

Chapter 3

A NONCENTRALIZED RELIGOETHNIC COMMUNITY

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American Jewry shares the long-standing American commitment to noncentralized decision-making. Decision-making in the United States is not decentralized but noncentralized. That is, there is no single center that can determine how or where decision-making should be dispersed, as the notion of decentralization implies. Rather, there are many different centers of decision-making, each of which exists legitimately in its own right, while the existence of each is protected within the society in some “constitutional” way. In political life even the federal government, powerful as it is, is simply one center — some would even describe it as a cluster of centers — among many.

Noncentralization is institutionalized in American society in government, religion, education, and most of the other arenas of American life (perhaps least in the economy), all of which serve to reinforce what is not only a basic social pattern but one that is culturally and ideologically accepted as the correct one.¹ This institutionalized noncentralization carries over to influence American Jewish life as well, where it is reinforced by organizational and cultural patterns well rooted in Jewish history.²

Not surprisingly, under such circumstances, where voluntarism is also involved, Jewish America has no single

overarching governing body. Action in the name of American Jewry on a countrywide basis is undertaken by a number of organizations of countrywide scope, generally with specialized fields of interest, while the real powers of communal governance, such as they are, are particularly concentrated in the local Jewish federations.³ The Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) is the closest thing to an umbrella body that exists; its powers are growing because it represents the combined leaders of the local federations. In addition, there are specialized umbrella bodies associated with it such as the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), the Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA), the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), and the Jewish Family and Children's Service Association (JFCSA).

It is significant that four of these five organizations have changed their names since the mid-1970s. The Council of Jewish Federations adopted its shorter name in recognition that its federations had become comprehensive community federations and not simply welfare funds. JESNA is, in effect, the reorganized American Association for Jewish Education, which had failed when it lost the confidence of the federation leadership in its efforts to promote Jewish education. The Jewish Community Centers Association was previously the Jewish Welfare Board. It adopted its new name to clarify its primary mission which is to provide an umbrella organization for the local Jewish community centers countrywide.

In addition, there are the "big three" in the Israel-overseas sphere that are so closely tied to the federation movement, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), United Israel Appeal (UIA), and United Jewish Appeal (UJA). Federations are prominent in the governance of all three, increasingly in formal ways.

Internally, the "state of Jewish America" is divided into approximately 900 local communities, organized through 178 local federations. Originally these federations encompassed single cities, but since the coming of suburbanization they have spread out to embrace virtually all organized Jewish communities within the vicinity of their original cities of jurisdiction; in that way most of the organized Jewish communities in the United States have become roughly analogous to counties. In

most cases they have done so by redrawing their boundaries to embrace suburbs and small towns within their metropolitan orbit. Thirty-eight of them have names reflecting their metropolitan scope. In fully suburbanized areas, such as New Jersey, areas of widespread semi-urban settlement such as California, Florida and Texas, and substate regions with small scattered Jewish communities like southern and central Illinois, regional federations have been organized to serve the needs of the whole area. In some cases, each local community continues to maintain its own local institutions as well. There are 25 such regional federations by name and 20 more federations that are named after the counties in which they are located and that are structured in essentially the same way. The trend toward "county-ization," essentially a product of the postwar generation, is growing.

By and large, American Jewish communal organization has not been based upon the state model, as is the norm in American society generally. Nevertheless, in four cases — Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, and Rhode Island — local federations have been reorganized and renamed after the states that they now serve in their entirety, while the Jewish Federation of Portland is defined as embracing all of Oregon and the Jewish Federation of Greater Manchester serves all of New Hampshire. Despite this relative neglect of the states for purposes of self-definition, it is testimony to the impact of the American environment that only a handful of the local federations have jurisdiction across state lines, and those are strictly responses to perceived necessity.

