



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**  
A DIVISION OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

**MS-831: Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980-2011.**

Series F: CIJE Accrual, 1981-2011, undated.  
Subseries 2: Dan Pekarsky, 1981-2011, undated.

---

Box  
76

Folder  
9

JCC Jewish educators project. Planning documents, 2002.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the  
[American Jewish Archives](http://AmericanJewishArchives.org) website.

## **JEWISH JOURNEYS: BOUNDARIES AND/OR SHARED ELEMENTS**

For the moment, assume that the kind of Jewish journey that JCCs should be inspiring is “an enthusiastically undertaken succession of experiences, leading to seeking out additional experiences, that offer the person engaged in them opportunities to grow as a Jewish human being.”

In the spirit of the JCC’s very pluralistic character, this definition is open-ended with respect to what counts as “growth”: it might include attitudes, interests, skills, understandings, practices, or self-understandings, etc. JCCs that operate with this understanding of Jewish journeys can be compared to the kinds of educational institutions John Dewey supported: institutions with encouraged people to grow in varied directions via varied means. **BUT:** Dewey (like some of the most thoughtful spokespersons for public schools) insist 1) that certain forms (directions of) growth are undesirable and should therefore not be encouraged, and 2) that however different the growth-trajectories that people embark on, there are certain common elements (beliefs, understandings, attitudes, commitments, etc.) that we should try to encourage in **everyone!** With this in mind, consider the following questions.

**Assuming the definition of “Jewish Journeys” identified above:**

- 1. Are there certain kinds of Jewish journeys that JCCs should not be encouraging (or should actively discourage)?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Would you be prepared to identify two or three Jewish values, aspirations, beliefs, understandings, practices, or attitudes, that JCCs should try to encourage in their members no matter what individualized Jewish growth-trajectory they embark on? If so, what are they? If not, why not?**

**Based on our work during this session, evaluate (and if need be revise) the definition of “Jewish journey” identified on this page.**



**1** The LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

**2** I will make of you a great nation,  
And I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
And you shall be a blessing.<sup>a</sup>

**3** I will bless those who bless you,  
And curse him that curses you;  
And all the families of the earth  
Shall bless themselves by you."

**4** Abram went forth as the LORD had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. **5** Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they

arrived in the land of Canaan, **6** Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land.

**7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will assign this land to your offspring." And he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. **8** From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to the LORD and invoked the LORD by name. **9** Then Abram journeyed by stages toward the Negeb.

**10** There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. **11**

of Moab. **2** The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlor and Chilion—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

**3** Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years. **5** Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

**6** She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of Moab she had heard that the LORD had taken note of His people and given them food. **7** Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

**8** But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me! **9** May the LORD grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!" And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping **10** and said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

**11** But Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you? **12** Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons, **13** should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the LORD has struck out against me."

**14** They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. **15** So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law." **16** But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. **17** Where you die, I will die, and

there I will be buried. <sup>a</sup> Thus and more may the LORD do to me <sup>b</sup> if anything but death parts me from you." **18** When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; **19** and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. The women said, "Can this be Naomi?" **20** "Do not call me Naomi,"<sup>b</sup> she replied. "Call me Mara,<sup>c</sup> for Shaddai<sup>d</sup> has made my lot very bitter. **21** I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. How can you call me Naomi, when the LORD has <sup>e</sup> dealt harshly with <sup>e</sup> me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!"

**22** Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.]

## JCC EDUCATORS PLANNING MEETINGS JERUSALEM SUMMARY OF MEETING 1, June 29, 2002

At the beginning of our meeting, we agreed that we would begin our discussions by attempting to assess our progress to date, as well our needs, in relation to the program's major aims. After briefly reviewing these aims, as well a report that attempts to bring together a number of disparate reactions to our work to date (and especially to our most recent Baltimore seminar), we spent the better part of the morning working towards a sense of where we are relative to our major aspirations. Against this background, we then reviewed a proposal for October (and beyond) that was developed as a springboard to our conversation. Below is a summary of some of the major themes and points that were discussed.

**1. We can't do everything!** The sense of the group was that we could not meaningfully accomplish everything that we might think important in the course of these 18 months. There was, for example, agreement among us that, though laudable, the idea of doing the group projects that were discussed in earlier iterations of the program was probably unrealistic (**but see the last paragraph of Item 3 below for an important qualification**).

