

experience? If so, what form should these services and/or activities take?

And finally, what specifically are the generational effects, if any, on the third generation?

At the inception of the writing of this article, our's was the only group for children of survivors offered in the Chicago area. In short order, our Center was able to offer four such groups, one of which is limited to college-age children of survivors. (Each of these four groups utilizes the staff mix described above). The observations shared with us by the other facilitators involved indicate that the themes, issues and concerns expressed within each group are common to them all. In spite of the fact that such support lends additional credibility to the suppositions and observations of the authors, there exists a blatant void regarding a systemized body of knowledge pertaining to the non-clinical population of children of survivors and the kinds of services that can be provided for them and by them.

We have gleaned much from our experience with the group personally as well as profes-

sionally. It has had a profound effect on our own feelings about the Holocaust, its survivors and their children. Our continued involvement during the past months with these individuals has served to strengthen and affirm our initial conviction that indeed children of survivors represent a unique group that deserves attention.

Intrinsic to any setting where the Holocaust becomes a direct or even indirect focus, there exists, at least to some degree, an aura of overwhelming gloom and gravity. In spite of the fact that many of our group sessions could be characterized in precisely that way, there also existed a sometimes nebulous but omnipresent sense of optimism. Children of survivors maintain a strong sense of humble pride not only because their parents survived physically, but because they survived with dignity, which our group members feel is attested to by their very existence.

You returned from Armageddon neither dehumanized nor defiled;

You chose to give me life!

I am your victory, I am your hope, I am your child.

## The Jewish Community Center — We May Not Be Unique But We Are Very Special\*

Harry Kosansky,

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*The role of the Centers in the future Jewish community may very well take on increased importance. Centers are the place where more Jews come to relate to more of their fellow Jews more consistently. Center services are more influenced by members than are the services of most other Jewish institutions.*

Every few years someone feels compelled, or someone compels us, to restate the function and roles of the Jewish community center within the Jewish community. Some view this as a professional imperative, for an ongoing reexamination of one's function is considered as in keeping with the highest standards of professional responsibility. Others view such an appraisal as an updating of the justification for the Center's existence. And still others approach it as an attempt to identify more clearly significant changes which either have occurred in recent times or which may be on the horizon and should be considered in the formulation of tomorrow's agenda of service to the Jewish community.

Such practice is a time-honoured tradition of our people, for in every generation Jews perceive themselves differently as Jews, their environment changes, their lifestyles, expectations of them, their interpretation of Jewish values, and the form of Jewish practices, all, change; and therefore the functions of Jewish institutions must also change in response.

When Moses formed the first Council of Elders, or the first group of leaders of thousands and then of hundreds, and then of tens, this may have been the first organizational structure uniquely Jewish. Ever since then there has been in our history a series of adaptations in organizational structure to cope with the changing times and the changing issues faced by the Jewish people.

The first need of a gathering place for our people was fulfilled in the *Ohel Moad*. From

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there it was modified to regional mini-centers, to the establishment of a major temple, to the formulation of local houses of worship, to the development of study academies, to synagogues, to organizations for the care of the traveller and then to the care of the sick, and down the line to the burial of the dead; the evolution from the counselling by the oracle to the counselling of the Rebbe and subsequently the social worker, and finally the conceptualization of a Jewish settlement house, the Y and now the Jewish community center. To think that we the Center were unique or alone when we came on the scene may be overstating our importance. To think of ourselves as something special and part of a total enterprise of Jewish communal structure is more in keeping with our understanding of how groups respond to their every-day changing needs and how groups design organizational structures to perpetuate themselves and ensure their survival.

The YM-YWHAs and similar associations came into being during the latter part of last century or early in this century when Jews were experiencing a change in their social order. The North American society to which Jews migrated was quite different from the society they left, and certainly the accustomed Jewish social order was non-existent. The early Centers were formed to provide a setting wherein a whole host of fraternal, social, cultural and leisure-time needs could be filled. They took on the function of helping the newly arrived to feel comfortable among themselves in their new environment, and to assist them in relating to the unfamiliar social and political

environment while at the same time helping them to maintain their identity as members of a Jewish group. For many it was a way-station in adaptation where they sifted what they wished to preserve and what they needed to acquire.

