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Ackerman, Walter. "Reforming Jewish Education", March 1995.

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## REFORMING JEWISH EDUCATION\*

A recent publication of the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) reports that "...many communities in recent years have been examining the roles, functions and service, and structure of their communal service bodies for Jewish education. In some communities, major changes in the mission, organization structure and funding of these institutions has been proposed and in some cases already implemented. At the same time, other communities are seeking to strengthen their existing communal service bodies or to establish new instrumentalities."<sup>1</sup>

An elaboration of that statement which a) describes the traditional functions of communal agencies for Jewish education, b) notes and tries to explain the reasons for the current review of those functions, and c) reports on the results of that examination can provide a useful framework for detailing developments in Jewish education in the United States since the start of the present decade.

Communal offices of Jewish education, variously known as a bureau, board or agency, are an institutional expression of the idea that the community bears a major responsibility and should play a significant role, not unlike municipal, state and federal governments in public education, in the complex process of transmitting Jewish culture, however defined, from one generation to another.<sup>2</sup> The first such agency - the Bureau of

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\* I gladly take this opportunity to thank colleagues all over the United States for their gracious response to my many requests for information and material regarding the work of the institutions with which they are associated. I am particularly indebted to Mark Gurvis, Managing Director of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, for his patient explanations of the work of the Continuity Commission of that community and for sharing with me his intimate knowledge of the process which led from the establishment of the Commission to the implementation of its recommendations.

Jewish Education of the Kehillah of New York City - was established in 1910. Judah Magnes and his associates in the leadership of the Kehillah thought the creation of the Bureau rather than direct grants to existing schools the most effective possible use of \$50,000 contributed by Jacob Schiff to the Kehillah for "the improvement and promoting of Jewish religious primary education in the city."<sup>3</sup> The program and activities of the New York Bureau forged a pattern which was the model for the work of similar agencies, subsequently established in cities all over the United States and Canada.<sup>4</sup>

These agencies worked mainly with schools. Only rarely were they involved with informal education - camps, youth groups, weekend retreats, trips to Israel. The concentration on formal schooling is easily explained: the literacy character of the Jewish religious tradition and the centrality of learning in that tradition leads inevitably to according the school and its "deliberate, systematic and sustained effort" pride of place among educational settings. Knowledge is the key to practice and the avenue of identification.

Over the years central agencies, particularly those in larger cities, have moved away from direct involvement with schools. Where once they expended resources on supervision, setting standards and evaluation, today they see themselves in a supportive role which provides resources and consultations to schools and other educational institutions. While some of them conduct schools - communal day schools or high schools and largely in smaller communities - most are involved in planning activities, gathering data, advocacy, professional growth programs, resource dissemination and services to teachers and principals.<sup>5</sup> The Association of Jewish Communal Education Agencies in North America, a recently organized group, defines its member bodies as the "...local community's hub for educational advocacy, central services, communication, planning and administration...[they] must work with all interested parties and across



denominational and disciplinary lines...the agency [is] the primary focus for the synthesis of theory, planning and practice in Jewish education."

Communal Talmudei Torah, when they existed, and later congregational mid-week afternoon and one-day-a-week schools have been the core constituency of bureaus, if for no other reason than that they are the overwhelming majority of Jewish schools in the United States. The growth of day schools challenged central agencies to develop new services and competencies.

Communal education agencies around the country are organized in different ways and occupy different places in the structure of the communal apparatus. In some places the educational arm of the community is an autonomous agency with its own independent board. In others it is a functional committee of the Federation; the degree of autonomy the agency enjoys under this arrangement varies from community to community.

Neither of these models is a considered conclusion drawn from the assumptions of either organizational or educational theory. By and large they are rooted in communal history and a skein of personal relationships. There is no evidence at all which indicates that one pattern, or a variant thereof, provides more effective delivery of services than the other.

Even though some communal educational agencies raise money on their own, their funding comes almost completely from the local federation and is subject to the demands of the allocation process. Despite this critical factor, federations have only rarely been involved in any meaningful way in the governance of the educational agency and even less in the practical aspects of its day to day work. Indeed the two often viewed one another, no matter the formal relationship between them, as belonging to two different, if not hostile, worlds. Recent developments in Jewish education, particularly on the level of policy and planning, have changed the patterns detailed here.

