

broader society. But if we dare to examine our Judaism and our Jewish institutions, if we update some of our Jewish traditional practices so that they are in harmony with the late twentieth century, if we reexamine and change our

Jewish denominational and community organizational patterns to respond to today's Jewish woman who is asking for full participation, we will be contributing to an enriched personal Jewish life and to a stronger Jewish community.

Opening Opportunities for Women in Jewish Communal Service*

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Panelists from each field (of Jewish Communal Service) confirmed that while there are considerable impediments to the progress of women into specific top level positions . . . there are fine opportunities; . . . the consciousness-raising brought on by the women's movement must not be regarded as a threat to Jewish communal life. . .

THE Women's Movement has begun to have its impact on various aspects of Jewish communal life. There is hardly a Jewish forum where some theological, ideological, psychological or practical reassessment of the condition of the contemporary Jewish woman or of her relationship with her own people does not take place. Challenging questions regarding equal access to Torah, differential treatment in the synagogue, limitations on exercise of power and the harmful effects of negative stereotype are beginning to be hurled with vehemence. Jewishly concerned young feminists decry the limitations on the full development of other human potential and on the enhancement of Jewish communal life through courageous change in the role and status of women.

Yet, despite these growing interests in the evolving role of the woman in the Jewish community, little discussion has been generated about the professional status of women and the opportunities open to them in Jewish communal service. A recent inquiry into current practice in seven fields, which represent the constituent member groups of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, has revealed that, while many women have attained positions of con-

siderable responsibility in their respective fields, few have achieved top echelon posts in agencies, institutions and organizations.

An ad-hoc NCJCS committee, formed in Philadelphia in 1973, was instrumental in passing a resolution on "Opening Opportunities to Women in Jewish Communal Service" at San Francisco in 1974. In 1975, having attained permanent status in the Conference, the NCJCS committee on Women attempted to focus more concretely upon the professional positions held by persons of achievement, who happen to be women, in the Jewish communal service profession.

Leading professionals, in each of the groups associated with the conference, were invited to share their impressions of the current conditions of women in their agencies, identify areas of inequity and point out the impediments to their progress, where such exist. The groups approached were the Association of Jewish Community Organization Personnel (AJCOP), the Association of Jewish Community Relations Workers (AJCRW), Association of Jewish Center Workers (AJCW), National Association of Jewish Family, Children's and Health Services (NAJFCHS), National Association of Jewish Homes for the Aged (NAJHA), National Association of Synagogue Administrators (NASA), National Council for Jewish Education (NCJE), and Jewish Vocational and Re-

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habilitation Services (JVRS). Fifty letters were sent to men and women holding key positions. Thirty-five thoughtful and substantive replies were received.[†] Three basic questions were posed:

- What is the status of women in your specific field of service, within the organized Jewish community, and what has led to this condition?
- What is the current practice with respect to hiring, promotional opportunities, salary differentials or special treatment of women in your field, in comparison with other areas of Jewish communal service, and the professions generally?
- What recommendations do you have to help rectify unjust situations, if such exist?

AJCOP

The replies to these questions from Federation executives, affiliated with the Association of Jewish Community Organization Personnel indicated that very few women have reached the position of Executive Director in a Federation. Those who have reached that level have done so in very small communities. Top women executives have been found in secondary positions only. While in some Federations women hold top jobs, such as Planning Director, Comptroller, Fund-raiser, Personnel Manager, most women serve in supportive roles to the male executive.

Among the realistic factors responsible for this condition, the following were cited:

- Women have not sought top professional leadership on the assumption that such posts were closed to them. "It is women's timidity or reluctance to work under conditions of severe pressure, rather than discrimination on the basis of sex, that has kept them out of these positions," was one assertion.

[†] See appendix for complete listing of those who replied.

—As long as Federation leadership is largely in the hands of men, who tend to carry over prejudicial attitudes from the business world in dealing with women professionals, this situation is not likely to change. "As changes occur in the general society, the field of Jewish communal service will benefit as well," another stated.

