The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington Outreach and Engagement Committee

A Study of the Population of Greater Washington and How It Compares to the National Jewish Population Survey

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Our task is to devise policies and practices to increase Jewish affiliation in Greater Washington. To do so, we will need to:

- delineate the meaning of "affiliated," and "unaffiliated;"
- identify key target constituencies in the Jewish population; and,
- arrive at effective programmatic directions.

This memorandum initiates our conversation by exploring the evidentiary foundation for our work. It begins by assessing (or re-assessing) the very basic issue of the extent and nature of affiliation (or "unaffiliation") in Greater Washington.

This working group has been convened in part in response to the impression that affiliation rates in the Washington area Jewish community are unusually low. If the local levels of affiliation are indeed radically lower than those experienced elsewhere, then the obstacles to communal affiliation may well be different in kind and magnitude than those found elsewhere. As such, they may well demand vastly different thinking than has emerged in other communities. Is such indeed the case? How low (or high) are the local affiliation rates, really?

In particular we should know answers to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent are Washington area Jews indeed unaffiliated?
- 2) Do levels of (un)affiliation differ from those elsewhere?
- 3) Among the unaffiliated, is their lack of affiliation is likely to perpetuate itself throughout the life cycle? Alternatively, will their affiliation levels substantially rise and peak at the expected times for the expected family configurations? We are dealing with questions of severity and conventionality: Is the challenge to expanding Jewish affiliation in Washington more (or less) severe than that experienced elsewhere? Do patterns of affiliation follow the more usual contours where affiliation characterizes certain population groups far more than others?

The recently conducted population study (Ira Sheskin, "The 2003 Greater Washington Jewish Community Study," 2004: The Charles I. and Mary Kaplan Family Foundation) notes the most critical factors that may strongly influence (and often limit) levels of communal affiliation in the Washington area. Among the most noteworthy are the following:

- High rates of intermarriage, among the highest of all Jewish communities of similar size. Typically, intermarried Jews exhibit very low rates of affiliation, far lower the inmarried Jews, and even lower than non-married Jews.
- 2) Somewhat large numbers of unmarried Jews (never married, divorced, widowed). The low rates of affiliation among the unmarried derive, in part, from the absence of other Jewish members in the household (spouse, children) who, by virtue of their very presence, provide more opportunities and reasons to affiliate. Very simply, homes with more Jews affiliate more often.
- 3) A very small presence of Orthodox Jews (under 3%, as compared with about 10% nationally). Of all Jewish religious denominations, the Orthodox maintain the highest rates of affiliation. Their under-representation in Washington exerts a downward drag on overall affiliation rates.
- Residential dispersal, that is, the small number of Jews who live in close proximity to one another, such as in Lower Montgomery County and adjoining parts of the District. Residential dispersal usually implies fewer informal ties (marriage and friendship) among Jews, as well as lower rates of affiliation.
- 5) **Recency** of arrival, as embodied in the relatively large number who were born outside the boundaries of the Greater Washington area. In other communities, families with two of more generations of residence in a particular area provide a disproportionate share of leadership for Federations, congregations, and other agencies. The small proportion of Washington area Jews with multi-generational histories in the area may well help limit the rates of engagement in community-oriented agencies, such as the Federation.

At the same time, on the "plus" side, the relatively high rate of **affluence** (high median incomes) in the Washington area promotes institutional affiliation. From previous research we know that Jewish affiliation – as with all forms of voluntary organizational activity – rises with income. If lack of income impedes affiliation, then high levels of income should, conversely, act as a facilitator of affiliation.

Reflecting the cumulative impact of the several socio-demographic obstacles to affiliation noted above, the population study narrative reports that levels of Jewish engagement in Washington fall short of those typically found in comparable communities. This generalization applies to:

- synagogue membership,
- JCC membership (notably, participation in JCC programs stand at relatively high levels, perhaps reflecting the local JCC's greater emphasis on program recruitment than on membership per se),
- belonging to other Jewish organizations (e.g., Hadassah, B'nai B'rith), and
- Federation involvement (contributions and other indicators, such as familiarity).

