality programs); and more financial resources for such activities, including research and evaluation.
- **To promote the development of a multi-dimensional professional field of Jewish youth education through education, training, consultation and professional development opportunities.** Anticipated outcomes include: greatly increased numbers of educators and rabbis who have been prepared to both teach in high school and lead youth groups; more social and communal workers who can manage large organizations and model Jewish commitment; more artists and physical educators who can integrate a Jewish dimension into their work in ways which engage youth; development of a core group of youth workers and educators who, as a result of professional development opportunities and salaries and recognition commensurate with their abilities can make this work a career; establishment of regional and national awards for outstanding youth workers and educators; inception of credit-bearing certificate programs; and increased use of new technologies for training and the dissemination of information.
- **To create a new paradigm of Jewish youth education which is more holistic and lessens the divide between “formal” and “informal” youth education.** Anticipated outcomes include changing the term “youth education” to mean how communities engage their youth populations through a range of both formal and informal educational components such as schooling, social experiences, camping and trips to Israel. This approach will also increase the use of educational options that are now only used sporadically, such as more creative use of the arts and humanities, electronic technology, Outward Bound-style activities and programs on college campuses. New methodologies to integrate professional training and program development for both formal and informal education will also be created.
- **To increase the use and dissemination of existing research on adolescence and promote research and evaluation of new areas in Jewish education.** Anticipated outcomes include a heightened research capacity for the study of Jewish youth that can provide Jewish communities with the information they need to envision, create and evaluate effective youth education programs. This research-based information will include the latest knowledge on adolescent development and the role of gender-based issues in the adolescent years, youth programs that have worked over time, and curricula that advance Jewish knowledge and commitment for this population. It will be a center in which practice and research are mutually informed.

- **To increase deliberative and collaborative opportunities for scholars, students and practitioners involved with Jewish youth education.** Anticipated outcomes include new on-campus forums, conferences and seminars that will foster greater creativity, interdisciplinary thinking and professional competence, including new visions, models and best practices.
- **To increase meaningful linkages between Jewish high school students and college and university resources in new and creative ways.** Anticipated outcomes include: new programs in which college students will serve as role models for younger Jewish adolescents; new pre-professional and professional training models; and innovative program models for on-campus and community-based education programs which draw on a wide range of university resources.

In sum, we envision a vibrant, more cohesive field of Jewish youth education and greatly increased numbers of adolescents who

- continue their Jewish involvement after Bar and Bat Mitzvah
- are better informed, interested and identified with Judaism
- who leave for college seeking future Jewish growth.

Program Area Overview: Youth and Adolescence

Many educational services are currently available to Jewish adolescents. They include youth groups, summer camps, Jewish day schools, supplementary high schools, trips to Israel and specialized programs such as the Maccabiah games and the Genesis Program at Brandeis. We know that roughly 40% of teens being raised as Jews participate in some way in these programs.

We also know that these educational services lack a systematic framework. This field is fragmented with each denomination, organization and community working on its own. There is neither a coherent field, an organized profession of Jewish youth educators nor a powerful voice to advocate for the educational needs of this population.

How can a university enter a fragmented field and make a sustained contribution that builds its unique strengths? Not by working alone or trying to take on all the challenges, but by working with partners and identifying those projects that demonstrate how productive changes can be introduced into this field. The following is an illustration of a plan of action that could be initiated by a Program Area in Youth and Adolescence at Brandeis.

Leadership Development

The highly successful Genesis Program that began this summer at Brandeis demonstrated a basic principle of youth education: dynamic leadership is crucial in working with adolescents. Genesis is a program built around an idea, but the implementation of the idea had everything to do with the program's leadership. Clearly a key objective for the Brandeis

program initiative is the development of dynamic professional leadership for youth educational programs across North America.

This field has struggled with high rates of turnover by employees who do not view themselves as *professionals* working with Jewish youth. Yet we know from anecdotal evidence of many talented young men and women who have significant influence on Jewish teens in youth groups, camps, schools, and special programs. However many of these young educators do not consider themselves professional “youth educators.” The challenge is to create a context that would motivate them to make a long-term career commitment to educating Jewish youth and to view themselves as the future leadership of this emerging field.

