AMERICAN JEWS

A READER

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INTRODUCTION

E UROPEAN OBSERVERS of the American scene have long commented upon the unique role of the voluntary association in American society—how citizens join together for the most diverse purposes, and how they seek to meet needs which in other societies are considered to be the responsibility of official bodies. Although it has not received similar attention, a related development of equal significance is the existence of “sub-communities” based on common descent and on feelings of a common religious, ethnic, or racial identity. While the legal system of the nation takes note of the existence of sub-communities it does not grant them a corporate status. Thus it comes about that the sub-community has no coercive powers. Nevertheless, despite its unofficial character and status, the sub-community has proved to be an enduring phenomenon in American society.

The sub-community—especially its communal structure—has not been the object of concentrated scholarly attention, perhaps because of the pervasiveness of the melting-pot ideology. For many decades it was assumed that the sub-communities were either European holdovers or defensive structures erected as a response to prejudice and discrimination. In either case it was thought that the sub-community would wither away with the passing of the
Jewish community on the local and national levels. He has clarified the objectives of such associations, the roles played by various types of people, and the trends responsible for shifts in the status and direction of given voluntary associations.

It should be pointed out that while scholarly literature is sparse, there has been considerable writing about the Jewish community by those active in it, as well as by those who would like to assume leadership. Much of this writing is critical in tone—for decades Jewish periodicals have published articles decrying the state of Jewish communal life and suggesting plans for its improvement. One chronic complaint centers on what is assumed to be the uncoordinated nature of Jewish communal structure, its tendency toward duplication. Another is that the Jewish community is undemocratic, that it is controlled by plutocrats who are said to rule by virtue of their fiscal potency.

Elazar's approach is different. He sees two large factors which have determined the shape of the community. The first is the growth of the federations, which he regards as a healthy development, accurately expressing the will, not of plutocrats, but of American Jewry as a whole. Federation leadership is made up, in his view, by a "trusteeship of doers" intensely committed to Jewishness. On the other hand, Elazar sees the main structural weakness of the Jewish community in the growth and development of the second large factor, the American synagogue. In his view the synagogue is localistic—it looks inward to its own constituency rather than outward toward the larger Jewish world. In an age of large and strong congregations, such localism becomes a significant factor in preventing the American Jewish community from effectively discharging the responsibilities thrust upon it by virtue of its numbers, wealth, and talent. Elazar's central proposals for the reform of American Jewish community structure are on the demand that congregational leaders come to consider their institutions as public rather than private institutions, and that the two key structures of the American Jewish community—federations and the synagogues—be brought together in closer articulation.

M.S.
ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

The Character of American Jewry

AMERICAN JEWRY forms the largest Jewish community in Jewish history and, indeed, is the largest aggregation of Jews ever located under a single government, with the possible exception of Czarist Russia on the eve of the mass migration. Its major local communities are larger than all but a handful of countrywide communities in the past.

The spread of Jews from East Coast to West and from far North to Deep South, despite the unevenness of the distribution, has given the Jewish community major concentrations of population at the farthest reaches of the country. Moreover, the density of Jewish population in the Northeast has been declining, at least since the end of World War II. California now has more Jews than any country in the world other than the United States itself, the Soviet Union, and Israel. Los Angeles, the second largest local Jewish community in the world, has as many Jews as all of France, which is ranked as the country with the fourth largest Jewish population. Simple geography serves to reinforce all other tendencies to disperse decision-making in the American Jewish community as in American society as a whole. It has proved difficult for any "central office" to control countrywide operations in the United States regardless of who or what is involved.

The five largest Jewish communities1 in the United States contain close to 60 percent of the total Jewish population and the top sixteen communities2 (all those containing 50,000 Jews or more) contain over 75 percent of the total. At the same time Jews are distributed in over 800 communities ranging in size from just under two million in New York City down to a handful of families in the more remote towns and cities. Those 800 are organized into 225 local federations or their equivalent, of which only 27 have more than 20,000 Jews and only ten over 100,000. (Greater New York City, while really a region rather than a local community, is organized under a single limited-purpose federation, which includes the five boroughs plus Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties.)

Local community size contributes directly to the organization of decision-making on the American Jewish scene. New York is not only in a size-class by itself but maintains its own—highly fragmented—organizational patterns while holding itself substantially aloof from all other communities. The federation system, which has become the norm throughout the rest of the country, is limited in New York City. There the major Jewish institutions and organizations, beginning with the United Jewish Appeal, conduct their own fund-raising campaigns and operate their own local programs outside of any overall planning or coordinating framework, often from their own national offices.

The major Jewish communities outside of New York are all structured so that the federations play a major, if not dominant, role in communal fund-raising and decision-making. All the significant ones among them are members of the Large City Budgeting Conference (LCBC) of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. While the LCBC itself is essentially an information-gathering body, its members together represent the single most powerful influence on communal fund-raising on the American Jewish scene and the leaders of its constituent federations are the major source of American Jewry's leadership across the spectrum of functional spheres. The communications network that is generated out of the interaction of those communal leaders may well be the heart of the countrywide Jewish communal decision-making system. Significantly, New York is not a member of the LCBC.

Communities too small or too weak to be members of the LCBC stand on the peripheries of the countrywide decision-making processes, no matter how well-organized and active they may be locally. Occasionally notable individuals from such communities do attain national prominence, but that is rare. Only in the last few years have the stronger of these communities begun to devise ways to enhance their national visibility in the manner of the LCBC.

1New York City, Los Angeles, Nassau County (N.Y.), Philadelphia, and Chicago.
2The aforementioned communities, plus Boston, Miami, Bergen County (N.J.), Essex County (N.J.), Westchester County (N.Y.), Baltimore, Washington, Cleveland, Detroit, San Francisco, and St. Louis.
Local decision-making has not been systematically studied in more than a handful of these organized communities. What we do know, however, is that there are variations among cities simply as a result of the differences in scale that change the magnitude of the communications problems. The ways in which patterns of communication are organized vary in communities of different sizes, not to speak of other cultural, historical, social, and economic factors. Size, for example, does much to determine who knows whom and how comprehensive or exclusive are friendship and acquaintance nets. These, in turn, determine who speaks to whom on communal matters.

There is also considerable evidence that the percentage of those affiliated with and active in communal life stands in inverse ratio to community size. Since there is always a certain minimum of positions to be filled, regardless of community size, smaller communities will, ipso facto, involve a greater proportion of their population than larger ones, not to speak of the greater social pressures for participation often manifested in smaller communities where people know who is and who is not participating.

The size factor works in other ways as well. To some extent, the number and spread of Jewish institutions is dependent upon the size of the community. A community of 10,000 Jews is not likely to have the range of institutions of a community of 100,000. Consequently it will not have the complexity and diversity of decision-making centers or channels nor the problems of separated leadership that are likely to prevail in a very large community where people can be decision-makers in major arenas without knowing or working with their counterparts in others.

The impact of size of place also has a dynamic quality. From the early eighteenth century, when Jews first arrived in the American colonies, until the mid-nineteenth century, Jews lived in a number of small communities of approximately the same size, none of which were able to support more than the most rudimentary congregational institutions. All this changed with the subsequent mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, who settled overwhelmingly in the major urban centers. At the same time, the Jews in the hinterland communities continued to migrate to the metropolises because that is where the opportunities lay.

Since the end of World War II there has been another shift in the scale of Jewish settlement that is only now beginning to be fully reflected in the structure of local decision-making. Increasingly, Jews have been moving out of the big cities into suburbs which, while nominally parts of the same metropolitan area, in fact have fully separate governmental structures and substantially distinctive socio-economic characteristics, both of which they guard jealously. This migration is leading the Jews back once again to small communities where, unless they are involved with a great metropolitan federation, they are able to maintain only the minimum in the way of local Jewish institutions. Scattered widely among many small towns, they are tied together at most by a common fund-raising system for overseas needs. From the available data it would seem that 60 percent of American Jews today live in separate suburban communities or in metropolitan communities of less than 20,000 Jews.