The overall inference drawn in the narrative from these observations is that Washington Jewry is under-affiliated. Accordingly, the unaffiliated Jewish population is thought to be larger here than elsewhere.

To interrogate this inference, I undertook an analysis of the Greater Washington population study data with a view toward understand who are the "unaffiliated," and their numbers.

To do so, the analysis requires a working definition of "unaffiliated." Although Jewish communal policy makers readily speak of "affiliated," and "unaffiliated" Jews, they have no firm consensus on how to define these terms. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the ambiguity attached to "affiliated" and "unaffiliated," these terms are necessary. To operationalize Jewish affiliation, I focused upon the following eight available indicators of current communal affiliation:

- 1) Membership in a synagogue (now).
- 2) Membership in a JCC (now).
- 3) Membership in another Jewish organization (now).
- 4) Volunteering under Jewish auspices (past year).
- 5) Donating \$100 or more to the Federation campaign (past year).
- 6) Donating \$100 or more to all other Jewish causes (past year).
- 7) Feeling "very much" a part of the Jewish community in Greater Washington (now).
- 8) Feeling "extremely" attached emotionally to Israel (now).

These indicators are inherently important in their own right, and, when taken together, they constitute a useful barometer of the concept, "Jewish affiliation". Surely Jews have other ways of connecting with the organized Jewish community. But, anyone who fails to score positively on ANY of these eight items would meet most people's definition of "unaffiliated," as commonly used. Even those who score positively on just one or two of these items might be reasonably regarded by many communal leaders and professionals as "unaffiliated" or, at most, "affiliated, but under-engaged."

Consistent with the figures provided in the report, the analysis of the household data (and households as the unit of analysis will emerge as a critical issue) are given below:

Jewish Affiliation Indicators, by Households					
	Approx Number of Households (000s)	Percentage Of Households			
Synagogue Member	422.08	.3697			
JCC Member	104.21	.0913			
Jewish Organization member	230.04	.2015			
Volunteers for a Jewish agency	303.30	.2656			
Gave Fed campaign \$100+	222.61	.1950			
Gave other J causes \$100+	366.45	.3209			
Feels very much a part of Jewish community of Greater Washington	212.92	.1865			
Extremely attached emotionally to Israel	219.16	.1919			
Any sign of affiliation, out of 8 points	727.91	.6375			

Source: Author's tabulations of data collected by Ira Sheskin, "The 2003 Greater Washington Jewish Community Study," 2004: The Charles I. and Mary Kaplan Family Foundation.

Rates and numbers of affiliated households: As can be seen from the table above, 37% (i.e., .3697) of all Jewish households in Greater Washington are affiliated with synagogues. They amount to approximately 422,000 such households (for technical reasons, the raw numbers of households – or individuals below – are slightly over-estimated by approximately 4%). Similarly, just 9% of households pay dues to the JCC, just 20% belong to another Jewish organization, and so forth. By the most relaxed definition of affiliation (scoring on any of the eight possible points of affiliation), 64% qualify as affiliated, meaning that 36% of the households are unaffiliated.

Mixed picture: These figures on belonging in Greater Washington do seem lower than those presented elsewhere, such as in the National Jewish Population Study 2000/01 (United Jewish Communities; see <u>www.ujc.org/njps</u>). Analysts reported that national synagogue membership rates equal 40%, and national JCC membership stands at 17%, both of which exceed the figures for Greater Washington reported above. At the same time, charitable giving rates in the Washington area clearly surpass those around the country. Just 10% of American Jews give \$100 or more to their Federation campaigns (NJPS), while the comparable figure for all other Jewish causes reaches just 21%, far below those reported by Washington area Jews. At least in terms of charitable giving (if not other areas of communal activity), Washington area Jews report higher affiliation levels than do Jews elsewhere. **One Jew, One "Vote":** In point of fact, in comparison with the rest of the country, the levels of affiliation in Greater Washington legitimately may be seen as substantially higher. The results above portray the percentages (and numbers) of Jewish households that affiliate in different ways with the Jewish community. Another way of looking at these same findings is to calculate affiliation on the basis of Jewish adult individuals rather than households. Doing so produces proportions that are somewhat, but meaningfully, higher, as the following table reports:

Jewish Affiliation Indicators, by Individuals (Jewish Adults)					
	Approx Number of Jewish adults (000s)	Percentage Of J adults			
Synagogue Member	813.32	.4646			
JCC Member	188.25	.1075			
Jewish Organization member	418.46	.2391			
Volunteers for a Jewish agency	564.66	.3226			
Gave Fed campaign \$100+	433.36	.2476			
Gave other J causes \$100+	675.52	.3859			
Feels very much a part of J community of Greater Washington	401.24	.2292			
Extremely attached emotionally to Israel	368.33	.2104			
Any Affiliation out of 8 points	1246.02	.7118			

Source: Author's tabulations of data collected by Ira Sheskin, "The 2003 Greater Washington Jewish Community Study," 2004: The Charles I. and Mary Kaplan Family Foundation.

The differences between the household and individual rates in the two tables are certainly notable. For example, the reported rate of synagogue membership moves from 37% for households, to 46% for Jewish adults, making the Washington rate not lower, but <u>higher</u>, than the national rate of 40%, and reported in the NJPS on the basis of <u>individual</u> adult Jews. By using the individual rate, Washington area Jews no longer trail the country with respect to congregational belonging, but modestly surpass the national average. Similarly, the percent of adult Jews who belong to households making gifts of \$100 or more to the Federation campaign reaches 25% for the Washington region's individuals, instead of the 20% reported for households, opening an even larger gap with respect to the national rate of 10% for individuals. Moreover, among individual Jewish adults in the Washington area, the proportion unaffiliated drops to 29%.

The reason for the shifting percentages between household and individual rates lies in the close association between number of Jews in the household and Jewish communal activity. Households with just one Jewish adult present largely consist of non-married Jews (either younger and never married, or older and widowed or divorced), or of inter-married Jews. These family configurations typically exhibit less involvement in Jewish life (as further demonstrated below). In contrast, most homes with two or more Jewish adults are those marked by the marriage of two Jews and, at times, the presence of adult Jewish children. These configurations are associated with higher levels of involvement. Simply put, the more Jews in the household, the more opportunities for someone to affiliate in some way, and the greater the affiliation levels both for households and the individuals Jews within them.

The last few decades has seen in Greater Washington, and elsewhere, rising rates of intermarriage. As more Jews marry non-Jews, they create more Jewish households than they would have had they married Jews. (A mixed-marriage requires only one and only one Jew; an in-marriage requires two Jews.) Hence, whatever its impact upon the Jewish engagement of individuals, the inter-marriage phenomenon exerts a downward effect on household rates of Jewish affiliation, simply by enlarging the sheer number of Jewish households while holding constant the number of affiliation-oriented Jewish individuals.

[A somewhat fanciful example may clarify matters: Suppose that in 1950 a village contained 100 married Jews, constituting 50 Jewish households. Suppose that 40 of the households were affiliated. The affiliation rate for both individuals (80/100) and households (40/50) would be equal, at 80%. Suppose that in the year 2000, their 100 descendants exhibited the same individual proclivity to affiliate (80/100). In other words, the proportion of adult Jews who were Jewishly inclined remained the same. Suppose further that the affiliating Jews inmarried and the non-affiliating Jews took Gentile partners. We still have 100 Jews, but now we have 60 Jewish households, 40 of which are in-marriages (and affiliated) and 20 of which are inter-marriages (and unaffiliated). Under these conditions, the individual rate of affiliation still reaches 80% (80 out of 100), but the household rate of affiliation drops to 67% (40 out of 60).]

In a sense, calculating affiliation on the basis of individuals is akin to "one Jew, one vote." In contrast, calculating on the basis of households resembles the Electoral College, where smaller Jewish households count as much as larger Jewish households. Failing to calculate individual-based rates is functionally equivalent to saying that a synagogue has as much interest in recruiting a household with an intermarried Jew and no Jewish children as it does in recruiting a household with two Jewish adults and three Jewish children.