One way Brandeis can address this challenge is by initiating a *Young Professionals Leadership Seminar* for the field of Jewish youth education. Imagine the impact on a young educator who is nominated by his youth organization or her school and is selected on the basis of outstanding promise to come to Brandeis for an intensive seminar on leadership in Jewish youth education. At this seminar participants would meet a group of peers who share a talent for and dedication to working with Jewish youth. They would learn from a faculty of both Brandeis professors and master professional educators from this field. Each participant would emerge from the seminar with deeper knowledge of Jewish sources, greater skills in educational leadership, a network of colleagues from around the country and across denominational lines and a senior educator appointed as his or her mentor for the coming year.

Over several years the Young Professionals Seminar would develop networks of talented, dynamic and well-prepared professionals preparing themselves to become leaders of this field. These young professionals would serve to raise the level of professionalism in this field and inspire others to make the education of Jewish youth their calling.

The Best Practice Forum

Jewish youth education is a field rich with programs and curricula that are thought to work very well with teens. But these exemplary programs are rarely recorded or formally evaluated. Hence this field’s effectiveness is diminished because it has no well-established record of its own best accomplishments to pass on to a next generation of youth educators and by which to establish its credibility with interested lay leadership.

This program area could build a resource for best practice in Jewish youth education through the work of an ongoing youth forum. This monthly seminar, to be held primarily at Brandeis, would consist of leading educators in Jewish youth education and scholars in the field. Educators would be invited to join the forum on the basis of their willingness to work with Brandeis faculty members in developing a case study illustrating best practice from their own school, synagogue or organization. The scholars would be invited to raise the difficult questions of quality: what makes a given educational practice truly “best” or “outstanding?” What are the criteria for excellence in this field by which programs could be evaluated?

The forum would be limited to select educators and scholars each year and would focus on developing the articulation and analysis of each case of best practice. However, the cases would reflect more than instances of best practice; they would raise questions of judgment and value and open up for consideration alternative paths *not* chosen by the educators in each case. While the cases would be designed to showcase educational success, they would also highlight the challenges and questions with which even the best educators continue to wrestle.

The conclusion of each forum would yield examples of best practice from which the Brandeis faculty could then create accessible training materials for the leadership seminar and other professional development courses in Jewish youth education.

Demonstration Projects

A major goal of this program area is to engage seriously larger numbers of Jewish adolescents in meaningful educational activity. One path to this goal is through demonstration projects — focused experiments in selected communities, in which Brandeis would work with partner organizations to create new programs for Jewish teens who have moved away from Jewish pursuits. Each project would create high quality programs to attract both involved and uninvolved Jewish teens.

Brandeis would bring to these projects considerable resources:

- 1) A *research capacity* to develop in greater depth a portrait of the Jewish youth in that community and an inventory of youth programs currently available.
- 2) A *training capacity* to develop the skills of the professionals and lay volunteers who would be involved.
- 3) A *curricular capacity* to develop new educational programs that would appeal to wider populations of Jewish adolescents.
- 4) A *consulting capacity* to develop and maintain over time the communal supports needed for the success of these efforts.

A demonstration project would enable the Brandeis faculty to work in concert with those organizations in a community that are ready to reach and work with Jewish youth in new and different ways. Brandeis would help to build and strengthen the capacity of these organizations to engage Jewish youth more effectively. *Working collaboratively* in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, the university and the community could take the kinds of informed risks that are inherent in truly cutting-edge ventures while assessing and conveying the results to optimal effect.

Jewish communal investment in youth education has been limited when compared to investment in Jewish education for younger children. Perhaps a lack of clarity about the goals and benefits of greater investment (beyond the Israel experience) has resulted in this situation. Brandeis's demonstration project could serve as a key catalyst that promotes broader communal discussions on vision and priorities in Jewish youth education. If the

data are there to demonstrate what can be accomplished, communal leadership may become more interested in how those achievements can be realized in their local communities.

We believe that such interest will lead to greater investments of human and financial resources in the most promising developments within this field.