## II

In the last five years the organized Jewish community has accorded Jewish education, or perhaps more properly the task of keeping Jews within the fold, a prominence quite unmatched in the history of American Jewry. The findings of the National Jewish Population Survey of 1990<sup>6</sup> and its dismaying statistics of intermarriages rates are cited by many as the proximate cause of the new interest in education. The celebration of Jewish achievement in the United States, most markedly observed in Charles Silberman's A Certain People<sup>7</sup> was necessarily muted in the light of the increasingly large percentage of young Jewish people who chose to marry non-Jews and withdraw from Jewish life.

Now is the time

The wave of concern which washed over Jewish life in this country in the first half of the present decade had actually begun its flow several years earlier. The report of the Joint Federation/Plenum Commission on Jewish Continuity, published in 1988 at the conclusion of a process which had begun three years earlier in Cleveland, reflects the concern of a major Jewish community for its future - "Now that we are free to be Jews, how can we be sure that we will remain Jews, and what kind of Jews will we be." The Commission on the Jewish Future of Los Angeles, created in 1988, gave voice to a similar concern when it noted that "The primary motivations for the establishment of the Commission were the deeply troubling statistics as well as our awareness and concern that intermarriage is increasing at an alarming rate, that ever fewer Jewish children receive a Jewish education, [that] affiliation with Jewish religious and communal/philanthropic organizations is dropping and that the sense of identification with Jewish history, tradition, religion and community diminishes with each



generation."<sup>8</sup>

The Cleveland Commission on Jewish Continuity, generally considered the first of its kind, was convened in 1985 by the lay and professional leadership of the local federation "...to strengthen Jewish continuity and identity."<sup>9</sup> The primary goals of the commission were, among others, "To raise the level of consciousness, promote a community dialogue and serve as an advocate for programs that promote Jewish continuity ... To create an atmosphere conducive to the implementation of a sound program, including formal/informal educational strategy ... that uses an interdisciplinary, inter-agency approach and makes the best possible use of communal resources and expertise...[and] to help identify the financial resources for the implementation of these models."

The work of the Commission was guided by a number of assumptions, the most important of which is "... that we must recognize that traditional supplementary Jewish school education can no longer approach the unrealistic expectations of the past. Our community must refocus its efforts on strengthening the ability of each school and congregation to integrate parent and family education into the experience of each family that enters its doorway. We must integrate proven "beyond the classroom" education programs into each child's Jewish education experience. We must enhance the ability of our day schools to provide intensive Jewish educational experiences."<sup>10</sup> When translated into the language of practice, that statement was taken to mean that a) "the community must invest significantly to build a Jewish education profession; b) each child should have opportunities for educational experiences that provide a Jewish living environment...retreats, Israel trips, summer camps, and other 'beyond the classroom' programs and because Jewish schooling for children can succeed only if supported in the home environment, c) parents...need more tools and skills than their own childhood Jewish education afforded them ... if they are to represent Jewish values, attitudes and behaviors to their children."<sup>11</sup>

The major recommendations of the report of the Commission were formulated by three separate task forces - one dedicated to Beyond the Classroom Education, another charged with Parent and Family Education, and a third which dealt with personnel. Conceived as an integrated whole, the proposed initiatives included:\*

Cleveland Fellows -- The College of Jewish Studies will develop a graduate program in Jewish education for students from Cleveland and elsewhere. The faculty and students will be engaged in study, teaching, and program development, within congregations, schools, and agencies. They will raise the level and quality of the local field of Jewish education and lead to positive ramifications beyond Cleveland.

Fellows Graduates Positions -- The graduates of the Cleveland Fellows program will be hired to fill many of the new positions in new area mandated by the Commission on Jewish Continuity. The position will include congregational family educators, retreat specialists, master teachers, school directors, and others.

In-Service Education Package -- The Bureau of Jewish Education and College of Jewish Studies will develop a program of individualized professional growth and in-service education to guide teachers already working throughout the community.

