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LEADING INDICATORS OF JEWISH EDUCATION:
A PLAN FOR MONITORING CHANGE

Adam Gamoran, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Ellen B. Goldring, Vanderbilt University

Bill Robinson, Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education



Proposal for a Consultation
at the annual conference of the
Network for Research in Jewish Education
Boston, June 1-3, 1997

LEADING INDICATORS OF JEWISH EDUCATION: A PLAN FOR MONITORING CHANGE

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed consultation is to seek input from the Jewish educational research community on a major new research initiative being contemplated by the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). The CIJE is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of Jewish education in North America through systemic educational reform, working with Jewish communities and organizations to build the profession of Jewish education and mobilize community support for Jewish education. The new initiative, on "Leading Indicators," could have broad implications for understanding the status and prospects of Jewish education in North America, so it is important to obtain the advice of a wide variety of researchers in Jewish education at the planning stage. The intended focus of the Leading Indicator project is to coordinate, integrate, and possibly collect information on the status and impact of Jewish education in North America.

Problem

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, with its finding that over half of American Jews now marry out of the faith (Kosmin et al., 1992), was a shock to the Jewish community. Committed Jews across the community spectrum are concerned about the future of the Jewish population of North America, and many are turning to Jewish education as a possible solution (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1990). A variety of commissions, programs, and initiatives are being proposed and implemented across North America. These efforts share the common purpose of revitalizing the Jewish community through education, but they are generally not coordinated and differ in their specific objectives. A major problem for new efforts is the lack of information about whether they are succeeding. How will we know whether Jewish education is moving in the right direction? Typically, evaluations are short term and limited in scope, if they occur at all. Yet the objectives of programs such as lay leadership development, enhanced professional development for teachers, seminars for educational leaders, and so on, are long-term and diffuse. Hence, there is a mismatch between the short-term local evaluation information being gathered, and the need for long-term, wide-ranging knowledge about change in the Jewish community.

An important reason for this mismatch is that appropriate information is difficult to gather and interpret. Program goals are often ambiguous and progress is hard to measure. For example, behavioral measures such as whether a person lights Shabbat candles or conducts a Passover seder -- desired outcomes of some education programs -- are probably inadequate for capturing the complex and diverse processes by which individual Jews respond to these programs. In addition, programs may have ambitious goals for change that occurs over a long period of time. It is difficult to measure progress in the absence of a longitudinal approach which can be expensive and complex, and requires a long delay before results can be assessed.

These challenges call for a coordinated effort to bring together a wide variety of information about Jewish education and its consequences in North America. Such an effort may draw on information already being collected in on-going projects, and it may also involve new data collections especially designed for this purpose. This effort to establish "Leading Indicators" of Jewish education is modeled after similar approaches in economics, health, and general education. It would provide a baseline on the current status of Jewish education, and allow assessment of change over time.

There are several benefits of a Leading Indicators approach to addressing the shortage of information about Jewish education and its effects. First, Leading Indicators would describe the status of a key aspect of the Jewish community, taking the pulse in an area whose health is believed to be central to the life of North American Jewry. Second, it would allow forecasting. In the medical field, child immunization rates are used to forecast the future health of a community. Similarly, rates of teacher training or professional development might be used to forecast changes in the Jewish knowledge of a future generation of Jewish children. Third, unlike most program evaluations, Leading Indicators offers a long-term perspective. By gathering similar data over a long period of time, such indicators may be able to detect changes that are too gradual to appear in program evaluations. Fourth, a Leading Indicators project can focus on the outcomes that really matter. It can transcend the direct outcomes of individual initiatives to examine the overall progress of the Jewish community and its educational system. Fifth, over time the indicator data would constitute a data base which could be accessible to many researchers and thus stimulate new research in Jewish education.

Along with the potential benefits, concerns about the depth and practicality of Leading Indicators also deserve serious discussion. Can Leading Indicators provide information of sufficient depth to be meaningful? Can they address the outcomes that really matter for Jewish life in North America? Given limited resources for research, will Leading Indicators have sufficient payoff to warrant the investment? These pressing questions could benefit from a consultation among researchers in the field.

Methodology

A number of methodologies may be considered to implement a Leading Indicator system for Jewish education. For example, several possible outcomes can be tentatively identified, and these are listed in Figure 1. This list is illustrative and is not meant to be exhaustive.

The basic methodology of the project should have three components: (a) to coordinate and integrate data that are already being collected; (b) to identify the essential gaps in current information; and (c) to consider collecting new information to fill in the gaps. Beyond these basic steps, a variety of models should be considered, and could be the subject of fruitful discussion at the conference. Figure 2 lists possible discussion questions for the proposed consultation.

One model under consideration follows the example of the U.S. government, which has recently begun compiling data to monitor progress towards national education goals (National Goals Panel, 1995). In 1990, the federal government and the nation's governors agreed upon several national goals for education, such as "all children will start school ready to learn" and "students will be first in the world in mathematics and science." Since 1994, the National Goals Panel has compiled information that addresses progress toward these goals. For example, data on preschool participation are used to assess progress in preparing children to start school. The data are not especially collected for the Goals Panel; instead they are drawn from a variety of national surveys administered periodically by the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies.

The National Goals approach has several characteristics that make it appealing as a model for Leading Indicators of Jewish education. First, it is based on a limited set of clear goals around which there is substantial consensus. Second, it is nation-wide. Third, it does not require any new data collection; instead it relies on information already being gathered.

However, it is not clear that a national (or continental) focus is feasible or necessarily desirable for Jewish education. The only nation-wide survey is the National Jewish Population Survey, and this is conducted only once a decade, not frequently enough for information that could be used for forecasting. However, individual communities may gather information more often. Also, whereas a national study may be a formidable challenge, community-based studies may be more feasible. Consequently, an alternative model would be to identify a limited number of representative communities and both use available information and collect new information where necessary.

Conclusion

The Leading Indicators project is a potentially important initiative for assessing the current status of Jewish education in North America and monitoring possible change. The project would benefit greatly from the insights of educational researchers who will be attending the conference. Over time, the project may benefit educational researchers who may carry out analyses of new data that may be collected. Hence, this consultation is proposed to establish a conversation around the idea of Leading Indicators of Jewish education.

References

- Commission on Jewish Education in North America. (1990). A Time to Act. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kosmin, Barry A., Sidney Goldstein, Joseph Waksberg, Nava Lerer, Ariella Keysar, and Jeffrey Scheckner. (1993). Highlights of the CJF National Jewish Population Survey. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- National Education Goals Panel. (1995). The National Education Goals Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Figure 1. Illustrative Outcomes for Leading Indicators

