ON THE JOURNEY:
Concepts That Support a Study of the Professional Trajectories of Jewish Educators

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The **Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE)** is an evolving community of researchers, practitioners, and philanthropic leaders dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide the work of Jewish education. The Consortium supports research shaped by the wisdom of practice, practice guided by research, and philanthropy informed by a sound base of evidence.

The **William Davidson Foundation** is a private family foundation that honors its founder and continues his lifelong commitment to philanthropy, advancing for future generations the economic, cultural and civic vitality of Southeast Michigan, the State of Israel, and the Jewish community.

The **Jim Joseph Foundation** seeks to foster compelling, effective Jewish learning experiences for young Jews in the United States. Established in 2006, the Jim Joseph Foundation has awarded more than $500 million in grants with the aspiration that all Jews, their families, and their friends will be inspired by Jewish learning experiences to lead connected, meaningful, and purpose-filled lives and make positive contributions to their communities and the world.

AUTHORS

This report was prepared by **Rosov Consulting**. Founded in 2008, Rosov Consulting is a professional services firm helping foundations, philanthropists, and nonprofits in the Jewish communal sector meet their goals, assess progress, and make well-informed decisions to enhance impact. Working at the nexus of the funder and grantee relationship, our expertise includes evaluation and applied research, strategy development, launching new philanthropic initiatives, and systems coaching. We utilize our range of life experiences and knowledge to best serve our clients.

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BACKGROUND

The Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE), with generous support from the William Davidson and Jim Joseph Foundations, is launching a multi-strand program of research that will have significant ramifications for the recruitment, retention, and development of educators in all sectors of the Jewish education ecosystem in North America. The three central strands are:

1. **Preparing for Entry**

2. **On the Journey**

3. **Mapping the Marketplace**

The "On the Journey" strand is the first to get underway. Data gathered about the experience of work in Jewish educational settings will serve as a valuable resource for the design and execution of the other two strands. In this first strand of our research, we are concerned with individuals who work as Jewish educators today and (for purposes of comparison) with educators who either recently transitioned to full-time administration or left the field altogether. In this phase of inquiry, we want to know what motivates people to commit to working as Jewish educators, how they grow professionally, and in what ways their workplace conditions, lived experiences, and professional journeys shape their professional choices.

Ultimately, as a reflection of CASJE's commitment to applied research, we seek to understand the working conditions and the professional development interventions that if instituted or improved would make a difference to educator job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and career commitment—outcomes typically associated with educator retention and growth and, in turn, with learner participation, motivation, and well-being.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The research design we employ depends, first, on precisely conceptualizing the central terms of our inquiry. How, therefore, do we define a Jewish educator and define settings for Jewish education? What do we mean, for example, by the "lived experiences" of Jewish educators, their "self-efficacy," and "career commitment"?

To bring clarity to these terms, and to help shape the design of our research, our team conducted a review of literature, blogs, and public statements concerned with these issues within Jewish education and in associated fields of work, such as public schooling, the caring professions, and public service. We also interviewed 13 informants identified as having specialist knowledge of particular sectors of Jewish education and engagement, such as camping, teen engagement, and entrepreneurial programming. And, in a series of seven focus groups, we solicited the perspectives of 33 practitioners who have lived

experience of work in settings geared to Jewish education, engagement, and/or activism. ("Lived experience" is a phenomenological concept that implies access to special knowledge as a consequence of first-hand involvement in everyday events.) In this paper, we synthesize what we have learned with respect to the central terms of our inquiry. We present this synthesis in relation to the four questions that shape the design of our work:

1. **What is a Jewish educator and how is the educator similar to or different from those who work as Jewish engagers or as Jewish communal professionals more broadly?**

2. **What are conceived to be the desired outcomes of investing in the recruitment, retention, and growth of Jewish educators with respect to the educators themselves?**

3. **What professional interventions, supports, and conditions are assumed to make a difference to these desired outcomes, and what are the grounds for such assumptions?**

4. **What features of educators' own background characteristics, and of their educational and communal contexts and experiences before taking up work as educators, might predict these desired outcomes?**

WHAT IS A JEWISH EDUCATOR TODAY?

The Educators in Jewish Schools Study, or EJSS (Kress & Ben Avi, 2007), is the most recent large-scale study of more than 1,500 Jewish educators, their working conditions, and careers. It is focused specifically on educators who were teachers or "second level administrators": personnel employed in day schools and complementary schools (the fashionable term at that time for afterschool programs) below the rank of head of school. The study's stated purposes were "to discover: Who are the educators that teach in Jewish day schools and complementary schools? What led them to a career in Jewish education? How do they perceive their current positions? What factors influence their decision to remain in the field?" These educators, the study's sponsors explained, "are teaching thousands of our children in kindergarten through 12th grade in 'formal education' venues" (p. ii).

A decade earlier, in 1996, as part of the efforts of the Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) to bring about "a dramatic change in the scope, standards and quality of Jewish education" (Commission on Jewish education in North America, 1990), Gamoran and his colleagues conducted the CIJE Study of Educators in three "lead communities," gathering data from almost 1,000 individuals. They then invited others to employ the same survey instruments in their own communities. This project concentrated its attention on "teachers

and leaders in Jewish schools…that is, day schools, supplementary schools and pre-schools" (Gamoran et al., 1996, p. 2). In doing so, the researchers specifically excluded "teachers and educational leaders working in informal Jewish educational settings," a decision they did not explicitly explain but which seems to have been related to an assessment of the settings in which professionally constituted Jewish education predominantly took place.

