

Developments in Jewish Community Organization in the Second Postwar Generation

Daniel J. Elazar

A New Generation and a New Agenda

In 1976 I published *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry*, a description and analysis of developments in the American Jewish community through the first postwar generation -- roughly 1946 through 1976.¹ Those were the years in which the American Jewish community completed the development of its communal structure, modes of Jewish affiliation, and basic patterns for collective action. American Jewry, along with the United States and the world as a whole, since has passed into the second generation of the postwar and indeed postmodern epoch.

As could be expected, the new generation brought a new agenda which it is presently in the process of defining. In some cases, trends from the first generation have continued to play themselves out. In others there have been reversals of previous trends, sometimes unanticipated. New organizations and institutions have developed along with new issues. All told, twelve years into the new generation, while we are still seeking appropriate ways to deal with the new agenda, a preliminary description and analysis of these new developments is in place. This article is, in that sense, an update of *Community and Polity* to show how both the American Jewish community and its polity have developed in the new generation.

Our examination will focus on the community and its polity as they are organized locally, countrywide, and increasingly on a statewide and regional basis. In particular we will examine the transformations taking place in local community federations and in the countrywide federation movement, the decline of the mass-based organizations and the exceptions to that decline, the shift in the forms and organization of Jewish education, the changes taking place in the synagogue movements in response to a general stabilization of membership at a lower level than anticipated, and the problems of Jewish unity generated by inter-movement competition, the new ambiguity in the sphere of community relations, the impact of demographic shifts on Jewish community organization, the institutionalization of new relationships between the American Jewish community and Israel, the emergence of new model organizations to mobilize and serve the Jewish community, and the emerging changes in communal leadership.

Transformations in the Jewish Community Federations

At the end of the first postwar generation, the Jewish community federations had become the framing institutions of virtually every local Jewish community of any size in the United States. As such, the local federation raised about half the money raised from Jews for Jewish purposes (excluding fees for services), by far the largest share; had extended its influence into every sphere of Jewish activity, in most cases with the exception of the religious congregational sphere, where the synagogue still remained fully or substantially independent; and through its powers of the purse had undertaken responsibility for community planning in such a way that the federation did as much as any single Jewish organization possibly could to shape organized Jewish life.

There were, of course, limitations on the newly powerful federations. Some were situational. Federations had no significant influence over Jewish demographic trends, whether birth rates, intermarriage, or inter-neighborhood, city-suburb or inter-regional migrations. To these forces they could only respond and not always well. Federations had little if any influence on synagogues, not even in such matters as their relocation or building campaigns, which had a significant impact on the larger Jewish community. Federations did not choose to have an impact on the content of Jewish education except in peripheral ways. While federations had extended their control over the community relations sphere by bringing the local community relations councils (CRCs) more or less under their control, to the extent that they exercised a veto over CRC activities if they did not set the CRC agenda, they still had to deal with relatively independent branches or chapters of the national community relations organizations.

The federations' dominance in the communal welfare sphere was more complete. Even so, individual agencies in the federation "family" remained federated with the framing institution, not subordinate to it. Federation domination may have been most complete in the Israel-overseas sphere, at least in the realm of fundraising, and since not much else was going on in the way of local community connections with Israel, that was sufficient.

The new generation has brought a number of important changes or developments modifying the previous situation:

1. Federations have become more involved in the educational-cultural and religious-congregational spheres. As more Jewish education has become day school education and a greater share of the day school budgets have come from federations, federation involvement has grown as part of the normal processes of Jewish communal governance. By the end of the previous generation, concern over the state of federation-synagogue relations had led to the development of coordinating committees in most communities. While these committees soon found that they had relatively little to do and synagogues still remain very much in the category of private institutions, ways have been found to provide federation aid to synagogue programs in many communities and a certain amount of inter-synagogal coordination under federation auspices or with federation encouragement has begun to emerge.

2. Within those spheres in which federations already had a strong presence, some federations have begun to move from federated to direct control arrangements. This has been the historic pattern in the so-called "integrated federations," where each of the communal functions is handled by a federation department or committee rather than a separate agency. But the federated pattern is by far the more common. Recent efforts by federations to either absorb formerly federated agencies as federation departments or to take over the budgeting process of still nominally federated agencies in such a way that their freedom of decision-making is reduced to mere housekeeping, is an increasing trend.

Much as the growth of federations was a good thing for the American Jewish community, there are signs that this new trend is not healthy for the community. While it may seem like a logical extension of the earlier movement from fundraising to financing to community planning, it is in fact a break from the federated pattern toward a unitary one, and unitary government has never worked either in the United States or in the Jewish polity unless it is a result of coercion from the outside, and certainly not where a voluntary community is concerned. People will simply vote with their feet and no longer volunteer. Indeed as we shall see, as the federations have become more powerful, there is every evidence that their share of the total Jewish fundraising dollar has declined as new people who do not find the federation establishments open to them or advancement through federation sufficiently rapid or far, seek other places to put what are, in the last analysis, voluntary contributions of time, effort and funds.