They made good use of these Centers; they used it as a community living room; in them they learned new skills; they learned and nursed new ideas; they found and became part of new movements. For others the Center was a place of retreat where they could feel comfortable with "their own" and experiment with the "American way of doing things" and explore different forms of self actualization.

This period, frequently referred to as the "Americanizing" period came to an end in the early 1940's. This work of the Center was assailed by some critics for having contributed to the assimilation of the Jew and to forces that were disintegrative of the Jewish community. For others the Center was viewed as the liberating force for so many Jews, for it provided a vehicle under legitimate Jewish auspices to aid them in their struggle to synthesize past tradition with new modes and new demands toward a different perception of themselves as Jews. To the former people, the Center was not a Jewish institution and to the latter it had become their new temple. Those who viewed the Center in negative terms tended themselves to be limited in adapting their Jewish past to a changing future, and those who viewed the Center as the forerunner to Elijah the Prophet were insufficiently conservative of basic Jewish elements of their past.

As the trauma experienced by world Jewry in the early 1940's began to be felt and with the renaissance of Jewish consciousness with the establishment of the State of Israel in the late 1940's reappraisal of the Center became the order of the day.

The Center that was newly emerging would be dedicated to, and work the more diligently, at helping Jews to become more Jewishly identified; at aiding in the fulfillment of a greater, more clearly identified Jewish

purpose. The major change in focus which came about was the shift from working with the needs and aspirations of individual Jews to the requirements and imperatives of Jewish group survival.

In both the former and the more recent years, the Centers were occupied with Jewish concerns, but different ones. Formerly the Center was occupied with helping Jews deal with cultural dislocation, find a new self and adjust to a new environment. Now, with the Jew relatively more secure in an already accustomed setting but at the expense of a diminution of his appreciation of the sustaining qualities of the Jewish past, the awful trauma of the European Holocaust revitalized his participation in a living Jewish dimension, and forged his membership in a more conscious and more directed Jewish group on the American scene. The Center continued to have responsibility for providing services required for personal satisfaction and adjustment, but added to this there would emerge a whole set of new involvements and undertakings designed to link that dislocated and relatively secure Jew to his past, to help him make the proper adjustment to the present, and to impress upon him the responsibility and the joy of maintaining the Jewish people into the future.

Everybody had his way of carrying out the additional responsibilities, and all these ways made their contribution to both the individual Jew and the group of Jews. We went through such silly debates over "what's Jewish about house basketball leagues," versus the profound contribution of gourmet Jewish cooking and of delicious Hanukah latka-making to the heightening of Jewish identification, when in reality they were both in some measure elements in Jewish survival. At present, we are discussing the same issues but we are attaching *Halachic* and *Aggadic* justification to the *Mitzva* of competition, and we are understanding latka-eating versus donut-eating on Hanukah in sociological and anthropological terms. Again both issues can be considered as contributing in some measure to Jewish survival.

Our philosophy and our agenda for the future might not be very much different from that of the past. What may very well be different may be the way we choose to justify our philosophy and interpret into new operational terms the agenda. For the foreseeable future we will continue to be multi-functional institutions, housed in handsome structures, subject to the requirements of efficient custodial and professional practices, and will be a stage for the controversy of whether one or the other services of the Center is Jewish or not.

We started out philosophically as the institution in the Jewish community which would be the meeting place for all Jews. We were caught up and allowed ourselves to be trapped into the controversy of whether we were for the affiliated or unaffiliated. When Jews came to us, as they come to us now, they choose the Center as their expression or as another of their expressions of affiliation with other Jews and a form of organized Jewish life. Jewish institutions don't determine who is defined as the affiliated and who is the unaffiliated, and have never been given the right certainly not by the Rebono Shel Olam to say who is better. All Jews from the time they are born until any such time as they wilfully determine not to be Jews are "affiliated."

Many people have enough of a dilemma defining affiliation and understanding it. Our concern should be to help the Jew express it, and our function as Jewish community centers should be to make ourselves available to those Jews who choose our particular institutions in which to express, work through, enjoy, better understand and share with others their particular Jewish interest, aspirations, enthusiasms or troubles. This in no way means to imply that the Jew who comes to the Center is that peripheral, misguided, unattached and unconcerned Jew. It does mean that as long as Centers are institutional extensions of the Jewish community, what goes on in our Centers are healthy and legitimate exercises and activities for Jews to practice, for they unquestionably contribute to the survival of our people.