Washington, D.C.'s UJA serves the Maryland and some of the Virginia portions of the Washington metropolitan area; the Jewish Federation and Council of Greater Kansas City includes both the Missouri and Kansas portions of that metropolitan area; in Portland the Federation, in addition to embracing all of Oregon, also includes the narrow suburban strip across the Columbia River in Washington; and in 1973 the Jewish communities of Rock Island, Moline, Davenport, and Bettendorf in Illinois and Iowa combined their federations to establish the United Jewish Charities of the Quad Cities. The Jewish Federation of Trenton (New Jersey) is now the Jewish Federation of Mercer and Bucks Counties NJ/PA, embracing the area immediately across the Delaware River in Pennsylvania where many

former New Jerseyites have settled. The Jewish Federation of Southern Illinois expanded to include southeastern Missouri and western Kentucky, as its name indicates. One or two other federations located in cities along state borders may reach across them to serve adjacent territories (such as Cincinnati and the neighboring Kentucky counties), but this brief list seems close to being exhaustive.

In most interstate metropolitan areas Jews have divided their structures to recognize the state boundaries. Nowhere is this more evident than in the New York metropolitan region, where despite the very free movement of Jews across state lines, the federation service areas have hewed entirely to state boundaries. This is a very subtle example of the influence of American society on Jewish organization.

The countrywide pattern of organizational diffusion is also replicated locally within each federation's area of service. Still, the local federations tend to be significantly more powerful umbrella bodies. Through their great role in fundraising and community planning, they have become bodies that all Jewish organizations and institutions locally must reckon with.

Balancing Territorial and Nonterritorial Organization

The American Jewish community, like every Jewish community before it, is organized through a mixture of territorial and nonterritorial institutions. This fact has had some important implications in the United States, where the territorial organization of power is central to the entire political structure of the country. Territorial units delimited by political boundaries and embracing all people and institutions within them as equals are the basis of American political life. These same territorial units, with some modifications, form the basis for the organization of local Jewish communities. At the same time the ideological divisions in the Jewish community, real or putative, also provide significant points of organization, as do particular functions and certain common interests, which are then linked to the territorial community through certain common mechanisms.

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

The basic institutions of the American Jewish community are essentially local and at most are loosely confederated with one another on a countrywide basis for very limited purposes. With the exception of a few institutions of higher education (and at one time a few specialized hospitals, which are now nonsectarian), all Jewish religious, social, welfare, and educational institutions are local both in name and in fact. Some are casually confederated on a supralocal basis but more are not, and those claiming national status with no local base soon find themselves without a constituency.

The five largest federated communities in the United States contain just under half of the total Jewish population, down from sixty percent twenty years ago. If we add Miami, the other federated community with over 200,000 Jews, we have approximately half of all Jews in the United States. Just under five percent more live in three other Jewish communities of over 100,000. Nineteen Jewish communities have between 40,000 and 100,000 Jews, up from nine twenty years ago. Their share of the American Jewish population is some twenty percent. Those three categories together constitute just under eighty percent of American Jewry, slightly up from twenty years ago (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Focusing on federated communities is important for understanding organized Jewish life because the community federations constitute the local governance structure of American Jewish life, but in fact what has happened over the past twenty years is a move from Jewish communities in discrete metropolitan areas to large regional concentrations of Jews in connected

Table 3.1**JEWISH POPULATION BY FEDERATED COMMUNITY SIZE, 1991**

Community Size	No. of Communities	Total Population	% of U.S. Total	Area
Over 1 million	1	1,450,000	25.1	Greater New York*
100,000-600,000	8	1,843,000	32.0	Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay, Washington D.C., Dade County (Miami, FL), Ft. Lauderdale (FL), Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia
40,000-100,000	20	1,268,200	22.0	
15,000-40,000	24	541,955	9.4	
5,000-15,000	42	499,190	8.6	
1,000-4,999	61	147,310	2.5	
100-499	<u>22</u>	<u>10,605</u>	<u>.18</u>	
U.S. Total	178	5,760,760	99.78	

Source: American Jewish Year Book 1992 (based on the National Jewish Population Study, 1991).