3. One of the characteristics of the new generation has been more direct diaspora involvement in those aspects of Israeli development where diaspora funds are involved. The greatest and best example of this is Project Renewal, where local communities, the larger ones alone and small ones in consortia, were twinned with Israeli neighborhoods and development towns to undertake urban revitalization projects. While some may have been reluctant at first, most of the stronger federations seized this opportunity as it became clear to them that it would give them more direct operating responsibilities than most have in their own communities.² By 1985, some forty federations have appointed their own representatives in Israel, in most cases to work with Project Renewal, but in at least four -- New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Francisco -- to be comprehensive representatives of federation interests and local community programs in the Jewish state. From this it was an easy step to demanding that the federations choose the community representatives to the governing bodies of the Jewish Agency, even if they are formally nominated by the United Israel Appeal.³

Another important element in the growth of the federations' power is the expansion of federation endowment funds. The effort of the past twenty years to increase those endowment funds has now begun to bear fruit. The income from these endowment funds has given the federation leadership increasing amounts of discretionary money to use to initiate or support programs that might not otherwise be able to pass through the normal allocations process.

4. Already at the end of the previous generation it was becoming apparent that federations were forming alliances with a newly-resurgent if still numerically small Orthodox Jewry in a manner not dissimilar to the alliances between the leading non-religious parties and the religious camp in Israel. Since then these alliances have spread and deepened. There are several reasons why this became a natural development. Mainstream Orthodox Jewish institutions do not compete with federations. At the same time they can use federation services and indeed are excellent clients for services which non-Orthodox Jews no longer require or seek from the Jewish community. Hence, the very cooperation with federations strengthens federations' role in the community and if the Orthodox can be persuaded to become federation contributors as well, in return for services, that role is further strengthened.

All this is enhanced by the growing strength of Orthodoxy on the American Jewish scene. In raw percentages the differences do not seem to be important. Orthodox Jews still constitute approximately ten percent of the American Jewish population. But a more careful analysis reveals that, increasingly, that ten percent consists of real rather than nominal Orthodox Jews, seriously committed to Orthodox Judaism with all that means. This means that nearly all of the ten percent Orthodox are actively Jewish, something that cannot be said for the 60 percent of American Jewry who identify with one or another of the non-Orthodox movements, of whom only about half are active at best and a third is probably a more accurate figure. Those who identify with no branch of Judaism are virtually all inactive. Thus the one-third non-Orthodox Jewish actives constitute 20 percent of American Jewry, while Orthodox Jews constitute nearly 10 percent, which gives Orthodox Jewry approximately one third of all active Jews in America. Thus the Orthodox community has acquired real weight on the American Jewish scene.⁴

If we add to this the minimal interest of the Reform movement as a movement in federation services, and the long-standing (though now diminishing) antagonism between many Conservative rabbis and the federations, the picture comes into even sharper focus. In the first postwar generation the Reform movement had almost no demands on federation services. Whatever services Reform Jews used, they used as individual members of the community. This has changed somewhat in the second generation as segments of the Reform movement have sought more intensive Jewish education and have sought federation support for their day schools and even their supplementary schools. Also, its struggle for presence and standing in Israel has led the Reform movement to try to mobilize federation support for Jewish Agency allocations to their Israeli institutions. Still there is no where near the level of utilization of local services among Reform Jews that there is in actuality or potentially among the Orthodox.

During the first postwar generation when Conservative synagogues were laying claim to everything in sight and were particularly disturbed by the competition with the Jewish community centers for their youth, a real antagonism developed between the Conservative rabbinate and the federations. Now that it is apparent that few if any Conservative congregations will become all-embracing synagogue centers and the Conservative movement's new leadership has come to perceive what it means to be in

conflict with the federations, changes are in the offing, but they have just begun and it is too soon to assess how strong the shift is likely to be.

5. All this is reflected in the new presence of observant Jews in the federation civil service. Gone are the days when most federation personnel, especially senior personnel, were secularists from socialist or communist backgrounds who had found their way back to the Jewish people through their careers in Jewish communal service. This remained true through the first postwar generation, but shifted rapidly in the 1970s and is continuing to shift.

Today Jewish communal service, like the rabbinate or Jewish education, tends to attract those who are especially committed to Judaism in all its facets and who find a Jewish career environment makes life easier and richer for them as observant Jews. We do not have percentages to draw upon but the change is palpable, especially among the younger age groups although the fact that the executive vice-presidents of both the Council of Jewish Federations and the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, not to mention the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, are Orthodox Jews speaks for itself.

One clear indication of the shift is to be found at the annual General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, the major gathering of American Jewry. Until just a few years ago, the Orthodox services had trouble attracting more than two or three minyanim even on Shabbat, as compared to the hundreds attending non-Orthodox Sabbath services. In 1987 the Orthodox service on Shabbat had approximately 250 participants, leaving the service still in third place but in the same size range as the Conservative and Reform services. Moreover it was the Orthodox service that drew the highest percentage of senior Jewish civil servants.

Nor should it be thought that all the traditional Jews in Jewish communal service are Orthodox. Those who are not Orthodox on the federation staffs are increasingly drawn from among the serious Conservative Jews whose personal and family observance level is high and who are participants in the more intensive Conservative frameworks such as havurot and Solomon Schechter day schools, as well as products of the Ramah camps.

6. The annual campaign has become more locally oriented. Federations rose to their present positions of power in great part because they became the principal fundraisers for Israel. For years Israelis and supporters of Israel charged that the local communities were living off the back of Israel, raising large sums of money in Israel's name and then keeping too much of it at home for local purposes -- that in the days when up to 70 percent of the campaign was allocated to Israel. Toward the end of the first postwar generation, the percentage of funds allocated to Israel began to decline and has continued to do so, so that the average is now more or less 50-50. This has served to intensify the aforementioned claim.

