National Conference on Jewish Population Growth

Summary of Proceedings
THE WILLIAM PETSCHEK NATIONAL JEWISH FAMILY CENTER

E. Robert Goodkind, Chairman       Yehuda Rosenman, Director

The William Petschek National Jewish Family Center was created by the American Jewish Committee in 1979 as an expression of its commitment to the family as the indispensable social institution for maintaining and enhancing Jewish identity, communal stability and human fulfillment. Its goal is to promote research on family problems, help clarify family values and stimulate the development of innovative programs to help meet the needs of parents, would-be parents and their children. It also strives to encourage an awareness and responsiveness to those needs in the Jewish and general community.
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH POPULATION GROWTH

OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 1, 1983

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REVISED PROGRAM

Monday, October 31, 1983

Registration--1:00 P.M.-1:30 P.M.

Session I

1:30 P.M.-3:30 P.M.

What is Happening to the Jewish Family Today?

Opening: E. Robert Goodkind, Chair, William Petschek National Jewish Family Center, American Jewish Committee

Speakers:

Dr. Robert Gordis, Conference Chairman
Jewish Family Growth in Historical Perspective"

Milton Himmelfarb, Director, Research and Information Services, American Jewish Committee
"The Problem of Family Size"

Judith Lang, Associate Executive Director, New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies
"A Response from the Field"

Session II

3:30 P.M.-6:00 P.M.

The Individual, the Community and the Family:
Expectations and Responsibilities

Moderator: Rabbi Michael Chernick, Hebrew Union College

Panel

Mimi Alperin, Chair, Interreligious Affairs Commission, American-Jewish Committee

Nina Cardin, Director, Jewish Women's Resource Center

Avis Miller, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Marian Stern, Hadassah, Women's Zionist Organization of America
Jerry Weissberg, National Council of Young Israel

Comments and Discussion

Tuesday, November 1, 1983

Session III

10:00 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

What Can We Do for Today's Families?

Chair: Yehuda Rosenman, Director, Jewish Communal Affairs Dept., American Jewish Committee

SPEAKERS

Dr. Donald Feldstein, Assistant Executive Director, Council of Jewish Federations

Stephen Solender, Executive Vice President, Associated Jewish Charities & Welfare Fund, Baltimore, Maryland

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, President, Synagogue Council of America

Session IV

1:30 P.M.-3:30 P.M.

Toward More Effective Policies and Strategies in Support of the Jewish Family

CONCURRENT TASK FORCES

A. Jewish Education--Formal, Informal, and Campus-Based

Rabbi Paul Freedman, Executive Director, United Synagogue Youth

Rabbi Richard Israel, Director, Hillel Foundation of Greater Boston

Chaim Botwinick, Board of Jewish Education, New York City

B. Childbearing and the Dual Career Family

Blu Greenberg, Author and Lecturer
C. Jewish Social Services--Dr. Norman Linzer, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University

D. The Role of the Synagogue

Rabbi Myron Fenster, Chair, Social Action Comm. Rabbinical Assembly

Rabbi Selig Salkowitz, Central Conference of American Rabbis

CLOSING PLENARY

3:30 P.M.-5:00 P.M.

Chair: Dr. Robert Gordis

Task Force Reports

Discussion and Recommendations for Communal Strategies
SESSION I:

What Is Happening To The Jewish Family Today?

OPENING

E. Robert Goodkind, Chairman of the William Petschek National Jewish Family Center, opened the Conference and welcomed the participants. He then described the genesis and purpose of this Conference--to develop communal strategies for the Jewish community to consider in addressing the problem of negative population growth. Mr. Goodkind then cited the seminal role of Robert Gordis, Professor Emeritus of Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary, editor of Judaism, and a renowned author and lecturer. The idea for a conference on the Jewish population problem had been inspired by Rabbi Gordis through his article "'Be Fruitful and Multiply': The Biography of a Mitzvah," which appeared in Midstream in 1982. Rabbi Gordis had helped put together the broad coalition of Jewish organizations represented here today, and had worked tirelessly in planning the program. Mr. Goodkind then gave the floor to Rabbi Gordis.

DR ROBERT GORDIS

Dr. Gordis addressed himself to two questions: the importance of this conference and what it can hope to accomplish. He pointed out that, in addition to the ongoing physical threat to Jews posed by anti-Semitism, there is the subtler problem of assimilation. This can take the form of alienation from the Jewish community, involvement in cults, conversion to another established religion, and intermarriage, which, despite some claims to the contrary, brings a net loss to the community. But even more dangerous, said Dr. Gordis, is the small size of Jewish families. If a Jew assimilates, there is always hope that he will return; but the child who is not born is lost forever. Dr. Gordis explained that the fertility rate for American Jewish families lies between 1.5 and 1.7. Jews, therefore, are not reproducing themselves. The problem is magnified
by the lack of any large-scale Jewish migration to the United States. The 1975 study published by the Harvard Institute for Population Growth predicted that in another century there will be only 50-60,000 Jews in this country, and a recent study by Fred Massarik found that Jewish population goes down 3.4 percent every decade. What are the factors in the general society that keep families small? First, urbanization means that people live in congested areas where feeding and educating children become more difficult. And Jews tend to be more urbanized than other groups. Secondly, women's entrance into the labor force affects family size. Forty-six percent of married women in America work; obviously, they will have fewer children than if they stayed home. Both forces--urbanization and women in the work place--are irreversible.