New York, with its 31 percent of the total American Jewish population, is the de facto capital of the American Jewish community. Moreover, because New York is really a region rather than a single community, and is additionally surrounded by perhaps another 15 percent of American Jewry living within the orbit of Manhattan, the Jews of New York tend to believe that all Jewish life in the United States is concentrated in their city and environs. At the same time, what would be considered very large Jewish communities in their own right are well-nigh buried within the metropolitan area and maintain only those institutions that meet local needs.

The other very large Jewish communities are regional centers of Jewish life as well as major communities in their own right. Los Angeles is clearly the center of Jewish life west of the Rocky Mountains and the second city of American Jewry institutionally as well as in numbers, with branches of all the countrywide Jewish organizations and institutions located within its limits. Because of its distance from the East Coast it has a greater degree of independence from “New York” than any other regional center in the United States. Chicago is the capital of the Jewries of mid-America in much the same way, although in its case relative proximity to New York has prevented it from developing the same range of national institutions or local autonomy as Los Angeles. Once the great western anchor of American Jewish life, its overall position has been lost to Los Angeles along with so much of its Jewish population.
Philadelphia and Boston, although not almost within commuting distance of New York, remain equally important secondary national centers for American Jewry because of historical circumstance. Philadelphia’s old, established Jewish community has long played a national role that at one time even rivaled that of the Empire City. It continues to maintain some institutions of national significance. Perhaps more important, as the first major Jewish community outside of the New York metropolitan area, its leaders have easy access to the national offices of Jewish organizations where they frequently represent the point of view of the rest of American Jewry (insofar as there is any common one) vis-à-vis that of “New York.”

Boston Jewry, though a far younger Jewish community, has capitalized on its city’s position as the Athens of America to create major Jewish academic institutions of national scope and to become the home of whatever Jewish academic brain trust exists in the United States.

Only in the South is the largest city not the regional center. Greater Miami, still a very new community, the product of the post-World War II migration southward and heavily weighted with retirees, has had no significant national impact as a community (as distinct from a location for the conduct of the winter business of American Jewry as a whole). The capital of Jewish life in the South is Atlanta, the region’s general capital. Despite its small Jewish population of 16,500, it possesses the panoply of regional offices associated with much larger Jewish communities in other parts of the country. The pattern of Jewish activity in Atlanta is markedly different from that of any of the other regional centers because of the intimacy and proximity within which the regional offices and local institutions must live.

Jewish communities of medium size (here defined as 20,000 to 100,000 population) all play tertiary roles (as communities) in the hierarchy of American Jewish communities. They are generally able to provide the full range of local institutions and organizations found in any American community, although often in rudimentary form, but serve no particular national functions except as a result of historical accident. Among them, national importance is determined by factors other than size. The subsidiary regional centers, all located between the Mississippi and the Pacific, represent nodes of Jewish population. These centers serve wide areas, sparsely settled by Jews, and thus occupy a more important role in the overall scheme than either their size or, in most cases, the quality of Jewish life within them would otherwise warrant.

Associational Framework
Still another environmental factor that is vital in shaping decision-making in the American Jewish community is the extraordinary variety of forms of Jewish association possible. Any organized interconnections within the maze of institutions and organizations of American Jewry have had to be forged in the face of many obstacles, including the lack of any inherent legitimacy attaching to any coordinating institutions, the penchant for individualism inherent in the American Jewish community derived from both American and Jewish sources, and the difficulties of enforcing any kind of coordinating effort within the context of American society which treats all Jewish activities as private, voluntary ones.

Thus the pattern of relationships within the matrix of American Jewish life must be a dynamic one. There is rarely a fixed division of authority and influence within American Jewry but, rather, one that varies from time to time and usually from issue to issue with different elements of the matrix taking on different “loads” at different times and in relation to different issues. Moreover, since the community is a voluntary one, persuasion rather than compulsion, influence rather than power, are the tools available for making decisions and implementing policies. All this works to strengthen the character of the community as a communications network since the character, quality, and relevance of what is communicated and the way in which it is communicated frequently determine the extent of the authority and influence of the parties to the communication.

The World Jewish Environment
Decision-making in the American Jewish community is further shaped by the impact of the world Jewish environment. This is most immediately evident in the role which Israel plays in American Jewish life. Israel has become the major unifying symbol in the community, in effect replacing traditional religious values as the binding ties linking Jews of varying persuasions and interests. Fund-raising for Israel has not only come to dominate all
communal activity, but has been the stimulus for the general
increase in funds raised for across-the-board Jewish purposes in
the United States since the end of World War II . . .

Indeed, Israel has become, de facto, the authority-giving
element in Jewish life today in the way that the Torah was in the
pre-modern world. The ascendency of Israel appears to have ended
a period of well over a century in which there was no clear-cut
source of authority in Jewish life at all. The fact that Israel has
become the new source of authority is not without problems of its
own, but nevertheless this new situation provides a means for
uniting a people with very diverse beliefs.

The authoritative role of Israel functions in two ways. First,
Israel is itself authoritative. Those who wish to dissent from any
particular Israeli policy or demand must be very circumspect when
they do so. Those Jews who reject Israel’s claims upon them are
more or less written off by the Jewish community. They are
certainly excluded from any significant decision-making role in
the community. Second, leaders who can claim to speak in the name
of Israel or on behalf of Israel gain a degree of authority that places
them in very advantageous positions when it comes to other areas of
communal decision-making. Even the synagogues, which are
expected to be bastions of support for the Torah as the primary
source of authority in the community, have come increasingly to
rely upon Israel and Israel-centered activities to legitimize their own
positions.

Government-like institutions are those that play roles and provide
services on a countrywide, local, or (where they exist) regional basis
which, under other conditions, would be played, provided, or
controlled, predominantly or exclusively, by governmental authori-
ties. The Jewish federations and their constituent agencies are the
most clear-cut examples of government-like institutions in the
American Jewish community. Locally, the federations themselves
have become something like roof organizations. They are constant-
ly expanding their role in community planning, coordination, and
financing. While they are not always comprehensive in the sense of
embracing all organizations in the community directly, in most
cases, they do maintain some formal connections with all significant
ones performing government-like services which are either their
constituent agencies, beneficiaries, or affiliates. Thus the bureaus of
Jewish education, the Jewish community centers, Jewish communi-
ty-relations councils, the community-wide welfare institutions, and
the like, all of which perform functions which would otherwise be
performed by government, are generally linked to the federation.

On the countrywide plane the analogous organizations are not
as easily identifiable. The Council of Jewish Federations and
Welfare Funds, the Synagogue Council of America, the National
Jewish Welfare Board, the National Community Relations Advisory
Council, and the American Association for Jewish Education at
least make claims in that direction. In fact, however, the Jewish
communities of the United States are no more than leagued
together; they are not really federated on a countrywide basis in a
sufficiently comprehensive manner to have generated comprehen-
sive institutions that are comparable to those on the local scene.

Localistic institutions and organizations, primarily synagogues now
that the landsmanshaften have virtually disappeared, are those
whose first and foremost task is to meet the primary personal and
interpersonal needs of individual Jews and Jewish families. By their
very nature, synagogues are geared to be relatively intimate
associations of compatible people. While the growth of the large
American synagogue has led to a confusion of functions (which has
contributed to the present difficulties of the synagogue as an
institution), it still retains primary responsibility for meeting those
needs.

General-purpose, mass-based organizations are those that function
to a) articulate community values, attitudes and policies;
b) provide the energy and motive force for crystallizing the communal consensus that grows out of those values, attitudes, and policies; and c) maintain institutionalized channels of communication between the community leaders and “actives” (“cosmopolitans”) and the broad base of the affiliated Jewish population (“locals”) to deal with the problems and tasks facing the community in light of the consensus. These mass-based organizations provide the political structural parallel to the government-like (“cosmopolitan”) and localistic institutions, bridging the gaps between them, providing a motivating force to keep them running, and also functioning to determine their respective roles in the community as a whole. In a sense these organizations function as the equivalent of political parties in a full-fledged political system (in some Jewish communities in other countries they are indeed political parties) to aggregate and mobilize interests in the community.

