

JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND THE FEDERATION SYSTEM

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The dramatic growth of schools of Jewish communal service over the past twenty-five years reflects the community leadership's affirmation of the Jewishness of Jewish communal agencies and the recognition of the need to provide specialized training to Jewish communal professionals. With the increased importance placed on Jewish continuity, these schools should assume an even more prominent role in educating Jewish professionals. If the resources of these schools are to be maintained, the federation system in conjunction with Jewish federations must assume some financial responsibility for them.

Throughout their long history, the Jewish people have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt to ever-recurring challenges and threats to their continuity. Indeed, it is this pattern of ideological and structural adaptation that explains the Jews' survival across three millennia.

The development of the first Jewish federation in Boston in 1895 was one of those critical structural adaptations that enabled the American Jewish community to respond to a modern challenge of watershed proportions (Sarna, 1995). The Boston Jewish leadership anticipated the massive waves of European Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century and recognized that a more systematic mode of fund raising and coordination of the services that had been developed in the prior half-century was needed.

A concurrent adaptation was the transition from an essentially volunteer-led Jewish community to one that recognized the need for the specialized services of a cadre of Jewish communal professionals. In 1899 the first organization of professionals and volunteers, the National Conference of Jewish Charities, was formed; it was the forerunner of what was to become the Jewish Communal Service Association. The Na-

tional Conference became solely a professional organization with the formation of the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (now the Council of Jewish Federations) in 1932 (Berger, 1980; Penn, 1980).

Around the turn of the century, the primary task of the newly organized Jewish community was to absorb significant numbers of immigrants and to help them acclimate to life in America. The community leaders turned to the newly emerging schools of social work to obtain the professionals needed to staff their social agencies (Stein, 1960). The link to social work proved to be a very compatible and mutually fulfilling relationship.

EARLY EFFORTS TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

However, as early as 1907, Jewish communal leaders saw the need to augment the social work curriculum with content specifically geared to training professionals for the growing network of Jewish social service agencies. In that year, the New York Kehillah, at the urging of Judah Magnes and Mordecai Kaplan, began a short-lived

attempt to train Jewish communal professionals. Six years later, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati joined with the Cincinnati Jewish Federation in sponsoring another unsuccessful program. The Jewish Community Centers Association's predecessor, the Jewish Welfare Board, sponsored a training program in 1917 that was also discontinued because of insufficient funding (Penn, 1980).

The first professional education program with any staying power was the Graduate School of Jewish Social Work, which lasted from 1925 to 1940 with the financial support of the philanthropist Felix Warburg. It is estimated that up to half of the executives and senior staff of Jewish communal agencies during the 1930s and 1940s were graduates of that training program. Unfortunately, after Warburg's death, the school ceased to operate in 1940 because of "lukewarm professional support and cooperation...(and because of) the inability of federations to assume the full financial responsibility which had been requested" (Stein, 1965, pp. 221-222).

Because of the growing interest after World War II in reclaiming Jewish knowledge and values as a context for educating Jewish communal professionals, the Training Bureau for Jewish Communal Service was established in 1947. Oscar Janowsky's 1948 report for the Jewish Welfare Board on the need for specially trained Jewish staff to work in more Jewishly oriented Jewish Community Centers provided a strong rationale for the Training Bureau. Despite the great fanfare with which it was begun and the co-sponsorship by the Jewish Welfare Board, the American Joint Distribution Committee, and the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the Training Bureau only lasted for three years. By 1950, insufficient funding by its sponsors brought about its premature demise.

THE 1960S: A NEW PRIORITY ON STRENGTHENING JEWISH IDENTITY

The decade of the 1960s marked another

watershed change in the American Jewish community, as a third generation of America Jews had come of age. These grandchildren of immigrants were well integrated into American society, but were unsure about their Jewish identity. The dramatic Israeli victory in the 1967 Six-Day War and the broader societal emphasis on ethnicity led Jewish communal leaders to affirm a new priority for their social agencies—strengthening Jewish identity. Specialized educational programs were thus needed to enhance the Jewish background and skills of communal professionals to enable them to respond to the heightened Jewish interests of Americanized Jews.