Youth and Adolescence: A Vision of Future Possibilities

As Jeremy and Jennifer reach the year before bar or bat mitzvah, they receive in the mail at home a video entitled: "Your Jewish Opportunities." The video describes five basic program areas that they may sign up for which will begin after their bar or bat mitzvah year. These options, developed by their Jewish community, are focused around areas of interest to teens and might include: drama, film, adventure, technology and social action. Each area is a fully developed curriculum for Jewish exploration that has a study component, but also involves a monthly "weekend away" with the staff of the community's youth center.

The professional staff of the community's youth center are full-time youth professionals. Their professional training has been in Jewish youth education and they have had a hand in developing these areas of interest. Each is an expert in one field of interest, but also has the Judaic background to integrate Jewish texts and experiences into the learning experience. They also teach in the Jewish day schools and spend their summer months at the local Jewish camp or leading trips to Israel.

After Jeremy and Jennifer spend two years in the Jewish Opportunities Program, they graduate into the Global Jewish Awareness Program for 10th and 11th graders. In the Awareness Program they will select one geographic area to study such as Latin America, Western or Eastern Europe, or Israel. They will study about the history and culture of each area once a week at the local college. They will also take courses at the JCC on the Jewish communities in those areas, including history, culture and religious practices.

They will have e-mail accounts enabling them to correspond with Jews who live in those areas and they will also learn about social action projects to help them. The program will culminate in a summer trip at the end of the 11th grade to visit one of these communities. The summer visit will be structured as a college course so that their learning experience will qualify for summer credit.

In their senior year of high school, Jeremy and Jennifer will enroll in the pre-college program at the JCC. The program, run by trained college counselors and college students, will help them select the colleges of their choice and learn all about the Jewish opportunities on those campuses. Each visit to a campus will include being hosted by Jewish students and spending a Shabbat at the campus Hillel.

In this vision the youth's experience is shaped by a broad educational vision that is guided by trained professionals who work for the Jewish community, and links each of them to both the world Jewish community and to the next step in their Jewish future. Because they are fully challenged by these experiences and identify with them, these adolescents come to feel that there can be a meaningful connection between their Jewish and secular interests and aspirations.

Conclusion

"The day is short, the task abundant."

The guiding vision for the Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis has been President Reinhartz's conviction that Brandeis University has the potential to play an even more active role in assuring the continuity of Jewish culture from one generation to the next. The question the Task Force has tackled is how best to direct the university's resources to meet the most urgent needs in the field of Jewish education.

Pursuing an answer to this question could have taken the Task Force in many directions, but with a disciplined wisdom its members chose a particular path. In their judgment, corroborated by lay and professional advisors from the community, Brandeis's plan is an achievable one.

Everyone concerned for the Jewish future in North America feels an urgency to act, for indeed "the day is short." Everyone familiar with the abundance of the task feels some anxiety about whether their efforts will suffice. But the fuller involvement of a research university of the quality of Brandeis in this effort is a sign of hope. The partnerships called for by this report — between the academy and the community, scholars and practitioners, professional and lay leaders — represent significant steps towards ensuring a vital and creative future for North American Jewry.



Appendix A: Summary of Action Steps Recommended by the Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis

- I. Create a Center for Jewish Education at Brandeis to
 - bring together scholars and practitioners to work collaboratively on the major issues in Jewish education.
- II. Develop a Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future to
 - sponsor interdisciplinary deliberations and papers on the future of Jewish education in North America
 - disseminate new ideas through a variety of media.
- III. Initiate a Program Area in Youth and Adolescence to
 - use existing research and produce new research in a variety of fields to address the problems of Jewish youth education
 - sponsor professional development opportunities in the field of Jewish youth education
 - sponsor lay development opportunities in the field of Jewish youth education
 - create new training materials for improved practice in the field
 - create partnerships with schools and agencies in communities to broaden and sharpen the impact of Jewish youth education
 - prepare Brandeis undergraduate and graduate students for professional careers in Jewish youth education.
- IV. Plan the Future of a Center for Jewish Education at Brandeis to
 - broaden involvement of Brandeis programs, faculty and students in Jewish education
 - build communal support for Brandeis's involvement in Jewish education
 - establish additional Program Areas in Jewish Educational Leadership and Pre-Professional Training or other areas.