In the American Jewish community, these organizations are to be found in three varieties. First, there are the quasi-elite organizations which have begun to reach out to develop a larger membership base but in such a way that only people with special interests or backgrounds are likely to find their place within them. The American Jewish Committee is perhaps the best example of such an organization and in many respects is the most important of these organizations. Beginning as a small select group, the Committee has developed a larger membership base as it has become more democratized, but its base still includes a relatively select group of people (even if they are more self-selected than they used to be). At the same time, it is a very powerful group since its major principle of inclusion seems to be influential or potentially influential leaders. It, more than any other organization, has a membership strategically placed in the ranks of the leadership of the government-like institutions and the major synagogues.

The American Jewish Congress is another organization of this type. Its history has followed exactly the reverse pattern of that of the Committee. It was founded with the intention of becoming a mass-based organization but has instead become the preserve of a self-selected group interested in a particular kind of civil-libertarian approach to Jewish communal affairs.

The second variety consists of mass-based organizations that remain widely open to all types of Jews but have not been able to develop the mass base they desire. The Zionist organizations in the United States (with the exception of Hadassah) are the principal examples of this group. They have not only fallen short of their basic aim but have also failed to develop an elite cadre that would place them in the first group.

Finally, there are the truly mass-based organizations of which two stand out: B’nai B’rith and Hadassah. These organizations, whose members number in the hundreds of thousands each, reach out to the lowest common denominator in the American Jewish community on one hand, while at the same time speaking for the most sophisticated and complex communal needs.

Special-interest institutions and organizations are what their name indicates. They reflect the multitude of special interests in the community, either by maintaining programs of their own or functioning to mobilize concern and support for the various programs conducted by the government-like institutions in the community by exerting pressure for their expansion, modification, or improvement. The number of special-interest organizations is well-nigh myriad and they cover the gamut of interests which any Jewish community could possibly possess. They perform the important functions of concentrating on specific issues and trying to raise those issues before the larger Jewish public on the one hand, and before the leaders and decision-makers of the Jewish community on the other. No one of these special-interest groups is likely to have a great deal of influence in the community as a whole, though some will be of decisive importance in those specific areas of interest in which they are involved. A whole host can wield some influence on communal decision-making, depending on the character of the interest they represent, the degree of sympathy it invokes as an interest among the decision-makers in the community, and the caliber of leadership attached to the special-interest group.

It should be noted that the description presented here is idealized to the extent that particular organizations and institutions have functions that overlap the categories. For historical reasons that relate to the evolution of the American Jewish community from discrete institutions, functions were assumed in unsystematic ways. Thus B’nai B’rith is responsible for welfare institutions and the Hillel Foundations because, at the time they were founded, no more appropriate organization was available to initiate, finance, or operate them. Today they are slowly being transferred to more appropriate communal bodies.

The patterns of decision-making in the American Jewish community must be traced in light of the foregoing four-fold
division which contributes so much to the shaping of the community's structural matrix. However it does not do so alone but only in combination with the territorial and non-territorial patterns of organization that inform the community.

**Territorial and Non-Territorial Organization**

The American Jewish community, like every Jewish community before it, is organized on a mixture of territorial and non-territorial bases. The territorial organizations are invariably the most comprehensive ones, charged with providing overall direction for the community as a whole or some otherwise fragmented segment of it, while the ideological, functional, and interest organizations generally touch the more personal aspects of Jewish life. One consequence of this has been that Jewish reformers in the United States seeking to improve the organization of the American Jewish community have constantly emphasized the need to strengthen territorial organization as against other kinds, while partisans of particular interests in the Jewish community have emphasized non-territorial forms of organization as the most appropriate forms in a voluntary community.

At the same time, because of the nature of the Jewish community, the territorial organizations rarely have fixed boundaries except by convention. Furthermore because ideological commitment in American Jewish life tends to be very weak, the ideological groupings have little internal strength of their own except insofar as they serve the interests of their members by taking on specific functional roles.

Ideologically based organizations have had more success on a countrywide basis where the absence of comprehensive territorial institutions has been marked until recently. Such countrywide organizations as developed prior to the 1930's became committed to specific ideological trends whether they were founded that way or not. However the impact of American life constantly serves to emphasize the territorial over the non-territorial elements wherever given half a chance and to reduce ideologically based organizations to functional specialists responsible for specific tasks. A major result of this has been to limit the powers of the countrywide organizations and to make the primary locus of decision-making for the American Jewish community local.

With the exception of a few institutions of higher education (and, once upon a time, a few specialized hospitals which are now non-sectarian), all Jewish religious, social, welfare, and educational institutions are local both in name and in fact. Some are casually federated on a supra-local basis but most are not, and those claiming national status with no local base soon find themselves without a constituency. Indeed, the major institutions of the American Jewish community—the federations and the synagogues—developed their countrywide bodies after their local institutions had become well-established. Among the organizations which have been built out of a national headquarters, the only ones that have succeeded are those which have been able to develop meaningful local operations under local leadership.

The three great synagogue movements which are conventionally viewed as the primary custodians of Jewish affiliation in the United States since the end of World War II are excellent cases in point. All are essentially federations of highly independent local congregations linked by relatively vague persuasional ties and a need for certain technical services such as professional placement, the organization of intercongregational youth programs, and the development of educational material. The federations function to provide the requisite emotional reinforcement of those ties and the desired services for their member units. They have almost no direct influence on crucial congregational policies and behavior except insofar as the congregations themselves choose to look to them as guides. Short of expulsion from the movement, they have no devices which they can use to exercise any authority they might claim even in those cases where the congregation was originally established by the parent movement (which is not the usual pattern but does occur). Once a congregation is established it becomes as independent as all the rest.

The other great countrywide institutions of American Jewry are similarly organized. The Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds is an equally loose confederation of hundreds of local Jewish federations which have emerged in the past four decades as the most powerful institutional forces in Jewish life. The role of the CJFWF is definitely tributary to that of its constituents who do not hesitate to give it direction. As in the case of the synagogue movements, the power of the national organization flows from its ability to provide services to the local affiliates, generate ideas for them, and manage the flow of professionals.

So, too, the National Jewish Welfare Board is the countrywide
service agency of the clearly autonomous local community centers, the American Association for Jewish Education is the service agency of the local bureaus of Jewish education plus the countrywide organizations that claim to have a major interest in Jewish education, and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council is the service agency of the local Jewish community-relations councils and the umbrella agency for the countrywide community-relations agencies and organizations. Exercise of these service functions brings with it a certain power which the professionals who staff the national agencies have developed in various ways, but it is a limited power, usually more visible at conferences than in the daily affairs of the local bodies. In recent years, the countrywide federations have been supplemented by even more loosely knit confederations of national bodies such as the Synagogue Council of America, a confederation of the major synagogue movements and, most recently, the Presidents' Conference, a loose league of the presidents of major Jewish organizations organized for "foreign-relations" purposes.

Whether the federative arrangements involved are of near-universal scope and have broad-based, multipurpose goals or are limited to single functions with rarely more than consultative or accreditation power, it is the consistent use of such arrangements that enables American Jewry to achieve any kind of structured communal unity at all. What emerges is not a single pyramidal structure, nor even one in which the "bottom" rules the "top" as in the case of Jewish communities with representative boards in other parts of the world. There is no "bottom" and no "top" except on a functional basis for specific purposes (if then). Thus it is the absence of hierarchy which is the first element to recognize in examining the decision-making process.

The Role of Functional Groupings

The institutions of the American Jewish community can properly be grouped into five spheres based primarily on function: 1) religious-congregational; 2) educational-cultural; 3) community relations; 4) communal-welfare; and 5) Israel-overseas. Decision-making in the community is organized accordingly.

Religious-Congregational Sphere: Even the synagogues can be seen as a functional grouping since American Jews' ideological commitment to a particular synagogue movement is very weak except at the extremes of Orthodoxy and Reform. In essence, they provide the immediately personal and interpersonal ritual-cum-social functions demanded by the community and do so primarily through individual congregations. They have an essential monopoly on those functions locally while the synagogue confederations, rabbinical associations, seminaries, and yeshivot maintain a parallel monopoly over the community's theological and ritual concerns countrywide.

Nationally, the three great synagogue confederations dominate the religious-congregational sphere. Over the years, each has expanded its scope and intensified its efforts on the American Jewish scene. In their common quest for an expanded role in American Jewish life, they have developed themselves into the Synagogue Council of America which, for a few years during the height of the "religious revival" of the 1950's, tried to capture the leading role as spokesman for American Jewry and which remains the Jewish religious counterpart to the national church bodies.

