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Report of the AJC Task Force on  
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# REPORT OF THE AJC TASK FORCE ON AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERSHIP

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the course of little more than a century, American Jews have created an extraordinary array of organizations and institutions serving every aspect of Jewish life. The establishment of these institutions on an entirely voluntary basis is an unprecedented achievement in our history. It has required a remarkable outpouring of human and financial resources -- all freely given. It has required imagination and commitment. And it has required leadership.

Much of this organizational effort has been directed to the religious life of the community giving rise to *synagogues, schools, seminaries* and related institutions. Analysis of the problems of leadership of those institutions lies outside the mandate and expertise of this Task Force. Rather, we have focused upon voluntary leadership in the Jewish communal sector - that is, with agencies responsible for the advancement of Jewish causes, defense of Jewish interests, and provision of Jewish social services.

The essential function of leadership is to give direction. It must identify and articulate communal needs and concerns and mobilize support for addressing them. It is important to recognize at the outset that the Jewish communal agenda is not predetermined, and that the essential task of leadership is to fashion that agenda.

At one time or another in our history, questions that are now largely resolved and whose resolution now has an aura of inevitability, were openly and fiercely debated or, indeed, not even seen as relevant. Should the community commit itself to supporting the establishment and security of a Jewish state? Should it throw its energy into maintenance and enhancement of a wall of separation between church and state? Should Jewish organizations participate actively in the formulation of national immigration policy or in the civil rights movement? The answers to these questions and a myriad of others were not preordained. So too the issues on which the community will need to focus in the future are not fixed, nor, indeed, have they been fully identified and articulated.

Clarity of purpose is a critical element in attracting members and potential leaders to active roles in voluntary organizations. Yet it is just when a consensus on purpose is wanting that leadership is both most needed and hardest to attract. Indeed, in those periods when a broad communal consensus has been lacking or only in an early stage of development, the legitimacy and authority of Jewish communal leadership has been most open to question and challenge. It should not be surprising, then, that uncertainty about the caliber and authority of the leadership of Jewish communal agencies has been a recurrent phenomenon. Almost 20 years ago, Salo Baron, the eminent historian, writing about the 1930's, called attention to

. . . the fundamental fact that what many American voluntary organizations had been suffering from was not so much the lack of eager candidates in democratic elections as the paucity of truly qualified leaders willing to take on the often arduous tasks of fund raising and of guiding their fellow citizens through a maze of both highly complicated decisions and boring daily routines. On the whole, Americans have been a "nation of joiners". . . . But while willing to join organizations, they are not always prepared to lead.

Imagination, foresight, wisdom, the capacity to organize and mobilize -- these are precious communal assets, always in short supply. Accordingly, it is always timely to consider how best to improve on the recruitment, retention, and promotion of potential leaders of our communal organizations. There is no time at which the community can afford needless barriers to talent. The present is no exception.

We do not believe there is an immediate crisis of Jewish leadership. Given our operational definition of leadership as membership on boards of Jewish communal agencies, we did not encounter any perceived shortage of volunteer leaders. Our concerns primarily are for the future: Whether Jewish communal organizations will be able to attract the talent they will need, whether today's young people will take interest and find satisfaction in Jewish communal life, and whether we will be able to make most effective use of the leadership skills that become available. The widely-heralded "pockets of Jewish energy" that have fueled the movement for Jewish renewal must be channeled as well to provide sources for communal leadership. Our principal observation, moreover, is that the recruitment of leadership is too important to be left to chance. We aim in this report to encourage serious thought and discussion on leadership issues. Our focus, in short, is not on remedying an emergency but on calling attention to the criteria and requirements for future Jewish communal leadership.

## II. ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE TASK FORCE

In May, 1988, Theodore Ellenoff, then President of the AJC, called for the establishment of a task force to consider the recruitment, promotion and retention of leadership of Jewish communal organizations. He proposed that the Task Force consider not only the particular organizational considerations of the AJC, but, more broadly, the lay leadership of Jewish communal organizations generally. Accordingly, he invited men and women with experience in a wide array of communal activities to serve as members of the Task Force. Forty-five agreed to serve and have participated in the work of the Task Force. Their names appear at the foot of this report. Robert S. Rifkind was appointed Chairman, and Dr. Steven Bayme was appointed Staff Director of the Task Force. Dr. Jacob Ukeles, President of Ukeles Associates, was retained as a consultant to the Task Force.

While the membership of the Task Force was being assembled, Rifkind and Bayme conducted a preliminary consultation with a number of astute observers of communal organizations, including Ron Ashkenas, Irving Brodsky, Naomi Cohen, and Herbert A. Friedman as well as senior members of the AJC professional staff. We thank each of those individuals for their guidance. In addition, Dr. Charles Raffel developed a comprehensive background paper to serve as a starting point for the work of the Task Force. That paper is annexed to this report as Appendix 1.

The Task Force held eleven meetings. It invited and received presentations from thirteen experts, including distinguished communal executives, historians, sociologists and political scientists. Those experts and their affiliations are identified in Appendix 3. The lengthy discussions we had with them were invariably stimulating and illuminating, and we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to each of them for their time and testimony.

A number of activities were pursued in support of the Task Force's deliberations:

- A public consultation was held in May 1989 in cooperation with CLAL--the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. The consultation focused upon Jewish literacy for volunteer leadership. The agenda for the consultation is annexed as Appendix 4.
- AJC chapters in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Miami, San Diego and Westchester County convened focus groups of local Jewish leaders to identify leadership issues within their respective communities. An analysis of the discussions conducted by these focus groups was prepared by Dr. Ukeles and presented to the Task Force.

- The Task Force commissioned an extensive poll designed to obtain a demographic profile of national and local Jewish leadership and to identify obstacles and incentives in the recruitment and retention of leaders. The data obtained were of considerable significance to the deliberations of the Task Force. In addition, we believe that they constitute a significant contribution to the too limited fund of knowledge about Jewish communal life in America. It is our hope that it will stimulate further and more extensive studies in the future.

The research analysis, both of the focus groups and of the poll of Jewish leaders prepared by Dr. Ukeles, is set forth in the companion volume to this report.

### III. QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

We begin with questions:

1. How can we enlarge the talent pool from which potential leaders are drawn? What are the major roadblocks to recruitment? Do women and the younger generation face particular obstacles? Do the financial demands on leadership constitute a significant barrier?
2. How does the community perceive the agenda of Jewish communal life? Is there agreement among potential and actual leaders that there is an important and meaningful agenda worthy of their time, attention and energy? Or has the communal enterprise lost its urgency for many potential leaders? Do communal organizations hold out the prospect of significant participation in the continuous process of reshaping the agenda?
3. Given the rise of religious tensions within the Jewish community -- both in the United States and in Israel -- to what extent is our present leadership representative of and receptive to a sufficiently broad spectrum of the community? Do communal organizations adequately embrace the principle of pluralism so as to moderate tensions between groups and to reach out successfully to those who hold minority views?
4. Are the relations between lay leaders and professional staff within communal organizations typified by a productive and satisfying sense of cooperation or by mutual frustration and acrimony? By confidence and candor or by suspicion and distrust? More generally, is the prospect of a close working relationship with professional staff a "turn on" or a "turn off" to potential leaders?
5. More generally, are potential leaders likely to perceive the investment of their time and effort in communal activities as well-spent, productive and satisfying?