Who are the educators we should study today? Increasingly, there are more Jewish education settings that look nothing like schools. The proportion of young people outside the ultra-Orthodox community enrolled in Jewish school programs of one kind or another has fallen steadily over the last two decades. In the afterschool sector—presumed still to include more participants than any other—the enrollees are estimated to have fallen to 204,000 from 230,000 in 2007 (Wertheimer, 2008).[1] At the same time, and perhaps in reaction to these trends, there has been an explosion of interest and investment in alternative sites for Jewish education and engagement, especially for those age 18 and older. The 2018 Slingshot Guide to Jewish Innovation, which—in its own words— "highlights some of the most ground-breaking organizations in Jewish life today," classifies 39 of the 50 organizations it highlights as concerned in some way with Jewish education. These include service-learning frameworks, millennial engagement platforms, media and technology businesses, Israel experience providers, alternative *minyanim*, and programs that make available intensive Jewish learning for niche communities.

Research literature over the last two decades reflects this ever-expanding notion of what constitutes Jewish education and, by implication, what a Jewish educator is and does. Scholars have detailed the ways in which Jewish education occurs within the framework of heritage travel (Cohen, 2006; Leigh, 2011), Israel experiences (Shapiro, 2006; Copeland, 2011), camping (Fox & Novak, 1997; Zola & Lorge, 2006; Reimer, 2012), online gaming (Gottlieb, 2015), museums (Moghadam, 2011), service learning (Chertok & Samuel, 2008), the rabbinate (Grant & Muszkat-Barkan, 2011), and outdoors-environmental programming (Rubin Ross, 2017). Sales and Saxe (2003) are among the rare countervailing voices to this expansive view, arguing in the course of their study of Jewish summer camps for a sharper distinction between Jewish socialization, the primary task of camps, and Jewish education, the task of a cadre of specialists within camps. A minority of employees at camp are Jewish educators, they argue.

Taking a different tack, and collapsing previous distinctions between formal and informal Jewish education, Bryfman (2011) makes the case for an all-encompassing notion of "experiential Jewish education," one that would be relevant to all of the cases just cited—

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[1] Comparing Wertheimer's 2007 estimate of 230,000 enrollees with Dubb and Della Pergola's (1986) estimate of 280,000 in 1982 suggests an annual decline of 1% per year, a slowing of the decrease from the previous two decades when the population declined by about 3.5% per year. If a 1% per year decrease has continued (a conservative estimate), this results in the estimated 204,000 today. [Thanks to Eli Schaap for help with this estimation.]

most definitely including camps. Kress and Rotstein (2018) go even further, arguing that the ultimate task of Jewish education is to enhance the psycho-social health and well-being of students: "Jewish educators are asking how they may help their students develop social relationships that are embedded in Jewish values. They are seeking to create Jewish learning that nurtures the soul, honors spiritual curiosity, and is relevant to their lives" (p. 271). This argument is in tune with Woocher's (2012) influential call for a new paradigm of Jewish education "built around the idea of placing learners at the center of its thinking and asking how it can help these learners achieve a more meaningful, connected and fulfilling life" (p. 218). This paradigm, as Woocher explained more succinctly elsewhere, involves conceiving of Jewish education as enabling learners to "use Jewish wisdom as a pathway to human flourishing" (Woocher, 2016). In these terms, Jewish education is not an end in itself, or directed toward particular Jewish outcomes such as Jewish solidarity, literacy, or observance; rather, it advances more universal outcomes.

Ironically, while scholars have generally been expanding the range of what Jewish education might mean and what a Jewish educator might therefore be, a number of the individuals who participated in our focus groups and informant interviews were not inclined to think of themselves as Jewish educators. This reaction was more prevalent among those who work in alternative settings but was also a point of view expressed by some located in more school-like settings. They find the term "Jewish educator" too constraining, associated with having and teaching specific Jewish knowledge. They feel that the term denotes one aspect of how they see themselves, but it does not capture much else that they do as part of a larger vocation: facilitating connection, building community, nurturing engagement, uncovering meaning, and impacting the world.

These respondents draw, then, on the same body of ideas that inspired scholars. They see their work as involving a broad range of social, emotional, communal, and instructional tasks, but they do so with unexpected and less expansive consequences in terms of their professional identities. Many who are working or have worked on the front lines prefer to describe themselves as facilitators, engagers, social entrepreneurs, or Jewish communal professionals. While they acknowledge "Jewish educator" to be a meaningful descriptor of their professional identity, it is neither sufficient nor complete.

These hesitations and reservations do not imply that, like previous studies of Jewish educators, we should focus specifically on those responsible for the transmission of Jewish content in some fashion, whether in formal contexts or not. On the contrary, **even if individuals don't think of themselves primarily as Jewish educators, but they do work for pay, directly with younger or older people who identify as Jews, in settings—whether virtual, brick-and-mortar, or outdoors—that are constituted to help participants find special meaning in Jewish texts, experiences, and associations, then they can be presumed to be engaged in the work of Jewish education broadly conceived.** They are

Jewish educators! The setting is not definitive. If someone defines herself as a Jewish educator and is employed to do this work in a setting whose primary focus is *not* Jewish education—say, at a Jewish welfare organization or community federation—she would fall inside the sample frame, too.