In a similar vein, there was a shared sense that it would be very difficult to do justice to **vision, translation, and implementation** in the course of the eighteen months; but there was not a clear sense of agreement with respect what the requisite balance should be. Here are some of the views that were expressed.

- a. Our program conception has emphasized the idea of "vision at the heart"; and although some of us felt that we had made considerable progress on this front, others were concerned that not enough attention had been spent on 'what ought to be', i.e., on helping participants struggle in a carefully way with what they should be aspiring towards, informed by powerful Jewish and general ideas. The view was also expressed that participants had yet to get clear on the distinction between existential and institutional visions. The suggestion was that much more needed to be done on this front, and that it would be especially valuable to have our participants encounter rich normative conceptions of, say, Jewish community, in relation to which they might develop their own.
- b. One person expressed the view that it was unrealistic to expect our participants to emerge with a well-developed vision at the end of the eighteen months and suggested that we should count ourselves successful if they are 'well on the road' to having a vision. An alternative view accepted the contention that participants would not emerge with a well-developed vision, but urged that participants we should help participants develop some less-than-fully-developed views in the course of the program, with the understanding that these are way-stations on the road to more fully developed conceptions.
- c. Another set of views focused on the theme of **translation**. So far the participants have had two major opportunities to practice translation – one of them in our very first gathering, where they had a chance to translate different conceptions of neighborhood into practice, and the second at the end of our most recent seminar where they were asked to think about how to translate a

particular conception of 'Celebrate diversity' in to practice (guided by Jonny Ariel). Two points were made: first, that the participants have begun to make real progress on this front (and perhaps to appreciate the power of a guiding conception to give direction to practice), but that a lot more work needs to be done in this area. Second, in the view of at least one person, the capacity and translate vision into practice may be the most important thing we can offer middle-level practitioners who will not have the primary responsibility for crafting their institution's guiding vision. If they can emerge from the program with an approach to planning and programming that begins with big ideas and educational aspirations and undertakes to identify their practical implications, this would be a very significant achievement.

- d. Yet another suggestion focused on **implementation**. Whereas *translation* focuses on what an institution or a curriculum would look like if a particular vision is taken very seriously, *implementation* has to do with moving an institution from where it is towards this imagined state. Implementation requires sophistication concerning organizational (or social) change. It's fine and good to be able to imagine an institution or a core-business, or a new kind of program which is coherent with one's vision; but it's all for naught if one doesn't have the ability to bring the institution in this direction. Though nobody challenged the importance of this point, it was noted that, unlike the themes of vision and translation, that of implementation is not the strong suit of the Mandel Foundation.
- e. Though one approach might be to decide which among these potential programmatic emphases deserve(s) center-stage, another approach would be to find a way of addressing all three. In this spirit, it was suggested that we might pick a narrow strand at the level of vision and take it through the steps of translation and implementation – most meaningfully, perhaps, by focusing on only one of the JCC's core businesses, e.g., camps.
- f. Another way of making room for the implementation-theme would be to ask the participants to explore it in the contexts of their project (which, ideally, already deal with the themes of vision and translation). The suggestion was that between January, 2003 and our concluding meeting the participants try to take one implementation-step and, in a memo to us, explain why they proceeded as they did and what happened. These matters would be discussed at our last gathering.

**2. Engaging executives.** Thus far, we have done very little to engage the executives (beyond the initial conference which they attended). The sense of the group seemed to be that it was important not just to maintain their support for their educators' participation (by convincing them of the benefits to the agency), but also to find ways to encourage them to become more active partners in the effort to make the Jewish dimension of the agency more central. It is important that they themselves become identified with whatever becomes the agency's vision of what it is about as a Jewish institution.

There was not much enthusiasm for the idea that the executives be included in the upcoming October seminar. The sense was that this might disrupt the overall flow of the seminar. Nor did we arrive at any clear sense of when they should be invited to participate: one possibility would be to bring them for part of the Israel seminar next

winter, and another person suggested that perhaps they should be present for part of our concluding gathering next May, where the emphasis might be on guiding visions. There seemed to be some interesting in this possibility.

There was a lot of enthusiasm for the idea that we should be engaging the executives in between our gatherings, probably by telephone. The occasion for the conversation could be the project, or else their reactions to the initiative as a whole, or else some more specific question. There was some discussion of whether the conversation should be a three-way conversation that includes the educator.