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\* I give the descriptions of the programs as they appear in the report. I do so not only for their content but also to provide a sense of the rhetoric, an important part of the work of the Commission.



The Personal Growth Plan starts with individual teachers at their various levels of experience, knowledge, and commitment, and helps lead them to degrees, licensure, or other advances in professional preparation. In addition, the community will implement teacher and institutional stipends to encourage participation in teacher education programs.

IISP -- The Israel Incentive Savings Plan attracts 100 new enrollments each year. The potential for additional growth is tremendous. The community will now approach recruitment differently, targeting specific congregations and schools to develop school-based trips that go hand-in-hand with IISP enrollment. This should dramatically increase the number of Cleveland youth who will have an Israel experience. Also, the shares of funding by the family, the school, and the community will be increased to reflect the current cost of Israel trips.

Curriculum Renewal -- Many of the community's schools operate with out-dated or ineffective curriculum. Also, new family education, Israel studies, and "beyond the classroom" education programs should be integrated into school programs. The Bureau's pilot program, Project Curriculum Renewal, should be expanded to work with each school on this critical concern.

Congregational Enrichment Fund Expansion -- This fund has enabled the congregations to develop important new programs in recent years in the areas of parent and family education, and "beyond the classroom" education. Funding has decreased since the program was initiated in 1982. An expansion of funds is now recommended to enable congregations to increase programming.

The total cost of implementing the recommended programs over a four year period was estimated at \$5,687,422.<sup>12</sup>



Within a short time, communities all over the country initiated processes similar to that followed in Cleveland. Continuity, a term coined by deliberate choice\*, became a slogan not unlike others used so effectively by federations in fund raising campaigns. A survey conducted in 1993 among 158 Jewish communities elicited 67 responses; of this number, 42 reported that they "... had created a community wide planning process (whether through a special commission or task force or through the work of an ongoing body) on Jewish continuity, identity and/or education."<sup>13</sup> Among the issues identified by respondents we find "[the] ability to identify and reach the unaffiliated; avoiding duplication of efforts by congregations, agencies and institutions [and] reaching consensus regarding priorities and/or special initiatives (e.g. a community in which there was some feeling that there was too much emphasis on the Israel Experience)"<sup>14</sup>

The reports of the various commissions and committees are strikingly the same, not a surprise considering their provenance. An analysis of sixteen mission statements discloses that Jewish continuity means different things in different places.<sup>15</sup> In some communities continuity was equated with Jewish education, values and culture; in others it was comprehended as ensuring the vitality of the Jewish community; another group thought of it as promoting the Jewish identity of individuals. the content of the various reports is arguably less important than the process of deliberation they reflect. Hundreds of people all over the country were engaged in serious discussions about the maintenance of Jewish life. The participants were by and large already engaged in

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\* Private communication from a member of the Cleveland Commission. It was felt that a more evocative symbolic sign than education was needed in order to marshal the resources, both in personnel and finance, required by the proposed programs.

communal affairs. They were chosen ad hominum or served as institutional/organizational representatives.

The inclusionary character of the idea of continuity brought synagogues into the process, both as participants in determining policy and in planning and as beneficiaries of implementations. The Cleveland commission was a coalition of federation professionals and lay people of the Congregational Plenum, the organization of the city's synagogues. This is a departure from traditional federation practice; the new alliance was a breach in the wall which divided between "church and state." It was also a belated recognition of the fact that synagogues are where you find people, their children and the schools they attend.<sup>16</sup>

While I doubt that there is any direct connection, the documents produced by the various commissions call to mind reports dealing with public education in the United States which appeared in 1983. The best known of these was A Nation at Risk.<sup>17</sup> A consideration of the various reports raises issues pertinent to efforts to improve Jewish education - a tendency to underestimate the complexity of the educational process; the failure to involve teachers and other professional educators in the deliberative process; the need to maintain public interest and avoid disenchantment; the necessity of continual attention to the structure of the decision making process.<sup>18</sup>