—While more and more women have been gaining access to decision making power in Boards of Federations, these women, by and large, "are not as hospitable as one would expect to the idea of a woman in the position of Federation Executive Director," yet another maintained.

Most of the respondents in this group felt that leadership in the Jewish community must not wait for general social change, but rather anticipate it by recognizing applicants for positions of major responsibility on the basis of ability and readiness to do a job. Some point out that there is a growing realization that to sacrifice the level of skill for some archaic notion about role differentiation, on the basis of sex, is foolish and wasteful. "It is not a matter of justice or injustice" said one Federation executive, "but relates rather to an evolving democratization of our society and the field of Jewish communal service in particular." It was felt that the Jewish community must go at a faster pace than other professional fields, so as to encourage women of leadership potential to gain the qualifications and experience in anticipation of the opportunities as they arise.

AJCRW

The respondents from the Association of Jewish Community Relations Workers reported that, while the condition of women in this field is improving steadily they have a longer road to travel than their male colleagues as they move upward. The status of women professionals

who are exceptionally talented and highly dedicated has risen substantially in this field. However, salary differentials appear to exist, despite increasing promotional opportunities, because of women's particular employment history. "A relatively large percentage of women," said a top woman executive in this field, "do not seek positions with heavy responsibility because they simply want to supplement their husband's income with a minimum pressure job. Thus, having started at a lower salary level, even when promoted to top echelon positions in their respective organizations, women may not command salaries commensurate with their male counterparts. On the other hand, states another leading woman executive in a major Jewish organization, "women today who seek top management jobs are prepared for long hours and difficult pressures. They have so arranged their marriages and their relationship with their husband and families that this arrangement is an acceptable life style for them." She points out that in her agency, women often work harder than their male counterparts, merely because without extra work it is harder for them to establish their reputations, as competent professionals.

In thirty-five years as a professional, in the field of Jewish community relations, another reports, the employment and promotion of women in executive positions has improved "from slow progress to considerable change." But, current practice varies from agency to agency and often within agencies. Until recently, women merited the posts of department head, primarily in research, office management, personnel, office administration and most particularly, educational programming and curriculum development. Those jobs that require policy development, major contact with lay leadership, supervision of other professional staff, or contact with police, were cus-

tomarily reserved for men. Currently, a very small fraction of CRC top executives are women and the proportion is slightly higher for assistant executive directors. "While ostensibly any position is available to a qualified woman in the community relations field, subtle indications of sex discrimination do persist," one respondent revealed.

At second and third levels of management and professional employment, there appears to be a steady expansion of opportunities for women. "While not totally eliminated, the barriers have been reduced and salary differentials have narrowed," several indicated. In identifying the major factors leading to change, "women's heightened awareness of themselves" and "the Law of the Land," were cited as the most likely reasons for progress. Slowly but surely, as more and more qualified women demand equal treatment in community relations, and as the "old guard" leadership moves over making way for the new generation, existing obstacles may be eliminated.

AJCW

Reports on the status of women in the Jewish Center Field indicate that women have achieved a high degree of equality in terms of opportunity, responsibility, recognition and compensation, with the exception of the executive director level. Twice as many women as men serve in "line" or direct service positions. An equal number serve on sub-executive levels. Except for small communities, where very small facilities are in operation, or in branches of large "J's" in large metropolitan areas, there are no women in positions of executive director of a Jewish Center.

An executive director of one Center in a major Jewish community reported that on the basis of a staff survey, women prefer jobs that do not call for evening and weekend work. "As women become

more prepared to meet demanding schedules they are likely to move into top executive positions," he conjectures. In his opinion the Jewish Center field appears to be faced with a self-selection factor, rather than unjust exclusion of women from desired positions.

Based on the responses from Center directors there appears to be no preferential treatment of men with regard to hiring, promotion and pay. Equal pay for equal work is generally regarded as standard operating procedure in this field. Salaries are differentiated, however, on the basis of MSW degrees vs. academic degrees.