**3. The projects.** Not that much was said about the projects (since we will be discussing them more fully when Barry Holtz arrives). But the idea of creating a template for the final document which includes such categories as *need, feasibility, relationship to guiding vision, how success will be judged, etc.* was greeted with enthusiasm. It was felt that such a template might prove a useful guide for both participants and their mentors. One person reminded the group of the availability of the Mandel faculty as consultants to participants as they pursue their projects, and suggested that participants should be encouraged to make use of such resources; among other things, this might offer some of the participants a greater chance to be guided by women as they develop their ideas.

The idea was floated that at our last gathering the projects should be center-stage; but at least one person, and possibly more, felt that we should avoid turning discussion of the projects at that stage into a kind of show-and-tell; there are, after all, other ways of acquainting the participants with one another's work. Rather, if projects are to be central to our final gathering, they should be used as vehicles of encouraging some serious thinking – perhaps about the guiding visions that inform them.

While the idea of collectively developed group projects was thought to be too ambitious for this program, the suggestion was made that it would be important to collect the write-ups of the individual projects into a single volume (both electronic and hard-copy). The knowledge that their projects would become part of such a volume might inspire the participants to create a higher quality document than they otherwise might. More importantly, such a volume would be a resource to the movement, suggesting both programmatic ideas and a certain way of thinking about program-development (as represented by the categories identified in the template). Though it may not be consonant with the culture of the movement and of our group to announce that only project write-ups that meet certain standards will be part of the volume, we did agree that it would be important for the mentors to work with participants so as to bring their ideas and articulations to a high level of quality.

**4. Developing a sense of collegiality.** The sense of the group was that the group was developing very well. People seem to feel comfortable with one another; they enjoy being together and learning together; they are capable of voicing and discussing disagreements in a non-threatening way; and their conversations are marked by some of the key themes that the program has emphasized. This is all the more impressive, given the substantial diversity (along a number of dimensions) of the group.

At the same time, a critical question was raised concerning the kind of collegiality that we hoped to be encouraging: do we mean more by “collegiality” than

“community of support”? Do we also have in mind that they will be serious resources to each other – or ‘critical friends’ – as their work unfolds, or that they will see each other as part of a cadre of educational leaders who jointly contribute to the movement? How we understand the kind of collegiality we want to encourage may well have a bearing on what we should be doing.

It was noted in this connection that having a serious colleague *at the local level* (‘colleague’ in the strong sense of someone to whom one can turn for ideas, for critique, for advice, for brainstorming, etc.) is terrifically valuable. Whether there is anything we can do to facilitate this, or to compensate for the inability to arrange this at the local level, was not further discussed.

Finally, it was suggested that it might be a very good idea to bring the participants themselves into the conversation about the development of a community of colleagues – what they hope for from one another as colleagues and what structures would be conducive to the development of this kind of collegiality.

**5. In-between gatherings of the group.** What does it mean to have ‘an eighteen month program’? Is it a program that actively engages the participants over the whole of an eighteen month period in a way that goes beyond periodic participation in our gatherings? Or does it mean that over a period of 18 months participants come together for some thirty days? Though neither of these extreme formulations capture reality, we seemed to agree that, though this may change somewhat now that the projects have begun in earnest, our program to date has been episodic. That is, it’s tended to be confined to our gatherings, between which little is expected of the participants and little contact is maintained with them.

Underlying this phenomenon there seems to have a working assumption that because of the nature of the work of JCC educators it is unrealistic to expect much serious work of them in between our gatherings. When this assumption was surfaced for discussion, different views were expressed – with at least one person subscribing to this assumption and at least one person suggesting that there would be little difficulty in engaging the participants in between seminars for meaningful discussions. Here, again, this is not a matter of either/or but of how much it’s realistic to expect of them [and of what is necessary if the program is to have a significant impact].

There was general enthusiasm for the idea that it would have been desirable from the very beginning of the program to engage the participants in once-monthly conference calls around significant topics; and the sense of the group was that it was not too late to introduce this practice at this stage of the program. Two ways of organizing this activity were suggested: a) a general conference call at a given time to which all program-participants would be invited; b) small sub-groups, possibly made up of individuals working with the same mentors on projects, for discussions of both projects and of significant topics of a more general nature.

**6. Follow-up to the eighteen months.** There seemed to be general agreement that it would be important to create meaningful follow-up experiences and/or structures that would facilitate such experiences, but we did not explore this matter in depth.