In what follows we begin to address most of these questions, in whole or in part. We answer none of them completely or conclusively. Nonetheless, we believe that posing the questions and inviting serious attention to them is a significant beginning. We firmly believe that these questions cannot be ignored if the communal enterprise is going to attract the caliber of leadership it requires to realize the promise of American Jewry.

### IV. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP?

While a great deal remains to be learned, the survey commissioned by the Task Force reveals much that is responsive to our questions. We set forth here in summary form the primary findings, based on a survey of responses by 800 Jewish communal leaders in six diverse Jewish communities across the country.

### **Characteristics of Jewish Leaders**

About 40% of the leaders surveyed are women and 60% are men. About 10% are under 35 years old; 40% are between 35 and 50; 30% are between 50 and 65 and 20% over 65. Thus, half of the respondents are under 50. While the community might benefit from having a higher proportion of its leaders below the age of 35 (Joseph was 30 when he ruled Egypt), age does not appear to be a barrier to leadership.

Among women a significantly higher proportion of leaders are between 35 and 50 (almost 50%) than among men (35%); while many fewer are over 65. The trend is clear: Despite the numbers of women entering the work force and the multiple pressures of home and work, it appears that younger women are moving into leadership positions at a much higher rate than did previous generations.

Part-time or full-time work occupy most women under 50; "full-time volunteer" accounts for the largest group of women leaders over 50. Thirty percent of the women under 50 years old work part-time, compared with almost none of the men. It appears that while younger women are assuming positions of leadership, they are subject to increasing pressure as more of them are working outside the home. As they age, they may well continue to work outside the home; if this trend continues, in the future there may well be far fewer "full-time volunteers" among women over age 50.

Almost 90% of the respondents are currently married; 95% have children. While Jews have higher rates of marriage than the community at large, Jewish communal leaders have an even higher level of marriage and child-bearing than the American Jewish community in general.

As a group, leaders are extremely affluent, relative to the Jewish community as a whole; The median annual household income of respondents is about \$150,000. National data indicate median incomes of Jewish households as \$35,000-\$40,000. But not all of the leadership group possess great wealth; 35% report incomes under \$100,000. Twenty percent report incomes of between \$200,000 and \$500,000 and ten percent report incomes over \$500,000.

Jews in general place a great value on higher education. As one might expect, leaders do so to an even greater extent. 60% have a postgraduate degree (compared with 10% - 30% for Jews in general). Over 40% are self-employed.

### **Jewishness**

For many Jewish leaders, organizational involvement is a key component of their Jewishness, outweighing explicitly religious involvement.

Of those who are married, 97% report that their spouse is Jewish and 94% that their spouse was a Jew from birth. These rates of "in-marriage" are substantially higher than comparable rates for the American Jewish community as a whole.

Most Jews receive some type of formal Jewish education. In most communities this ranges from 60% to 80%; in the leadership group, 90% received some formal Jewish education. About half received a Hebrew school education; over 30% went to Sunday school; and 7% went to day school.

The level of participation in informal Jewish education is significantly higher than the participation levels reported in community surveys. About 1/2 had belonged to a Jewish youth group; about 1/3 had attended a Jewish summer camp. About 1/4 reported taking some college-level Jewish studies; among those under age 35, the proportion is over 40%.

Jewish community studies typically report that most Jews select other Jews as their closest friends. Despite very high levels of general education and income, friendship patterns among Jewish leaders focus on other Jews. Almost 80% reported that their three closest friends were Jewish.

Jewish leaders resemble other Jews in their religious identification, only more so. Most Jews (80-90%) identify with one of the major synagogal movements. Among the leadership group, the figure is over 90% and they tend to identify overwhelmingly with the Conservative and Reform movements.

Leaders possess some Jewish knowledge. Over 60% have read a book of Jewish interest within the last 12 months; almost 90% have read a Jewish magazine; and 90% have read an Anglo-Jewish weekly. They typically do not understand spoken Hebrew.

Commitment to Israel is very high among Jewish communal leaders. Over 90% consider caring about Israel a very important part of being Jewish. 85% have been to Israel at least once -- this is twice the rate found among all Jews in recent surveys.

The children of leaders receive more intensive Jewish education than did their parents; 98% received some form of Jewish education; 22% went to day school. In short, Jewish leaders appear particularly concerned with Jewish continuity. Given their natural apprehension about increased intermarriage, they are investing considerable resources in the Jewish education and socialization of their children.

#### **Participation**

The leaders surveyed contribute both time and money. Over 40% report contributions of at least \$10,000 a year to Jewish causes; another 20% give between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Less than 10% give under \$1,000. The median contribution is \$8100.

Of those surveyed, 95% participate in organizational activity at least once a month. The typical leader spends about 10 hours a month on Jewish communal activity. The range is from 1 hour to over 100 hours each month. Furthermore, two-thirds of leaders participate in non-Jewish or non-sectarian volunteer activities.

### **V. SOME PRELIMINARY ANSWERS**

The research summarized above sheds new light on some of the questions we have raised. Before proceeding to a fuller discussion of areas of concern, we spell out in summary fashion the answers the research suggests. Leadership, for our purposes, refers to those active on boards of Jewish communal organizations.

In terms of gender, as we have noted, 40% of current leaders are women. To be sure, there are proportionately fewer women in senior leadership positions. Moreover, some focus group participants reported the persistence of barriers to women in leadership roles, particularly at upper levels. Women leaders are generally younger than men in similar roles, suggesting that opportunities are broadening and that women are availing themselves of these opportunities.

Youth does not appear to be a barrier to leadership. Remarkably, the average age for joining an organization is 28, and the average for attaining a leadership position is 33. Fully half of today's leaders are under age 50. Although only 10 percent are under 35 years old, it seems reasonable to suppose that young men and women will concentrate first on building their own families and careers before assuming leadership posts.

Contrary to the expectations of some, competition with secular or non-Jewish volunteer organizations does not appear to be a significant factor constraining recruitment. To a significant extent the leaders of



Jewish communal organizations are also active in non-Jewish organizations.

Presented with eight possible reasons for hesitancy to accept a leadership position, eight out of ten respondents indicated that the combined demands of family and career are an important reason for hesitance. For women under the age of 35, competing time pressure was identified as a very important reason by 86% of the respondents. The same view was expressed by participants in the focus groups and, indeed, by the members of the Task Force.

On the other hand, only four out of ten indicated that the high financial burden believed to be required for a leadership position turns them off. Unlike the concern about competing time pressures, the issue of giving level and wealth does not seem to concern younger leaders more than older ones. Of course most of the respondents are relatively affluent and all have already taken on some level of leadership responsibility.

## VI. AREAS OF CONCERN

### A. Enlarging the Talent Pool

The Jewish community contains considerable sources of potential leadership. Jews generally are well educated and relatively affluent. They are distinctively activist and concerned citizens, and they are not without influence in American society. Yet, within the Jewish community, many are unaffiliated, with no personal or institutional ties to organized Jewish life. Moreover -- and perhaps more important -- even among the nominally affiliated there is, we believe, a great deal of talent that could be but is not effectively channeled into communal endeavor. It is well worth trying to enlarge the pool of talent available for leadership positions within Jewish communal organizations.