At least since the Lebanon War in 1982, however, there has been a tendency to shift the emphasis in the campaign to local needs, even downplaying Israel. In recent years there

have even been campaigns in some cities in which Israel has hardly been featured. This is partly a result of the fear on the part of the federation leadership that Israel's bad press has made it less attractive to donors, but it is also a reflection of the increased consciousness of the donors of local Jewish needs, especially in the realm of formal and informal Jewish education.

The further spread of the Jewish population outward from the old metropolitan centers and around the country, away from the northeastern seaboard, has moved an increasing number of federations to begin to develop new forms of state-wide and regional organization to accommodate a situation in which most Jews are no longer located in clear-cut metropolitan concentrations. State-wide organization first came in an effort to find a basis for providing federation support for Jewish programs on the college campuses. Since many universities, including many of those most attractive to Jewish students, are located outside of normal federation service areas, and even those that are within metropolitan areas draw students who do not originally come from the local community, the need to develop an equitable basis for supporting Jewish campus services led to regional or state-wide consortia of federations.

These consortia were paralleled by the establishment of intra-state regional federations for small Jewish communities such as those of southern and central Illinois. In the first, a number of very small Jewish communities created one common federation to service the Jews in the southern third of the state, while in the second, a number of separate federations created a federation of federations to deal with the Jews in the central third. More recently, statewide confederations of federations have been established in Florida, Illinois and New Jersey, in part for joint representation at the state capital, and in part for a wider range of joint activities designed to serve statewide Jewish populations.

This is a new departure for American Jewry which had always been organized on a city-wide or metropolitan basis. As yet it is not a major transformation, but it may be a significant one. Indeed, the Council of Jewish Federations is now discussing countrywide or continent-wide planning to deal with such demographic trends as the Jewish move to the sunbelt.⁵

Declines in the Mass-Based Organizations

A second great change taking place in American Jewish community life is the decline in membership of the great mass-based Jewish organizations. B'nai B'rith has been in serious trouble since the mid-1970s as its older members have died and fewer and fewer younger people find it attractive. New forms of leisure time activity have replaced the traditional B'nai B'rith bowling leagues and brunches which were the primary attractions for many otherwise marginal Jews. The insurance packages offered by the organization, once attractive benefits, especially to the self-employed, now compete with insurance and pension plans that do not require organizational membership. Nor has B'nai B'rith's Jewish content been focused enough to attract those Jews who seek Jewish activity.

The women's organizations including Hadassah have also been hard-hit by the changing environment. The women's movement with its emphasis on careers for women in areas once considered the province of men has attracted many of the younger women, occupying their time so that they no longer have the need, the energy or the leisure for voluntary organizational activity in women's groups. Those who do find time for such activity are more likely to seek expression in what were once men's groups that now recruit leadership regardless of gender, such as the federations themselves, their agencies, synagogue and school boards, or the local chapters of AIPAC (the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee).

This has had two consequences. On one hand, the role in Jewish life of general purpose mass-based organizations outside the synagogue in Jewish life is diminishing. B'nai B'rith has for all intents and purposes transferred its most important functions to other bodies. ADL has become even more independent than it was. The Hillel Foundations have become part of the federation world. The synagogues have become the institutions that have the troops, i.e., they have become the only places where large numbers of Jews assemble regularly. If they cannot compete with the federations for leadership in the Jewish community, they do play a mobilizing role which federations cannot. Hence there now is a greater incentive for both federations and synagogues to develop linkages based upon the special ability of each to mobilize either funds or people.

Stabilization in the Congregations

At the end of the first postwar generation, the situation in the synagogues looked cloudy, if not gloomy. The great religious revival of the 1950s had ended in about 1962. Few new congregations were founded after that date except where migration brought Jews to unsynagogued areas. Hence synagogue membership actually began to decline, a decline that continued for the next thirteen years. The situation stabilized about 1975, just at the generation's end, and since then remains stable. While there has been little if any growth in synagogue membership, the decline in other forms of Jewish association, particularly among the mass-based Jewish organizations, has actually strengthened the synagogues' overall position in the community somewhat, while improved federation-synagogue relations have helped reinforce those two institutions as the twin pillars of the local community.

Within the different synagogue movements, there have been apparently contradictory trends. The Reform movement has benefitted most from such growth as there has been to the point where it now is at least equal if not larger in membership than the Conservative movement in most communities. The trend to more traditional observance in Reform congregations has continued and the National Federation of Temple Youth, the Reform youth movement, is undoubtedly the strongest of the synagogue youth movements. On the other hand, the drift of most Reform Jews away from comprehensive Jewish experiences is equally pronounced.

The Conservative movement has suffered the greatest decline of all of the movements. By the end of the postwar generation, members of Conservative congregations fell into three categories: a very small percentage, probably no more than five percent, were seriously practicing Jews who found their Jewish expression within Conservative congregations. These were the authentic Conservative Jews who lived up to the formal requirements of Conservative Judaism. There were perhaps 50,000 of them in the United States at most, and most were rabbis, Jewish educators, cantors and their families. For that small nucleus of those seeking to be authentic Conservative Jews, the havura became a major vehicle -- a few separate from established congregations, and an increasing number within the congregational framework.