**7. Theory/practice balance.** It was noted that a number of participants seemed to feel that the program to date unduly emphasized theory at the expense of opportunities to hear and about and discuss questions of practice. Three responses to this problem have been identified (the third one articulated not at our meeting, but already at our Baltimore seminar):

- Create more opportunities for the participants to discuss questions of practice, either by reducing the time devoted to theory or by extending our seminars so as to give time to such questions.
- Don't squander the rare opportunity to think about the work in broader, more conceptual ways by reducing the program's more theoretical cast.
- Rather than going, as we have been, from vision/theory to practice, we should build into the program rich opportunities to go from practice to theory – that is, to begin with practices that the participants are already engaged in and to work towards the underlying assumptions that are at work in them. This might meet the participants' desire to deal more centrally with their own practice and the program's interest in encouraging more theoretical thinking about what they are or might be doing.

**8. From 'spirituality' to 'the search for meaning'.** Reviewing a first attempt to imagine what the upcoming October seminar might look like, one person commented that theme of spirituality may not be so central to the JCC agenda as to warrant organizing a substantial part of a gathering around it; perhaps it should figure as a more minor theme. In response, it was noted that the idea to focus on spirituality came from the participants themselves – that is, this is an issue that seems to be important and of interest to them. Listening to this conversation, one member of our group suggested that perhaps we should think of the spirituality-theme as one of several themes that fall under the larger category of *the search for meaning*; and that perhaps this more general rubric might prove a worthy organizing principle. There seemed to be great interest in this idea, with someone noting that even the work of JCC Board members often falls in this category. A concern was, though, expressed about whether one could do justice to this theme in a three-day seminar, and the suggestion was made that perhaps October could be the beginning of an inquiry into this matter that would extend into our next January seminar.

**9. Role of the JCC educator.** The proposal for October also focused on *the role of the JCC educator*. Not much was said about the wisdom of this focus.

**10. Missing elements: the JCC in the Community; the informal dimension.** In our discussion of the way our program has been dealing with the question of vision, the comment was made that we have yet to deal with the question of the place/role of the JCC in the ecology of the community in which it finds itself. It is noteworthy that, although the programmatic proposal for next December emphasized the theme of community, this particular question was not, but perhaps should be, included in the formulation. It was also observed that although we have reason to believe both that informal education is for many worthy educational purposes much more effective than formal education and that JCCs are extremely suited to informal education, we have very done very little in this arena; nor does the proposal for October and January speak to this matter.

**JCC EDUCATORS PROGRAM  
SUMMARY OF JERUSALEM PLANNING MEETING,  
Sunday, June 30, 2002**

Grounded in our discussion of where we seem to be in relation to the program's larger aims, this session focused on programmatic matters. In the words of one of our colleagues, "What the hell are we doing in October?" Inspired by this lofty formulation, we settled into a productive conversation that enabled us to make considerable progress in thinking about both the October and January seminars. Below is a summary of some of the major points made in our discussion.

**1. Clarifying our challenge.** We played with more than one formulation of what we should be thinking about. One person identified major themes that have defined our seminars to date (social capital/neighborhood, collective memory, American Jewish identity) and asked us to consider whether, given the limited amount of time left to us in the program, the energies of our participants would best be served by focusing on themes like spirituality and community. Might there be other themes that might prove more promising in relation to our principal purposes.

Reflecting on our work to date, another participant commented that we have spent a lot of time thinking about what is, but not enough on what ought to be. For example, we focused on what contemporary Jews are like, not on what we hope they will become. Building on the flow of our conversation, he suggested that we should be thinking of our programmatic agenda in relation to three major questions:

- a) What is a meaningful Jewish community, and what is an educated Jewish person?
- b) What is the special role of the JCC in helping to achieve the aspirations identified by these conceptions?
- c) What role should the Jewish educator play in helping to achieve this agency-agenda? Or, put in another language, how are we – and our participants – to understand the professional identity of JCC Jewish educators?

Responding to this formulation, one participant expressed some discomfort with what he felt was the suggestion embedded in the latter formulation that the JCC and the JCC educator were primarily focused on repairing or building the larger community rather than on the clientele that walk through their doors. This comment elicited a number of responses including the following:

- There is no inherent incompatibility between thinking about what we hope the larger community will ideally look like and having an inward focus. On the contrary, getting clearer about our aspirations for the community as a whole may put us in a better position to think about what we should be emphasizing in our work with the people who walk through our doors. If, for example, one of the things we think important in the Jewish community of our dreams is civilized conversation across group-divides, this might carry implications for what we do with the diverse groups of people who walk into our agency. That is, an interest in 'the ideal Jewish community' question needn't imply that we will address it in JCCs other than through our work with our own colleagues.