"In the beginning" we saw the Center as the place for Jews to engage in a whole host of fraternal, social, cultural and leisure-time activities, and then we incorporated education, counselling, group decision-making, and social and political action; we will carry all of these roles with us as we move forward in dealing with tomorrow's Jewish community. One hopes that we will continue to retain in our table of contents health and physical education programs, the cultural arts, nursery schools, social development and skill-learning groups, camping, Jewish consciousness-raising experiences, service to all age groups and all the other important goodies we feel are important for Jews and which our communities have grown accustomed to and look forward to participate in within our Centers. If we do not continue to do these things, one of the special qualities about our Centers will be lost. For what we do brings together Jews from all corners of the Jewish community, provides an informal forum for the sharing of different points of view on both general and Jewish issues, and is the place where everyone is recognized as an equal and can better understand whatever inequalities he and others may possess. Our challenge is not to search for what the future will bring, but rather respond meaningfully to what the present demands.

Today the definition of the Jewish family, the demography of the Jewish community, the function of Jewish institutions, the individual and group practices of Jews are no longer the same as they were just a few short years ago. We know that the rate of divorce is going up; we know that there is movement of Jews from one part of the country to another, we know that single-parent families is a reality for many, we know that Jewish lifestyles such as the homosexual or the non-married cohabitative are being practiced in increasing numbers, we know that on the average our Jewish population is growing older, we know that synagogue attendance is on the decline, and we know that Jewish education is not enough to insure the permanence of the Jewish ethic and sense of belonging. We have some

hunches about the effects of many of these changing phenomena and some of us have developed some very good programs to deal with them. The test of the relevancy of today's and tomorrow's programs will be in how they deal with these changing patterns as well as in carrying over yesterday's worthwhile features.

The Center will continue to be a primary site where being Jewish and sweating Jewish can converge, where being physically fit and Jewishly fit can be maintained. The Center will be a primary setting for the practice of the arts and the expression of the Jewish arts, for helping people develop skills necessary to participate in social and political life—to develop more joyful social associations and more forceful political responses to both Jewish and general communal issues.

While he takes on more of the characteristics of the general society, the Jew may at the same time move more inwardly to his Jewish self and his Jewish group. He may view the seductions and the attractions of the general society as affording him comfort, happiness and excitement while he views his association with the Jewish society as being one of denial, of inadequacy, of persecution, of being irrelevant and imperfectly fulfilled. For that Jew, and there are many like him, it is necessary to cite Mannheim Shapiro's apt statement that "the Jewish communal need is a passionate love affair between American Jewry and the thousands of years of Jewish experience. Out of such a love will emerge that way of life of being Jewish in America which will both continue the line and give new strength for new conditions" Shapiro went on to add "the Jewish communal worker has the opportunity to serve as both Shadchanim and midwives in this mating and fruition."<sup>1</sup>

The Center may not have been the innovator of such things as the Purim Carnival, the Third Seder, the Sukkah contests and the

<sup>1</sup> Mannheim S. Shapiro "Appraisal of the Current Need of the American Jewish Community". *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. XL, No. 1 (1963).

March to Jerusalem Walkathon, but it surely did a great deal to firmly implant them on the American scene. Its task as much as the task of any other Jewish institution now is to enrich these experiences, to embellish old forms of Jewish merrymaking, to further develop Jewish happenings and add to the atmosphere "that doing Jewish" becomes the in-thing. We have a function to help Jews search out meaningful, colourful and authentic Jewish practices. The link-up with those thousands of years of Jewish experience will require more and more communal supports to help the individual Jew feel more left-in than left-out.

The new lifestyles of Jews and the increased mobility of Jews have brought about hosts of strangers in our midst. The automated and technological society in which we live have brought about anonymity. For many the extended family no longer exists and this has brought about loneliness. Children of divorced and separated parents may be laden with insecurity and children of single or widowed parents may manifest undue anxiety. Social relationships may not be the easiest for the single or widowed adult to form, and the non-married partners may choose voluntary separation from their immediate families or old established friendship groups. Because one has chosen or finds himself in any one of these situations is no indication that he no longer wishes to be part of the Jewish group. On the contrary, the organized Jewish groups have not been too hospitable to these people and only recently have we seen the beginnings of their acceptance and their inclusion into the mainstream of Jewish institutional life. While it is fair to state that Centers to date have done more than, or at least as much as, other Jewish institutions in welcoming and serving them, we still are on the threshold and in the exploratory stages of observing how these groups will accept us, and the degree to which our institutions will be comfortable in accepting them. Time is not on our side, for their numbers are growing and unless we aggressively seek them out or aggressively move our Centers to adapt to these changing constituencies, attrition

from our community will grow with them.