In the early 1960s, Bert Gold, then executive director of the Los Angeles Jewish Community Center Association, was asked by the Hebrew Union College to conduct a feasibility study on establishing such a specialized training program. His report highlighted premises for such programs that are implied in the mission of almost all the present-day communal service programs.

While professional training for the field of Jewish communal service has undergone a number of different phases and emphases, by and large it has looked to graduate schools of social work as the basis for its professional education. At the same time, there has always been an accompanying question asked: What about the Jewish communal worker's need to possess a knowledge of history, culture and religious traditions, beliefs and values of Judaism? Too often that question has gone unanswered....Because the functions of the Jewish communal agencies must be directed towards Jewish group survival, their professionals must have an appropriate Jewish education alongside with technical, psychological and sociological knowledge and skills (quoted in Bubis, 1971).

The rationale for professional training for Jewish communal service was further elaborated by Judah Shapiro in 1968 in a presentation to the annual meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service.

In that address, he outlined the need for a Jewishly literate and committed cadre of Jewish social workers and reported on the beginnings of a new organization, the Bureau for Careers in Jewish Service. The goal of the Bureau was to recruit new professionals to Jewish communal service through a coordinated nationwide program. Through the efforts of the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) leadership, representatives from every major Jewish organization agreed to participate in the Bureau's efforts. Yet, as with earlier training efforts, insufficient funding led to the Bureau's quick end.

However, fortunately at this time the climate was ripe for the development of graduate programs in Jewish communal service. In 1968, the Hebrew Union College Daniels School of Jewish Communal Service was founded, followed shortly by the Hornstein Program for Jewish Communal Service at Brandeis University, the Baltimore Institute for Jewish Communal Service, and Cleveland's program at Case-Western Reserve University in conjunction with the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies. In the next decade, programs were created at Spertus College in Chicago, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Gratz College in Philadelphia, the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, University of Toronto, and Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University in New York.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FEDERATION TO SCHOOLS OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

A corollary development associated with the 1967 Six-Day War was the emergence of the Jewish federation as the dominant organization in the American Jewish community. As Israel assumed a central role in the Jewish identity of American Jews, it followed that the Jewish organization with the function of mobilizing financial and political support for the Jewish State—the federation—would grow in importance, supplanting the synagogue in influence and

status. The Jewish agenda and priorities of the federation and its network of agencies became the agenda and priorities of the community as a whole.

Interestingly, despite this increase in influence and power, the federations and their national coordinating body, the Council of Jewish Federations, played virtually no role in the emergence of the new schools of Jewish communal service. In fact, until the early 1970s the literature on professional education was focused almost exclusively on the personnel needs of Jewish Community Centers. Dozens of articles appeared in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* in the 1950s and 1960s on this topic, but very few were focused on federations per se.

CJF first established some ties to the schools of Jewish communal service in 1971 when it launched the Federation Executive Recruitment and Education Program (FEREP). Its objective was to recruit individuals interested in professional careers in Jewish federations, and the schools of Jewish communal service were designated as the ones in which FEREP candidates would do their graduate studies.

Two important policy positions were inherent in the design of FEREP and the recruitment and education of Jewish communal professionals. First, the CJF leadership acknowledged its support of the new graduate schools with specialized Jewish content. Yet, as the number of graduate students receiving FEREP scholarships averages about nine annually and the Jewish federations collectively hire about thirty-five entry-level professionals each year, a significant majority of professionals entering the system come from schools other than the specialized Jewish communal service programs. And increasingly, in recent years, federations have hired new staff with no specialized professional training at all (Joel Daner and Lance Jacobs, CJF, personal communication, May 30, 1995).