1. Lifelong learning: Jewish education occurs throughout the life course and is not limited to childhood schooling.
 2. Knowledge: There is a recognized minimum level of knowledge and skills that most Jews achieve, and a substantial group achieves much higher levels.
 3. Educational leaders: Educational leaders are prepared, by training and disposition, to provide the vision and leadership necessary for Jewish education, including expertise in education, Judaica, and administration.
 4. Teachers: Teachers are prepared, by training and disposition, to teach the rich Jewish heritage that is vital for Jewish continuity, including expertise in Jewish content and the field of education.
 5. Informal education: Every Jew has access to informal educational experiences with rich Jewish content.
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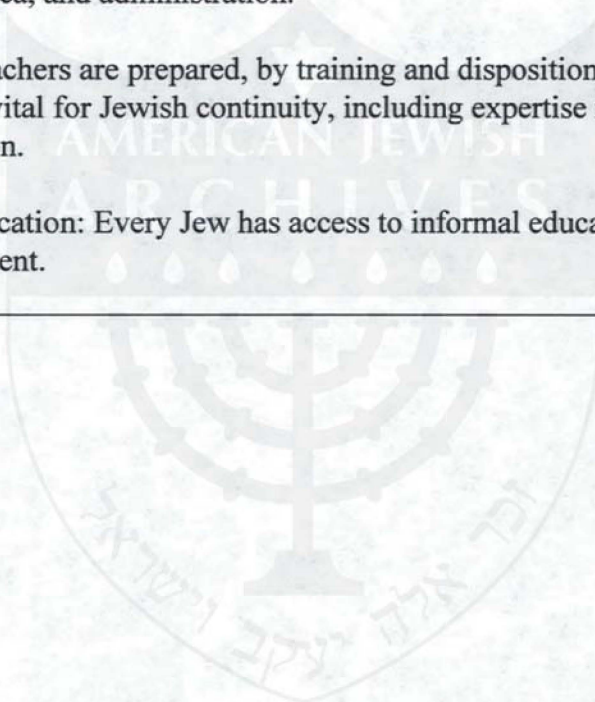
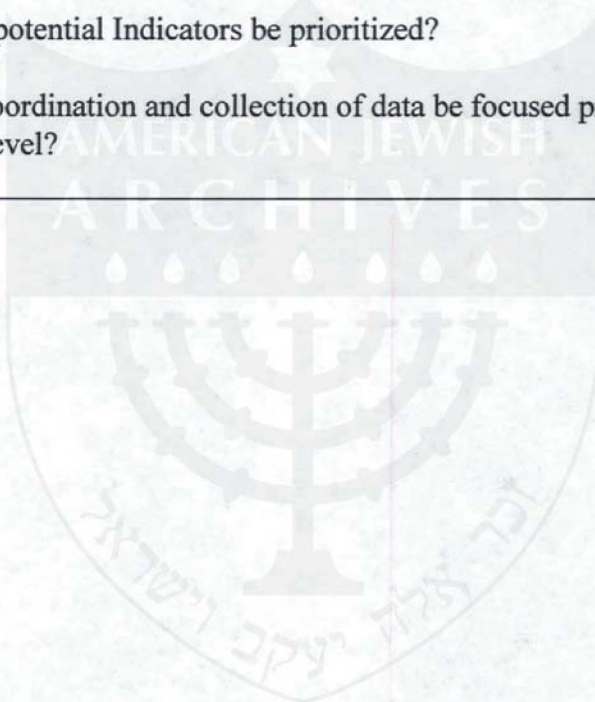


Figure 2. Questions for Discussion

1. Is the Leading Indicators project a worthwhile idea? Who would benefit from it?
 2. Is it feasible to identify and gather information on Leading Indicators of Jewish education in North America?
 3. What information is already being collected that would address the illustrative outcomes, or other outcomes that may be proposed? What are the key gaps in available information?
 4. How should potential Indicators be prioritized?
 5. Should the coordination and collection of data be focused primarily on the community or the national level?
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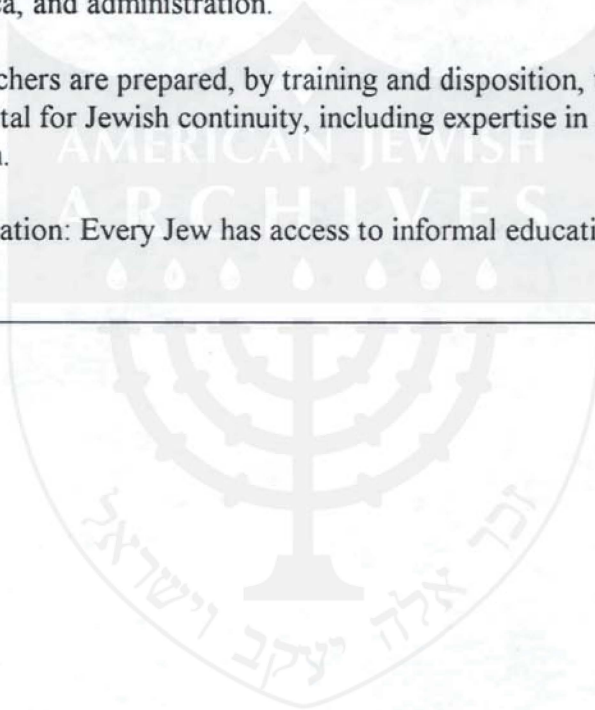
Adam Gamoran, University of Wisconsin, Madison
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A Consultation
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-



Benny - ^{more} straight forward approach
- bean counting is useful
- may be easily linked to parts of T rate
- some things common sense tells us we ought to know
- es post-bar-mitzvah particip rates
- its an indicator of something

Len - not so simple even in economics
- es unemployment not preceding inflation

Wooden - tragedy that not gathering indicators data
- es an adult thing
- but should be driven by the policy agenda
- implemented in

Joan Kaye - don't know enough abt what makes a vital T community
- need to look at non-established community
- need to study those contexts as well

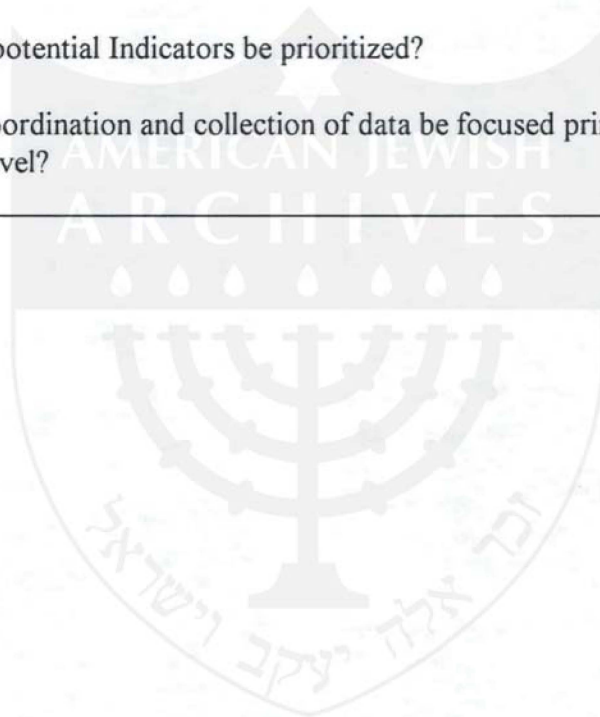
Lisa - what would we need to know to get to indicators

CS - community-based research studies to find out
- out of that - much better sense



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-



Worthwhile prog?

Saxe - not sure

- diff
- lots time
- wait provide answers to qs needed 3-5 yrs
- more interested in community studies

BH - too much abt indivs, not enough abt orgs

- we don't name indivs - not even philanthropy
- need for national picture bcs people are mobile

Rob - all educ is local

- experience/could be very diff, not picked up by indicators
- maybe better to track parents + kids over 20 kids
- how are they making sense of life + educ?

