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# Commentary

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## Progress of a Suburban Jewish Community *Park Forest Revisited*

02.01.57 - 12:00 AM | [Herbert J. Gans](#)

Park Forest, a privately developed suburban new town located some thirty miles south of Chicago, started off with its first tenants in the summer of 1948. In the beginning the project consisted of “garden apartments” designed for people with middle-class incomes; most of the tenants were under thirty-five and few even of the wives lacked some sort of a college education.

I had made a study of the Jewish community of Park Forest—which by the middle of 1949 comprised about 150 out of a total of 1,800 families—and in the April 1951 issue of COMMENTARY I described its first fourteen months of existence. In this initial period the Jewish families, though scattered throughout the length and breadth of the project, had had no trouble in finding one another and, following rounds of exploratory parties, had begun to form circles of friends and acquaintances. From among these circles, people with a bent for organizing had set up first a B’nai B’rith lodge and, shortly thereafter, a chapter of the Council of Jewish Women. Then the leaders of the two clubs had begun to meet to discuss the possibility of establishing a congregation. However, their first session indicated that the Jewish community felt its most pressing need to be the Jewish education of their children. While one group, mainly composed of men, wanted to found a synagogue with a Sunday school attached, another, made up mainly of women, rejected the congregation and insisted on a Sunday school alone for the children. After months of meetings and discussions, the latter course was adopted.

My article had dwelt on the fact that the parents sought a Sunday school in order that their children might learn “to feel Jewish.” For this reason, too, the parents had transformed the “happy” Jewish holidays, especially Chanukah, into children’s festivals filled with Jewish symbols. At the same time, the parents

themselves sought to escape involvement in the activities of the community's specifically Jewish religious and cultural institutions, even though they did look to their fellow Jews in Park Forest for their friendships and informal social life. I felt that a Jewish community from which adults excluded themselves, and whose institutions functioned almost solely for children, was something new, and I called this a *child-oriented* Jewish community. I contrasted it with the more traditional *adult-oriented* Jewish community that is centered on a synagogue, and whose religious institutions and culture existed primarily for the sake of adults and whose educational system was designed to prepare children for adult status and functions as quickly as possible.

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By May of 1955, when I returned to Park Forest for a short visit, the town had become famous as a prototype of postwar suburbanization and as a model for builders of new towns elsewhere. Park Forest now had 24,000 residents, about half of whom owned their homes. There were five shopping centers, with close to one hundred stores and two professional buildings, five elementary schools, and six churches. Six more congregations were planning to build churches of their own.

The Jewish community had likewise grown. It now comprised between six to seven hundred families and, along with a congregation employing a full-time rabbi, it had two Sunday schools and three new women's groups: the Temple Sisterhood, a B'nai B'rith Auxiliary, and a Hadassah group. The Temple building had just been dedicated, and all the evidence suggested that it was now the Jewish community's central institution. I was curious to find out why Park Forest's Jews had changed their minds about a congregation, and, even more important, why they had turned—apparently—from a child- into an adult-oriented Jewish community within the five years since I had last visited them. I also wanted to see what their development into a seemingly representative suburban Jewish community revealed about the postwar growth of Jewish communities generally, and to what extent this growth bore out the claims of a recent revival of Jewish institutional and community life in this country.

In the course of my visit in 1955 I spoke with a dozen of the Jewish community's leaders and analyzed Temple membership records; subsequently, I obtained more information by correspondence and other means. I must, however, emphasize that, unlike my 1951 report, this present one is not based on a formal sociological study (although two important community leaders representing rival points of view, having seen it in an early draft, do consider the article to be an objective picture of the community as it was in 1955).