The second policy issue concerning professional personnel was the decision by the federation leadership to restrict their re-

recruitment role to the federation setting, instead of the broader field of Jewish communal service. The CJF Board set up a Commission on Professional Personnel in 1986 to review their future personnel policies in light of the reality that "the responsibilities of Jewish Federations have increased enormously (and) the problems are far more complex than a generation ago (CJF, 1987, p. 1)." During those deliberations the question arose as to whether this review and response to the needs of American Jewish communities should be extended to the full network of Jewish communal agencies. The decision of the Commission is noted in the Letter of Transmittal of the two co-chairs that accompanied the report:

Our Commission limited its work to the federation field because it recognized the need for immediate action to meet pressing federation needs. However, we recommend that CJF take the initiative in convening the appropriate groups to explore the personnel needs and problems of the entire field of Jewish communal service (CJF, 1987).

Yet, rather than any further collaborative efforts developing from the 1986-87 review, what followed in the ensuing years was the assumption by each of the several subfields of Jewish communal service of independent responsibility for its own professional personnel needs. The Jewish Community Centers Association, for example, expanded its own professional recruitment and training programs, as did the Jewish family agencies, the Jewish community relations agencies, Hillel programs, and the Jewish youth movements. Although the Jewish federation, in its operating function and mission, has consistently affirmed that it is the central address of the Jewish community, on the issue of recruitment and education of Jewish communal professionals, the federation leadership has chosen to pursue a more narrow institutional role. This decision belies the reality of the career paths of American Jewish communal professionals, in which professionals typically move

from jobs in one Jewish communal organization to another. In terms of scope of the CJF recruitment initiative, while there are 1,300 Jewish professionals now working in Jewish federations, it is estimated that there are 10,000 professionals employed in all the Jewish communal organizations in America (Joel Ollander, JCSA, personal communication, May 2, 1995). Thus, the CJF recruitment initiative reaches only 13% of the potential pool of Jewish communal workers.

Tensions between the Schools and Federations

Points of tension between the schools and federations do exist; they are expected, understandable, and important. Graduate programs by design and philosophy are not geared to specific settings. It is their task to educate, not train. By necessity, their focus must be on theories, conceptual materials, values, history, methodologies, and philosophies, all of which are intended as preparation for long-lasting practice principles and professional stances that go beyond the particular setting in which a worker is employed. Federations, as specific work settings, at times desire training in more immediately measurable skills and techniques.

In addition to the occasional philosophical differences that sometimes exist between faculty and colleagues in the field, there is an additional complication. Field work experiences in which all graduate students are required to engage amount to about 1,000 hours of practice experience over the course of the two-year program of study. For the schools the experience must include the right of a student to fail at times. The practicum is just that—an experience of learning by practicing—and students must be allowed failures in order to learn.

The stakes of failing while learning in a federation setting are often great. A young graduate student involved in campaign assignments can only be allowed a limited amount of autonomy. Often the field instructor (the professional mentor) has been charged with raising more funds than the

previous year. To put the dollar goal at risk by allowing latitude and discretion to the student thus becomes risky for the field instructor and not just the student. The result at times is a more sheltered set of practice experiences for the student than the school faculty might wish (see some of the reactions of students and agency staff in Bubis et al., 1991).

One way to alleviate the inevitable tensions is for "town and gown"—federation professionals and academics—to meet regularly to identify and discuss differing assumptions about the nature and purpose of graduate education. Federation professionals do sit on the boards of many of the schools of communal service, and these are natural vehicles for such dialogue. In addition, longitudinal studies on the premises and expectations each has of the other are also needed.

Inadequate Funding of Graduate Education

Education in the schools of Jewish communal service is expensive, ranging from \$25,000 to \$40,000 annually. Each program does its best to provide stipends and loans, and such aid is estimated to exceed \$4 million a year. Although some communities do provide scholarship aid to students, such assistance as well as the FEREP scholarships do not cover the full cost of education. The schools preparing people to work in Jewish communal settings receive very little community support for the scholarships they provide.