* Includes the five boroughs, Westchester, Nasau, and Suffolk Counties.

Table 3.2

MAJOR LOCAL REGIONS OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT

Region	Jewish Population	No. of Cities	Total Area (in sq. miles by county)
New York - Northern New Jersey	2,000,000	24	5,156
Southern California	600,000	3	6,728
Southeastern Florida	515,000	3	5,159
Southeastern Pennsylvania - Southern New Jersey	281,000	10	4,155
Northeastern Illinois	252,000	7	3,528
Boston area	228,000	5	4,773
San Francisco Bay Area	210,000	6.5	5,156
Washington, DC	165,000	5	1,470
Washington, DC, with Baltimore	265,000	7	2,339

Source: *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1993* (New York: Oharos Books, 1992) and *American Jewish Yearbook* (1992).

belts of federated communities that are organizationally divided among several or even many federations but constitute continuous bands of Jewish settlement. The original examples of this were in the New York-northern New Jersey-Connecticut area and around Boston. Now similar regions have emerged around Philadelphia-southern New Jersey-eastern Pennsylvania and Washington-Baltimore. Even more visible are the belts

of Jewish communities in southeast Florida, southern California, and in the San Francisco Bay area stretching up as far as Sacramento.

Southeastern Florida, consisting of Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, is an excellent example of the new-style Jewish community that departs from the previous pattern of a large central city in which the Jews were once concentrated, plus the suburban and exurban areas to which the Jews have moved. While it once bore some resemblance to that pattern in the original Jewish settlement in Miami and Miami Beach, not only has Jewish settlement spread out over the area but thousands of Jews have moved directly to the region from other parts of the country. The relatively low-density Jewish region of settlement that they have built is one of the first of the new pattern. Thus a new "map" of American Jewry is developing, with continuous belts of relatively dense Jewish settlement in the northeast, southeast, and far west that fit the pattern of the suburban-cybernetic frontier far more than the old urban-industrial pattern of separate cities that had characterized the original pattern of Jewish settlement in the United States.

What is characteristic of all eight of the localities in this category is that each includes several counties (in the case of New York, eight; and even in the less clear-cut case of Chicago, seven). They include all of the largest local Jewish concentrations in the United States, over 75 percent of American Jewry. All but Greater Washington had over 200,000 Jews, and the latter is close to that figure. All have at least 1500 square miles in their core area and over 2,000 in their extended area, and four have 3,000 or more.

Organizationally, as the Jewish population spreads throughout these regions, the synagogues become even more important as the primary Jewish institutions, having little if any competition. The once very prominent federation agencies play a reduced role since they are unable to service such large areas with dispersed Jewish populations. The federations remain a presence, but in a less immediate sense. The federation leadership is essentially confined to those people who are within lunching distance of the central office, and activists are confined to those who can reach appropriate points of activity. If the federation activities remain primarily centralized in one office, the range of

activists is restricted, while if it develops regionalized structures, more Jews can get to points of activity. Where several federations function within the same region, each functions as an independent regional node. There may be some cooperative links between them but no real confederal relationships have developed among them.

Other Jewish organizations no doubt suffer even more from this kind of population dispersal. How can Jews in Deerfield or Buffalo Grove (Ill.) who do not work in Chicago's Loop really participate in the American Jewish Committee or the Anti-Defamation League? And even if they do come to work in the Loop, they will not be around for activities beyond the occasional luncheon meeting, returning home in the evening after a long commute. Aside from the federations, the Jewish community relations councils have some ties with the various areas within each region because they are called in if community relations problems arise, and some have even organized some form of presence in various parts of the region. The bureaus of Jewish education will normally have ties with schools throughout the region and provide them with some services. Of all the agencies, it is likely that they have the most continuous and consistent contact with all parts of the region.

