WILLIAMSBURG

A JEWISH COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS AND PATTERNS OF CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF A COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

by

George Kranzler



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This study is published in memory of the late

Wilhelm Weinberg

whose philanthropy and furtherance of the arts, sciences and education have left a lasting memory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to acknowledge debts of gratitude:

To Professor Seymour M. Lipset, whose guidance, counsel and advice enabled me to carry this investigation from its initial stages to completion. Beyond his generous contribution to the crystallization of ideas and the technicalities of research, I am deeply indebted to Professor Lipset for his encouragement in the years during which I had the privilege to work under his sympathetic sponsorship.

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To my teachers, Professor Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Professor Robert M. MacIver, from whose knowledge and scholarship I was privileged to draw inspiration.

To Dr. Sol Frieder, Messrs Richard Netter and Carl Weil, executors of the Wilhelm Weinberg Estate, and to Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung, who made the publication of this study possible.

This study of the Jewish Community of Williamsburg, brought up to date and in a more compact format, is published seven years after its completion and acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph. D. degree. May it contribute to better understanding and stimulate further research in the vital areas of general and Jewish community research.

It is dedicated to my dear wife, without whose infinite patience and helpfulness it could not have been written.

G. K.

Baltimore, Md., August 1961.

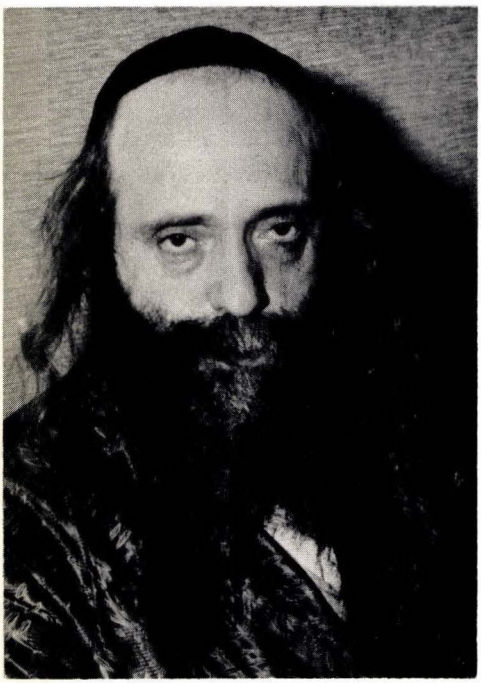
RABBI OF SATMAR
RABBI JOEL TEITELBAUM



RABBI OF LUBAVITCH
RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSOHN



FAMOUS CHASSIDIC LEADERS



RABBI OF KLAUSENBURG
RABBI JEKUTHIEL HALBERSTAM



RABBI OF TZELEM
RABBI LEVI Y. GRUNWALD

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I

INTRODUCTION

1. NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION

RECENT MASS immigration of large ethnic groups and shifts in the general life pattern of the American community focus new attention on the dynamics of group assimilation and community organization,[1] and warrant investigations such as the present.

Unlike most sociological studies in recent years, this investigation does not propose to test a particular hypothesis. Its immediate aim is to add to the substance of sociological knowledge by the description of a special kind of community, whose structure and pattern of change — interesting though they may be — cannot be generalized to apply to other communities as well. But as the report of the anthropologist on a primitive society bears significance beyond the pale of its tribal community, certain aspects of organizational change apparent in this study may perhaps throw some light on the forces at play in the general pattern of group dynamics and community organization.

In another respect, too, this investigation does not follow the usual pattern of current sociological research. For, while it does not claim to verify a particular hypothesis, this study cannot accept the trend made popular by the ecological schools, which overemphasize the mechanistic ecological and economic determination of the basic community structure.

The present investigation follows the approach of Walter Firey in *Land Use in Central Boston.*[2] There Firey has shown that the spatial organization of the community of Boston is largely the product of valuational factors originating in the historical and cultural back-

1. Cf. Nathan Glazer, "America's Ethnic Pattern," *Commentary,* New York, April 1953, Vol. 15, No. 4, and Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism,* unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1953, p. 13. Since published by Free Press, (Glencoe, Ill.), 1955.

2. Walter Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston,* Cambridge 1947.

NB: Publishers of reference sources are listed in the appended bibliography.

ground of its population, and that many of its essential features clearly contradict the economic and ecological interests and forces which are commonly said to determine the physical structure of a community.

With Firey we believe that:

> "Social systems choose locations not only in response to interests, but also in response to values which are derived from broader, larger cultural systems which have found articulation in spatial area." [3]

Yet going beyond the mere physical phase, the description of the community in this investigation will attempt to offer the evidence of at least one instance for the view of Robert M. MacIver, who claims:

> "Social systems are directly or indirectly the creations of cultural values... and every change in valuations on the part of social groups registers itself in institutional changes."[4]

The primary value pattern of the community under investigation is a religious system with its own ideal-types of social conduct, social institutions, economic forms, and Weltanschauung. Since we are dealing with a modern, living community, the interaction of the social and cultural forces in the process of change that took place in its basic structure is complex. As Professor MacIver has further pointed out:

> "The unity of the social structure corresponds to a diversity of social attitudes and interests. These attitudes and interests are not only variant, and variantly influential, they are also in part conflicting, as well as in part cooperant." [5]

From the diversity of conforming and conflicting aspects a definite pattern of concomitance seems to emerge in the analysis of the three main phases of the community which bears out the general stress on valuational determination underlying this study.

At no time, however, must the accent on the valuational configuration of the community life be interpreted to imply the complete absence of the other factors. The general economic, ecological and cultural forces operative in the American community at large, are also active and effective in the community here investigated. They have a definite bearing on its life pattern, as will be shown throughout, particularly since the community, which happens to be an Orthodox Jewish one, lives side by side with a wider community that is not Orthodox, and partially not Jewish. It is only as a reaction to the overemphasis on coercive, mechanistic determinants in most communal

3. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
4. Robert M. MacIver, *Society* (New York, 1941), p. 465.
5. Robert M. MacIver, ibid, p. 465.

research, that this study tries to show that in at least one type of community the change to a more intensive valuational pattern resulted in increasing disassociation from the forces and institutions that differ from or conflict with these values. But despite this bias of emphasis no conscious attempt has been made to minimize the influence of the economic and ecological factors that helped to shape the pattern of community life in Jewish Williamsburg, the community under investigation.

This study follows the process of change that took place in the residential and economic patterns, in the social structure, the family and the synagogue pattern of this community throughout the fifty years of its existence.

The material for this study has been gathered in fifteen years of intensive and systematic participant observation. This closeness to the object of investigation may perhaps be responsible for some personal bias acquired in the years of intimate association with the various groups, forces, and institutions. Yet at the same time it offers a deeper understanding of the currents and crosscurrents of the complex of a living community, some of which will escape the objective outside investigators.

Selective use of questionnaires, depth interviews, life histories, and the juxtaposition of comparable aspects from key institutions, groups, or individuals of the three major phases combine to offer a picture of the community in flux that is frequently impressionistic and experiential. This form of presentation will provide a better perspective of the process of change and of the forces at work in the warp and woof of the economic, social and cultural patterns in transition. Most of all it focuses attention on the human aspect in the interplay of the social groups and their spiritual values, which is a basic requirement for the understanding of the dynamics of a social system.

Although this investigation deals with a special kind of community, one of a plurality of cultural patterns to develop in the inclusive American society, the insight gained from this human perspective may perhaps be applicable to other social groups built around cultural value systems.

2. THE COMMUNITY SELECTED [6]

Williamsburg, the community of this investigation, is located in a small residential area of Old Brooklyn, off the Williamsburg Bridge,

6. Throughout this study Jewish Williamsburg is called a community, in line with Professor MacIver's definition:

"Wherever any group, small or large, live together in such a way

parallel to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It comprises about fifty blocks with an approximate population of 20,000[7] people. It is one of the important Jewish neighborhoods of Metropolitan New York, where immigrants and their children have become part of America in the course of the past half century, particularly since the end of World War I. Here they created the pattern that satisfied their spiritual needs, derived from the clash or amalgam of their Old and New World values. This pattern centered about the synagogue, although the degree to which this was true varied with the different groups of immigrants.

At this point the main problem of this study poses itself. By the normal pattern of succession of Jewish neighborhoods in New York, Williamsburg should long ago have declined into a slum district like all the areas adjoining it. By the testimony of two major studies of the neighborhood conducted in the Mid-1930's,[8] almost half of its economically better-off population had moved away, business had declined beyond recovery, and houses and stores were boarded up in the unmistakable manner of an area that is on its way out. Yet in less than ten years the Jewish community of Williamsburg completely reversed the process of economic and ecological collapse foreshadowed in the early and Mid-1930's.

What was it that attracted many new residents to this neighborhood, though it had not a single park, not a single playground, and suffered from the smoke and dust of adjoining industrial belts and a stifling climate? What created a worse housing shortage there than in other comparable neighborhoods? And what was it that exaggerated the value of its relatively poor real estate far above its true value and the general market price?

The answer proposed by this study is that a large number of American Jews and newcomers flocked into the brownstone barracks of Williamsburg because they desired its concentrated Jewish atmosphere and its institutions of learning for their young. By income and education a good many of them belonged in the higher-level communities. Yet they valued the religious aspect above the social and esthetical inconveniences. Only when social pressures became too strong for

that they share... the basic conditions of a common life, we call that group a community. The mark of a community is that one's life *may* be lived wholly within it, that all one's social relationships *may* be found within it.... A Community is an area of common living." (Society. op. cit., p. 8ff.)

7. See footnote 3, p. 22 in manuscript.

8. Study of *Jewish Community of Williamsburg,* Brooklyn, by Jewish Welfare Board, 1936, unpublished, and *Williamsburgh,* by Helen Logan, N. Y. 1940, pp. 16, 89.

the members of the upper income groups did they move to Crown Heights, Boro Park, or Far Rockaway, in New York City, where communities were building up that resembled Williamsburg in spirit, without its physical and social disadvantages.

This study will attempt to analyze the process of change in the Jewish community of Williamsburg since its origin at the beginning of the century. Particular stress is laid on the last fifteen years, when the intense valuational attitude of the new population reversed the process of deterioration.

Each chapter will deal with the three main phases of the community, which will be referred to here, colloquially, as:

Phase I: *Williamsburg* (-1938)
" II: *Refugeetown* (1939-1948)
" III: *Hunksville* (1949-)

3. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Williamsburg, formerly spelled Williamsburgh, was named after a Colonel Williams who surveyed the territory between Wallabout Bay and Bushwick Creek in the early nineteenth century. In 1851 Williamsburgh became an incorporated city; and in 1855 it was merged into the then still independent City of Brooklyn.[9]

The Williamsburg[10] of the present study refers to the Jewish community living in the area bounded by Wythe Avenue, Brooklyn Broadway and Heyward Street, and centered along Bedford, Lee, Marcy and Division Avenues and their cross-streets. This is the only neighborhood which showed some gain in population and increase in average

9. *Comp.:. History of Williamsburg*, by J. A. Jewel, New York, (undated),
Eastern District of Brooklyn, by Eugene L. Armbruster, N. Y., 1942
History of Eastern District of Brooklyn, by Henry R. Stiles, N. Y. 1897,
History of Kings County of Brooklyn, by Henry R. Stiles, N. Y. 1884.

10. The Williamsburg with which this study deals, does not refer to the entire area that goes officially under this name and includes the territory ranging from the East River and the Brooklyn Navy Yard in the west to Greenpoint in the northeast, Stuyvesant Heights and Willoughby in the south, and Bushwick and Ridgewood in the southeast. This Old Williamsburg, which is the locale of Betty Smith's famous *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, and of Daniel Fuch's earlier and less popular, but brilliant novel, *A Summer in Williamsburg*, was already in the Twenties a "gray and dreary slum, the home of the

income during the 1920's and early 1930's, when the rest of Old Williamsburg went into a steep decline as residential area, losing up to fifty percent of its population.[11]

From the very outset this particular neighborhood west of Broadway had been a choice location for the higher social strata of Brooklyn. Bedford Avenue was the seat of the most exclusive[12] clubs of the borough, and of the Seneca Club, headquarters of the powerful Kelly machine of the Democratic party. Wealthy industrialists and professionals owned houses in the once tree-shaded sidestreets. Most of the trees and the social elite are gone. They left Williamsburg in the years before and after World War I, when Jewish elements began to settle there in larger numbers. Up to that time only the wealthiest Jews (of German extraction) had resided there, and had established congregations in some of the large churches sold by the Christian owners because their members had left the neighborhood. Even a reform Congregation had been formed then, the first in Brooklyn.[13] This Jewish Reform Temple, Beth Elokim, located at 274 Keap Street, lost its function when these high-income Jews moved on to better neighborhoods. In 1921 the building was sold to a congregation of Orthodox Russian and Polish Jews who had begun to settle in Williamsburg in large numbers in the years after World War I, and who subsequently effected a complete change in the character of the community.

In the beginning of the 1920's Williamsburg became really Jewish Williamsburg as an Orthodox community of the moderate "Ashkenazic" Russian Polish type. By 1930, the formerly predominant non-Jewish population had shrunk to an estimated third of the approximately 20,000 people who lived there;[14] and those who remained withdrew mostly to the outer zones of the section. Consequently, the district turned into a typical lower and low-middle class Jewish neighborhood, in which workers, employees, and small businessmen replaced most of the higher class Jewish and non-Jewish

poorest of New York's Jews, a social group even less favored than those who lived in Manhattan's Lower East Side."

Irving Howe, "D. Fuchs: Escape from Williamsburg," *Commentary*, July '48, Vol. 6, No. 1.

11. U. S. Census — Williamsburg Study of Jewish Welfare Board, (New York, 1936), p. 57(a).

12. "The top hats, tails and carriages are as plentiful as on Fifth Ave." Unidentified-quote in *Williamsburg*, by H. Logan op. cit.

13. Sam P. Abelow: *History of Brooklyn Jewry*, N. Y. 1937.

14. Estimated on the basis of the proportion of Jewish children in the local public and parochial schools.

population. Numerous synagogues were established throughout the section, the largest in former church buildings. Hebrew schools and organizations were formed, and many of the club houses, beginning with the exclusive Hanover Club on Bedford Avenue, were taken over by Jewish organizations. Soon Williamsburg became one of the neighborhoods which attracted those elements which had outgrown the Jewish immigrant communities of the Lower East Side, Old Williamsburg, (east and south of Broadway), Brownsville, and the East Bronx socially and economically.

One of the oldest members of Jewish Williamsburg described the change in the communal pattern in these words:[15]

> "I was one of the first Jews who lived in this neighborhood. When I moved here fifty years ago this was a very ritzy section, and only the very rich resided here. Walking down Hewes Street from Bedford Avenue, was like walking into a park, with trees and well-cared-for gardens on both sides of the street. Imagine this, once my son saw a Jew with beard and *Peyes* on Taylor and Lee, and the Christian children were running after him, throwing stones and calling him names. He was amazed and disturbed and came running to me for an explanation.[16] It's quite different now. Every second man wears a beard and the children on Lee Avenue are Jewish and most of them have a *yarmulke* and go to a Yeshivah. But it took a long time for all this to happen. When I came here, Williamsburg was still a "midbar," a desert, for Jews. By the beginning of the First World War there were already different kinds of congregations, and the Hewes Street and South Fifth street synagogues were located in the huge church buildings. But Williamsburg became really Jewish after the war, when the richer Jews moved to Flatbush and Crown Heights, and the plain people moved here

15. The transliteration of Yiddish or Hebrew words, as stated in Zborowsky and Herzog's, *Life Is With People*, (N. Y. 1952) is difficult because of the many conflicting methods. Basically this study has tried to adopt the system generally found in the Anglo-Jewish press, rather than the one which uses the scholarly phonetic symbols. Standard terms are italicized, particularly when used the first time. Terms, such as Torah, which have become part of the English language, are used in their common spelling. Generally the Neo-Hebraic Sephardic system of pronunciation has been preferred in the transliteration.

16. "The migration of Jews into Williamsburg and Greenpoint was not received gracefully by the old settlers. The bearded Jew who ventured far from his home, was not certain of returning without scars on his face made by rowdies. Nor was the unbearded Jew safe .... Lastly the increasing number of Jews and their readiness to give blow for blow cowed the hooligans." Sam P. Abelow, *History of the Jews of Brooklyn*, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.

> from the East Side and other neighborhoods of "Greene." The stores in the streets changed owners and carried Jewish merchandise, foods, and religious articles. For us who had known Williamsburg before, this was a wonderful change. But, of course, it was never as Orthodox or as "fanatical" as it is now. We had no "Glatt Kosher." And most of our children went to the public schools, even though the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath was founded in the late Twenties and attracted students from everywhere. There were movies all over, which are practically all gone. And there were dance halls and poolrooms for the young. But still there were really *"baale-battishe"* Jews living here and many *Talmide Chachomim.* Their huge *Seforim-Shrank,* libraries, which now gather dust in the siderooms of the *shuls,* were all used then. It was a really fine Jewish life here in Williamsburg."

The impressions of this old-timer are borne out by the data. Jewish communal life in Williamsburg flourished during the 1920's. It declined only in the 1930's, after the crash and the depression had affected many of both the lower and higher-income group, and when the richest elements and the younger generation moved to better neighborhood, or sections where they would not be bound to the Orthodox life pattern that dominated Jewish Williamsburg, though to a considerably lesser degree than it has in the community's later development.

Toward the end of the 1920's and during the 1930's the moderate Chassidic Galician and Polish Jews began to settle in Williamsburg in larger numbers. They organized their *Shtieblach,* small makeshift synagogues, in stores, basements and flats. A few even had their own *Rebbes,* though all of them were of minor stature, compared to the famous Chassidic leaders who came to Williamsburg during the late 1940's. This new element soon made itself felt. Though not as extreme as the later newcomers, it brought a warmer, more intensively religious spirit to Williamsburg, which until then had been dominated by the more restrained, formal and rational spirit of the Ashkenazic Russian-Polish Jews of the earlier years. The large parochial school which they founded, grew by leaps and bounds and developed in a few short years into a major institution with a national reputation, replacing the Hebrew schools commonly associated with the Ashkenazic type of congregation. The pattern of customs and mores which had satisfied the Orthodoxy of the earlier elements, did not meet their Chassidic standards. Gradually many of the practises accepted before their influence was felt (especially in the social realm), were no longer considered proper for the Proper Williamsburger. More intensively Orthodox youth movements displaced the moderate general organizations. Due to their relatively low economic status during the difficult years, it was a long time before members of the Chassidic group

assumed some of the community leadership held by the Russian Polish group.

When the first German and Austrian refugees began to settle in Williamsburg, the depression of the 1930's was still effective; but soon afterward, the beginning of the war in Europe changed everything. Both the old and the new elements were able to take advantage of the boom. The diamond industry, in particular, brought to New York by Belgian refugees, most of them Orthodox, benefitted the Jewish population of Williamsburg, and raised the community's standard of living, and with it the amount of money available for commercial projects. Although a good many of the wealthier Jews moved to better neighborhoods, they were easily replaced by new leaders from the ranks of both the old and the new population. The latter increased by the day, as new elements from the countries overrun by the Nazis immigrated into the United States. The Orthodox of the middle and lower classes were attracted to Williamsburg because it was a community with the right spiritual climate in which to settle and bring up their children. During those years the Orthodox institutions of Williamsburg grew and developed to larger proportions than could ever have been anticipated even by the optimists among their founders. Their effect on the young, and the general rise in Orthodox standards introduced by the increasingly predominant Czechoslovakian, Polish and Hungarian Chassidic newcomers, intensified the already orthodox community pattern further.

With the end of the World War II, the inmates of the Displaced Persons camps, the concentration camps and the internment camps, as well as their more fortunate comrades who had found temporary haven in every corner of the world, flocked to the United States. Williamsburg again was most attractive to those seeking an intensively Orthodox atmosphere. While the earlier groups of newcomers adjusted themselves into the community's existing institutions, congregations and organizations, and rose within the framework of these organization; especially those who brought with them their own spiritual leaders. The Hungarian groups, especially, which until the 1940's had played a minor part in the communal life of Williamsburg, gained by this wave of immigrants, and they quickly formed their own strong religious centers of the extreme Chassidic type to which they had been accustomed in their old homelands. Among their new leaders were famous Chassidic *Rebbes* who not only brought their own followers with them, but also attracted a considerable following from among the earlier groups.

The influence of these extreme groups grew rapidly and attracted many of both the younger and older elements among the natives

and earlier immigrants. On the other hand quite a few of those who were unwilling to go along with the intensive form of communal life introduced by the newcomers, moved away as quickly as they could find accommodations in other, less extreme Jewish neighborhoods. Others, especially of the original Russian-Polish group, voiced their open resentment and created occasional conflicts or tensions. Since both groups agree on the theoretical principles of the Jewish faith, and the application of the laws of the Torah to actual life situations, and their differences are only a matter of the degree to which they adhere to this application, there could not be any serious conflict between the more or less Orthodox factions. By their numerical and spiritual strength, the new Hungarian elements were able to impose a large part of their extreme pattern of practical Orthodoxy on communal life, in the synagogue, on the local economic scene and in the social structure and general valuation.

