



## Changes in Society

Jewish Society

The Market Driven Community

Jewish Winnipeg Demographics

Innovative Approaches to Judaism & Jewish Life

A Brief History of Jewish Winnipeg

**Changes in Society**

*Society has changed. Tremendous leaps in industrialization and technology have changed the way people build communities and civil society since the first settlements in North America. The way individuals relate to each other and to organizations has a significant impact on how communities need to adapt over time in order for Jewish community to remain relevant now and in the future. The following is the first in a series of papers prepared for use as background for the various community planning efforts undertaken by the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg in 2016.*

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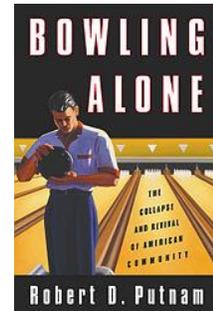
**Key Trends:**

- **“It’s who you know.” Social capital** is the term that describes the people you know who help you get through life. Dispersion of social capital, which is derived from many small group interactions today, requires more interactions of less depth than it did 40 years ago when. Individuals rely more on personal networking and less on extended family. Personal networking as a way of attaining sufficient social capital permeates society.
- **Membership** as an operating concept is out of favour, with a focus on consumerism. A modern community is made up of consumers more so than simply loyal, ideologically aligned members.
- The rise of **individuality** over group identity affects denominations and churches, as well as political parties and other entities that rely on membership as their primary operating model. Individual spirituality is enhanced by special interest groups with common perspective, giving rise to a multitude of variations on the traditional church model.
- Reduction in **community cohesion** and identity in relation to religious and ethnocultural institutions affects membership rates and funding models.
- **Technological change** has revolutionized the people communicate, the nature and definition of community, the accessibility of resources and spirituality, the development of new tribes that replace industrialization and mass marketing with leadership and common interest.
- Institutions that buck the trend foster small, special interest groups that **network** to form the larger organization. They create bridging social capital.
- **Philanthropy** has moved from charity to social investment, from a trust and obligation model to a methodology for pursuing social change and family interests.

## **Social Capital – small group connections versus institutional loyalties**

### **Forty-five year trend away from membership:**

Research like Robert D Putnam's, Bowling Alone, Steven M Cohen and Arnold Eisen's, The Jew Within trace changes in society generally and in Jewish communities in North America particularly away from institutional membership and towards individual expressions of spirituality. The research tracks lower rates of civic, organizational, and religious involvement in the latter third of the twentieth century. Even dinner parties are down from 40 years earlier.

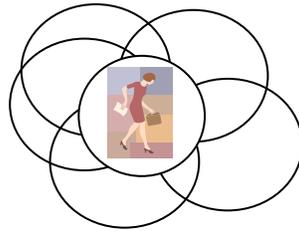


### **What is social capital?**

**In the 1950s**



**Today...**



It used to be that you lived your life in one place and joined a church or synagogue, and the men went bowling together while the women planned fundraising bazaars. Social capital derived from a few circles of engagement, and from extended families that probably lived close by.

Sixty years later you are more likely to be mobile, both geographically and economically. You have lots of contacts and friends from different sources and circles. Your social capital derives from playgroups, carpool, business networking breakfast groups, sports teams both for adults and kids, and many more of these activities. These groups are far less likely to overlap than 60 years ago. It is in small groups that individuals build social capital, i.e. the network of contacts and friends that support them in times of need, in business, in daily routines. This small group networking is sometimes referred to as **bonding social capital**.

With the reduction of social cohesion through membership that provides identity, comes a reduction in social capital, i.e. the collection of close contacts one relies on to get through the day. Or perhaps it is rather a dispersion of social capital requiring that one individual maintain many more contacts than a few decades ago. With this change there is likely less depth in most of those relationships and an increased personal cost to maintain all the contacts needed for daily life.

**Community building and developing social capital:** Putnam traces the decline of social capital in America, the way people connect with each other over common purpose or interests and develop supportive circles of contacts that help each other. Civil society depends on social capital.

In Better Together, Putnam et al provide models for organizations that buck the trend of diminishing institutional membership. How do they do it? They succeed with lots of one on one engagement and a style of relational organizing much like old time labour organizers. “I’ll talk to twenty people and you talk to twenty people and then we’ll get back together to see whether we have enough support for going to the owners.” The group provides meaningful connections through models similar to the labour union organizing model from the 1920s - in small groups, one on one conversations, common interests, and lots of listening to the needs of the members.

Examples of this kind of effective building of social capital with small groups and strong relationships is familiar to Jews from youth groups and other community organizations, but some examples result in evil or criminal purposes, like gang affiliation. So success requires alignment of the long term goal with the needs of the group and doing the right thing.

*Jewish community experience with the model of union organizing from political socialism is extensive, especially from Winnipeg in the early part of the twentieth century, and should be familiar from our own family stories. But if you didn’t hear about it from a grandparent, you can study the impact of the Winnipeg General Strike, and the role of Jewish community members in ensuring that everyone’s voice was heard.*

**Networking and Mentoring:** Sheryl Sandberg’s book, *Lean In*, highlights the modern trend to adapt what used to be “an old boys’ network” to everyone else in the marketplace. Women in particular are expected to network professionally to find the right job and personally to find the right carpool.

Mentoring programs have been formalized in a wide variety of fields starting with teens in high school, university students, business networking forums, employment networking for immigrants in Canada, and more. Attempts to create community mentoring programs have resulted in more volunteer mentors than “mentees” since similar programs were available through these other means.