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Although by 1950 the Park Forest builders had put up and rented all the apartments in their development—and from then on built only one-family homes which they sold—the influx of Jewish residents continued in roughly the same proportion as before, maintaining the Jewish representation in Park Forest at just below 10 per cent of the total. Community leaders, talking to me in 1955, felt that there was little difference between the older and the newer residents. The newcomers included proportionately fewer Ph.D.'s, but more M.D.'s,

dentists, and businessmen. (A sizable proportion of the stores and professional offices in Park Forest's shopping centers were owned or managed by Jews.) It was guessed that the newer residents had slightly higher earnings than the 1949 group, whose median family income was about \$6400.<sup>1</sup> The newer residents were also said to be predominantly second-generation Jews whose parents had come from Eastern Europe; in fact, some people thought that these newcomers knew more Yiddish than the earlier settlers did. On the whole, then, Park Forest Jewry could still be described as a community of young middle- and upper-middle-class professionals, businessmen, and better paid white-collar workers, with children mostly of pre-school or elementary school age.

In 1949 two separate attempts at organizing local High Holiday services had failed; in 1950 renewed attempts to hold such services proved more successful. Shortly thereafter, the group of men that had tried to set up a congregation in 1949 founded the Reform Temple Beth Sholom. Late in 1951 enough families had joined the Temple to permit it to engage a full-time rabbi. Soon a building committee was organized and the first fund-raising letters were sent out. Support was slow in coming, but finally in 1954 a \$70,000 temple was built with the help of a large mortgage and sizable contributions from the officers of American Community Builders (the developers) and their contractors, as well as smaller ones from about 20 per cent of the Jewish residents of Park Forest.

In 1955, the paid-up membership of the Temple's congregation numbered 240 families, which constituted about 35 to 40 per cent of the total Jewish community. The Temple's religious orientation could best be described as "East European Reform," for it combined Reform permissiveness about religious practices in the home with a quasi-Conservative array of ceremonials, Hebrew reading, and responsive singing at services. The nature of this synthesis was typified by the Temple kitchen, which was not kept kosher but did not serve pork. The rabbi described the services and their ritualistic emphasis as a "warm, liberal kind of Reform" which he thought would prove agreeable to both people used to Reform and those used to Conservative practices. The rabbi's background reflected that of his congregants; reared in a traditional East European milieu, he had been trained in an Orthodox seminary but had later changed over to Reform.

In 1955, Friday night services generally attracted from fifty to seventy-five people. There was a core of forty (more or less) regular worshippers—about 3 per cent of the adult community—the rest being observers of *yahrzeit*, new members, and visitors. Bar Mitzvahs would bring enough people from Chicago to double or triple attendance, and High Holiday services attracted six hundred worshippers—about half the adult Jewish community.

The Temple's religious and cultural functions ran second to its social ones. Soon after its founding, a Sisterhood had been organized that by 1955 had enrolled about half the adult Jewish women in the congregation. Of these, a hundred—15 per cent—were described as "active" by the president of the group. The Sisterhood's main ostensible function was fund-raising, for which purpose it sponsored luncheons, dinners, dances, bazaars, and other affairs. These were well attended. It was reported, for example, that in 1955 Purim services had attracted fewer than fifty worshippers, but that a Purim dance the same evening was attended by three hundred and fifty people. Other social functions were equally popular, and the high point of the annual fund-raising campaign was a bazaar to which the many businessmen and merchandisers in Park Forest's Jewish community contributed goods that were sold at bargain prices for the Temple's

benefit. People critical of this “social emphasis” pointed out that the social hall in the basement claimed more space in the Temple than anything else.

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In order to attract as many residents as possible, the Temple had set membership fees below what was needed to meet expenditures; this brought recurrent financial problems. Because of these, and because the organizers of the Sisterhood programs came from the highest income strata of the Jewish community, the price of active participation in the social activities revolving around the Temple was rather high. One of the Sisterhood leaders estimated that faithful attendance at the various affairs had cost her family about \$600 in the past year, in addition to the hundred-dollar Temple membership fee. She explained: “Many of the gals in the \$6000-\$7000 income bracket can’t afford to join us. They join the Temple and the Sisterhood but they explain they don’t have time to participate, or give some reason like that. Most of the gals have accepted the fact that they can’t afford it; only a few get obnoxious about it. But to those who can afford it, we don’t have to sell the Sisterhood. I myself have played this game for years, and since my husband works in the community, we have to do it for professional reasons anyway.”

Hence the social climate of the Temple and its Sisterhood was definitely upper middle class. For some of the active members it served, perhaps, as preparation for the country-club style of life they would enter when they moved, as many would eventually, to a higher-income suburban community.