Wooden - change needs to drive the research

- need to study where people are trying to do something

- lack of basic data - ^{res in population day sch attendance} # schs, where they are

Shery - do the research on what makes a difference

- as an aspect of an indicator study

Lifsa - indicators ignore diversity in field of J ed

Isa - ~~the~~ Lifelong learning - worth doing, not that hard

check NJPS

- is it making a difference in their lives
- attach qs to NJPS

BH - informal also

Shery - what's the pt of the enterprise? continuing to learning

Len - that's a diff issue - e.g., is it an indic that things are changing

Leora - United Way - outputs vs Outcomes

tabulations

what do those indic mean

Dan - what are the indic, indic of, what do the indic indicate

INDICATORS OF JEWISH EDUCATION: ASSESSING CURRENT STATUS AND MONITORING CHANGE

Adam Gamoran
Ellen B. Goldring
Bill Robinson

June, 1997

The Problem

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, with its finding that over half of American Jews now marry out of the faith (Kosin et al., 1992), was a shock to the Jewish community. Committed Jews across the community spectrum are concerned about the future of the Jewish population of North America, and many are turning to Jewish education as a possible solution (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1990). A variety of commissions, programs, and initiatives are being proposed and implemented across North America. These efforts share the common purpose of revitalizing the Jewish community through education, but they are generally not coordinated and differ in their specific objectives. A major problem for new efforts is the lack of information about whether they are succeeding. How will we know whether Jewish education is moving in the right direction? Typically, evaluations are short term and limited in scope, if they occur at all. Yet the objectives of programs such as lay leadership development, enhanced professional development for teachers, seminars for educational leaders, and so on, are long-term and diffuse. Hence, there is a mismatch between the short-term local evaluation information being gathered, and the need for long-term, wide-ranging knowledge about change in the Jewish community.

An important reason for this mismatch is that appropriate information is difficult to gather and interpret. Program goals are often ambiguous and progress is hard to measure. For example, behavioral measures such as whether a person lights Shabbat candles or conducts a Passover Seder -- desired outcomes of some education programs -- are probably inadequate for capturing the complex and diverse processes by which individual Jews respond to these programs. In addition, programs may have ambitious goals for change that occurs over a long period of time. It is difficult to measure progress in the absence of a longitudinal approach which can be expensive and complex, and requires a long delay before results can be assessed. These challenges call for a coordinated effort to bring together a wide variety of information about Jewish education and its consequences in North America. Such an effort may draw on information already being collected in on-going projects, and it may also involve new data collections especially designed for this purpose. This effort to establish "Indicators of Jewish Education" is modeled after similar approaches in economics, health, and general education. It would provide a baseline on the current status of Jewish education, and allow assessment of change over time.

There are several benefits of an Indicators approach to addressing the shortage of information about Jewish education and its effects.

- Indicators would describe the status of a key aspect of the Jewish community, taking the pulse in an area whose health is believed to be central to the life of North American Jewry.
- Indicator data would facilitate planning. In the medical field, child immunization rates are used to plan medical interventions. Similarly, rates of teacher training or professional development might be used to develop policies that respond to anticipated shortfalls.
- Unlike most program evaluations, Indicators offer a long-term perspective. By gathering similar data over a long period of time, such indicators may be able to detect changes that are too gradual to appear in program evaluations.
- An Indicators project can focus on the outcomes that really matter. It can transcend the direct outcomes of individual initiatives to examine the overall progress of the Jewish community and its educational system.
- Over time the Indicator data would constitute a data base which could be accessible to many researchers and thus stimulate new research in Jewish education.

Proposed Methodology

To help us develop a methodology for compiling Indicator data, we held consultations with four groups of experts, and spoke with other individuals. A synthesis of these consultations is attached. We considered a variety of *purposes* of an Indicators project, including [a] providing a status report on Jewish education; [b] assessing progress towards CIJE's vision; [c] evaluating CIJE; and [d] documenting the effects of Jewish education. Our proposal emphasizes the value of Indicators for a status report, but all four purposes may be served to some degree.

We also discussed different *models* for an Indicators project, including a longitudinal survey of a cohort, as compared with reliance on existing cross-sectional surveys, and various *levels of analysis*, particularly the national, community, and institutional levels. Our proposed methodology emphasizes the community level and repeated cross-sections, although it incorporates information from national surveys as well.

Emphasis on a Status Report

The main purpose of the Indicators project is to identify the current state of Jewish education, and to monitor change over time. This information may be used to galvanize support for change, when it is combined with a strong argument about what changes are most likely to produce the desired results. For example, CIJE data on the background and training of teachers, combined with current theories of teacher training, serve as the basis for important new initiatives in teacher professional development in Jewish education.

While this type of project would not evaluate CIJE directly, it could serve an evaluative purpose in the sense that when change occurs in the right direction, CIJE's mission is being accomplished. For the most part the project would not assess CIJE's broad vision for Jewish life in North America, because that vision is too far removed from education and from "hard data" to be feasibly measured at this time. However, it would examine progress towards CIJE's vision in education, which is at the core of CIJE's vision.

Focus on the Community Level

There are three main reasons for emphasizing the community level in the study of Indicators. The first is substantive: The community is the most likely site of influential policies. National policies often have little impact on individuals, and policies of specific programs and institutions, while very important for members, typically do not have implications beyond their walls. At the community level, however, there is potential for concrete policies to affect a large number of people across a variety of denominations, programs, and institutions. In Baltimore, for example, a community-wide incentives program has increased the extent of professional development among supplementary school teachers (Gamoran et al., in press). In Seattle, new funding has subsidized day school tuition, and an Indicators project would allow comparisons of enrollment over time and across communities with different funding policies.

The second reason to focus on communities is that substantial data are already available. A number of communities have conducted demographic surveys, some repeatedly. In addition, some version of the CIJE educators survey has been conducted in Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Seattle, and other communities may be added in the near future. Also, survey data on professional development programs are available for Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland, Hartford, Milwaukee, and San Francisco.

The third reason is related to the second: Data collection at the community level is more feasible than at the national level. Existing data will not be enough for the indicators project, so some new data will need to be collected. The community offers a reasonable frame for survey methods.

The communal focus also has limitations. Most important, it hinders the generalizability of the Indicators. Many small communities will not be represented, and unless New York is one of the communities, the degree to which New York's situation is adequately represented by surveys from other communities is not known. This limitation can be partially addressed by using national data when available. Demographic information and rates of participation in Jewish education can be taken from the National Jewish Population Survey and compared with community data to give some sense of the generalizability of the community data.

Use of Cross-Sections

Rather than following a single cohort of individuals over time, we recommend gathering data on cross-sections of individuals repeatedly over time. Repeated cross-sections are needed to monitor change in the state of Jewish education. For example, cross-sections could reveal whether rates of enrollment in religious education beyond the age of bar mitzvah are increasing or not.

Following a single cohort would show how the experiences of individuals changed over the life course, but would not indicate whether Jewish education or its outcomes are changing over time.

Large surveys often allow examination of multiple cohorts. For example, the National Jewish Population Survey has been used to show that intermarriage rates are rising, by documenting the increasing chances of intermarriage for persons born in later years. Thus, a single survey can yield data on successive cohorts, up to the time the survey is administered.

The disadvantage to cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data on individuals is that cause and effect cannot be demonstrated. One might observe a rise in enrollment and a decline in intermarriage and infer a causal connection, but this conclusion would be far more speculative than that based on a study of comparable individuals whose enrollment and marriage decisions were followed over time.

Next Steps

A list of proposed indicators is provided below. This proposal implies four "Next Steps":

- (1) Compile existing data from communities into a coherent data base. Need to [a] identify communities with appropriate data; [b] acquire the data. This includes CIJE data on educators and on professional development. Timeline: Fall 1997 - Spring 1998.
- (2) Repeat the survey from the CIJE Study of Educators in Milwaukee (Spring 1998) and Atlanta and Baltimore (Fall 1998). This would be five years after the original survey, and it would provide trend data in addition to the baseline for these cities. Consider additional surveys in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Cleveland for 1999, where surveys similar to the CIJE survey have been administered. Timeline: Spring - Fall 1998, and beyond.
- (3) Consider gathering new data where data are currently unavailable. Need to prioritize -- which data are most essential? Timeline: Ongoing.
- (4) Articulate a theory of change. Need to explain more fully why these indicators are most essential, and how the indicators are linked to one another. CIJE already has a theory of change - it needs to be made explicit in the context of the indicators. Timeline: Ongoing.