Each of the synagogue confederations has a seminary of its own which, because of its academic character, projects itself on the American Jewish scene in a quasi-independent way. Even with the growth of Judaic studies programs in academic institutions, these seminaries remain the backbone of organized Jewish scholarship in the United States. Their alumni lead the congregations of American Jewry and, through their rabbinical associations, link seminaries and the confederations. In addition, there are a growing number of yeshivot in New York and many of the other major Jewish communities that reflect the great growth and proliferation of the new ultra-Orthodox elements in the community. They preserve and extend traditional Jewish scholarship on a scale never before experienced in American Jewish history.

Since World War II, there has been an increased involvement of power centers outside of the United States in the religious-congregational spheres. The Israeli rabbinate is a growing force on the American scene by virtue of its role in deciding the personal status of individual Jews. In an age of jet travel between Israel and the Diaspora, such decisions have ramifications which reverberate throughout the Jewish world. In this connection, the Knesset is also acquiring influence in the religious-congregational sphere and, indeed, is the first "secular" body anywhere to do so, simply because of its central role in defining the question of "Who is a Jew?" in a setting where separation of "church" and state does not prevail.
The controlling power of the synagogue in the religious-congregational sphere means that a very large share of Jewish activity—involving perhaps half of the total revenue and expenditure of American Jewry—is managed outside of any communal decision-making system. American synagogues have traditionally considered themselves (and have been considered) to be private institutions, like clubs or fraternal lodges, accountable to no one but their own members for the decisions they make. This reflects their status in American law and has simply been carried over unquestioningly into Jewish communal affairs.

**Educational-Cultural Sphere:** The synagogues also play a major role in educational matters, having acquired that role after a contest of some forty years duration during which the non-synagogue schools were defeated in the struggle over who was to assume responsibility for elementary and secondary Jewish education. Today the great majority of Jewish Sunday and afternoon schools at the elementary level and a large number of those at the secondary level are housed in and controlled by synagogues. Synagogue control is so complete where it exists that we do not even have decent estimates of how much is spent on Jewish education since they do not make their budgets public.

Management of elementary and secondary Jewish education carried on outside of the synagogues is vested in three categories of institutions. There are a few surviving “seculular” schools, usually Yiddishist in orientation, managed by what are secularistic equivalents of congregations, that is to say, groups of families that carry out the same functions together that conventional congregations do, eliminating their overtly “religious” character. There are also some remnants of older non-congregational school systems, generally confined to serving the older neighborhoods. Finally, there are a handful of communal school systems, the largest of which are in Detroit, Minneapolis, and St. Paul, that function as the comprehensive educational arms of the Jewish community and dominate Jewish educational activity locally.

Aside from the latter, the only movement in Jewish elementary and secondary education outside of the synagogue that is growing is the day-school movement. Day schools, whether formally attached to some national “ideology” or not, tend to develop with communal support by default, though, because few communities have any well-defined way to deal with them, they are rarely tied to the central institutions of communal governance but remain nominally “private” schools that receive subsidization to some degree.

Central agencies of Jewish education in the larger Jewish communities do have some formal responsibility for developing curricula, setting professional standards and the like for the synagogue schools, and in some cases have acquired responsibility for directly managing secondary afternoon schools and colleges of Jewish studies. Occasionally, they even maintain “experimental schools” which usually provide such intensive supplementary Jewish education as exists in a given community. While their operational role is limited, they usually represent the only links between the synagogue educational programs and the central institutions of the local Jewish community.

Higher Jewish education is also divided into three segments, the colleges of Jewish studies, the seminaries and yeshivot, and the emerging Jewish-studies programs in general colleges and universities. The latter, whatever their name and format, are beginning to acquire a certain amount of importance within the overall scheme of Jewish education locally and are even beginning to affect the character and content of the traditional institutions of Jewish education. It would be wrong, however, to overestimate the importance of such programs—as against the seminaries and yeshivot—as sources of Jewish scholars or to view the colleges of Jewish studies as influences on local communal life.

If anything, Jewish educational activities are even more localized than the religious-congregational activities. The American Association for Jewish Education, the umbrella body for the central agencies and itself a confederation of local and national groups, is limited in the technical services it renders to studies of local needs and problems. The Orthodox day schools are somewhat more clearly linked to their countrywide bodies, particularly in the case of the Torah Umesorah schools. The Conservative day schools are linked formally to umbrella bodies which exist in name only and many such schools have no extra-community ties at all. The most important ties linking any Jewish schools are the professional associations linking Jewish educators. Increasingly, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds is becoming involved in the educational and cultural sphere in an attempt to develop some countrywide input, but its role must still be considered peripheral at this point.

Worldwide bodies involved in the educational-cultural arena
include the Jewish Agency, which represents the Zionist point of view and Israel's interests and which works most extensively in the realm of adult education and in linking Jewish students with Israel. The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, an international body with headquarters in New York, has become the most potent source of support for Jewish scholarly and cultural activities since its resources exceed those of any other institution on the scene.

Among the scholarly associations and research institutes, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and the American Jewish Historical Society are probably the most potent independent bodies actually engaged in projects and their activities are distinctly limited, if only because of monetary limitations. In general, these bodies are small, independent, and outside the mainstream of American Jewish life.

Except for the Jewish Publication Society and the small seminary and movement publication programs, publication is a private enterprise in American Jewish life. The JPS is the most significant publishing force on the American Jewish scene and the only one seriously linked with other institutions in the Jewish community. Only recently has the publication of Jewish books for profit expanded much beyond the textbook business.

What is important about the cultural activities of American Jewry is how peripheral they and those engaged in them are in the context of American Jewish public affairs. Since the cultural institutions do not even have the advantage of feeling needed by the decision-makers, as is true of Jewish education, and rarely have the prestige of Jewish academics in general universities, they are at a great disadvantage in a community that is not much oriented to scholarly or cultural concerns.

Community-Relations Sphere: Most major Jewish communities have a Jewish Community Relations Council which considers itself the central agency for handling community-relations problems. In addition, communities often have local offices or chapters of the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish War Veterans, and the Jewish Labor Committee that also engage in community-relations work, whether in cooperation with the Jewish Community Relations Council or independently. Indeed, the classic pictures of fragmentation in American Jewish life are usually drawn in regard to the community-relations field, and it was in that field that the most publicized countrywide efforts have been made to bring order out of chaos, beginning with the development of the National Community Relations Advisory Council in the 1940's. The latter is a confederation of independent agencies combining both local agencies and countrywide bodies in one common league. Of course it is limited in its role precisely because it is a confederation of what are powerful and independent bodies, each in its own right.

In the educational-cultural and religious-congregational spheres the situation is so structured that the many separate organizations engage in relatively little direct competition. In the community-relations sphere, on the other hand, the smaller number of separate organizations overlap one another because they deal with the same problem—often the same explicit issues. The effects of that competition are potentially great because they are directed toward "foreign affairs" matters, that is to say, matters that reach outside of the Jewish community and directly affect its relations with the larger world. Consequently, a considerable amount of self-policing and specialization has developed within the sphere in the past two decades.

The American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Congress, conventionally recognized as the "big three" in community-relations work, are the most centralized of all countrywide Jewish organizations. Their role in American Jewish life was once enhanced by their centralized structures at a time when the local Jewish communities were barely organized and the individual institutions within them were far too parochial to reach out to the general community. Today, their situation is reversed. Only those that have managed to decentralize are thriving. The American Jewish Congress, perhaps the most centralized among them, has not properly taken root on the local plane and as a result is suffering tremendously as a countrywide organization. The Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee began earlier to achieve substantial decentralization with greater success, though in both cases the national office still plays a very great role even in local activities.

More recently, the synagogue movements have attempted to enter the community-relations field as part of their drive toward dominance in American Jewish life. Bodies such as the Synagogue Council, the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, and the National Commission on Law and Public Affairs of the Orthodox movement reflect this. However, they still play a relatively limited role on the overall scene.