Although federation professional leaders over the decades have often been strong advocates of specialized training in Jewish communal service, little of that advocacy has been translated into serious financial support for the programs that now exist. Indeed, every effort made before 1950 ultimately failed because of inadequate funding. Only when Jewish-sponsored universities and colleges assumed the obligation to provide graduate education for Jewish communal service has the continuity of the pro-

grams been assured. Beyond providing some individual scholarships to applicants ready to work in their own agencies, neither CJF, the Jewish Community Centers Association, nor any of the other national umbrella Jewish organizations has assumed any financial support for the schools. The bleak fact remains that a remarkably low level of fiscal support has been forthcoming from the federation system.

Deprofessionalization of the Field of Jewish Communal Service

No certification system exists within federations for their professional staffs. Neither is there agreement about what a professional needs to know, believe in, and be capable of doing skillfully as a requirement to enter federation work. Lay and professional leadership have not yet engaged in a comprehensive process of developing standards for practice within federation settings (Forum on Deprofessionalization, 1994).

The schools and programs graduate about 100 people annually for all the settings within the field of Jewish communal service. Impressionistically, they still seem to be sought after as staff. But just as impressionistically they tend to be clustered in a limited number of cities. Those within federations tend to be in the largest cities, which are less affected by the deprofessionalization process than are small and intermediate-sized federations.

The lack of serious support by federations as a system limits the ability of the schools to expand their respective student bodies. No thoughtful exploration between federations and the schools has ever taken place in the larger context of the cost of mounting graduate programs. There is little appreciation of the costs involved in expanding faculty and facilities.

Role of Foundations

Several foundations have played important roles in the development of graduate education for Jewish communal service and have

thereby had an impact on federations, their relationships to the schools, and their expectations regarding curricular issues.

The philanthropist Morton Mandel has funded several projects dealing with education for Jewish communal service. Many of the graduates of Case-Western Reserve Mandel School of Applied Social Science in Cleveland are now working in federations, particularly in the Midwest.

Many of the programs funded by the Wexner Foundation are geared toward leadership development in the Jewish community. The Wexner Graduate Fellowship program provides full funding for about eighteen students per year pursuing rabbinic, cantorial, Jewish education, and Jewish communal service careers. The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs' curricular development program is also funded by the Wexner Foundation. In this program, nine of the Jewish communal schools are cooperating in the development of curricular material on governance in the Jewish community (Elazar and Bubis, 1993). This material, including simulations, should serve as a bridge between theory and practice in federation settings.

ISSUES OF CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE

The dramatic growth of schools of Jewish communal service over the past twenty-five years is due to two changes in the American Jewish community. First, the communal leadership in the past quarter of the century has moved beyond the ambivalence of their predecessors to an assertive affirmation of the Jewishness of Jewish communal agencies. Second, there has emerged a pool of Jewish college students with positive Jewish backgrounds whose preference is to study at schools of Jewish communal service to prepare them for professional careers within the Jewish community. Since 1968, hundreds of federation and agency professionals have graduated from these schools.

A major motif in this analysis has been the adaptive capacity of the organized Jewish community in the face of recurrent

changes that have confronted it. The Jewish community in the final years of the 20th century is once again experiencing a watershed change. It is the challenge of Jewish continuity, and once again the Jewish federations are assuming a central role in mobilizing the communal response. The nature of the contemporary challenge was starkly outlined in the results of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey conducted by the CJF (Kosmin et al., 1991). The issues have been well documented: a dramatic increase in the rate of intermarriage and a decline in all the traditional measures of Jewish identity and observance. Today's American Jewish community is primarily third and fourth generation, and they are very acculturated. The factors that shaped the Jewish identity of their parents and grandparents—the centrality of Israel, the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, ethnicity, and Civil Judaism—no longer can be counted on to assure the Jewish identity of this generation (Woocher, 1991). New strategies and priorities are emerging around such themes as Jewish family education, spirituality, *tikkun olam*, transforming Jewish experiences, and closer collaboration between the synagogue and the federation and its constituent agencies (Shrage, 1993). Central to all these Jewish continuity strategies is an upgrading of the Jewishness of the Jewish communal agencies, which in turn suggests a need for communal professionals with Jewish commitment and competence.