Reaching out to relatively non-participatory sectors of the community requires thought and planning. We have been unduly content to rely on people drawn from the business, financial and legal sectors. There is a world of talent, insufficiently tapped, in the media, politics, the arts and academe. Since people in those fields may not come within the familiar circle of most present leaders, a conscious effort must be made if we are to reach out to them. In doing so it will be necessary to recognize that financial expectations may have to be moderated if we are to enlist the skills, influence and points of view they can contribute. Academics, for instance, can be recruited for their technical and intellectual talents, irrespective of their financial capacity.

Boards should acknowledge explicitly that they require a multitude of talents. As a matter of policy, they should consider reserving some slots for creative and influential men and women who have non-financial contributions to make. At the same time, the broadening of membership criteria on boards should be accompanied by careful and regular evaluation of the total contribution of members. A systematic approach to assessing the quality and productivity of volunteers is just as important as the regular evaluation of the work of the professional staff. In all events, given the dynamic, rapidly changing world in which we live, organizations that wish to remain vital need to enlist those who will bring fresh perspectives and insights.

### B. Time

Leadership is time consuming. It takes time to master issues, time to reflect on solutions, time to weigh alternatives, time to deliberate, time to establish effective relationships, and time to attend to the inevitable nitty gritty of organizational life. The intelligent, active and involved people we want to attract and retain are busy people. The rapidly increasing numbers of women in the workforce and the challenges faced by two-career families intensify the problem of time.

It is important to recognize that the sense of time pressure is not the faddish conceit or petty vanity of our day. It is a reality that Americans are in fact working harder and working longer.<sup>1</sup> Affluence does not produce leisure. On the contrary, as goods become more plentiful, time -- the only inexpandable commodity -- becomes more precious. As one economist has put it:

What has happened is that in the rich countries all slacks in the use of time have been eliminated in so far as is humanly possible. The attitude to time is dictated entirely by the commodity's extreme scarcity.<sup>2</sup>

As we have pointed out above, nothing appears to stand as a more significant barrier to involvement in the leadership of volunteer organizations than the shortage of time.

Communal organizations cannot avoid demanding a significant investment of time from their leaders. But they must avoid wasting time. They must strive to use time efficiently. They must satisfy potential leaders that their time will be well spent. Organizations must recognize that busy people, with an array of demanding and rewarding tasks to do, are continually choosing how their time can most productively be spent.

Long meetings at which board members sit passively receiving oral reports that could as well have been distributed in writing are a turn off. Travel time that could have been avoided by the effective use of the conference call and the fax is a turn off. Staff work that is incompletely prepared or ineffectively presented is a turn off. Meetings that are held because it is time to hold a meeting and not because there is a need to meet about something are a turn off. Worse -- all of these deprive us of the time that is needed for the serious tasks at hand. The leadership of communal organizations need to budget and audit their use of volunteer time with at least as much care as they budget and audit their use of funds. Furthermore, staff ought assume increased responsibility for facilitating the effective use of the time of volunteers and for eliminating make work. In doing so, they will help to realize a sense of meaningful and constructive participation by prospective leaders and further the development of productive and mutually satisfying relations between volunteers and staff.

Similarly, staff ought recognize that volunteers require opportunities to exercise their personal talents and intellectual abilities. Some are best suited for boards; other, for hands-on committee work, still others, for advocacy, policy deliberation and fact-finding. Placing individual volunteers in areas where they can function most effectively and will enhance the final outcome is critical to a successful partnership with staff. Professional staff who perceive volunteers as inappropriately placed will tend to regard them as at best an adornment, or, at worst, a necessary evil. Although the Task Force recognizes the meaningful progression of volunteers within an agency as a positive principle, it identified the excessive rotation of volunteer portfolios as unhelpful, since it limits volunteers' ability to specialize and become expert in particular areas. An appropriate balance must be struck between the need to facilitate the upward mobility of volunteers through the principle of rotation with the need to develop volunteer expertise and stability in certain portfolios. Conversely, it is important for volunteers to understand and to take seriously the professional aspirations and job placement of staff within roles appropriate to their talents and suitable for maximizing their skills.

### **C. The Jewish Communal Agenda**

Potential leadership is attracted by the belief that there is important work to be done and a mission of consequence to serve. Perpetuation of organizational activity for its own sake is of little allure.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *New York Times*, June 30, 1990, sec. 4, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Staffan Burenstam Linder, *The Harried Leisure Class* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 22.

There is reason to believe that some of the main themes that have given purpose and direction to Jewish communal life over the past half-century are beginning to wear thin and may not long continue to evoke the widespread consensus and dynamism of the past. Ironically, this is in large measure attributable to the remarkable successes of the organized efforts of the past. The Jews of America have achieved an unprecedented degree of freedom to pursue their religious, social, cultural, economic and political interests. What is unclear is how the Jewish community is going to exercise the freedom it enjoys.

It is unclear, for example, the extent to which anti-Semitism will continue to serve as a cohesive force. Most strikingly, AJC research indicates that the cause of Zionism may not have the same passionate hold on the younger generation as it does on those for whom the events of 1948 and 1967 are vital and personal memories.<sup>3</sup> The battle for the freedom of Soviet Jewry, while it will doubtless claim our communal energies for years to come, appears at last to be well on the road to a successful outcome.

Of course, all of this may change; it is a perilous world. Nonetheless, we are concerned here with perceptions. It is perceived that the traditional core concerns of the communal agenda are losing their salience, particularly for those among whom tomorrow's leaders will have to be found. One need not agree entirely with Arthur Hertzberg's assessment of the present scene to acknowledge that it has significance for our analysis:

After 1967 the Jews in America were freer, bolder, and more powerful than any community of Jews had ever been in the Diaspora. And yet, amid the bustle of success, the Jewish community was eroding. Those who had been young in the 1930s still remembered Hitler, and Coughlin, but their children had much less sense of embattlement as Jews. Some took up causes, such as fighting for the rights of Soviet Jews or rallying to support Israel. Those who took part in the 'student struggle for Soviet Jewry,' or in the agencies which supported Israel, felt both virtuous and important, but they and their parents knew, if only in their hearts, that American Jews would eventually run out of causes. They would have to face the question of meaning. American Jews had solved their problem with the Gentiles, but they did not quite know what to do with themselves.<sup>4</sup>

We do not believe that American Jewry is about to run out of causes. We believe it can run out of the informed imagination required to identify and articulate them. We believe that it is the primary function of leadership to supply that imagination.

There have been times when the agenda of the Jewish community was well-established, endorsed by a strong consensus, conferring legitimacy on those who served it. At those times, the principal function of leadership was to work out the tactics and strategies for the pursuit of generally recognized goals. This is not such a time. Today Jewish communal leadership must ask itself what type of Jewish community it wants to achieve and transmit to the next generation. It must articulate a vision of the future capable of giving direction, generating consensus, and attracting followers and successors.