Proposed Indicators

I. NATIONAL/CONTINENTAL

A. Currently available (all by cohort)

1. Inter marriage rates
2. Participation in any Jewish education
3. Participation in day school
4. Years of Jewish education

B. Not currently available

1. Jewish summer camp attended (by name of camp)
2. Children in Jewish early childhood education
3. Private foundation contributions to Jewish education

II. COMMUNITY

A. Currently available for selected communities from community surveys

1. Various demographics
2. Contributions to Federation
3. Percentage of Federation allocation to Jewish education

B. Currently available for selected communities from CIJE surveys

1. Characteristics of teachers in Jewish schools
2. Characteristics of educational leaders
3. Characteristics of professional development programs

C. Not currently available

1. Participation rates (overall and post-bar-mitzvah)
2. Content in formal and informal Jewish education
3. Learning outcomes for participants in Jewish education
4. Attitudinal outcomes for participants in Jewish education

Synthesis of Consultations on the Leading Indicators Project

We held four consultations with a variety of experts to help with our planning and development in the Leading Indicators Project. Aside from CIJE staff, participants in the consultations were non-overlapping. They brought to the consultations a broad range of specialized knowledge in areas of general education, Jewish education, evaluation, and survey methods. A list of consultations and participants is attached. In addition to those listed, we held an individual meeting with Harold Himmelfarb, a sociologist and author of a well-known study on the effects of Jewish education, who currently works for the U.S. Department of Education. Of those persons deemed most important for our consultations, the only one we did not see was Steven M. Cohen of Hebrew University's Melton Centre. We hope to speak with him at a later date.

Despite the diversity of participants, several common themes emerged in the consultations:

1) Overall there was substantial enthusiasm for the idea of an Indicators project. Almost all participants thought the project could serve a mobilization purpose; that is, by providing essential, basic information about the current state of Jewish education and ongoing changes, the Indicators could stimulate interest and support for policy decisions about Jewish education.

The strongest cautionary views were expressed by Len Saxe at the Research Network consultation. In Saxe's judgment, the most pressing issues are at the community level, and Indicator data may not be rich enough or sensitive enough to context to help the communities.

2) While not totally dismissing the value of indicators, Saxe's argument tilted strongly towards the community as the most important level of analysis. This emphasis is consistent with the views of many of the participants in all four consultations. The community is the most essential level of analysis for a variety of reasons: a) It is the locus of funding decisions; b) Individuals participate in a variety of institutions within a given community; c) Most existing survey data are at the community level.

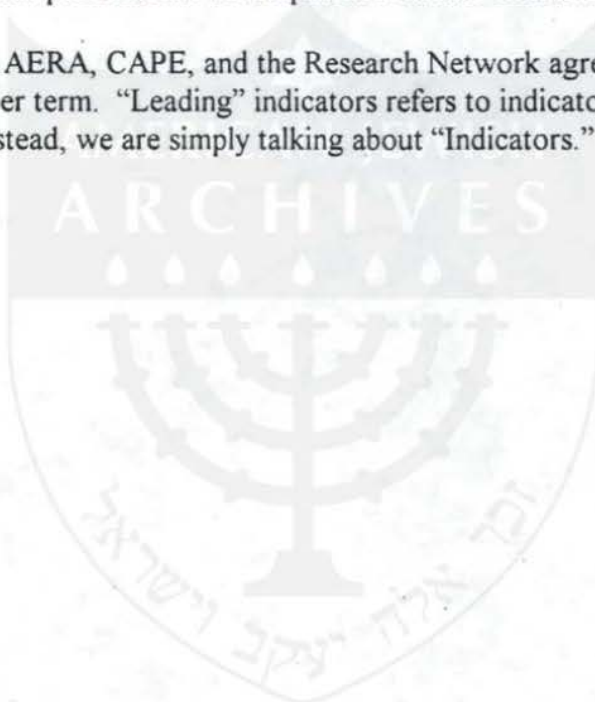
3) Although many participants asked whether the Indicator study was *supposed* to be an evaluation of CIJE's work, few if any of the participants thought that it *should* be (except indirectly, in the sense that if Jewish educational indicators are moving in the right direction, CIJE's mission is being accomplished). Close evaluation of CIJE's work would not, for the most part, yield Indicator data of broad interest (e.g., the TEI evaluation), and Indicators that have wide relevance are too far removed from specific CIJE initiatives to constitute direct evaluation of CIJE. Most participants thought that gathering Indicator data would be a valuable activity, but it would not be a direct evaluation of CIJE.

4) Some causal inference, or at least speculation, is possible with Indicators data. However, demonstrating causal effects should not be the main focus of the Indicators study. Data that can serve adequately for causal analysis would likely be too narrow and restricted to serve the broad purpose of Indicators. For example, an in-depth study of a single cohort over time would not show how Jewish institutions and the Jewish population are changing over time.

5) Participants at the Professors consultation and at the CAPE consultation commented that the "CIJE Draft Visions" are not appropriate as the starting point for an Indicators study. The draft visions are too "soft" (i.e. hard to measure), too abstract, too value-oriented, and too distant from education. Instead, theories about quality in education should be considered as the basis for developing Indicators.

6) Participants noted a need for a theory, conceptual framework, or "causal maps" that would link the Indicators to one another. To make even the most speculative causal inferences possible, a set of theoretical connections is essential. For example, we have a theory that certain types of professional development are more effective than other types. We can use this theory to decide on the indicators of the quality of professional development. Admittedly, however, this does not test the hypothesis that such professional development is in fact effective.

7) Finally, participants at AERA, CAPE, and the Research Network agreed that "Leading" Indicators is not the proper term. "Leading" indicators refers to indicators used for forecasting, usually in economics. Instead, we are simply talking about "Indicators."



Participants in Consultations on the Leading Indicators Project

February 2, 1997: The CIJE Professors Seminar

Adam Gamoran
Ellen Goldring
Gail Dorph
Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Bill Firestone
Barry Holtz
Fran Jacobs
Barbara Neufeld
Anna Richert
Susan Stodolsky

March 27, 1997: AERA

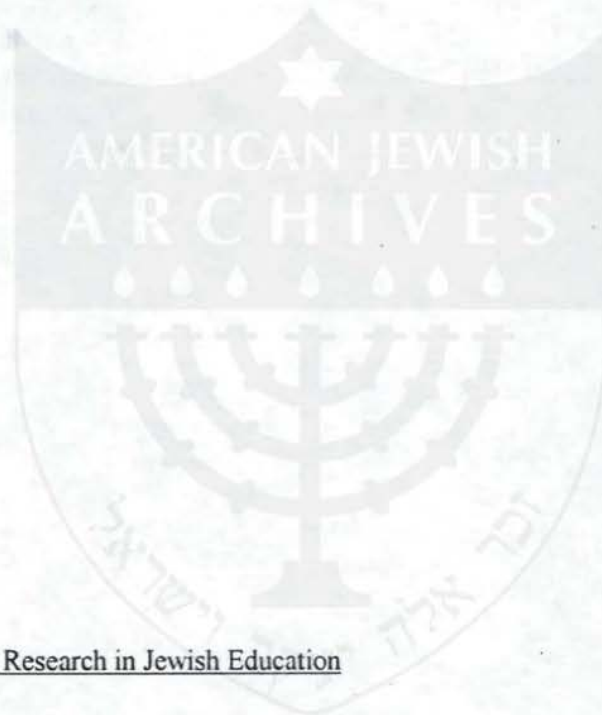
Adam Gamoran
Ellen Goldring
Bill Robinson
Henry Levin
Aaron Pallas
Barbara Schneider
Lee Shulman
Rafe Stolzenberg