This strategy suggests including as part of our research general studies teachers in Jewish day schools (some of whom define themselves as Jewish educators [Pomson, 2000]). It would also point to the inclusion of pulpit rabbis, who frequently see their primary professional roles—instruction, care, cultivating Jewish growth, building community—in terms fully consistent with those who define themselves as educators (an argument evocatively evidenced by Tauber [2015] in her textured study of congregational rabbis). However, while this approach might make sense for definitional accuracy, we believe that rabbis (but not day school general studies teachers) fall outside of the population most likely to be targeted for the educational programs and interventions that this study is meant to inform and inspire. This is even more clearly true of university professors of Jewish studies who are not tasked with shaping the personal commitments of their students and whose students do not primarily identify as Jews. It also points to the exclusion of full-time administrators and coordinators employed in Jewish educational settings who do not have direct contact with students or program participants.

These particular boundary cases help concretize our definitional criteria of who is a Jewish educator for the purposes of our inquiry: (i) people engaged in work that involves direct contact with participants, (ii) who are being paid for the work, (iii) in an institutional setting geared to Jewish educational outcomes, or (iv) as part of responsibilities that call for instruction and meaning-making of Jewish sources and/or wisdom.

DESIRED EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

Our interest in understanding the professional trajectories of Jewish educators is predicated on an assumption that the effectiveness of Jewish education is dependent on the characteristics of its personnel; or, to put it differently, that the dispositions, capacities, and length of tenure of Jewish educational personnel are related to what their students, campers, and clients might derive from their efforts. A long tradition of research, especially in public education, probes such relationships between educator characteristics and educational outcomes. The educator characteristics encompass a long list of variables, including gender, age, length of tenure, socioeconomic status profile, academic ability, self-efficacy, emotional well-being, certification, career commitment, pay, and job satisfaction. The most prominent "learner" outcomes of interest in such studies include student attendance, achievement, socio-emotional well-being, and motivation (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Klusmann et al., 2016; Atteberry et al., 2017; Arens & Morin, 2016).

In our work, we do not propose to explore the relationships between educator characteristics and student/participant outcomes. (Examining such relationships is beyond the scope of our inquiry and would be especially difficult to operationalize in a variegated field like Jewish education that lacks a shared vision, common outcomes, and common outcome data [Fox et al., 2003; York et al., 2015].) We do, however, want to explore those educator characteristics that are themselves outcomes of purposeful interventions or workplace conditions and that can, in turn, reasonably be expected to be associated with positive learner experiences and outcomes.

Given the diversity of contexts in which study participants are employed, we propose to further sharpen our focus and look specifically at educator characteristics that will be salient across the full range of Jewish education contexts outlined above and are also readily quantifiable for research purposes.

To this end, we propose to examine four such educator characteristics—length of tenure, job satisfaction, sense of professional self-efficacy, and career commitment—and to explore the extent to which and the ways in which specific (programmatic) interventions, workplace conditions, and background variables contribute to these outcomes.

Length of Tenure

In teaching, the length of individuals' professional service is associated with their effectiveness, with a steep increase in effectiveness occurring after the first few years of employment (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017; Gershenson, 2016; Clotfelter et al., 2007). High levels of staff turnover are associated not only with the diminished effectiveness of staff but also with high financial and other costs as a consequence of resources being diverted to the recruitment and training of new staff (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Watlington et al., 2010; Eckert, 2013). In welfare-providing sectors, such as nursing, social work, and psychotherapy, the intensity of work is more often associated with "compassion burnout" the longer individuals stay on the job (McFadden et al., 2015; Goldberg et al., 2016). In these professions, some degree of turnover may be more desirable than in teaching. We propose to explore more fully the divergent patterns between the teaching and caring professions more generally with respect to length of tenure. For the moment, these differences leave us wondering what might be most desirable in sectors of Jewish education where there is a greater emphasis on instruction than in those where the emphasis is on serving participants' or clients' psychosocial needs.

As far as the contributors to retention and longevity are concerned, length of professional service is typically associated with a variety of "institutional" and personal variables. The former include pay and working conditions (such as workload, support, and supervision) and the nature and length of preparation and induction, while the latter include job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and career commitment. In these respects, there does not seem to be a

difference between teaching and other similar professions (Ingersoll et al., 2014; You & Conley, 2015). With its special focus on probing what workplace supports might contribute to greater teacher retention, the EJSS provides useful instrumentation and a helpful point of comparison for this dimension of our work.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction—a second desirable educator outcome—can be conceptualized as hedonic (pleasure-based), moral (providing a sense of authenticity), and instrumental (fulfilling one's material and psychological needs) (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), and what Rothausen and Henderson (2018) call "eudaimonic," or meaning-based job-related well-being. Higher levels within these domains have been found to contribute to a higher commitment to stay in a job, superior job performance and efficacy, and improved employee physical and mental health (Platis et al., 2015; Tarigan & Ariani, 2015; Liu & Meyer, 2005). In these terms, education and other caring professions may be no different from other fields of work (Gkolia, 2014; Usop et al., 2013; Judge et al., 2001). This association is an iterative (or circular) one. While job satisfaction impacts these outcomes, the opposite can be said too—these outcomes also impact job satisfaction (Koedel et al., 2017; Faragher et al., 2013).