Appendix B: Members of the Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis

	Chairman President Jehuda Reinharz
Joyce Antler	American Studies
Joshua Elkin	Solomon Schechter Day School/Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service
Sylvia Barack Fishman	Near Eastern and Judaic Studies/International Research Institute on Jewish Women
Arthur Green	Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Irving Epstein	Provost
Edward Kaplan	Romance and Comparative Literature
Daniel Lehmann	New Jewish High School
Daniel Margolis	Bureau of Jewish Education/Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service
Alan Mintz	Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Shulamit Reinharz	Women's Studies/Sociology/International Research Institute on Jewish Women
Bernard Reisman	Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service
Myron Rosenblum	Chemistry
Jonathan Sarna	Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Leonard Saxe	Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare
Larry Sternberg	Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies/Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service
Robert Szulkin	Germanic and Slavic Languages
Peter Witt	Education Program

Task Force Steering Committee

Joseph Reimer
Task Force Co-Director

Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service

Susan Shevitz
Task Force Co-Director

Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service

Susanne Shavelson
Assistant Director

Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service

Marc Brettler

Near Eastern and Judaic Studies

Daniel Terris

Rabb School of Summer, Special and Continuing Studies



Appendix C: Task Force Consultants

Alan Hoffmann

Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education

Barry Holtz

Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education



Appendix D: Meetings and Consultations Held During the Planning Process

Meetings of the Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis

All meetings were held at Brandeis University.

December 5, 1995

December 9, 1996

March 12, 1996

May 13, 1997

September 19, 1996

September 16, 1997

Consultations held with Task Force members

January, 1996

Several small-group consultations with Task Force members to identify primary interests and areas of concern for Brandeis's involvement in Jewish education.

April 26 and May 1, 1997

Two consultations with Task Force members to discuss the emerging concept of a center for Jewish education at Brandeis.

July 2, 1996

Task Force consultation on the development of the deliberative component, the *Colloquium on Education and the Jewish Future*.

Other group consultations held

February 4 & 5, 1996

Consultation on Professional Development for Jewish Educational Leaders, Brandeis University. Attended by 34 practitioners, scholars and funders. [For the full proceedings, see "Professional Growth and Communal Change: Proceedings of the Consultation on Professional Development for Jewish Educational Leaders," 1997.]

January 9, 1997

Research consultation with Dr. Bethamie Horowitz, UJA/Federation; Dr. Leonard Saxe, Brandeis University and Dr. Amy Sales, Brandeis University.

June 3, 1997

The Uneasy Fit Between Jewish Educational Research and Practice, Brandeis University. Attended by 44 researchers and educational leaders.

Consultation with Lay Leaders

October 18, 1996

Convened at Brandeis University by task force chairman Jehuda Reinharz. Lay leaders: Moses and Phyllis Deitcher, Morton Mandel, Charles Ratner, Esther Leah Ritz. Task force members and consultants: Marc Brettler, Joshua Elkin, Edward Kaplan, Joseph Reimer, Shulamit Reinharz, Jonathan Sarna, Leonard Saxe, Susanne Shavelson, Susan Shevitz, Dan Terris.

Other individual consultations held

Dr. Adrienne Bank	A & M Bank Consultants, Inc.
Professor Howard Deitcher	Hebrew University
Allan Finkelstein	Jewish Community Centers Association
Sam Fisher	B'nai B'rith Youth Organization
Dr. Tova Halbertal	Hebrew University
Avraham Infeld	Melitz Institute, Jerusalem
Richard Joel	International Hillel
Carolyn Keller	Commission for Jewish Continuity, Boston
Simon Klarfeld	Genesis Program at Brandeis
Rabbi Daniel Lehmann	New Jewish High School, Boston
Professor Ze'ev Mankowitz	Hebrew University
William Menkow	Commission for Jewish Continuity, Boston
Professor Harvey Shapiro	Boston Hebrew College
Barry Shrage	Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston
Dr. Bernard Steinberg	Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel
Professor Gary Tobin	Institute for Community and Religion, Brandeis University
Rabbi David Wolfman	UAHC, Northeast Region
Dr. Jonathan Woocher	JESNA