- Moving in a different direction, another participant suggested that it is important for the JCC, in general, and for the Jewish educator, in particular, to face outwards to some degree, i.e., to engage not just in outreach but in the larger community conversation concerning the nature of Jewish life and our needs as a community.

**2. Insisting on the integrity of the initiative.** Beyond the points that were central to our conversation on Friday about the need to keep some of our core ideas (like vision and translation) at the heart of our programmatic agenda, three new points were made that relate to this general theme. The first of them was made by one person but not discussed; the second two were the subjects of considerable discussion.

- We need, one person suggested, to find a way to cut down on the amount of coming-and-going that has become typical in the course of our sessions at programs.
- The sense of the group seemed to be that we may not be doing justice to some of the themes we take up, e.g., neighborhood and American-Jewish identity. That is, we may unwisely be jumping to other themes before we have explored them and their implications for the work of JCC educators in sufficient depth. Revisiting some of these themes in ways that continue to deepen them may be very important.
- The observation made by one thoughtful participant that, though he wasn't particularly disturbed by it, he didn't sense the thematic narrative that held the initiative as a whole together, was troubling to a number of us, and there was some interest in identifying what the narrative of the program as a whole is and presenting it to the participants. If it's wisely chosen, rather than superimposed in an artificial way, it might contribute to our planning as the initiative proceeds.

**3. The search for meaning (or meaning-making) as a possible overarching theme.**

Building on a suggestion made on Friday that perhaps we should be thinking about the theme of spirituality as a sub-theme of the broader theme of "the search for meaning", the suggestion was made that perhaps we could weave a meaningful narrative for the program as a whole around this concept. That is, perhaps the idea informing the overall initiative is that JCCs are in the business of helping people in their quest for meaning, where 'meaning' encompasses a variety of things including a sense of connection to others, a new or deeper connection to Judaism, the sense that one is making a contribution to the lives of one's clients or, as in the case of Mort Mandel, to Jewish life. The role that memory plays in giving meaning to our lives and projects is also easily related to this general theme. While the wisdom of making this theme a kind of official organizing theme for the initiative as a whole may need further deliberation, *if* - and it's a big "if" we decide that this would prove a fruitful organizing theme, it could provide a backdrop to our treatment of spirituality (itself intimately connected with, or a species of, the search for meaning). In addition, it suggested at least three programmatic ideas that might be worth considering:

- An invitation to Mort Mandel to address the group, perhaps next May, concerning the ways in which his role as a lay leader adds meaning to his own life.

- An introductory session at our next seminar that frames the program's narrative in relation to this theme.
- An exercise, perhaps in the course of our next gathering, that invites participants to speak to one another about where they themselves find meaning in their JCC work and how they attempt to facilitate the search for meaning among those they work with in JCC settings.

4. **Spirituality as a theme for an upcoming gathering.** Whether or not we take “the search for meaning” as an overarching theme for the whole program, the sense of the group seemed to be that the theme of spirituality does deserve to be the focus of some of our upcoming work. At least two reasons were offered for this idea: a) the participants themselves have requested the opportunity to think about this issues; and, b) the theme of spirituality, especially in the hands of someone like Art Green, has the potential to deepen our understanding of the concerns, needs, and aspirations of American Jews today. It would thus serve not just as a bridge from our last seminar to the present, but as an opportunity to address a concern that we had jointly identified – namely, the need to take some of the themes we have been dealing with in earlier seminars to deeper levels. As just noted, Art Green seemed to us ideally suited to helping the group think about issues pertaining to spirituality in ways that illuminated American Jewish realities and needs; and it was suggested that Barry Holtz be asked to contact him.

Should Art Green prove unable to come, we identified Arnie Eisen as someone who might be a very fine substitute. The alternative would be to defer the spirituality piece of the program, and to use October to begin wrestling with the theme of community (possibly with the help of Michael Brooks. *See below.*).