Most commonly, the sources of job satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) are both conceived to be extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic factors include pay, benefits, workload, employee empowerment, government regulations, and the physical environment (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Ning et al., 2009). Intrinsic factors include collegiality, collaboration, a sense of community, and the "psychic rewards" of the work itself (Lortie, 1975; McLauglin & Talbert, 2001; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Little, 1993). While the issue of job satisfaction was not explicitly addressed in our focus groups, this extrinsic/intrinsic dichotomy was a key part of the discussion of why people were drawn to Jewish careers, with some citing a sense of vocation or "calling," and others more practical reasons such as the kind of skills that training or early-career jobs provided. For many, of course, their careers and choices involved a mix of both. How extrinsic and intrinsic factors continue to impact ongoing job satisfaction—and whether the balance changes as careers progress—will be a significant area of inquiry for our research.

It has been argued that teaching comes with heightened satisfactions and dissatisfactions because of the difficulty in distinguishing between the act of teaching (and its decisive satisfactions) and the context in which teaching occurs (Hansen, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994). In Jewish institutional-communal settings the sources of satisfaction may also take special forms, derived, for example, from the alignment of the work schedule with the Jewish calendar, the everyday use of Jewish languages in the workplace, and a sense of deep fellowship from working alongside members of the same minority faith community (Pomson, 2005). These possibilities all need to be explored in our research design.

Sense of Professional Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy draws on two foundational tenets: locus of control and social cognitive theory (Zee & Koomen, 2016). As Rotter (1966) originally conceptualized it, locus of control is the *generalized* expectancy for control that individuals develop in relation to their environment. In social cognitive theory, as proposed by Bandura (1977), individuals' behaviors are influenced not only by generalized expectancies for control but also by these individuals' perceived capabilities, or self-efficacy, to perform those behaviors in *particularized* domains. For the past 40 years, the application of self-efficacy to the work of teachers (Teacher Self-Efficacy, or TSE) has been studied extensively. This has resulted in a variety of measurement scales, with the oft-used Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) reported to have satisfactory reliability and construct validity across grades and countries (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Zee and Koomen (2016) summarized the findings from 165 studies of teacher self-efficacy that they reviewed in relation to three domains:

i. *Consequences for classroom processes* – High-efficacy teachers, especially those with more experience, tend to effectively cope with a range of problem behaviors; use proactive, student-centered classroom behavior strategies and practices; and establish less conflictual relationships with students.

ii. *Consequences for students' academic adjustment* – TSE is modestly associated with students' academic adjustment in elementary school and beyond. Aspects of students' motivation, and total motivation scores in particular, seem more consistently predicted by TSE than by their academic achievement.

iii. *Consequences for teachers' psychological wellbeing* – Over time, self-efficacious teachers may suffer less from stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and overall burnout, and experience higher levels of personal accomplishment, commitment, and job satisfaction.

In weighing the application of TSE to our study of Jewish educators across multiple settings, it will be wise to keep in mind a caution of Klassen and his colleagues (2011) in their review of teacher efficacy research. Besides finding that "much teacher efficacy research continues to use discredited, poorly conceptualized and flawed measures" (p. 37), they note a particular challenge due to the fact that self-efficacy and collective efficacy measures have to be adapted to the domain of functioning. With no prior domain-specific studies of educator self-efficacy in Jewish educational contexts, our work will need to be very much alert to this application challenge.

Career Commitment

When examining commitment to a career in Jewish education, the concept of "career success" needs to be considered. Generally, career-related outcomes have been theorized in two distinct but interconnected ways. Historically, career success was conceptualized and measured in an *objective* manner, mainly as salary, rank, or number of promotions (Altonji et al. 2014). For the last two decades, scholars of career behaviors have considered an additional multitude of *subjective* and psychological outcomes (including motivation, satisfaction, and emotional intelligence) along with communal and sociological concerns (including shifting generational dynamics, technology, and automation). In research on vocational behavior, this personal construct is referred to as Subjective Career Success (SCS), and there is research that shows that all dispositions and forms of network support are related inextricably to SCS, as measured by the Subjective Career Success Inventory (SCSI) (Ng & Feldman, 2014; Shockley et al., 2015).

In Aron's 1990 landmark paper, *Towards the Professionalization of Jewish Teaching,* initiated by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, she constructs commonly accepted criteria for a profession (legitimacy, autonomy, and commitment) into a compelling case for conceiving the field of Jewish education as a profession. With respect to career commitment, she proposes that Jewish educators' commitment is predicated on their identities as (1) caring people; (2) integral members of the community; and (3) religious role models (Aron, 1990).