May 22, 1997: CAPE

Adam Gamoran
Hadar Harris
Annette Hochstein
Michael Inbar

June 2, 1997: Network for Research in Jewish Education

Adam Gamoran
Bill Robinson
Isa Aron
Jonathan Golden
Barry Holtz
Bethamie Horowitz
Leora Isaacs
Sherry Israel
Joan Kaye
Alisa Rubin Kurshan
Dan Pekarsky
Len Saxe
Lifsa Schachter
Rob Toren
Jonathan Woocher



CIJE Professors Seminar
Leading Indicators Discussion
2/2/97

The session began with Adam and Ellen introducing the project. Ellen had prepared a handout that included a list of discussion questions as well as the CIJE "Draft Vision Outcomes" and the Leading Indicator project schedule. A preliminary discussion was encouraged to clarify the issues that might be involved, followed by small group discussions led by Ellen and Adam, followed by a reporting and summary discussion.

Preliminary Discussion

The first question that came up was, "Is the purpose of this project to evaluate CIJE, or to examine the health of the Jewish community?" While the main purpose is the latter, discussion suggested the two purposes might not be mutually exclusive. If the indicators are widely discussed and valued, then that would be an impact of CIJE, in shaping the agenda. The project is not seen as one that uncovers causal relations, but rather as taking the pulse of North American Jewry. The group recognized that movement one way or another on indicators may have nothing to do with what any particular organization is doing. Furthermore, the CIJE lay board does not see this project as a way to evaluate whether CIJE's funds are being spent well.

Still, there are links between potential indicators and CIJE's efforts. Sue Stodolsky commented that assessments could be incorporated that are not the visions of outcomes, but are linked to outcomes in the long run. Some indicators could be more immediate, others could be longer term. In this way indicators could assess the sequence of change, and link the indicators to evaluation.

Bill Firestone noted that this list of outcomes (the CIJE "Draft Vision Outcomes") is not the type of list that people normally use to study outcomes; it is softer and more value-oriented than would typically be used. We need to get from these outcomes to indicators, and how to do that is not obvious.

At this point there was some discussion of whether it is worthwhile to take on the enterprise. The general sense was that more needs to be considered before the question of worth can be answered.

Anna Richert suggested that a Leading Indicators study helps define what we care about, what matters in the world. Sharon Nemser noted the following possible purposes for the project:

- engage people
- raise consciousness
- stimulate discussion
- put forth a vision

Sue Stodolsky wondered, what scale of effort would be required? What is the resource base already? Part of the project could be coordinating what is already going on.

With this framework for discussion, we moved to small groups.

Ellen's Small Group

The group began by thinking about a systematic way to look at the task of considering leading indicators. The group focused on a discussion of 'causal maps' rather than a list of indicators. That is, we reviewed the list and there seemed to be two "types" of indicators. One type refers to process, inputs or 'opportunity to learn' indicators. These are processes or opportunities that would have to be in place, but they are not outcomes. The second type of indicator is the outcome. For example, leadership and renewal are processes that should lead to outcomes, such as centrality of learning. The discussion centered on the need to have a set of hypotheses, or causal maps about how processes and inputs are related to the outcomes.

The group then discussed the difficulty of the task. There is not a body of knowledge or previous examples of how to measure the outcomes. There are numerous methodological issues that are suggested when using the term leading indicator, such as representation of the population. There would need to be both quantitative and qualitative methods used.

Because of these difficulties, the group discussed the idea of beginning with a pilot approach in the 3 lead communities. The data would be collected as community profiles on 'leading indicators'. The community profiles would be packaged in such a way so that communities could collect much of the data themselves. The data could include data from institutions (institutional profiles), as well as data from the community, such as surveys of families, unaffiliated, etc. The initial data collected could focus on the 'opportunities to learn', the inputs and processes. While this data were being collected, groups of experts and clients' could be working simultaneously to develop measures to collect outcome data. Furthermore, the project should rely on existing data already available.

Adam's Small Group

Discussion began by asking what criteria one might use to prioritize the outcomes, if one wanted to develop Leading Indicators. The group identified four criteria: intrinsic merit, centrality to CIJE, feasibility of gathering information, and uniqueness to CIJE. We discovered that all the outcomes were high on intrinsic merit, so that criteria was not useful for prioritizing. We spent most of our time going through the list and rating each outcome as high, medium, or low on each of the other criteria (see below). Participants felt that the Professors Group can offer helpful advice on this project.

	<u>Intrinsic Merit</u>	<u>Centrality to CIJE</u>	<u>Feasibility</u>	<u>Uniqueness to CIJE</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1. Centrality of learning	high	high	medium	medium	cognitive/experiential -- JESNA?
2. Jewish identity	high	low	medium	low	CJF survey (connec to Judaism hard to assess)
3. Moral passion	high	low	medium/low	low	important to federations
4. Jewish values	high	high	low	high	affective domain -- possible to meas
5. Pluralism	high	low	low	high	what is the unit?
6. Involvement/commitment	high	high	high	low	cities have own data
7. Intensity/energy	high	???	low	medium	eg-JCC camps w/ no Jewish content
8. Relationship with Israel	high	low	high	low	can't leave it out--coordinate info
9. Leadership	high	high	medium	medium	eg- \$ for Jewish ed, #lay involved in continuity, #prof ed leaders
10. Continuous renewal	high	high	medium/low	high	the methodology of CIJE

Summary Discussion

Following a period of reporting out from the small groups, a summary discussion ensued:

Adam: Thinking less about what we could collect, but what exactly could be collected...use other work that is going on and coordinate with Synagogue 2000, Population data

Fran: concerned about how other people would view our numbers and what does it mean to put the CIJE name on it?

Bill: if start with opportunity to learn and then work with indicators and then work on a package, over time one would move out from 3 communities to others and have a methodology that could sell to other communities. Need a research staff to do this.

The two small groups just focused on different aspects of leading indicators.

Concerned about being inclusive. Many of these need the traditionally-defined affiliated communities. Need some way to "get out of the box"

Talking about major investments for all of these indicators because of the instruments that need to be developed.

Is this a worth while way to think about this? Or are there other ways?

Is this what CIJE should be assessing? This was a good way to frame what CIJE should be looking at within a larger agenda. But should CIJE put more effort into evaluating CIJE and its programs first, before embarking on the LI project?

Maybe what we need to look at is not what the successes are, but what the problems are. Indicators are important for a lot of things including telling us where we need to focus our energies.

Need to look at "improving personnel" -- what does that mean? What would it look like? Do we need to make it look bigger, sexier? We don't really know what improving personnel means.

We need to articulate what the projects are. Each project within organization would have to attend to these goals. How is the program designed to achieve these goals? This means that the notion of indicators is something different.