The overall conclusion is that affiliation rates in Washington are NOT lower than elsewhere. Thus, policymakers ought not approach the challenge of boosting affiliation as a matter entailing extraordinary demographic or cultural obstacles to affiliation. However, with this said, policymakers certainly retain an interest in searching for ways to elevate affiliation, no matter what its current level.

The remainder of these results are calculated on the basis of Jewish individual adults, rather than households, providing a different perspective on patterns of affiliation than would otherwise be the case.

Distribution of Affiliation Points

Below is the distribution of cumulative scores on the eight points of affiliation. As noted, 29% of the adults exhibited no such signs of affiliation, and, as might be expected, the distribution thins considerably with increased levels of affiliation.

Number of points of affiliation, out of 8				
	Number of Individual Adult Jews (000s)	Percent		
.00	504	28.8		
1.00	326	18.6		
2.00	212	12.1		
3.00	248	14.2		
4.00	173	9.9		
5.00	125	7.2		
6.00	96	5.5		
7.00	56	3.2		
8.00	10	.6		
Total	1751	100.0		

Source: Author's tabulations of data collected by Ira Sheskin, "The 2003 Greater Washington Jewish Community Study," 2004: The Charles I. and Mary Kaplan Family Foundation.

Three Strata: Unaffiliated, Affiliated, Engaged

To facilitate further analysis, I combined the above distribution in three strata to represent the following three levels of affiliation:

• Unaffiliated – those exhibiting no apparent signs of connection with organized Jewish life; they have no strong feelings about being Jewish, belong to no Jewish institutions, and donate nothing (or next to nothing) to Jewish charities. These were those respondents with a score of 0 out of 8 possible points of affiliation (29%).

- Affiliated those maintaining only a few elements of connection, such as making a small donation to a Jewish cause or belonging to a JCC or synagogue. However, they manifest little or no evidence of serious commitment or involvement in Jewish life (31%). (Score of 1-2.)
- Engaged these exhibit several signs of connection, and evidence of serious commitment of some sort, perhaps by way of multiple memberships, undertaking volunteer activities, and expressing strong feelings of attachment to the Jewish community or Israel (41%). (Score of 3-8.)

As noted earlier, the completely unaffiliated count for almost 29% of the adult Jewish population in Greater Washington. In addition, we ought not lose sight of the 31% who are merely "affiliated," reporting only one or two points of affiliative connection.

Affiliation: 3 Levels				
Number of Individual Adult Jews (000s)				
Unaffiliated (0)	504	28.8		
Affiliated (1-2)	537	30.7		
Engaged (3-8)	709	40.5		
Total	1751	100.0		

Source: Author's tabulations of data collected by Ira Sheskin, "The 2003 Greater Washington Jewish Community Study," 2004: The Charles I. and Mary Kaplan Family Foundation.

Distribution of Family Configurations

In terms of family configurations, the three largest distinguishable groups are empty nesters (middle-aged and older couples with no children home – 24%); "singles" (listed as, "Not married, under 65" – 22%), and parents (be they in-married or single parents) with school-age (6-17) children at home – 20%. In their different varieties, the intermarried account for 17% of all Jewish adults. Of the 9% of the total who are intermarried and with children home, about half (4.5%) are raising their children as Jews, while slightly more are raising their children as non-Jews.

Distribution of Family Configurations of Jewish Adult Individuals			
	Number of Individual Adult Jews (000s)	Percent	
Intermarried, no kids	137	7.8	
Intermar, nonJ kids	81	4.6	
Intermar, J kids	78	4.5	
Not married, under 65	392	22.4	
In-married, no kids, under 65	94	5.4	
In-married or single parent, tots	94	5.4	
In-married or single parent, schoolchildren	343	19.6	
Empty nesters	421	24.1	
Single, 65+	110	6.3	
Total	1751	100.0	

The following two tables present various measures of affiliation by family configuration. The first table below presents the individual items (synagogue membership, JCC membership, etc.); the next table presents summary measures (mean number of affiliation points and percent in any way affiliated).