Between 25 and 30 percent of the movement's congregational membership could be identified as following accepted Conservative practice, that is to say, identifiably concerned with religious practice and in a way characteristic of Conservative Jews, but not fulfilling the mitzvot in the manner that the movement formally required. These were the kind of people who maintained kosher homes but did not observe kashrut outside of the home. The other two-thirds of the members of Conservative congregations had not found themselves a Conservative way of life beyond synagogue membership. Many of their children began moving over to Reform, leading to a serious decline in Conservative movement membership and a religiously leftward swing in most Conservative congregations.⁶

As already indicated, Orthodox synagogues were undergoing their own changes. Those congregations whose membership consisted primarily of the nominally Orthodox either declined or were transformed by the new seriously Orthodox and new congregations of the latter grew in strength. By and large, Orthodox congregations moved to the right religiously.

New Trends in Jewish Education

The early 1960s also witnessed a peaking of the number of Jewish children enrolled in Jewish schools and the beginning of a long decline that as yet has not been arrested. This decline is in part because of the sharply declining Jewish birthrate. At a time when 85 percent of the Jewish population is over the age of 16, there are simply not that many Jewish children available. Beyond that there is also some slackening off of interest in Jewish education and at least on the more peripheral circles. In part this is a matter of increasing geographic deconcentration of the Jewish population. Jews who have moved far away from centers of Jewish population simply find the cost too great in terms of travel time. In other cases it is simply that the issue of Jewish identification is less important and the idea of Jewish education as a "inoculation" to enable Jews to live in a hostile world has diminished.

On the other hand, there have been shifts in the forms of Jewish education.⁷ Day school enrollment, even thirty years ago almost negligible on the Jewish education scene, has

now reached 25 percent of the total enrolled in Jewish elementary and secondary schools at any given time. The growth of day schools has come at the expense of more serious supplementary schools. Supplementary Jewish education today has been reduced from the six hour norm of a generation ago to an average of four hours per week. The drop in number of hours is even more apparent at the secondary level.

Significantly, while day school education has become quite popular on the elementary level, there are still very few secondary day schools outside of the Orthodox community. Perhaps this is because parents are worried about their children's chances to enter college, even though the record of such secondary day schools as exist is very good in that respect. Be that as it may, there are very few substitutes at the secondary level so that children who graduate elementary day schools frequently do not continue and have their Jewish education arrested at the age of 13 as their parents had theirs arrested at the same age through bar or bat mitzvah. Most supplementary high school programs are extremely weak, often involving two hours a week of courses on subjects such as medical ethics, feminism and the Jewish experience, or teenage sexuality -- all important subjects in and of themselves but hardly the substance of a Jewish education as traditionally conceived.

The day schools themselves are mixed. Some are quite serious, others less so. Many are under ultra-Orthodox sponsorship, even though they appeal to a broader population and hence face a certain disharmony which effects their results. Today, however, every religious movement has its day schools and there is a communal day school network as well.

A good part of this growth has been stimulated by the general trend to private schools among the upper middle class. Many Jewish families of limited religious commitment decide that if their children are going to go to private schools in any case, it would be good for them to go to Jewish ones. The more these schools reach out to a cross section of the Jewish public, the more problems they have in squaring their educational goals with the Jewish behavior of the home, creating new problems but at least good ones from the point of view of the Jewish community.

Jewish education at the college level has continued to expand quantitatively in the number of positions, chairs and Jewish studies specialists. It is now well-accepted that any university or college of full status will have some kind of Jewish studies component. Qualitatively, on the other hand, university-based Jewish studies have been something of a disappointment. As student interests shifted in the 1970s to become more career oriented, enrollment in Jewish studies programs dropped along with enrollment in all courses not career relevant. Moreover students who do enroll not only do not become majors, but they do not even go beyond one or perhaps two courses, usually taken out of curiosity or to fulfill a liberal arts requirement. Third, the popular courses are those on the peripheries of the discipline such as courses on the Holocaust or Jewish feminism. Courses in classical Jewish studies, especially those which require even basic knowledge of Hebrew, tend to languish and unless specially endowed, tend to be cancelled by cost-conscious universities.

One result of this, unanticipated by most, has been the revival of the Hebrew colleges. While they, too, have had to compromise their Hebrew standards, they still probably provide a more intensive education in Jewish studies than any other tertiary institutions. Moreover a number of them have developed a wide range of professional programs leading to the Masters degree, often jointly with professional schools at nearby universities, in Jewish education, social work and communal service, which have given them a new clientele and a new lease on life. In the process they have begun to upgrade their organizational and staff facilities, moving from the old normal school model to one more approximating the general university.

It should be noted that the oldest independent graduate school of Jewish studies, Dropsie University, ceased to exist for all intents and purposes in 1987, long after it ceased to be an effective source of Judaica scholars. It was converted into a center for advanced study in Middle East and cognate fields.