Two types of efforts may be required for the Leading Indicators project:

- pulling together information that is already available or being collected, influencing what data are being collected by others
- collecting new data
 - this might be thought of in two dimensions:

scope (national, community)
method (quantit, qualit)

May 12, 1997

To: Members of the CIJE Indicator Task Force Committee

From: Barbara Schneider

Re: Notes and Interpretations of the AERA meeting Chicago, Spring 1997

During the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, in Chicago this past spring, a small committee met to discuss the feasibility of designing an indicator project that would focus on issues related to Jewish education and identity. The charge to the committee, consisting of Adam Gamoran, Ellen Goldring, Henry Levin, Aaron Pallas, Barbara Schneider, Lee Schulman, and Rafe Stolzenberg, was to examine the possibility of developing indicators of the presence and quality of Jewish life in North American, including but not limited to how the various components of the Jewish educational system--religious day school programs, after-school programs, and so on--affect the development of a Jewish identity. Ellen and Adam explained that CIJE is currently working with three communities, in Atlanta, Baltimore and Milwaukee. At this time, it is not entirely clear as to whether the indicator project should focus on designing a project around these three communities, other selected communities, or the nation as a whole. Even though CIJE's efforts have been targeted on a limited number of locations, these somewhat smaller efforts should not necessarily preclude the option of undertaking a more extensive indicator project that would be national in scope. Committee members were urged to think about a wide range of projects, some of them somewhat modest and others that may be more ambitious ventures. The assignment was to come up with several different strategies for undertaking an indicator project.

As for what the substance of the indicators would be, the committee was instructed to assume that we know what it is we want to accomplish and there is a large group of talented professionals driving improvements and innovations in education. The first question the committee was asked to address is: How do we begin to think about measuring where we are and whether or not we are making progress toward reaching certain moral goals? Second, should we be taking the "pulse" of the Jewish community every some odd years to generate a baseline of

information that could be compared over time? The thought was such a project might resemble the new national goals projects, and we would be able to discern for example, whether more individuals were attending religious services, more individuals were involved in continuing Jewish education programs, more young people were engaged in Jewish summer experiences or trips to Israel, more individuals were willing to identify themselves as practicing Jews rather than ethnic Jews.

The notion of defining the scope of an indicator project is central. Some of the important points made regarding what should be examined include the following:

First, the project should probably not be an evaluation of CIJE or its agenda, but rather a set of questions that are self-standing and that have long term consequences. The first task would be to develop some base line measures that seem reasonable and can help to inform how our Jewish educational institutions do their work.

Second, if the project is looking for indicators, such as a change in the community as a whole, then the items should be constructed around themes that were practical and could be designed and fielded in a relatively short period of time. For example, it would be difficult to study the effect of elementary Jewish education on the Jewish community overall. However, it would be relatively straightforward to study the impact current Jewish elementary education programs are having on the identity formation of Jewish adults, adolescents, and children.

Third, studying indicators abstractly can be problematic. A case could be made that designing indicators around the intervention sites would give a clearer view of what the goals of the project are and if they are observable in the community.

Fourth, that designing indicators that are just descriptive of the Jewish community right now could be very informative--a kind of Jewish population study. This effort would be broader in scope not focused on programs but informative on other kinds of issues. For example, are Jewish teachers in Jewish schools increasingly receiving richer Judaic educational experiences? What proportion of the Jewish community is pursuing Jewish studies courses in higher education, as either majors or minors. From information like this we could monitor the seriousness with which the community is in fact developing an intellectual base for its future. Along these lines, one of the interesting things to monitor would be the growth of Jewish studies programs at colleges and universities and investments in these programs over a specific time period, such as five or ten years. This type of question might best be asked at the institutional level.

Fifth, it is important to have indicators that encompass both attitudinal and behavioral measures. It is the combination of both type of items that will make the indicator project richer in scope and depth. From individuals and targeted institutions it should be possible to obtain information of levels of religious and education participation. However, only through individuals can we obtain attitudinal and identity information.

With respect to designing an indicator project, several different options were considered. First, a project somewhat more limited in scope, would be to survey the Jewish families in the three communities who are being served by the current CIJE intervention programs. Some of the benefits of this design are that the questions could focus in part on some of the CIJE activities, the response rate of the families would likely be high, and the operational costs for undertaking such an effort would be considerably less than a national sample. The disadvantages are that it would not be a random sample of Jewish families in the U.S., the questions may be repetitive of present CIJE evaluation plans and activities, and some of the broader questions certain members of the committee were interested in asking--such as those targeted at higher education institutions--would be inappropriate for this subpopulation.

The advantages of a national design, particularly one that is stratified by region, and population, would be generalizability of results, broader base of questions, and possible linkages with other surveys (i.e. this last point could also be accomplished with the three-community design). The major disadvantage of a broad national survey is the considerable cost of drawing the sample, fielding the enterprise, and analyzing results. Another disadvantage may be that the work of other surveys is replicated. Thus, special care would have to be made to ensure that this project was gathering unique information and that information could be linked with other efforts.

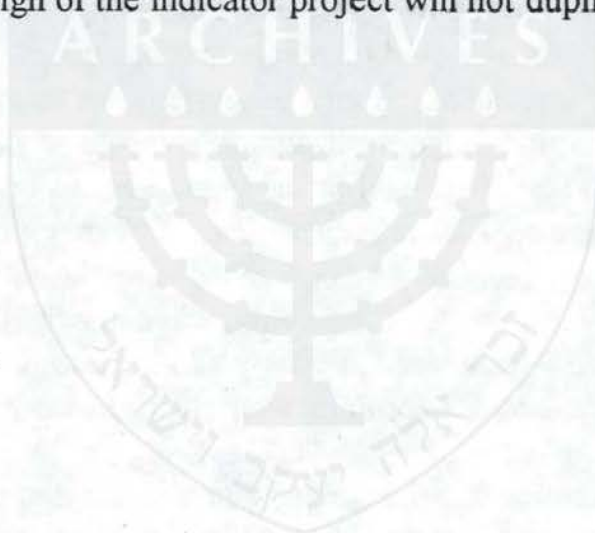
Costs could be minimized by designing supplements that could be attached to current surveys. Presently there are national population and educational surveys that would allow for supplements. Broad national surveys could be conducted on individuals or on institutions. If one of the criteria of the sampling frame was for example, type of religious synagogue--reform, conservative, orthodox, then the design could be a two stage effort whereby the institutions were selected and a number of families or individuals within those institutions would be surveyed.

There is also a third type of design, one that is built around a purposive sample of communities or institutions. In this case, the project selects a particular community or set of institutions and surveys them intensively. The disadvantage of this method is the lack of generalizability to the nation as a whole. However,

purposive samples that are selected with specific criteria can sometimes be more informative than national studies where the questions tend to be very broad.

Overall it would appear that the committee agreed that an indicator project would be useful and the extent of its usefulness would be colored by the type of questions being asked and the scope of the population being surveyed. The notion of nested surveys where individuals and institutions, such as synagogues or various types of religious schools, are surveyed in tandem, seemed particularly appealing. The possibility of a separate higher education survey would probably be best handled as a supplement to national higher education institutional surveys currently being conducted. Cost is a major consideration and will undoubtedly influence the design of the project.

As for next steps, it was suggested that CIJE staff examine current national Jewish surveys and other national surveys to see what type of information is presently being obtained. This review should include not only the range of questions but the sampling frame used to obtain the information. This first step will ensure that the questions and design of the indicator project will not duplicate the efforts of others.



CIJE Indicators Project
Summary of Consultation at CAPE
May 22, 1997

Participants: Annette Hochstein, Mike Inbar, Adam Gamoran, Hadar Harris (CAPE staff)

Adam began the meeting with a brief introduction to the Indicators Project. Mike, Annette, and Hadar had previously reviewed summaries of earlier consultations (CIJE "professors" and educational researchers).

Mike began his response by asking for clarification about the issue of cohorts. He noted that often, much of the variation that occurs in a social phenomenon is between cohorts rather than within cohorts. This indeed seems to be important for Jewish life in the diaspora. For example, most of the variation in intermarriage lies between cohorts. Hence, for an indicator project that purports to measure the status of the Jewish population on an ongoing basis, it is essential to include information from successive cohorts.