The EJSS supports this assertion, and several scholars have taken up the question of how modernizing trends in careers have impacted the professional criterion of commitment among Jewish educators. Most prolific in this respect is Eran Tamir who, in his role at the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University, has proposed three critical findings. First, teachers with greater commitments to the Jewish community outside of their schools are more likely to stay in their jobs at Jewish day schools (Tamir, 2010). Second, teachers whose career choice developed around religious or civic missions and/or beliefs are more likely to experience career commitment (Tamir & Lesik, 2009). Third, teachers who serve as leaders in the school, in any capacity, are less likely to see the position as temporary (Tamir, 2013).

These studies reiterate that career commitment, like any of our outcomes, is a result of the interaction between person, program, and setting. It is no surprise that career commitment is a central concern of the settings that employ Jewish educators, as low career commitment is correlated with high employment turbulence that can lead people to leave their jobs or the sector as a whole.

INTERVENTIONS AND CONDITIONS

While hardly any research has looked at the characteristics of Jewish educators in relation to learner outcomes, and only marginally more research has looked at the interventions and workplace conditions that might contribute to these characteristics, there has been much more extensive research of a primarily qualitative nature that looks at the workplace conditions and professional experiences of Jewish educators. This research is oriented around three units of analysis: the individual educator, the workplace, and the interventions designed to improve the quality of educators' work. When taken together, these research strands help weave an image of the professional contexts in which Jewish educators work and the strategies intended to improve their functioning in these contexts.

Educators

A small body of work is focused on the stories of individual educators, their professional trajectories, and their lived experiences. Until now these studies have been concerned primarily with teachers—and mainly with teachers in day school settings. Ingall (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of three beginning teachers from the time they started their pre-service education until their departure from the field which, unfortunately, was within four years of their first appointment. Her findings are bleak and highlight the critical role that administrators and colleagues can play in supporting or not supporting novice teachers. Pomson (1999; 2002; 2005) published a series of studies, each focused on a different teacher's personal narrative of work in a Jewish day school; these studies open a window on teachers' lived experiences of those schools and the pressures they experience as a result of parental expectations, the organization of schools around a dual-curriculum of Jewish and general studies, and the meaning and conflict educators experience in day-to-day work in ideologically driven institutions. Against a similar backdrop, Reiss Medwed (2005) probed issues of gender and authority that complicated the work of female teachers of Talmud in these settings, even when the school had a liberal religious orientation. Finally, a couple of studies by graduate students of Ingall have applied a portraiture methodology to investigating the professional lives of educators in settings that are not schools. First, Rosenheck and Livstone (2000) examined the experiences of educators in the radically different contexts of a university Talmud program and a religious school family education program. More recently, Tauber (2013; 2015) employed a similar methodology to understand the work of congregational rabbis as educators—and specifically as educators of adults. These studies indicate how Jewish educators derive professional nourishment as much from the act of teaching as from the communal and mission-driven ethos within the institutions where they teach.

Workplaces/Settings

A different body of work examines the sectors and settings in which Jewish educators work in terms of how these workplaces are experienced by employees. In these studies, the lens is focused on the institutional context beyond the classroom— that is, beyond the point of educational interaction. Both Hammerman (2017), in a study of teachers in a centrist-Orthodox day school, and Pomson (2005), in a series of narrative inquiries into the lives of teachers in Canadian Jewish elementary schools, unpack teachers' experiences of community, collegiality, and isolation in the day school context.

Focused on a different dimension of the workplace, a series of papers prompted by the work of the Mandel Teacher Educator Initiative has shed light on the professional culture of Jewish day schools and afterschool programs and on the kinds of opportunities that exist for professional growth in these settings (Stodolsky et al., 2006; Stodolsky et al., 2008; Dorph 2011). Finally, a collection of studies has examined the role of parents in their children's Jewish schools, as a resource on which teachers can draw and as a challenge that teachers must address, either due to parents' lack of interest or time or as a consequence of parents showing "too much interest" (Ingall, 1998; Kress, 2007; Pomson, 2007; Prell, 2007).

With so much of this research concerned with school settings, Held's (2015) study of beginning educators in university-based Hillels and residential summer camps stands out for making explicit why people are drawn to stay in and, more frequently, leave these settings. Motivated by a desire to "give back," these young professionals derive satisfaction from being part of a Jewish community and by the sense of having to stretch both professionally and personally as a result of the demands of the job. At the same time, individuals in these settings are frustrated by the amount of administrative work in which they must engage; by their perception of few opportunities to advance professionally in these sectors; and by a feeling of inadequate support, mentorship, and supervision. (The dearth of opportunities for advancement and support was a critique we heard frequently from the experiential educators in our focus groups as well.)

In recent years, the annual reports released by Leading Edge have provided a picture of workplace culture in Jewish nonprofit organizations more generally. Only a small part of the data reported derive from educational institutions (in 2017, about 12% of the participating organizations defined their primary concern as educational, and 6% as youth and student engagement). This caution is important, since the picture painted of the strengths and weaknesses of Jewish organizational cultures is not fully consistent with the findings of research concentrated in schools. Reviewing data from both 2016 and 2017, the authors of the 2017 Leading Edge report found that over these two years the organizations that participated in the study exceeded General Industry Benchmarks with respect to employee connection to their employer's mission, a feeling that they were

respected by their employers, the extent of collaboration within their department, and a feeling of personal pride. Participating organizations were below General Industry Benchmarks with respect to the provision of adequate feedback, sufficient human resources to get the work done, provision of opportunities for advancement, the extent of collaboration across the organization, and the transparency of the organizational culture (Leading Edge, 2017).