The single major factor, to affect the potential of women adversely, is the question of long term career goals. "The possibility that because of marriage a woman may choose to defer her own career plans in favor of her husband's, often tips the balance toward selecting a man rather than a woman for a top position." Despite some feeling that "chauvinistic attitudes" on the part of Boards of Directors persist, there appear to be relatively few other obstacles in the way of those women who seek to achieve top professional status, or any position they desire, in the Jewish Center Field. Among the recommendations made for correcting inequities was the suggestion that discriminatory practices be exposed in the professional associations and that the associations, in turn, set and interpret standards to the lay leadership.

NAJFCHS

It may be of some significance that this category had the highest number of respondents and the greatest consensus among their views. Based on long years of experience in this field, leading professionals reported noticeable shifts from the middle 30's, when there was a preponderance of women in top executive positions, to the present, when they occupy mostly middle to lower levels of

employment in Jewish family service agencies. It was stressed by several that the outstanding women, who have given professional leadership to this field, were invariably replaced by men, as they retired.

Professional opportunities for women in family casework are still excellent with the exception of the top executive jobs. On a sub-executive level, on the supervisory level and on the practitioner level, there are far more women than men. On these levels there appear to be no differentials in pay. However, men in these positions are evidently more successful in negotiating for and eventually getting a higher salary. Women appear to perceive their jobs with a more evident sense of "selfless dedication," and are at times even "reluctant to support demands for progressive action with regard to advances in pay," it was reported.

Among the factors that impede greatly women's upward and onward moves such items as, "lack of career mobility," "hang-ups about self worth," "reluctance to compete with male counterparts" and "irrational male biases" were mentioned. There was a strong feeling that the under representation of men on the practitioner level has placed this field at a disadvantage. Men are perceived mainly as the agency chiefs and their virtual absence from the vital components of direct human contact with clients is regarded as a serious deprivation of an important value in this field of service. "Women, who have been the architects of this field, having served as theoreticians, program planners and administrators, have yielded to men," writes one woman executive. Perhaps, in a psychological sense, this proves the very thesis which seems to be challenged now, namely, that social work, particularly family and child welfare service, has the same relation to society as a mother has to her family; yet, who can deny that motherhood involves decision-making,

standard setting, discipline, goal construction—ideas usually associated with the man's role." As we begin to see more interchangeability of roles in our society, "women may again assume the positions of professional leadership that have made Jewish family, children's and health services such a flourishing field," she mused.

Among the recommendations stated was the task of sensitizing agency and Federation Boards to the distinct advantages to be gained from interchangeable professional roles in this field. Also, of alerting young and capable women to the fact that this can be a promising field for them provided serious barriers to their seeking a maximal challenge are confronted and eliminated.

NAJHA

The status of women in the geriatric field seems somewhat better than in other fields. In geriatric centers more and more women are employed in all professional positions. Because services to the elderly are becoming increasingly health related they draw heavily upon fields that are traditionally women oriented, i.e., nursing, occupational and physical therapy, recreation, etc. Women also appear to hold such positions as comptroller, mental health administrator, research project director, department head, etc. It is reported that generally there does not appear to be discriminatory practice in regard to hiring women, nor in the rates of pay offered to them. The area of health administration, remains "somewhat more limited," states an executive director of a major geriatric center. One reason given for this lag in professional opportunity is that "Boards of directors tend to feel more comfortable with male executive directors." Another reason is that professional schools do not graduate too many female specialists in health administration—a requirement for top executive positions in

this field. Women's predilection for "being in direct human contact with clients," and their desire to "put just a little extra of themselves into their work," were the main reasons given for reluctance to get into grantmanship, budget-making, fund-raising, and administration. "Homes for the aged do utilize women more fully than other fields and in some instances they are reaching top level positions," another executive director pointed out. "But, do women in this field want the responsibility that comes with the demands of institutional administration?" he asks. "Evidently not much," he concludes. "The opportunities appear to be there for them, but there are few takers."