The Sisterhood was not only the upper-middle-class Jewish women’s club, but its members were the most active in helping the rabbi and keeping the routine work of the Temple going. Nonetheless, the lay leadership of the Temple was still male, and was composed for the most part of executives in Chicago commerce and industry, businessmen, lawyers, and doctors. As officers and board members of the Temple (and, in several cases, husbands of Sisterhood leaders), their share of the contributions to defray the operating costs and sustain the building program was the largest. The Temple was said to be “run,” however, by the small group that had founded it, which included some “Jewish professionals” employed in the Chicago offices of national Jewish organizations. This group was supported by the president of American Community Builders, who holds a high position in the American (and world) Jewish community. A man vitally interested in the local Jewish community, he had donated a great deal of money to the Temple and was said to wield considerable influence in its affairs.

While the Temple provided religious services and a modest lecture program, the Jewish education of the children remained in the hands of the community Sunday school, which had no organizational ties with the Temple. This school, which I described in my April 1951 article in COMMENTARY, had been under the direction of the Park Forest Board of Jewish Education since 1949. By 1954-55, its enrollment had increased from an original thirty-five to a total of 385 students, who made up an estimated 85 to 90 per cent of the eligible Jewish children in the village. Classes still met in the public schools on Sundays, and smaller groups of children attended weekday Hebrew classes. The school considered itself a community institution, without denominational affiliation. Its faculty prided itself on teaching the children something about the

diversity of Jewish worship, believing that its function was to provide information about all Jewish denominations to students who might one day decide to choose other than Reform. At the same time, the school encouraged its pupils to attend the Temple. The latter's rabbi was a member of the faculty, preparing the older children for Bar Mitzvah. The teaching staff in general considered intellectual training and achievement a major objective; community leaders spoke highly of the school's curriculum and standards of instruction.

This emphasis on denominational diversity and intellectual standards was not coincidental, for it represented to a considerable extent the objectives of the two groups actively supporting the school. The first group was made up primarily of academic or publicly employed professionals such as scientists, research workers, teachers, and public administrators. These people belonged, or were on their way to belonging, to the upper middle class, but moved in a different social world from that of the Temple leaders, by whom they were characterized as "intellectuals"; they, in turn, described the Temple leaders as "businessmen and country-clubbers." Neither characterization was quite accurate, but it sufficed. The academic professionals—as we shall call them—were not much interested in religious or other involvement for themselves, but wanted their children to have good Jewish educations and were strongly in favor of the school's emphasis on intellectual achievement. The second, smaller group supporting the Sunday school was composed of people from more traditional backgrounds whose sympathies lay with Conservative rather than Reform practice. Many of these were lower-middle-class, white-collar workers, and among them were to be found those Jews of Park Forest who retained patterns of immigrant culture to the greatest extent. The school's denominational neutrality, as well as its serious interest in Judaic traditions, is what gained it their support.

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In 1949, even before the Temple was established, its founders fought for a Sunday school affiliated with it. After the Temple had been organized, they tried repeatedly to arrange for an affiliated school, but not until 1954 did the lay board of the Temple yield. Shortly thereafter the present rabbi was hired, partly because of his extensive training as a religious educator, on the understanding that he would set up a congregational school. After a few unsuccessful attempts to attach the community Sunday school to itself, the Temple announced the formation of a school of its own in March of 1955, with classes to begin in September. When I returned to Park Forest in May of 1955, the Jewish community, facing the prospect of two Sunday schools, was once again split into opposing camps.

The main argument, in public, involved the relations of the two schools to the Temple. The leaders of the new Sunday school objected to the community school's denominational neutrality, arguing that it was teaching the children *about* Judaism rather than emphasizing its practice. The rabbi illustrated the difference this way: "The community school teaches that Jews light candles on Friday night, and that the children *can* do this, but don't have to. Our curriculum will be more emphatic—we say you *ought* to do it."