Addressing the vital issues of Jewish survival in the 1990s will, in all probability, require modification of the Jewish communal agenda. The Jewish community will have to confront the serious losses to assimilation, intermarriage, and indifference. Those erosive forces are abetted by widespread Jewish illiteracy and the limited exposure to quality Jewish education during childhood and adolescence and the low rates of communal affiliation during college and post-college years. Abroad, we face new challenges of nascent anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe and of enabling a vast migration of Soviet Jews to lead a creative Jewish life. Not only will Jewish leaders continue to be charged with safeguarding Israel but also

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<sup>3</sup> See Steven M. Cohen, *Ties and Tensions: An Update. The 1989 Survey of American Jewish Attitudes Toward Israel and Israelis* (New York: Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, American Jewish Committee, 1989), pp. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 377.

with developing a mature relationship between American Jews and Israelis at a time when criticism of Israeli policy will, in all likelihood, become more commonplace. These issues are by no means necessarily new; but they do represent a pronounced departure from current communal agendas and priorities.

We fully recognize that bold visions do not spring up on demand. Nonetheless, Jewish communal organizations need to devote more time and attention to reshaping and revitalizing their specific agendas. They need to create institutional environments conducive to fresh thought and to the recognition of new opportunities and new challenges. It is too easy to be preoccupied with the daily round of familiar short-term concerns. Such preoccupation, however comforting, will in the long-run prove fatal. In all events, it will not attract fresh talent into the ranks of leadership.

#### **D. Leadership Training**

To identify and articulate a commanding vision for the future of the Jewish community requires historical imagination. The past furnishes the only vocabulary for discussing the future. The richer and deeper our understanding of history, the greater our capacity to conceive and assess alternative future possibilities. To aid in developing historical imagination, we believe that Jewish education is vital. Links to our heritage and historical experience deepen our understanding of present issues and our passion for Jewish preservation and continuity. A sense of our historic communal experience will help leaders distinguish between short-term and long-term problems and solutions. An informed and committed leadership is also essential to articulating community perspectives to other groups and to deepening our involvement with Israel and its leaders. Jewish cultural literacy will enable leaders to address critical questions, such as the future of Israel-Diaspora relations, to represent the Jewish community, and to command the respect of today's young people. More programs that educate present and future Jewish leaders, like those of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) and the Wexner Heritage Foundation, should be encouraged. The Hilda Katz Blaustein Institute model of leadership education at the American Jewish Committee merits further attention and resources. While Jewish education cannot become a rigid requirement or criterion for leadership, it should be a stated goal for leadership attainment. We strongly advocate regular Jewish educational programs for leadership, with appropriate seminars and leadership institutes. Agency annual meetings and board institutes should include opportunities for Judaic study.

We recommend enriched resources for national training. Volunteers require broad training experiences that transcend particular organizational lines of Jewish agencies or ideological movements and that encourage pluralism and mutual understanding among Jews of varying political and religious beliefs.

We note the existence of successful models of leadership training programs. In Los Angeles leaders often rose to their positions by participating in an inter-agency seminar exposing future leaders to the wide varieties of Jewish organizations. The Young Men's Jewish Council in Chicago has trained individuals for leadership by effectively giving them responsibility for the management of small Jewish organizations. Upon completion of their training, they generally advanced to more significant leadership positions in the Chicago Jewish community. Consideration should be given to further extension and replication of these models.

#### **E. Volunteer-Staff Relations**

The Task Force was concerned whether widely-perceived tensions in lay-staff relations and media reports of executive dismissals in Jewish communal organizations may hinder the effective functioning of Jewish organizations and act further as a deterrent to development of quality volunteer leadership. Within the focus groups, at least half of the comments of both volunteer leaders and professional staff expressed negative views about the volunteer-staff relationship and cited problems as stemming primarily from role confusion.

The Task Force, therefore, focused upon tensions between staff and volunteer leadership, flowing from confusion about their respective roles and from the apparent confusion over mission and agenda. Generally, volunteers have assumed ultimate responsibility for agency policy and direction while staff has assumed operational responsibility. Conflicts exist when responsibilities are insufficiently delineated. When volunteers and staff lose confidence in each other, conflict and indecision result.

Some tension between volunteers and staff is natural and, in certain situations, healthy. Organizations benefit from a candid and vigorous exchange of views. Lay leaders quickly lose respect for professional staff who tell them only what they wish to hear. Conversely, staff quickly grow resentful of leaders who brook no criticism.

No single model of volunteer-staff relationships will fit the range of Jewish communal agencies. Operational and direct-service agencies may function best through a "hands off" approach that permits professional staff to deliver services while volunteer leaders attend to significant institutional and budgetary issues. Policy-oriented agencies may function best as partnerships, with laity and staff jointly undertaking policy advocacy and action programs. The traditional rule of thumb, with volunteers determining policy and staff implementing it, needs to be re-examined because of the complexity of contemporary Jewish public affairs. New compacts may be necessary to maintain a climate of mutual respect. Staff should see volunteers as allies and advocates in advancing agency agendas -- volunteers should respect the professionalism and expertise of staff members.

Other volunteer-staff models exist, both in government and universities. However, the Jewish community's distinctive contribution has been to maximize the role of volunteers in fulfilling an organization's mission. Rather than abandoning the lay-staff partnership, we should work to reestablish mutual trust between volunteer leaders and professional staff.

The following elements will be critical in facilitating successful volunteer-staff relationships:

1. *Common Mission.* We require greater clarity about ideological mission, values and agenda. Volunteers and staff work together most effectively when they are united as a team committed to advancing particular aims and goals. Such a team concept can best be created by reviewing the agency mission periodically to determine what elements distinguish it from other agencies, serve as its ideological *raison d'être*, and clarify its future direction. Periodic retreats, involving officers and key staff, can serve as a forum for such a review of agency mission.

2. *Clarification of Roles.* Conflict between volunteers and staff can be minimized when meaningful projects are assigned and where respective roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. Gratifying relationships and mutual trust are built around successful projects that involve working together on problem solving and program enhancement.

3. *Mutual Candor.* Candor between volunteers and staff in addressing issues is a critical element in formulating relationships based upon trust. Professional staff who make excessive claims of success and volunteer leaders who refrain from challenging them diminish the effectiveness of the organization.

4. *Staff Training.* Agency culture and volunteer-staff relationships vary from place to place. Staff should be familiar with the particular culture and pattern of relationships in an agency. Not all staff possess the required skills for building effective partnerships with volunteers. In-service training should be given to strengthen these skills. Subject matter ought include supervision, committee process, Judaic knowledge, and program development and execution.

5. *Jewish Literacy.* Staff training should also include Jewish education, enabling staff to help develop new agendas based on a shared sense of history, and an understanding of Jewish communal norms,

teachings, and ethics. Volunteers, in turn, will respond favorably to staff members perceived as interesting and capable professionals.

The mentoring programs of the Wexner Foundation deserve particular attention. During their graduate education, Wexner Fellows work with mentors who are senior communal professionals. An atmosphere of trust is created across denominational lines. Fellows and mentors share their triumphs and failures, building pluralism and respect for one another as Jewish communal professionals. This model, created for graduate students intending to pursue careers in the Jewish community, should be extended to continuing education programs for Jewish communal professionals.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The challenges of Jewish leadership today are among the most exciting and formidable in Jewish history. Jews today increasingly are empowered to shape the Jewish communal future. To do so they must address sources of potential future recruitment, realities of widespread disaffiliation, and the responsibilities of leadership to articulate vision and inform public opinion.