By the end of the 1940's, when the frenzy of the postwar phase and its subsequent brief regression had subsided into a more normal situation, many of the newcomers had worked their way into influential positions in the community by virtue of their economic and social adjustment. By 1949, there was no longer any question that the extreme Chassidic newcomers, led by world famous Chassidic *Rebbes,* had replaced the majority of the former leaders. They took the initiative in many areas of religious and practical life which had previously been neglected for lack of funds, courage, or zeal on the part of a leadership which lacked the unifying and organizing power available to the Chassidic leaders. Numerous religious institutions were established. New businesses were built up and made popular far beyond the immediate community. Trades which had been plied by Orthodox Jews since the years of the early immigrants, were taken up by the newcomers. Within a short time they were able to establish large communal centers in the heart of Williamsburg. Consequently, Williamsburg became the hub of this extreme Orthodox type of religious activity. Despite the fact that many of the original residents and earlier refugees and Displaced Persons moved to better and more moderate Jewish neighborhoods, housing conditions became even worse than during the war years. Rent and real estate prices rose to twice the level prevalent in other comparable neighborhoods.[17]

17. Since the end of Phase I, when the Orthodox elements comprised only about a third of the Jewish community, they have become a good two thirds of the community because of the departure of the old elements and the increasing number of Orthodox newcomers who settle in Williamsburg.

Above all other realms, the religious and cultural life of the community was affected by this intensification of the customs and mores. A holiday in Williamsburg became a sensation for strangers, and an experience unparalleled even for those who had known Chassidic life in Europe. "I have never seen or heard of anything like this at home," remarked an oldtimer critically, as he viewed the all-night spectacle of the *Simchath Torah* celebration on Bedford Avenue. He thought of his home town, which had never seen busy streets like Bedford Avenue blocked off for hours, while thousands of Jews, young and old, in Chassidic garb or in the most fashionable American clothes, joined in dancing through the wee houres of the morning. He did not doubt that there was a similar or even more intense form of religious experience in the old European "courts" of the Chassidic *Rebbes.* To find it in the setting of a modern metropolis, and shared by such a variegated multitude of Jews who only twenty years ago were thousands of miles apart, physically and spiritually, was something that might impress even the most critical observer. These high spots of communal life in Williamsburg impress themselves even more strongly on the youth and the adults who are prepared for it by the intensity of the religious attitude throughout the year, and in the daily routine of their private and social life.

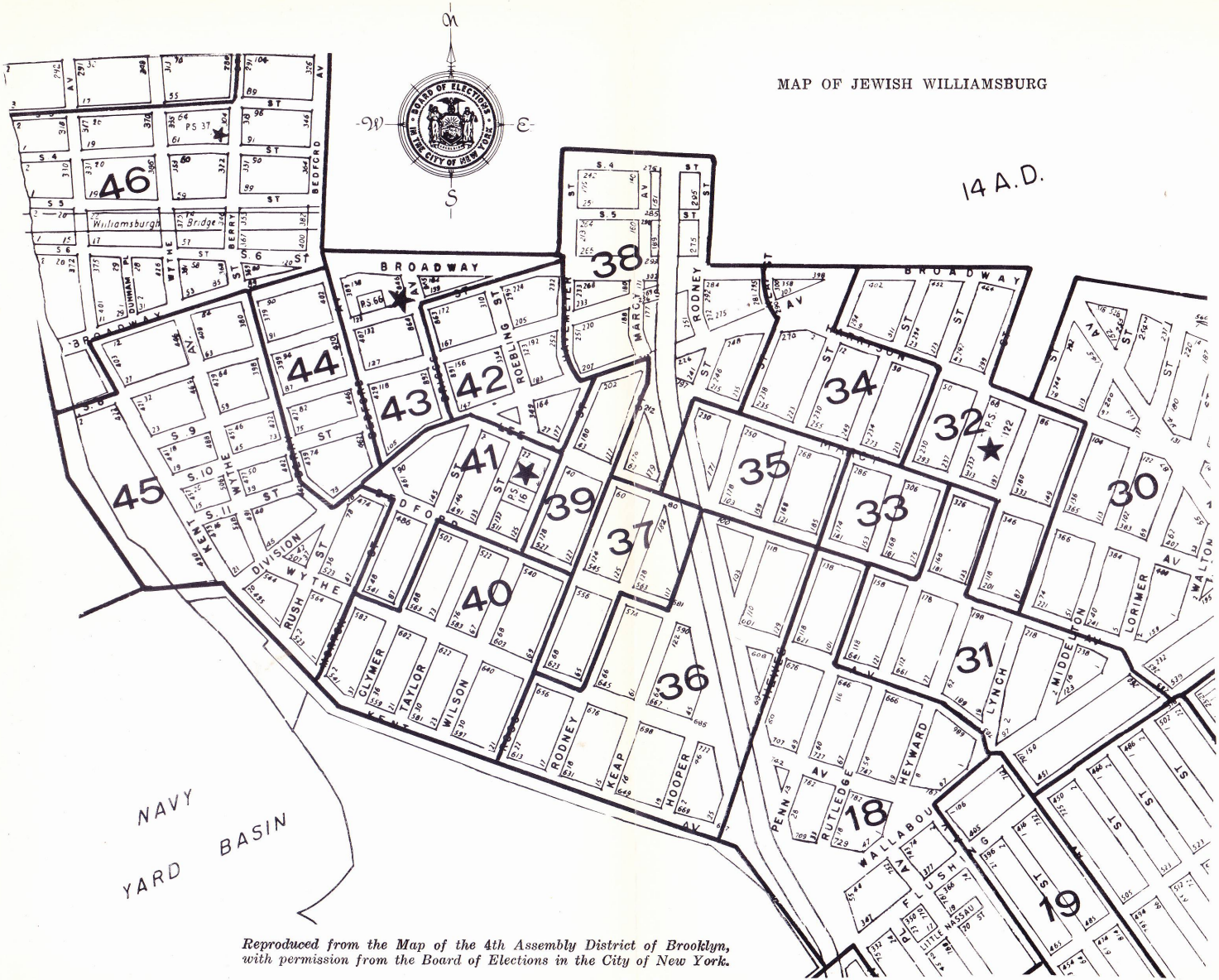
Since the middle of 1952, a new turn of events has ushered in a different, and perhaps final phase of the Jewish community of Williamsburg. The long projected Queens Connecting Highway blueprinted to cut through the very heart of the neighborhood, is finally being undertaken. Ten of the most populated blocks will have to come down. The houses have already been taken over by the city, and their inhabitants given notice of eviction. At this point the tenants have to make a decision as to whether to stay on in Williamsburg, and pay the exorbitant rental which is now charged by landlords, because apartments are at a premium in the blocks which are not touched by the project, or move out of the neighborhood into different Jewish sections. Since most of the Chassidic *Rebbes* are staying on, at least for the time being, more than half of these tenants intend to stay. One of them, a German Jew with a thorough education, both secular and religious, who gave up teaching in favor of a lucrative export business and could afford a better neighborhood, remarked wistfully: "My wife looked for an apartment in Crown Heights. But I was wishing all along to myself that she would not succeed. I gladly pay the $110.00 for the six rooms on Bedford Avenue, knowing that my children will be able to continue their schooling, and grow up here. And I myself have the ideal set-up of a "Kehillah" with

friends who spend their spare time in the study of Torah, and who can be an example of true Judaism to me and my family. What else could I wish for, neighborhoods where my wife and I play bridge? No, siree, for me Williamsburg is good enough, as it is. What will happen later, we shall see."

He expresses the waiting attitude of all those who are worried about the effect of the highway on the neighborhood, but are willing to hold out at any price, for as long as possible. Others are moving away. Much of the building-up process has temporarily stopped because of the uncertainty. The years to come will have to show whether the presence of the famous *Rebbes* will be able to block the almost certain ruin of the neighborhood as a residential area.[18] Low-cost housing projects are planned for Williamsburg, several years after the completion of the highway. It will be interesting to observe the clash of these purely ecological projects with the valuational structure of the community in the present composition.

This rounds out the historical background of the Jewish community of Williamsburg from its past through the present, with a preview of the potential developments of the future. It provides the setting for this investigation of the effect of the valuational factor on the changing patterns of a community in transition, as each newly-assimilated group affected in turn the standards and mores of its society.

18. In Spring 1954 many of the central blocks had been torn down to make way for the Queens Highway project and Williamsburg looks partially as if hit by a few bombs. Yet of the approximately 5000 families thus forced to move, most of the Hungarian Chassidic elements are staying on because they want to live in the neighborhood of their *Rebbe*, and their educational institutions. Other Orthodox elements have mostly moved to Crown Heights or Boro Park. The majority of the non-Orthodox elements move out to the suburban communities of Long Island. See Ch. X, p. 206 for more recent information.



Reproduced from the Map of the 4th Assembly District of Brooklyn, with permission from the Board of Elections in the City of New York.

THE ZONAL STRUCTURE OF WILLIAMSBURG

RP

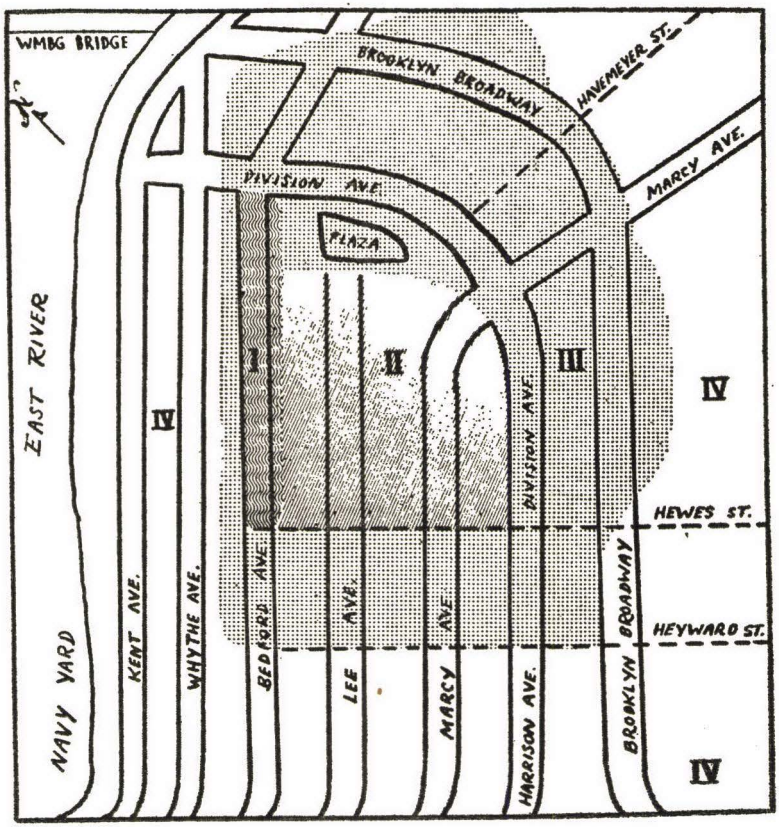


CHART I : ZONAL STRUCTURE OF WILLIAMSBURG

ZONE I

ZONE II

ZONE III

ZONE IV

II

THE RESIDENTIAL PATTERN

1. INTRODUCTION

THE ASPECT of community life which seems least subject to the valuational needs of its population is the residential pattern. As Walter Firey has successfully demonstrated in *Land Use in Central Boston*,[1] even the physical organization of a neighborhood is largely affected by the cultural values of its people. The spatial arrangement, the outer appearance, the real estate value, the housing conditions, the local business locations and status, and the social ranking of the residential pattern must be considered as facets of the total view of a community that is more than a conglomeration of accidental physical proximity.

In the case of the Williamsburg Jewish community, this influence of the value needs of the population on the residential pattern becomes obvious as we follow the changes in the physical appearance and organization of the neighborhood, especially in the years following the depression. For the physical deterioration of Williamsburg had then reached a point at which it seemed doomed, as an "irremediable slum area."[2] The events of subsequent years proved these observers wrong. This will be shown in the description of the three main phases of the Williamsburg community and the effect of each on the residential pattern.

2. THE ZONAL STRUCTURE

The territory of Jewish Williamsburg comprises an area of roughly fifty blocks, and has an approximate population of 20,000 people, if only the main blocks are counted. If the figures of all marginal census tracts are added, the population totals 25,000.[3] It is bordered by Wythe

1. *Op. cit.*
2. *Williamsburgh*, by Helen Logan, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
3. 18,821 for Census tracts 529, 533, and 535
   25,651 if proper portions of marginal tracts are added
   (U. S. Census 1950).

Avenue, the Navy Yard and the East River front to the west and northwest; Brooklyn's Broadway on the north and northeast; and Heyward Street on the south. It is the section immediately adjoining the Williamsburg Bridge on the south, and only the southwestern part of the large area once known as Williamsburg. It is roughly identical with the western half of Postal Zone II, and takes in the whole of Census tracts 535, 533, 529, and parts of tracts 525, 537, 539, and 545.

Williamsburg is primarily a residential area, though the districts adjoining the Jewish community had an era of industrial boom in the years before and after World War I. Only a fringe of factories along the East River front west of Wythe and Kent Avenue remains of this industrial development. Most of the factories closed down during the depression. Three blocks of Broadway, from Marcy Avenue to Bridge Plaza, constitute a better business artery, at the northern border. Both the industial and business districts are extraterritorial in the sense that they have little connection with the population of Jewish Williamsburg. The Jewish community is organized along the four avenues that cut through the area:

Bedford Avenue, a *broad, elm-lined* street with a mixture of Victorian mansions, spacious club houses, churches, brownstones and apartments.

Lee Avenue, the busy local retail street.

Marcy Avenue, a secondary residential artery, along which are located most of the public buildings, Eastern District High School, the large Young Men's Christian Association, and further northeast, beyond the main area of the Jewish community, the local post office. Lastly

Division Avenue, ending at Harrison Avenue, a third-rate retail business and residential street. Fifteen streets cross these four main avenues, and continue further beyond the borders of the immediate community.[4]

The status value of the various parts of the neighborhood was originally graded up the hill from the southeast, the east, and the north as the Jewish population of Old Williamsburg moved across Broadway towards Bedford Avenue, then a largely non-Jewish higher-class residential artery. The further east a block was from the particular part of Bedford Avenue which later became the heart of the Jewish community, the lower its status value was. To the north, west and south, there was and is an abrupt downgrading into the peripheral area of the non-Jewish industrial or slum districts.

Much of this originally clearly-structured social status pattern of the neighborhood has become antiquated in the course of the general

4. See Chart I., p. 23.

downgrading of the area, and the social equalization of the inner zones, Zone I and Zone II,[5] in the course of the population shifts of the past fifteen to twenty years. Bedford Avenue does not rank higher than the blocks around Marcy Avenue, in terms of social status rating for the individual on the basis of his residence, though Marcy Avenue is now practically at the periphery of Jewish communal life.

Except for the better houses and Victorian mansions on the avenues, most of the buildings of the neighborhood are of the three — or four — family type of brownstone houses popular in the first decade of the century. They are interspersed with large apartment houses built during the building boom that ended in the early 1920's.

For purposes of analysis Chart I shows a schematized plan of the area, divided into four major zones: Zone I, which represents the best part of the neighborhood, and centers around Bedford Avenue. Zone II, the second best part, consisting of blocks that adjoin Zone I. Zone III, the lowest of the immediate parts of the neighborhood, and Zone IV, the peripheral area which was the locale of the Jewish community of Williamsburg before the shift towards the western section.

Zone I: Zone I is a long rectangle of ten blocks stretching from Clymer Street to Hewes Street, and centering about Bedford Avenue and the area towards Lee Avenue on the east. West and northwest, only one block separates Zone I from the non-Jewish Zone IV fringe of light and heavy industry that runs parallel to the Navy Yard and the East River, and bends northeast across the dead end of Broadway, and beyond toward Greenpoint. Bedford Avenue, the main artery of Zone I, crosses through the entire borough of Brooklyn. Its upper part, northeast of Zone I, passes through several blocks of Zone II character, approximately up to the Williamsburg Bridge. Beyond that it continues through Zone IV, an area of the lowest residential character, mixed with industry, and populated by Lithuanians, Russians, Poles, Puerto Ricans, and other minority groups. South of Zone I, Bedford Avenue passes through several Zone III and IV blocks.[6]

The part of Bedford Avenue which is associated with the main center of the Jewish community of Williamsburg, starts at the intersection of Division Avenue, Morton and Rush Streets, where the

5. See infra p. 35 ff.

6. From there, beginning after Wallabout and Flushing Avenues, Bedford Avenue enters its worst phase, the notorious Bedford Avenue-Stuyvesant Heights area. After it has passed through the colored belt with its dilapidated houses, sprinkled with light industry and automotive establishments, which stretches up to Eastern Parkway, it continues through the better neighborhoods of Brooklyn all the way out to the Atlantic shore.

Democratic Party of Brooklyn had at one time its main bastion, the Seneca Club, controlled by the powerful Kelly machine. It ends just before the point where the local Republican party has its headquarters in the building of the Theodore Roosevelt Republican Club, at the border of the Jewish and non-Jewish areas. The beginning and end of Zone I are marked by large synagogues, both converted churches which once served the religious needs of the highest social elite of Williamsburg, and even Brooklyn. Of the two other large church structures along this part of Bedford Avenue one served a Protestant congregation whose members came from far to attend services, until the end of 1951, when it was sold to a Jewish school. The fourth church structure has been for sale since 1940, and like some of the dilapidated former mansions at the upper end of this zone, its silent, dark shell of equisitely carved Gothic architecture is a monument to the change in the area.[7] Most of the former private mansions and clubhouses located in Zone I have been converted into Jewish religious, social or organizational centers. There are fifteen large or small synagogues of all types and shades of Orthodox Jewry situated along the ten blocks of Bedford Avenue, making it the main religious artery, as well as the focus of Williamsburg's communal and social affairs. For, the synagogues serve at the same time as homes for the Jewish political and social organizations, and provide residences for some of the most famous religious leaders of Orthodox world Jewry.

Beyond that, Bedford Avenue is the social center, the street under whose shady trees one can meet everyone else, particularly in the younger set, as they parade up and down on Friday evenings, Sabbath afternoons and holidays, displaying their newest outfits, and meeting friends or members of the opposite sex.

There are no stores on this part of Bedford Avenue, except three drugstores, which are situated at the beginning, the end, and the middle of Zone I. There are many small, local retail stores in the adjoining parts of Bedford Avenue, above and below Zone I.

The new buildings added to Public School No. 16, at the corner of Bedford and Wilson Street, in 1951, have replaced the worst structure of this Zone and improved it considerably.

Bedford Avenue is also the busiest traffic artery of the neighborhood, though most of the traffic is not local in character and passes through to Greenpoint, Queens and other boroughs.

7. It was purchased by a local real estate company, and was since torn down, to make room for a large apartment house that is yet to built.

ZONE II: Zone II runs parallel to Zone I, and stretches from the block between Bedford and Lee Avenues across Marcy Avenue, up to Division Avenue and its continuation, Harrison Avenue. Most of its houses are of the same quality as the inferior brownstone structures and thirty to forty year-old apartment houses of the Bedford Avenue area. In the course of the decade, after World War II, many of these old-fasioned buildings have been renovated. The overhanging decorated roofs, parapets and high stoops were removed, the lines and general facade were strengthened and covered with stucco, and the high windows were replaced with smaller ones. Similarly, the interiors of these houses were modernized, not so much to raise the level of housing, as to enable the landlords to by-pass the rent ceilings, or to sell the houses at prices far above their true value. Apartments have been at a high premium in Williamsburg since the beginning of World War II, due not only to the general housing shortage, but to the change in the population and in the communal pattern.

Lee Avenue, next to Bedford Avenue the most important street of the community, is the main local shopping artery, with its numerous small and larger stores catering to the immediate needs of the Orthodox Jewish population of Williamsburg. Practically all the bakeries, butcher stores, groceries, delicatessen stores and food markets carry the types of merchandise that meet the strictest standards of Jewish religious law. Like all of the other shops and stores in the immediate area, they are closed on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays — something which is true of few other streets or neighborhoods in New York or the United States. This observance of the Sabbath by the local stores is one of the main factors which earned Jewish Williamsburg the name of "The Jerusalem of America."

Both movie theaters, one at the beginning of Lee Avenue, the other close to the end of Zone II, have closed down. The first went out of business in 1939, and was recently purchased by a Viennese refugee congregation to be converted into a synagogue. The other, which functioned until 1951, was bought by the congregation of one of the famous recent arrivals among the Chassidic leaders and was converted into his communal center and personal residence.[8]

Although Lee Avenue is less important than Bedford Avenue as a center of communal activities, it is one of the main business and shopping streets of the neighborhood. It is always filled with delivery trucks, school children and women shopping, pushing carriages and wheeling wire-baskets up and down its slope. Only on Sabbaths and

8. He has since moved to Israel.

holidays is it quiet. Then the focus of local traffic moves to Bedford Avenue.

Only three blocks of Marcy Avenue are part of Zone II. Generally it bears Zone III character, but the streets that cross it continue the residential feautres of Zone II as far as the next avenue. Although the public buildings of the neighborhood are located on Marcy Avenue, it has lost importance both as an attery of communal activities, and as a residential street. It does not reflect the hustle of the Zone I and II streets.

Zone II has the densest population of the entire neighborhood. It is mostly inhabited by people of the lower and upper middle classes, with some admixture of members of the lowest class, while Zone III holds most of the upper- and lower-lower class population. In general there are no differences as to the type of people who live in Zone I or Zone II, and there is no class status attached to either as a residential area. Because Bedford Avenue is the location for most of the professional offices of doctors, lawyers, and dentists, it rates somewhat higher than Zone II on the social scale.

There is, however, one definite distinction which elevates Zone I, particularly Bedford Avenue, above the others — the fact that most major religious leaders have concentrated their private residences and religious centers there. The secondary leaders are located in Zone II, in the streets between Bedford and Division Avenue. One can almost gauge the importance of a religious figure by his proximity to Bedford Avenue. This distinction does not apply at all to the residence of the lay leaders or wealthy[9] class of Williamsburg citizens.