To this argument, the community school retorted that, having only a single synagogue, the community needed a school which taught something about the views of all the Jewish denominations. A pamphlet issued during

the controversy said: “It [the school] emphasizes those elements of Judaism which are basically acceptable to all elements of Jewry. Differences of practice which exist are taught in a democratic climate encouraging acceptance of the diversity of opinion . . . a child who shares the experience with his parents in a Temple and further enriches himself in an independent school will have deeper insight than can be obtained from . . . a single viewpoint.”

Underlying these public differences was the question that had been debated in 1949: should the school teach children in a way that would encourage and press the parents to take part in community religious life, or should it teach them in a way that would leave parents uninvolved if they so chose. This question was basic to the larger problem of adult- versus child-orientation.

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Although the community school staff was of two minds on the question, their school permitted the parents of its students to eschew all Jewish religious or cultural involvement. As one of the school’s lay leaders pointed out: “Its purpose is education, and the parents are not involved unless they want to be. Religion for the parents is not necessarily the main end of life; we want a school for our children. . . .” The Temple, intended by its founders to be adult-oriented, explicitly sought the participation of parents in its new school and in the Temple. The rabbi explained: “My primary interest is in the adults, and I am opposed to a child-centered Judaism. However, here the people seem to be mainly interested in the education of the children. . . . We hope, though, the children will bring the parents . . . perhaps they will return the parents to Jewish life.”

However, the rabbi did not expect that this would happen. Indeed, he felt that the indifference of Park Forest parents to Judaic practice was such as to require the Temple to take a more active role in training their children for religious participation—and that he himself had to assume the role of a surrogate father. He explained: “I want to make personal contact with the children, otherwise I only get the volitional ones, and that’s not many. . . . I want to be able to identify with the children. . . . I want them to accept the synagogue in their lives and come to services.”

Nor did the Temple seek to draw in the children only in order to teach them; it also wanted—and needed—to have them take the place of their non-observant parents at Saturday services. The rabbi pointed out: “The school’s program will be a worship curriculum. The children will have to come and help prepare services. . . . The Saturday morning services will be a part of their education.”

This curriculum, in addition to its educational function, would provide a larger number of worshippers for the Temple. More important, by giving children the role, if not the status, of adults at the Saturday services, the Temple could maintain itself as an adult-oriented institution.

What had happened between 1949 and 1955 was therefore not a turn-about from child-orientation to adult-orientation. Rather, both the community school and the Temple, with its own new school, had resigned themselves to the essential unwillingness of adults to participate in formal Jewish religious and cultural activities. The Temple was able to operate as if it were an adult-oriented institution, while adjusting at the

same time to the reality of the child-oriented community, by giving the children a quasi-adult role. Facing a choice between adhering to its traditional position or surrendering this for the assurance of community support—and survival—the Temple had chosen the latter.

Were the later Jewish arrivals in Park Forest—who presumably represented a majority of the Temple members—really as child-oriented as the settlers of 1948-49, or was the Temple responding only to the demands of the earlier group? This could not be determined in a brief study. However, one of the newcomers, a leader in the Sisterhood, said: “People here don’t need to join the congregation . . . until their children are old enough to join the Sunday school, and if there were no children, there would be no Temple or Jewish organizations.”

Another leader said that though people without school-age children were asked to join the congregation, they were not expected to do so. This observation was borne out by a study of the congregational membership. Of one hundred and eighty member families known to have children, 85 per cent had at least one child of Sunday-school age. This does not of itself prove that the presence of eligible children was responsible for Temple membership, but data for a group of fifty new and old residents who recently bought homes in Park Forest tend to bear this hypothesis out. Thirteen of the twenty-six families with school-age children—50 per cent—had joined the Temple, but of the seventeen families without eligible children, only three—18 per cent—had joined.<sup>2</sup> These data, taken together with the community’s indifference to religious activities except on the High Holidays, suggest that most Park Forest Jewish parents could still be described as child-oriented.

It will take some time to discover whether the children are going to accept the quasi-adult functions planned for them in the Temple. If they do, the synagogue will be able to continue as a religious institution without reliance on the parents. If they do not, or if the children try to get their parents to attend synagogue regularly along with them, the parents may in the end be forced to choose between a child-oriented and an adult-oriented Jewish community more squarely than they have until now.