Obviously a phenomenon that embraces over three-quarters of American Jewry is by far a major phenomenon in American Jewish life, the principal pattern of organized Jewish settlement. It is fair to say that it has not yet been recognized for what it is, much less investigated as to its impact and consequences. So far, organizational adjustments have developed primarily on an ad hoc basis. It is clear that more systematic efforts are called for. At least two have been tried so far: The Los Angeles Jewish Federation Council, covering almost all of Los Angeles County, initiated a program of regionalization dividing the whole federation area into five regions, the largest of which, the San Fernando Valley, would be the third largest Jewish community in the United States if it were independent. The reluctance of many people at federation headquarters to devolve real powers to the regions, subsequent efforts at recentralization of what had been devolved, and the reluctance of the federation agencies to follow its lead unless absolutely necessary, has severely weakened the result. The consequences of that have been very serious

secessionist movements within the Federation, which have led to one and perhaps will lead to another secession within a year or two of this writing unless some have accommodated. The other was an effort to develop a confederation of the three or four federations in the San Francisco Bay Area (depending upon whether or not Sacramento was included). This was a prominent idea for awhile in the 1980s, but little if anything seems to have come of it.

Even if they have not yet succeeded, these efforts highlight another critical point, namely, that these regions require far more complex organizational structures than previous Jewish communities, which even if large, were able to unite effectively under one metropolitan federation with a central office. Some of the regions already embrace several federations, but they rarely have any ties with one another other than informal ones.

Because the locus of Jewish life and organization is in the local community, community size contributes directly to the organization of functions and decision-making on the American Jewish scene. New York is not only in a size class by itself but maintains its own — highly fragmented — organizational patterns, while holding itself substantially aloof from all other communities. The extensive scope of the federation which has become the norm throughout the rest of the country still is limited in New York City, albeit the merged federation is strengthening. Until the Yom Kippur War the major Jewish institutions and organizations, beginning with UJA, conducted their own fund-raising campaigns and operated their own local programs outside of any overall planning or coordinating framework, often from their own national offices.

Until the merger of the New York Jewish Federation and the New York UJA, the former served the Jewish hospitals, the social-service agencies, and some of the Jewish Ys, but like the early federations in other cities was rather strictly confined to the health and welfare field. The overwhelming majority of Jewish institutions in New York City had no contact with the Federation, nor did they see in it an important tool for accomplishing even the general tasks of New York Jewry. Negotiations for a merger of the Federation and UJA on an expanded basis had begun even prior to October 1973, when the war came along to catalyze the union. A temporary unification of campaigns de-

signed to allow UJA to raise funds for Israel during the period normally allocated to the Federation was later transformed into a permanent arrangement, so that by 1986 the last major holdout came around to the common American pattern. It is unquestionably true that New York's great size prevented an earlier merger by allowing separate constituencies sufficient room to maneuver in and sufficient resources to enable them to ignore one another.

The major Jewish communities are all structured so that the federations play a major, usually dominant, role in communal fundraising and decision-making. All the significant ones among them are members of the "Big Nineteen." Federation leaders are the major sources of American Jewry's leadership across the spectrum of functional spheres (see below). Their names are found at the top of the leadership lists of virtually all the major Jewish organizations, even those not directly linked to the federation "family." The communications network that is generated out of the interaction of those communal leaders constitutes the heart of the countrywide Jewish communal decision-making system.

Communities too small or too weak to be members of the "Big Nineteen" stand on the periphery of the countrywide decision-making processes, no matter how well organized and active they may be locally. Occasionally, notable individuals from such communities do attain national prominence, but that is rare. The stronger of these communities may enhance their national visibility through the various "young leadership" groups, particularly of the CJF and UJA, that have been formed to recruit new talent for the Jewish community. Young leaders seem to reach positions of importance sooner in smaller communities and thus gain a voice in the countrywide councils while they are still linked to one another through the young leadership groups.