Dr. Gordis then turned to what this conference might accomplish. In doing research on the history of Jewish attitudes toward procreation, he found that in early Jewish history, there was a relaxed attitude toward procreation, with no great emphasis on large families. In the time of the Mishnah, for example, there was controversy between Hillel and Shammai about whether one had to have two sons, or a son and a daughter, to fulfill the commandment to reproduce. Both scholars, however, agreed that two children fulfilled the requirement. Once Jews were exiled from their homeland, however, the physical preservation of the Jewish people became a major problem, as a result of massacres and forcible conversions. The Jewish leaders, therefore, increasingly stressed the need for large families. The process was reversed when Emancipation and Enlightenment came to European Jewry. The commandment to procreate was neglected, along with the other commandments of Jewish law. That is why the Jewish birthrate has been plummeting since the early nineteenth century. Thus on the hundredth anniversary of Moses Mendelsohn's birth, it was impossible to find a Jew whose family had lived in Berlin for a hundred years. Then came the Holocaust, which destroyed a third of world Jewry.

It is appropriate, therefore, to take steps now to ensure that there will be a Jewish community in the future. This conference is not an either/or question of success or failure. Even a minimal increase of the Jewish birthrate would more than justify our efforts. First, we can remove certain blocks that now stand in the way of family growth, such as the cutbacks in government support for child care centers. This is true for Jewish institutions as well: our synagogues and community centers should provide child care. Also, the high cost of Jewish education can be mitigated by giving discounts for large families.

Even more important than removing these blocks, though, is the positive need to transform Jewish attitudes toward the size of the ideal family. We must change the stereotype of father, mother, and two children. We must stress the innate satisfactions in having children. There are signs that attitudes are beginning to change.
Betty Friedan, long a leading spokesperson for feminism, has recently suggested that the movement has gone too far in downgrading the joys of family life. Also, there is a trend among people who are not married to adopt children, indicating the deep yearning for family built into human nature.

Something can be done about this problem, if only we try. If we can sell toothpaste, and elect Presidents through public relations techniques, we can "sell" a larger Jewish family. Speaking personally, Dr. Gordis said that nothing in his life has given him greater satisfaction than his children and grandchildren, who are his lifeline to immortality.

MILTON HIMMELFARB

Dr. Gordis then introduced Milton Himmelfarb, Director of Information and Research at AJC. Mr. Himmelfarb noted that many observers are optimistic about the Jewish future because of studies that indicate a positive attitude toward marriage and family among Jewish college students. Indeed, the studies do show this about attitudes, but not behavior. Talk is cheap. When the same group of college students was asked nine years after the initial study: "have you ever been married?" 59 percent of the Jews said no, compared with 37 percent of the non-Jews. When asked: "do you have children?" 96 percent of the Jews said no, and 74 percent of the non-Jews. Of the 4 percent of Jews who had children, none had more than one. Among the non-Jews, in contrast, 15 percent had one child, 9 percent had two, and 2 percent had three or more. Dr. Gordis's assertion, then, that the desire for children is rooted in human nature, is very doubtful.

The crucial factor is whether the social environment is conducive to childbearing, and America today does not provide such an environment. We constantly hear government estimates of how much money it costs to raise a child till he or she graduates from college. If that is the way we consider having children, we must be idiots to have them, especially if we want to go to expensive restaurants. Thus, it is actually against rational self interest to have children—something that was always recognized by such philosophers as Bacon, Hobbes, Spinoza and Rousseau. What should be said about this is that the point of having money is not to save it, but to use it to have children.

Mr. Himmelfarb discussed Dr. Gordis's assessment that feminism is one factor in low fertility. This might not be the whole story, according to the recent book The Hearts of Men, by Barbara Ehrenreich. This book argues that feminism actually came after a masculine revolt against family responsibilities, a revolt symbolized by Playboy magazine. In a Jewish context, this theory would place blame on the Jewish American Prince for neglecting his fathering role.
We can learn a lot, said Mr. Himmelfarb, by looking at a fertility map of the United States. Counties with high fertility rates tend to be poor and rural. The only exception is Utah, where the Mormon population has very large families. Mormons are similar to Jews in that they are well educated and relatively prosperous, but because their social environment is Mormonism and not the New York Times. Because Mormonism approves of large families, the burden of proof is placed on the Mormon who does not have children, not the one who does. For modern Jews, on the other hand, having children is the deviant thing to do.