5. **The theme of community.** Although we have treated the theme of community in our discussion of social capital/neighborhood, we felt, as we did in the case of American Jewish identity, that it needed to be explored more deeply. The rationale for viewing “community” as a pivotal theme included the following points:

- The JCC *is* - or, in any case, may most usefully be thought of as – a community, and it is important to think about what kind of a Jewish community it should aspire to be, especially given the fact that it welcomes individuals of diverse Jewish (and other) stripes into its world.
- The theme of community invites reflection concerning the kind of Jewish community we should be aspiring to cultivate, and the role that the JCC should be playing in the process of helping to create such a community. How the JCC understands what an ideal Jewish community is may carry important implications for how it understands itself as a Jewish community and for what it views as its central challenges.
- Our forays into the theme of community to date have tended to focus on general sociological perspectives, but have not done two critical things: a) they haven't sufficiently encouraged the participants to struggle with the question of what an improved Jewish community would look like – an inquiry that would also shed light on the kinds of Jews they would like to cultivate; b) while the participants have thought about sociological accounts that discuss the need for and the benefits of community, they haven't encountered powerful, if conflicting, Jewish perspectives concerning the kind of Jewish

community we should attempt to encourage. Such an encounter has the capacity to ratchet up their own thinking concerning the kind of community they aspire to encourage.

- We have readily available to us a number of thinkers – including Menachem Brinker, Michael Rosenak, and Michael Brooks – who have the capacity to stimulate our thinking about these matters. In the case of Brinker and Rosenak, they could offer different perspectives on an ideal Jewish community; in the case of Brooks, he could catalyze some exciting, but very different ways of thinking about how to understand and approach the challenge of repairing Jewish culture.

Although some concerns were expressed about overly-focusing on the theme of community in Israel, as well as about bringing an American like Brooks to Israel to discuss community, the group seemed to gravitate towards the idea of making the theme of community a significant, but not the only, part of the Israel seminar in January 2003. Conceivably, Brooks would be invited not to this seminar but to our May 2003 seminar.

**5. The role of cases in our program.** In the course of our deliberations, the suggestion was made that it might be desirable to start off the work of the upcoming seminar with an examination of a concrete case. As an example of what he had in mind in the reference to a case, the person making this suggestion sketched out the following situation: some non-Jewish parents who send their children to the JCC's Early Childhood education program come to the agency with the complaint that the materials in the lobby dealing with the situation in the Middle East are extremely and misleadingly one-sided; and the agency needs to decide not just what to respond, guided by what considerations, but the right process through which to develop a response.

In part, the suggestion that we begin with such cases was anchored in the recollection of the great – in the view of some, unparalleled – excitement of the participants the very first night of the program when they were discussing cases they themselves brought with them from out of their work; the suggestion also was influenced by participants' own request, at our last seminar, that more of our work begin with practice rather than theory. Finally, the suggestion that we begin with a case was a response to our desire to give the participants a chance to use categories and themes that have been central to the program to interpret and respond to a concrete situation that might arise in the context of their work. Not only might this show them, as we enter the second half of the program, how these themes and categories can jointly illuminate their work, it would also give us some index of the extent to which these ideas are entering into the way they think. (With the latter point in mind, one person suggested that perhaps we should divide the group into two sub-groups, only one of which is explicitly asked to use program-themes and categories in making sense of the case, and to see whether they address the challenge posed by the case differently).

Though, as someone emphasized in our conversation, developing good cases requires very careful work, such cases can prove powerful educational tools. They are "powerful" not just in the sense that they have the capacity to engage, but also in the sense that they enable people to bring together diverse kinds of ideas (including lead-categories like vision, translation, and implementation) to make sense of a

problematic situation and have the power to lead them to struggle with important foundational issues in away that is anchored in practice. Such considerations led to a more general discussion of the desirability of creating a kind of cases-bank that could serve as a resource not just for this particular sequence of seminars but also for future programs. In addition to our own attempts to develop some powerful cases in the immediate period ahead of us, it was suggested that we might turn to the participants for help in this arena: not only would it be useful to scan some of the cases they wrote up in preparation for our very first seminar, we might invite them to help us in the generation of new cases. Such cases, if well-crafted, would be a significant contribution of our program to the JCC movement and to the general field of Jewish education.

The importance of developing well-crafted engaging cases led one person to emphasize the desirability of creating scenarios that involve people and in which there is the potential for tension concerning how the problem at hand should be addressed. Someone suggested that perhaps the work of Judy Shulman dealing with cases would be a good resource for us as we think about how to develop adequate cases, and another person suggested that we might draw on some extant cases (e.g., a case that was used effectively by the Mandel Foundation in another context, or the case that became the basis for the case-study developed in the Harvard Business School text dealing with the phenomenal growth of the Willow Creek Church outside Chicago).