Local decision-making has not been systematically studied in more than a handful of these organized communities. What we do know, however, is that there are variations among the cities in each of the categories simply as a result of the differences in scale that change the magnitude of the communications problems. The ways in which patterns of communication are organized vary in communities of different sizes, to say nothing

of other cultural, historical, social, and economic factors. Size, for example, does much to determine who knows whom and how comprehensive or exclusive friendship and acquaintance nets are. These, in turn, determine who speaks to whom on communal matters.⁴

There is also considerable evidence that the percentage of those affiliated with and active in communal life stands in inverse ratio to community size. Since there is always a certain minimum of positions to be filled, regardless of community size, smaller communities will *ipso facto* involve a greater proportion of their population than larger ones, and of course there are often greater social pressures for participation in smaller communities, where people know who is and who is not participating. Various studies have shown, for example, that the percentage of synagogue members is higher in smaller communities.⁵

One response to this in the mid-1980s was a CJF effort to promote the idea of a North American Jewish community. This idea arose partly from the exigencies of fundraising in a period of high mobility. For example, when Jews moved from the northeastern "Rust Belt" to the southern or southwestern "Sunbelt" or retired from the major Jewish communities in the North and moved to Florida, Arizona, and California, their old community federations were reluctant to pass their names on to the new because they did not want to lose those dollars for their campaigns. Often this enabled people to disappear from both.

The initiative was additionally stimulated by the development of new national, indeed international, needs. First and foremost among them was the resettlement of Soviet Jewish refugees to the United States. The Jews from the Soviet Union, later the Commonwealth of Independent States, did not settle evenly throughout the United States but concentrated in a few communities, who felt their financial burden for absorbing them was disproportionate. Thus the idea of a North American Jewish community received great impetus from the effort to achieve a "fair share" distribution or allocation of those costs among all the federated communities in North America. There also was a need to provide a fair share of community support for Israel's absorption efforts.

With regard to both of these, concrete steps were taken by CJF and its member federations to establish equitable formulas for apportionment of the costs. CJF in particular has been interested in this idea of a North American Jewish community because obviously it strengthens it vis-a-vis its local federation members, who in the past have had a controlling power over the Council, which they have used to keep the Council a more limited body than its leaders might want it to be.

Synagogue Challenges to the Federation Movement

When the federation movement arose, the American Jewish community was essentially in the hands of an oligarchy of German and Central European Jews who acted through bodies such as the American Jewish Committee and through the congregations and countrywide institutions of Reform Judaism. After World War I, when the Eastern European Jews began to come into their own, these were supplemented by various ideological groupings — principally Zionist and socialist — who managed to reduce the old oligarchy to a lesser role without being able to replace them. These culminated in the local Jewish community councils of the 1930s who made a serious effort to take over local leadership. By the 1950s, however, they had been defeated by the federations, if only because the latter controlled the finances and most had been transformed into Jewish community relations councils, federation subsidiaries that brought together the rest of the organized Jewish community, primarily for community relations activities.

As the Jewish community councils were losing the struggle, the synagogues were rising to bring a new challenge to the federations. The great growth of suburbia after World War II led to the establishment of hundreds of congregations around the United States as the primary Jewish institutions in their areas. Following the model of the synagogue center, developed by Mordecai M. Kaplan, they sought to be comprehensive institutions in their communities. However, the inability to properly divide up the turf meant that congregations came to overlap one another in their service areas and to compete for members.

Post-World War II growth in their local congregations was accompanied on the countrywide plane by attempts on the part of the national synagogue bodies to lay claim to a larger voice in the affairs of the American community than they had heretofore commanded. Though the challenge that the national synagogue bodies threw out to the federations was only marginally successful, this struggle for supremacy bespoke a continuing area of contention within American Jewish life. As the leaders of the synagogue bodies sought to bring additional functions into their synagogues (i.e., under their jurisdiction), they increasingly came into conflict with the leaders of the federation bodies, whose conception of the tasks of the community as a whole was expanding at the same time.