It would seem, then, that the way to overcome rational self-interest is to create a community with different values. This is evident in Israel too. Demographers have found that when you hold all other variables equal, being religious is good, on the average, for one more child per family. Those committed to a higher quality of Jewish life will have more, and vice versa; encouraging more children could lead to more Jewish commitment.

JUDITH LANG

Dr. Gordis then introduced Judith Lang, Associate Executive Director of the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, who gave a "Response from the Field." She noted that family counselors and mental health professionals have become increasingly aware of the link between Jewish family stability and Jewish survival. But we must really investigate how much and in what ways the powerful dynamic of Jewish identity is utilized when professionals working for Jewish agencies treat Jewish families. Mental health practitioners are trained to be "value-free," and all too often are ambivalent about their own Jewish identity. Both factors may make them blind to the client's possible ethnic and religious yearning for Jewish connectedness. Another inhibiting factor is that many of the professionals are themselves part of the current "culture of narcissism" and fail to view keeping a family together as a priority.

Jewish family counselors, therefore, should be retrained to enable them to make use of Jewish ethnicity, culture and religion in treatment. Graduate schools and in-service courses must stress the connection between positive Jewish identity and mental health. This is the time to move in this direction, since American cultural trends now support strong ethnic and religious identity.

There are several things already being done to strengthen the family. Divorce counseling is now encouraging co-parenting after divorce, which promotes the long-term welfare of the child. There are beginning to be services for reconstituted families, though more are needed. Cult clinics have saved many young Jews from the cults, and helped their families deal with the problem. Much is being done in the area of Family Life Education—for intermarried families, career women
trying to deal with their ambivalences about motherhood, and "normal" families who attend pre-marital, marital, and parenting workshops. Special counseling is available for special populations, such as Iranian and Russian Jews.

Ms. Lang suggested some communal strategies to enhance the continuity, survival, and growth of Jewish families. First, more financial support is needed for Jewish family services, especially in a time that the government is cutting back on funding such activities. More Jewish-sponsored day care is needed, and perhaps also a program of skilled homemakers for working parents who prefer their children cared for at home. We must come to terms with the permanence of the two-paycheck family, and forget our nostalgic vision of every Jewish mother staying home. There should be more part-time job opportunities for Jewish communal workers who are parents, and Jewish-sponsored career counseling which is family-focused. We must encourage more young Jews to marry, and New York Federation is in the process of setting up a marriage bureau. We must, Ms. Lang, continued, respect freedom of choice, and enhance the image of the housewife so that she will not feel like a "career failure." Similarly, there should be encouragement for those men who stay home with the children while their wives go to school or to work.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Gordis then opened the floor for discussion. The following points were raised:

1. It was suggested that the presentations had spoken in generalities, with few practical strategies offered. Dr. Gordis responded that this first session of the conference was meant to be diagnostic, whereas the other sessions would present concrete suggestions.

2. Do social workers trained in Jewish schools of social work tend to use their Jewish values in practice? Ms. Lang replied that the problem was that the "Jewish component" is very unclear, and that preaching values to people has little effect in any case. What she prefers is something subtler, with the counselor projecting a sense about what he or she feels about Jewishness in a personal way.

3. What was the impact of the movement for Zero Population Growth on Jewish attitudes toward childbearing? Mr. Himmelfarb felt that the decision to cut back on children preceded the ideology of ZPG, which was really a rationale for what Americans wanted to do anyway. ZPG is no longer conspicuous. That could be because the tide of opinion has changed toward having more children, or, more likely, it could mean that ZPG has already accomplished its purpose in bringing down the birth rate. Dr. Gordis considered it
irrelevant whether the behavior or the ideology came first. What counts is that it does not apply to Jews, though it may be proper for other groups.

4. Probably one important factor that makes Jews want to have children is the desire for immortality, both for the individual and for the group. Unfortunately, many young people today think they will stay young forever, and by the time they begin to confront their mortality, it is too late to have children.

5. There is a grave danger in coming on too strong when we speak to young people about having children. It is a very personal decision, and no one likes to feel pressured. A subtle approach is likely to get the best results.

6. Symbols can also project subliminal messages. Unfortunately, the logos of most of the Jewish family and children's agencies consist of two parents and just two children.

7. Do any of the polls and studies that have been done about families indicate whether changing the economic circumstances would change decisions about childbearing? Mr. Himmelfarb responded that most of the demographic information is in the American Jewish Yearbook, but that it is hard to make the jump from these statistics to practical application. Dr. Gordis suggested that a compilation of the available statistics might be one of the results of this conference, for example, the recent data provided by the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.

8. Much of the blame for the low birth rate lies with a group of men who have been "copping out"—Jewish homosexuals, who constitute something of a cult.