The move from the determination of policy through planning and finally to implementation raises important questions of governance - who will oversee the new programs recommended and funded by a Continuity Commission? In some cities the task was assigned to the already existing communal agency for Jewish education. In others the central agency was reorganized and federation assumed a major role in its operation. Cleveland is an example of this approach; the Bureau of Jewish Education has been replaced by the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, an agency jointly



managed by a professional educator and a federation executive. The new entity was created in order to "institutionalize the work of the Commission on Jewish Continuity in the organizational life of the community." More specifically it was believed that federation involvement in the day to day details and management of the community's educational system would keep top leadership involved, guarantee the continuation of the planning process begun by the commission and facilitate coordination between the central educational Jewish agencies of the city.\* It is obvious that the federation has here taken on an operational responsibility for an educational agency - a new and sometimes controversial role.

The prodding of federations, sometimes bitterly resisted by long-time lay and professional supporters of bureaus, has led to the reorganization of central agencies in several cities. Striving for a more equitable distribution of community funding has led in Detroit to the replacement of the United Hebrew Schools, perhaps the only real communal system of education in the country, by the Agency for Jewish Education; the Chicago Board of Jewish Education is now the Community Foundation for Jewish Education; significant structural changes - all of them guaranteeing federation a prominent role - have also taken place in Baltimore and Atlanta.

The proposal for the reorganization of the Chicago Board of Jewish Education, long one of the country's leading central agencies, reflects a widely shared perception - "... we need a communal entity with the capacity to: lead a reassessment of the traditional supplementary school model; generate a sense of excitement about Jewish education in

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\* The reference is to the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies and the Jewish Community Center of Cleveland which together with the Bureau (now the JECC) are considered the major communal agencies. Note the parity given the JCC.

the community; create enthusiasm for Jewish involvement among students and their families; and attract top leadership and substantial new resources."<sup>19</sup> A change in structure and governance was deemed an essential condition for the attainment of these objectives, the difficulty of assessment notwithstanding.

The internal organization of the new bodies is less important than the functions they are assigned. The example of the proposals in Chicago is instructive: The new "Community Foundation for Jewish Education will be disassociated from operating responsibilities for Jewish education ... it will not be part of a delivery system ... although it may undertake experimental or demonstration projects." The traditional service activities of the Board will be transferred to other agencies. The new Foundation will engage in " ... coordinating events, ... planning and priority setting; constituency building (or advocacy for Jewish education) and the development of new sources of funds for Jewish education."<sup>20</sup> The plan of governance of the foundation includes a board consisting of representatives of the Board of Jewish Education, Chicago Federation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Jewish Federation of Chicago, the Midwest Region of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, and the Midwest Region of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Yet another model of implementation is the Jewish Continuity Commission of the New York U.J.A.-Federation established in 1993. An outcome of a Strategic Plan, the commission administers a Grants Program and is engaged in a major effort." ... to increase the number of teens participating in Israel Experience programs." During the 1994-95 year the Commission, a new entity with no formal connection to the New York Board of Jewish Education, will spend over \$900,000 for scholarships, strengthening marketing and partnerships with 39 congregations which seek to establish a "Gift of Israel" as the "gift of choice" for children and their families at Bar/Bat Mitzvah" The total budget for the agency for 1994-95 was 2.2 million. Twenty one grants were



awarded to enable " ... a number of institutions to undertake initiatives to strengthen (if not transform) themselves as settings for Jewish living and learning." Among the recipients of the grants were the Hillel Foundation at Hofstra University for an outreach initiative, the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York for the development of a Jewish Family Education Training Program, the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island for a five-year plan for varied programs designed to strengthen Jewish content throughout the Center, and the National Jewish Outreach Program to create opportunities in at least ten Hebrew schools for parents and children to study Hebrew simultaneously. The Commission directs its grants primarily toward institutions which serve the "marginally affiliated" - families with children, college students, singles and young adults and new Americans. It plans to develop a design for the assessment of the designated projects in order " ... to learn more about what is required to achieve institutional change."