This report does not pretend to answer all these questions. Rather, it aims to research assumptions about the nature of Jewish leadership, articulate guidelines for future expectations and recruitment of leadership, and call attention to viable existing models. Most important, it is our hope that the report will stimulate further deliberations and operational programs to insure that the Jewish community develops the quality of Jewish leadership it requires to advance the Jewish communal agenda, in the 21st century.

*Appendix 1*

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY (1989)

Charles M. Raffel

The very word "leadership," perhaps because it deals with people effecting change by affecting other people, engenders a range of strong, deeply rooted responses. There is the common, often violent accusation that leaders, as a group, are power-hungry, superficial, opportunistic, overly status-conscious, egotistical, self-protective, and thoroughly insensitive to and unrepresentative of the needs of the people. A less virulent indictment of contemporary leaders is quite often rooted in their failure to measure up to the standards of yesterday's heroes. This put-down through nostalgia portrays current leaders as second-rate pretenders who lack the charisma, emotional fortitude, intellectual depth, and personal resolve of past leaders.

The usual counterthrust to these indictments is to place the blame for inadequate and ineffective leadership on the followers. "The community gets the leaders it deserves," an untested but provocative cliché, has often been used to deflect frontal attacks on leadership by shifting responsibility for the problem from the leaders themselves to their supporters, members, or followers. This rather unproductive cycle of reproach and despair is so common where the issue of leadership is concerned that the rare positive evaluation of an individual leader or of leadership in general is dismissed as intellectually naive, inaccurate, and, frequently, the product of an effective public-relations campaign.

The contemporary American Jewish community echoes these trends in evaluation of leadership in a number of ways. Always ready for quick delivery, in the words of a prominent leader, is "a pat indictment of the process by which a man's wealth and secular status, rather than his Jewish knowledge and insights, have become the qualifications for a Jewish aristocracy."<sup>1</sup> Often, when leadership is discussed in the abstract, it is not within the context of change, transition, or evolution but rather against the background of "crisis." If an individual leader of general high esteem is mentioned in casual conversation, a tidbit of gossip or disregard is often immediately introduced to provide the necessary blemish or tarnish.

A counterbalancing trend within the Jewish community is to evaluate positively the functioning of the polity as a whole, bypassing assessment of individual leaders. That is to say, whether because of or in spite of its leadership, the voluntary structures of American Jewry seem to serve its needs and goals quite well -- substantial funds are raised in a systematic way, and not only are international needs met, but the panoply of social-welfare, health-service, educational, community-relations, public-affairs, "defense," and religious institutions are well fueled and smoothly run.

Nevertheless, the prevalent atmosphere, in which leadership is viewed suspiciously, makes it easy to dismiss Jewish communal leadership but not to discuss it. (For a productive and effective discussion, the questions we frame will help, in no small measure, to determine the answers we arrive at.) What would seem to be required to stimulate a fresh examination is an initial suspension of the evaluation of the enterprise, whether positive or negative, in favor of a more balanced and scientific approach that would

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<sup>1</sup> Philip M. Klutznick, *No Easy Answers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), p. 108.

strive for both an objective appraisal and a series of positive recommendations. This examination, rooted in American Jewish Committee tradition, aims to chart and capture the vibrant communal consensus or middle ground.

The plan of this paper is to provide a context and structure that will stimulate public discussion about the future direction of Jewish volunteer leadership without attempting to influence the outcome of the discussion. Following a brief sketch of historical trends in American Jewish communal leadership, the focus shifts to the main body of concern, five interrelated policy issues: (1) *Ideology and agenda*: What are the concerns and beliefs which will motivate leaders in the future? (2) *Representativeness*: Who should be chosen to motivate and speak for the community? (3) *Jewish cultural literacy*: What does a contemporary Jewish leader need to know? (4) *Board-staff relations*: How can volunteer leaders and professionals work together most effectively? (5) *Recruitment*: How can the community best ensure a future generation of committed, involved, capable leaders?

## OVERVIEW

Edwin Wolf 2nd, an historian, traces two distinct stages of American Jewish leadership which mirror trends in the general society. The first era, "leadership of the individual," is characterized by dominant personalities:

In the era of Morgan, Rockefeller, and Ford, when men with strong individuality, a Puritan sense of being "the elect," and even eccentricity formed the power elite, when a Theodore Roosevelt, as a Franklin Delano Roosevelt several decades later, put his personal impress upon the office of the president, the American Jewish community had its Marshall, Schiff, Warburg and Adler.<sup>2</sup>

These individuals, and a few others of similar stature, helped to create the foundations of American Jewish communal and cultural life through their own decisive and dramatic personal efforts. In Wolf's words, they possessed "glamor and the charismatic touch which attracted disciples. They fought; they thought; and they created."<sup>3</sup>

The powerful issues and concerns which dominated the second era of modern American Jewish history, according to Wolf, made active and innovative leadership superfluous. The need to galvanize support against the Nazi threat of annihilation and later to support the State of Israel obviated the function of charismatic leaders: "These masses no longer needed leaders with new ideas. They did not have to be led. All they wanted were mechanisms through which they could give expression to their feelings and into which they could pour their dollars."<sup>4</sup>

These efforts gave rise to an intricate corporate structure in which leadership is subservient to the goal and mission of the corporation or organization. The leader or "organization man" is loyal to the organization, draws his authority from the organization alone, and consciously downplays any natural charisma or native innovativeness. The key focus in this era of the "organization man" is not really leadership but membership: "The corporate structure, with its tremendous strength of discipline, organization, efficiency and success, became the pattern of Jewish life. The leader gave way to the executive; committee action and community supplanted the initiative of an individual."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Edwin Wolf 2nd, "Leadership in the American Jewish Community," in Oscar Janowsky, ed., *The American Jew: A Reappraisal* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), p. 364.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



In this era, the significant means of accomplishing the goals of the communal agenda are membership and fund-raising drives. While these developments pay dramatic dividends in philanthropic terms, the traditional image of leadership is significantly altered. In replication of the assembly-line structure, leaders themselves are faceless, interchangeable parts who serve for the greater good. The uniformity of this structure, geared for efficiency, slow, steady growth and stability, mirrors the uniformity, in Wolf's analysis, of suburban, middle-class existence. This second era is characterized as that in which "the leadership of man, any man, became suspect."<sup>6</sup>

Wolf anticipated a third era, one which he could only sketch suggestively at its earliest stages, which would require a reversion to the strong, dynamic leadership of the earlier first stage. As the superimposed agenda lost some of its luster, the focus would shift from a magnetically drawn, self-motivated membership to a new cadre of visionary and innovative leaders.

The emotional appeal which welded American Jewry together is waning, as in American national life the excitement of the Depression, of World War II and of the atomic breakthrough are waning. People, not only Jews, are looking for ideals and leadership of a different kind, for something which will challenge them and at the same time something which will be acceptable within their educated, sophisticated frame of reference.<sup>7</sup>

Wolf closes his discussion on an uncertain yet optimistic note: ". . . a vast reservoir of potentiality exists in the new generation which is seeking the kind of leadership which its intelligence deserves. A new model machine is needed."<sup>8</sup> The following analyses constitute an attempt to lay the groundwork for such a new model.