9. It is very misleading to blame the women's liberation movement for the low birthrate. The current issue of Ms. Magazine features the subject of how American society does not have a wide tolerance for children. Many American women would argue that much of the problem lies with Jewish men who are not marrying Jewish women.
SESSION II

"The Individual, the Community and the Family:
Expectations and Responsibilities"

The moderator, Rabbi Michael Chernick of Hebrew Union College, introduced the members of the panel who described their own personal experiences in relation to having children in our society.

Mimi Alperin, a leader in the AJC, who currently serves on its National Board of Governors, and chairs the National Interreligious Affairs Commission.

Nina Cardin has an M. A. in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She directs the Jewish Women’s Resource Center, a project of the National Council of Jewish Women, New York section.

Avis Miller, a student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, is Rabbi at the B’nai Israel Reconstructionist Congregation in South Bend, Indiana.

Marian Stern is Assistant Vice President for Community Programming at Chemical Bank, a member of the board of Opportunity Resources for the Arts, and an officer of the New York chapter of Hadassah.

Gerald Weisberg is Coordinator of Student Affairs at Long Island City High School. He is liaison Vice President of the National Council of Young Israel, chairing Young Israel’s Campus program and its education committee.

MIMI ALPERIN

Ms. Alperin recalled that, growing up in the 1950s, she assumed, like most people at that time, that a woman was supposed to marry a man able to support her, so that she could stay home and have children. Married at age 19, she was pregnant while still a junior in college. Mimi has been a full-time parent, but doubts whether, if she were getting married today, she would follow the same path. Today,
women recognize that their marriages are not necessarily forever, and that they could very well wind up as the sole breadwinners for their families. Not only do women today work in greater numbers than ever before, but they continue working even after having children. Nevertheless, men, on the whole, do not share the parenting and housekeeping chores. Many middle-class women are thrown into poverty after divorce: only 60 percent of divorced women with children under 18 are awarded child support, and only half of those collect the full amount due them. This is one symptom of a widespread lack of concern for children in our society. We do not provide enough child care facilities, and we pay our teachers abominably. If we want more Jewish children we need more parenting by fathers, a more supportive Jewish community, corporate policies that accommodate people as parents as well as workers, and a government that does not undermine the family.

NINA CARDIN

Ms. Cardin expressed her commitment to family and children, Jewish communal activity, and a career. It is wrong, she said, to think in terms of simple priorities among these values, since day by day, indeed, moment by moment, the priorities shift depending upon circumstances. To maintain the ability to shift quickly between them, one must cultivate a balance between organization and flexibility. Thus, when choosing a career, Ms. Cardin deliberately sought out a position with flexible hours. She has even been able to take her infants to work with her. Even more important than this flexibility, though, was the attitude of the employer. A supportive rather than a begrudging attitude is likely to encourage a woman to successfully balance family and career. Also of crucial importance is a husband willing to do 50 percent of the parenting. In addition, Ms. Cardin noted that her choice of synagogue affiliation is now based on whether there is receptivity to children. After all, the childbearing imperative relates, not just to women, but to the community and its institutions. Support groups of women, which do not pressure or judge individuals, could be helpful in airing issues like the need for more Jewish children. We must bear in mind that childlessness and a nuclear holocaust have the same result—the doom of humanity.

AVIS MILLER

Ms. Miller, the next speaker, pointed out that people often express amazement at her either because she has five children, or because she is preparing for the rabbinate. Actually, both of these facts are rooted in the Jewish commitment of her husband and herself. Interestingly, the response that is generated by her large family has been overwhelmingly positive. Apparently, the ZPG movement has run out of steam. Jews, especially those committed to Jewish life, like to see large families. The problem, though, is that parental nurturing is not yet a respected activity. The very same people who like to see large families respond negatively when you tell them you are a
full-time parent. Obviously, a lot of the positive feedback to large families is rooted in nostalgia for the past. In contrast to individual Jews, Jewish institutions are not very understanding toward large families, and can be quite callous in refusing to make special financial arrangements. If we are serious about increasing our birthrate, we have to provide financial aid.

MARIAN STERN

Marian Stern described herself as thirty years old, married for almost seven years, fairly well-educated, with very high career aspirations, and childless. She has had to confront the dilemma faced by many other women: Having spent much time and effort in preparing for a career and for financial success, how do you decide about having children? It is very difficult to forego a lucrative salary to stay home with a baby. Ms. Stern announced, though, that she had resolved matters for herself: she is three months pregnant. She believes that there is little to be gained in stressing to Jews the importance of making up the demographic losses of the Holocaust. People simply do not base their decisions on such considerations. In dual-career families, we have to understand the difficulties of living any kind of Jewish family life. A working mother has problems preparing a traditional Sabbath. Saturday becomes, for such families, the day to take care of errands. The primary reading material in such homes is Forbes and Business Week. We surely are not demonstrating the importance of Judaism in our lives. When we have our child, we will have to make changes in our lifestyle to create a more Jewish atmosphere. Yet, certain aspects of life in a dual-career family can enhance Jewishness. Jewish men often become deeply involved in childrearing, thereby conveying Jewish values to the child. Also, the extended family becomes more important, and grandparents can communicate Jewishness. Ms. Stern has noticed an unfortunate rift between her single friends and her friends who are married with children: each group seems unwilling to understand and accept the choices made by the other. She also believes that, if the institutions of the Jewish community do have special programs to help dual-career families with children, their existence is insufficiently publicized. Jewish organizations should join forces with other groups that are working to encourage corporations to institute more liberal maternity leave policies, part-time employment opportunities, and child care facilities.