What I have brought thus far permits the following summary and comments: \*

1. Problems and their solutions are defined by individuals with particular perspectives. Training, experience and the need to maintain position condition perspectives and determine reactions. The programs and shifts in organization I have discussed are all first order changes - they deal with what exists and ask only how it can be made more efficient and effective. Just as in public education, this approach draws its understandings from the concern with product in the corporate world. There is no indication in the hundreds of pages of reports, based on countless hours of discussion, that anyone questioned the assumptions

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\* Much of what I bring here is based on interviews with educators and federation executives in several cities.

of principles which guide educational efforts in the Jewish community today or seriously examined the possibility that the problems of our times can be solved, if at all, only by altering the way all those engaged in Jewish education conceive and perform their roles.

2. Jewish education in the United States today enjoys a level of interest and funding without parallel in the history of the American Jewish community. Both the

interest and the funding are fueled by the statistics of intermarriage and disaffiliation. The data have shaped educational strategies. The key words are identity and identification rather than Talmud Torah.

3. Jewish education is now comprehended in much broader terms than has been the case in the past. The perceived failures of the supplementary school - the standards of measurement are rarely defined - and the conviction that its work must be buttressed by "beyond the classroom" activities has raised informal education to a level of parity, if not higher, with formal schooling. One third of the grants distributed by the UJA Federation Jewish Continuity Commission of New York were awarded to programs in community centers. Jewish Family Education ranks high on the agenda; investments in camping and retreat programs create opportunities for providing youngsters with the experience of "Jewish living" unavailable in their homes; and above all, the Israel Experience - a tacit admission that the American Jewish community by itself is unable to guarantee an adequate quality of Jewish life.

Experiences calculated to enhance identification are very often without a normative base. The emphasis on active involvement in "forms of Jewish living," or at least as reflected in published documents, makes little mention of learning



as that term has been traditionally understood by Jews. One wonders about the intellectual baggage which will be carried by those whose relationship to Jews and Jewishness was formed "beyond the classroom."

There is now a new configuration of Jewish education; institutions not previously considered educational - or at least not seriously so - are now part of a network of agencies that are expected to interact with one another and with the larger Jewish community. Within that broadened framework, school people and others associated with formal education are no longer the sole educational authorities of the community. That change in status has not been easily assimilated. More than that, the call for "reform" implies that those charged with certain educational responsibilities have not met communal expectations. Continuity commissions and their counterparts that have not involved school people in their deliberations, as is the case in several communities, have done little to enhance the status of the profession, a step considered critical to renewal.

4. The reorganization of the structure of Jewish education, as distinct from the work of line units like schools, community centers and camps, is driven by federations. While federation interest, advocacy and support of Jewish education is welcomed in all quarters - no one would deny the incomparable ability of a federation to galvanize an entire community - its more active involvement in the day to day activities of communal educational agencies has spawned a literature of concern, and even complaint.

There is a history of antagonism between federation loyalists, professional and lay alike, and Jewish education professionals, increasingly and today almost completely associated with religious institutions. Together with the feeling of never having been adequately appreciated and funded by federations, Jewish

educators remember the agencies principled, and often unreasonable opposition to day schools and the use of communal funds to support them. Significant changes in postures and shifts in patterns of allocation have not entirely erased notions which claim that federations are more interested in hospitals than in schools and that many of the activities they support contribute little to maintaining Jewish life. Indeed some arguments maintain that the emphasis on informal education is less an outcome of empirical evidence of their effectiveness and more an attempt by federations to highlight the area of their expertise and maintain control.

Federation involvement in education has also given rise to discussions about "organizational cultures." There are those who fear that the purposes, attitudes, values, language and behaviors of federations clash with those of educational institutions, particularly when those are embedded in the life of a synagogue community. They each have different goals and serve a different kind of clientele - givens which condition internal priorities and external postures. Federations are primarily concerned with providing goods and services for Jews; educational institutions are dedicated to "... creating communities of Jewish learning."<sup>21</sup> The functions of federations require compromise and consensus; the purpose of education in a free, democratic society is to motivate autonomy. These differences will neither change nor disappear; the task is rather that of forging patterns of contact and cooperation which use the strengths of each to create new opportunities for educating.