It is reasonable to project that the schools of Jewish communal service will assume a more prominent role in educating the Jewish professionals who will confront the Jewish continuity agenda. This analysis concludes by highlighting six issues that are likely to be on that agenda and accordingly that should become part of the curricula of the Jewish schools.

1. *Mixed Multitude*: The combination of growing numbers of Jews involved in mixed marriages plus a generation of Jews less likely to fit into previous Jew-

- ish denominational categories will mean a more diverse Jewish population. Professionals in coming years will need to find a balance between pluralism, inclusiveness, and keeping an authentic link to core Jewish values.
2. *Collaboration*: Until very recently, the organized American Jewish community operated as essentially two parallel systems: (1) the synagogue and (2) the federation and its constituent agencies. Community leaders have made clear it is time to end that separation and to develop ongoing patterns of collaboration between the two systems (Shrage, 1993).
 3. *Lay-Professional Partnership*: The lay leaders of the Jewish community have become increasingly sophisticated in their levels of Jewish and general education. They come to Jewish communal organizations with high expectations for their involvement in managing the organization and for assuring the quality of the enterprise. The challenge to their professional colleagues will be to create a working partnership that optimizes the interest and abilities of their lay colleagues while allowing for their own appropriate leadership initiatives.
 4. *Developing Shared Premises and Curricular Content*: Professional education is marked by its ability to teach knowledge, values, methods, and techniques. Each school of Jewish communal service has the right to develop its vision of how to teach those elements. Yet, all of the schools should operate according to shared premises and should offer some common core curricular elements. Federations must be part of the process to develop those commonalities. As noted earlier, the Jerusalem Center-Wexner program has provided a vehicle to begin this process of dialogue between the schools. Federations must be involved in expanding this dialogue, which will ultimately result in a delineation of what every Jewish communal worker should know, believe in, and be able to perform skillfully before embarking on a career in Jewish communal service.
 5. *Synthesis of Identities*: A theme emerging from this hundred-year review of American Jewish professionals is the growing complexity of the core identity expected of these professionals. Initially, social work and its skills and values provided a professional identity consonant with the tasks facing the Jewish community. In the late 1960s Jewish knowledge and commitment were highlighted as a new emphasis for the communal professional. Most recently, a third set of skills—management and finance—has been added to the professional requisites. The question arises: are these several professional roles and identities, along with their different values and skills, compatible? Can a sufficient level of synthesis and mastery of these diverse identities and skills be achieved in the two- or even three-year period of time designated for the education of the Jewish communal professional? And is extending the period of time and commensurate cost for educating the Jewish professional likely to become a disincentive both for the Jewish community and especially for the young people deliberating about their future career decisions?
 6. *Aspirations and Realities*: Clearly, the expectations for future Jewish professionals, in terms of skills and quality, have escalated. That is a plus in regard to upgrading the standards and scope of future services to be provided by the Jewish community. But these rising expectations generate questions about feasibility. Does the profession of Jewish communal service offer sufficient status and salary to attract and hold high-caliber professionals? And, getting to the inevitable bottom line, is the Jewish community ready and able to assume a greater share of the escalating costs involved in the education of quality Jewish communal professionals? Up to

now these costs have essentially been managed between the graduate schools and the students. Private universities (all of the schools of Jewish communal service are part of private universities) are struggling to remain financially viable. University students often come from their four years of college burdened with loans and are limited in how much they can invest in further schooling.

If the current unprecedented resource of schools of Jewish communal service is to be sustained it will require some assumption of financial responsibility, by the federation system, either independently or in conjunction with Jewish foundations, such as the Wexner Foundation or others that have demonstrated an interest in educating Jewish leadership.

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