A final note about Jewish educational workplaces and settings that was highlighted by our focus groups is the large number of participants who had moved through multiple workplaces in their careers, traversing the boundaries often drawn between "formal" and "informal" or "full-time" and "part-time" settings. It seemed that for these professionals, the desire to be a Jewish professional/educator was the primary driver behind changing jobs, while distinctions between types of roles were less of a factor, at least in the early stages of a career. Many did ultimately find their "place" in the field within a particular role and setting that felt most fulfilling and comfortable.

Interventions

One more strand of research that sheds light on the professional experiences of Jewish educators and the circumstances in which they work comes from studies that either assess the contribution of preservice and in-service programs to educators' professional experiences and capacities or are sponsored by these programs in order to better understand the contexts in which the programs operate. Examples include Rotstein (2011) and Burstein and Kohn (2017).

The most substantial program of research of this kind is associated with the DeLeT (Day School Leadership through Teaching) programs at Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Researchers have been gathering longitudinal data from alumni every two years since 2007 and from parallel populations of Jewish and other teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2014).

As part of this program, Tamir (2013) drew on longitudinal data from alumni of three mission-driven teacher education programs. In doing so, he affirmed "the primary role of school conditions [while] teacher preparation takes a back seat, in terms of its impact on teacher career choices" (p. 28). The school conditions that proved influential in this case were consistent with those in the professional-culture framework developed by Kardos and others. (2001): the availability or absence of mentoring, professional development, administration support, and collaboration with young and veteran teachers.

These findings were echoed within our own focus group research. Networks, cohort-based professional development, collaboration with colleagues, mentoring, and effective supervision were named as the experiences and opportunities that had been most

valuable for participants' professional growth. While congregational and day school educators were more likely to describe getting support and meaningful professional development opportunities from their own work settings and communities, many of the experiential educators noted that they had to find support and professional development from national networks and programs, as they found little available for them locally. Even fewer professional development, networking, or mentoring opportunities are available for those in the innovation sector, though some in those roles noted that they viewed grants and other interaction with funders as more than just financial support, but rather as a broader investment in them as professionals.

In recent work, Tamir and his colleagues (2017) reference Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) distinction between emotional support and instructional guidance for teachers and the significant impact of the latter but not the former on teachers' decisions whether to stay in teaching or to leave the profession. Drawing on a sample of 329 alumni of various Jewish teacher education programs, the authors found what they called "a troubling gap" between teachers' relatively strong sense of satisfaction with their relationships with school administration and weak indicators of a productive professional culture in their schools. Less than half of the sample reported participating in formal induction programs or that their school takes the learning needs of teachers seriously. Even fewer—just 21.9%— reported "opportunities for professional advancement (promotion)."

The literature reviewed in this section sits atop a deep body of work (just a small part of which we have cited) that depicts the lives and work of teachers in schools, as well as the conditions and cultures in schools and the programmatic interventions that are associated with professional growth and teacher retention. The literature on Jewish schools adds nuance to the general patterns reported in that broader body of work and highlights, for example, the strong ideological (mission-driven) and communitarian (frequently family-like) character of Jewish educational settings. **It is troubling, however, that the areas of relative strength in the workplace cultures of Jewish organizations, as reported by Leading Edge and in the various case studies of Jewish educators and their workplaces, are not those associated in the school professional-culture literature with retention and career commitment.** This phenomenon needs to be explored further. Moreover, the literature we have reviewed on interventions and conditions in Jewish educational settings also says relatively little about the role of financial compensation in the professional trajectory of Jewish educators. The EJSS and the CIJE studies are exceptions in this respect. In the broader literature on teaching and other caring professions, educator pay and compensation are variables that loom large in the decision whether to stay in an educational appointment over time and overall job satisfaction. These are factors in the "conditions" and "context" of educators' work that we will need to examine.

BACKGROUND VARIABLES

If, as Dan Lortie (1975) influentially argued, teachers' practice is strongly informed by their long "apprenticeship of observation" before entering the profession, what should we assume are the most salient contexts and experiences in which prospective Jewish educators have been similarly apprenticed? Which background experiences might have the greatest influence on educators' professional trajectory, their interest in working in a sector of the field, and their efficacy within that sector? Our research design is based on the assumption that such experiences and other important background variables like gender, on the one hand, and age or generation, on the other, are associated both directly and indirectly with the educator outcomes in which we're interested, such as career commitment and self-efficacy, for reasons we review below.

Gender

Like many other caring professions, sectors of Jewish education are highly gendered: 79% of EJSS respondents in both day schools and complementary schools were women (Kress & Ben Avi, 2007). Among respondents to the 2017 Leading Edge study, 63% identified as female, 26% identified as male, and 11% answered "other" or "prefer not to answer" (Leading Edge, 2017). At Jewish Community Centers, women account for 72% of Jewish Community Center staff but only 23% of executive directors (Schor & Cohen, 2001). Choosing to commit to a career in one sector or another of Jewish education seems strongly associated with gender.