5. The "continuity process" has, at least in intention, challenged the assumption that the communal structure, as represented by federations and the synagogue world are two separate domains.<sup>22</sup> The recognition that "... Jewish continuity is inextricably tied to Jewish religion and spirituality and that congregations must



be part of the process through which we address challenges"<sup>23</sup> has gained ground and changed the landscape of communal activity in education. The commission in Cleveland was a joint effort of federation and the Congregational Plenum; five congregations were among the beneficiaries of grants in New York.

The emerging relationship between federation and synagogues lends credence to the position which holds that " ... effective education takes place in settings where ideological references are strongly expressed in practice and life style. One cannot have effective Jewish education without denominational perspectives which provide a base for induction"<sup>24</sup> At the same time, religious bodies fear that newly available funding will be used primarily to support Jewish educational programs sponsored and directed by federations.

6. It is not clear that communities around the country have devoted sufficient attention to developing criteria which order priorities. The increase in the variety of educational settings eligible for communal funding does not mean that all of them are equally capable of achieving desired outcomes. Some knowledgeable observers question the wisdom of investments in programs for the marginally affiliated or outreach activity in the direction of those not at all connected. They maintain that "pay-offs" are more likely when resources are applied to those already committed.

The minutes of a meeting in one community are instructive:

*Weiss (Orthodox):* Why are we doing this prioritizing? What does voting on priorities mean? Does it mean how dollars will be spent? Or does it just mean how things are valued? For example, trips to Israel, which everyone valued high, versus day schools. Trips to

Israel might be valued high, but that doesn't mean that a great deal of money should be spent on them.

*Yitzchak Weinstein (an educator):* Note the emphasis on the word *schooling*. this is formal education. Then there is also communal education. And informal education ... isn't Israel a school in itself? All three - schooling, communal and informal - should be integrated. Let's deal with these issues by going through specific recommendations...

*Jerome Orenstein (a traditional religious non-Orthodox leader):* I think there is a continuum, formal and informal. One is not more important than the other. The valuation here is that all are equal.

*Silver (chair):* Don't worry about money yet.

*Weiss [to those around him]:* But that's what it is all about.

*Silver [he reads]:* "Increase salaries and benefits": day schools will come in with a proposal that fits in. But there could be someone defined as a teacher at the Jewish Community Center.

*Hammerman (Orthodox):* Formal and informal education are not the ends of a continuum. They are different.

*Silver:* Let's avoid dividing up into formal and informal. Doing that would lead to conflict, no decision, no consensus....<sup>25</sup>

7. The goals of the continuity process are all too often too broadly stated. There is no way of ever "knowing" whether or not they have been achieved. At the same time there is in some places a naive expectation of immediately visible results - "After all the money we've put into that place, why doesn't my grandchild like Hebrew school?" Goals should be formulated in a manner which permits measurement and the identification of the effects of an intervention.



### III

An account of developments in Jewish education in the United States today must consider the increasingly visible role played by private family foundations. One observer estimates that Jewish sponsored foundations in this country spin off approximately \$500 million a year.<sup>26</sup> There is even a suggestion that " ... within a few years the total amount of money given away by endowment funds and family foundations will exceed the total dollar amount from the annual campaigns of federations."<sup>27</sup>

Private foundations, an expression of the volunteerism deTocqueville found so impressive and also of the Protestant ethic of stewardship, play an important role in American society. That example, together with the Jewish tradition of *Tzedakah*, guaranteed the creation of Jewish family foundations once sufficient wealth had been accumulated. Critics of private foundations complain that they are capable of influencing public policy without paying the price of accountability. The truth of that charge must be weighed against the fact that the freedom enjoyed by foundations permits risk-taking and a margin for experimentation and innovation not easily matched by established institutions tied to the consensus policies of communal funding. A student of American philanthropic foundations wisely notes that "The only total mistakes which a foundation can make are in its investment policy, not in its granting policy..."<sup>28</sup>

It is , of course, impossible to list here all those foundations which award grants to educators and educational institutions or to list the activities they support. Several of them, however, have achieved a special prominence. The Crown Family Foundation, for example, working together with JESNA, which administers the program, has established the Covenant Awards and Grants. The Awards go to individual educators in recognition of "excellence, effectiveness and creativity". A member of the family describes the purpose of the awards in less official terms: " ... to locate talent and provide it with some venture capital or a little time in the limelight and some breathing space and mobility."<sup>29</sup> The grants are made available to institutions " ... to provide seed funding...to develop and implement significant and cost effective approaches to Jewish education that are potentially replicable..." The program receives as many as 400 proposals a year.