This conflict reflected a confusion of roles as much as a clash of interests, which in turn was a product of the pragmatic patterns of growth of American Jewish institutions. In some ways the conflict marked the end of the pioneering period of organized American Jewry, the point where haphazard growth brought jurisdictional and functional overlap that could be rationalized intellectually and ideologically but failed where it required harmonization institutionally. This conflict reached its peak early in the 1960s. Then the reversal of fortunes in the synagogues led to a certain retrenchment and a more or less general cessation of efforts to encroach upon the federation world. The synagogues, struggling to retain their members in a changing environment, withdrew from their efforts to move into other spheres.

By the mid-1970s, conscious efforts were being made on both sides to improve synagogue-federation relations. Surprisingly, once the CJF and the local federations set up committees to look into the matter and to take steps to improve relations, it turned out that it was mostly a psychological question of paying attention to the issue and less a matter of serious institutional conflict, perhaps the result of changing times as much as anything else. Consequently, in the 1980s, relations between the federations and the synagogues improved and further efforts were devoted to matters of program and technique rather than to overcoming clashes. Both the federations and the synagogues came to recognize the importance of the other as one of the two bedrock

institutions of American Jewry; the first with the money and the second with the "troops."

With a few exceptions, the federations from the first did not (and most still do not) subsidize synagogues or functions that come under the synagogues' wing. By common agreement the latter were left to raise their own funds, and in the first half of the postwar generation they did so with remarkable success. Nevertheless, though large amounts of money were raised for the construction and maintenance of synagogues in the same period, synagogue fundraising offered neither the excitement nor the continuity of the annual federation drives. The synagogues' great fundraising efforts were necessarily one-time affairs and the annual needs of each congregation remained relatively limited.

This is still generally true, although since the mid-1970s many federations have begun to provide funding for functions under the synagogues' aegis, especially those involving Jewish education, and a few have occasionally gone beyond that. In Los Angeles, for example, the federation has developed a joint purchasing arrangement with those synagogues that care to join with it to achieve substantial savings. While subsidies for synagogues are still very much the exception, pressed by budgetary difficulties, synagogues, through their federation activists, have sought ways to gain federation support through the functional route.

A major impetus to advancing federation-synagogue ties has been the recent drive for programs that promote Jewish continuity. By the late 1970s, the federations and the synagogues had ceased most of their competition and had come to recognize that each needed the other. The mutual discovery that the federations had the cosmopolitan leadership and the money, and the synagogues had the people, and that American Jewry had come to rest upon these two pillars, inaugurated a new era in federation-synagogue relations. It was given a major push forward after 1990 by their mutual concern for Jewish continuity. Those programs are opening the door to many new forms of cooperative relationships.

Organizing the Communal-Welfare and Israel-Overseas Spheres

The polity-like characteristics of any society are expressed through its institutional structure and dynamics. The more complete its set of institutions is, the more truly can it be defined as a comprehensive polity. As for the American Jewish community, its organizations and institutions can be grouped into four categories, based on the kinds of roles they play within the community as a whole: 1) government-like institutions, 2) localistic institutions and organizations, 3) general purpose, mass-based organizations, and 4) special-interest institutions and organizations.

Government-like Institutions: Government-like institutions play roles and provide services on a countrywide, local, or regional basis that under other conditions would be played, provided, or controlled by governmental authorities, either predominantly or exclusively.

Comprehensive-Representative Organizations: The predecessors of the federations generally adopted the term "charities" or "philanthropies" in their names, as in Boston where the federation to this day is known as the Combined Jewish Philanthropies. After World War I the tendency was to substitute the term "welfare" (e.g., the Jewish Welfare Federation of Detroit) for "charities," in recognition of the changing attitude toward assistance for those in need, but still reflecting the essentially social-service orientation of these bodies. Federations that were developed or reorganized immediately after World War II increasingly used the term "federation" unqualified by any adjective other than "Jewish" (e.g., Greater Phoenix Jewish Federation), an indication of the progressive expansion of the intended role and scope of these comprehensive-representative organizations. By the 1970s, the favored term was community federation.