Ambiguity in the Community Relations Sphere

The Jewish community relations agenda remains ambiguous, following the break-up of the black-Jewish coalition in the late 1960s and the diminution of the ethnic movement in the 1970s. On one hand, the Jewish community, especially those active in the community relations field, remain as sympathetic as ever to the complete integration of blacks into American society, interested in maintaining inter-ethnic coalitions whenever possible, and even shares many of the dogmas of the new liberalism. On the other hand, affirmative action, which often became quotas under another name, was recognized by most as a blow to the basic Jewish interest in a fully open society in which advancement was based strictly on merit, and there were increasing differences of opinion among opinion-molders in the Jewish community with regard to the new liberal agenda. The responses to this differed from community to community depending on the voluntary and professional leadership of the community relations agencies, but in no place were the answers easy. One result of this was that the traditional community relations agencies lost much of their energy and drawing power with individual Jews seeking more specialized single-interest groups that reflected their special concerns, whether AIPAC or the New Jewish Agenda.

Small Town and Rural Jews

For approximately a hundred years, from the Civil War to the 1960s, the trend in American Jewish settlement patterns was from smaller to larger places. With the countercultural revolution and the deconcentration of economic activity of the 1960s and 1970s, a growing number of Jews began to settle in small towns and rural areas away from the major metropolitan centers. Moreover they did so not necessarily to leave their Jewishness behind, but rather sought to bring it with them. Thus new Jewish

organizational frameworks emerged in many parts of the country where Jews had hardly been seen before. In most cases these fell within traditional frameworks -- synagogues, local chapters of Hadassah -- but they also developed some new dimensions.

Two examples of this are to be found in rural New England and the Colorado mountains. As Vermont became a center of the counterculture, many Jews settled in that state. Others in smaller numbers settled in rural areas of New Hampshire and Maine. Collectively they have organized on both a local and regional basis to provide at least a minimum of organized Jewish life with regular activities up to an annual regional meeting which, in the spirit of the counterculture, is more in the form of a happening than for organizational business.

One can find a similar phenomenon in the Colorado mountains without the regional organization. There Jews who have settled in the ski resorts or the mountain exurbia within commuting distance to Denver have organized congregations that tend to meet sporadically but which offer a framework within which to associate as Jews. A curious phenomenon has taken place in connection with these congregations. Normally the pattern for naming synagogues is to choose some biblical phrase or Hebrew words indicating their moral purpose (Emet V'Emunah or Beth Shalom). These new mountain congregations have names such as Beth Evergreen or Beth Vail after the towns in which they are located.

Changing Relationships in the "National Agencies"

The first postwar generation marked a shifting of power away from the community relations agencies to those of the federation movement. In the second postwar generation there has been a shift within the community relations sphere as the old-line agencies such as the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, and Anti-Defamation League have given ground to newer ones such as the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Simon Weisenthal Center. This is not to suggest that there has been an absolute decline in the old-line agencies, only a relative one, with the old-line agencies becoming more limited and specialized and less able to draw attention.

What is characteristic of their replacements is that they are either identified heavily with Israel or with the Holocaust as distinct from being identified with the fight against anti-Semitism and for such traditional liberal causes as separation of church and state characteristic of the old-line agencies. Not that the latter have not tried to adapt to these new issues, but the public image remains strong. Moreover the new power-brokers have found it more to their liking to build new bodies rather than try to capture the old ones.

The Conference of Presidents, founded over 30 years ago, first surfaced on the American scene when Yitzhak Rabin was Israel's Ambassador to the United States. He wanted a vehicle through which American Jewry could approach the White House without having

to rely upon the president's aide for Jewish affairs. The Presidents' Conference position was further strengthened when Menachem Begin found it in his interest to cultivate it when he was Prime Minister of Israel. These steps made the Presidents' Conference more visible, but not necessarily more influential. It is only in the second generation that its influence may have begun to grow under the leadership of its new executive director, Malcolm Hoenlein.

AIPAC followed a similar pattern. Originally a small organization of insiders, discretely lobbying the U.S. Congress on behalf of Israel, its name began to get out as a way to be associated with insiders. Then in the 1970s it began to attract federation leadership looking for a vehicle to work politically for Israel. They joined AIPAC on an individual basis and both its power and visibility grew. With the nearly successful AIPAC fight against the sale of Phantoms to Saudi Arabia which brought the organization headline attention, many more people sought to join. Tom Dine, the new executive director, saw the possibility of transforming AIPAC into a mass organization with local chapters, a far larger budget, and increased activities, and he moved the organization in that direction with great success. Today AIPAC is one of the most dynamic membership organizations on the American Jewish scene but continues to pursue its single issue.

Very different but equally successful is the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Founded and operating entirely outside of the establishment except for a link with Yeshiva University, the Center's extremely dynamic director, Rabbi Marvin Hier adopted the latest in mass mailing techniques and by exploiting the Jewish fascination with the Holocaust and perennial fear of anti-Semitism, managed to build a very large base of contributors who provided a very large budget in small segments. At the beginning the Center raised money but had no visible program. When its leadership felt it was ready, it moved into Nazi hunting and once again, mastering the public relations aspect, made front-page news doing what other organizations have been doing for years.

In part the shift taking place is a reflection of the new generation's desire to funnel their funds into very focused activities, if not single-issue organizations. Thus multi-purpose organizations where the use of funds is left to the discretion of the senior leadership, often the professionals, have had a hard time reaching out to the younger generation. Beyond that, the breakdown of the liberal consensus in the community has also had its effect. While a higher percentage of Jews vote for Democratic candidates than that of any other white ethnic group, it is down from the astounding totals of the New Deal years to the point where a third or more of all Jews regularly vote Republican in presidential elections, among them a group of serious-minded intellectuals and activists who have been developing their own organizations to express what has become known as the neoconservative point of view. Thus the Presidents' Conference is strictly neutral and AIPAC has assiduously avoided liberal or conservative positions per se, while the hard-line position of the Wiesenthal Center would have to be considered on the conservative side of the spectrum.