JVRS

Counseling for vocational rehabilitation and training was regarded predominantly as a man's profession since the period of the 30's and 40's. The past 10-12 years, it was indicated, have brought a change in this field. This change, it was suggested, may be attributable mainly to a substantial government push in the training of women for such positions. At the present time, indications are that men still predominate in all aspects of vocational and rehabilitation services which are not clinical, e.g. fund-raising, budgeting, personnel and public relations. However, more and more women are preparing to enter these areas. Currently, there are no reports of women serving in positions of executive director in any major JVRS agency across the United States. While the salary scale for women is on par with men, men do appear to gain the edge in terms of actual pay and promotion. As in other fields, men seem to be better at negotiating increments and they do move up faster than women in JVRS agencies. Furthermore, because this field has a strong physical rehabilitation component, which is usually identified with

the male professional, this is undoubtedly a significant factor in hiring and promotion, several executives confirmed.

Among the recommendations made for eliminating these disparities was the idea that agency heads should provide equal opportunities to all members of their professional staff who show ability to train and qualify for new openings leading to higher level positions. Inter-agency forums for men and women to discuss these problems were also thought to be useful in rectifying unjust practices.

NASA

The field of synagogue administration is a relatively new area of professional service in the Jewish community and is still in the process of being defined. Most synagogues are traditionally male-oriented, with women playing a minor role in their governing bodies. Although this is rapidly changing, in most synagogues women do not vote, serve on Boards of trustees or head up committees. As a result, the functions of the synagogue administrator are characterized as a "male function," although this function is not too well understood by the leadership of the congregation. "While some synagogues 'make do' with women office managers, who perform some of the functions of administrators, such personnel are generally regarded as clerical staff or as part-time volunteers," states a top administrator of a major synagogue in a large metropolitan area.

Opportunities for women in synagogue administration are limited and currently there are no women applicants for placement in NASA's Placement Commission. Although most administrators have the background of a college degree and courses in business administration or related subjects there are no specific requirements for the position. This tends to work to the disadvantage of both male and female administra-

tors. NASA's membership roster indicates that approximately 10 percent of its members are women. Most of them have the same fringe benefits as their male counterparts e.g. insurance, medical care and pensions, etc. However, women synagogue administrators generally work at a lower salary level. "For many years women were the backbone of volunteers in synagogue life, and it is difficult for them to be accepted as paid professionals because they still continue to do much work in the synagogue on a non-paid basis," writes a woman synagogue administrator. She further reveals that as a woman administrator she had to prove her worth first and then work up to the starting salary of the male.

In viewing the future it appears that old synagogues are not likely to accept women in the role of chief administrator. The younger, liberal synagogues which are increasingly electing women to their boards and ritual committees will be more likely to make the breakthrough. Among the recommendations for removing the obstacles to the progress of women in this field were the concrete definition of the role and function of the synagogue administrator and the general liberalization of attitudes toward women in the synagogue. In view of the changing role of the rabbi, women studying for the rabbinate would be wise to gain adequate background in business administration in addition to any other background. Increasing synagogue-Federation interaction may require a synagogue administrator to have a greater sensitivity to community issues, to concerns of agencies serving Jewish needs and to communal planning. These are by no means skills reserved for men.

NCJE

The fields of Jewish education like synagogue administration lags far behind other fields in opportunities for women. "It appears to me that in Jewish

education one finds the same degree of bias against women as in other fields of Jewish communal service, only more so," writes an executive director of a central agency for Jewish education. Several respondents pointed out that thus far women have been excluded from directorships of central agencies for Jewish education and from headships of education commissions setting educational policy in the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist or Cultural-secularist movements. All policy-setting appointments for the American Jewish educational establishment are held by men. "The long-standing tradition of an all male rabbinate often militates against the appointment of women to many senior educational posts," it was explained. Furthermore, because the Jewish education field is almost exclusively religion-oriented, many educators are required to assume the role of religious functionaries. This tends to limit further opportunities for women to rise to top level positions in Jewish education.