#### THE COMMUNITY AND ITS LEADERS

Before we can understand the nature of leadership in the contemporary American Jewish community we must appreciate the nature of that community. Some observers assert that the word "community" cannot be accurately applied to the loose confederation of associations, institutions, and organizations that populate the American Jewish landscape. Others view this same confederation as a dynamic polity that has brilliantly adapted Jewish needs and traditions to the prevailing American culture.<sup>9</sup>

Both interpretations of the American Jewish community share a common denominator: "voluntary." In former eras, one was born into a Jewish community and one had to make a determined and deliberate effort to leave. In contemporary America, one is free, throughout one's life, to affiliate with a synagogue, service organization, or public-affairs agency, and to maintain or discontinue that affiliation at will, albeit at the risk of informal peer or unsanctioned communal pressure.

The leaders of this voluntary community have themselves been described as a community of leaders lacking a leader. Discussion of lay leadership is made difficult by the degree to which the term "leader" has been abused and devalued. Often mere membership in an organization is enough to earn one the reputation of a leader. For purposes of this paper, a serviceable definition of a lay leader that reflects a consensus among writers on the subject is *one who serves on an organization's board of directors*. The definition may be extended to embrace those who chair prominent committees or subcommittees within more complex organizations.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Henry Feingold, *A Midrash on American Jewish History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 110-126.

The study of Jewish leadership is impeded not only by the voluntary nature of the community and the vagueness of the definition of "leaders," but by the absence of scholarly guides to the field. Daniel J. Elazar, a researcher and theorist in the field, bemoaned a "paucity of studies of Jewish leadership" and noted particularly that "studies of voluntary leadership are few and far between."<sup>10</sup> This lament surfaced over a decade ago, and little progress has been made since.

The present overview is fueled by a methodological optimism; that is, it focuses on what is known, rather than on what we don't know. Any claim of comprehensiveness must be abandoned at the start.

While no national demographic profile of American Jewish leadership exists, a recent study of the Los Angeles Federation may be examined with an eye on its applicability (however limited) to the national scene. From this study, we learn that the average Jewish leader is "male, age 53, married, finished graduate school, and works full-time."<sup>11</sup> The majority of board members are drawn from the fields of business management, law, and finance, and they pursue not only busy and successful professional lives but extensive and varied volunteer commitments. Approximately 60 percent serve on four or more boards. The median number of volunteer hours is five per month.

Subjective rating of personal gratification in board service is generally high; 51 percent find the experience very rewarding, while only 18 percent find it "Not at all rewarding." The motivations for communal involvement, in descending order, are: "To be involved in the Jewish community" (65%), "Desire to help others" (57%), "Desire to be a decision-maker" (29%), "To get involved in a particular program" (26%). Rated most highly as criteria for lay leadership are commitment to the organization's goals (79%), the ability to get along well with people (69%), and knowledge of the organization's issues and programs (62%).<sup>12</sup>

This study of the Los Angeles Federation leadership may not be applicable to other kinds of Jewish organizations -- a public-affairs agency, for example. Nevertheless, it sheds light on recent changes in the nature and composition of Jewish leadership, as described by Elazar:

... the changes in the character of the voluntary leadership reflect the changes that have taken place in the American Jewish community. The first generation of voluntary leaders consisted of immigrants who had prospered but retained a regard for the Jewish life they remembered. The second generation, comprising their Americanized sons and daughters, had learned of Jewish communal responsibility from their parents but themselves had little to remember in the way of authentic Jewish life. The present generation is the most acculturated of all, is also the best educated secularly, and thus is better able to make intellectual contact with Jewish culture. If nothing else, these changes have made Jewish communal activity a more sophisticated affair, a trend that is accelerating.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, "The Jewish Community as a Polity," in Marshall Sklare, *Understanding American Jewry* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982), p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Huberman, "Making' Jewish Leaders," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Fall 1987, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), p. 286.

## LEADERSHIP ISSUES

### Ideology and Agenda

In *A Certain People*, Charles Silberman argues that a cultural and religious renewal is taking place among American Jews. Not only do the great majority affirm their Jewish identity in some way and feel more comfortable about such public expressions, but there is a significant return of "lapsed" Jews and a growing intensification of commitment among those who had always maintained a degree of allegiance. Silberman, echoed by other optimistic observers of the American Jewish scene, declares: "What is not at issue is the *existence* of a religious revival, but its nature and significance."<sup>14</sup>

This revival has changed the way leaders view the community's mission and the ways in which the communal agenda is prioritized. While today's communal agenda may resemble one of two decades ago, today's agenda is prioritized more with an eye on the inner vitality of the Jewish community, to Jewish survival, rather than with an eye toward accommodation with the prevailing host culture.

The intensification of the "Jewishness" of Jewish communal life is in part the work of a new generation of lay leaders who see in their volunteer activities a means of religious expression. The unintentional pioneers of this "civil Judaism" were the student activists of the late sixties and early seventies who pressed their local federations to focus more on particularistic Jewish concerns than on general social-service activities. Today's volunteer leaders of the Jewish community share, in the analysis of Jonathan Woocher, author of the seminal study on "civil Judaism," *Sacred Survival*, a common belief system:

1. The unity of the Jewish people
2. Mutual responsibility
3. Jewish survival in a threatening world
4. The centrality of the State of Israel
5. The enduring value of Jewish tradition
6. *Tzedakah*: philanthropy and social justice
7. Americanness as a virtue<sup>15</sup>

They rank Jewish communal priorities in the following order: (1) financial support for Israel, (2) support for Jewish education and culture, (3) social and welfare services for Jews in need, (4) defense against anti-Semitism and discrimination, (5) political support for Israel, (6) support for Jewish religious activities and institutions, (7) help for Jewish communities in other countries, (8) increased participation in Jewish community activities, (9) harmonious relations between Jews and non-Jews, (10) unity among American Jews, (11) promotion of Jewish interests in American society, (12) extension of civil rights and social justice in American society, (13) social welfare services for anyone in need, and (14) support for leisure and recreational activities for Jews.<sup>16</sup>

In assessing these priorities as an agenda for communal action, one may raise the following questions: Is this an agenda that current leaders can endorse and that will sustain and motivate the serious commitment of a future generation of leaders? How pervasive is the ideology of "civil Judaism" among current lay leaders? And finally, should this ideology shape the Jewish communal agenda of the future? In any case, Woocher has provided an important profile of the values and priorities of American Jewish leadership.

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<sup>14</sup> Charles E. Silberman, *A Certain People* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p. 268.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

## Representativeness

Psychologist Kurt Lewin posited a theory of ethnic leadership, "the leader from the periphery," which he elucidates as follows:

In a minority group, individual members who are economically successful, or who have distinguished themselves in their professions, usually gain a higher degree of acceptance by the majority group. This places them culturally on the periphery of the underprivileged group and makes them more likely to be "marginal" persons. They frequently have a negative balance and are particularly eager to have their "good connections" not endangered by too close a contact with those sections of the underprivileged group which are not acceptable to the majority. Nevertheless, they are frequently called for leadership by the underprivileged group because of their status and power. They themselves are usually eager to accept the leading role in the minority, partly as a substitute for gaining status in the majority, partly because such leadership makes it possible for them to have and maintain additional contact with the majority.<sup>17</sup>

As soon as the majority group gained truly equal footing within the general society, Lewin hypothesized, leaders would tend to be more representative of their ethnic group. Currently available data would seem to indicate that American Jewish leaders are like other American Jews -- only more so.