**6. Do we need to announce seminar-specific themes?** As we were giving thought to the sequence of themes that should define the program's curricular journey, one person wondered we really need to publicly tag each seminar with a particular theme. In the first place, our actual seminars tend to burst the seams of the announced theme; in the second place, having an announced theme may artificially limit us, leading us, for example, to feel that we have "to do a theme", or to do justice to it, within one particular seminar, rather than allowing us to continue exploring it in the company of other themes in a more integrated way across the program as a whole. His suggestion: announce to the participants that on our road to greater clarity concerning the nature of our work, in the months to come we will be spending time with the following cluster of pivotal themes to which we will be returning in various ways and in different combinations as we move along. In the spirit of this suggestion, somebody else commented that if we did choose to go this route, a paragraph introducing the itinerary for a particular seminar might prove as good, if not a better, orientation-tool for the participants than characterizing the seminar under a single rubric.

On the other side of this issue was a concern that when people walk into a seminar, they benefit from having a conceptual handle that gives them some sense of what to expect. If -- *and this may be a critical "if" in thinking about this issue* - the announced theme meets this need and doesn't create expectations that put artificial limits on planning particular seminars or the curricular journey as as a whole or on our discussions at the seminars, then there is would not seem to be any harm in using such themes as a way of giving focus to our deliberations and meeting the need of participants for orientation.

We did not come to closure concerning this very interesting question.

**7. Don't mis-take themes for educational purposes!** As we explored the thematic dimensions of upcoming seminars, one person felt the need to remind the group that we should not confuse themes with educational purposes. Whatever the theme we choose to explore, it needs to be viewed and curricularized in a way that will help the participants develop greater clarity and depth of vision, to become more thoughtful about and adept in doing translation, to think about what they would count as success, to identify implementation-issues, etc.

**8. Missing themes.** It is noteworthy that a number of matters that, to greater or lesser degrees, we have viewed as part of our agenda, are not represented in this week's discussions. These include: *the use of space/architecture, informal education, nature*. Whether – and if so, how – one or more of them should enter into our conception of upcoming seminars is a matter we may want to return to. It is also worth noting that the theme of “role of Jewish educator” – which, though an overarching theme, was also identified a particular motif in the first iteration of the October seminar – did not enter into yesterday's attempt to sketch the trajectory of our upcoming seminars.

**9. Where we seem to be programmatically.** Our deliberations seem to have led us in the following direction:

*October* – Using the theme of spirituality as a vehicle of deepening our conversation of American Jewish identity and struggling with its pertinence to the mission of JCCs and the work of JCC educators. Ideally, Art Green will prove a major resource, and the seminar will take place in Boston, offering us the opportunity to do a site visit to the local JCC. In ways that need still to be clarified, we may want to take advantage of the presence in Boston of Barry Shrage and/or Marc Sokol, and we may want to turn to Israel Scheffler to think more richly about the role of educator. As we deliberate about such possibilities, we need to temper the desirability of rich mix with concern for coherence, overload, and the participants' expressed desire to have some time to discuss their own practice.

*January* – Whatever else we do in Israel, one thematic strand appears to be *community*, with the possibility of drawing on Professors Brinker and Rosenak, as well as Michael Brooks, to help our participants struggle with different conceptions of community in relation to which they can clarify and deepen their own views on this matter, with attention to the implications for their own work. Given that we cannot leave all of the planning for the Israel visit until after the October seminar, it may be worth spending some of the time still available to us in our present meetings trying to conceptualize other dimensions of the upcoming Israel program.

*May 2003* – We have done much with this seminar yet, but we have discussed the possibility of using the projects as a springboard to some of our discussions and of inviting the executive directors to participate at this time (though the idea of inviting them to Israel has also not been ruled out).

We have also discussed the possibility/desirability of engaging the participants more regularly between our gatherings; and the idea on the table is some kind of once-monthly phone-conference, possibly in sub-groups attached to particular mentors. The organizing questions/themes etc. for these conversations probably needs more

attention. In a related vein, we have discussed the possibility/desirability of entering into conversations with the executive directors in between seminars. The content and aims of these conversations also need more attention.

**Note: Because Bethamie Horowitz has agreed to write up our rich conversation with her concerning evaluation of the initiative, I haven't attempted to summarize this conversation here.**