But informal networking continues to extend the reach of the community far into the general community whenever needed. Employment networking for immigrants and mentoring of young people in career development happens daily. Jewish communal leaders are always amenable to helping make contact, without the bureaucracy of formal programs.

## 1. Globalism and Technology

*Globalism: is the interconnectedness of physically disparate communities. A phenomenon that is as old as civilization, globalization describes the pace at which globalism increases. Modern technology, particularly the internet and the web and the rise of social media, have brought distant communities in close contact. The pace of globalization is staggering.*

### Common Impact of Technological Change

**Electronic Communication** is preferred both by organizations saving postage and printing costs and recipients who would rather not wade through paper. A physical invitation is now a “treat” for young adults who never receive mail.

**Marketing methods** now revolve around online means. The variety of social media is accelerating faster than most adults can track.

**Fundraising** The “feel good” value of donating online is instant and immediate.

**Social media** has created communities and “tribes” online that change paradigms, and allow individuals to lead, to find like-minded individuals, and change the world.

Tipping opinion is a phenomenon that is described by Malcolm Gladwell, in his book called *The Tipping Point*. While he uses examples as old as the ride of Paul Revere to warn that the “British are coming”, the speed with which popular opinion changes with the rise of internet tools like Twitter, Youtube, Instagram et al is staggering for those who became adults before Facebook redefined “Friends”.

Jewish society will have to keep pace and with Israel at the forefront of these technologies, Jewish communities have the resources to do so. They require will and leadership.

## **2. Affiliation and Identity**

It used to be possible to derive your identity from your denomination or religious affiliation. As the notion of membership wanes, the derivation of identity, much like social capital, comes from multiple sources and individual choices.

Pastor Rick Warren of the famed Saddleback Church offers his experience for success in his 1995 book. After going door to door to meet the people of his community, he writes:

I didn't meet a single person who said, "I don't go to church because I don't believe in God." However I *did* meet a lot of people who said, "I believe in God, but I don't feel church has anything I need."

**Saddleback Church:** While regular Sunday services at Saddleback Church attract capacity crowds of several thousand members to a relaxing and entertaining spiritual experience, the Church actually engaged 45,000 Christians who consider Saddleback as "their church home" (pg 120, Better Together). Even if you never visit Saddleback's service, there are over 200 "ministries" that allow you to connect on your own terms. Small groups with common interest engage in activities that include some element of religious study or prayer but also include bringing together like groups of people to experience community and spirituality in a comfortable environment. The description of a group of young families that meets on Friday night to learn together and talk in someone's living room while the kids watch movies and eat in another room, is somewhat reminiscent of family Shabbat dinners. The model of encouraging and supporting this wide variety of small group meetings – providing material and networking, and more – is a significant role model in modern successful organizations.

**Bridging social capital** is a term that is sometimes used to describe the strength gained through networking small groups together either as a single larger entity or as an association. For instance chapters of a national organization, coalitions, labour unions, etc.

### 3. Spirituality – The Rise of Individuality

Contrary to popular perception, spirituality is on the rise, though less through traditional institutions. In 1985 Robert Bellah's Habits of the Heart outlined a significant change in the nature of modern society with the rise of individualism, particularly with respect to religion and individual choices for spiritual expression.

**Individuality vs collectivity:** Compared to the post-war society of the last century who joined clubs to meet their friends, the younger generations in today's society are less inclined to be a member of a formal organization, more inclined to define spirituality for themselves, and much more likely to use the internet.



With a large and aging generation of baby boomers, fully one third of the Canadian population, are more committed to personal autonomy and expressive individualism than traditional synagogue attendance. Their children, the Echo generation, and younger adults tend to believe in God but not in institutions, forcing change on traditional mechanisms for transmission of traditions like synagogues, which are failing to reach a large number of Jewish adults.

A study called OMG! How Generation Y Is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era, and other literature referenced in this paper, all track the change in North American Society, echoed in Jewish communities, towards individual expressions of spirituality that supersede loyalty to groups such as churches or synagogues.

#### 4. **Philanthropy then and now**

In an age of entitlement and access to everything, financial decisions are made as **investments** in the family's interests. For those who are fortunate to have sufficient funds to make charitable decisions as well pay fees or memberships, these will be viewed as a kind of investment, an investment in what will provide the best improvement in the world as well as provide some personal satisfaction. Volunteerism may be viewed as an equally valuable contribution as financial support. Jewish organizations compete with health based research, the arts, and recreation for discretionary charity dollars.

#### **Changing reasons why people give – philanthropy, marketing or social**

**entrepreneurship:** A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. Modern donors are more inclined to be social entrepreneurs than past generations who gave just because it was the right thing to do. They are also less likely to simply trust charitable organizations and their leadership – for obvious reasons. And there are many times the numbers of choices for philanthropy demanding their attention than even twenty-five years ago.

“I’ll give you \$x, if you are doing “y”.” Younger generations want to make a difference but they want to see the difference. Putnam observes “Religious involvement is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy.” This phenomenon is also observed in the 2013 report of the Pew Research Center “A Portrait of Jewish Americans”

**Online donation:** The instant gratification achieved through crowdfunding, and online campaigns with up to the minute totals, and immediate responses thanking you for your support and telling real stories has changed the way fundraisers operate.

#### 6. **Defining Community**

Courtesy of Chris Yaren: the definition presented by Peter Block:

*Community is about the experience of belonging. We are in community each time we find a place where we belong. In the broadest sense Belonging, is the experience of being at home. It is opposite of thinking that wherever I am, I would be better off somewhere else. It also has to do with being an owner: something belongs to me. To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of the community. It can also be thought of as a longing to be. Being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all that we do. It is the capacity to be present and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled.*

*The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole.*

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