Few studies have brought a gendered lens to the study of employment in Jewish education and even fewer to the study of practice in Jewish education. There is a well-established trope that depicts the feminization of Jewish education and, in recent years, of Jewish life in general (Fishman & Parmer, 2008; Kaplan, 2009; Tuhus-Dubrow, 2011). Taking stock of this phenomenon within education sectors, Kobrin (2009) concludes that "the feminization of the Jewish teaching profession would not have been possible if not for the part-time nature of this profession and the commensurately low salaries paid to its teachers." She speculates whether, in turn, there is a correlation between this occurrence and the general devaluation of Jewish education in the latter half of the twentieth century. Fishman and Parmer (2008) identify the causes of feminization in other places. Today, in Liberal Jewish communities, women are better educated than men; they are more active participants in youth activities, summer camp, and synagogue life; and they outnumber men by at least 2:1 in rabbinic preparation programs. From a young age, women take up opportunities to be socialized in community activism, and having done so, women have displaced men in positions of community responsibility and leadership. However understood, gender is evidently a powerful factor in shaping Jewish educators' work choices, in coloring which educational sectors have special

appeal and meaning, and in contributing to how work in these places is experienced (Cooks, 2018).

Generation (and Age)

When it comes to the role of age, and of generation more generally, in shaping professional trajectories in Jewish communal service, there has been no end of discussion and anecdote in the blogosphere about the specific interests and special needs of millennials, or of those who today are under the age of forty. There has been much less research. Anecdotal data suggest that Jewish millennials are looking for work that has special meaning and responsibility (Lifshutz Lankin, 2018) and that builds community with like-minded peers (Sherman, 2018), even if that involves foregoing great financial benefits (Young, 2015). Millennial Jewish professionals need support, want to learn, and crave opportunities to stretch (Shapiro Abraham & Bonnheim, 2018). They want to make a difference in the workplace and the world (Windmueller, 2018; Klein & Liff-Grieff, 2009). The drumbeat of postings over just the last year to *eJewish Philanthropy* (the Jewish professional community's primary virtual venue for news and views) supports these claims through first-person accounts rather than systematic comparison with previous generations of communal workers. Nevertheless, these accounts express the perceptions of those who work with young staff every day and who may themselves have experienced work with other generations as a point of comparison.

Research data indicate that these personal accounts are consistent with some broader patterns of generational difference, but that the differences between the generations are neither so all-encompassing nor always so acute. Framing this research, Briscoe and Finkelstein (2009) explain that two conceptions of career have dominated the literature: the protean career (since 1976) and the boundaryless career (since 1994). Unlike the traditional career that is conceived and can unfold in a single organizational setting, in a boundaryless career, individuals no longer rely on organizational promotions and internal career paths; they are less likely to stay within a single "bounded" career path or organization. The protean career attitude is defined by two dimensions. The *values-driven* dimension suggests that the individual's internal values provide both guidance and measures of success for the individual's career, while the *self-directed* dimension provides the ability to be adaptive in terms of both performance and learning opportunities (Bravo et al., 2015, p. 2). Drawing on the assumptions of generational theory that the shared formative experiences of a cohort of people born and raised in the same historical era form the basis for shared values and personality traits (Mannheim, [1928] 1952), researchers have examined whether millennials differ from other generations in their approach to work and career, having come of age in an era when boundaryless and protean careers have become increasingly normative (Lyons et al., 2014).

Analyzing cross-sectional data from career narratives, Lyons and his colleagues find that millennials are distinguished in their "eagerness for advancement," "eagerness for variety," and "willingness to leave employers" (Lyons et al., 2014). And yet, based on quantitative cross-sectional data, Kowske and others (2010) caution that "while generational differences do exist, whether they warrant special programs for millennials is debatable" (p. 265). They conclude, "The generations are more similar than different with regards to work attitudes…given the statistically significant, but practically small amount of variance attributable to generation relative to individual level variables" (p. 274). In a review of generational differences in work values, Twenge (2010) points to important nuances. She notes that "contrary to popular conceptions, there were no generational differences in altruistic values (e.g., wanting to help others)." What she calls GenMe are, however, consistently higher in individualistic traits; they rate work as less central to their lives, they value leisure more, and express a weaker work ethic than Boomers and Silents. Finally, Twenge suggests that "the lack of generational differences in job hopping suggests that GenMe workers who are satisfied will be retained" (p. 201). They are more stable in their work commitments than might be supposed from anecdote.

Early-Life/Formative Experiences

In his classic study of teacher career cycles, Huberman (1989) found that teachers who experienced the fewest initial difficulties in their careers were siblings in large families or had been scout leaders or camp counselors. In a powerful life-history study of women working for social change, Casey (1993) traced the adult teaching commitments of Catholic educators, Black educators, and secular Jewish women teachers to formative experiences in their families, in political movements, and during their college years. Writing in an autobiographical mode, William Ayers told his own teacher's backstory, with a poetic touch:

> My own pathway to teaching began long ago in a large, uniquely
> nurturing family, a place where I experienced the ecstasy of intimacy
> and the irritation of being known, the power of will and the boundary of
> freedom, both the safety and constraints of family living. I was the
> middle child of five children and I had opportunities to learn as well as
> opportunities to teach. In my family, I learned to balance self-respect
> with respect for others, assertiveness with compromise, individual
> choice with group consciousness. (Ayers, 1993, p. 7)

The influences surfaced by accounts such as these have been theorized more generally by Richardson and Watt as what they call "antecedent socialization influences" in their internationally validated FIT-Choice model (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice). Such

antecedents include social dissuasion (as a negative influence), prior teaching and learning experiences, and other social influences (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2015). Interestingly, though, studies of antecedents to a commitment to teach do not tend to explore experiences prior to college or prior to student-teaching experiences. Moreover, most of this literature is concerned with the relationships between these early experiences and teachers' beliefs and implicit theories—not so much with what influences teachers' employment choices.