Elazar's judgment on the representative character of American Jewish leadership is mixed: "They are representative because there is a certain sameness in American Jewry: their desires, tastes, attitudes, interests, and educational backgrounds probably depart very little from the norm among the majority of American Jews." Yet, he also finds, the prerequisites of a certain degree of wealth, leisure time, and a "cosmopolitan" outlook have restricted national voluntary leadership to an oligarchy.<sup>18</sup>

Peter Medding, a political scientist, observes that the leadership elite will promote the interests of the Jewish community as they perceive them. One result of this elitist perspective, he notes, was the federations' early orientation toward general social-welfare funding while neglecting Jewish education and particularistic communal needs. The problem of leaders who are out of touch with the rank and file is compounded by the fact that high-level decision-making takes place in private, with little or no input from public debate or discussion.<sup>19</sup>

While high achievement and prestige are usually prerequisites for leadership roles, Medding finds certain nonelite roads to leadership. Many leadership positions lie vacant, and "leaders often evolve by default"; any talented individual who is willing to devote time may rise within some organization's ranks.<sup>20</sup>

The process of leadership selection seems to contain invisible checks and balances. Leadership may be labeled, at times, an "unaccountable elite," yet

. . . Jewish organizations are representative of the basic views of the majority of the Jewish community on the fundamental issues of Jewish interest -- Israel, anti-Semitism, Soviet Jewry, etc. Historically speaking, . . . the leaderships of Jewish communities moved in consonance with the

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<sup>17</sup> Kurt Lewin, "The Problem of Minority Group Leadership," in Alvin Gouldner, ed., *Studies in Leadership* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 193.

<sup>18</sup> Elazar, *Community and Polity*, p. 285.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Y. Medding, "Patterns of Political Organization and Leadership in Contemporary Jewish Communities," in Daniel J. Elazar, ed., *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses* (Philadelphia: Turtledove Publishing, 1981), pp. 281-286.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

expectations of the Jewish masses. . . . In this regard, the leaderships represent widely shared community attitudes and act as their "trustees."<sup>21</sup>

### **Jewish Knowledge**

Philip M. Klutznick suggests the following three criteria for leadership:

Is he patient with the community, its institutions, its differences, even its weaknesses, but impatient with its pessimists?

Does he think Jewishly?

Will he, when the time comes, move over and make room for another aspirant to leadership?<sup>22</sup>

Precisely because leadership is voluntary, it is difficult to impose further obligations on leadership, other than the obligations which leadership imposes upon itself. These obligations flow naturally from an intense peer-group pressure among leaders and from the community's expectations of its leaders, not to mention the individual's own understanding of the inherent responsibilities and demands of leadership.

Given the prevalent atmosphere of Jewish culture and religious renewal, a newly emphasized expectation for leadership has emerged on the edge of consensus -- the expectation of Jewish cultural literacy. Some have argued that this cultural literacy should be viewed as a prerequisite for national leadership. Others have suggested a commitment to the concept of the value of Jewish tradition, expressed symbolically within an organization through a *d'var torah* or invocation, is necessary and sufficient.

In attempting to push toward a consensus on this issue, the parameters surrounding what constitutes Jewish literacy (in Klutznick's assessment, the goal is "to think Jewishly") needs to be discussed, debated, and defined, not only in terms of what a leader needs to know, but, given obvious constraints of time, the most effective methods of transmitting this knowledge. A complementary discussion would focus on whether literacy is best viewed as a comprehensive knowledge of things Jewish or a readiness to listen to traditional Jewish perspectives prior to decision-making.

Two particularly innovative training programs for Jewish leaders attempt to provide substantive background in Jewish history, values, and tradition. The Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) offers self-study courses on major Jewish historical issues, and the Wexner Heritage Foundation offers a program of lectures and seminars on Jewish culture and philosophy to invited groups of Jewish leaders. These and other programs exist not out of a belief in "education for its own sake," but from the empirical assessment that Jewishly knowledgeable leaders are better and more effective leaders. Indeed, social-science research indicates that personal Jewish knowledge, practice, and commitment correlate positively with intensive communal involvement.<sup>23</sup> It is significant that, over the past two decades, an increasing number of personally observant, "traditional" Jews have begun to play more visible roles in both the professional and volunteer spheres.

### **Board-Staff Relations**

The Jewish public has recently become aware of tensions between professional and lay officers through the publicity surrounding the dismissals or resignations of the chief professionals at some major Jewish organizations. In one view, the departures are symptomatic of the contentiousness and mistrust that now

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>22</sup> Klutznick, *No Easy Answers*, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Steven M. Cohen, "Trends in Jewish Philanthropy," in *American Jewish Year Book 1980* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1980), pp. 29-51.

grip the Jewish community. In another, they reflect long-standing and deeply rooted tensions within the community that had been managed productively until recently.

What unites both views is the difficulty, if not the vintage, of the problem of relations between board and professionals. A recent issue of *Sh'ma*, aptly subtitled "A Journal of Jewish Responsibility," documents the inner dynamics of the problem. Michael Berenbaum, an academician and consultant, offers as "axiomatic that the more powerful and able a professional staff, the more successful an organization."<sup>24</sup> Lay leaders are given an "important, but clearly secondary role." Lay participation, in Berenbaum's view, is best limited to fund-raising and active support of the professionals. This view is supported by Daniel Landes, of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, who crystallizes his views by referring to the relationship "between *supporters* and senior professional staff."<sup>25</sup>

In urging an effective and strong lay-staff partnership, AJC's current president, Theodore Ellenoff, corrects Berenbaum's view of the American Jewish Committee as an organization whose excellence is due to professional expertise alone. It is due rather to "a partnership with lay leadership with the understanding that their respective roles were rooted in cooperation, rather than in wasteful arm-wrestling for domination."<sup>26</sup>

Sanford Solender, formerly executive director of UJA/Federation of New York, makes the case for the long-term solidarity and breadth of the organizations which are built on a clearly defined, strong, and effective partnership of lay leaders and professionals. Detecting in Berenbaum's view "an implicit contempt for the lay role in organizational life," Solender writes, "The essential thrust of Michael Berenbaum's article, that organizations function best with effective professional leaders who dominate and run the bodies . . . , subordinating lay leaders to secondary roles, is fallacious. Organizations may appear to thrive for an interval with such a regime, but the success is illusory and time-limited, and this is a prescription for long-term weakness and instability."<sup>27</sup>

What underlies not only this debate in the pages of *Sh'ma* but the tensions in the trenches of major Jewish organizations are distinctly different conceptions of how organizations are best run. Two models emerge from attempts to describe an optimal relationship between the professional and the volunteer: one derives from a social-welfare-service context, the other is based on a corporate, private-sector frame of reference.