At the same time as we concern ourselves with the manifestation of the changing Jewish family and the broken Jewish family, more imaginative thought must be given and new program designs must be developed to the end of supporting maintenance of the traditional intact Jewish family. Counselling families in planning Jewish celebrations such as weddings, birth, barmitzvah, Pidyon Haben and even funerals should be as much of our function as counselling families on parent-child relations, marriage difficulties, early childhood growth and development, the selection of the right Jewish camp, and perhaps even planned Jewish parenthood for the purpose of increasing the Jewish birthrate.

Centers have continuously cherished the principle that members have a stake in *what* is being done, *how* it is being done, and *why* it is being done, and that the decisions governing these activities require the member's input and the Center's respect for his input. We have in our Centers a simple equation which states that people plus other people want to come together to share among themselves and with still others, to listen and to act and from such interrelations come respect, interest and understanding which further underpin planning, decision-making and sound distribution of agency resources—in ways that are responsive both to their own needs and to those of the thousands of their fellow members. When this route is traversed, nobody can say to anyone else, "I told you so" or "I know what is best," for in the process of getting there everyone has been involved in telling others and everyone came to know what is best. If there be merit to this equation as it is expressed within the Center, then the Center should attempt to expand this equation beyond and into the wider Jewish community so that more Jews can have more to say on the growing number of issues to be placed on the future Jewish communal agendas. Our pattern of leadership should be to liberate and free Jews to express themselves on Jewish issues, to restore a greater sense of responsibility to community,

and to safeguard the principle that Jewish institutions and issues belong to those who need it, want it, and who are searching for a way to work for it.

By and large Centers have had the ability to seek out and attract the appropriate lay leadership that was required through the changing phases of its existence. There, too, has been a constant flow of skillful and capable professionals who have staffed these agencies. As the Center evolved and as it adapted to the changing requirements of the community it served, lay structures were altered and staffing patterns were revised. We are now dealing with larger and more complex institutions that render more diverse services which are subject to more rapid change. These dynamics require lay and professional leaders who are both more specialized in some areas and who are also capable of being more fluid in their approach to fulfilling their overall respective responsibilities. Both leadership groups will be subjected to greater demands from Center participants and will be expected to be more knowledgeable of the community requirements. Lay leaders will be confronted with more sensitive and deeper soul-searching issues requiring policy formulations which are more elastic in some instances and more specific in others, but in both instances do express sincere commitment. The demands upon the professional leaders will be that they be more precise, decisive, efficient and skillful as they deal with the day-to-day operations of Centers and services to members.

Our Centers are housing multiplied specialized areas of work. Each added specialty brings with it a change in the composition of our staff, affects the make-up of our membership, disturbs the program schedules of our agencies and adds to the complexity of demands placed before lay leaders. There is no doubt that these specialized services have all emerged in response to identified needs. There is a limit to how specialized we can become and still retain an atmosphere of the ingathering of our folk. The extent to which we choose to become specialized should be limited

by the effect upon the preservation of the many unspecialized programs and by the relationship of these particular specialties to the core function of our Centers. The totality of our services—which is the sum of the traditional leisure-time services, the socialization and recreational services, the formal and informal teaching services, the Jewish experiential activities, the pursuit of the cultural arts service, the specialized preventative and rehabilitative services and whatever else may be included in the table of contents of any of our Centers—is governed by the physical and financial resources made available by members, consumers and community. Until these resources become unlimited we will be called upon to set priorities and make choices of what should be added, what should be substituted, what should be retained and what should be dropped from the Center manual. More and more it will be necessary to cull out what we consider to be our basic functions, and this may change from time to time. To make these decisions more difficult, as many other good institutions, we have developed over the years a reputation for quality workmanship in some of the “merchandise lines” we carry. If our profit incentiviveness is to continue to be the relevancy of our services, like all good enterprises we may have to discard something even at the height of its success, for there may be more pressing needs emerging on the horizon which we are uniquely designed to fulfill.