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The controversy over the two schools was brief and ended shortly before spring registration. While child-versus adult-orientation was an underlying factor in the public debates, parents probably made their choice on the basis of more tangible considerations. For one thing, the Temple school offered free tuition to the children of members, which made a financial difference to families with two or more children. Then there was the fact that the congregation played a symbolic role as a community focus for the Jewish people. The Temple building, where classes would be held, also gave parents an opportunity to point out to their children that “they had a church now, too, just like their non-Jewish friends.” On top of all this, the rabbi loomed as a welcome figure of authority to parents who wanted their children to be taught to feel Jewish, but could not or would not do the teaching themselves. The rabbi’s authority—and his visibility as a Jewish symbol—was probably more convincing to parents than the community school staff’s professed aim of exposing students to “a broad cross-section of Jewish thought”—especially to parents less concerned to have their children achieve an intellectual grasp of Judaism than to immerse them in a Jewish atmosphere and surround them

with Jewish symbols.

One might say, then, that as the parents saw it, the community school emphasized Judaism as such, while the Temple school stressed identification with the Jewish community and its symbols—that is, with “Jewishness.” This difference probably influenced the parents’ choice, and their preference for the Temple school and “Jewishness” seems to be in accord with over-all trends in the American Jewish community.<sup>3</sup>

The difference in prestige between the two schools was undoubtedly an additional factor in the parents’ choice. The congregation’s social program clearly stamped it as being upper middle class, whereas the community school sponsored no social activities to speak of. After its connection with the Temple was severed, the community school began to negotiate with a lower-middle-class Orthodox synagogue in a nearby community for a place in which to hold Bar Mitzvah services for its thirteen-year-olds.

At the beginning of the 1955-56 academic year, it looked as though the Temple school had proven to be more attractive than the community school to the majority of Park Forest Jews. It counted a student body of over five hundred, while the community school had only about 125 students from eighty families closely identified with its cultural objectives. (If we knew exactly why so many Jewish parents chose the Temple school over the older community school, we should possess an important clue to their attitude toward Jewish education and to what Jewish life meant for them.) At the end of the academic year, I heard later, the future of the community school was for a time in doubt, and it was able to survive thanks only to donations from loyal supporters and voluntary salary cuts on the part of the staff. The school was now in the position of many another intellectually oriented group in America: it had enough members to justify its existence and propagate its point of view, but the small scale of its operations burdened it with chronic financial problems that constantly threatened its survival—despite the loyalty of its supporters.

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In 1955, then, Park Forest provided an example of the rapid growth of a postwar suburban Jewish community. Whether it is a representative example, only time and further study can tell, although reports from other communities suggest many similarities with Park Forest.<sup>4</sup>

The rise of these suburban Jewish communities, with their greater organizing energy and higher participation rates as compared with urban communities, has been explained as the symptom of a “Jewish revival”—that is, as a reversal of the trends toward ever greater cultural assimilation observable in the Jewish communities of the cities. To determine whether this explanation is correct for Park Forest would require a thoroughgoing study of the factors that have made its Jewish community what it is today. At this point it is possible only to speculate.

The major factors that “explain” Park Forest’s Jewish community in 1955 seem to me to be five: the suburban environment; the social activity patterns that go with upper-middle-class aspirations; the pressure on Jewish residents for participation; the flexibility of the Temple in serving their new requirements; and above all, the common desire to provide children with a Jewish environment.



The young Jews who moved to Park Forest were probably neither more nor less identified with and concerned about Judaism and Jewishness than their friends who remained in Chicago. But in Park Forest they found they could no longer live as before. In the city they had lived so much *with* Jews that there was little need to worry about living as Jews. But in Park Forest their neighbors were as likely as not to be not Jewish, and the latter's proximity made them conscious of the difference, all the more so as they felt that these neighbors saw and treated them as Jews.

One response to the new suburban circumstances was to transfer some of the social relations they had maintained informally with other Jews in the city into the more formal context of organized groups and Temple activities; the latter also became an avenue for meeting and associating with fellow Jews with whom they might otherwise have had no relations.