Mike also recommended that we create a group to review what indicator data exists already in North America, as a way to get the project started. Availability of such information would be part of a plan that could be presented to CIJE decision makers before the Indicators project begins in earnest. Possible sources of information include Brandeis (Sylvia Barack Fishman?), CCNY (Kosmin?), Stanford (Shulman, Lipset?).

Annette suggested that because the "draft visions" are very abstract and removed from education, they cannot provide good measures of what Jewish education can or will accomplish. Many other factors are involved in Jewish life, so the "draft visions" do not necessarily indicate the success or lack of success of education.

Annette and Mike urged us to present proposed indicators to a high-level group of decision-makers and clients. This would include key lay leaders and persons who deal with policy for Jewish education. We should obtain response and input from such a group.

In addition to advice about the Indicators Project from CIJE staff and lay leaders, we should get input from experts in Jewish educational research, with particular focus on standards of content for Jewish education. Barry Holtz and Seymour Fox would be good contributors.

We discussed the issue of causality. Mike noted that data-gathering always involves assumptions about causality; the question is at what level is causality assumed, and where can it be demonstrated. Adam asked for clarification, using the issue of teacher professional development: We assume pd leads to better teaching and more learning, but we do not try to demonstrate it. Mike agreed that it is difficult to show the causal link between pd and student learning. But suppose someone said, why is 5 hours of pd better than 1 hour? Causality might be inferred from changes in the extent of pd that coincide with other trends, such as increases in participation in Jewish education, or a stronger content focus in Jewish schools, etc. Causality is not demonstrated but can be inferred.

Adam raised CIJE's concern that such limited attention to causality does not answer the "big questions," e.g. does pd reduce intermarriage, etc. Mike explained that any action potentially has immediate consequences and a chain of consequences. It is impossible to study everything at once. Now, a decision-making group might legitimately say that if you can't study the whole chain at once, the project is not worthwhile. On the other hand, it is also legitimate to say, here's what we can do today. (Mike told a nice allegory to illustrate this point which I will pass on!) Mike commented that there probably is no doubt about the notion that we can influence the quality of education through teachers and teacher training. If this is agreed upon, then indicators about personnel and training seem warranted.

Annette noted that in the past, no real indicator data has been available. Community data collection has been of inconsistent (mostly low) quality. The CIJE Educators Survey and the NJPS are important new sources of data. More elementary, baseline data are needed. Annette urged us to gather baseline data on the quality of education, focusing on the presence or absence of Jewish content in educational settings. Basic data on this are needed.

Adam raised the question of levels of analysis. Annette suggested that for some questions, we may want to focus on specific institutions or programs, and for others we might focus on communities and the continent as a whole. As an alternative to the continent as a whole, we might focus on selected communities. This would allow us to interpret the indicators with a richer knowledge base about the specific communities. We discussed the issue of selecting a representative community. Annette suggested that most issues are common to many communities, allowing for variation in geography, size, and composition (% orthodox). This could be explored with analyses of the NJPS, although within-community sample sizes may not be large enough. We might also compare communities using recent community surveys.

Both Mike and Annette advised us to keep the Indicator Project separate from the evaluation of CIJE. The purpose of the indicator study is to provide information for CIJE (and other) decision-makers about the health of the Jewish community. Indicators are not well suited to adjudicating between alternative sources of success. For example, if teachers are better trained, is that because of TEI? Or because of the JTS education school? But this debate is beside the point.

Mike added that CIJE is one of the institutions of North American Jewry. Would you design indicators to measure the effectiveness of the U.S. Congress? No. Later on, it may be possible to connect the evaluation of CIJE with the indicators. For example, if professional development is effective, then one could say CIJE is effective because it has enhanced professional development.

What are indicators used for? Mike suggested that indicators provide information for decisions.

Adam summarized the implications of the meeting:

1. There should be a systematic review of available data, particularly community-level data.

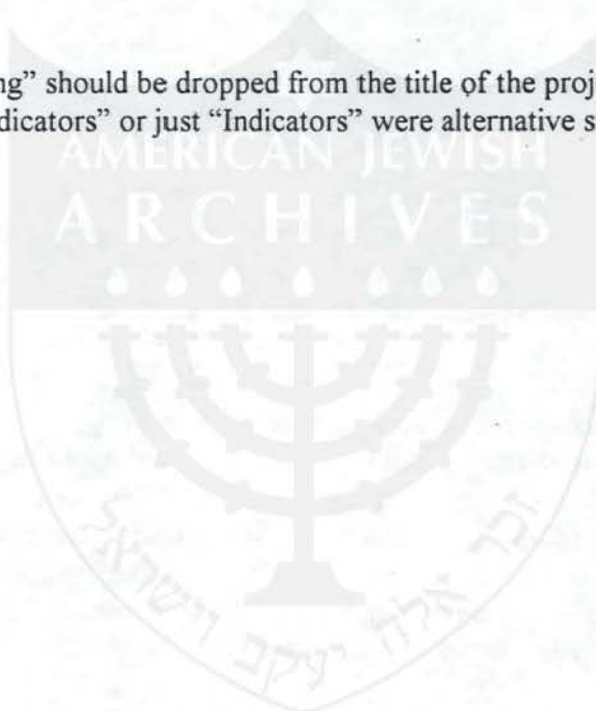
2. The project should start with available data.

- A. CIJE data on educators and p.d.
- B. Links to community data
- c. Links to the NJPS

3. What is the highest priority for new data? Annette's view is that the top priority should be to find out what is going on in the educational settings (e.g. classrooms) of selected institutions in selected communities.

The process for this is to prepare a proposal outlining these activities. The proposal to present indicators as alternatives to the "draft visions." It should include, in an appendix, a listing of available data.

Mike agreed that "Leading" should be dropped from the title of the project. "Criterion Indicators," "Selected Indicators" or just "Indicators" were alternative suggestions.



LEADING INDICATOR CONSULTATION
Network for Research in Jewish Education Conference
Hebrew College, Boston -- June 2, 1997

IN ATTENDANCE:

Isa Aron (HUC-LA), Adam Gamoran, Jonathan Golden (Hebrew College - Graduate student), Barry Holtz, Bethamie Horowitz (NY UJA-Federation, Leora Isaacs (JESNA), Sherry Israel (Brandeis), Joan Kaye (Orange County BJE), Alisa Rubin Kurshan (NY UJA-Federation), Danny Pekarsky, Alex Pomson (York University, Graduate student), Bill Robinson, Leonard Saxe (Brandeis, Heller School), Lifsa Schacter (Cleveland College), Rob Toren (Cleveland BJE), and Jonathan Woocher (JESNA).

SUMMARY:

After Adam described the intended project, the group indicated that it wanted to begin with the first question -- Is the LI project a worthwhile idea? Most of the conversation centered on this question and a second question -- What types of data would be worthwhile to collect? Three primary conclusions can be drawn from the consultation:

1. While there was not widespread agreement, there was some sentiment that it would be important to collect certain types of data from a national sample, now. While we may not know for certain what the key indicators of the health of Jewish life or Jewish learning are, twenty years from now we will kick ourselves for not having collected data on these indicators. So we need to make our best guess. The participants gave two examples of this type of data: (a) the number of Jewish schools and their locations, (a) participation rates in (certain) programs.
2. We should make use of already existing means of gathering data, such as NJPS and community demographic studies. Instead of spending new resources, we should influence these studies to include questions that will gather the information that we deem important (see point #1 above). [Note: There may be no nation-wide studies of Jewish institutions currently being done.]
3. Before engaging in any new, nation-wide research, we should work with a community to build an inductive understanding of what is important to measure and how to measure it in ways that are valid and reliable. In addition, as several participants asserted (including Saxe and Horowitz), the appropriate level of analysis is the community (not the individual, the institution, or the nation).