Zone III: Zone III consists of a belt of blocks adjoining Zones I and II on all sides. Until the most recent phase only a third of the blocks west of Bedford Avenue was occupied by members of the Jewish community. But the developments of the last years have extended this zone down to Wythe Avenue.

Though Zone III is still very much a part of Jewish Williamsburg, it represents its lowest level of housing and economic status. Its streets are mixtures of residential and business structures of Zones I and II, in proportion to their distance from these inner areas. Many of its stores have been converted into shops, garages and light manufacturing establishments, particularly in the blocks bordering on Zone IV. Once the most densely-populated zone of the neighborhood, Zone III has lost a good portion of its people, especially since the 1940's. Some of its houses were boarded up, and several blocks have been surrendered to

9. Wealthy in terms of the low middle class standards of Williamsburg, (see Ch. III).

small groups of other minorities, such as Puerto Ricans, in the area that borders on Zone IV. In fact, two of the movies at the outskirts of Zone III, one of them the most popular local theater before 1940, have been taken over by the latter, and show only Spanish pictures. The developments of recent years, described further on, have reversed much of this general deterioration of Zone III.

Zone III contains some of the oldest institutions, synagogues, and population groups of the neighborhood. As most of its inhabitants belong to the working class, its synagogues and religious institutions have lost prestige with the decreasing membership and the shift of communal activities westward toward Bedford Avenue. There is also a large non-Jewish element left over from earlier days, in the marginal, southeastern blocks of Zone II, east of Marcy Avenue. The Catholic Church and parochial school is the active center of this mostly Irish, German and Scottish segment of the population living at the periphery of the Jewish community. The playing of Christmas carols through a loudspeaker system around Christmas time makes a strange contrast to the usual atmosphere of the neighborhood. Other churches of Zone III are either vacant and for sale, or have been converted into synagogues. One church in the center of Zone II has been in the hands of a Negro congregation for years. It is only open on Sundays or on special occasions, when its membership comes from far to attend its services.

The public buildings, Eastern District High School, P. S. 122, the Public Library, the nursery, YMCA and post office, are part of Zone III, or the border area towords Zone IV. They all show signs of the general deterioration of this sector of the neighborhood. The student body of Eastern District High School, which had once prided itself on being among the finest and socially most prominent in the city, recruits its members from the lower or lowest social classes. More than a third of the present registration comes from the adjoining colored neighborhoods. The YMCA is very much out of the local picture. It takes almost no part in the affairs of the community west of Broadway. Its building was said to be for sale several times in recent years. It serves the marginal area rather than the population of the immediate neighborhood.

Three blocks of Brooklyn Broadway, from Keap Street up to Havemeyer Street and the Plaza, are part of Zone III, where it borders on Zone IV. Above and below these few blocks, Broadway is defintely part of Zone IV and outside the Jewish community life of Williamsburg. Even the short section of it that boasts of better business establishments, is, as stated before, almost extraterritorial; for much of its activity, of its hustling business life, stems from thee population east, north and south of the Jewish community. The women of Jewish

Williamsburg do their main shopping in the large department stor of mid-Manhattan or downtown Brooklyn. Their immediate needs a satisfied by the stores in the neighborhood, rather than those on Broadway. The store-owners of this busy strip were once among the most influential of the community's leaders. Now most of them live in different neighborhoods and spend only their business hours in Williamsburg.

Some prongs of Zone III reach out beyond Broadway, due to the location of several important institutions and synagogues in that area, particularly in the South streets. The rest of these streets is very much Zone IV in character, as the condition of the buildings, and the type of people who live there make evident. Again the developments of recent years have reclaimed several of these streets.

One more area of Zone III deserves special mention, the part of Roebling Street that stretches from Lee Avenue to Broadway. Here are some of the last remnants of Old Williamsburg, the pool-rooms, cafeterias and bookmaking establishments, which were once part of the immediate neighborhood, but are now frequented by elements who live in the adjoining areas, or have moved out of the neighborhood entirely. However, some elements among the youth who have broken with the pattern of Jewish Williamsburg can be found there, among the boys hanging around the street corners. Gradually the last vestiges of this type are disappearing even on Roebling Street.

ZONE IV: By and large Brocklyn's Broadway separates Zone III from Zone IV to the North, Northeast and East, while Heyward Street more or less marks the border to the South, and Wythe Avenue to the West. Zone IV was part of the old Jewish community of Williamsburg before the trek across Broadway, westward toward Bedford Avenue began at the end of the 1930's. Most active Jewish life has died out there. Synagogues have lost their membership and Jewish stores have been sold or boarded up. Except for a few strips in the South street mentioned before, and a few blocks in the Bushwick area, there i little active communal concentration to be found, though recent developments have brought some change.

In general, Zone IV, which once contained streets with the densest population in all of New York, (5000 in one block),[10] bears all the earmarks of the slum — the dilapidated buildings, the neglected streets, the mixture of residential and manufacturing structures, garages and shops. Refuse and squalor are ubiquitous. Long rows of houses are boarded up, or left to rot, or to be destroyed by the gangs of neighborhood youngsters which roam the streets. Two of the worst sections of

10. U. S. Census 1920.

Zone IV have been cleared, and replaced by low-rental housing projects, the Maujer Street project, erected in the late 1930's and the Marcy Avenue Project, fifteen blocks south of Jewish Williamsburg, which was built in the late 1940's. More such projects are planned for the entire area, including the immediate neighborhood of the Jewish community.[11] Meanwhile, however, most of the debris-littered streets and lots, the disintegrating houses with shattered windows and broken walls, are still standing. Many are inhabited by a quaint and often colorful lower-class mixture made up of Jewish, Slavic, Puerto Rican and gypsy elements. Whole blocks of Broadway have become part of this extinct section. Some of its once busy stores have even been converted into living quarters for gypsies and colored families.

Among the dilapidated houses are numerous synagogues, which testify to the once-lively Jewish community life of this neighborhood. Many of these synagogues have been sold, or boarded up and left to disintegrate. Others wait only for the last members of their old congregation to die. Even the better streets of this zone, Bushwick Avenue, with its sad, old mansions set back from the street, and the dusty and rusty wrought-iron gates and balconies, are gradually yielding to their fate.

West of Bedford Avenue the population of Zone IV is practically non-Jewish. Here, too, houses are disintegrating or boarded up, or being swallowed up by an expanding belt of light and heavy industry near the Navy Yard and the East River docks. Schaefer Breweries has torn down whole blocks, and erected numerous buildings, to serve as garages, shops and administrative structures for its growing organizations.

To the North and Northeast, beyond the dead end of Broadway and its shops, factories, vacant lots and boarded up houses, Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Puerto Rican groups have taken over the entire area. The population of the adjoining southern area is somewhat more Jewish, yet it has little in common with the pulsating Jewish life of the western section.

At the border of this area is Havemeyer Street, which stands as a lonely monument to the active Jewish community that once centered around it. Many women from Jewish Williamsburg west of Broadway still come to Havemeyer Street to shop in its stores, to purchase the quaint, spicy foods and delicacies, to browse through the sidewalk displays of the basement and cellar bargain shops, and to recall their

11. They are to go up in 1961. Several were built in the Bushwick area between 1957 and 1960.

youth in this street typical of the immigrant neighborhoods of the early decades of this century. In spite of nostalgic scents and smells, they cannot overlook the fact that the majority of the people who now live in and frequent Havemeyer Street speak Spanish instead of Yiddish. Few of the younger women go there at all. Their immediate needs are satisfied on Lee Avenue. Only the banks and large office buildings on the Plaza part of Havemeyer Street have retained their importance as a focus of business life in Williamsburg.

One thing emerges clearly from the superficial inspection of Wiliamsburg and its zonal pattern: Only the intensively Jewish area centering about Bedford, Lee, Marcy and Division Avenues, has survived the general disintegration of the entire section.

The status value pattern is not as clearly structured as that of the community participation, but from the preceding description it shapes up as follows:

1. ZONE I: Lower-middle and upper-middle classes, plus community leaders and professionals.
2. ZONE II: Lower-middle, upper-middle, upper-lower classes, and secondary religious and lay leaders.
3. ZONE III: Lower-middle, upper-lower and lower-lower classes. Non-Jewish and minority groups at peripheral areas.
4. ZONE IV: Upper-lower and lower-lower classes. Mainly inhabited by Slavic, Puerto Rican and Negro groups.

The preceding zonal presentation of the residential pattern of Williamsburg gains depth if seen through the perspective of changes that took place in the neighborhood in the course of its three main phases of development.

3. PHASE I (-1938)

The history of Jewish Williamsburg as a community is close to fifty years old, though some nuclei of the wealthiest Jewish elements had previously dared to "invade" this one-time stronghold of Brooklyn's social elite. One man in the beginning of his forties, remarked:

> "When I was still a child my parents had the courage to move into this neighborhood. A Jew with beard and side-burns who dared to enter these then still completely non-Jewish streets, was sure to be stoned, and to leave minus his beard. That's how they felt about us Jews around here."[12]

12. Cf. supra, p. 7. Also Sam P. Abelow, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13.

The Jewish section of Old Williamsburg in those days was made up of the areas in the east, southeast, and northeast described before. It was a lower-class neighborhood, densely populated and similar in character to the Lowest East Side, the cradle of New York's Jewish communities of this century. In the status hierarchy of Jewish neighborhoods in New York it ranked somewhat on the same level as the East Bronx, while the new Jewish Williamsburg ranks considerably higher, as may be seen from this estimated pattern:[13]

1. The East Side of Lower Manhattan
2. Harlem
3. East Bronx, Bushwick, Old Williamsburg, Greenpoint
4. Brownsville, Brighton
5. East New York, Bensonhurst
6. Williamsburg, East Flatbush
7. Washington Heights, West Bronx
8. Boro Park, Crown Heights, Flatbush, Mid-Manhattan
9. Kew Gardens, Forest Hills, Far Rockaway, Monsey, N. Y.
10. Long Island communities, Westchester.[14]

By the time larger groups of Jews moved into that part of Williamsburg west of Broadway, at the time of World War I, the neighborhood had already passed its peak as one of the select residential areas of Brooklyn. Toward the middle of the 1920's, Zone II and III had been taken over by Jewish elements of the lower-middle and upper-lower classes. They established their retail stores and synagogues in the blocks centering around Division and Lee Avenue; and gradually they moved into Zone I, as an increasing number of the non-Jewish population left the neighborhood. At the beginning of the 1930's, when the crash and the depression hit Williamsburg as hard as the other neighborhoods and impoverished many of its wealthier elements, most of the blocks, except a few quiet ones at Hooper and Hewes Streets, had become almost exclusively Jewish. Lee Avenue had become the major Jewish shopping center for daily needs, as most of its stores had gone over into Jewish hands. By that time Lee Avenue had also replaced Division Avenue as the focus of communal activities. Synagogues sprang up along it, and organizations had their locals either on Lee Avenue itself, or on the blocks next to it.

13. 1-4 compare roughly to the First Settlement, 5-8 to the Second, and 9 and 10 to the Third Settlement of Marshall Sklare's characterization of neighborhoods, in *Conservative Judaism, op. cit.*, p. 80 ff.

14. Cf. Maller, Julius B. "Study of Jewish Neighborhoods of N. Y." *Jew. Soc. Service Quarterly*, New York 1934.

Almost simultaneously, as Zone II was consolidating its socio-economic predominance, Zone I was already going through the metamorphosis that had changed Zone III and then II into a Jewish center. Most of the non-Jewish residents of Bedford Avenue and its adjoining blocks sold their houses and moved to newer and better neighborhoods in Brooklyn or Long Island. As a consequence, the organizations, churches and clubs lost their membership and were forced to close down and sell their buildings. Within a few years the center of the community moved from Lee Avenue and its adjoining area to Bedford Avenue. Most of the older Jewish organizations exchanged their rented basement or store locals for buildings on Bedford Avenue, and thus entered their major phase as important factors in the community. Only the cellar-clubs and locals of minor non-Jewish organizations on Bedford Avenue remained until the end of Phase I, about 1939. The lower-class membership stayed on in the neighborhood a few years longer than the higher elements. The rarely used building of the Knights of Columbus' at the end of Zone I, is the sole survivor of the major clubs and organizations whose headquarters had previously been located on Bedford Avenue in its spacious rooms.[15] Otherwise the end of Phase I marked the end of practically all non-Jewish communal activities on Bedford Avenue of Zone I.

One aspect of change that will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters, but must be mentioned here because it brought new forms of communal centers, is the gradual influx of Polish Galician Chassidic elements into Williamsburg since the end of the 1920's. Instead of concentrating into the large synagogues of the Jewish Russian Polish elements which had moved westward from Old Williamsburg, they established many *Shtieblach,* small prayer-halls, in stores or basements. In general they were lower-middle class elements, rather than the lower-or upper-lower class Russian Polish element. They were the first to bring the beards, *Peyes* and Chassidic garb, which were to become so common later on. On the other hand, being dealers, peddlers, and semi-skilled craftsmen, they did not replace the Russian Polish Jewish craftsmen who had their shops in Williamsburg, who gradually moved away or died out. They introduced into the residential pattern such institutions (which were to become typical of later-phased Williamsburg), as the first major Yeshivah, and the main ritual public bath, which served the community until the recent phase.

Meanwhile Zone IV had largely disintegrated. Its Jewish communities had dissolved, as their members moved westward into the new Williams-

15. It was sold to a Chassidic Yeshivah in 1954

burg, or into higher-class neighborhoods. Gradually, even some of the peripheral blocks of Zone III began to disintegrate, and to lose their Jewish elements, as the depression years and the westward concentration made themselves increasingly felt, and the younger and wealthier elements began the movement out of Williamsburg, the trend which changed so much of the later communal pattern.

It was on the basis of this state of affairs, at the end of Phase I, that the two major studies of Williamsburg,[16] which included both the old and the new communities, predicted its complete disintegration and collapse as a residential area — even though the area centering around Bedford and Lee Avenue was then still superior to the completely deteriorated adjoining areas.

4. PHASE II (1939-1948)

Residentially speaking, the high-water mark of the new Williamsburg Jewish community, before the arrival of the refugees, marks at the same time the beginning of its decline in the hierarchy of Jewish neighborhoods in New York. Soon after Zone I had become the nerve-center of the local Jewish community life, the upper crust of its society, that part of it which had survived the depression, began to leave the neighborhood and move up to the next rungs in the hierarchy of Jewish communities, particularly Crown Heights. Some people also moved to Boro Park. But Boro Park did not become the next stage in the life of the lower-middle class of Williamsburg's Jews, until the middle of the 1940's, while the upper-middle class continued to prefer Crown Heights or the new Jewish communtites of Queens.

Had this trend continued, Williamsburg west of Broadway would have been more or less finished as a living community within the span of ten to fifteen years, the length of time required for the younger generation to grow up and leave the neighborhood in which its parents have become adjusted, for those who have started at the bottom of the social ladder to work their way up and feel ready to enter the social pattern of the better neighborhood.[17] Physically and spiritually, both the young and the wealthy had outgrown the community and left it for their own advancement. As a consequence, in the usual pattern of residential growth and decline, the poor and old of Williamsburg would have been left alone to witness the inevitable collapse of the community.

16. Jewish Welfare Board Survey, and Helen Logan, *Williamsburgh, op. cit.*

17. Cf., M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, p. 80.

Two events occurred toward the end of the 1930's to arrest this trend towards departure and the collapse of the vital elements of the community, firstly, the beginning of World War II, and secondly, the arrival of the first large groups of refugees in Williamsburg.

The war situation changed the employment and income level of Williamsburg and its economic standards began to rise rapidly, as wages went up and the earnings of those who were in business for themselves exceeded all normal expectations. At the same time the general apartment and housing shortage began. Helped by higher war incomes, the housing shortage and the new elements which began to settle in Williamsburg, the value of real estate rose by leaps and bounds. An average house of Zone II worth $8,000 in Phase I, jumped to $10,000 in 1942, and reached $15,000 around 1950. One of the early refugees remarked ruefully:

> "When I first came to Williamsburg in 1939 I could have bought some of the nicest houses of the neighborhood for the $2,000 which I had brought with me. But I was afraid to invest my last penny, as long as I did not have a decent job. The house into which I moved is one of the finest on a quiet block in the best part of Williamsburg. In 1941 I could still have bought it for $10,000, if I had a down payment of $4,000. Had I known of it, I certainly would have taken out a loan and acquired it, for I knew that its owner had kept it in proper shape. But by the time I found out about it, it was too late. Someone else had bought it, and owned it for three years. During this time he did nothing to improve or even to preserve it. In 1944 he sold it to a painter at $14,000. Now he offers it to me for $16,000 because I am his tenant. Other people will gladly pay $17,000 for it. They sell much worse houses on the block for $20,000. As far as I am concerned, it's all out of the question. I could tear my hair out that I did not buy it when the first landlord sold it in 1939."

This story is typical for most of the houses in the entire neighborhood, particularly those of Zones I and II. What is not typical in this story, is that the second and third houseowners did not bother to renovate and modernize the house. In general, however, many of the brownstone houses received the face-lifting described in the first part of this chapter. The purpose was, of course, to enable the landlords to raise the rents, and to meet the rising standards of the population. Within a short time from the beginning of 1939, when the average rental ranged around $35.00 for a four-room apartment, it rose to fifty. Young couples looking for apartments ten years later would have had to spend a minimum of $75.00 rent for the same apartment.

This rise in the average rentals for Williamsburg occurred simultaneously with the general rise in rentals, but it was far beyond the

normal rise in neighborhoods of the type of Williamsburg, with its physically inferior housing and living conditions. Is was not the general ecological situation, but the particular value needs of the people who were willing to pay such relatively exorbitant prices for apartments and real estate, that caused this change, counter to all normal expectations at the end of Phase I. ,

In addition to the general improvement of economic conditions everywhere at the beginning of the war, Williamsburg went through a boom of its own, which helped raise the general standards of the neighborhood considerably. This additional factor was due to the establishment in Williamsburg of the diamond polishing trade introduced by Orthodox Jewish refugees from Belgium, many of whom settled at least temporarily in Williamsburg. Furthermore, many of Jewish Williamsburg's residents, both young and old, learnt this relatively easy, and highly profitable trade, thus bringing more money into the community than it had ever had before. As a consequense, the appearance of the neighborhood improved considerably. People wore better clothes, got used to certain luxuries, and set up high standards of living, not only for themselves, but for the community in general. As they were able and willing to spend money on their own personal needs, they gave freely for the religious, cultural and educational needs of the community. Thus, all local institutions, synagogues, organizations, and communal or ritual centers, profited by the diamond boom, and the general appearance and status of the neighborhood was raised considerably.

Equally important as a factor in the changing residential pattern of the Jewish community of Williamsburg was the gradually increasing stream of refugees which poured in during Phase II. From 1939 to 1942 small groups of German, and then Viennese and Czechoslovak refugees selected Williamsburg as the community that offered them the type of Jewish religious atmosphere they preferred for themselves and their children.[18] Very few non-religious refugees were among them. Most of those who did settle in Williamsburg because their relatives or friends lived there, left soon afterward, because they preferred such ecologically better-suited neighborhoods as Washington Heights, the Bronx or Queens, to the "slums" of Williamsburg. Only those to whom the religio-social factor appealed, overlooked the disadvantages. Since these new elements belonged mostly to the lower- or even the upper-middle class of businessmen and professionals, they took the place of the middle and upper-class people who had

18. See Life History #2, Appendix I.

left Williamsburg since the late 1930's. They became part of the community, and took an active lead in raising its cultural and organizational level.

A more radical change in the residential pattern of Williamsburg came with the influx of an increasing number of Hungarian refugees toward the end of the war, and in the years of the postwar era. The first groups of Western European refugees assimilated themselves easily to the type of living they found there at the turn of the decade, at the end of the 1930's. They were eager to be accepted, and had little difficulty in succeeding, for their background blended rather well with the moderately Orthodox type of community life that prevailed in Williamsburg up to that time. The large Hungarian groups of newcomers who settled there after the end of the war were less flexible, however, and not so eager to become assimilated. They preferred to adjust the standards of the community to their own particular pattern of religious life. Arriving in much larger numbers than the small early German and Viennese groups who counted altogether not more than 250 people, they were able to exert a strong influence on the general communal life. In addition to their large numbers, they were aided by the fact that they brought several of their world-famous religious leaders with them, each of whom attracted many followers from other neighborhoods. At the end of Phase II, in 1948, there were close to fifteen hundred newcomers living in Williamsburg. The famous religious leaders were of the Chassidic type, called *Rebbes,* in distinction from the usual rabbis. They commanded a much stronger respect and discipline from their followers than did the type of rabbis who headed the Phase I congregations in Williamsburg. Hence they were able to exert a great deal of influence on the entire life pattern of the Jewish community in the immediate and wider neighborhood. For even those Orthodox Jews who are not their followers will respect their decisions and judgment, except for a limited number of determined opponents to the Chassidic leadership, the so-called *Mithnagdim.*

These new leaders of the Phase II immigrants were thus able to change or considerably affect the residential pattern of the Jewish community of Williamsburg. They established their own new religious and communal centers in the very heart of the neighborhood, along Bedford Avenue and its adjoining blocks. Most of all they changed the appearance of the neighborhood by their insistence on maintaining many of the habits and customs which had become part of the extreme Chassidic standard of Orthodoxy. At the end of Phase II, men with long beards, *kaftans,* and all verieties, types and sizes of black hats, and women with whigs or kerchiefs and dark stockings, became a common sight in the streets of Williamsburg.