On the other hand, women have played and still play a significant and creative role in Jewish education. They have occupied, and continue to occupy positions of principal, consultant, curriculum development specialist, textbook writers and master teachers within each ideological stream of Jewish religious education. While there are many highly trained and experienced women in this field, the predominant number of them hold part-time positions in afternoon religious schools or day schools. Most of them serve as classroom teachers. Only a select few have risen to principalships in their respective schools or consultantships in central educational agencies in their communities. While codes of practice, with regard to pay and promotion generally do not discriminate against women, differentials appear to exist. Women are generally hired for

primary and elementary grades in all-day-schools and in supplementary religious education though they may not have a B.A. degree from a secular university. Post-secondary studies positions, which often pay at a higher scale, are given to men who are attending theological seminaries or have achieved their rabbinic ordination. A most encouraging new development is the increasing emergence of the woman at the college and university level, in the role of professor of Judaic studies.

Thus, several factors inhibit the mobility of women into high-level posts:

- a. Women's own reluctance to seek high level positions in Jewish education because they do not wish to complicate their home life. The heavy schedules, including weekends, typical of most top administrative positions, are presumed to interfere with responsibilities in the home.
- b. Women's professional roles in Jewish education are often confused with the role of volunteers. As principals and administrators of synagogue schools they are often expected to accept lower salaries as a form of service to be rendered to their synagogue.
- c. The inherent bias in traditional Judaism against mastery of *Torah*, *Mishna* and *Talmud* by women, an attitude which extends even to Conservative and Reform Judaism, although little of this knowledge is generally drawn upon in the performance of top administrative duties, prevents many women from pursuing higher degrees in Jewish education and qualifying for top positions requiring background and experience.
- d. The fact that many full time educational directorships in synagogues are often combined with the posi-

tion of assistant rabbi, calling for the performance of ritual tasks in the synagogue, disqualifies women from candidacy for these posts. Because upward mobility in the field is contingent upon precisely this kind of experience, many women are automatically eliminated on lower echelon levels.

It was suggested that with the rising feminist ferment, which often prompts scholarly women to try to make their way into the rabbinate, this field may present a new frontier for women. While many male and female congregants may persist in rejecting the image of a woman rabbi in the pulpit, they may be more inclined to accept her in the rabbi's study, or in top administrative office of an educational agency. Thus, women may well need to achieve rabbinic ordination in order to qualify for high level posts in Jewish religious education.

A woman has yet to achieve the position of executive director of a board of Jewish education in a large community. A major problem to be overcome in woman's quest for such a highly visible post is her acceptability to all segments of the Jewish community. Because a central agency for Jewish education must address itself to all ideological factions in the community, a chief executive's capability in budgetary planning and coordinating of services, etc., must be matched by the readiness of the lay leadership on the board of such an agency to divest itself of many prejudicial and archaic attitudes to fully benefit from the talents of an exceptional professional, man or woman.

Thus, a highly experienced consultant suggested that improvement in the status of women in Jewish education will come with the following:

1. the change in the public image of the woman as a competent professional;

2. better organization of the Jewish education profession;
3. making Jewish education a full-time profession by finding opportunities for educators in broader service to the community, thus expanding parameters of skill and experience;
4. raising the status of professionals in Jewish education, both men and women, in the eyes of the community;
5. efforts by such groups as the NCJCS committee, to make community leaders aware of the problem and help women improve their own image of themselves as well as their image in the eyes of others, to the point where they will be motivated to achieve fuller development of their potential.

* * *

Discussion

At a discussion of the above information, at a special session of the 1975 NCJCS Meeting, panelists from each field confirmed that while there are considerable impediments to the progress of women into specific top level positions in the Jewish communal service professions, there are fine opportunities in the Jewish community for able, and well trained professionals who are women. The consciousness-raising brought on by the women's movement must not be regarded as a threat to Jewish communal life but rather an important challenge to be met. "Women in the Jewish community won't wait much longer," it was asserted. Younger women, seeking to define their identity as women and Jews, can look to the Jewish communal service field for greater personal satisfaction and professional reward beyond that which may await them in many other pursuits. Although it may be a struggle to reach the top for many, for some it may

well be worth the try. When equality is achieved, women may be free to activate their minds and energies in their earnest desire to enhance the quality of Jewish life by means of creative changes which they have, in these years, been passively awaiting.