Several observations are in order:

- Affiliation varies dramatically by family configuration. A sense of the variation can be gleaned by comparing the intermarried with no children (the least affiliated) with the in-married with school-age children. Among the intermarried, just 9% belong to a synagogue s compared with 82% among the in-married. Among the intermarried, just 29% are affiliated in some way, as compared with fully 91% among the in-married. The very wide variations in affiliation by family configuration strongly suggest that policies to Jewishly engage the population need to take family status into account: Family status is the critical dimension for purposes of "market segmentation," and policy development. We need to develop different policies for different sub-groups, divided along family status lines.
- 2) Three population groups exhibit especially low rates of affiliation (or, conversely, high rates of non-affiliation): the intermarried; younger singles; and older singles. Each merits special attention, and each suggests specific policy objectives, as follows:
 - a) The intermarried and their low rates of affiliation underscore the interest in organized Jewry pursuing policies among single Jews that will bring about higher rates of in-marriage. Nothing so powerfully influences one's Jewish future as the religious identity of one's spouse. Previous research has demonstrated that the spouse's religion is a more powerful predictor of current Jewish involvement than is Jewish schooling, income, residential location, mobility, or other sociodemographic variables.
 - b) The low rates of affiliation among younger, unmarried Jews, suggests a parallel interest in facilitating marriage opportunities in this population group. More married Jews with children in the population means more affiliation in the community.
 - c) The low rates of affiliation among older singles (largely widowed) suggests the possibility of boosting affiliation with special efforts to retain the institutional engagement of older Jews after the death or departure of their spouse.

d) Retention of the potentially disaffiliated may be more readily achievable than recruitment of the currently unaffiliated.

- 3) Affiliation rates mount dramatically for in-married Jews as they move through the life cycle. As they progress from parents without children, to parents with pre-school children, to parents with school-age children, points of affiliation mount progressively with each of these transitions. They move sequentially from 1.5 for the married-no-children, to 2.4 for the parents of pre-schoolers, to 3.4 among parents of school-age children. This pattern suggests the organized Jewish community may well increase total affiliation by speeding the process of acquiring points of affiliation among the in-married. Affiliation earlier in the family life cycle will lead to greater, wider, and more enduring engagement. In particular, the network of Jewish pre-schools can be used to reach these parents (and intermarried parents of Jewish children as well) more widely and more rapidly. Once enrolled, these families can be more rapidly and effectively encouraged to join synagogues, JCCs, and other Jewish agencies, as well as to consider intensive forms of Jewish education for their young and growing children.
- 4) Among the intermarried, those raising Jewish children exhibit far higher rates of affiliation than those raising their children as non-Jews. Of the mixed married parents of Jewish children, as many as 76% are affiliated in some fashion as contrasted with just 34% of those raising their children as non-Jews. The contrast in synagogue membership is equally impressive: 55% vs. 7%. These large gaps demonstrate the critical importance of persuading inter-faith families to raise their children as Jews. Not only will such a decision on their part affect the Jewish identity of the next generation; as we learn from these findings, raising a Jewish child immediately affects (to the good) one's relationship with organized Jewry, producing higher rates of affiliation.

Jewish Affiliation Indicators for Family Configurations								
Family Configuration	Syn Member	JCC Member	J Orgn member	Volunteers for a Jewish agency	Gave Federation campaign \$100+	Gave other Jewish causes \$100+	Feels very much a part of Jewish community of Greater Washington	Extremely attached emotionally to Israel
Intermarried, no kids	.0864	.0202	.0497	.0856	.0711	.1822	.0219	.0446
Intermar, nonJ kids	.0739	.1033	.0518	.0772	.0235	.0617	.0134	.0185
Intermar, J kids	.5527	.0533	.1065	.2488	.1496	.3595	.1677	.1878
Not married, under 65	.2095	.0874	.1395	.1965	.1149	.2116	.1458	.2142
In-married, no kids, under 65	.3836	.0561	.3384	.1645	.1256	.2155	.1354	.1046
In-married or single parent, tots	.5984	.1476	.3036	.3209	.1307	.3765	.2605	.2489
In-married or single parent, schoolchildren	.8224	.1673	.2782	.6295	.3319	.5592	.3612	.2519
Empty nesters	.6270	.1181	.3515	.3877	.4692	.5997	.3254	.2789
Single, 65+	.2923	.1129	.3697	.2323	.2682	.3154	.2623	.2274
Total	.4646	.1075	.2391	.3226	.2476	.3859	.2292	.2104