The immediate effect of this change in the appearance of the neighborhood was that many of the upper-class people, particularly those to whom the increasingly Orthodox atmosphere was not so welcome, and who had been forced to stay on during the years of the war housing shortage, stepped up the pace of their departure into other, less extremely Orthodox sections. While normally such strong depletion of the solid membership of a community might have ruined the neighborhood, the moving away of the upper-class and of the not-so-Orthodox elements was hardly felt, since their place was taken by the newcomers who flocked into Williamsburg. Instead of declining, the local economic situation improved, apartments became even scarcer, and real estate prices continued to rise as more houses were renovated. At the very end of Phase II, when the diamond rush petered out, as a result of the recession, and a general economic letdown made it more difficult for the new elements to adjust themselves, the process of happy assimilation ceased. "If they cannot find a job, and the funds they have brought with them dwindle, they do not assimilate so easily," remarked one of the doctors of the neighborhood.

These changes were mostly taking place in Zones I and II. At the same time Zone III sank even lower on the social status scale during the years of Phase II. Gradually, despite the general housing shortage in the neighborhood, it became a typical working-class residential area. Its institutions, even its large synagogues, lost most of their former influence, as their older members died out and the younger ones moved away.

Generally, Phase II brought relative prosperity and an overall improvement of the standard of living into Williamsburg as a Jewish residential area. Instead of the downward trend expected at the end of Phase I, the appearance and value of the physical assets rose far beyond the general economic boom in other, comparable neighborhoods. Only the outer zones, removed from the center of the Orthodox communal life, did not share in this improvement of Williamsburg's status as a residential area.

PHASE III (1948-1954)

"This is beginning to look more and more like *Refugeetown*," remarked one woman, sitting in front of her house, at the end of Phase II, and discussing the changes taking place in Williamsburg with her equally critical neighbors. To those old-timers who do not share the intensely Orthodox values of the newcomers, the neighborhood had lost its former dignity and status, as the numerous newcomers established themselves as an integral part of the Williamsburg scene.

The outward movement of the less Orthodox, and the intensification of the communal activities of the Orthodox element, both newcomers and old-timers, continues in Phase III, from 1949 on, or shortly after the brief recession of 1948. As the slightly spiteful name *Refugeetown* implies, the large number of newcomers who had replaced former residents, gave the neighborhood more the appearance of being an immigrant ghetto than it had before. Many more people wore the foreign, Chassidic garb, and spoke Yiddish, or even Hungarian in the streets. The stores had multi-lingual signs, and new owners had taken over the local business.

Residentially speaking, the new phase of increasing settling of newcomers in Jewish Williamsburg reversed the trend that started in Phase I and continued into Phase II. Instead of concentrating on the inner zones only, the overflow of new immigrants surges back into all parts of Zone III, and even into some of the still habitable sections of Zone IV. Counter to all ecological expectation these areas were built up again. Boarded up houses and stores were reopened, and the intensive community life flowed back into those peripheral belts of blocks that had practically been abandoned and doomed to gradual disintegration. Parallel with this physical re-expansion into Phase I space, went a reversion to the lower-class professions to which most of the Phase I people had belonged. Like these immigrants of old, many of the newcomers were unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled workers. They captured most of the local trade as shoemaker, glazier, or carpenters for the neighborhood, replacing some of the very old Phase I craftsmen who had plied these professions for decades. It became a common sight to see men with beards and *Peyes* driving all kinds of large and small trucks around the neighborhood, making the deliveries of laundry, milk, soda, and meat which had been handled by members of the old Russian Polish Phase I community, or by people who came from other low-class Jewish communities, from Brownsville, Bushwick, of the Lower East Side. Competition turned keen, and there is a brisk businesslike atmosphere about the hustling and bustling local streets around Lee Avenue.

There was also a constant change of ownership of real estate in the neighborhood, as many of those who otherwise would not have thought of leaving Williamsburg, took advantage of the boom and tried to get more than double the true value of their houses. For they knew that the newcomers who were eager to settle in Williamsburg would pay the price, either for themselves, or if the buildings were suitably located, for their religious leaders or religious institutions. Only those of the older members of the community who were tied to it for personal reasons, or who were interested in an Orthodox atmos-

phere and Orthodox school for their children, remained in Williamsburg. Most of the Orthodox elements which had moved away selected Boro Park or Crown Heights; the others settled in the rapidly developing Jewish communities along Queens Boulevard and in Long Island.

Thus the new elements had taken over or were prominent in every phase of the residential pattern of Williamsburg. Their distinguished religious leaders attracted huge crowds on holidays and made the neighborhood a special showcase for visitors from all parts of the United States. They added numerous religious institutions, schools, and ritual centers to the community at the best locations of Zones I and II, and even in some of the formerly neglected parts of Zone III. The last of the neighborhood movies have been taken over by them and converted into religious centers. They established parochial schools at different locations, whereas there had been only one such institution, for both boys and girls, until Phase II.

"It seems as if this is a different neighborhood," said one young man who had just returned to Williamsburg after years of living in Boston. "Life, Jewish life seems to be bubbling over in these streets. And one feels good to see all this, after one has been away from any kind of concentrated community life as long as I. But, it is a lower-class type of activity that fills the street, louder and full of hustle, lacking some of the calm dignity Williamsburg had when its menfolk went to work outside of the neighborhood, and only women and children were frequenting the streets during the day." As this rather keen observer noticed, the activity that fills the streets in Williamsburg in Phase III is a workaday activity. Local business had taken over much of the former quiet residential atmosphere, at least in the inner zones of the neighborhood.

6. SUMMARY

From the description of the changes that took place in the Jewish community of Williamsburg since its origin, it is obvious that according to the normal pattern of development it should have fallen apart as a residential area at the end of the 1930's. War conditions, improved income, and the influx of new elements who shared the Orthodox Jewish values of the community arrested the social and economic decline, despite the increasing departure of the wealthier population. Real estate and local business values improved instead of declining. Instead of an increasing surrender to disintegration, like the adjoining areas, the residential pattern of Williamsburg expanded back into once-abandoned sections, as more and more new elements, disregarding economic and ecological considerations for the sake of the spiritual atmosphere of the Jewish community, move in.

III

THE ECONOMIC PATTERN

1. INTRODUCTION

IN THIS chapter we shall attempt to analyze the major changes that took place in the course of the three main phases of the Jewish community of Williamsburg as they affected the economic structure of the neighborhood.

We shall try to show that in at least one type of community even the economic pattern was affected by the valuational needs of its population, — although the constant effect of the general economic pattern and forces had an intrinstic influence on the life pattern of Jewish Williamsburg, as will be pointed out throughout this chapter. Yet with the increasing strength of the valuational pattern economic considerations were frequently superseded by the ideological convictions and mores of the people.

As in the preceding chapter, we shall follow this shift of accent from the economic to the valuational determination in the course of Williamsburg's development from a select residential area to its decline and rise after World War I; from its boom in the 1920's through the depression in the 1930's; and from its revival before and during World War II until the present time, when new elements have replaced most of the old population, and adjusted the local life to their particular valuational needs.

2. PHASE I (-1938)

The earliest Jewish population of Williamsburg, at the time when the neighborhood was still one of the best in Brooklyn, belonged to the highest Jewish class of wealthy businessmen, professionals, writers and intellectuals, among them some of the most famous names in the American Jewish world. Their number was not large enough to organize a community life of their own. They formed several of the first and oldest congregations, which later on took a leading part in the community life of Brooklyn[1]; but at that time, in the first decade of the

1. Cf. Sam P. Abelow, *History of Brooklyn Jewry, op. cit.*

century, they were little more than places of occasional worship. Similarly, the Jewish community did not form an independent economic pattern of its own, as neither its religious, nor its social needs were of a nature and intensity to demand other than the general local shopping facilities, which were those of a better residential area. Only at the periphery, where Old Jewish Williamsburg bordered the southwestern section, at Havemeyer Street and Broadway, did some of the lower-class Jewish business life serve those who looked for it. Most of the local services were still handled by non-Jewish craftsmen, shopkeepers and workers.

The subsequent basic change in the population and class level effected a general levelling-down of the standards of living. On the other hand, it meant the building-up of a Jewish community life with its own particular economic needs. Externally, the levelling-down expressed itself already in the fact that *there was an increase* in the population for 1920 and 1930, ranging between 10.9% and 23.0% from Zone I to Zone III, according to the U. S. Census figures ,while all the surrounding census tracts lost as much as 52.3% and in one instance almost 30.0% of their population in the rapid decline of the old Williamsburg areas. Thus, the new Jewish community increased in density of population, as the mansions once inhabited by individual families were opened to several tenants, and as former butlers and maids disappeared and their quarters, too, were converted into basement or top floor apartments. Expensive stores for upper-class needs closed down, and had practically disappeared by the middle of the 1920's.[2] Instead numerous small stores opened up to serve the increasing vital needs of the larger population of the lower-class which prefers local, small-scale shopping.

Most indicative of the levelling-down of the general economic structure of Jewish Williamsburg is the change in the occupational distribution of the population. Instead of being made up of wealthy businessmen and professionals, the new community now followed the general occupational pattern of the Russian-Polish group in other Jewish middle and lower-clas communities.[3] A little more than one-third engage in some trade; one-third are artisans and skilled workers, and the rest are divided among roughly 10% professionals, teachers, rabbis and religious funcionaries of the older generation, and lawyers, doctors, dentists, accountants and government employees of the younger generation. About 10% are minor clerks in business or manufacturing establishments. 5% are unskilled workers; and between 3% and 5%

2. H. Logan, *Williamsburgh,* N. Y. 1940.
3. Comp. N. Glazer, "What Sociology Knows About American Jews," *Commentary,* N. Y., March '50. Vol. 9, No. 3.

mostly older people who depend on their children or on public or private philanthropic agencies for support, are unemployed.

This, for example, is the occupational picture of one of the oldest and most important congregations of the Russian-Polish group of Phase I. It has a permanent membership that varies between a hundred fifty at best, and a hundred and twenty, in the beginning 1950's. Its Sabbath services, however, show an attendance three times as large, and its high holiday services, which attract many unorthodox members of the community, count ten times as many people as there are regular members.

THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF A PHASE I CONGREGATION — 1930

Number of People	*Percentage*	*Profession*
47	36	Businessmen
40	30	Skilled workers, Artisans
16	12	Professionals
13	10	Clerks
7	6	Unskilled workers
8	6	Unemployed
Total 131 Members	100%	

Since this is one of the oldest and best-established congregations, the picture it presents is somewhat distorted; it has approximately 10% more independent businessmen, and 5% more professionals than the average congregation formed during the Twenties. Yet the general distribution is sufficiently characteristic of the occupational picture of Phase I. Approximately half the businessmen own retail or wholesale stores, mostly in Manhattan; 23% are manufacturers of garments and textiles; others own large factories. The rest of those engaged in business are customer-peddlers or own small local establishments, such as luncheonettes, candy-stores, and barber-shops. The skilled workers and artisans are tailors, housepainters, bakers, glaziers, furriers, tiemakers, garment cutters, patternmakers, operators, plumbers, and shoemakers. This particular group of artisans is typical of the lower-class Russian-Polish elements of Phase I, which were so much a part of the local

scene, and which largely disappeared during Phase II, to return in Phase III among the recent newcomers.[4] The percentage of unemployment is relatively high, due to the fact that even then, in 1930, the average age of the membership of this congregation was rather high.

Similarly in the basic pattern, yet indicating the different trends to develop subsequently, during Phases II and III, is the occupational distribution of a young men's organization, one of the most important in the neighborhood. More than half of its membership belongs to the Polish Chassidic and the early Hungarian elements which settled in Williamsburg during the late 1920's and throughout the 1930's. Characteristically enough, it has a larger membership than the much older, better established congregation of the large synagogue whose occupational distribution was described above. Instead of quoting only the occupational picture in the beginning and at the end of Phase I, we shall also cite the figures of Phase III, to show the change in the distribution. The picture has changed little in the occupational distribution of the previously described congregation, except for an overall decrease due to the death of older members, and the lack of new membership, which will be commented on in the chapter on the synagogue pattern of Williamsburg.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF A WILLIAMSBURG YOUNG MEN'S JEWISH POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Profession	1926*	1938	1950
1. Unskilled Workers	12%	6.2%	3.5%
2. White Collar Workers	8	9.4	4.7
3. Skilled Workers	20	12.4	8.2
4. Business employees, clerks	28	40.0	16.4
5. Independent Businessmen	4	15.6	45.0
6. Professionals		7.5	17.5
7. Students	28	8.0	4.7
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Number of Members:	25	160	170

* The 1926 figures are based on estimate of leaders of the group. There are no exact records available.

4. However, as will be pointed out latter on, the artisans and skilled workers of Phase III tended more towards the technical crafts which were practically unknown among the Phase I Jews. See infra p. 72.

While the 1926 figures are still too small to be of general significance, and the 1950 figures are somewhat biased, due to economic developments in the Jewish community, the 1938 figures are practically identical with the 1940 United States Census figures, which quote 79.5% of all those employed as salaried workers, and 15.4% as self-employed.[5] The comparable figures for the organization in 1938 are 80% salaried workers, including the salaried workers among the professionals, and 15.5% self-employed.

The basic pattern that evolves from both the figures of the older congregation and those of the young men's organization, despite the differences caused by the fact that the first was long settled by 1930, while the latter was still developing, is this: At the end of the 1920's, around the time of the crash and before the reversals of the depression years, the people of Jewish Williamsburg were on the economic upswing. The majority aspired to having a business of their own, while a smaller percentage settled for employee status in the business world. Among the older generation a good many became independent craftsmen who plied the basic trades; while the younger generation tended towards the professions, with their economic and social rewards, or to the more technical crafts, rather than to basic trades. Only one young man of the present membership of the organization is a plumber, an occupation like those of more than a third of the membership of the older Russian-Polish organization. But regardless of the type of work, it is the general tendency of the workers to establish their own shops, of the students to become professionals, of the clerks, salesmen, or employees to go into business for themselves, and of the small businessmen to expand and become wholesalers or manufacturers, if possible.

The preceding figures do not yet reflect the serious setback which hit the Jewish community as well as the entire country during the depression. These reversals ruined many who had made good during the boom of the 1920's, and put a general damper on the aspirations and possibilities of the more ambitious. Although the Jewish community of Williamsburg had levelled-down considerably from its original wealthy upper-class population, it had developed into a middle-class neighborhood, with good prospects for the young and skilled. The depression clamped down on standards of living, on income and expenditures, on the value of the real estate, and the general appearance of the neighborhood and its people. According to the U. S. Census figures of 1930 the average expenditures of a Williamsburg family amounted to $2000.00 per year, compared to almost double that ten years later. Although this figure takes in the poorer neighborhoods

5. U. S. Census 1940.

adjoining Jewish Williamsburg, it is pretty close to the low standards which evolved as a consequence of the serious setback of the depression.

A second factor is also responsible for this low economic standard, which developed into a major trend and helped to change the appearance and composition of the community. This second factor was the moving away of those who had become wealthy as businessmen or professionals during the 1920's. Following the pattern of community succession in other neighborhoods, they aspired to the higher social status associated with such better Jewish communities as Crown Heights, and left Williamsburg as soon as their income permitted. There was not yet a sufficiently strong valuational bond to Williamsburg to counteract this trend. Their moderately Orthodox needs could be served just as well in Crown Heights or Boro Park.

Local business, which had adjusted itself to the needs of the Russian-Polish community, had completely gone over into Jewish hands during the 1920's. From shoemaker and baker to the grocer and butcher, all local retailers provided the types of food and services demanded by the moderate Orthodox pattern. These local shops and stores were hit hard by the years of the depression, and the moving away of the wealthier elements. The following statement made about business in the entire Williamsburg area, applies equally to the Jewish communtiy:

> "Business in Williamsburg thrived fairly well until the depression. After that stores began to close out one by one, and business folded up or moved out of the area."[6]

Although the economic breakdown was not as radical as in the older sections, things looked bad and people began to doubt their economic future in the neighborhood .At the end of 1938 one of the oldest and most popular grocers of the community made this statement:

> "Three quarters of my good customers have moved to Crown Heights or Boro Park. What is left are the *Kaptzonim*, the poor people, from whom it is difficult to make a decent living."

Soon afterward he sold his store and opened a new grocery in Boro Park, where some of his faithful former customers helped him to re-establish himself. He would never have made this move, had he anticipated the boom that was soon to hit his old store, enabling his successor to sell it a few years later at ten times the price of $1,500 for which he had bought it.

6. Helen Logan, *Williamsburgh*, op. cit., p. 9.

Naturally, those who worked outside of Williamsburg were equally affected by the general slump. A third of the members of one congregation, who had established themselves in business in the years before the depression had to give up, and go to work for others who were able to hold out. The ambition and hopes of the younger ones were temporarily halted. With the turn of events in the middle of the Thirties, the prospects improved and many who had given up or shifted to lower professions, were looking forward to taking up their careers where they had been stopped by the depression. Here is the typical example of a young member of the organization whose occupational distribution was presented before.[7] Like his brothers he had attended college in preparation for a career as a mathematics teacher. The difficult economic situation forced him to abandon his full-time studies, and he took a job as a plain worker in a faucet factory. Yet he continued his studies at night, received his bachelor's, and eventually his master's degree, and took the examinations qualifying him to teach in the public high school system. When questioned about his attitude toward the hard, menial work in the factory, and toward the people with whom he had to associate there, he said:

> "While I am on the job, I am one of the gang. I talk rough and joke around like the rest. But the other workers know that I am different from them. At three thirty I take off my overalls, wash the grease off my face and hands, and go to a private school to teach a few periods of math. That keeps me going until the time when I will get an appointment. The others are resigned to spending their lives in the factory. I am only biding my time."

This young man is now an established member of the faculty of a major public high school, the father of a family, and the owner of a home in a better neighborhood of Brooklyn, where many teachers live. Like he, most young people were biding their time and getting ready to ride the crest of any opportunity that came their way in their chosen fields. Many did not even wait for prosperity. As soon as things began to look better, they invested their meager earnings and started out in such lines of business as customer-peddling — particularly the members of the Polish Galician group who had not learned a trade and were willing to work for a minimum profit. Most of them were able to hold out and to work their way up in subsequent years.

In general, Phase I witnessed the initial decline of the neighborhood from a wealthy, high-class, loose Jewish community to a compact lower-middle and upper-lower-class Jewish community of the moderately

7. Supra, p. 47.

Orthodox Russian-Polish type. Increased Jewish population and needs raised the level of the local retail business that catered to the daily requirements of their communal pattern. The depression stopped the economic upswing, and the occupational rise and consequent improvement in social status of the Jewish community of Williamsburg, as it did elsewhere throughout the country. During the last years of Phase I new hope and improvement accentuated the new tendency of those who had successfully survived the depression in business or in a profession, to move to better neighborhoods. Thus the eventual doom of the community was foreshadowed, despite, or because of the imminent improvement of conditions, if Williamsburg kept to this normal pattern of development.

3. PHASE II (1939-1945)

Two events which began to take effect soon after the beginning of Phase II, and dominated it throughout, blocked the normal course of development described above, World War II and the settling in Williamsburg of refugees from the Nazi-dominated countries.

When the first groups of refugees from Germany, Austria, and other Central and Western European countries arrived in Williamsburg, the gloom and hopelessness of the preceding phase had already given way to a more positive outlook, and few people were left altogether without a job. However, the newcomers found the first two years of economic adjustment quite difficult, much more so than any of the other groups which came later on.

Their difficulty was a double one. In the first place, there were still few jobs available, particularly for members of the older age groups. One middle-aged refugee from Germany, who had been a wealthy businessmen, and had brought a small fraction of his money with him, spent two frustrating years hunting for a decent job. During this time he lost the courage and spirit of enterprise which had brought him such success in Germany. He spent the few thousand dollars he had brought with him, as he tried to buy into businesses that failed, and as the living expenses of his growing family rose. In the end he accepted a job as grocery clerk for ten dollars a week, lugging heavy cases and packages. He could have had it easier, had he joined the rest of his relatives who moved to small towns outside of New York. However, he preferred living in Williamsburg, where his children would grow up in a Jewish atmosphere.[8]

Most of the German and Austrian refugees struggled along simi-

8. *Life History of J. N.*, App. I, p. 225.

larly in 1939, and most of 1940, until the war changed the economic condition of the country, even though America was not yet directly involved. The average weekly earnings of the newcomers ranged between $15.00 and $25.00 per week, mostly closer to the minimum. One young man from Viena, a skillfull worker, became the envy of all his friends when he earned $18.00 a week, and was soon raised to $25.00. It took the less skillful twice as long to equal his earnings.

The additional difficulty for the newcomers was that most of the jobs open to these early groups of refugees were of the menial type, and far below the professional levels to which they had been accustomed. Most of the German and Austrian refugees had come from the middle-classes, and were well educated, at least as far as their secular training was concerned. They could not measure up to the standards of religious "learning" held by the Eastern European Jews.[9] Practically without exception, they had been used to high standards of living.[10] The political revolution and racial persecution which had driven them from their homes and professions found them spiritually, as well as physically unprepared for the stress and strain ahead. Although they had suffered much less personal harm than the camp inmates who made up the later waves of refugees who settled in Williamsburg, it was more difficult for them to make the proper adjustment to the new situation into which they had been thrown so unexpectedly. The change from the status of a well-settled, successful businessman to the lowest class of menial worker, or from university-trained, esthetically sensitive and culturally over-bred intellectual to elevator boy or factory helper, if they were lucky, was a harrowing one that demanded more stamina and physical strength than most of the later newcomers had to put forth, when working conditions were much better, and the contrast between their immediate past and their present situation was less acute.