MINUTES:

Saxe:

I'm not sure if it is a worthwhile idea. It will take a long time and a lot of money and won't provide answers to questions that are pressing on us in the next three years.

[In his own work:] Given changes in the management and collection of data [on issues like crime where collection is required by law], it became difficult to compare data sets over time.

Borrowing a line from James Carville, "It's the context, stupid!" We need to study people in community, not as individuals. The question is: What data can be collected in communities, where community people can be involved and feel ownership?

Horowitz:

We know too much about individuals in a behavioristic way and not enough about institutions ... though it would be nice to hand funders a book with lots of exact data that we don't know yet.

I agree with him [Saxe] on collecting community-level data. You need to be able to talk about "New York - ness." Yet, [we should also be aware that] people are mobile, so we also need national data.

Toren

As was said earlier, all education is local. This [LI] may not pick up institutional, cultural changes that occur, for instance, in ECE. In Cleveland, we are grappling with how this [our work] may have an impact on parents or kids. [We suspect that] the important "engagements" of Jewish education may be different than in public school. Perhaps, [we should] track cohorts of families, beginning with those first entering into the system, and ask them how are they making sense of Jewish communal life.

Woocher

Change should drive research and not vice-versa. We need to look at what people are trying to achieve and direct our research at this -- collect data in places where they are trying to create change.

Nevertheless, there is a paucity of basic data, like the # of schools in the U.S., and where that are.

Israel

Be careful about making connections. We don't have much belief that teacher-training will lead to increased student commitment [in contrast to

student knowledge]. We don't know what the factors are that will make a difference [to be able] to know what indicators to choose.

Schacter

[There's a] problem with treating the field [of Jewish education] as if its an undifferentiated field. For instance, give how schools define "rich Jewish heritage" differently, you can't create a standard that applies to all groups. This raises the possibility of needing different indicators.

Aron

[The outcome of] "life-long learning" is different from the others. [It may be worthwhile to measure.] "Knowledge" is complicated [to operationalize]. "Teachers" raises the question of impact on students. [Perhaps, for life-long learning focus on] what and how are they learning, and in what contexts? Attach a NJPS question on this.

Horowitz

"Informal education" may also be similarly worthwhile.

Israel

If it is about the vitality of Jewish life, limiting it to "learning" leaves out many Jews.

Saxe

[In response:] That is a different issue. The question is: Is it an indicator of change?

Aron

[It would be] interesting to see which programs are sustained over time.

Saxe

[In response:] But, this is not an indicator.

Isaacs

The United Way makes a distinction between outputs and outcome. Outputs are like indicators, being clearly defined measures. Outcomes tell us what the outputs mean. An example of an output is the # of families participating in family education. An example of [a corresponding] outcome is the impact of the program on the families.

Pekarsky

[In other words..] What are the indicators indicators of?

Gamoran

The U.S. Dept. of Education tends to use "outputs."

Israel

Do the indicators (i.e., formal training of teachers) lead to impacts on students?

Holtz

There are things in the simple collection of data that are useful. In regard to Jon Woocher's comment, you could separate out some core/basic data that it seems bad that we don't know and common sense tells us this is good or bad news (e.g., participation rates, such as Bar/Bat Mitzvah schools). These would be an indicator of something; but what that something is we have to learn.

[Some conversation on the issue of "leading" indicator and what that means -- the same thing we discussed in Chicago.]

Saxe

Unemployment has been considered a leading indicator, but over the last few years it has not predicted inflation which we thought was well-connected to it. Yet, our understanding of what the indicator is has remained clear and stable.

I'd rather see us inductively build this up by doing community studies -- how communities experiment with notions of how to develop these indicators. And, community involvement should help with the validity and usefulness of the indicators.

Aron

At the very least, some of us should be involved with the people constructing the NJPS to make sure that the questions are the best.

[Horowitz and Israel are on the advisory(?) committee of the NJPS.]

Woocher

From the point of view of those who will write our history, they will think that not collecting this data is a travesty. There are trends, like adult learning, that are important to monitor. But, from a change perspective, if we know that the #'s increased, so what? If there was a close link between professional development and student learning, then we may regret this.

Kaye

What makes a vital Jewish community and what do they need to do to become vital? We need to look at this. Some communities are established, but others -

like Orange County - are not established communities.

Schacter

We are steps away from collecting useful indicators. What steps should we take?

Saxe

[We should engage in] community-based research projects, were we study what's going on and let the community's agenda drive some of the questions.

BILL ROBINSON'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE THREE PRIMARY CONCLUSIONS

1. Collect some data now.

Participation rates seems to be a particularly likely measure that we would want to know about now and in twenty years. While participation in "bad" programs may not lead to more educated and committed Jews, I would assert that participation is a necessary, though not sufficient, factor in creating more educated and committed Jews. The key criteria for deciding what data to collect may be -- What are the necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for improving Jewish education?

Yet, collecting this data may not be as easy as we think. To use "participation rates" as an example, three problems confront us:

For what programs or institutions would we collect participation rates and which would we exclude? In other words, what counts as "Jewish education"?

What counts as "participation"? Showing up to one event in a series of events? Paying the membership fee (affiliation), regardless of attendance? Graduation (if there is such a concept in place)? How we measure "participation" affects the meaning and significance of the indicator.

Will institutions turn over their participation rates? Federation funding and denomination dues are tied to participation and affiliation rates. While assuring the anonymity of local institutions or programs may be a "rational" way of overcome some resistance, people are not always rational. Connected to this -- What obligation would we have to individual communities or institutions to share the data?

I think the second problem -- What counts as participation? -- is the most

difficult to resolve. This leads to Saxe's suggestion that we need to spend time working with and in communities in order to understand what measures will actually indicate what we want to know.

2. Make use of what is already being done

There are three types of research that are common in the Jewish world: national-level studies (such as the NJPS); community demographic and marketing studies (being conducted by Federations); and program or initiative evaluations (an example of the latter is New York's grant program). The question that confronts us is: How do we influence these studies to include questions that will gather the information that we deem important?

NATIONAL-LEVEL STUDIES -- We should place ourselves on the advisory(?) board of the NJPS and other such national surveys.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL STUDIES -- We should work cooperatively with the CJF to offer our services on request to communities, which want to engage in a demographic study, to assist them in constructing appropriate instruments and methodologies.

PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE EVALUATIONS -- We should NOT get involved in doing program evaluation, outside of CIJE initiatives. However, we should work with one or two communities in evaluating the totality of their work.

3. Work with one community in order to learn

At the "post-conference" program, teams from Boston and New York discussed the evaluation work they are doing for the family education initiative and continuity grants initiative, respectively. They focused on the difficulties inherent in this type of work -- (1) how the competing perspectives and interests of researchers, practitioners, and planners affect the content, form, and feasibility of the evaluation, and (2) how do evaluate 58 programs taking place in different institutions with different contents and goals (New York)?
[THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY ALL THAT THE POST CONFERENCE WAS ABOUT!]

If we undertake this work, it should be done with a community that is "evaluation-ready." If attendance at this conference is any indication, then only Boston, New York, and Cleveland (who sent three people) are "evaluation-ready." Since Boston is working with Brandeis (Susan Shevitz) and New York has sufficient in-house capacity and the advice of JESNA, that leaves our buddies in Cleveland. [Notably, Lifsa asked me at the Conference and when I saw her in Cleveland last month to help her think about how to evaluate the work of the College.]