Summary Measures of Affiliation by Family Configuration					
Family Configuration	Percent with any affiliation	Number of points of affiliation, out of 8			
Intermarried, no kids	.2931	.5617			
Intermar, nonJ kids	.3394	.4232			
Intermar, J kids	.7645	1.8259			
Not mar, under 65	.5669	1.3194			
In-married, no kids, under 65	.6824	1.5236			
In-married or single parent, tots	.8279	2.3870			
In-married or single parent, schoolchildren	.9066	3.4017			
Empty nesters	.8517	3.1574			
Single, 65+	.7720	2.0806			
Total	.7118	2.2069			

We may also examine the relationship of family configuration and affiliation from another vantage point, by asking: Of those who are Unaffiliated, Affiliated, and Engaged, how many Jewish adults are found within each family configuration?

Among the Unaffiliated, the largest types of family configurations are the young singles (34%) and the intermarried (30%, excluding interfaith couples raising their children as Jews). Among the Affiliated (though not genuinely "Engaged"), the largest family group consists of the young non-married (28%), followed by the empty nesters (18%). The Engaged heavily consist of empty nesters (37%) and in-married or single parents of school-age children (33%).

Family Configurations by Affiliation: 3 Levels					
		Affiliation: 3 Levels			
		Unaffiliated Affiliated Engaged		Engaged	Total
	Intermarried, no kids	19.2%	5.9%	1.3%	7.9%
	Intermar, nonJ kids	10.7%	4.6%	.3%	4.6%
	Intermar, J kids	3.6%	5.8%	4.1%	4.5%
	Not married, under 65	33.7%	27.7%	10.4%	22.4%
Family	In-married, no kids, under 65	6.0%	7.4%	3.4%	5.4%
Configuration	In-married or single parent, tots	3.2%	6.9%	5.6%	5.3%
	In-married or single parent, schoolchildren	6.3%	14.1%	33.1%	19.6%
	Empty nesters	12.3%	18.4%	36.7%	24.0%
	Single, 65+	5.0%	9.1%	5.1%	6.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Policy Options

In particular, what objectives are we seeking, and with (or for) which constituencies? In our conversation, three sorts of goals will be useful to sort out:

- Maximize the number of Jews who are in any way "affiliated." Here we are seeking to move those Jews who are totally unaffiliated to a position of some sort of affiliation with Jewish life, however minimally and however defined. The target constituencies here may well consist of the intermarried and younger unmarried Jewish adults, as well as, possibly, older singles. These may be the hardest and most costly to reach.
- 2) Maximize the number of Jews who are "engaged." Here, we are seeking not mere affiliation, but some elements of serious involvement in Jewish life; for this objective, a single instance of superficial affiliation alone is not enough. Our mission here is to broaden and enhance the Jewish communal engagement of Jews, be they totally unaffiliated or even slightly affiliated. Under this rubric, we may decide to focus upon pre-schools, both as a way of more rapidly attracting young families (both in-married and intermarried), and as a way of propelling these families into other forms of Jewish institutional engagement both during and after their pre-school years.
- 3) Maximize the acts of Jewish engagement. Here we are seeking simply to produce a more active Jewish community, irrespective of who may be recruited to engage in those activities. (In effect, the Federation campaign operates this way.) This objective seeks more Jews going to more synagogue services, observing more rituals, donating more money, consuming more Jewish culture, doing more volunteering, as well as belonging to and supporting more Jewish agencies. Here we may focus upon current members of synagogues and JCCs, and seek to provide them with more opportunities for involvement.

Our deliberations will need to prioritize among these different routes to maximizing Jewish affiliation, and then to develop program initiatives and recommendations consistent with those objectives.