Changing Roles in the Communal-Welfare and Israel-Overseas Spheres

At present three great organizations dominate this sphere countrywide -- the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal, and the United Israel Appeal. A fourth, the Joint Distribution Committee, is somewhat smaller but one of the most respected organizations in the Jewish community.

The end of the last generation found the CJF in the process of initiating a self-study in preparation for a transition to new leadership. The end result was some strengthening of its internal organization, a modest expansion of its budget and consequently its organizational capacity, and a substantial expansion of its role in Israel and overseas programs. The catalyst for that expansion was the intrusion of UJA into the sphere of activity of the local federations, especially in leadership development. With its far larger budget skimmed off the top of funds it received from the federations, it was able to freely expand its program while the Council was constricted by the caution of the local federations when it came to expanding its role and their resultant reluctance to increase its budget. The Review Committee took almost immediate cognizance of this issue, but decided that the way to deal with it was through quiet action rather than formal recommendations. As a result, CJF initiated a process which in effect brought UJA to heel, convincingly demonstrating to those who witnessed the act where the power lay in the American Jewish community.

The principal vehicle used by CJF to do so was the United Israel Appeal. Once the United Palestine Appeal, the fundraising arm of the Zionist movement's Keren Hayesod in the United States, with the establishment of the UJA by joint action of UIA and JDC in 1937, the UIA had lost its direct fundraising role. While it continued to be of lessened but still real importance for another decade, in the 1950s its role was further reduced and it became for all intents and purposes a paper organization whose major function was to accept funds from UJA and transfer them to the Jewish Agency. With the reconstitution of the Jewish Agency in 1970, the UIA acquired a new lease on life as the body that formally designated the American community representatives in the Agency's new governing institutions. The CJF took this revived instrumentality, brought about its reorganization, and revived its role in the governance of its creature, the UJA, which had become its master, and through CJF representation on the UIA was able to secure a restoration of UJA to something closer to its proper position in the constellation.

One result of this was the continued growth in importance of the UIA as a principal arm of the American Jewish community in overseeing the use of funds raised for Israel. While the three organizations continued to have substantial overlapping board memberships as well as constituencies, in the ensuing years each developed its own bedrock functions. The CJF is the coordinating body and spokesman for the federations, with a primary responsibility for community planning. The UJA is the federations' fundraising arm for Israel and overseas needs with a primary responsibility for fundraising. The UIA is the federations' arm for overseeing the use of the funds in Israel with a growing responsibility for oversight and evaluation. This is not to suggest that competition does not continue to exist between the three. It is almost a given that there should be a certain

amount of competition and tension at their points of intersection and overlap. This leads to periodic suggestions that the three should be consolidated into one organization. In fact what has developed is a kind of system of checks and balances among the three which may very well strengthen the community's governing processes.

In all of this, what became the dominant feature of the new generation was a new concern with the Jewish Agency and how federation-raised funds were being spent in Israel. The reconstituted Jewish Agency soon became a major item on the agenda of the federation movement. This was manifested through a strong commitment to making the new reconstituted Jewish Agency Assembly, Board of Governors, and Executive more responsive to diaspora -- meaning for them American -- Jewish concerns. From there it developed into programmatic concerns, particularly after Project Renewal was launched in 1977-1978 and individual federations began to be involved in specific Israeli communities. At every stage it was concerned with achieving greater efficiency and accountability.

Organizational Changes in Jewish Education

The changing face of Jewish education, while particularly manifested locally, spilled over into the countrywide arena. The old American Association for Jewish Education, deemed a failure even by its friends, was subject to critical examination which led to its restructuring as the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), a body designed to play more of a service than a promotional role. However because JESNA's principal constituency consists of the central agencies for Jewish education and the constituency of the central agencies is primarily the declining supplementary schools, despite good will and efforts to provide basic funding for a take-off, JESNA has found it difficult to find an appropriate role for itself other than to represent Jewish education in the give-and-take of the national agencies.

The Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE), on the other hand, is a prime example of a new phenomenon in American Jewish life, a countrywide grassroots organization whose annual "happening" rapidly became the most exciting activity on the North American Jewish educational scene. CAJE was developed as a countercultural instrument, sparked by the young veterans of the Jewish countercultural revolution of the late 1960s who saw Jewish education as the place where they wanted to make their contribution, but refused to do so through what they perceived to be the tired institutions of the Jewish education establishment. Originally spurned by the educational establishment, as it demonstrated that year after year it could draw hundreds of teachers who came at their own expense to learn and socialize together for a week every year, the establishment sought it out. Today it has established itself, holding several summer conferences in different parts of the country and in 1988 in Israel.