The "recommendations" that derived from the group discussion can be summarized:

- a- The panelists and participants in each respective field confirmed the information gathered by the Committee, namely that opportunities for women in Jewish communal service do exist but obstacles are also evident.

The 35 responses received to questions posed by the Committee provide substantive evidence that some professionals of high achievement and considerable experience in all seven categories of service within NCJCS are universally excluded from top level posts in their agencies, institutions and organizations, only because they happen to be women.

It was strongly recommended that the Conference attempt to set better standards of practice for Jewish communal service and interpret these standards to the lay and professional leadership

- b- Because many of the obstacles to women's progress are attitudinal rather than objective on the part of male counterparts and women themselves, it was strongly felt that the NCJCS should continue to deal with the subject in all interdisciplinary forums at future Conference meetings and that each constituent group be urged to examine the status and condition of its own professionals who are women.
- c- It was asserted that unless young women see the promise to realize their full human potential and the opportunity to apply it toward enhancement of the quality of Jewish life through the Jewish communal service professions, they may not even venture into or abandon them in frustration. Male chief executives should be urged to provide special opportunities to young professionals, male and female, who are in the process of determining life-long career goals and who seek maximal challenge in Jewish

communal work. This form of consciousness raising was seen as a function and responsibility of NCJCS.

- d- It was suggested that a grievance committee of men and women professionals be appointed to review cases where flagrant discrimination against women, in violation of law, is evident. This Committee should attempt to resolve conflict before it reaches the courts, as it well might, in specific instances.

Appendix

AJCOP:

- Mr. Donald B. Hurwitz, Executive Vice President, Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia
 Mr. M.C. Gettinger, Executive Director, Jewish Welfare Federation, Atlanta, Ga.
 Mr. William Avrunin, Executive Director, Jewish Welfare Federation, Detroit, Michigan
 Mr. Bernard Olshansky, Executive Director, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Boston, Mass.
 Mr. Alvin Bronstein, Executive Vice President, Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California

AJCRW:

- Mr. Albert Chernin, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia
 Mr. Daniel Mann, Executive Director, Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington
 Dr. Harold Saks, Administrative Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
 Mrs. Selma G. Hirsh, Associate Director, American Jewish Committee
 Mrs. Naomi Levine, Executive Director, American Jewish Congress

AJCW:

- Mr. Jack Dauber, Associate Executive Director, Jewish Centers Association, Los Angeles, California
 Mr. Herman A. Eigen, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center, Cleveland Heights, Ohio
 Mrs. Hans Mayer, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center of Houston

NASA:

- Mr. Martin Leichtling, Administrative Director, Park Avenue Synagogue, New York
 Ms. Ann Burns, Synagogue Administrator, Temple Gates of Prayer, Flushing, New York
 Mr. Milton Goldman, Executive Director, The

OPENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Jewish Family and Children's Service, Baltimore, Maryland
 Ms. Sarah Lederman, Borough Director, Jewish Association for Services to the Aged, Forest Hills, New York

NCJE:

Dr. Leivy Smolar, President, Baltimore Hebrew College, Baltimore, Md.
 Mr. Henry Margolis, Director, Bureau of Jewish Education, Cleveland, Ohio
 Mr. Samuel Steinberg, Educational Consultant, Jewish Education Association of Essex County, New Jersey
 Rabbi Irwin E. Witty, Executive Director, Board of Jewish Education, Toronto, Ontario
 Mrs. Rebecca Mosenkis, Educational Consultant, New York Board of Jewish Education, N.Y.