The configuration of Jewish education has been altered also by the work of two other foundations. The Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program is dedicated to attracting " ... promising men and women into professional leadership careers in Jewish education, Jewish communal service, the rabbinate and cantorate and Jewish studies. The Fellowships cover all tuition costs and fees of the schools of choice and also provide annual stipends. At this point we do not know whether the program has attracted young people previously not committed to careers in the Jewish "civil service" or whether it serves those who have already made the choice. The Wexner Foundation also provides institutional grants for graduate professional schools and training programs in order to " ... stimulate improvement in the core curricula of those institutions which train professionals "for service in the Jewish community. The Foundation ..." particularly wishes to encourage more effective communication among the various denominations and professional groups within the organized Jewish community." Grants may amount to as much as \$75,000 a year for a minimum of three years.



The decision of the Wexner Foundation to concentrate its efforts in one area - leadership for the Jewish community - is intended to avoid the dangers of "scatterization" - the dilution of effect which results when relatively small sums of money are awarded to a large number of individuals and institutions that lack any evident connection with one another. That same policy has been followed by the Bronfman family which believes that " ... if you want to change something, you'd better narrow your focus ... get down to something that you really can accomplish."<sup>30</sup> The CBR Foundation has made the Israel Experience its primary focus and in addition to the summer program in Israel which it operates, the foundation is a major factor in efforts to reach an exponential increase in the number of young people who will spend time in the Jewish state as an integral part of their Jewish education.

The Israel Experience, whether sponsored by local institutions and agencies working together with national organizations and offices in Israel or "sold" by private entrepreneurs has gained a prominent place on the map of Jewish education. I will not here attempt an analysis of its educational significance. I will, however, note that the expectations of transformation attached to programs in Israel are sometimes unrealistic.

While the foundations I have mentioned thus far are interested in changing American Jewish education, they have chosen to work through individuals and single institutions, or a consortium of institutions, without addressing themselves to systemic issues. The Mandel Associated Foundations has chosen a different role. From the convening of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, together with the Jewish Welfare Board and JESNA in collaboration with the Council of Jewish Federations, to the activities of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE), a product of the deliberations of the Commission,<sup>31</sup> the foundation has addressed itself to developing a strategic design for the systemic change of Jewish education. The areas of CIJE concern - building the profession of Jewish education, mobilizing community support, designing

curricula and instructional materials and developing a research capacity - are testimony to the broad scope of the undertaking.

The Lead Community project is the major CIJE activity to date. It is an interesting and instructive example of the way in which an independent agency, unrelated in any formal way to communal organizations nor constrained by their investment in what is, can mobilize an entire community in the name of Jewish education.<sup>32</sup> The project also demonstrates the ways in which goodwill and influence rather than authority work in a voluntary system.

Aided by the support and consultation services provided by CIJE, the three lead communities - Atlanta, Baltimore and Milwaukee - were chosen from among 23 applicants - are intended to provide an example of " ... what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, when the importance of Jewish education is recognized by the community and its leadership, and when the necessary funds are secured to meet additional costs." The design of the project requires that each community articulate communal goals for education and develop pilot programs which will be monitored and evaluated. One of the major functions of CIJE is to disseminate the information gained from the work of the Lead Communities and to encourage the replication of these efforts in other places. Indeed the publications of CIJE to date<sup>33</sup> are already an important contribution. The entire enterprise is guided by the assumptions that systemic change requires a community wide effort rather than innovations in individual programs and institutions.