Increased American Jewish involvement in the concerns of the
Jewish people as a whole has sharpened the need for a communal voice that speaks as one, at least in the foreign-relations field. This, in turn, has led to the establishment of the Presidents' Conference, consisting of presidents of the major countrywide Jewish organizations who meet together to make policy decisions that the more institutionalized consultative bodies cannot. Since the Presidents' Conference must make all decisions unanimously, it is limited in the degree in which it can play an active role in its prescribed area, but it has brought some order at least in matters strictly pertaining to foreign relations. 

Since support and assistance for Israel have become key items on the community-relations agenda, the Israel government has become a prime mover in this sphere. Despite occasional protests to the contrary, official American Jewish action on behalf of Israel in the public-relations field is conducted in close consultation with and in response to the initiatives of the Israel authorities. In certain respects, Israel's role in the community-relations sphere may well be greater than its role in any other sphere of decision-making in the American Jewish community.

Communal-Welfare Sphere: The communal-welfare sphere has undergone the greatest change in the past generation. As late as the 1950's it was simply another functional grouping among several, considerably better organized internally; the various Jewish social service and welfare agencies plus the Jewish community centers had federated with one another a generation or more earlier. While the local federations had already expanded to include fund-raising for overseas needs, their pretensions to centrality in the community were limited by the fact, that on the domestic scene, they remained primarily concerned with the traditional social service functions.

By the end of the 1950's, the federations had been transformed into the major fund-raising bodies in the community and stood on the threshold of a whole new world of responsibilities. The latter transformation came as federations realized that proper execution of their role as allocating agencies necessitated greater involvement in community planning of a scope that at least touched all the activities defined as being communitywide in character in any given locality. At the same time, the old "German" leadership in the communal-welfare field was being broadened to include "Eastern European" elements as well, selected from the same income, occupational, and observance levels.

The decade of the 1960's saw the federations undertake community planning on a large scale, beyond that required for the simple allocation of funds. They also acquired greater responsibility for and interest in Jewish education as well as continuing and even deepening their relationships with their constituent social-service and welfare agencies. In the process, most made strong efforts to broaden their leadership base to include new segments of the community.

All this has served to enhance the central role of the federations locally and to give them the best—if not the unrivaled—claim to being the umbrella organizations. There is no question that the key to the growth of the power of the local federations is that they have become the major fund-raising bodies on the American scene. Even though money and influence are not necessarily correlated on a one-to-one basis, there is unquestionably a relationship between the two. Locally, as agencies become more dependent upon the federation for funds, they are more likely to be included in the ambit of federation planning and policy-making.

The same pattern has repeated itself on the countrywide plane though in a less clear-cut way. The difference is that the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds does not have the fund-raising power which the local federations have and consequently has no such monetary power to exercise over the parallel national associations. The Jewish Welfare Board, for example, is funded the way the CJFWF is—by grants from its local constituents and the local federations directly, thus limiting the possibilities of CJFWF influence on indirect grants. The national community-relations and religious organizations are even more independent.

A new addition to the communal-welfare scene is the Israeli element, the result of the large role played by the federations in raising funds for Israel's needs. The government of Israel has its special concerns in American Jewish life which it pursues in many ways, but is finding it increasingly advantageous to pursue within the context of the communal-welfare sphere. The Jewish Agency, particularly since its recent reconstitution, has virtually coopted the federation leadership as its "non-Zionist" representatives, creating an even tighter bond between the institutionalized representatives of the World Zionist movement and the American Jewish community than ever before. In both cases, the institutionalization of relationships is still in its incipient stages.

Israel-Overseas Sphere: This area is both the best organized and the best integrated of all the spheres. Integration here dates back to
World War I and the founding of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). In general, the sphere has two interlocking wings, one concerned with fund-raising and the other with political-cum-educational activity. Responsibilities for fund-raising are divided between the federations which handle the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) the Israel Bonds Organization, the Jewish National Fund, and the various “friends” of Israeli or overseas institutions. Political-cum-educational activities are conducted primarily through the Zionist organizations that are now at least nominally united (except for the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) into an American Zionist Federation, locally and countrywide.

Since the potentiality for competition among these organizations is great and the need to cooperate for the common good of Israel felt universally among them, a system of negotiated sharing has been developed through a network of agreements dividing the funds and/or the campaign arenas. The basic agreements are those reached nationally between the representatives of the federations working through the CJFWF and the UJA on an annual basis, dividing the funds raised in the local campaigns. A second agreement, between the UJA, the Israel Bond Organization, and the various “friends” groups more or less spells out their respective jurisdictions and claims to various methods of fund-raising. Thus Israel Bonds has a right to make synagogue appeals, while direct solicitation is a province of the UJA through the federations. The problem of cooperation among the Zionist organizations has consistently been more difficult. Since, with the exception of Hadassah and the ZOA, they are tied to the great “national” (read “worldwide”) Jewish Zionists parties that participate in the political life of Israel, they have been less than willing to cooperate on the local scene until very recently.

Naturally, the Israel-overseas sphere is substantially influenced by sources outside of the United States. The Israel government and the Jewish Agency take a very active role in the fund-raising process. Similarly, the Jewish National Fund and the Keren Hayesod become active participants both through the Jewish Agency and to some extent directly on the American scene as well. Aside from these Israel-based bodies, the JDC, the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training (ORT), and the Claims Conference are also involved in the worldwide activities of the Jewish people, both as beneficiaries and constituents of the American Jewish bodies functioning in the field. Their role has been of great significance in the postwar period. The JDC in particular has become the bearer of American Jewish “know-how” as well as money wherever there are Jewish communities in need of redevelopment.

BASIC DIVISIONS IN THE DECISION-MAKING ARENAS

Religious and Secular

The division between the “religious” and the “secular” developed out of the American milieu and was enhanced in the early days of the twentieth century by the relatively sharp division between those Jews who concerned themselves with their shuls and those who, while members of synagogues and temples, were really far more interested in welfare and community-relations activities which they saw as divorced from “religion” per se. This led to the rise of two separate groups of decision-makers. By their very nature, synagogues were localistic institutions, while the secular services became the province of the cosmopolitans.

Despite all the forces making for separation, the division could not and did not remain a hard and fast one. Indeed, it has been breaking down since the end of World War II. In the first place, there was the great expansion of those educational and cultural functions which could not be neatly divided between the two. Moreover, as the synagogues grew in power in the 1950’s and began to see themselves as the true custodians of American Jewish life, they began to claim authoritative roles in areas previously reserved to the “secular” side. Finally, the whole thrust of Jewish tradition militated against such a separation as artificially enforced. As those concerned with the “secular” side became more involved in Jewish life and began to see their services as functions that had a specifically Jewish content, they began to think of them as no less religious in the traditional Jewish sense than the functions of the synagogues. Nevertheless, while ideologically and functionally the lines between the two are weakening, structurally the separation
between "religious" and "secular" institutions remains as strong as ever.

**Public and Private**

While there is little conscious perception of the distinction between "public" and "private" (partly because there is some notion that vis-à-vis governmental activities all Jewish communal activities are private), nevertheless the activities sponsored or funded by the federations and their constituent agencies are implicitly understood to be the public activities of the American Jewish community. The argument for "communal responsibility" essentially has been an argument designed to define them in that manner.

Synagogues, on the other hand, have continued to be regarded as "private." Only in the last few years has this notion of the synagogues as private entities been questioned within Jewish communal circles, and then only privately, in a belated recognition of the fact that a congregation of 1,000-2,000 families, providing a range of services far beyond simple maintenance of the weekly and yearly prayer schedule, is not the same as a collection of twenty or forty men gathered together primarily for a minyan. In part, this recognition is a response to the synagogues' encroachment upon the traditionally communal sector. In part, it is also a reflection of the suburbanization of American Jewry whereby synagogues have become major centers of community activities in their respective suburbs—if not the only centers—and where movement of a major synagogue from one neighborhood to another affects the whole course of Jewish life within a particular locale.