The most well-known investigation of the social forces of young adulthood that have a constructive influence on adult work commitments has been provoked by Perry's Public Motivation Theory (PMT), with its conceptualization of prosocial values, such as compassion and self-sacrifice, that underlie a desire to help (Perry, 1997). As Moynihan and Pandey (2007) explain, PMT assumes that individual behavior is not just the product of rational, self-interested choices but is rooted in normative and affective motives as well. Perry locates the motivation to serve in five antecedent influences: parental socialization, religious socialization, professional socialization, political ideology, and individual demographic characteristics. In a refinement of the theory—under the title of "bringing society in"—Perry identifies the first of these influences as part of the "sociohistorical context," a construct that includes "observational learning/modeling" (Perry, 2000).

FIT-Choice and PMT call out the experiences and contexts that provide the soil from which a commitment to teach grows, but there is very little if any quantitative research that unpacks the dynamics of how such commitments take shape. The richest work to address that task has involved deep ethnographic or narrative investigation of people's lives, such as Ayers' educational autobiography, reconstructing what led people to launch their careers as educators (teachers, really, since peer-reviewed literature really does not look at other sectors of education). There is an extensive genre of this kind in general education, but it is not widely represented in Jewish education. Two exceptions—Scheffler's (1995) intellectual autobiography and Blumberg's (2019) account of her journey as a teacher—are of individuals whose deep socialization in Jewish educational settings informed teaching careers conducted in settings for general education.

We know from our focus groups and informant interviews that time spent in Jewish youth movements and at summer camp, as participants and even more so as staff, prepares the ground for adult professional commitments in Jewish education. We don't know, though, whether such trajectories are extreme outliers, with the commitment to teach mobilized by other decisive factors in people's lives. After all, only a small minority of camp counselors become professional Jewish educators or rabbis. These variables need much more examination.

Prior Jewish Knowledge, Skills, and Experiences

In the age of Teach for America, it seems that teaching success depends less on what you know than on general smarts, a record of volunteerism, interpersonal intelligence, and grit. (See for example, https://www.teachforamerica.org/how-to-join/eligibility.) To what extent, then, is the depth of individuals' prior Jewish learning (and the extent of their subject matter knowledge) an enabler or inhibiter of service as a Jewish educator? With expanding notions of what a Jewish educator is, what are the relevant prior skills and knowledge that facilitate or enable access to the field as a professional Jewish educator? What prior experiences serve as valuable resources on which to draw during the inevitable challenging moments? For the moment, Tuchman's doctoral work on the influence of informal experiences as youth advisors, camp counselors, and child care supervisors on Jewish teacher self-efficacy is a rare, if not unique, exploration of these issues in a Jewish context (Tuchman, 2010; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011).

Again, our focus group data provide a start. Many, if not most, of those who work in formal and experiential Jewish educational settings (synagogues, schools, camps, youth groups), as well as Jewish communal organizations, cited experiences with Jewish learning and teaching as powerful factors in their choice to become Jewish educators and professionals. These experiences included teaching religious school as a college student, working at Jewish summer camps, participating in immersive study in Israel either during or soon after college, and majoring in Judaic Studies. While for some, their early experience was a predictor of their eventual career choice (i.e., camp counselors became experiential Jewish educators, religious school volunteers became congregational Education Directors), there were also many instances of "cross-fertilization" between sectors. Finally, as with many of the findings from our focus groups, the experiences of those in the "innovation" sector were quite different. Few of those participants described these kinds of Jewish learning and educational experiences as critical to their career choices, though many still had strong early Jewish influences from their families or peers.

While our focus groups explored how Jewish learning and teaching brought people into the field, we did not delve into whether having a strong Jewish knowledge background increased participants' sense of self-efficacy as Jewish educators or influenced their desire to stay in the field. These will be critical questions to explore in both the quantitative study and follow-up qualitative research.

CONCLUSION

The concepts we have reviewed here lay the foundations for three layers of research questions we intend to address through our work: **(1) descriptive questions** about the nature of desired educator outcomes, interventions and workplace conditions, and educator characteristics; **(2) comparative questions** about interventions and workplace conditions as they play out by different educator characteristics; and **(3) questions about the relationships** between interventions and workplace conditions and desired educator outcomes, and about the direct relationship between educator characteristics and these outcomes.

These are the building blocks that will ultimately enable us to propose **what it would take to recruit significantly greater numbers of talented people to the field of Jewish education, and what would be needed to sustain and retain those personnel once they have started to work in the field.**

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