GERALD WEISBERG

The final speaker on the panel, Mr. Weisberg admitted his discomfort at being a single male talking about the need for more Jewish children. He explained that he comes out of an Orthodox background, and has concluded that all the Jewish education in the world cannot ensure Jewishness without proper role models who can communicate the joys of Jewishness. For only through such an appreciation of living
Jewish values will a person be likely to put children ahead of higher income and luxuries. If you believe that forming a family is a divine command, and that children are gifts of God, material considerations will take second place. Mr. Weisberg has had a lot of experience in singles' organizations, and finds them wanting. In these groups, the singles serve as substitute families for each other, and when people come to feel like brothers and sisters, they will not become husbands and wives. As an alternative to singles' groups, the Jewish organizations should recruit young singles into the parent body, and treat them like any other member. This will not only get them to realize that they are adults and should form families, but it will also make them understand their responsibility to the Jewish community. Mr. Weisberg deplored the fact that so few Jewish children get a Jewish education, because a child who enjoys his religion and understands it will be the one who will raise another healthy Jewish family. Families that do not provide their children such an education are preparing the way for intermarriage. We must increase funding for Jewish education on all levels. High school students especially should be trained so that when they get to college they can reach out to the thousands of Jewish students who are Jewishly ignorant. Finally, Mr. Weisberg cited the advice given by his rabbi, who urged parents, instead of leaving money to their children in their wills, to agree to help support a grandchild, who, without such support, might not be born.

DISCUSSION

1. Given the changes that have taken place in women's roles, is it realistic to expect that women will want to be mothers, and that men will be willing to take on family responsibilities?

There was a consensus among the panelists that women, despite their new roles, still want to have children. Tragically, there are large numbers of women in their thirties who want to be mothers, but cannot find the kind of man they would want to marry. Perhaps the Jewish community could study this problem and seek solutions. Another problem that women face when they want to combine career and motherhood is the lack of understanding shown by the corporate world.

As to the men, the panelists had differing view. Some felt that a major change had indeed taken place in male attitudes, and that husbands were, in many cases, becoming equal co-parents. Others denied this, arguing that traditional male assumptions were still widespread, and that even those men who articulate parental egalitarianism do not actually put it into practice when the situation arises. The point was also raised that it is not enough for the husband just to do chores when the wife requests it. He should take the initiative and follow through.
2. The one subgroup in the Jewish population that maintains a high birthrate is the Orthodox. Is there any way that this message can be transmitted to the non-Orthodox?

One panelist noted that in her community the Orthodox day school gave a much higher scholarship for multiple siblings than the non-Orthodox school. Another suggested that for the Hasidic Orthodox, there was simply no interest in participating in the wider American society. This means not only that Jewish family values come first, but that they will not spend money on things like fancy restaurants and movies. The modern Orthodox, though, are very much part of the culture, and they are not having as many children, although their birth rate generally is above replacement level.

3. Is it wise to set up a model of what a Jewish family should be, or should we accept a plurality of models?

There was some controversy about this. One view held that there certainly should be a normative model of two parents and more than two children, though care must be taken to serve those Jews who do not fit the model-singles, single parents, childless families. The other viewpoint rejected as unrealistic the idea that people in our time will let their personal decisions be molded by what the official Jewish community wants. Indeed, decisions about childbearing are so private that it is doubtful whether Jewishness has anything to do with them.

4. Does the special cost of living a Jewish life serve as an obstacle to greater childbearing?

The discussion focused on day schools. Some felt that only a day school education could raise a child to value and understand his Jewishness. The possibility was even raised by one panelist that, if he were unable to afford day school tuition for another child, he would not have that child. Others disagreed, arguing that predicing childbearing on the certainty of day school education virtually writes off most of the Jewish community who cannot or will not send their offspring to day schools. There was also some discussion of the need to upgrade the day schools, and Jewish education in general. The chairman, though, pointed out that the pros and cons of day schools are not really within the framework of this conference.
SESSION III

What Can We Do for Today's Families

Chairman Yehuda Rosenman, the Director of the Jewish Communal Affairs Department of AJC, outlined the program for the second day of the conference. While the first day dealt with the situation in the Jewish community today, and with the perceptions of individuals based on their own experiences, the second day was intended to be more practical, focusing on what can be done by individuals and by groups to increase the Jewish birthrate. The morning session would hear from three speakers representing three types of communal institutions: Donald Feldstein, who has served as a Federation executive and as an executive vice-president of the AJC; Stephen Solender, Executive Vice President of the Associated Jewish Charities and Welfare Funds of Baltimore, who looked at the issue from the Federation perspective; and Mordecai Waxman, President of the Synagogue Council of America, who discussed what the synagogue can do. Mr. Rosenman noted that in the afternoon, all participants would have an opportunity to meet in small workshops.