"Cosmopolitans" and "Locals"

The "public-private" distinction as it is implicitly recognized in Jewish life today follows very much along the lines of the dichotomy between "cosmopolitans" and "locals" described by social scientists. Briefly, cosmopolitans are those who see the whole community as a single entity and maintain connections and involvements across all of it. While their cosmopolitanism is first defined in relation to a particular local community, once they develop a cosmopolitan outlook toward the local community, they almost invariably take a cosmopolitan view of the larger world of which that community is a part, as well. Locals, on the other hand, are those whose involvement and connections are confined to a small segment of the total community—a neighborhood, a particular social group or, in Jewish life, a particular synagogue, organization, or club. Their involvement rests overwhelmingly on their commitment to that point of attachment and does not extend to the community as a whole except indirectly. Moreover, their perceptions of the larger world are also quite limited, based as they are on their localistic involvements.

To a very real extent, this is a natural division in society. At the same time, all cosmopolitans have clearly localistic needs—to be tied to something more intimate than the community in the abstract, or even to a set of institutions which must inevitably be depersonalized to some degree. Similarly, locals can be mobilized for essentially cosmopolitan purposes when those purposes are made to strike home at the source of their involvement. Thus every community needs institutions devoted to serving both cosmopolitan and local needs as well as the local needs of cosmopolitans and the cosmopolitan needs of locals.

In the Jewish community, the organizations and agencies that fall within the federation family generally represent the cosmopolitan interest and consequently attract cosmopolitans to leadership positions within them. The synagogues, on the other hand, represent localistic needs and interests first and foremost. Indeed, that is their primary role (if one that is often neglected in the large contemporary American congregation). Consequently, the leadership they attract consists of a very high percentage of locals.

**Professionals and Volunteers**

The other major division among decision-makers in the American Jewish community is that between professional and voluntary leaders, with the professionals further subdivided into those whose training is obtained through religious institutions and those whose training is through secular ones. The American Jewish community has the most professionalized leadership of any in the world, probably the most of any in Jewish history. The roots of this undoubtedly lie in the commitment to professionalization which envelops the larger American society.

Today, the day-to-day business of the Jewish community is almost exclusively in the hands of professionals or, at the very least,
influence the appointment of voluntary leaders to particular committees, and the fact that they provide continuity in the life of the organization adds to their power. At the same time, some of the volunteers may indeed have special talents, capabilities, or positions, particularly political ones, which place them in very strategic positions within the organizations and give them major roles in the decision-making process hardly different from those of the professionals in those arenas where their talents, capabilities, or positions are useful. In fact, the process usually finds volunteers and professionals working in tandem on common problems with minimum conflict.

The sources of professional and volunteer leadership in the community themselves help to mark the division. By and large, the volunteers are recruited from among the wealthier elements associated with any particular function or institution. This is partly because the hierarchy of influence among the voluntary leadership is often set in terms of the size of their contributions and partly because the costs of playing a leadership role are such that only the well-to-do can afford the time and the money to do so. Aside from successful businessmen and professionals and perhaps young lawyers associated with law firms where there is a tradition of participation in Jewish communal life, the only people who can contribute the requisite time are academicians and they are limited by their inability to spend the money required to maintain an active role. Thus, willy-nilly, wealth becomes an important factor in determining the voluntary leadership.

This situation is not quite as stark as it seems. Obviously it is far less true in the case of small synagogues and clubs (the most localistic institutions of all) and most true in the case of the UJA. Even where wealth is of great importance, it does not function as the only measure of leadership. The wealthiest men are not necessarily the most important leaders. There is apparently some threshold of prosperity past which most men are relatively equal in the pursuit of leadership roles. A man of still modest means from the perspective of the very wealthy may choose to allocate a high proportion of his resources to the Jewish community and get recognized accordingly, while a man of very great means may not be willing to make such a major allocation and remains unrecognized accordingly. Moreover, beyond the willingness to give there must be a willingness to serve.
THE DECISION-MAKERS: THEIR ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

There are at least five categories of decision-makers functioning in the Jewish community today. Three of these are dominated by professionals: rabbis, communal workers, and Jewish educators. Two are dominated by lay personnel: congregational boards and volunteers. These categories, in turn, fall into two divisions: congregational decision-makers (rabbis, congregational boards) and communal decision-makers (communal workers, volunteers). (The educators, as we shall see, form a kind of class of their own.)

Congregational Decision-Makers

Rabbis: At the very least, rabbis function as decision-makers within their congregations, while the more talented, important, well-known or cosmopolitan among them are able to build upon their rabbinical roles to become decision-makers in the larger Jewish communal life as well. In general, rabbis tend to be restricted to their congregations or to their synagogue movements by the secular sector and by their own reluctance to venture outside of the arena in which their authority is rarely questioned.

It is very difficult for rabbis to shift roles when they leave the congregational setting, as they would have to do if they were to participate, say, in communal-welfare activities. There they would have to participate as if among equals, but with neither the special competence of professionals in the particular field nor with any claim to special recognition by virtue of their rabbinical positions. A relationship of equality in such a situation is uncomfortable for both sides, since neither knows how properly to respond to the other. Thus it is more convenient for a rabbi simply not to participate.

The field of education and culture however, is one area in which rabbis can participate fully. At the same time, rabbis are not especially eager to become professional leaders in this area for at least two reasons. First, Jewish education tends to enjoy a relatively low status in the eyes of the voluntary leaders who control their destinies as rabbis; second, American rabbis rarely have the training or the time to develop excellence in Jewish scholarship to a degree that would give them the kind of status they demand—and get—in the pulpit.

When the Jewish community was smaller, its leadership concentrated in fewer hands, and its functions (and finances) more limited, a few dynamic rabbis could rise to positions of communal eminence by dint of their virtuosity. None of those conditions prevails today and the virtuoso rabbi has gone the way of his secular counterpart. Another reason why rabbis are not found in the forefront of American Jewish leadership is that synagogues are essentially localistic institutions and rabbis, no matter how cosmopolitan in outlook, in order properly to maintain their congregational bases must adapt themselves to localistic needs and interests.

Congregational Boards: Since synagogues account for so much of Jewish activity in the United States today, the men and (in some instances) women who comprise the congregational boards of trustees must be considered important decision-makers, though they are rarely recognized as such. The lack of recognition stems from the fact that there are so many congregations in the United States, each a little empire in itself, controlling its own budget, hiring its own personnel, establishing its own programs, and building its own facilities with barely any reference to any outside body.

The congregations spend no less than $100 million a year and perhaps as much as $500 million. Nobody knows the exact figure, or even knows how to make a proper estimate. This is an amount of money equal to that contributed to the federations and the UJA in the very best years of their drives.

There are over 4,500 Jewish congregations in the United States according to the fragmentary figures available. Should the average size of the congregational board be ten members (probably an underestimate), this would mean that there are at least 45,000 congregational board members. In fact, the number is probably larger than that. When we add to the congregational boards the number of men who serve on congregational committees, the number of potential decision-makers increases even further and our knowledge of what they do and how they do it diminishes even more.

Every form of decision-making is to be found in the government of Jewish congregations in America, ranging from the
most autocratic, where one man decides all congregational policy, holds the rabbi in the palm of his hand, so to speak, hires, fires, and decides as he pleases on all issues, to situations where the most open forms of town-meeting democracy prevail and the congregation governs itself without the mediation of any board.

In the larger congregations, with boards of thirty or more, actual policy-making may be confined to an even smaller group. Assume that decision-making is shared among five people in each congregation—again, probably an underestimate. That means that there are still 20,000 significant decision-makers governing the synagogues of the United States, all of whom function within their respective congregations with minimal, if any, ties among congregations.

At this stage of our knowledge, it would be difficult to describe the “typical” congregational board member or even the typical congregational board. What unites them all is their essentially localistic commitment to the primary needs of their own particular congregations. It is rare to find a congregational board that, in its official capacity, will concern itself with the needs of the larger community, even when its members may, in other capacities, be the major communal leaders.

This fragmentation of outlook has great consequences for the community as a whole, particularly in the case of the largest congregations, those with membership of a thousand families or more. The consequences are obviously far less important in connection with congregations of fifty families. What is most important is that even congregations of medium size, whose actions are not likely to jolt the Jewish community as a whole in the manner of the largest ones, have a tremendous impact on the character of the community by virtue of their control over the education of their children.