The average Williamsburg Jew was used to much lower standards of living than most of the early refugees. The cramped housing conditions, the dirty, tree-less streets, the lack of refinement in physical surroundings and spiritual atmosphere, were a source of constant harassment that made adjustment difficult, and drove all those from Williamsburg who did not appreciate the particular Jewish atmosphere it had to offer.

On the other hand, however, those first groups of newcomers, who searched for months until they found a job, and who had to start

9. See infra, Ch. VI.
10. Comp. M. R. Davie, *Refugees in America*, N. Y., 1947, Ch. VII.

the climb back to their old professions or to satisfactory new ones from the very bottom of the occupational ladder, had one advantage. This experience made it easy for them to overlook inconveniences, and the spiritual and physical distress of the new living conditions. Unlike the earlier Russian-Polish, Galician and Hungarian immigrants, they had burnt their bridges behind them, not in search of the "gold in the streets of America," but in search of a new homeland. Driven from their jobs and homes, having seen their best friends and neighbors turn against them, they were grateful for the $10.00 a week job that gave them a chance to start all over again. They appreciated the cramped apartments or rooms that were a far cry from the spacious, tastefully decorated and richly furnished homes to which many of them had been accustomed. For they no longer had to worry about the heavy boots and the knocks on the door in the middle of the night, or the uniforms in the street. The miracle of American democracy in the streets and on the job provided a psychological counterweight for the harrowing difficulties of working and living conditions. While finding it much harder than the groups of newcomers who settled in Willliamsburg during the next decade, the German, Austrian, and Czechoslovakian refugees of the early Phase II were grateful that they were alive and had escaped the burning fires of the Nazi hell about which they now read in the newspapers. They made the economic adjustment to their new living conditions at a quicker pace and in better spirit than the "Greene" of the earlier and later phases.

About the time that the German and Austrian refugees and the first of the Czech, Belgian or Polish newcomers of the second shift began to settle into their lowly jobs, while adjusting in the congenial atmosphere of Williamsburg, the entire economic scene took a radical turn for the better. The conversion to war industry offered the opportunity for which the members of the community who were not settled in any particular job or business had waited, and they made the most of it.

The newcomers experienced this sudden economic lift, along with the older population of Jewish Williamsburg, and the community at large. It changed their pattern of living radically. They benefited from the opening of many previously closed avenues of advancement. To most of them the unskilled, manual work in which they had engaged for lack of anything better, was obviously stop-gap. They had the training, the experience and the business acumen of their European background; and the few lean years since their arrival had given them some chance to orient themselves to the different

conditions in this country. Not all, of course, had recuperated sufficiently from the traumatic experiences of their violent personal persecution. Once they had found some minimal form of hand-to-mouth livelihood, they did not dare to take a chance on striking out anew on a larger scale. Many of those who were not drafted into the army, or were not too old, went into business. They took up either a line of business similar to the one in which they had been engaged in their former homeland, or one with which they had become acquainted on the "job," working their way up from the bottom. Others again used their savings or the remnants of what they had salvaged of their former wealth to buy stores or small businesses, and work them up.

Of one Williamsburg congregation of approximately fifty members, which had been started in 1940, only six, or a little more than ten percent, maintained their original jobs in the factories of business establishments in which they had found work on their arrival. Twelve went into business for themselves. One became a leather dealer, a line which he had learnt thoroughly in Germany. Five entered some branch of the textile wholesale business, in which they had engaged in Europe. Four became customer-peddlers, the American form of the instalment business which had made them well-to-do in their former existence. Two others who had spent several years together in a luggage factory, starting as floor-boys, opened their own luggage firm. One member of the congregation bought a local grocery. Two went into the old clothing line. Three who had been professionals and who at first had worked at any odd job. now returned to their own kind of work, one a doctor, and two Hebrew teachers. Seven were able to enter skilled trades as electricians, furriers, printers, gold-workers, or cutters, because the union admitted them now, while before the lack of a union card had prevented them from finding a job. Twenty-two learnt the diamond polishing and dealing line, a trade which had been practically unknown in America until then, and developed into a major industry in little more than a year.

More than any other single factor — even the general economic boom due to the war situation — the rise of the diamond trade was responsible for the greatest material as well as spiritual boom Jewish Williamsburg has known. This industry had been introduced into this country by a group of Belgian Jews who had plied the diamond trade in Antwerp for many years, until the Nazi invasion had broken up this most important of all the diamond centers of the world. As in Belgium, the majority of those who engaged in it were Orthodox Jews who had brought their skills and experience with them when they settled in New York. Naturally they attracted their own type of people, when they began to open shops here. At

first only a few young men, mostly refugees, were willing to learn the various cutting and polishing operations that make up the diamond trade. As salaries increased by leaps and bounds, and the importance of diamonds for industrial and luxury purposes, and as investment of war earnings, rose, a large number of young and old people, male and female, were attracted to the trade. Many of the original young workers earned fabulous incomes, opened their own shops and taught the sawing, cleaving, polishing and setting of diamonds to the hundreds who flocked to the rapidly developing center around Broadway and Forty Fifth Street in Mid-Manhattan. People left the garment, fur, tie-making and other trades, which even after years of experience could not offer earnings like those of the diamond business, where a beginner, after a few months, could bring home $100.00 a week and more, and experts were able to make twice as much. Soon shops were opened in Williamsburg as well as in the midtown center. The whirring of polishing wheels behind white-washed store-windows became a familiar sound; and older men with beards, sitting on the high stools, next to young men, clean-shaven and wearing expensive silk shirts, became a common sight. Many of the older men had previously been religious functionaries, teachers, rabbis, or beadles. Now they abandoned the meagre salaries of these professions, as well as the low social status attached to them in a class order in which the successful businessman occupies the top-rung of the social ladder.[10]

After a while some even of the older people of the original population of Williamsburg gave up their professions for a job in the diamond trade, which many of them had previously ridiculed or slandered in a good-natured, though somewhat jaundiced manner. There is the typical example of one middle-aged officer of a local organization which had been rather slow in admitting newcomers into its inner circles. He had been one of those least friendly to the refugees, and was particularly critical of the diamond workers. When a local citizens' committee visited the diamond center for some important philanthropic cause, they entered a shop in which they found him sitting before a wheel. As soon as he caught sight of the visitors he dived below the bench, pretending to search for a lost stone, and stayed there until the visitors had left the shop. It was obviously difficult for him to face a situation in which he had availed himself of the very financial gains he had stigmatized in the newcomers as tainted. Like he, few were able to maintain a pretense of opposition or even disregard for the trade that had wrought a revolution in the appearance and standards of living of the Jewish

10. See infra p. 82.

community of Williamsburg. Soon it was no longer embarrassing to be a diamond-cutter or a dealer, and within a year, while some of the old social upper-crust had left Williamsburg, many of the elite of the community's activists had switched to the trade introduced by the newcomers, and thus removed the social stigma attached to it at the outset. Only in 1950, years after the local diamond boom had died down, did some of the early resentment return. This was at a time when the newspapers carried reports of diamond smugglers, most of whom lived in the richer neighborhoods — only two resided in Williamsburg proper, and two others at the outskirts. For months those who were ill-disposed toward the newcomers, hinted that they were hiding diamonds in the heels of their shoes or behind their long beards, and similar allegations.

During the five or six years for which the diamond boom lasted, it affected practically every aspect of the community life of Jewish Williamsburg, and changed the entire economic pattern described in Phase I. Not only did it introduce a new social elite and revalue of the former social valuations, it changed the community's appearance and standards of living as much as the war-economy and its limitations and shortages permitted.

The average expenditures of a Williamsburg family, which according to the Census figures had ranged around $2000.00 per year in the early Thirties, rose to double that in the Forties. A family of five which was used to getting along on $50.00 per week, spent between $80.00 and $90.00 per week ten years later, not only because prices had risen so much, but because the general trend was to spend more and spend it more casually — and also because the standards of comfortable living now included things that had been deemed luxuries in Phase I. Although this holds true for the general economic picture, it is particularly true for Williamsburg, where the standards of Orthodox Jewish life had never included luxuries and extravagant spending. At first some of the older elements disliked these changes in appearance, cost of clothing, and personal habits. Commented one of the old community leaders when questioned about the remarkable change:

> "These young fellows who make a hundred dollars and more a week, have lost all sense of proportion. One of the boys showed me his shirt and tie, and said proudly that they cost him almost as much as he used to earn three years ago for a whole week of drudgery."

Apartments in the immediate neighborhood, which according to the U. S. Census figures for 1940, had ranged between $27.00 and

$42.00, had risen by fifty percent less than five years later. The general war scarcity had made it almost impossible to find vacancies; and it was practically impossible to find a decent four-room apartment in the better blocks of Zones I and II, or even in most of Zone III, below a $50.00 monthly rental. The average five-room apartment ranged between $60.00 and 75.00, a price unthinkable for Williamsburg during the Thirties. In order to take advantage of this extraordinary rise of rental in spite of the rent ceiling, many landlords renovated their houses and apartments. Thus they raised the sale value, while paying the expenses of the renovations with the rent increases.

The result was, of course, a constant change of ownership in the real estate of Williamsburg. As peoples' earnings rose, and they could not get apartments except at exorbitant rentals, they preferred to invest their money in buying houses. In one block at the border of Zones I and II, eighteen of the forty houses passed from their non-Jewish or Jewish owners, many of whom planned to leave the community, into other hands. Some were bought by Americans from other neighborhoods who preferred to live in Williamsburg because they wanted to give their children the Jewish Orthodox environment and excellent educational facilities it afforded.

As pointed out in Chapter II, the houses of the immediate community, which by the testimony of qualified observers had been doomed to complete disintegration at the end of Phase I, rose in value during Phase I from an average of $7500 to $12,000 for a four-apartment house, and rsached $15,000 and more in Phase III. On the aforementioned block on which eighteen houses had changed hands during Phase II, eight were completely renovated. Two landlords removed the stoops and parapets, while three left the outside untouched, yet modernized the apartments and fixtures. Thus they were able to raise the price of their houses above their true value.

Like rentals and the price of real estate, general living expenditures rose considerably, even beyond the overall level. Following is a comparative listing of a few basic items and the increases they were subject to from the end of Phase I. Although these prices do not differ from the prices charged for the same items in other neighborhoods, they indicate the rise of the range within which an average Williamsburger would move.

RISE OF THE PRICE RANGE OF THE BASIC ITEMS OF MEN'S APPAREL IN WILLIAMSBURG*

ITEM	PHASE I (-1938) $	PHASE II (1939-1948) $	PHASE III (1949-) $
1. Hat	3.50 - 5.00	4.50 - 6.50	7.50 - 12.50
2. Shoes	4.50 - 7.50	6.50 - 12.50	9.50 - 17.50
3. Suit	25.00 - 40.00	30.00 - 50.00	35.00 - 60.00
4. Coat	20.00 - 40.00	35.00 - 55.00	40.00 - 65.00
TOTAL	$53.00 - 92.50 (70.00)	76.00 - 124.00 (100.00)	92.00 - 155.00 (125.00)

* Based on estimates by local businessmen and residents.

This rise of the price range within which an average Williamsburg Jew would be able to outfit himself for Passover or the Fall holidays, is not only due to the general rise of prices, but to the expanded standards. One man who had earned $25.00 a week at the beginning of Phase II in 1940, and who now makes about $100.00 a week, said:

> "I can still get the same Tom MacAnn shoes for about $5.00, and the Adams hat for $6.50. But I have gotten so used to the Florsheim shoes and better hats, that I have to spend at least $15 for my shoes and $10 for a hat. Before I used to walk into Crawford's and get a suit and a coat that did not cost more than $60 together; now even if I go into Crawford's I have to spend twice as much to get what I want. And I am not at all frivolous with the money. With three children you don't get very far on $100.00 a week nowadays."

One mother, a widow who had brougbt up five sons, complained:

> "I used to clothe all of my sons for Passover for less than it takes now to satisfy my two unmarried boys. I just can's keep up with their tastes and the prices."

The same situation which permitted the men of Williamsburg to accustom themselves to higher standards in clothing, affected the women likewise, if not more. For one thing, the diamond trade was open to them as well as the men, and a good many of the young girls, being well suited for the exact, painstaking work, earned more than most of the successful businessmen of lower-middle class Williamsburg in Phase I. Fur coats which had once been the exclusive mark of the upper class, became a common sight in the Sabbath

promenade. It became the standard apparel of a marriageable young lady trying to attract better class suitors; and it became a must for the older women who wanted to be members of the local "society." Only the mink coat remained out of their range as the dream whose realization was limited to the select few. The size of the diamond engagement ring that had become essential, was the measure by which the success of a girl's husband-hunt was gauged. Shoes and hats were no longer of the cheap mass-produced type; like the dresses and suits they betrayed the shift to uptown shopping, and the intense awarenes of styles and vogue. The Sabbath and holiday promenaders on Bedford Avenue could now certainly compete in appearance with any good middle-class crowd, which had not been the case during Phase I, when only the select few were able to shop anywhere else but in the cheap local stores.

More indicative even than the development of a taste for clothes of higher price ranges, is the fact that, despite the shortages of war-time, cars and telephones became the common household articles of the average well-off members of the community, instead of the privilege of a select few. In one particular organization there were only six owners of cars, and eighteen of telephones among the 160 members (of whom more than half were already established in some trade or profession). Of the six cars, four were needed for daily work, one for commuting to the place of work, and only one could be classified as a luxury. This was at the end of 1938. In 1948, at the end of Phase II, 120, or almost 80% of the members, owned telephones, and 39, close to 40%, owned cars, despite the difficulties and expenses of getting cars and phones. By 1951, 90% owned telephones, and only the young and still-unestablished were without one. Over sixty possessed cars, of which only about forty were needed for daily business purposes.

A similar indication of the rise of the Williamsburg Jewish population to higher standards of living during Phase II is the fact that practically all normally-situated members of the community rent rooms or bungalows in the mountains or at the beach during the summer months. The husbands stay in the city during the week, and join their families for weekends or their vacations. During Phase I only about a third of the community had been able to afford this luxury. During Phase II, in 1945, forty of the fifty members of a refugee congregation sent their families to summer resorts, and almost 90% of the above-mentioned organization of 160. Their normally crowded local hardly counted twenty members, or twice the required quorum for the Sabbath services.

"I am no longer a "greener," said one newcomer, a slipcover operator, during his second summer in Williamsburg. "This year I sent my family to the mountains. They live in a small bungalow at Swan Lake." His conception of being adjusted was that he did not have his family stay home in sweltering, dusty Williamsburg during the summer, like the greenhorns or paupers.

If the economic boom of Phase II expressed itself by inclusion of formerly unattainable articles of comfort or luxury in the standard of living of the average member of the Jewish community of Williamsburg, it certainly affected all aspects of the local business scene. In the course of Phase I, particularly during the years of the depression, many of the neighborhood stores had closed down, or seen their business dwindle to the minimum. People carried their business to the large stores in Manhattan or Downtown Brooklyn, and only minor or emergency needs would be filled in the deteriorating local stores.

Much of this slackening of the retail business in Williamsburg was remedied during the years of economic recovery in Phase II. Not only were practically all the stores that had been closed in the preceding phase reopened, but numerous new ones were established by young people who were eager to make good, especially the early refugees, and, later on, the newcomers from the Displaced Persons. On Lee Avenue alone, the major local shipping street, twelve of the fifty-seven stores were taken over by earlier refugees, fifteen by the later newcomers. Eight new stores were established in former basements and abandoned shops. The new owners brought their experience of years of successful business management to their work, and they revitalized much of the local trade that had gone stale or almost died out in the preceding phase. For many of them it was their first chance to prove themselves after the years of humiliation and debasement. They put their hearts and souls into making a go of this chance, because they realized how much of their successful adjustment and normalization depended on it. As soon as building materials became available, they modernized and refurnished the old-fashioned stores.

Obviously the increased volume of spending due to higher income was largely responsible for this change in the local retail scene. There was, for example, a grocery in the heart of Williamsburg, which had barely sustained its pathetic owner through the meager years of the Thirties. On numerous occasions he had to turn customers away because his shelves were empty. Soon after the beginning of Phase II the store came into new hands. The new owner rebuilt and refurnished the store and invested his not-too-large capital in new

stock. Within a short time the store was prospering as it never had before. Two years later it moved across the street into a new and larger location, and the owner had to hire help, in addition to several members of his family, to handle the increased volume of business. While the original owner, a member of the community for a quarter of a century, had been looked down upon for his inability to make ends meet, the new owner became a respected figure in the life of Jewish Williamsburg.

What made the food business such an important factor in the economic life of Williamsburg was the fact that from the middle of Phase II on, newcomers from Hungary began to settle in the community in increasing numbers. They, more than any other ethnic group, were extremely Orthodox and insisted on special kinds of foods, prepared under the extremely stringent supervision instituted and directed by their own religious leaders. Thus their valuational needs started a new Orthodox food industry that became almost synonymous with Jewish Williamsburg. Its *Glatt Kosher* meat products, its special dairies, bakeries and groceries supply the needs of much of New York's Orthodox Jewry and have started a lusty national and international trade. One local butcher, for example, a forerunner of the subsequent waves of Hungarian newcomers, opened a small butcher store in a reconverted basement in 1939. Four years later he purchased one of the largest buildings at one of the best situated spots on Lee Avenue, the shopping center. He converted it into a large, modern meatery with special, well-equipped departments for the canning of meat and the production of all kinds of smoked meats and salamis, many of which had been unknown to Williamsburg before the arrival of the newcomers. He was the first to introduce the specially supervised meat demanded by the extremely Orthodox, and his name became a trade-mark known all over New York and throughout the country. Several other butchers followed his example in the course of Phases II and III, by associating themselves and their products with the authority of one of the famous rabbinical leaders who settled in Williamsburg. His faithful followers throughout the immediate and wider community would not buy meat from any other store, thus assuring financial success to their rabbi's butcher.

This change in the needs and wants of the population, particularly of the many newcomers, plus the increasing tendency of the wealthier members of the original community to move to Crown Heights or Boro Park, caused a considerable loss of business to the old-established Phase I butcher stores which did not handle the special kind of meats. High prices could not make up for the loss of old customers who

moved from the neighborhood, or who changed to the special meats because they were so easily available. Moreover, there was no denying that the new standards were an improvement in terms of the religious values to which oldtimers, as well as the newcomers adhered. Following is the typical reaction of one young Williamsburg Jew who, when asked about the type of meat he uses, said:

> "Before (the arrival of the newcomers and their standards) it would not have occurred to me to ask for *Glatt Kosher* meat. I had not even heard the word until they came. I bought where all my friends bought, in one of the neighborhood butcher-stores whose owner had already served my mother for years. But now I would not go into a butcher store that does not carry *Glatt Fleish.* True, it costs quite a bit more per pound. But if I can have it, why should I not spend more and have a clear conscience."

His reaction is typical of the change in the thinking and conduct of the elements among the old population whose resentment was not strong enough to overcome the realization of the higher religious value pattern of the newcomers. Hence he easily made the adjustment to their new standards of living, even at the cost of financial sacrifice and the change of old habits. Consequently the entire community pattern was affected by this change, as evidenced in the switch to the new meat.

A similar situation existed in the bakery and other vital food lines. A Viennese refugee whose father had owned one of the largest Orthodox Jewish bakeries in Austria, may be cited as a typical example of the change wrought by individual newcomers in this field. When he first settled in Williamsburg at the end of Phase I, he tried all kinds of jobs of the lowest type and found it extremely difficult to support his large family. He worked as errand-boy for a small fruit store and did other deliveries, pushing a cart through the streets of Williamsburg, or trying to peddle eggs from house to house. Had he been a properly trained baker, he might have worked in one of the big baking factories, like his brother who had learned the trade. But he was a scholar and an extremely pious man whose religious zeal and sincerity had soon made him a popular figure in the Williamsburg community, despite his low economic status.

Toward the end of Phase II some sympathetic friends helped him finance the establishment of a small commission bakery in the heart of the neighborhood. Within a short time he opened another store, did his own baking, and saw his products become a standard brand now sought and purchased by Orthodox Jews in the immediate and wider community, although they could not compete in quality with

the products of other, more experienced bakeshops. The owners of the old-established bakeries were religious men of the Russian-Polish type, who belonged to the large synagogues of Phase I. Their personal pattern could not live up to the stringent standards of the newcomers. Only the hardiest maintained their businesses, while some of the others sold out to newcomers or to those of the original population who could compete on equal terms with the adherents of the new pattern.

Similar changes occured in other food lines, especially dairies, fats and spices. Increased demand helped the established lines, and fostered new ones that had not existed in Williamsburg or beyond it, before the influx of the newcomers of Phase II. Likewise, most of the local retail business began to flourish, as the large groups of new members of the community increased the volume of local shopping, despite the increasing departure of the older elements. For, they prefer the local trade to the uptown or downtown stores frequented by the Phase I people.