Donald Feldstein said that there already has been more than enough talk about the low Jewish birthrate, and the time has arrived to do something tangible about it. He rejected both the hysterical approach that foresees an end to the American Jewish community, and the attitude that numbers do not matter. He proceeded to outline four basic strategies that have been suggested to increase the Jewish birthrate.

1. Family Support Social Services. This approach would favor programs and special benefits to make childrearing more pleasant and affordable: things like day care, parenting programs, reduced tuition rates for large families, mortgage assistance for young couples, children's allowances. This does not work. The countries that have tried such programs in an effort to produce more children have not succeeded. The more money a person has, the more his perceived needs will grow, and the fewer children will be produced. To be sure, the existence of such support services
may create a climate of opinion which could suggest that having children is the norm in the Jewish community, but Feldstein feels that this in all likelihood will be offset by the negative consequences.

2. Related Social Service Strategies. Indirectly, getting more young Jews to marry will bring an increase in the Jewish birthrate. Therefore, Feldstein lauded the effective programs for singles that are available, and suggested greater efforts to reach Jewish students on the campuses, and get them to meet and socialize with other Jews. Better Jewish education, visits to Israel, involvement in Jewish social causes, will all help. Also, the cults must be fought, the non-Jewish partners in intermarriages should be encouraged to convert, and offering unwanted children for adoption should be encouraged as an alternative to abortion.

3. Jewish Ideological Strategy. The Jewish community might exhort its members to have more children, and offer special recognition for those that do. A special "exemption" would be demanded from ZPG for the Jewish community because of its precarious demographic situation. Feldstein doubted that much good would come of this strategy, since exhortations based on Jewish commitment will convince only the already committed, who are already having children. The fact remains that most Jews pick up their values from the general American culture, and a specifically Jewish ideological campaign will accomplish little.

4. General Ideological Strategy. This would entail an attempt to modify the popular culture away from hedonism and toward transcendent values. Feldstein maintained that such an approach is practicable and is intrinsically right. He believes that there is a readiness in the larger society to listen to pro-family and pro-growth arguments, that the Jewish community can make a difference, and that ZPG has already been proved a fraud. We must stand for such traditional values as deferred gratification, moral values, responsibility of family members for one another, and against paganism.

STEPHEN SOLEN

Mr. Solender said that communal strategies would have to take into account responses to previous initiatives in this area. He therefore reviewed what the responses were to the National Jewish Population Study of the early 1970s. The most significant responses came in Jewish education, services to the aged, and, to some extent, in services to single-parent families. Very little progress, though, has been made in increasing the birthrate, responding to intermarriage, and adapting to the greater mobility of American Jews. Solender blamed this on the tendency of American Jewry to respond only to emergencies. The demographic problem is not a high priority on our agendas. If we
want to educate the community about the urgency of this matter, we should develop specific programmatic responses, and publicize them all over the country. Some examples of successful programs are: Jewish community centers that have membership policies receptive to intermarried couples; homes for the aged that respond to intermarrieds; Jewish Family and Children's Services that provide family education forums. Solender proceeded to advocate increased funding of more day care with scholarship assistance, mortgage assistance for young families with many children, increased stress on family programs in Jewish institutions, recognition of large families, aggressive outreach to singles, dating services, and even family allowances for families with many children. There should be, he continued, a catalog describing all such successful programs around the nation. In addition, Jewish organizations should have the most progressive personnel practices, responsive to the special needs of working women--leaves of absence to have children, refresher courses for women who have been out of the work force, special consideration in hiring for women in their 30s and 40s, and child care funding as part of fringe benefits packages.

**RABBI MORDECAI WAXMAN**

Rabbi Waxman pointed out that the synagogue reaches more American Jews than any other Jewish organizational body: about half of American Jews belong to synagogues. Also, since the synagogue stands for the Jewish experience in its totality, unlike other organizations which stress limited, specified goals, it can have a tremendous impact on attitudes regarding childbearing. Synagogues can shape attitudes in several ways. First, it can combat intermarriage through educating young people about the special role of Jews as the chosen people--a kind of Jewish patriotism. Second, the synagogue can teach specific ideas about Jewish population growth, such as a Jewish exemption from ZPG because of the Holocaust, the religious duty to propagate. It can also give special recognition to large families. Dr. Waxman then turned his attention to the changing role of women. He doubted whether most American Jewish women would willingly go back to being full-time wives and mothers, and therefore suggested attention to other attitudinal factors, such as the hedonistic view of sexuality that is so prevalent. He then listed a number of practical steps that synagogues can take to encourage large families: programs to get young singles to meet and marry, day care centers, scholarship support for Jewish education and visits to Israel, outreach to mixed marriage families. Synagogues should be encouraged to hire social workers for their staffs, possibly with Federation assistance.