Relations between rabbis and congregational boards obviously stand at the heart of the congregational decision-making process. While, again, the variety is great, three general models can be found. On one hand, the congregational board, or the dominant authority figure in the congregation, may simply dominate the rabbi, confining him to a role that involves conducting services and carrying out similar ritual chores. In some cases, rabbis are not even allowed to attend congregational board meetings. In other situations, the diametrically opposite condition prevails: the rabbi is so strong that he dominates the congregational board, which exists primarily to mediate between him and the congregation as a whole or to carry out his wishes in areas where he does not want to be directly or extensively involved. Finally, there is the situation which prevails more normally, where some kind of division of functions is worked out between the congregational leadership and the rabbi, with decision-making shared in certain relatively clear-cut areas.

Communal Decision-Makers

Communal Workers: Communal workers gain their power on the basis of either expertise or their day-to-day involvement with the problems of the community. Their technical knowledge and perennial availability give them important decision-making roles unless they are directly challenged by the voluntary leadership. This rarely happens because, in most cases, the voluntary leadership does not feel interested or competent enough to challenge them.

At the present time it is likely that the majority of Jewish communal workers are drawn from the social-work professions and have been trained as social workers, with legal training in second place. In relatively few cases were the senior civil servants of the Jewish community trained specifically for Jewish positions. In most cases they simply fell into such positions as a result of happenstance or circumstance. This is less true among the younger members where Jewish agencies, in an effort to overcome the personnel problem, have made some effort to recruit people and provide them with the resources needed to attend secular schools to get social-work training on condition that they then serve the agencies for a specified period of time.

For the most part, the communal workers are not well-grounded in traditional Jewish learning or even in rudimentary knowledge of Jewish history, law, society, or customs. Consequently, their deficiencies are most glaring when it comes to making decisions involving the Jewishness of their programs. Since their expertise in other respects tends to be among the very best available in the country, the contrast is rendered even sharper than it might otherwise be. This is not to say that many—or most—of them have not become seriously and sincerely interested in fostering the Jewish aspects of their work, but they are in a difficult position when it comes to translating attitudes into concrete programs.

Volunteers: We have almost no data on the voluntary leaders of the American Jewish community, but one thing that does mark them is
their relative wealth, although this is not the only criterion. They are very heavily confined to community-relations, communal-welfare, and Israel-overseas activity. Volunteers are a group for whom Jewish activity is a means of expressing Jewishness, no more and no less than synagogue worship or observance of Jewish tradition is for others. In effect, their activity becomes their religion, and their observance is conditioned by the demands of communal life. Some of them are involved in communal leadership primarily for the honor, but many others work as persistently as their professional counterparts for little recognition. Moreover, they expend large sums of money for the pleasure of participating.

Money and energy are thus key sources of such influence over decision-making as the volunteers have, although neither replaces talent when it comes to the actual decision-making process itself. Money may buy a man the presidency of an organization or agency. Energy may put a man in a leadership position, but some kind of talent is necessary if a person is actually to have a share in making decisions. This is true if only because of the role of the professionals in screening the advancement of the voluntary leadership.

In at least one area—that of fund-raising—volunteers are the dominant decision-makers. No matter how much professional help is provided, it is only the voluntary leadership—the men who give the money themselves—who are able to influence others to give money. Moreover, with respect to fund-raising they usually feel that they have as much expertise as any one else and therefore are less likely to defer to the ideas or demands of the professionals.

By and large, the volunteers are probably representative of the more Jewishly committed elements in the mainstream of the American Jewish community, this despite the fact that they are rarely elected to the offices they occupy in any meaningful sense of the term. (The elections, though not always formalities, are usually simply means of formally ratifying the choices of nominating committees and, even when contested, are rarely contested by candidates representing seriously different characteristics or points of view.) They are representatives 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.

Jewish Educators: Jewish educators are here considered apart from rabbis and communal workers because they generally pass through different forms of training and pursue different career lines. While some men trained as rabbis become Jewish educators, most of the educators are men who had decided upon Jewish education as a career before entering rabbinical school. It can fairly be said that the educators' decision-making role is confined to the sphere of Jewish education, that is to say, to schools or camps where they exercise authority as professionals. However, their authority is limited by various external factors. Chief among these are the problems inherent in Jewish education in the United States—namely, the ambivalence of parents regarding the amount of Jewish education they wish their children to acquire, the problems of obtaining qualified teachers and adequate financial support, and the fact that education is lodged in the synagogue whose leadership has other priorities.

Still, within this framework there is usually little interest in what the Jewish educators teach except on the part of the rabbi who may intervene to assure that "loyalty to the institution" is given the first priority. Beyond that, even the rabbis tend to pay little attention to the day-to-day operations of "their" schools. A Jewish educator who wishes may do more or less what he pleases in his school with little outside interference, provided he does not do anything that violates the Jewish communal consensus.

DECISION-MAKING TASKS AND MODES

The tasks to which the various categories of decision-makers address themselves are all ultimately geared to the question of Jewish survival. Given this overriding interest, the Jewish community's two most important concerns are defense and education.

Defense: The major defense concerns have changed radically within recent years. From the 1870's through the 1930's domestic anti-Semitism was the dominant defense concern of the community. Beginning with the 1930's, however, this was gradually replaced by efforts to defend Jews in other parts of the world. However, after 1948, Israel became the major focus of Jewish attention; and since 1967 particularly, insuring the survival of Israel has become the heart of the defense function of the American Jewish community.
Even the community-relations agencies are now spending a high proportion of their time and resources trying to increase support for Israel in the United States. As a result, the most important decision-makers in the community are those who are related to the defense of Israel, namely the federation and UJA leadership, voluntary and professional.

**Education**: Education is now being recognized as an equally essential concern. Meeting Jewish educational needs is a somewhat problematic matter for the community since it exposes all the ambivalences of contemporary Jewish life, creating a clash between the desire for survival as a people with the desire for full integration into the general society. Jewish education therefore requires a great measure of commitment to the notion that Jews are different and must educate their children to be different. All agree that Jewish education is important, but the character of the commitment is something else again. American Jewish education reflects all the ambiguities, and that is one reason why major decision-makers rarely play any real role in the educational field and why those who are professionally involved in Jewish education are not major decision-makers in the community.

Since these ambivalences are not easily overcome there is not likely to be any dramatic change in the foreseeable future although there has been a consistent and gradual increase in support for Jewish schools over the last twenty years. It is now clear that the major decision-makers are willing to provide some kind of “minimum base” support for Jewish education locally through the federations and their appropriate constituent agencies. This minimum base is progressively being defined upward but it remains a base line, not an aggressively advancing one. Moreover, the federations are discouraged from moving beyond the minimum by the unresolved division over control of Jewish education between the community as a whole and the individual synagogue.

**Social Services and Welfare**: The decision-makers who are most involved in this area have been losing importance on the communal scene. This is partly because the social services themselves have become progressively less Jewish in appearance, if not in fact, and partly because the rise of the welfare state has reduced their significance in American Jewish life. Jewish hospitals, for example, are now simply institutions sponsored by the Jewish community as one of its contributions to the welfare of American society as a whole. The Jewish community maintains its stake in such institutions partly because it is a customary way of making a contribution to the life of the general community, partly because it provides a bridge to other minority groups with whom the Jewish community wants to maintain good relations, and partly because there is some strong, if unspoken, sentiment in the Jewish community that it is well for Jews to have such institutions under their supervision “just in case.”

Pressures are also mounting for the social welfare agencies to give representation on their governing bodies to their non-Jewish clients. While most Jewish communities have resisted those pressures, the fact that the institutions are supported only partially from Jewish funds and heavily by United Fund and government contributions or grants makes it more difficult to hold the line.

Certain of the institutions which are presently considered to be within the social-service sphere are now seeking to broaden their interests, usually by moving into the area of education and culture as well. This is particularly true of the Jewish community centers whose social-service functions have been reduced as their educational and cultural functions have increased. Today some Jewish community centers often appear to be secular rivals of the synagogues.

**Finance**: Community finance is obviously a central task of the American Jewish community and the raising of money is a continuing and unrelenting activity. Indeed, such is its importance in determining the organization of Jewish communal life that from a strictly organizational point of view it may be considered the most important task of all.