The area of Williamsburg community life which profited most by the change in the economic situation during Phase II, and would hardly find a place in the discussion of the economic pattern of other communities, is that of the religious and educational agencies and institutions, which had partially fostered this change. As Orthodox Jews the people of Williamsburg, particularly of the Phase II and III type, did not have many outlets for their social and individual interests that are not largely met by these institutions. They were not the ones to have a good time in nightclubs or in the other agencies of the entertainment world that profited so much from the war boom. Their tastes in leisure life and entertainment were relatively simple, and at most could be satisfied in a card game at the hotels where they spent their summer and winter vacations. They may even belong to some social or Jewish political organization that took them to meetings or perhaps to conventions outside of the immediate community. But in general Williamsburg Jews relished the social and leisure life that a closely knit, well-organized community like their own had to offer. The synagogue, the Jewish religious or political organization, their favorite institution, the "Rebbe," their religious leader and his activities, more or less defined the realm within which the average Williamsburg Jew moved, outside of his business contacts. On them he lavished his attention and spent his social expenditures. During the years of low income the interest had to be largely theoretical. Those who could afford to further the causes dear to the community did not have sufficient interest or lacked generosity. Thus many of the local institutions vital to the religious and communal life, suffered greatly

during Phase I. The change in the political situation, the Nazi bestialities, the war conditions, shocked many of the formerly uninterested into taking a more active part in Jewish cultural and religious causes. The ensuing economic boom, particularly the high earnings of the diamond workers in Williamsburg, did a great deal to put the struggling religious, educational and cultural institutions on a more solid basis than they had ever known before. Thus, instead of the entertainment phase of the community, which died down completely with the closing of the local movies, and the disappearance of poolrooms, dance-halls and clubs, except at the outer periphery of Zone IV, the money was diverted to the religious and cultural areas of the community life.

Typical of this effect of the economic boom on the institutions of Williamsburg and their financial condition is the example of a local Jewish religious girls' school. It had been organized, collapsed and was reorganized several times under different names and constantly changing management during the Thirties. From the beginning of Phase II it began to grow by leaps and bounds, until it had to limit registration because the building could not house more than five hundred children. It acquired a new building, larger and better suited to housing a larger student body. Its students are recruited equally from the young of the newcomers and the old established families that have remained in Williamsburg.

Similar expansion and stable management helped both the older institutions of learning for boys and girls, and the new ones that developed during the years of Phases II and III. The very people who had previously been unable to give any monetary help and who had complained about those who could and would not help, were now in a position to prove their genuine interest in the causes important to them. As the diamond boom and the general economic improvement gave them the means, they contributed generously, and many of the fond dreams of the Jewish community of Williamsburg that had been cherished for years, became a reality. The neigborhood thus became a center for world-wide religious and religious educational activities. This in turn meant business for local stores, employment for local people on a professional and general level, and made Williamsburg a desirable neighborhood for those who sought this atmosphere and its educational opportunities for their children.

There were other religious forces at work in Williamsburg during Phase II, which will be dealt with in detail in subsequent chapters, yet must be mentioned here, both because they had a considerable effect on the economic structure of the community, and because they helped engineer the shift to the valuationally determined communal

pattern. These new forces were the religious leaders, the Chassidic rabbis called *Rebbes,* charismatic mass leaders, most of whom settled in Williamsburg during Phases II and III. As in the case of the institutions, their following came not only from the ranks of the numerous newcomers, but also from the original membership of the community. For these religious leaders were practically all famous personages who had been recognized long before they were uprooted from their "courts"[11] in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Roumania, and who had followers whose devotion went back for generations, as far back as their lineage. Few of those who came to the United States during and after the war settled anywhere but in Williamsburg. On Bedford Avenue, the main thoroughfare, four such famous *Rebbes* were able to acquire large mansions and converted them into religious centers because of the willing devotion of their large following, which spared neither effort nor expense in helping their revered leader.

This very reverence and absolute obedience was a tremendous source of income for the Williamsburg community. For, to be able to live near, and be with, and pray with, their *"Rebbe,"* Chassidim would go far out of their way to pay high rentals, to cramp their style and standard of living, and to give freely for all purposes and causes with which the *Rebbe* associates himself. Hence most of the changes in the economic pattern of Jewish Williamsburg, described above as caused by the intensification of local religious standards, were the direct or indirect product of this inner discipline of the Chassidic following of the new religious leaders. Since this trend came to even stronger expression in Phase III, it will be dealt with again in the following section of this chapter.

One other thing that must be mentioned here because it represents an importaint change brought about by the new economic situation of Phase II, is the rise of Jewish Williamsburg on the "marriage market." Belonging mostly to the upper-lower class during Phase I, the chances of marriageable boys and girls to marry partners from higher social strata were limited. If they did not marry youth of their own set from the immediate neighborhood, they tended to draw their partners from comparable sections, from Brownsville, the Bronx, the East Side, or Bushwick. Of an organization of 160 members, the twelve who were married at the end of Phase I had chosen mates from these neighborhoods. But at the end of Phase II twenty-one youngsters, either children of the senior members or junior members,

11. Their residences were called *"Hoif,"* courts, and in manner and style of conduct deserved this title of distinction.

had married partners of higher social classes whose families lived in Crown Heights, Boro Park, Queens or fashionable Long Island. Only one of the twenty-one came from a really lower class home. All others had middle-class parents, and married mates from richer homes. Seventeen had attended college; seven boys were graduates of one of the local rabbinical institutions, and five held promising positions as rabbis. Beyond the social upgrading, this means that even on an economic level the Jewish community of Williamsburg had moved up to a status of eligibility for admission to better Jewish circles. This again was largely due to their good valuational training and background. A boy or girl from Williamsburg had became a *Yachsen,* someone accepted and respected, not despite, but because of his community.

In general, Phase II reverses much of the trend anticipated for the development of the Jewish community of Williamsburg. It marks the rise of its members to a higher economical level, and with it the concomitant rise to higher standards of living, increased cultural activity and social recognition. And this rise took place despite the continuous departure of the wealthier and socially more prominent elements of the original population.

These developments may be attributed to the following factors:

1. The rise of the general economic standards of the country due to war and the political circumstances.
2. The establishment of the diamond industry in this country by Belgian refugees, and its beneficial effect on both the individuals and the community of Jewish Williamsburg.
3. The general professional upgrading of the younger population of Jewish Williamsburg, and its bearing on the economic and social standing of its members.
4. The active participation of the newcomers in the making of the local economic boom, and in its exploitation for the material and spiritual welfare of the community.
5. The intensification of the religious valuational standards of the community because of the increasing number and influence of the newcomers and their famous leaders, and its corollary effects on the local business scene.

4. PHASE III (1949-1954)

The economic pattern that had evolved during Phase II, continued in Phase III, as ever more aspects of the community life of Jewish Williamsburg shifted to the valuational standards introduced by the increasing number of extreme Orthodox newcomers. For, coupled with

the steady influx of the new elements was the growing tendency of the original members of the community to leave the neighborhood. At first it had only been the wealthy upper-class and the young who had sought to escape the status and squalor of Williamsburg. Toward the end of Phase II middle-class people, too, decided to move out, particularly those whom the intensive Orthodox pattern did not permit to follow their old, moderate forms of social and cultural life. Even some of the earlier refugee groups began to follow this trend, and many of them left Williamsburg for Crown Heights, Boro Park and Queens.

This change in population effected a considerable shift in the economic balance, as the newcomers gained full equality and took over most of the local business life. This meant some lowering of the general standards once more, as in Phase I, when the original wealthy elements gave way to the lower Russian-Polish elements; yet the community as a whole did not deteriorate, as might have been the case in a community less structured around the religio-social foci than Jewish Williamsburg. Even as Phase III started off with a considerable decline from the high level of the war and postwar economy, and as such essential factors of the Phase II boom as the diamond industry began to disappear, the community life continued to flourish and stabilize itself, especially after 1950.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter, the influence of the famous religious leaders who had settled in Williamsburg was perhaps the most powerful factor in the situation. Not only did they command the respect of their Chassidic following among the newcomers, but their authority was gradually recognized by the Orthodox elements of the original community, and even many of those who lived in other Jewish neighborhoods. Their leadership in raising the level of Orthodox practise was followed by these groups.

To illustrate this local and wider effect, let us again look at the vital food lines, particularly meat and meat produce. It is a well known fact that despite the *Kosher* legend on practically every butcher or delicatessen store whose owner is Jewish, few deserve the patronage of Orthodox Jews. An annual fee to a supervisory organization or a few more or less scrupulous religious functionaries may provide an official sanction which is hardly acceptable even by the lowest standards and loosest interpretation of the letter and spirit of the Jewish law. In such a state of near-lawlessness it was not difficult for a firm backed by one of the famous rabbis from Williamsburg to establish a name for integrity and religious reliability. Though created by newcomers the products of this higher pattern of *Kashruth* were

adopted by many other conscientiously Orthodox Jews. Like the young man quoted in the preceding section, they changed to the new food lines, even though they had to pay more and would have accepted some of the better, old established products before the new ones were available.

Thus several meat lines created in Williamsburg by newcomers under the stringent supervision of one of the famous rabbis, have outlets in other Jewish neighborhoods of New York, or do a thriving mail order or export business. Naturally, they have displaced most other butcher shops in Williamsburg, as they have taken over practically all of the forty-two stores on or near Lee Avenue. Delicatessen stores which had formerly carried the products of other popular Jewish brands have changed ownership and now sell the produce of the stringently supevised butcher stores. Similarly, restaurants and caterers who supply meat for the social functions of their Orthodox Jewish clientele, now advertise the use of these "Glatt Kosher" products as a way of establishing, indirectly, their own reliability.

What happened in the meat industry is typical. Other food industries were created by the newcomers to meet their own high standards of Orthodoxy. They filled a vital need in the general Jewish community of New York, and to some degree even of the whole country, whole giving economic security to their creators. One newcomer, with the help of his sons, built a small food business into a large kosher cheese company which now exports to all parts of the world. Another man took over a small vegetable fat company organized by early refugees, and built it into a large oil and fat corporation. One recent newcomer was the first to establish himself as a producer of reliable pickled products. At first he drove his own little delivery car. Now large trucks carry his popular mechandise all over New York and to other Jewish communities in this country. A fourth newcomer established a large dairy firm which supplies hundreds of Orthodox Jews with properly supervised kosher milk. In the last two years three more companies of newcomers associated with the name of a famous rabbi have established milk companies and all of them do a thriving business. Still another newcomer to Williamsburg built a growing butter and cheese company that meets the highest standards of the dietary law.

The producers of these food lines have gained considerable prestige in the community, as well as the economic benefits of a thriving business. The owner of the fat company, for example, has become a key figure on the board of directors of several large educational institutions, and is an important official of some religious projects

whose scope exceeds the narrow local community. He could not have secured this status had he not been willing to give generously of his time and money to these vital causes. He and many other newcomers who have made good in some business or profession, have taken the place of the former social leaders of Williamsburg. They have been accepted as equals because of their willingness to take an active share in community affairs. Their intense religiosity, and in many instances their religious background, qualifies them as much as, or even more than, some of the social leaders of Phase I who left the neighborhood.

Naturally, only a small percentage of the newcomers of Phase III[12] went into the food line. Many of the others tried some lines of business, like food, which were in some direct or indirect way related to or dependent on the religious background of those who engaged in it. As a consequence, they established industries in this country which had before been either unimportant or non-existent. They began, for instance, to produce religious articles, such as *Talleisim,* the prayer-shawls, *Tzitzith,* the special fringes, *Tefillin,* phylacteries, and other paraphernalia of the Jewish ritual. Another line of business which had hardly existed in the United States, and was dependent almost exclusively on imports form European and Palestinian Jewish centers, was the Hebrew book publishing industry, with its related branches. Only some of the minor, regular needs had been satisfied by the very modest establisments which had developed in the course of the past decades. The almost complete destruction of the European centers which had supplied most of the Hebrew of Jewish literature, plus the increasing interest in Hebrew or Jewish literature in this country, gave many of the newcomers a chance to engage in some phase of this business. Not much original printing and publishing is done, since these firms cencentrate on photographing or offsetting the famous works of centuries of Hebrew literature which have become rare and attainable only at exorbitant prices. Numerous classics and more recent works have become available again or for the first time to the average literate American-Jew interested in acquiring the basic library of standard works necessary for the studies that are part of his religious life. Although publishing at the present price level is almost prohibitive, a number of Hebrew publishing houses are developing and expanding, to fill the needs partially created by the newcomers themselves.

A number of the newcomers fitted themselves easily into the trades which they had plied in Europe, particularly those which did not

12. 32 out of the 350 members of one of their major congregations, or close to 10%.

demand too much adjustment in methods of production. Furriers, for example, had little difficulty finding work, or establishing themselves in business. But one of them, a furrier and designer who had lived in France for many years, complained:

> "Business is much harder here. It's really dog eat dog. One furrieris jealous of the other, and you've got to slave hard to be able to keep up with the rest."

Few of the newcomers entered the garment trade which had once absorbed a large percentage of the immigrants in the first three decades of this century. Even the textile field, which had been taken up by a number of newcomers of the earlier waves of refugees, was hardly touched by the newcomers of Phase III. The diamond boom had died down before the end of Phase II, and only a few hardy ones, those who had acquired specialized skills, or who had become members of the diamond club as brokers and dealers, remained with it. After a year of seeing their large reservoirs of savings dwindle down, the majority of Williamsburg's diamond workers switched to different professions. Many lost their savings by investing in all kinds of business ventures which collapsed because their owners were not sufficiently experienced, or because business conditions in general deteriorated and they could not hold out as well as their more experienced competitors. One newcomer of Phase II, for instance, went into the fuel line. He counted for customers on his large circle of friends among the house-owners of Williamsburg. After three months he had to sell the business to save himself from complete financial collapse. Another member of the same group had bought up a beverage company, but competition and inexperience made him leave it four weeks later. Others of the most recent group of Phase III newcomers, however, did again take up the beverage delivery route business and are quite successful in it. The first one who had failed in the oil business became an oil salesman; the second took the remnants of his savings from the diamond boom and bought a house, like many who had been frightened by their failure to find a substitute line in which they could maintain the high standard of living they achieved during Phase II.

Of one congregation of fifty, of which twenty two had become diamond workers, only nine remained in the industry. This percentage is even higher than that in other congregations, because these nine had helped each other, either in becoming members of the club, or by keeping each other busy with work. Of the thirteen who had left the diamond trade, seven returned to their former professions as workers, customer-peddlers, or religious funcionaries. Two bought

stores in the neighborhood, one a grocery store and the other a restaurant. One became a salesman, one a clerk in a factory, and two entered a line of business which was considerably more popular with other groups of the early and later newcomers — the export and import trade.

Twenty seven of the 165 members of a Viennese-Hungarian congregation became exporters or importers at the conclusion of Phase II, when they were forced to leave the diamond industry. The goods-starved countries of post-war Europe provided a wide open field, and many of the newcomers of all groups who had friends or relatives there, or who during the years of their migration had established themselves in business there, now took up these connections and started some form of export business. But what at the outset seemed like a promising boom, lasting only a year or two. Of the twenty seven, fourteen were forced to abandon their offices on Lower Broadway, or in the Wall Street area and return to less unprofitable occupations, when the needs of the countries with whom they dealt with were filled, and the international political situation and monetary difficulties prevented all but the experienced and well-established firms from continuing this rather changeable and risky line of business. Eight of the fourteen turned back to the diamond trade, which improved again, as the export and import business deteriorated. Although this improvement of the diamond trade is far from the boom that had such a deep effect on Williamsburg during the Forties, is is moderately active. Remarked one of those who returned to it:

> "We dont's even make half of what we used to earn in those good days; but it is still easier to make a decent living in diamonds than in any other line you don't know."

Working overtime, and having good connections with active dealers, will still net a polisher close to a hundred dollars a week, which seems quite satisfactory to those who had wasted a year or more waiting for the line to recover and then had experienced dangerous failures in unsuccessful investments and business ventures of different sorts. Interestingly enough, three of the eight who returned to the diamond trade did not completely abandon the profession to which they had reverted in the interim. They had learnt the bitter lesson of watching a hard-earned savings account disappear. Therefore one maintained his morning job as a Hebrew teacher, and worked in the diamond center during the afternoons and evenings. The other spends his evenings selling insurance; and the third continues his electrical appliance business during his off-hours, not so much for the profits, as to make sure that he will not be left completely without some-

thing to which he can turn if the diamond line falls off again.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the change in the occupational pattern, and with it of the economic life of the Jewish community of Williamsburg during Phase III, is the predominance of skilled or semi-skilled crafts and trades among the newcomers. They learnt these mechanical or manual trades during their years in the camps or after their arrival in this country. They revert back to the immigrants of the first three decades of this century, unlike the immigrants and refugees of the 1930's and 1940's who aspired to higher professions or to business. Yet while the workmen of the early decades had not been real professionals, and had learnt just enough of their crafts to handle the tools for basic repair work, without a thorough training, these recent newcomers pride themselves on their skills. "I am a European carpenter," said one young man, on being called in to make additional lockers in a school building and seeing the rather imperfect job one of the local old-time carpenters had made. "If I do a job, I got to do it right. I can't work like that." Another young man with a beard, a recent newcomer and ardent Chassid, who had learnt the pocket-book line in this country, proved his skill to the foreman who had doubted his ability to compete with the rest of the experienced workers in the factory. He showed that he was not only a superior operator, but the master of every phase of pocketbook production from patternmaking to finishing. The foreman, who was himself one of the early refugees from Germany, remarked in surprise:

> "A fellow like he can take the place of five others who know only one side of the work, and that superficially. He's got the brains in addition to the skill."

While it was hardly possible to find skilled craftsmen among the immigrants of the 1930's and 1940's, and outsiders had to serve the needs of the community, Jewish Williamsburg now has Orthodox young carpenters, electricians, glaziers, plumbers, truckdrivers, etc. In 1947 one of the local barbers who caters to the trade of the Orthodox population, remarked bitterly that he could not get any help younger than fifty to sixty years old. "In the whole barber union," he remarked, "there are hardly any young people to go around. The young ones want to learn and study and get into finer occupations and better businesses. Those they send me from the union can hardly move." Now he has two skilled young assistants of the recent immigrant type working in his place.

While there are many who handle these basic trades, a good many of the younger newcomers are particularly interested in the mechanical

crafts. In one congregation of recent Hungarian and Polish newcomers which has a membership of 76 young men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, there are only two who attend college. Over forty are skilled craftsmen, such as patternmakers, upholsterers, electrical engineers, furriers, leatherworkers, jewelry workers, machine operators, delivery truck drivers, bakers, knitting-machine operators and decorators. Only one is a butcher and one a tailor. 30% of a Phase I congregation was made up of skilled workers, but these were of the basic type, like shoemakers, carpenters, tailors and garment workers. Eleven of the seventy-six members of this young men's organization and congregation are in business for themselves. But again they are in the types of business requiring special skills. Two are partners in a leather-goods factory. One runs a woolen knitwear shop with his father. One produces slipcovers. Three are partners in a firm that makes frames for chairs. Two work in a company that assembles watches. One has a small plating business. And only one of the eleven is in a purely commercial business. The others prefer lines that require some technical skill.

This occupational distribution may appear to indicate a lowering of the economic level; yet closer inspection shows that all of these skills are at least as rewarding financially as the business lines in which the immigrants of the 1930's and 1940's engaged (with the exception of the lucrative diamond trade). Fourteen of the seventy-six own cars; twenty-seven were married in the course of the last three years, twelve of them to girls from early refugee families or from the original population of Williamsburg or other neighborhoods. It was much harder for the newcomers of the early waves of refugees to get married, because it took them much longer to find jobs; and hardly any of them earned a quarter of the salaries of the average skilled newcomers of this particular organization. The average earnings of the newcomers of a similar organization to which many of the early German and Viennese refugees belonged in the beginning of Phase II, were about $25.00 per week after two years; while the average earnings in this organization of later newcomers range between $75.00 and $100.00 per week. The difference is due partly to changed labor conditions, but also to the type of skills and background they brought with them to the jobs.

While the earlier refugees earned less because they were not trained for the manual or technical jobs that were open to them in the beginning of Phase II, they were also, because of their university or business training, less concerned with the sheer economic aspect of their adjustment than the newcomers of the 1940's. When asked

why his organization did not make much progress, the leader of the Phase II group complained: "How can we advance if our members are only interested in making money, in having a good time, and getting married." Whereas the early refugees felt intellectually superior, though their Hebrew training was inferior to that of the members of the original Williamsburg community, the recent newcomers feel rather inferior in both secular and religious education. While practically all of the younger refugees of the early Phase II years attended colleges or other schools of higher learning as soon as they were settled in this country, hardly any of the recent newcomers who had graduated from the concentration and Displaced Persons camps have the patience and interest to do so. Only those who are still young and flexible, and have families to support them, attend school beyond the required minimum.

This is also the key to the money-mindedness of which their leader complained. One of them expressed it frankly:

> "I was just a child when the Nazis put us in a camp. I have lived without parents or relatives, and was never settled or able to stand on my own feet for fifteen years. Now I think is is time that I earn some money, get settled and live like a normal human being. I have dreamt so long and so much of all this. Now I have the opportunity to get it, and I'll try my best to see to it that I don't have to depend on being fed and supported by others again. I don't want to live on a dry crust of bread and the dream of a piece of meat."

The years of utter privation and the inability to compete in a free market and to prove their capabilities, have made the newcomers eager to succeed in this respect. It is the excuse for some of the greediness which has led a few of the recent newcomers to less savory occupations, such as smuggling. In general it was not the Orthodox type of newcomers who lives in Williamsburg who chose this desperate way of making money, though all of the Displaced Persons had been forced to engage in some black market activities in postwar Europe as a matter of survival. Only four of the newcomers who were caught smuggling since the beginning of Phase III come from Williamsburg. With two exceptions they are hardly known and do not belong to any of the organizations of the community. It is the peripheral types with little or no social responsibility who succumb to the temptations of this illegal activity. The majority of those who were caught, live among the higher classes and in neighborhoods where there is much less cohesion and community life than in Williamsburg.

