

Alex Pomson and Randal F. Schnoor, *Jewish Family: Identity and Self-Formation at Home* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), 182 pp., ISBN: 978-0253033086.

The major trope of 20th century North American Jewish education was the development of institutions of Jewish learning. As Jewish communities across Canada grew and developed, they established day and supplementary schools, institutional synagogues, community centres, and summer camps. In parallel, communities focussed on teacher training and credentialing, establishing teachers' colleges, fellowships, and in-service training. Driven in part by a generation of parents struggling to etch out their place in North American society and the place of Judaism in their lives, the hallmark of 20th century Jewish education was the building of the infrastructure necessary to educate children outside of the home.

In its nascent years, the 21st century seems to have started on a new path. Rather than developing the external infrastructure to educate children, 21st-century initiatives in Jewish education take an inward focus—developing the family and home as loci of Jewish identity formation. Programs such as PJ Library, OneTable, Honeymoon Israel and even the Jewish Grandparents Network, focus on empowering family members and the home to reach their potential in strengthening Jewish identity. It is at this intersection, between a century focussed on the external Jewish education infrastructure—building institutions and training educators—and new initiative focused on the internal capacity—family and home—that Pomson and Schnoor's new work, *Jewish Family: Identity and Self-Formation at Home* finds a particularity important niche.

Pomson and Schnoor's project started in 2003 when the researchers embarked on a 20th-century endeavour, researching how Jewish day schools impact adult Jewish identity. The fruit of that project, *Back to School: Jewish Day Schools in the Lives of Adult Jews* demonstrates that the role of institutions, like Jewish day schools, spans beyond the student to impact the lives of the parents, enriching their Jewish curiosity and creativity. *Back to School: Jewish Day Schools in the Lives of Adult Jews* endures as an important indicator how institutions of Jewish learning, designed primarily for children, serve as a source of meaning in the lives of Jewish adults.

Nearly fifteen years later, driven by a deep curiosity about the journeys taken by the families who participated in the first study, Pomson and Schnoor returned, seeking to chart the long-term impact of day school on these families. Through recurring interviews with sixteen families, the resulting work focusses not on the day school, which for many was a distant past, but on the family as an enduring and dynamic centre for Jewish identity formation.

Pomson and Schnoor paint compelling portraits of families etching out their own Jewish lives: orcharding on Rosh Hashana, creating their own Passover Haggadah, and planning unique ceremonies for Bnei Mitzvah. At the same time, they describe families who have distanced from Jewish practice and living: moving homes to less Jewishly-populated areas of town, deepening exploration of other traditions such as Buddhism, and even individuals who self describe a rebellion against Judaism. For each, the home and family played the central role in their evolving Jewish journey.

Translating these vignettes into a theoretical construct, Pomson and Schnoor apply two spectrums of Jewish capital present in any family: cultural capital, which includes levels of knowledge, fluency and skill of Judaism, and social capital, which underscores the density of one's Jewish network. Using these two concepts, the researchers create a capital map which helps interpret the Jewish idiosyncrasies of the families they interview as a model for considering the desired outcomes of Jewish education in the 21st century.

While the corpus of research in Jewish education has grown dramatically over the nearly two decades during which this study took place, few studies have undertaken a longitudinal approach. The project's ability to return more than a decade later to the same families, chart their experience and journeys both as individuals and as a family unit is a vital contribution to the field, enabling research to move beyond a momentary snapshot or series of retrospective reflections and towards a longitudinal approach to chart change.

Canadian Jews, in history, nature, and forms of affiliation, are often held in distinction to their American cousins. Indeed, the 2018 Survey of Jews in Canada and its comparison to the 2013 Pew Portrait of Jewish Americas underscores these distinctions and the profound impact that the Jewish education infrastructure has had on catalyzing these differences. The authors of the Canadian study note, "American Jews are as likely as Canadian Jews to say they were brought up in the Jewish religion. But they are half as likely to have attended a Jewish day school or yeshiva and less apt to have attended a Jewish overnight summer camp, Sunday school or Hebrew school." Through their longitudinal project, Pomson and Schnoor demonstrate the ripple effect of Jewish education in Canada. As more Jews attend day schools and other educational programs, more families' journeys are informed by their participation, leading to greater engagement in Jewish life, and a more deeply affiliated Jewish community. While Pomson and Schnoor's study could tell the story of many day schools across North America, it is the concentration of such stories and the propensity of Canadian Jews to engage in such activities that have developed the distinct nature of Canadian Jewry.

In shifting their focus from the impact of the school to the role of the family, Pomson and Schnoor demonstrate that the more things change, the more family, as a centring point for the individual, stays the same. The prevalence of the day school in participants' lives shrinks as the children age; bnei mitzvah, Israel experiences and other educational or lifecycle movements come and go; historical events change the external context but the internal family structure endures; even disruptive family events including divorce occur, but the family endures. *Jewish Family* offers a powerful reflection of the ways these changes impact the individual, and the ways in which the family remains the constant.

In acknowledging the enduring power of the family and home as the locus of identity formation, which Pomson and Schnoor's work brings into focus, the change in the focus of Jewish educational initiatives, from the 20th century's focus on developing external infrastructure to educate children to the 21st century's emphasis on developing the family and home, becomes a logical progression in the community's evolving educational strategies.

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