Two major struggles have developed and have been essentially resolved in the area of fund-raising, both of which have had significant consequences for the organizational structure and the patterns of decision-making in the community. The first was the struggle within each locality as to whether or not to centralize the raising of funds for Jewish communal purposes. By and large, the decision has been to centralize fund-raising for all purposes other than those that fall within the religious-congregational sphere. This struggle led to the creation of the Jewish federations which by standing astride of general fund-raising have acquired the central decision-making role in the community.

The second struggle that took place was between local and
national organizations over who should be responsible for the raising of funds. The local organizations won the lion’s share of the victory, gaining control over fund-raising for even the most national and international purposes. This victory has substantially strengthened the power of the local communities in the overall framework of American Jewish life.

**Decision-Making Modes**

In the final analysis, what can we say about the decision-making modes of the American Jewish community? A number of modes may be identified. We will consider six of these: 1) the penchant for government by committee; 2) the urge to avoid conflict; 3) the legitimacy of tension between the “national office” and the “local affiliates”; 4) the patterns of “duplication” and inter-organizational competition; 5) the sources of innovation and the initiation of programs; and 6) the role of personalities in the decision-making process.

**Government by Committee:** The immediate organizational tool of decision-making in the American Jewish community is the committee. Committees—in all shapes, sizes, and forms—carry out all the variegated business of the community. The multiplicity of committees within organizations and institutions provides for a certain degree of diffusion of power among many decision-makers and something akin to an intra-institutional “checks and balances” system.

Power and influence accrue to those who can control the committees and their work. Personality conflicts may well be focused more sharply in committees but, then, the business of the community is conducted through committees, from the smallest synagogue to the President’s Conference (itself simply a high-level committee). Consequently, the dynamics of committee behavior are at least a partial factor in any decision taken by the leadership of the American Jewish community.

**Conflict Avoidance:** Despite the existence of conflict as part of life’s reality, conflict avoidance is a major principle in American Jewish decision-making. By and large, especially where voluntary leaders are involved, every effort is made to avoid open conflict. Where issues are such that they are likely to provoke conflict there is every tendency to avoid raising them in the first place. Where an issue is likely to provoke conflict and must be raised, every effort is made to develop a decision in such a way that there is no chance for the conflict to be expressed.

In part, this avoidance of conflict reflects the traditional desire of a minority to avoid any weakening of the ties that bind its members together. But, in part, it also reflects the fact that the voluntary leaders in the American Jewish community are overwhelmingly recruited from the world of business and commerce where open conflict is considered “bad form” and decisions are reached in such a way as to minimize the appearance of conflict if not its reality.

The desire to avoid open conflict clearly rules out some issues from consideration no matter how important they might be. It also enhances the role of the professional leadership since it enables them to administer the community rather than requiring the voluntary leaders to govern it. In such situations, the tendency is to rely upon the men trusted with the administration to make what still are, in the end, political decisions. Thus the professionals continue to gain power simply because they can organize decision-making in such a way as to minimize the emergence of conflict, thereby earning the appreciation of the voluntary leadership.

**Local Affiliates vs. the “National Office”:** One perennial conflict which is considered legitimate, provided that it is not allowed to spread beyond limited tactical skirmishes, is the tension between the “national office” and the local “affiliates”. In part, it reflects the simple difference in constituency and interest of the national office and the local affiliates or branches. In part, it reflects a difference in the situation between Jews in the New York metropolitan area with its particular set of problems and Jews in other smaller communities which have a different scale of operations.

This tension is a perennial one which, by its very nature, can never finally be resolved. But shifts do take place in the structure of the tension, and these bring about immediate changes in the community’s decision-making patterns. What can be said about the present situation, in general terms, is that those organizations which have traditionally been New York-centered are losing power in the community as a whole, while those whose locus of power is in the localities are gaining.

"Duplication” and Inter-Organizational Competition: Inter-organizational competition within the same sphere (duplication) is
Another perennial feature of the American Jewish scene, stemming from the voluntary and associational character of the community. The attack on duplication is part of the standard rhetoric of American Jewish community life. At the same time, competition itself is not always a negative phenomenon. Moreover, on the local plane, organizations functioning within the same sphere often develop patterns of sharing that effectively divide tasks so as to minimize overlapping. Duplication is not likely to disappear on the American Jewish scene nor even to be substantially reduced in the ways in which reformers usually suggest because there is no realistic way to curb the proliferation of organizations. When organizational consolidation does take place, it usually reflects a tightening of the organizational belt to cope with decline, a retreat rather than a step forward, such as in the case of the recent formation of the American Zionist Federation.

This is not to say that all efforts to control duplication reflect weakness. Within the sphere of community relations, for example, coordination came about at a time when the individual organizations were all flourishing. Furthermore, even though some of the same organizations are now doing poorly, they are not interested in consolidation. Rather they are redoubling their efforts to survive.

Recognition of the realities of interorganizational competition is not the same as condoning the semi-anarchy which prevails in some sectors of American Jewish life and which is justified in the name of a specious "pluralism" that is no more than a reflection of organizational self-interest. What is needed are better means of enhancing coordination and limiting harmful duplication in ways that are consonant with the American situation.

Innovation and Program Initiation: While decision-making in connection with established programs is more or less shared by the professional and voluntary leadership, innovation and program initiation are more often than not dominated by the professionals, if only because they are involved in organizational and institutional affairs on a day-to-day basis and are recognized as the custodians of programmatic expertise. Their positions, then, make them the initiators of a very high proportion of new activities and programs and the prime generators of new ideas. This is not to say that they are the only innovators and initiators; but there is no question that they bear a disproportionate share of the responsibility in these areas.

Personalities: The role of personalities in decision-making is not to be underestimated even though there have been substantial changes in this regard in recent years. Ironically, personality conflicts are particularly significant at the highest levels in the national organizations. Perhaps because they are so detached from operational responsibilities, the top leaders can indulge in the luxury of personality conflicts. In the local communities, operational necessities lead to greater efforts to control such conflicts.

Problems and Prospects

Despite the limitations of the data, it is not unfair to conclude that the American Jewish community is governed by what may be termed a "trusteeship of doers" in which decision-makers who are generally self-selected on the basis of their willingness to participate hold the reins of communal life in all of its facets. They perceive of their function as managing the community's affairs in trust for its members, the Jewish people as a whole, just as earlier generations of leaders saw themselves as managing the community's affairs as trustees of God. It is this sense of trusteeship which keeps the communal leadership from being an oligarchy, or a small body that manages the community for its own profit. Every significant Jewish interest has the right to claim a place in the trusteeship of doers and is accorded that place once it brings its claim to the attention of the appropriate leadership by "doing."

Although it is not elected in any systemically competitive manner, the trusteeship is representative of American Jewry in that it reflects the attitudes, values, and interests of the community—except perhaps in one respect: the leaders are probably more positively Jewish than the community's rank and file.

A trusteeship of doers seems to be the system that is fated for American Jewry and probably for any Jewish community living in a voluntaristic environment like the United States. Those modern Jewish communities which have experimented with communal elections have not found them any better a solution to the problem of representation, because the turnout in these elections tends to be extremely low. Moreover, a voting procedure does not guarantee the election of statesmen to communal leadership either. Elections have one important consequence, however. They raise to the top ranks of leadership men whose qualifications are not simply functional, in most cases these are men who have gained leadership
other locally or nationally as often suggested.

It is a common fallacy that a community of proper federal basis should conduct and manage the different activities of the present system. It is possible to make better determinations as to who should conduct and manage the different activities of the present system. However, the community afe considered to be a more complex and comprehensive form of the community. Hence, the community would form a major part of the basis of representation in the future. It is possible to accommodate those who are willing to work within which election conducted through the community.

If this could be accomplished, it might then be possible to work within which election conducted through the community. This is not a spirit in synecdoche or proper scale, provided that it is not a spirit in synecdoche or proper scale, provided that it is not a spirit in synecdoche or proper scale, provided that it is not a spirit in synecdoche or proper scale.

When the community is called for, then in an effort to make the election, the election must be conducted on the community. The election must be conducted on the community. The election must be conducted on the community. The election must be conducted on the community.