In the 1930s the emerging role of the federations as the central agencies of Jewish communal life was challenged by the Jewish community councils. This came about at a time when the federations themselves still considered their scope to be primarily limited to philanthropy. In no small measure, the challenge

was a reflection of the efforts of the rising East European Jewish leadership to provide what they believed to be a more appropriate "central address" for the Jewish community than that afforded by the federations, which were still dominated by Central European Jews. It was their contention that the umbrella body of the Jewish community should be based upon the membership organizations rather than the service agencies, an arrangement that would lead to a more representative body. They suggested that the federations serve as fundraisers for the community councils to enable the latter to function as the spokesmen and policy-makers for their communities.

Where Jewish community councils were organized, a struggle of greater or lesser intensity developed between them and the federations, which lasted from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s. In about three-quarters of the cases the community councils ultimately had to concede, and in all but one of the other cases they absorbed the fundraising function to become federations in all but name. In some places there was a merger of the two bodies: in Los Angeles the Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles was created. In others, like Detroit, there was a standoff, with the Jewish Community Council withdrawing to public-relations activities almost exclusively. In still other places, Philadelphia, for example, there was a reorganization: the Jewish Community Council became the Jewish Community Relations Council, a constituent agency of the federation, and became responsible for the community's external relations. In still others — Chicago, for example — the reorganization led to the Jewish Community Relations Council becoming an enlarged committee of the federation with its own executive and staff, but clearly part of the mother federation. In no case did the community councils emerge as the comprehensive representative organizations, as their proponents had hoped, primarily because the federations were able to capture the two decisive areas of communal activity: fundraising and financial support for Israel.

Elsewhere we shall discuss the question of whom the federations represent, but here the general point can be made that while the problem of representation is in some respects solved in American Jewish life, it is clear that it is part of the struggle that transformed the federations from fundraising mechanisms for social-service institutions into comprehensive-representa-

tive bodies. American Jewry, perhaps in tacit recognition of the difficulties presented by an unbounded community of concentric circles, has not relied upon competitive elections as a means for making their institutions representative. Although formal elections are held regularly, generally a previously agreed-upon slate, put together by a nominating committee appointed by the incumbent officeholders, is presented for what usually amounts to unanimous ratification by the electors. The occasional contested election usually involves a factional fight with one group seeking more representation than it has had in the past. In spite of this — or perhaps because of it — the great majority of the federations have sought to devise ways for a very wide range of Jewish groups and interests within the community to be represented within their structures, at the very least in relatively nominal fashion on their boards, and with increasing frequency in meaningful fashion on their executive, planning, and working committees.

The federations' position as framing institutions is enhanced by the fact that they are dominated by people who are involved in the total life of the community and who therefore tend to see its problems from a perspective based on a conception of the community as a whole.⁶ These people are also usually the representatives of the local Jewish community to countrywide and worldwide Jewish bodies.

Other government-like institutions at the community level include bureaus of Jewish education, the Jewish community relations councils, and the community services organizations and institutions. While these bodies serve more narrowly defined functions than the federations, they also must adopt a broader perspective, looking at the community as a whole because they are extensively involved in all its relevant parts. Appropriately, the bureaus of Jewish education, local community relations councils, Jewish community centers, community-wide welfare institutions, and the like — all of which perform functions that would otherwise be performed by government — are generally linked organizationally to the federation.

The closest countrywide analogous body to the local federations is the CJF, which sometimes leans in the direction of becoming an umbrella organization with considerable scope and at other times pulls back from any such tendencies in order not

to offend other powerful countrywide organizations, including those mentioned above, the umbrella organizations of the synagogue movements, or the once powerful membership organizations such as B'nai B'rith or the American Jewish Committee. The annual General Assembly of the CJF has become the most important meeting of the American Jewish community, a gathering of over three thousand Jews — delegates from all the local federations and representatives of every organization and institution that has business with them.