The work plan of CIJE calls to mind the activities of the Fund for the Advancement of education established by the Ford Foundation in 1951. During the 16 years of its existence the fund disbursed more than 70 million dollars. Conceiving of itself as a source of "risk capital" to be used in trying out new approaches to public education, the



fund chose three areas of concentration: improving the quality of educational personnel, improving the quality of educational programs and improving the relationships between educational institutions and society. The press release of April 30, 1967 which announced the conclusion of the program of the Fund and the integration of its activities with those of the Ford Foundation state that " ... the Fund has sought to encourage practical and effective change in the form of new and better educational practices. It has had the satisfaction of seeing ideas which it assisted on a pilot basis widely adopted in the schools and colleges. Team teaching, use of teacher aides, institutional television, programmed learning, new methods of preparing teachers, cooperative work study programs, early childhood education and enrichment of school programs in deprived areas are examples ... the Foundation itself will keep open wide the door and keep strong the hand of support for good ideas to advance education and for the imaginative people to strengthen education.<sup>34</sup>

It is still too soon to assess the impact of the efforts of CIJE; that is the case also regarding the efforts of the other foundations. Graduates of the Wexner Fellowship programs have not yet been in the field long enough to permit judgement; in any event it will be difficult to tease out the influence of the financial aid and participation in the programs and seminars sponsored by the foundation itself. We have no record of the long term effects of the projects funded by the Covenant grants. It is important to realize that there are some things we will never know; the very rightness of the intention which accompanies the support should supply sufficient warrant for its continuation. We can say that the generosity of the foundations has inspired imaginative efforts and a great deal of thought about how to do Jewish education. The art of writing a proposal creates opportunities for the kind of reflection without which education cannot rise above the ordinary.

#### IV

The consensus regarding the importance of the recruiting, training and retention of talented young people for the field of Jewish education turns attention to training institutions. The Wexner Foundation, the Covenant Grants and the CIJE committee for "Building the Profession" have all recognized their importance. A variety of programs are planned to strengthen their faculties, enrich their programs and augment their training capability. The recent gift of \$15,000,000 to the Jewish Theological Seminary for its School of Education is perhaps a breakthrough which will encourage contributions to other schools.

The traditional training role of teachers colleges, Colleges of Jewish Studies and the schools of education of rabbinical seminaries has recently been modified by an initiative undertaken by the Rhea Hirsch School of Education of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles in cooperation with the Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the help of the Cummings Foundation. The Experiment in Congregational Education is an effort to encourage a small number of Reform congregations " ... to rethink and restructure the full range of their educational programs as they affect all age groups. Its ultimate goal is to widen the definition of education in the congregational setting and to assist congregations in their efforts to transform themselves into learning communities." The assumption of the experiment is that the bifurcation which separates the school from the rest of the congregation and its activities is an obstacle to educational effectiveness which must be removed. It is not my purpose here to discuss the details of the program. The point is to note a major departure from a traditional role. A training institution has moved out of a narrow frame and moved into the field in order to effect a radical change



in the institutions to which it sends its graduates.

A similar purpose informs the work of the Cleveland Fellows, a program of the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies initiated and funded by the community's Continuity Commission. Participants in the program are trained as family educators and mainly work in congregational settings both during and after the completion of their studies. While not as elaborate as the Experiment in Congregational Education in either design or implementation, the Cleveland Fellows Program seeks also to make learning the business of the entire congregation.

Discussions about the role of the training institutions make but passing mention of their place and function in the development in a research capability of the service of Jewish education. While research in general education has much to teach us and can provide paradigms of inquiry, the particular demands of Jewish education warrant a particularistic effort. Broadening the area of their activities to include research will enhance the academic stature of the training institutions and brighten the image of the profession.

## V

I have elsewhere dealt with the organization and structure of Jewish education in North America.<sup>35</sup> This paper is a complement to that earlier work. As before, I have not dealt with schools; they require a separate effort. I have here tried to deal with developments which seem to me central to the maintenance and enhancement of the educational enterprise of the organized Jewish community. Continuity commissions, foundations

and training institutions in different measure and in different ways have forged a new configuration of Jewish education. The new pattern is an effort to change and improve what exists - particularly the supplementary congregational school. Its weave is a combination of rhetoric and resource which is more evocative and plentiful than what has been available to previous attempts to raise public consciousness and enlist material support for Jewish schooling and other educational activities. Whether or not it will achieve more or better than its predecessors remains to be seen.

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