**DISCUSSION**

Comments from the audience centered on Donald Feldstein's presentation. Several members of the audience disagreed with his assessment that support services have little relevance to demographic
growth, and indeed the question was raised whether it might be immoral to urge more childbirth without providing the necessary support services.

Dr. Feldstein responded that he had not meant to imply that he opposed support services. Such programs can be quite legitimate in their own right. But, he insisted, there is no evidence that they raise the birthrate.
CLOSING SESSION

At 1:30 the participants broke up into four task forces: one on Jewish education, another on dual career families, a third on social services, and the fourth on the synagogue.

At 3:30 everyone reconvened for the final plenary session, and chairman Robert Gordis called upon each task force to report on its deliberations and recommendations.

I. Task Force on Jewish Education--Formal, Informal and Campus-Based
Chair--Rabbi Paul Friedman

Resources: Chaim Botwinick
Rabbi Richard Israel

After a wide-ranging discussion the following recommendations were made:

Formal Education

1. Educational Materials. Evaluate existing materials for their subliminal messages about family and children, and persuade publishers and educational agencies to give large families greater prominence.

2. Family Life Education. Both curricula and teacher training are needed in this area.

3. Fee Structures. Large families should get special consideration, possibly through financial aid from Federation.

4. Special needs of women teachers. Administrators and boards of education should recognize the need for childcare and other supports.

5. Adult Volunteer Programs in Schools. For example, grandparents could help out in early childhood programs.

Informal Education

1. Youth organizations should work together in developing programs and materials on family and childbearing.

2. Volunteer organizations should be provided with programming on the subject of Jewish population growth.

3. Sponsor programs like "Jewish Family Month."
4. Discourage age-and sex-segregated activities in Jewish institutions, and substitute programs for the whole family.

5. Fee structures in synagogues, Ys and JCCs should encourage large-family participation.

6. Rabbinic counseling of young couples should include discussion of childbearing.

7. Encourage programs that will enable young single Jews to meet and marry each other.

Campus
1. Put the issue of Jewish Population Growth on the Hillel agenda.
2. Encourage campus counselors of young couples to deal with the childbearing issue.

II. Task Force on Childbearing and the Dual Career Family.
   Chair--Blu Greenberg
   The following suggestions emerged from the discussion:
1. Day Care should be made available and widely advertised.
2. There should be changes in the structure of the work place--and Jewish organizations should be models for this: flextime, part-time work for both men and women.
3. Use the media to promote family values--soap operas with Jewish families, and a more positive image of the family on TV.
4. Jewish Family Life Education.
5. Outreach to the unaffiliated--free membership and tickets to synagogues.
7. Encourage the option of a down-scale lifestyle to accommodate children.
8. Try to get legislative bodies to bring about change.
9. Ideological Supports: concept of childbearing as a mitzvah, the nurturant parent as a role model for children. Parents of married children should not hesitate to advise their children, recognize potential role of grandparents in providing a support system.
III. Task Force on Jewish Social Services

Chair--Dr. Norman Linzer

The following points were raised:

1. Programs for service to young children meet the needs of families but do not promote childbearing. What influences the birthrate are ideology and value issues.

2. Social work values may not be conducive to Jewish needs. Therefore, Jewish social service personnel should be urged to clarify their own values through in-service courses offered in cooperation with educational agencies. The agency executives must be convinced that this is important for the proper functioning of their agencies.

3. Jewish family agencies should be more aggressive in providing adoptive children.

IV. Task Force on the Role of the Synagogue

Chair--Rabbi Myron Fenster and Rabbi Selig Salkowitz

The following suggestions were proposed about how synagogues can promote childbearing:

1. Create a fund for Jewish education to help large families.

2. Point to role models in the synagogue who have large families.

3. Stress the subject in premarital counseling, and offer free synagogue membership for a period after marriage.

4. Encourage doctor's discount after second child.

5. Provide day care at the synagogue.

6. Special holiday activities for young families.

7. More activities for singles in the synagogue.

Dr. Gordis thanked all of the task forces for their reports, and announced that steps will be taken to disseminate and implement the suggestions made at this conference, and ensure that the issue of Jewish population growth will stay high on the Jewish public agenda.

* * * * *
APPENDIX A

Summary of Proposals

I. Ideological Strategies

1. Jewish communal workers should abandon the pretense of being "value-free" when counselling Jewish clients, and let Jewish pro-natalist messages come through in a natural, unobtrusive manner. To enable them to do this, they should be trained in Jewish values so they can resist the pull of "the culture of narcissism."