Religious Challenges to Jewish Unity

We have already noted the growth and strength of Orthodoxy which also became the major source of energy in Jewish life during the second postwar generation. Israel continued to be the central concern of American Jews, but Zionism was no longer a prime source of energy. Nor could the non-Orthodox groups generate the kind of energy that Orthodoxy could. On the contrary, the Conservative movement, as we have noted, began to lose the children of its more casual members, fourth generation American Jews and beyond who drifted into the Reform movement or nothing in about equal proportions. The Reform movement was more successful than the latter in building important institutions on the American and, indeed, the world Jewish scene as the Conservative movement had been a generation before. But as important as these were, they could not generate the same level of motivation as did Orthodoxy in either the religious or political spheres.

One result of the new ascendancy of Orthodoxy was a boldness on the part of the ultra-Orthodox in challenging the legitimacy of non-Orthodox Judaism. This issue was exacerbated by the rising tide of intermarriage, the perennial problem of non-halakhic conversions conducted by Reform rabbis, and the new and even more difficult problem of the Reform movement's recognition of patrilineal descent as a means of becoming Jewish. Orthodox reluctance to recognize the religious acts of non-Orthodox rabbis was exacerbated by these new phenomena. The Orthodox refused to recognize the acts of Conservative rabbis no matter how fully halakhic for political reasons, in an effort to deny them legitimacy, but with regard to Reform the denial could be on halakhic grounds alone.

Israel's position was key here since the determination by the Knesset of who is a Jew for purposes of the Law of Return, while affecting very few American Jews directly, struck at the self-esteem of virtually all those who identified with non-Orthodox movements. Thus the issue became a cause celebre for both sides, with the ultra-Orthodox groups pressing for more rigid definitions of who is a Jew designed to protect the Orthodox monopoly and the non-Orthodox insisting on full recognition of their legitimacy. By the mid-1980s people were raising the question as to whether or not there would be a split in the Jewish people. The reluctance of virtually all Jews to allow such a drastic step to happen led to an effort on the part of the various groups to find some common ground and to avoid any ruptures.

In the meantime the Reconstructionist movement replaced the Reform movement as the most radical religious movement on the American Jewish scene. By the end of the previous generation, the Reconstructionists had emerged as a fully articulated movement, separated from its Conservative parent although still in the Masorti (or Conservative) camp. Led by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and its student body, the movement moved rapidly during the 1970s out of the Masorti camp in the direction of far more radical positions.

The original Reconstructionist movement rejected the binding character of halakha but still looked to halakhic tradition for a vote, though not a veto, to paraphrase Mordecai Kaplan. The new Reconstructionist movement had no interest in halakhah per se except for historical purposes. Rather it sought Jewish self-expression along the lines of the current liberal and radical agendas. Like the Reform movement it found a place for homosexual Jews, going beyond the Reform movement to warmly welcome them into the Reconstructionist rabbinate as well. Because of their radical commitment to free individual choice, they were able to tolerate individual expressions of Jewishness to an extent beyond anything any other Jewish movement had known since the days of the Frankists.

New Model Organizations

One of the features of the new generation was the emergence of new model organizations. We have already mentioned the growth of the Weisenthal Center and the transformation of AIPAC. In addition, what was originally founded by Rabbi Irving Greenberg as the National Jewish Conference Center and which became in turn the National Jewish Resource Center and CLAL (the Center for Learning and Leadership), an organization which can best be described as one that fosters participatory leadership education for adults, has become a featured player in the Jewish arena. A communal body led by an Orthodox rabbi who has built his organization on the premise that the federation movement is the most significant game in town, CLAL cultivates the federation leadership as its most important constituency. CLAL preaches a religion of what Jonathan Woocher has termed "sacred survival" in which the survivalist and communal dimensions of Jewish life were emphasized, embellished by certain key religious rituals designed to impart transcendent significance to the very act of survival and the activities necessary to ensure it.⁸

Still another new model of Jewish organization is the Center for Jewish Community Studies/Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. It is a worldwide Jewish policy studies center with offices in Jerusalem, Philadelphia, and Montreal, designed to provide the Jewish people and Israel with a think-tank on the model of the Brookings Institution or the American Enterprise Institute. Less a direct teaching institution than CLAL, it is an institution of the new information society in which the acquisition, organization, and analysis of information are important tools for communal growth. The Center also turned principally to the federation leadership for its support and attracted many of the most significant figures of American Jewish life behind it. It focuses on policy research and interpretation, ranging from questions about the political behavior of American Jews to specific studies of the Conservative movement on the occasion of its 100th anniversary or the proper role of the Boston Hebrew College, all anchored within the intellectual framework of the Jewish political tradition whose study and teaching was pioneered by the Fellows and Associates of the Center.

Yet another group of new model Jewish organizations are the very large philanthropic foundations founded by very wealthy Jewish families or individuals. Jewish family foundations were not a new development. Until recently, however, most were vehicles for relatively modest contributions for general support of established Jewish institutions such as the UJA or the local Jewish hospital. There were a few private foundations that did engage in funding of worthy projects through a more open competitive process rather than a preordained one, but it is only recently that very large private foundations with assets in the tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars have been established under Jewish auspices. Among these leading foundations are the CRB Foundation established by Charles Bronfman of Montreal, focusing on Jewish and Canadian interests; the Koret Foundation of San Francisco, focusing on Jewish and San Francisco Bay area interests; and the Wexner and Wexner Heritage Foundations, both founded by Leslie Wexner, the first specializing in the development of better Jewish professional leadership and the second, better Jewish voluntary leadership. These foundations have assets which make them major players on the American Jewish scene and there will be others coming along. It is too soon to assess the implications of this new source of wealth dispensed by private individuals, following the very personal preferences of their founders.