If it may seem that their years of want and insecurity have led

these Phase III newcomers to be almost exclusively guided by economic considerations, the events of Phase III in the Williamsburg Jewish community prove otherwise. There is, for instance, the large congregation of one of the most famous of all the Chassidic rabbis to settle in Williamsburg. Although at least a third of its membership of over four hundred are well-to-do, the majority consists of workers or craftsmen, or have started some trade or small business and are not finding it easy to maintain themselves in the face of present economic conditions. Yet when the *Rebbe* decided to buy one of the largest buildings on the main thoroughfare for a combination residence, house of prayer and academy for talmudical studies, and appealed to his followers for help, they spent as much as $300.00 for a seat at the high holidays services, when the largest synagogues of the neighborhood charged, at most, $15.00 per ticket. One recent newcomer who was building up an egg delivery route and pushed a baby carriage filled with merchandise through the streets, when asked why he spent so much money for a seat ticket, replied enthusiastically:

> "Why, I would pay any price to be near the *Rebbe*, and listen to his saying the prayers, and share his holy devotion."

This man made $50.00 a week, when business was good, and he has a family of four children. Another member of this congregation, the pocketbook operator mentioned above, who earned $65.00 per week, had twice given $100.00 towards the building fund, in addition to paying the seat price. Yet he stated unequivocally:

> "I think it is my sacred duty to do my share. I consider it a privilege to do so much, even though it hurts. And I know that I will have to give again. You see, there were times when I could not work at all. Then I swore that whenever I earn a living, and normal times return, I would share and give for charity and just such causes as the *Rebbe* asks us to support."

This same worker took a week and a half off to observe the Passover holidays for the full eight days, while even the most Orthodox Jews go to work on the three semi-holiday of *Chol Hamoed.* He did this at the risk of being laid off altogether; for the boss had warned him that in that normally slack season he was fortunate to have placed a larger order, which had to be filled quickly, and that he needed every man. He would not guarantee the job of anyone who stayed out at such a time.

> "I have never worked on "*Chol Hamoed*" (the semi-holidays), and I don't think any amount of money could persuade me to do so now,"

was the worker's typical reaction. In another Viennese-Hungarian Phase II congregation, there were only twenty-two Sabbaths on which there was no appeal made for some religious or communal cause in 1951. In another very large Williamsburg synagogue of the Phase I Russian-Polish type a maximum of five appeals for the entire year has been set up, and the rabbi ran into considerable difficulties when he tried to push in a sixth emergency appeal for one of the local religious educational institutions. The open resistance of the membership, which is quite wealthy and could afford the additional burden, points up the difference in the attitude of the old-established Phase I groups toward matters of concern to the community. They have become rigid and formalized, and openly resent some of the changes imposed on them by the more intense Orthodoxy of the recent newcomers, even in this aspect of economic participation in communal affairs. Their own economic situation enables them to contribute to worthy causes beyond the normal, expected quotas for such standard projects of the American Jewish scene as the U.J.A., Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and the recognized large national institutions. They prefer to hide behind the formality of a constitutional clause, and the excuse of bad business in general, like congregations in cities outside of New York and far from its active Jewish communal life.

Yet Jewish institutions and communal projects initiated by the famous leaders and the community as a whole,[13] find enthusiastic support by the people of Phase III Williamsburg, which is about evenly divided between newcomers and those of the older population who have stayed on. Even though the economic boom of the war and post-war era is largely over, the schools, synagogues, ritual centers and organizations thrive and continue to expand. Neither the departure of most of the old economic and social leaders, nor the lowering of the occupational level and the residential downgrading discussed in the preceding chapter, have affected the standards and positive prospects of Jewish communal life.

In general Phase III marks the further intensification of the trends apparent at the end of Phase II, the increasing departure of the Phase I and some of the Phase II population, and their replacement in the economic structure of Jewish Williamsburg, as well as in all other phases of the community life. Temporary economic setbacks, resulting from the shift to new sources of income, and the occupational downgrading of a large percentage of the newcomers to the manual and technical trades and crafts have had little lasting effect on the economic

13. Discussed in Chapter VII.

pattern, which is largely determined by or concentrated around the valuational foci. New sources and avenues of business are opened by the intense Orthodox standards of Williamsburg and are partially expanding into other communities. Directed by their religious leaders, the Jewish community has been able to maintain and further raise its standards of communal activity, despite lower income and higher expenses. As a whole, religious valuational interests have been able to successfully counteract and outweigh personal economic greed and meet the need for individual security of the newcomers.

5. SUMMARY

At the end of both Phase I and Phase II it seemed that the exodus of the wealthier elements and a general decline in the economic situation had doomed Jewish Williamsburg to the fate of its neighboring areas. Counter to the expectations of trained observers, Jewish Williamsburg has flourished and prospered economically as never before in its history. The large groups of newcomers who have settled there since the end of Phase I, have become successfully integrated into local and general business life and have contributed considerably to the economic boom, as well as the general cultural and social rise of the neighborhood. Their high standards of Orthodoxy, and their allegiance to the famous religious leaders, have helped maintain the community and make it a center of Orthodox Jewish business, as well as of other religious activities and projects. Even the temporary setbacks and partial downgrading of the beginning of Phase III have not halted this process of economic advancement, and the stabilization of the changing population produced by the intense valuational determination of their individual and communal conduct.

Though of vital importance, the effect of the economic situation of the Jewish community of Williamsburg has partially been superseded by the stronger religio-social interests of the people.

IV

CLASS STRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

1. INTRODUCTION

CLASS structure and the pattern of leadership in a community like Jewish Williamsburg are necessarily determined by the Orthodoxy of its people and the application of these religio-cultural values to their daily life. Whether we define a social class with Max Weber as a group of people with the same life-chances,[1] or with Robert M. MacIver as a portion of a community which is marked off from the rest primarily by social status,[2] the ultimate distinction between the various strata in the community depends on what its people consider valuable. The higher and lower social status of individuals or groups indicate that the individuals or the group possess more or less of the economic or cultural goods considered desirable by the community.

Again it must also be stressed that the Jewish community of Williamsburg does not live in a social vacuum. Being part of a larger community, it is definitely affected by the general values and social forces which it shares with this wider community because of common conditions of life. In those areas in which the values of the wider and the immediate community clash, the increasingly pronounced value pattern of Jewish Williamsburg replaces the general valuation in the determination of its changing social structure.

American social stratification is largely determined by income and wealth,[3] and the social leaders of the community are the successful businessmen. They are closely followed by the class of professionals like lawyers, doctors, dentists, and veterinarians, who combine the prestige of education with that of income and wealth.

1. Max Weber, *Wirschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tuebingen 1922, III, Chapter IV.
2. Robert M. MacIver, *Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
3. Cf., Cuber, *Sociology*, N. Y. '51, p. 413; MacIver, *Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

Officially the clergymen belong to this class. However, as the Lynds have made sufficiently clear in their discussion of the role of the religious leader in the American community, although they are respected and treated deferentially, they are actually only suffered and pitied in this position "at the fringe of things" by both the members of the business class and the working classes.[4]

In the American-Jewish community the superior position of these three upper classes is even more pronounced, because, as recent studies show, "Jews are a middle-class group increasingly found in business and the professions"[5]; because the conditions which produced the high status of the successful businessman and the professional are even more relevant in their case. To these people, who had lived in various stages of oppression and discrimination in the countries of the Old World, America was the golden land of opportunity where they could rise from the status of social pariahs. Here they could utilize their particular historically-conditioned and developed talent for business. And here they were even able to enter the professions closed to them in most other countries.

This opening of previously closed doors had the concomitant effect of breaking down most of the values that had molded the Jewish community throughout the centuries of its survival in exile. These values were largely dependent upon the pressure from without in their resistence to total assimilation and disintegration by the various host countries and cultures. Identifying the value pattern of the Jewish Orthodox tradition with the hated ghetto conditions of their Old World existence, the majority of Jewish immigrants discarded much of their belief and the values associated with it after they had set foot on the American soil, and entered into its culture. The general climate of the hunt for a livelihood, of "making a living," and the subsequent pursuit of material success, of wealth and its corollaries of luxuries and social recognition, absorbed all of their energies and most of their interests. Those immigrants who maintained their Jewish values, who settled in Jewish communities to preserve some of the religious life pattern, had to face the fact that their children were trying to escape from the transplanted ghetto of Jewish customs and religious values which they did not appreciate.[6] Much of the Jewish communal life itself, the synagogue, the religious

4. *Middletown,* New York 1929, Ch. XXII, p. 347 ff.
5. "What Sociology Knows About American Jews," by N. Glazer, *Commentary,* March 1950, New York, Vol. 9, No. 3.
6. Comp. Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto,* Chicago, 1928, Ch. XXII. p. 215.

functions, the religious and welfare institutions, was affected by the spirit of the dollar-hunt and the idolization of the successful businessman that characterized the community at large and its social structure.

As a consequence, the social status of the Jewish clergyman,[7] the rabbi, declined to a position lower than the status of the non-Jewish clergyman, who, on the surface at least, maintained a high degree or social respectability, even if he did not actually have either the power or the influence commensurate with it. The increasing secularization of Jewish community life deprived the rabbi of most of his traditional functions — functions which go far beyond the ritual and the synagogue. By tradition and law he is supposed to be the actual community leader and to occupy the top rung of its class system. Actually, however, he became a mere functionary, a salaried employee of the community, who depended upon religious ceremonies at birth, Bar Mitzvah, marriage and death to supplement his very meager income, an income that ranged between $10.00 and $30.00 a week until World War II. Only the Conservative and Reform rabbis whose congregations are well-to-do, have maintained at least the external prestige and the financial remuneration accorded the non-Jewish clergyman, while at the same time losing all semblance of actual community leadership in terms of the traditional values. His contract up for renewal by the membership of his synagogue, the Orthodox rabbi, who was only engaged on an annual basis, was at the mercy of his congregants year after year. Whatever authority was still vested in him, was thus undermined by his forced deference to those who could make or break him, who were his superiors and "customers." While officially ranking near the top classes made up of successful businessmen and professionals, the rabbi became actually inferior to all those who could decide his income and fate as head of the congregation.[8]

Here, perhaps, is the strongest indication of the major inroad the economically-oriented value pattern of the American scene has made on traditional Jewish communal values in the United States. It means the breakdown of the very essence of the traditional Jewish social order, which is based on the primacy of "Torah" scholarship and authority. The "Torah" is the supreme Jewish code of law, divine in origin, and the only legitimate and valid guide to all phases of individual and communal life. He who speaks for Torah, who can interpret and convey its direction, is the only one entitled to

7. Comp. M. Sklare, *Comservative Judaism, op. cit.*, p. 80ff.

8. Comp. Ch. VI., Jerome E. Carlin and Saul H. Mendlowitz, *The Rabbi*, op. cit., Chic. U. '51; and M. Sklare, op. cit., p. 265.

social leadership. The only traditionally valid criteria of social status are the degree of Torah scholarship and of the observance of the religious commandments. Theoretically speaking the ignorant and lax are rightfully doomed to the very bottom of the social hierarchy, regardless of their wealth or influence or other worldly qualifications.

Though this ideal pattern of Jewish social structure may never have been fully realized, the authority and leadership of the rabbi, the spokesman of the Law, was never as impaired by any competing valuation as it was by the economically-determined value pattern of the American-Jewish community before and after World War I. Partially, perhaps, this may have been due to some incompetence on the part of the immigrant rabbis who were not flexible enough to adjust to the conditions and requirements of a religious leader in the New World. More authoritative and impressive personalities might perhaps have been able to counteract the strong influence toward secularization to which the masses of immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe were subjected. As a consequence, not only the social position of the rabbi, but the influence of the religious values on the entire social structure of the community was weakened, even among those Jews who did not leave the Orthodox life pattern of their forefathers after their settlement in the United States.

2. PHASE I (-1938)

Both the small, wealthy Jewish community of Phase I Williamsburg up to World War I, and the Russian-Polish low-and-middle-class community up to World War II, were as representative of this pattern of American-Jewish society and its class structure as any other religious Jewish neighborhood of New York. The latter was made up of immigrants from Eastern Europe and their children, who started out in the working classes as unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled laborers or as business employees who gradually moved up into the middle class. Some of its successful businessmen and professionals rose to the upper-middle class by their income and social status. Consequently, true to their group's typical behavior, they felt that they owed it to their social standing, and to the advancement of their children, to leave the lower-class environment of Williamsburg, and many of them moved to Crown Heights and other upper-middle class Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn.[9]

The majority of the Jews in Phase I Williamsburg after World

9. Compare Warner-Srole, *Social Systems of Ethnic Groups, op. cit.*, p. 42, sub "hierarchical attraction."

War I were Orthodox by the standards of the Russian-Polish, and later of the Chassidic Galician Polish pattern. Despite the decidedly religious character of the community, Jewish Williamsburg's class structure was largely dominated by the value pattern that places success in business, income and wealth ahead of the traditional values of rabbinical leadership, spiritual elite, and the authority of the scholar not only in questions of the law, but in all phases of individual and communal life. The only principle of selection which differentiated the social structure of Williamsburg from other, less religious communities was the requirement of observance of religious practices and adherence to the basic dogmas of the Jewish faith made for those who wished to be accepted into the inner circle of local society. It certainly was the *sinequanon* for those who wanted to be members of the elite. Wealth and income alone were not enough to qualify a non-religious person for active participation in communal life proper.

While accepting material success as a definite and decisive factor in the selection of the community leaders, the basic qualification was not the money aspect, but its combination with the spiritual value of religiosity. Typical is the example of a famous figure of the garment industry who became the president of a local educational institution, and was willing to invest large sums into building it up to national scope. As soon as it became apparent that his religious principles were not as stringent as the strictly Orthodox views of the dean, he was forced to leave the administration. As a consequence this school is still struggling desperately with its financial problems, but its integrity in terms of the local conception of communal leadership has been preserved.

Otherwise, however, practically every phase of Williamsburg community life was dominated by those who, in addition to their basic religiosity, had proven their prowess in business or professional life, regardless of the state of their scholarship in matters of Hebrew learning.

As a consequence the following pattern of class structure evolved in the Jewish community of Williamsburg during Phase I, as shown by the example of several key institutions and organizations.

WILLIAMSBURG
CLASS STRUCTURE OF PHASE I

1. Successful businessmen
2. Professionals, (lawyers, doctors, scientists, etc.)
3. Rabbis, Hebrew scholars

4. Government employees, religious functionaries
5. Small tradesmen
6. Skilled workers
7. Semi-skilled workers, business employees
8. Unskilled workers

The records of institutions, synagogues, schools and organizations, point to the fact that their administration or boards of directors were headed by the elite of the Jewish community, the successful businessmen of the neighborhood. Admired for their proven business acumen, able to use their own means, and to attract the support of other men of means, they were the ones drafted and elected to head all community projects, campaigns and regular activities. Of the thirty-seven names of presidents of synagogues or chairmen of local organizations signed to an appeal for an emergency campaign for the victims of a *pogrom* in Poland, twenty-eight were such successful businessmen, manufacturers, wholesalers, real estate dealers and brokers, or owners of large retail establishments. The remainder were professionals, lawyers, accountants, a dentist and the director of an institution.

The oldest and largest Hebrew institute for boys, which in time became one of the most important Orthodox *Yeshivoth,* academies for Talmudical studies, in the United States, was founded and administered by Orthodox laymen of the community, rather than by the rabbis and scholars. They were the ones to engage and dismiss the teachers, and they had a decisive voice even in such matters of professional concern as the program and curriculum. Many of the frequent crises arose from the clash between these lay leaders, who controlled the funds, and the rabbis who directed and taught the classes. "You rabbis may know how to teach *Gemara* (Talmud), but we businessmen know how to run an institution," was the famous saying of the chairman of the board of directors, a manufacturer who left Williamsburg towards the end of Phase I, but remained active in its communal affairs, like many others of this early elite.

His attitude was typical not only of his own self-estimate of where he belonged in the community's status-hierarchy, but of the valuation of the entire community. The community disregarded the "impractical" scholar's and rabbi's claim to leadership, and approved of the ignorant, though religiously observant successful businessman's guidance even in such almost exclusively spiritual matters as the program of an advanced institute of learning. Only the revaluation of Phase III

brought a sharp reversal of this relationship between the religious leader and the wealthy layman.

Equally under the control of wealthy lay leaders were the very foci of religious activity, the synagogues and their congregations.[10] Only six of the thirty-two large and small synagogues of the neighborhood were founded for and guided by Chassidic rabbis of minor stature. They were largely dependent upon the laymen who served as officers of their congregations, and they had to remain aloof from the inner squabbles or clashes of personality that beset the congregants, in order not to lose their patronage. While there is a bond of personal allegiance that ties the followers of a Chassidic *Rebbe* to their religious leader, the rabbis of the synagogues, even of the few large ones, commanded little of the formal respect accorded a religious minister. They were the employees and tools of the laymen, the successful businessmen and lawyers who headed the administration and steered its course. Many a rabbi who dared to voice dissatisfaction or open disapproval of his lay officers, faced discharge or a simple refusal to renew his annual contract. As a matter of fact, half the synagogues, particularly the small congregations, never employed a rabbi, or did away with him when they felt they could no longer support him — this in spite of the very low salaries paid them. Laymen, sextons or so-called reverends, lay people with some knowledge of the ritual, took over their functions. This expendability of the rabbi increased the power and prestige of the lay officers, while further diminishing the social status of the rabbi.

Second in the esteem of the Jewish community of Williamsburg, as in the social structure of the American community at large,[11] is the class of professionals, particularly lawyers and accountants, who are actually part of the business class, since they sell their services on a business basis and are actually part of the business world.[12] For the same reason, they are almost as valuable to communal life as the successful businessman himself, since they are trained to deal with formal matters such as meetings, organization and public addresses, as well as with official agencies and the handling of the technical details of administration. Just as their ranks furnish most of the politicians on the local and national scene, they are also the important officials in Jewish community life. For, if there is one thing

10. Cf., Ch. VII.

11. Comp. Warner-Srole, *Social Systems of Am. Ethn. Groups, op. cit.*, p. 57.

12. Cf. Lynd, R. S. & H., *Middletown, op. cit.*, p. 23.

that is valued highly among Jews, it is education.[13] Professionals like the lawyer are unique in that they are able to combine scholarship with technical skill and material success. An additional reason for the high ranking of this class in a community of the religious type like Williamsburg, is the fact that few of those who in the Old World were admitted to higher secular studies, had remained Orthodox. A secular education meant almost automatically a break with the tradition and its pattern of life. In America, too, even the young of those immigrants who maintained their Orthodox values, leave the "ghetto" mostly during the years of their college education.[14] The break is not as inevitable as it had been in Eastern Europe. Therefore those professionals who remained Orthodox and lived in a community like Williamsburg, were highly respected, particularly if, as in the case of some of the Williamsburg lawyers, they combined Hebrew scholarship with their secular education. This is also the reason why many of the first newcomers from Germany, Austria, and other Western European countries, who settled in Williamsburg during Phase II, soon rose in the social esteem of the population and advanced very rapidly into the elite of communal leadership. They combined a thorough secular education with a religious attitude, particularly the physicians.

Second only to the successful businessmen, lawyers, doctors, dentists, certified accountants' and other professionals, have been members of the elite of Williamsburg's society ever since its development. They have been among the highest officials on all boards and administrations. In the largest synagogue of the community, for example, a well-known lawyer and political figure has been the highest or one of the highest officers for many years, a dentist ranking just below him. Both have alternated with wealthy merchants in directing the affairs of this most influential local institution. In one of the most important Orthodox local organizations the members of one family, all certified accountants, people of erudition and Hebrew learning, took turns in holding the highest offices. They competed with lawyers and businessmen for the presidency throughout the years of their membership, and finally moved into other upper-middle-class Jewish neighborhoods where they are once again playing important parts in communal affairs. The only member of the family who remained in Williamsburg became a figure of importance on the national scene, as one of the leaders of Orthodox Jewry in America.

13. Cf., *Commentary on the Amer. Scene*, N. Y. '53, p. 117.
14. Cf., L. Wirth, *The Ghetto*, Ch. XXII, *op. cit.*

Similarly in another Orthodox organization a certified accountant has been either president or president-maker for more than a decade. A lawyer's family has been running the affairs of a third, perhaps the largest local youth organization. He or his brothers, also professionals or businessmen, have been in practically every administration that has been elected throughout the years of the organization's existence. Professionals have helped establish every major institution of learning, and continue to guide them as members of the board of directors. They have made up, almost exclusively, the membership of the secular boards of education of all boys' and girls' schools in the community. And lawyers and certified accountants have been the ones to organize the local social services, a loan organization open to any resident of the community, charity funds, a home for the aged, a refugee-aid office, etc.