Thus, the communal-welfare sphere has undergone great changes in the postwar years. As late as the 1950s it was simply another functional grouping among several, although considerably better organized internally, since the various Jewish social service and welfare agencies and the Jewish community centers had federated with each other a generation or more earlier. While the local Jewish federations had already expanded to include fundraising for overseas needs, their pretensions to centrality in the community were limited by the fact that, on the domestic scene, they remained primarily concerned with the traditional social service functions.⁷

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

In the 1960s, as the federations undertook community planning on a large scale, they also took greater responsibility for and interest in Jewish education as well as continuing and even deepening their relationships with their constituent social service and welfare agencies. In the process, most made strong efforts to broaden their leadership base to include new segments of the community, although even this broadening took place within certain limitations which omitted or failed to reach certain constituencies.

After 1970, the government of Israel and the reconstituted Jewish Agency were new additions to the communal-welfare scene, as a result of the large role played by the federations in raising funds for Israel's needs. The government of Israel has its special concerns in American Jewish life, which it pursues in many ways, but is increasingly finding it advantageous to pursue within the communal-welfare sphere. The Jewish Agency, particularly since its reconstitution, has virtually co-opted the federation leadership as its "non-Zionist" representatives, creating a tighter bond than even before between the institutionalized representatives of the World Zionist movement and the American Jewish community.

Notes

1. For an elaboration of the principle of noncentralization as it applies to the United States, see Daniel J. Elazar, *The American Mosaic* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994).
2. Ernest Stock describes this phenomenon in "The Absence of Hierarchy: Notes on the Organization of the American Jewish Community," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 2 (December 1970).
3. In almost every locality where a comprehensive organization exists, it is known as the Jewish Federation — informally if not formally. The precise title differs from situation to situation. For example, in Philadelphia it is known as the Federation of Jewish Agencies, in Detroit as the Jewish Welfare Federation and with increasing frequency simply the Jewish Federation. Of the 178 communities with comprehensive-representative organizations listed in the 1992 *American Jewish Year Book* (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 155 use the term "federation" in their names and 8 use "community council" (or "community center" in a few cases). Twelve more use some version of "welfare fund" or "agency" and 12, the term "united." Some of these combine two or all three in their names.
4. For a history of the federation movement from its inception to 1960 written by an insider, see Harry L. Lurie, *A Heritage Affirmed* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961). Lurie was the long-time executive director of the CJF through its formative years.

5. See *National Jewish Population Study* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, 1974) and the *American Jewish Year Book, 1989* (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 83-85, for data on synagogue membership by community size.
6. The "cosmopolitan-local" dichotomy occupies an important place in sociological thought. Its roots lie in the work of Ferdinand Toennies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957), and it has received its finest American expression in Robert Merton, *Social Thinking and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1957). See also Carle F. Zimmerman, *The Changing Community* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938); Alvin W. Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Towards an Analysis of Latent Social Rules," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1958); and Sidney Vincent, *Personal and Professional: Memoirs of a Life in Community Service* (Cleveland, OH: Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1982). I have applied it in "Cosmopolitans and Locals in Contemporary Community Politics" (with Douglas St. Angelo) in *Proceedings of the Minnesota Academy of Science* (May 1974).
7. See Harry L. Lurie, *A Heritage Affirmed*, *op.cit.* For the material on the social service agencies, see Graenum Berger, *The Jewish Community Center: A Fourth Force in American Jewish Life* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966); Philip Bernstein, *To Dwell in Unity: The Jewish Federation Movement in America Since 1960* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983); Sidney Vincent, *Personal and Professional: Memoirs of a Life in Community Service* (Cleveland, OH: Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1982).