Bertram Gold has described the evolution of the lay-professional relationship within a social-service agency.<sup>28</sup> In the first stage, the agency is completely run by the volunteers, who determine the mission, raise the capital, deliver the services, and translate the work of the agency to the wider community. In the second stage, the increasing complexity of the organization's structure and programs requires that paid workers do part of the job. The third stage turns the initial stage on its head. The agency is now dependent on the specialized training of the social-work professional, and the professional manager has assumed considerable power within the organization. An "undifferentiated partnership" is established that blurs the distinction between lay and professional roles:

In this kind of relationship, everything was conceived as being done together . . . . Every communication that went out from the agency was jointly signed by the executive and the

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Berenbaum, "Effectiveness and Professional Responsibilities," *Sh'ma*, January 1988, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Landes, "Response to Michael Berenbaum," *Sh'ma*, January 1988, p. 43; italics added.

<sup>26</sup> Theodore Ellenoff, "The Excellence Good Lay Leaders Prompt," *Sh'ma*, January 1988, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Sanford Solender, "We Need Partnership, Not Dominance," *Sh'ma*, January 1988, pp. 46,45.

<sup>28</sup> Bertram H. Gold, "The Layman and the Professional," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Summer 1959, pp. 366-372.

president. Every decision was made together. Board and staff walked hand-in-hand in sweetness and light.<sup>29</sup>

Gold argues for a more productive fourth stage in which lay leader and professional perform distinct yet complementary roles: the function of the volunteers, as represented by the board of directors, is to determine agency policy, and the function of the professional staff is to execute that policy. The professional must use his or her social-work skills to develop a productive relationship with the volunteers. The quality of this relationship is the key to the successful functioning of the agency.

David Andrews describes the corporate model of the professional-volunteer relationship.<sup>30</sup> In this model, lay leaders are appointed to boards of directors more for their fund-raising potential than for their service orientation. Board members view the professional head of the agency as the chief executive officer with full responsibility for its operation while the board provides "social accountability."

In practice, neither the Gold nor Andrews model avoids tensions, confusion, and role conflict often due simply to failure to define where policy-making ends and implementation begins. The most recent overview of lay-staff relations, published in 1987, points to a deepening of both confusion and concern.<sup>31</sup> There has been little progress in achieving a productive complementary relationship.

The only board function that is universally acknowledged and practiced is to hire and fire the chief professional operating officer of the organization. The recent spate of firings of chief executive officers of major Jewish organizations, rather than anomalous, can be interpreted as another reminder of the current confusion in board-staff relations.

### **Recruitment**

All but the most truncated discussions of Jewish communal participation inevitably include a classic refrain: "Outreach to the unaffiliated." Closely related to the issue of developing high-quality future leaders for Jewish communal organizations is attracting high-quality membership.

Several years ago, Jonathan Woocher mapped out a five-point plan of research to attack the relatively unexplored area of Jewish affiliation. Granted that the level of Jewish affiliation is high in proportion to other voluntary communities, it is nevertheless assumed that the quality of participation could be elevated. Woocher proposed studying the motivation behind affiliation, the reason for choosing one organization over another, the impact of affiliation on the individual and community, changing demographic patterns which affect communal participation, and policy initiatives which help attract, train, and maintain a committed and active membership.<sup>32</sup>

This comprehensive research agenda on Jewish affiliation remains largely unrealized. Nevertheless, certain clues to attracting high-quality lay leadership emerge from available research and anecdotal evidence. What are the incentives and disincentives of leadership within a particular organization? Does the organization, institution, or agency make a positive difference in the life of the community and on the leader's growth? These simple but often ignored questions encourage an agency to offer its leaders not only challenging and rewarding responsibilities, but also the necessary training to fulfill them.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>30</sup> David Andrews, "The Board and the Executive: A New Look," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Summer 1971, p. 344.

<sup>31</sup> Gerald Bubis and Jack Dauber, "The Delicate Balance: Board-Staff Relations," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Spring 1987, p. 189.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan S. Woocher, "Jewish Affiliation: An Agenda for Research," unpublished research proposal, American Jewish Committee, 1985.

The Los Angeles Federation study offers some suggestive pointers on leadership recruitment. Individualized one-to-one recruitment is the most effective means for developing new leaders. It is a truth of fund-raising that many people do not give unless asked; the same is true of leadership recruitment.

Once recruited, new leaders want training in a variety of areas, including orientation not only on the workings of their agency but on the workings of the Jewish community as a whole, to place the agency's operations in a broader context. Leaders seek streamlined organizations in which the immediate effects of leadership are palpable: smaller committees which are task-oriented, individual projects which have clear and manageable time-frames, and the periodic rotation of assignments between boards.<sup>33</sup>

In line with the prevalence of dual-career couples is the request for programs which encourage rather than preclude family involvement. Younger lay leaders specifically requested more mentoring, the pairing of senior and junior leaders to guide the latter's volunteer-career advancement. They also requested training in managerial skills, from running a meeting to financial planning. A particularly novel and resourceful approach is that of the Young Men's Jewish Council of Chicago, which trains both male and female Jewish leaders. Training consists of on-the-job responsibility directing a constituent agency's program. "Graduates" of this four-year program are encouraged and prepared to serve the Jewish community in other capacities.

While the answer may be complex and multidimensional, the question is simple and direct: How can the Jewish community's chief resource, its volunteer human potential, be best managed to enable the community to articulate and achieve its goals?

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<sup>33</sup> Huberman, "Making Jewish Leaders," pp. 36, 38-41.



*Appendix 2*

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*Appendix 3*

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New York, NY

Bert Gold  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, NY

Hillel Levine  
Boston University  
Boston, MA

Egon Mayer  
City University  
New York, NY

Bernard Reisman  
Brandeis University  
Waltham, MA

Bert Rockman  
University of Pittsburgh  
Pittsburgh, PA

David Ruderman  
Yale University  
New Haven, CT

John Ruskay  
Jewish Theological Seminary  
New York, NY

Ismar Schorsch  
Jewish Theological Seminary  
New York, NY

Jacob Ukeles  
Ukeles Associates, Inc.  
New York, NY

Jonathan Woocher  
JESNA  
New York, NY

*Appendix 4*

**CONSULTATION ON JEWISH LEADERSHIP**  
**American Jewish Committee - National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership**  
**May 8, 1989**

**AGENDA**

**Opening** Dr. Steven Bayme, Director, Jewish Communal Affairs Department,  
American Jewish Committee

**Session I - Challenges to Jewish Leadership**

**Moderator:** Robert S. Rifkind, Chairman, AJC Task Force on Jewish Leadership

**Speakers:** Rabbi Irving Greenberg, President, National Jewish Center for Learning  
and Leadership  
Ira Silverman, Executive Vice-President, American Jewish Committee  
Shoshana Cardin, Past President, Council of Jewish Federations

**LUNCH**

**Session II - Tensions in Lay-Staff Relations**

**Moderator:** Eric Levine, Associate Director, Am Echad, National Jewish Center  
for Learning and Leadership

**Resource  
Persons:** Dr. Gerald Bubis, Founding Director, School of Jewish Communal  
Service, Hebrew Union College  
Dr. Bernard Reisman, Director, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal  
Service, Brandeis University

**Closing** Dr. Steven Bayme, Director, Jewish Communal Affairs Department,  
American Jewish Committee  
Rabbi Irwin Kula, Director, Am Echad, National Jewish Center for  
Learning and Leadership