2. Encourage Jews to see the demographic problem in the context of the Holocaust. Bearing Jewish children will then be seen as a way of preventing Hitler from attaining posthumous victories.

3. Jewish education should emphasize the values of marriage and childbearing. A special curricular unit should be developed.

4. Singles should be educated toward a greater responsibility to the Jewish community. This includes aggressive advocacy of marriage and family as communal norms.

5. We should counterract the ZPG movement as both irrelevant for Western societies and inconsistent with Jewish values. We should not permit the Moral Majority to be the only force opposed to the hedonistic ethic of self-fulfillment at the expense of family responsibility. We must stand for our values even at the risk of offending certain groups (e.g. homosexuals and the voluntarily childless).

6. Stress the importance of the birthrate issue in our college services, young leadership programs, family life education, pre-school parent education, and professional staff training

7. Encourage parents and grandparents to advise married children and grandchildren about childbearing.

II. Family Support/Social Service Strategies

1. There should be Jewish-sponsored day care for children of working parents. Also, there should be a program that provides skilled homemakers for working parents who prefer childcare at home. Such services should be provided on a sliding fee scale.

2. We should encourage more part-time employment opportunities both within and outside the Jewish community.
3. We should create more "marriage bureaus" and other mechanisms that would enable young Jews to meet and marry.

4. The corporate world should be encouraged to initiate flex time, paternity leaves, on-site day care, and opportunity for shared jobs. Jewish communal agencies might provide role models for such innovations in their own personnel practices. It should be pointed out that research indicates that these kinds of changes actually yield greater productivity by raising worker morale.

5. There should be scholarships to encourage multiple-child families' participation in synagogue activities, Jewish education, and Jewish camping.

6. Mortgage assistance for young marrieds, geared to the number of children, would encourage larger families.

7. Anti-cult activity is needed.

8. We should be willing to experiment with family allowances for families with many children.

9. Synagogues should launch outreach programs to childless families and mixed-marriage families, which are unlikely to affiliate on their own. Such families should be introduced to families with children.

10. Special scholarships for study in Israel for those willing to commit themselves to some form of Jewish communal work thereafter.

11. Jewish Family Life Education should include premarital, marital, and parenting groups as well as sessions for the intermarried. There should also be special seminars for women in "fast track" careers who may wish to consider childbearing, but find that it may conflict with career aspirations.

12. Little attention has been focused on encouraging reconstituted families to have a second set of children. Increased services to such families may yield results.

13. Encourage the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse in intermarriages. A uniform conversion procedure acceptable to all branches of Judaism should be worked out.

14. Without intruding on freedom of choice, encourage adoption as an alternative to abortion.
15. There should be a more aggressive approach to provide childless couples with adoptive services.

16. Many women feel that they must work rather than have children because of the fear that divorce or widowhood will leave them economically vulnerable. Legislative action to protect women from such vulnerability may convince many of them to have children.

17. Jewish obstetricians and pediatricians should be encouraged to give discounts for the third child and beyond.

18. Greater communal efforts geared towards stabilizing and preserving marriage including counseling clinics to encourage people to discuss and work out marital problems.

III. Strategies of Communication

1. More family-centered Jewish communal services and lobbying for a restoration of government aid to family services will communicate the value that the Jewish community places on the family.

2. Jewish-sponsored day care, besides providing means of socialization, education, and affiliation with the Jewish community, communicates the importance of parenting.

3. There should be Jewish-sponsored career counseling that focuses on family needs and goals.

4. There should be special recognition of role models of co-parenting. Such couples might be named as guests of honor at communal functions.

5. Synagogues that welcome children, adapt to the special needs of parents, and provide special rates for large families signal that the Jewish community values family and children.

6. A National Jewish Family Week or Month, recognizing families with three or more children, would publicize a pro-natalist message.

7. Jewish organizations could send a pro-family message by instituting parenting leaves, fringe-benefit child care programs, and special assistance for women returning to the work force.

8. Rabbinical sermons and counselling could sensitize individuals to the religious significance of reproduction, the psychological significance of the nuclear family, and the centrality of the birthrate to Jewish survival.
9. Special literature must be developed to encourage people on the periphery of the Jewish community to affiliate.

10. Social workers or para-professionals employed by synagogues can provide family services and communicate the Jewish pro-natalist approach. Communal financial aid should help congregations pay for this.

11. We should evaluate the media to determine what messages are being communicated about the family, and we should also persuade publishers and educational agencies to give greater prominence to large families.

12. Emphasize programming for the entire family rather than for age-and sex-segregated groups.

13. Place the childbearing issue on the agenda of every Hillel Directors' Conference.

14. An ongoing media and education task force should create materials for distribution on childbearing and family life.

15. There should be sessions for Jewish communal and social workers that would enable them to clarify their Jewish values.

16. A Jewish family soap opera should be produced.

17. There should be special holiday activities for young families.

18. Jewish magazines and periodicals should devote an issue to families and population growth.
APPENDIX B

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