The Jews who most conspicuously made this shift to formal or organizational social life tended to belong to the higher income classes. They were responding not only to life among non-Jews, but to a new way of life that was associated with their rise into the professional and managerial upper-middle classes. Studies have shown time and again that participation in the activities of voluntary organizations increases as one goes up the socio-economic ladder: community service has long been an integral part of the upper-middle-class way of life in America. It is true that Jews in this country maintained a multitude of ethnic and religious organizations long before they aspired to upper-middle-class ways. But as they have moved up the socio-economic ladder, their organizations and the pattern of activities connected with them have gradually been altered to conform to the general American pattern for their new social position. Thus in Park Forest, where much of the activity of the voluntary organizations was in the hands of the women, it was patterned to a considerable extent on the secular upper-middle-class clubs—and, in its social side, on the extra-curricular life of the higher-status college campus.<sup>5</sup> In many ways, the relation of the Sisterhood to the Temple resembled that of a sorority to its college community.

Many Jewish residents were not always as ready to contribute funds to the building up of the Jewish community, affix their signatures to membership cards, and in general work as volunteers, as they were to attend parties and dances. Often, people took part only after community leaders had exerted considerable pressure upon them. To organize this captive audience—as Nathan Glazer aptly calls it—required constant appeals to the self-interest of the individual Jew as well as to his “community spirit.” Even so, interest in the community tended to remain sluggish. Only a handful of people organized the Temple; fund-raising for its building was planned by a professional public relations counsel, and involved dinners, the sending of letters, and considerable personal coaxing. It is said that the contributions of no more than fifty people really built the Temple.

Much of this pressure came from the “Jewish professionals” in the community. Their persistence, and the support given them by the Jewish officers of American Community Builders, undoubtedly hastened the growth of the Jewish organizations. Perhaps without them the Temple would not have been started, so great was the indifference—it is said—of Park Forest's Jewish community at large. It may be that the presence and effect of the leadership provided by the “Jewish professionals” distinguishes Park Forest somewhat from other Jewish suburban communities. However, the pressure for participation is a familiar phenomenon in other communities, and the resistance to it in these is just as ambiguous as it seems to be in Park Forest.

Living among non-Jews as they do, suburban Jews can't and won't surrender completely the allegiance, no matter how tenuous, they retain to the formal Jewish community. Despite complaints, even from some leaders, that the community was over-organized and that there was too much fund-raising, the mood of the Park Forest Jewish group was such that its members continued to be amenable to community pressure, though sometimes only grudgingly. It might be said that while the community's interest in the institutions developed by its leaders was weak enough to require the application of pressure, its cohesion as a Jewish group was sufficiently strong to tolerate this pressure.

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It remains nonetheless true that the basic, underlying impulse for the establishment of a formal Jewish community in Park Forest was the desire of parents who felt themselves to be Jews to have their children grow up feeling Jewish too. Because parents could not or would not provide a Jewish atmosphere and cultural environment at home, they supported the community's organizations, schools, and Temple—and endured the community's pressures. While some kind of Jewish community would probably have been set up in Park Forest even without this motive, such a community, lacking this concern about the children, would have had fewer organizations, a much smaller scale of participation, no synagogue building or permanent rabbi, and perhaps no congregation.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the community has taken its present form largely because of the capacity of the Temple to respond to the demands of its members and adapt itself to the new Jewish situation in the suburbs. Thus the Temple was able to overcome the loss of its original function as an adult house of worship and study by requiring that the children make up a large part of its congregation at services. At the same time, it has been able to retain adult support by ceasing to insist upon the attendance of adults and resting content with their presence in large numbers only on the High Holidays. On the other hand, the Temple attracts adults by offering itself as a center of voluntary social activities. In doing so it also acknowledges the major role women now play in the formal Jewish community, and provides them with an opportunity to participate in what was previously a male organization. The men still make the major decisions regarding the operation of the Temple, but have otherwise retreated into the background. The gap left by their withdrawal from religious affairs, and by the women's lack of familiarity with such affairs, has been filled in large part by an increase in the functions and authority of the rabbi.