The Blurring of Lay and Professional Roles

One of the truly unexpected developments of the new generation has been the blurring of the roles of the voluntary and professional leadership in organization after organization in the Jewish community. If there was anything that characterized the first postwar generation it was the sharpening of the distinction between the two sets of leaders in most spheres, only excluding the campaign where the professionals did not come with any particular advantage. The rise of a new body of senior civil servants for the Jewish community working full time at their jobs, increasingly trained for their careers, and possessing a near-monopoly of the information needed to make decisions led observers to speculate that professionals would come to dominate the communal leadership to such an extent that voluntary leaders would become no more than decorations. Instead, quite the contrary has happened.

Today, despite the even further professionalization of the senior civil service, voluntary leaders have become increasingly involved in decision-making to the point of interfering with legitimate professional prerogatives, leading recently to a number of notable resignations of top professional leaders from major Jewish organizations and institutions. Why has this change taken place? One reason seems to be the diminution of educational differences between voluntary and professional leaders. In previous generations, many of the top voluntary leaders were self-made men, who had left school early out of the necessity of making a living and had prospered. Today both voluntary and professional leaders have the same level of general education with similar advanced degrees, similar intellectual interests, read the same periodicals, general and Jewish, so that the difference between the two groups is more like the difference between attorneys and medical doctors, i.e., one of specialization, rather than level of competence, and that in a field in

which the importance of specialization is less than self-evident. The situation is further compounded by a modest movement of voluntary leaders into the ranks of professionals and vice versa which has not always been successful, and an equally modest movement of Jewish academics into Jewish communal service, whose results are not clear. What this will do to the confidence of the carefully crafted Jewish communal service is not at all clear.

The one area in which the professional leadership may have an advantage is in their Jewish knowledge, though only in the case of those who come from serious Jewish backgrounds. For the rest, all have been exposed to the same kind of Jewish education from bar or bat mitzvah to university Jewish studies. Nor does Jewish knowledge count as much as it might in strengthening the professionals.

The Unravelling of the Progressive Solution

This last phenomenon in particular suggests what may be an overall trend in Jewish community organization in the United States, that is, the unraveling of the progressive solution. American Jewish community organization as we know it was developed during the Progressive era and indeed is a product of the organization theories of the Progressives, including the reliance upon professional managers and experts functioning under the general policy-making direction of non-professionals, federated organizational structures, emphasis on localism and local problem-solving, reliance on functional organizations rather than upon traditional patterns of communal activity in the philanthropic sphere, and the treatment of philanthropic activities as civic activities to be fully insulated from politics.

This Progressive approach has remained dominant in Jewish community organization to the present and has contributed no small share to the amazing growth and vitality of Jewish organizational life. Indeed, this Progressive dimension has been one of the secrets of the success of the organized Jewish community. Now, however, over two generations after the end of the Progressive movement as an identifiable force, parts of this Progressive-Jewish synthesis may be unravelling.

Not only are lay and professional roles becoming blurred, but as the American Jewish community becomes involved in the larger Jewish world, the distinction between the civic and political dimensions of organized Jewish life are also becoming less distinct. Other Jewish communities and, most especially, Israel, never adopted the distinction. For them, public affairs are inevitably political. This has led to clashes between the American Jews and the others in the world Jewish arena but it also has influence the American Jewish leadership, moving them more into politics than ever before.

At a time when the new organizational theories are emphasizing the virtues of many competing units, it is not surprising that American Jews, along with other Americans, are finding their way back to a more diffused system. While just as the organizational

diffusion called for by the present organization theorists works only because of the existence of strong federal and state framing institutions, so too is it likely to work in the Jewish community as long as the local and countrywide framing institutions remain strong. Today the trends are pulling in two directions. Within the federation family there is a trend toward centralization, while the scope of activities of the agencies may be undergoing some reduction as people choose to give their support to other organizations as is easy to do in a voluntary community. The great spheres of communal activity continue to grow closer together, but the institutions within those spheres may be further dividing. As always, then, contradictory trends exist side by side.

Notes

1. Daniel J. Elazar, *Community and Polity, The Organizational Dynamics of the American Jewish Community* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976).
2. Cf. Paul King, Orli HaCohen, Hillel Frisch, and Daniel J. Elazar, *Project Renewal in Israel* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America and Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1987) and Charles Hoffman, *Project Renewal: Community and Change in Israel* (Jerusalem: Renewal Department, Jewish Agency for Israel, 1986).
3. Cf. Daniel J. Elazar and Alysa Dortort, eds. *Understanding the Jewish Agency* (Jerusalem and Philadelphia: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1985), rev. ed.
4. I have elaborated on this in "Who is a Jew -- and How?", *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, VP40, (May 12, 1985).
5. Cf. Carl Schrag, "The American Jewish Community Turns to the States: The Springfield Office of the Jewish Federations of Illinois," *Jerusalem Letter*, JL100, (February 21, 1988).
6. Daniel J. Elazar, Steven M. Cohen and Rela Geffen Monson, "Planning for the Future of the Conservative Movement," *A Study by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs/Center for Jewish Community Studies* (February 8, 1987).
7. Contemporary Jewish education
8. Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987).