JVRS:

Dr. Harold M. Kase, Executive Vice President, Health and Rehabilitation Services, N.Y.
 Ms. Beatrice Novick, Program Director, Jewish Occupational Council, New York, N.Y.
 Mr. Albert I. Ascher, Executive Director, Jewish Vocational Service, Detroit, Mich.
 Mrs. Barbara Nurenberg, Administrator, Jewish Vocational Service, Detroit, Mich.

Mr. Ronald Baxt, Executive Director, Federation Employment and Guidance Service, N.Y.

NAJHA:

Dr. Jeffrey R. Solomon, Director, Community Services, Miami Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, Florida
 Mr. Bernard Liebowitz, Executive Vice President, Philadelphia Geriatric Center, Phil. Pa.
 Dr. Herbert Shore, Executive Vice President, Jewish Home for the Aged, Dallas, Texas
 Mr. Bernard Warach, Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, New York, New York

NAJFCHS:

Mr. Burton S. Rubin, Executive Director, Jewish Family Service Association, Cleveland, Ohio
 Mr. Sidney J. Berkovitz, Executive Director, JFCS, Chicago, Illinois
 Mrs. Vera Margolis, Director, Department of Community and Family Life Education, JFCS, Chicago, Illinois
 Mr. Benjamin Sprafkin, Executive Director, Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia, Pa.
 Dr. Claire S. Wenning, Assistant Executive Director, Westchester Community Services, N.Y.
 Mr. David Crystal, Executive Director, Jewish Family Service Agency, Los Angeles, Calif.

On Getting It Together — In a Fairly Together Place A Case for an Independent Treatment Center in the Jewish Community Center

MEL GOLDSTEIN

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 Samuel Field Y.M.-Y.W.H.A., Little Neck, New York*

The therapy center (in the Jewish community center) is an ambulatory treatment facility that operates within a range of services in the community at the "middle-of-a treatment-continuum." . . . The central notion . . . is the therapeutic community . . . Our therapeutic commune is made up of three important sub-groups: a peer community, a parent community and a staff community.

THE past decade in American life has been characterized by a rapid change in the values, attitudes and belief systems of our youth. As a result a wide group of sociologists has since the 1960's revised interest in generational analysis, produced numerous studies, a great deal of public awareness and some sensationalist mass media coverage. The range of arguments in this field proceeds from one end which sees current youth rebellion as a natural evolution of acted-out parental values which have been incorporated by youngsters (Westby & Braungart, 1966; Flacks, 1967; Kenniston, 1968; Troll, Neugarten & Kraines, 1969; Thomas, 1971), to a great gap between the generations in their life styles and core values. (See Friedenberg, 1965; Angel, 1968; Seely, 1969; Mead, 1970; Slater, 1970; Laufer & McVey, 1971; Laufer, 1972.) Significant positions between arguments for a theory of "there is nothing new under the sun" to a strong case being made for a unique youthful revolution have been and are being developed by social scientists on an empirical and theoretical level. It would seem to this observer to be too early to subscribe fully to either school of thought. One orientation, however, does seem promising in tying together this dilemma and it seems from a general systems theory approach with specific emphasis on the role of feedback (see Bengston & Black, 1973). As applied to behavior,

feedback involves a continuous process of (a) looking at and defining one's goals, (b) articulating alternatives in achieving these goals, (c) observing the effectiveness of the various alternatives, and (d) selecting the best action plans or means from these goals. Young people it would seem are in a unique and freer position to participate in a feedback process of exploration than their adult mentors or role models. By virtue of their greater freedom from commitments due to adult status, their relative ideological openness, and their fresher contacts with institutions, they are the most likely candidates within a society to inject value and behavioral innovations. And innovate they have in the past 15 years; with the freak culture, radical political action, recreational attitude toward drugs and sex, the gay and woman's movements, and so forth.

In the Jewish community the generational conflict that has just been described has been as equally manifested in our young people as it has been in the general population. The emergence of changing value systems, the breakdown of the Jewish family unit, the alienation of the young from traditional Jewish institutions have caused concern among leaders in the Jewish communal field. Writers have looked upon intergenerational and social disruption in the Jewish community from both a philosophical and a practical point of view.