The same principle of choice will apply in determining the staff that will be needed, and the design of the staff structure. Today the staff of our Centers are different from what they were in years gone by and there is every reason to believe that staff with different training, different commitments and different

skills will be needed in the future. In addition to professional skills our staff of the future will be required to possess Jewish skills. If we are to deal more and more with Jewish behaviour, Jewish lifestyles, Jewish practices, Jewish issues, and Jewish communal events, our staff will be required to be more competent in these areas in order to give appropriate leadership, direction and “authoritative” teaching, for as we influence the evolutionary interpretation of Jewish halacha it should be done within the context of Jewish tradition and Jewish mission.

The changes which must and will take place will not be easy nor without conflict. Debate over the distribution of community funds will continue to rage and the “fair share” of the community dollar that will be requested by Centers may not be so ample in amount. Ongoing interpretation to community leaders of what the Center is all about will have to increase within the daily dialogues conducted at community planning forums.

The role of the Centers in the future Jewish community may very well take on increased importance. Centers are the place where more Jews come to relate to more of their fellow Jews more consistently. Center services are more influenced by members than are the services of most other Jewish institutions. Our system is one which provides a market place for diverse interests, points-of-view, likes and dislikes and for the fulfillment of diverse needs and aspirations. We provide a setting which is not bound by the holiness of tradition but rather is impelled to fulfill the commandment of relevancy to the evolving Jewish community. These dynamics present direction and conflict, but more important they present a sense of mission and a message that we may be needed more than ever before.

## On Working With the Agency Board: A Sometimes Neglected Skill\*

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*There are also a variety of opportunities within agency program and services to provide opportunity for laymen to experience them directly. The laymen should get a chance to “touch” the youth and see activities in vivo.*

One of the most vital roles of executives and sub-executives in Jewish communal agencies is serving as a secretariat, the professionals who staff the board of directors and its various committees. One of the unique aspects of American life is private social agencies and the boards of directors who, ideally, in a caring fashion, shape vital human services. How this special American creation works is largely dependent on the competence of the professional who staffs the board and the other lay bodies.

In the years of conducting institutes for executives and sub-executives on the subject of working with boards, I often will ask, “what is your first association when you hear the term, ‘board of directors?’” The response of participants invariably includes terms like, “Control,” “Hiring” and “Firing,” “Lack of Understanding,” “Policy Makers,” “Conservatives,” “Reactionaries,” “Cigar Smokers,” etc. These associations and perceptions suggest the presence of potential obstacles in effective use of professional self in working with those who are responsible for policy-setting.

It's been suggested that the professional's role with the agency's board of directors is analogous to that of a part-time group leader with the “Tigers Club.” There is one major difference, however. With the “Tigers Club,” the professional's concern is with the Tigers' meeting their individual and group needs. In working with the board or with one of its

committees, the main focus is on the lay body setting appropriate agency policy and is not on the people on the board or committee meeting personal needs. However, we must recognize that people do have needs for recognition, acceptance, being part of the group and exerting leadership. These needs must be met in the normal course of board and committee meetings. Without these psychic rewards or payoffs, people won't fully and freely give of themselves.

In essence, the board is a task-oriented group. Effective boards and their committees require people to volunteer their time and expertise in a responsible and mature fashion. They come to countless night meetings and give generously of their time. If the staff who work with these different policy units are not aware of lay people needing personal gratification from community work or if they are not aware of their own feelings towards lay people, professional effectiveness will be greatly hampered.

We strive to have a professional working relationship with boards and committees. If the professional self-image implies an *inferior* role in relation to lay people, rather than a *different* role, then professional effectiveness will be hampered and may view the coming of a committee meeting with the feeling, “dammit, I have a meeting coming up next week and I don't know what the agenda is going to be, what will we discuss?” We may develop anxiety about the meeting and unconsciously send out the notices late. Our follow-up or involvement of the people may be peripheral and we may rationalize the meeting as being educational since we have not allowed

\* Based on material that also went into a speech made to the Symposium on Practice of the National Association of Social Workers, San Diego, California, November, 1977.