But the Temple could not have sustained its present level of operations and retained the community support it needed if it had not eventually set up a school—which remains the primary institution for the Jewish residents of Park Forest. The Temple's need to compete with the community Sunday school can thus be understood as a matter of institutional survival, although its rapid triumph in that competition can only be explained by its capacity to satisfy the present desires of the Jewish residents of Park Forest.

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It seems clear that what has happened in the Park Forest Jewish community over the past six years is not a “revival” of Jewish-centered life, but rather the adaptation of Jewish life to the suburban environment. Jewish life has become more visible because it has been taken out of the rather isolated urban Jewish neighborhood, because its participants have attained a social and economic level where organized communal activity is more highly prized, and because parents require institutions and visible symbols with which to maintain and reinforce the Jewish identification of their children.

In the course of this transformation of their lives as Jews, the Jews of Park Forest have probably not become more religious or more interested in Judaic culture. They may have become a more cohesive community, but the cohesion rests primarily on the parents’ desire to confirm the Jewish identity of their children, and it may fall off when this is assured. Moreover, it must be remembered that this report has been focused on the 40 per cent of the Jews of Park Forest who belong to the Temple, the 10 per cent who support the Board of Jewish Education, the 15 per cent active in the Sisterhood, and the 3 per cent who attend services regularly. These, though probably larger than the equivalent minorities in the city, are still minorities as regards the total Jewish community. The majority of Park Forest’s Jews have not been considered in this study: they are Jews whose chief connection with the formal Jewish community (which may well be only a temporary one) consists in sending their children to its Sunday school.

The community revolves around its Sunday school students, and changes in the community may be expected when enough of these students reach the age of Bar Mitzvah. Unless they continue their Jewish education, or unless they are replaced by a new crop of youngsters, the Temple may have to seek new functions or else lose much of its support. According to the evidence provided by older communities, one such new function could be to provide a social center for those teen-agers who want it and whose parents do not want to expose them to the possibility of intermarriage.

Whether the Temple would succeed in holding the Jewish teen-agers in this way depends to some extent on the latter’s relations with their non-Jewish contemporaries. But in the long run, holding on to today’s children—and, indirectly, to their parents—hinges to a considerable extent on the way in which the Temple, the Sunday schools, and the parents themselves—as well as the secular institutions of the community—influence the youngsters’ feeling of Jewishness over the next few years.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This was partially supported by the report that in 1954, when the developers opened a subdivision of more expensive (\$19,000) homes, there was such a rush of Jewish newcomers, as well as of other Jews who had been living in rented apartments in Park Forest, that part of the section became (or seemed about to become) a densely settled Jewish neighborhood, and was banteringly described as “little Jerusalem” by Jews themselves.

<sup>2</sup> The remaining seven families were “mixed marriages.” Mixed-marriage families made up 14 per cent of

this sample, the same proportion as was found in the 100-family sample studied in 1949. As in 1949, however, there were probably still other mixed-marriage families in Park Forest that had renounced all Jewish identification.

<sup>3</sup> For a sociological definition of latter-day Judaism and “Jewishness,” and a discussion of these over-all trends, see “American Jewry, Present and Future,” by the same author, in COMMENTARY, May 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Several of these were published in COMMENTARY. See Harry Gersh’s “The New Suburbanites of the ’50’s,” March 1954; Evelyn Rossman’s (*pseud.*) “The Community and I,” November 1954, and “The Community and I: Two Years Later,” March 1956; and Morris Freedman’s “New Jewish Community in Formation,” January 1955. Nathan Glazer’s general analysis of the suburban Jewish community appears in his “The Jewish Revival in America: Part I,” December 1955.

<sup>5</sup> The present rabbi had directed a campus Hillel foundation before coming to Park Forest, and while this was not a factor in his selection, it may have been one in his ability to gain the community’s support as rapidly as he did.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the two largest Christian congregations in the village, the Catholics and the United Protestants, began their building program with schools and have not yet constructed church buildings. (To some extent, this is probably a matter of economic allocation, for school buildings can be used for services whereas churches cannot easily be used for teaching.) Whether or not this is a reflection of Catholic and Protestant child-orientation, too, I do not know.

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## About the Author

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