Next in rank during Phase I, perhaps even lower, came the rabbis of Williamsburg.[15] While they participated actively in all community affairs as members of boards or committees, few of them commanded as much genuine respect from the people as might be expected in a neighborhood guided by religious values. It was the combination of the high valuation of material success and the breakdown of the social and the religious role of the rabbi which undermined his social status, and made him subservient tc rather than the leader of the other scholastically and religiously less qualified strata. Interestingly enough, by the middle of Phase I many rabbis, particularly those of the younger generation, who had the right social contacts and no difficulty adjusting to the language and conditions outside their own field, changed to different professions. Dissatisfied with the monetary and social rewards of the pulpit and unwilling to compromise their Orthodoxy, they looked to the world of business to give them both. The rabbi of one of the oldest and largest synagogues, for example, studied law while ministering to his congregation. As soon as he had his degree, he opened an office, and shortly after he had acquired a large-enough practice, he left the pulpit. One joined the furniture business of his brother, a third took over a department in the textile business of his father-in-law. Others used their connections to strike out on their own, and a good many turned out to be successful, even during the years of the depression. "Now I am no longer a rabbi, now I can talk freely

15. Cf., Ch. VI. Also Jerome E. Carlin and Saul H. Mendlowitz, *The Rabbi, A sociological Study of a Religious Specialist,* Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1951, and M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism, op. cit,*

as one of you," one such former rabbi, now a businessman, said in a discussion. He was expressing the feeling of emancipation he and his colleagues experienced on leaving their profession. Only a few rabbis who possessed superior scholastic backgrounds, or were able to attract crowds by their extraordinary oratorical gifts were able to maintain the respect vital to their position, and did not find themselves forced to bow to the humiliating practices required of the rabbis who depended on the good will of their congregants.

This trend continued, until toward the end of the 1930's when a generation of young Williamsburg Jews grew up who had attended talmudical academies and gained a new perspective on the role of the religious law and became its spokesmen in the Jewish community. From their ranks began to come young scholars who did not bear the stigma of the immigrant rabbis, who did not speak English and could therefore appeal only to the older generation. These younger men had more self-assurance, and were unwilling to compromise with their convictions and religious standards.

One such outstanding young scholar, a product of Phase I Williamsburg, became a driving force in one of the important local religio-social organizations. In the course of his membership in it, he has held practically every office in the local branch and in its national movement, against the competition of professionals and businessmen. His astounding scholarship, plus his wholehearted participation on all levels of the practical as well as cultural work of the organization, made him a most respected and popular figure far beyond the immediate membership, and he wielded considerably more influence than other much older and better-established rabbis. His guidance and even criticism were well received where others dared not tread. This type of rabbi was the only one who could hope to restore the status of community leadership to the profession which had suffered most from the increasing secularization of the American-Jewish community. The developments of Phase II and Phase III, however, with their new type of immigrant and their eminent leaders of world stature, changed the situation radically.

Two kinds of occupational groups conclude the upper half of the social class system of Jewish Williamsburg during Phase I, the secondary religious functionaries and the government employees. All the factors which contributed toward lowering the status of the rabbi, were even more effective in the case of the other minor religious functionaries, the Hebrew teacher, the cantor, the *Shochet* and *Shammes*. Although they must be ranked with the upper classes because of the better-than-average Hebrew background normally

required of them, and their status as religious officials, they ranked far below some of the lower classes, such as the tradesmen and the skilled craftsmen, in public esteem. The latter, by virtue of their earning power and, even more, by their independence and their equality with the higher-status members of the community organization, felt themselves superior to the religious functionaries who depend upon the good will of the boards of the committees in charge of the particular function. If many of the rabbis tried to enter other professions, even more of the religious functionaries did so, if not full time, at least part time. The insurance business was the favorite line chosen by them for the reason that it permitted them to spend their evenings on it, and to gradually develop a clientele, while maintaining their positions as long as possible. They also felt that in doing this sort of work they were able to retain some of the dignity of their status, which other trades would not have offered. In one school alone, more than half the teachers were drawn off into different occupations during the 1930's, leaving only a few old ones who could not change to other professions. A few years later, however, with the beginning of Phase II, the younger elements, natives of the community, began to take their place, and to set a trend similar to the one that had made the rabbinical profession more respected[16]

Ranking with the religious functionaries, although without their public esteem, was the small part of the community employed in the government during Phase I.[17] Their secular education, plus steady income and job security, particularly during the depression and slow recovery of the late 1930's, gave them good standing in the community. The teachers, court and city employees, social workers and investigators, never earned the respect and social homage paid to successful businessmen and professionals. In this respect the Williamsburg pattern coincides with the preference of the general American community for free enterprise, rather than government employment.[18] Like the religious functionaries, few of the government workers have ever held a higher office in the administration of local institutions or organizations. There is one instance of a court translator who became the president of a large youth organization for one term, after many years of membership along with several of his brothers, all of whom were active in the ranks. Soon after the termination

16. Comp. Life History #4: RJL. Appendix I, p. 235.
17. Only 4% of the Williamsburg labor force were in government service in 1930-1940, (U. S. Census)
18. Fortune Poll, 1946.

of his presidency he withdrew from all participation in the organization and lives only for his family and job. Here, perhaps, lies one of the main reasons for the middle ranking of the government worker, as well as the religious functionary. Both are usually good, solid citizens, active members of their groups; even more, they help make up the "activists," those who do the work of their organization or institution. But they are rarely the leaders or innovators who initiate or direct community activities. They are the good committee members, the trustees, secretaries, board of education members who will take their jobs serious and participate in all local campaigns and projects. As such they are indispensable to the community life, and are appreciated accordingly.

From the purely social point of view, the government workers rank higher than the religious functionaries because they are usually invited into the closed circle of the businessmen and professionals, while the Hebrew teachers and other religious functionaries rarely gain admittance into these inner circles. On the other hand, in an Orthodox community like Williamsburg, the religious functionaries are more a part of the inner circles controlling Jewish affairs, because of their acquaintance with the problems of religious life, and association with those who direct it.

The highest of the lower half of the social structure of Williamsburg, are the small tradesmen — the owners of local retail stores, the customer peddlers and owners of various delivery routes, the distributors of daily household items such as eggs and soda. During Phase I they barely eked out a living, in contrast to Phase II, when their fortunes rose considerably during the years of war and postwar shortages. They are members in good standing who pay their dues and give to the community causes advocated by their customers. They are rarely elected to any office of higher rank in the synagogues and organizations, unless their trade has expanded to such a degree that they are moving from the small tradesmen into the businessmen class.

There are two such outstanding exceptions in the neighborhood, one a hardware store owner, a true patrician of the community, who was instrumental in the establishment of practically all the institutions of learning for both boys and girls in Williamsburg. Although maintaining his retail store, he has expanded into the wholesale business, at the same time becoming president of his synagogue, and being elected to several lay boards of religious organizations. His thorough Hebrew background, as well as his success as a businessman, qualify

him for such a key position. Different is the case of the other small tradesman, who is the owner of a paint store, as well as a painting contractor. He had neither the knowledge, nor the personal qualifications for the position, but was elected president of a large synagogue in recognition of his activist work, and in the wake of a rebellion against a distinguished professional who held the job for several years. Otherwise few small tradesmen have become anything more important than minor officials in their "Chevra," (religious society). Nor did they enter the social or religio-political inner circles until the boom of Phase II, when several of them were accepted into the ranks of the local business elite.

The large percentage of skilled workers who comprise close to twenty-five percent of the Jewish population in New York,[19] rank below the small tradesmen on the social ladder of Williamsburg. They are furriers, cutters, designers, patternmakers, watchmakers, printers, painters, electricians, upholsterers, and in Phase I also carpenters, shoemakers, glaziers and tailors. Though many of them suffer from seasonal fluctuations, they generally have a relatively high income, and frequently possess the symbols of social status which some of the higher classes do not show. They are among the foremost real estate owners in Williamsburg. A plumber, for example, owns most of the houses on the two best blocks in the neighborhood. A furrier owns the two largest apartment houses. Of the car owners among the members of a major local organization practically all were skilled craftsmen in 1938, though after the war car ownership lost its distinctiveness, as people from all classes began to purchase automobiles, and today the streets of Williamsburg are crowded with the models of all makes and price ranges from early models to the newest Cadillac. Certainly during the years of the diamond boom the cutters, sawers, polishers and dealers were able to match the members of practically all other classes in the ownership of such symbols of high status, and earned the concomitant recognition. In normal times, the skilled workers are the typical activists. They do the spade work in the organizations, although they do not hold many offices. Becoming trustees or *"Gabbaim,"* (the managers at the services and social affairs of congregations and organizations), is usually as far as they can go. In one local organization the offices of the two *Gabbaim* have been held by five people within the span of the past fifteen years. One of the five is a dental technician, the

19. Cf., M. S. Robison: Jewish Population Studies, N. Y., '43; J. Maller: *Jewish Neighborhoods of N. Y.*, op. cit., N. Y., '34, Jewish Social Science Quarterly.

other a textile cutter, the third a tie patternmaker, the other two are salesmen, of the class next to the skilled craftsmen in the social ranking. These five have taken turns at this particular job, which involves more work than all other offices, and rarely has any one else been elected. The two men who did break into the office were from the class above them, a butcher and a customer peddler, and both soon moved on to higher offices, while these five remained in the work-job. A similar situation exists in most other organizations and synagogues, where the skilled workers have proven their activist qualifications.

Although few of the skilled workers have actually entered the inner circles on any social, political, or religious level of the community structure, they rank relatively high in the esteem of the people, higher in fact than in the Old World where a *Baal Melocho,* a craftsman, was something of a social outcast, and where there were even special synagogues for the craftsmen, because the members of the higher Jewish society would not mingle with them.[20] In Europe usually only a poor or ignorant person permitted his son to learn a trade. Conditions in the United States, particularly in New York, changed this outlook, and the skilled worker, because of his higher earning power and relatively steady income, has gained considerably in social status. Only toward the end of Phase I, when many of the sweatshop workers and small tradesmen succeeded in establishing themselves in business, did this relatively high esteem decline, as will be shown in the choice of careers for the young. Without the diamond boom in Phase II the skilled workers would have ranked considerably lower, despite their increased earnings, because of the rise of the Jewish population of communities like Williamsburg into the lower-middle and partially even into the upper-middle class during the pre-war, war and post-war eras.

The next rung in the social system is occupied by the semi-skilled workers and business employees — clerks, salesmen, bookkeepers, and floor and office workers. While the semi-skilled workers, the painters, garment industry operators, pressers, tie workers, leather goods and textile workers, rate somewhat higher on the income scale than the business employees, the latter have the advantage of a temporary status. They are the young of older members of the community who, except for the too old or incompetent, look forward to the day when they will become independent businessmen. They are only biding their

20. Comp. *"The Shtettel"* in M. Zborowsky & E. Herzog's Life Is With People, N. Y. '52.

time and learning the trade and its skills for later use in their own interests. They are the most mobile in the whole social structure, ready to climb from the next-to-the-lowest rung to the very highest within the span of a few years. Socially, too, they are more acceptable to the better circles than the semi-skilled workers. In general they are also the more active members in the organizations, institutions and congregations, doing a good share of the actual work required by the community projects and campaigns, without being elected to any office of importance. The semi-skilled trades, like house-painters,[21] are largely the fields entered by middle-aged immigrants who have neither the skills nor the adaptability to start on a professional, business or skilled occupation. They look for a job in a field in which they can start from scratch and acquire the skills within a few weeks or months. It is usually an ethnic group that enters certain semi-skilled trades and concentrates on them. Very few of the Hungarian Jews who came to Williamsburg during Phase I, for example, did not learn the tie-making trade. The older ones became collectors for institutions, and the younger members, still able to work, learned some phase of tie-making. They returned to it after the years of the diamond boom, many of them establishing their own business with the money left from the "fat years," when their weekly earnings were twice and three times as high as they could have made in their own trades. The Russian-Polish group of unskilled immigrants concentrated on the garment trade, the capable ones rising to managerial positions and from there to the establishment of their own business.[22] Close to 70% of the businessmen of a large Phase I Russian-Polish synagogue are in some phase of the garment industry, and the semi-skilled workers are operators, pressers, or cutters.

Limited incomes, and usually limited education and initiative, confine both the semi-skilled and business workers to the ranks in the community organizations. They are the ones who pay their dues and vote, but are rarely voted for. Their number has greatly decreased since Phase I.

The lowest stratum of the social order in Jewish Williamsburg, as in other Jewish communities, is that made up of the unskilled workers. While a good number of the immigrants may start out in this group, the majority rise at least to the next class of semi-

21. Comp. *Commentary on the Amer. Scene.* op. cit., p. 24.
22. Cf., ibid, and Life History #1: M. B., Appendix I, p. 213.

skilled workers. In none of the congregations or organizations investigated does their number exceed five per cent, even during the years of strong immigration. Manual work as such, and the type demanded of the unskilled worker, are rarely valued by Jews, except in the early pioneering ideology of modern Israel. Hence the only people who remain in jobs of this type are those who, because they lack intelligence or capability, are unable to move up, and their number is very small. It ranges between 2% and 5%, depending on the age of the group. Of a youth organization of 160 members only 3% held such jobs by the end of Phase I. During Phases II and III their number dwindled even further, to less than 1%. Of the membership of an old established congregation which has hardly any youth, close to 5% held jobs as unskilled workers, and their number has increased rather than decreased since Phase I, as the richer elements leave the neighborhood and the old and indigent are unable to continue doing skilled work.

Socially, these unskilled workers are hardly active, and they have little to do with communal affairs, except in some instances, as passive participants or the recipients of some of the social work done for the old and needy.

As a whole the structure of this class and status system in Jewish Williamsburg differs little from the stratification in other lower-middle-class communities of a similar type. Its only distinctive feature is the weight given religiosity, Hebrew scholarship, and active participation in the religious life of the community, as well as income and occupation.

This picture of the stratification during Phase I is also reflected in the choice of careers for the young, at least as far as it shows what the parents and the children themselves value as a promising future relative to their interests and capabilities. For in their children most Jewish parents try to bring their own unfulfilled hopes and dreams to realization.

Here is the occupational distribution of the 135 members of a local organization in Williamsburg who grew up during Phase I, between 1925 and 1938:

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF AN ORGANIZATION PHASE I

Profession	%
Unskilled workers	3[23]
Skilled workers	18
White collar workers	10
Independent Businessmen	17
Professionals	10
Business employees	37
Students	5
Total	100%

23. The 3% who were unskilled workers had taken this type of job for lack of anything better. Only one of them remained with it in the succeeding phase. Half of the 10% of the white collar workers were in some government service, the other half worked in the offices of large firms as executives and assistants to executives. By far the largest number were working in business as salesmen, clerks, buyers, floor boys, and on other inside and outside jobs. As the statistics of Phase II will show, most of them succeeded in opening their own small or large businesses, mostly of the type in which they had worked during the years of Phase I. The next largest group had learned or was still learning a skilled trade, such as furrier, jeweler, watchmaker, upholsterer, plumber, patternmaker, and others. But two-thirds of these were of the older generation, those close to their fifties, while the younger ones tended more toward the higher professions or business, thus emphasizing the decreasing attraction of the skilled trades. Almost as many had become independent businessmen by the end of Phase I. More than half of them were jobbers in some textile line, cotton goods, hosiery or linens. A few of them, four, have already worked their way up to the status of manufacturers, or the type of large business that will place them with the upper middle-class. Three of the four have since left the neighborhood and moved to a section where their constantly increasing income can find the corresponding symbols of higher social status.

Of the professionals six are lawyers and certified public accountant, while only three are rabbis and directors of religious institutions or organizations. The number of rabbis and other religious functionaries increased during Phases II and III. As a matter of fact, of the seven who are full-time students, half are preparing for the rabbinate, for Hebrew teaching or for other religious functions.

Similar proportions with slight variations describe the occupational distribution of other local organizations for young men between the ages of seventeen and thirty. They confirm the pattern of a class structure based on a combination of material and spiritual values, with the accent, in Phase I, on material success, particularly as regards community leadership.

3. PHASE II (1939 - 1948)

The change in the international situation, the war in Europe, the increasing persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, and the beginning of the mass migrations, were responsible for the basic change in the pattern of the social structure of the Jewish community of Williamsburg.

Three factors were particularly effective in producing a new situation and a subsequent revaluation of the standards of Phase I. The first such primary cause was the settling of distinguished religious leaders of world stature in Williamsburg. These men not only commanded the respect and reverence of the newcomers who arrived with them, by their scholarship and high standards of religious guidance; they won the recognition of the general Orthodox masses, and gained a degree of authority that had hitherto not been known in the communal life of Williamsburg.

The second factor in the change was the arrival of large groups of German, Austrian, Czechoslovakian and Belgian Jewish refugees who settled in Williamsburg because they liked its even then relatively high religious climate better than that of other American Jewish communities. On the other hand this arrival of the newcomers coincided with an increasing tendency on the part of the wealthier and more influential business elements to leave Williamsburg for Crown Heights, Boro Park or such communities in Queens, as Forest Hills and Kew Gardens.

The third factor that contributed considerably toward the change in the valuation of the Jewish community of Williamsburg, and the concomitant changes in the social structure, was an increasingly strong tendency toward a return to religion in the Jewish community at large. It was partly the effect of Hitler's hate campaign against the Jews, his ruthless persecution and mass murders, and partly a revulsion from the idols of atheism, liberalism, Marxism, socialism, and just plain capitalism, or money-ism, which for the past few decades had replaced religiosity on the American Jewish scene, and estranged wide segments of the community from the culture and

traditions of their fathers. This is what one observer of the American-Jewish scene says about this trend:

> "Here we have a paradox. The Jewish community, which once maintained a high resistance against the outer world by means of a marked difference in religion and customs, has abandoned those differences. What was more natural than that, with the containing pressure reduced, the content of the Jewish vessel should pour out? And in the 1920's it certainly seemed that was happening. Yet something happened to restore the pressure: perhaps it was the hostility of the non-Jewish world. At any rate, it was restored, the community finds itself again within the old walls, but the world within the walls has changed drastically, and can hardly be distinguished, the way it looks from the world outside. And the rise of such slogans as the demand for "positive Judaism" and "Jewish content" replacing the old simple fear of assimilation, indicates clearly enough that people have felt the difference."[24]

The immediate effect of this trend was a return to the synagogue, to active interest in communal affairs, and to the kind of Hebrew education which the older generation of immigrants had known in Europe, but which they did not, in most cases, give their children, and from which a good portion of those who did get it ran away, as from a symbol of the ghetto of the Old World. Because of this trend back to religiosity, which began to make itself felt towards the end of Phase I, and became stronger during Phase II, an ever growing number of boys began to attend Hebrew schools, afternoon schools, Sunday schools, and day schools.[25] This closer acquaintance with Hebrew culture and learning brought about a deeper understanding and appreciation of Jewish values and their practical implications for the individual and the community among them, the respect and esteem in which the Torah scholar, and the official spokesman for the religious community, the rabbi, were traditionally held.

The combination of these three factors, the arrival of groups of newcomers with a religious background, the trend back to religiosity and Torah education, and the settling of famous religious leaders in the community, effected a basic change that during Phase II pushed the rabbi to the front of the social structure and brought him close to the level of the successful businessmen.

There is, for instance, the example of one Austro-Hungarian rabbi who arrived in Williamsburg at the beginning of Phase II, just at the right psychological moment in terms of the pressure from the out-

24. N. Glazer, *op. cit., Commentary,* March 1950, N. Y., p. 284.
25. See infra Chapter VI for detailed discussion.

side and the swelling surge back to more intensive religiosity. He immediately rallied about him the various Hungarian elements which had accumulated in the course of the last decade of Phase I without playing a major role in the predominantly Russian-Polish community. They had no congregation or institution of their own, but had mixed with the Chassidic Galician Polish groups. Although this particular rabbi was not one of the really world-famous Chassidic *Rebbes* who came later; he was the son of a well-known scholar, and a scholar in his own right, and as such he gained general recognition, and wielded a strong influence on all elements of the Orthodox Jewish community of Williamsburg. Within a very short time he established a synagogue in the center of the neighborhood that attracted the various groups of Hungarian Jews and grew by leaps and bounds. More and more people joined it from other groups, and pious Hungarians from other parts of the city and even other towns, many of them wealthy businessmen, came to spend the holidays in Williamsburg with this rabbi, in prayer and celebration.

One thing was apparent from the very first moment, that the rabbi was the "boss" of his synagogue, as was no other congregational head in the immediate or wider community. Without fear he began to criticize and suggest changes in the personal and communal conduct of his congregants — something not many American rabbis would dare to do. He demanded higher standards in all those phases of religious practice which had somehow suffered from the general secularization of Jewish life. His authority produced a stricter form of supervision of such food products, as meat, milk and bakery products than that accepted, without question, by most elements of the Orthodox. His strictness, integrity and disregard for personal gain, and his refusal to accept the influence of high-income people among his congregants to any degree unmerited by their religiosity or scholarship, gained him wide recognition. Had he come during Phase I, of course, he might not have succeeded to such an extent, because he would not have had enough of his own Austro-Hungarian elements to give him the necessary basic support. Nor would he have been able to extend his authority beyond his own group, because in the generally less intensely Orthodox climate of Phase I he would have been shrugged off as just another of those rabbis who try to gain a "soft livelihood, instead of working in a sweatshop like others." Now, however, many of the young Americans who had attended a *Yeshivah,* had grown up to become family heads and had taken their place in the community. Their reaction was not as violent as that of the older, more disillusioned immigrants of Phase I.

They recognized in him a kind of sincerity that appealed to them. It took several more years and the arrival of even larger numbers of new immigrants of the intensely Orthodox type, as well as the influence of several other factors — the arrival of the world-famous rabbis and an intensification of the trend created by the growing up of the younger elements with a thorough training in the Hebrew and talmudical tradition — to bring the religious leader to the very top of the social class system, outside as well as within the merely religious phases of communal life.

This development had already gone far enough to place the rabbi on a plane of equality, in all communal affairs, with the business and professional figures who had until then dominated the local scene. The constant pressures of the war and postwar years, for example, demanded the raising of huge funds for emergencies that arose in various parts of the Jewish world. Practically all the emergency committees elected or selected to respond to the momentous tasks imposed on the Williamsburg community, were headed by active rabbis, especially those of the younger generation. Their authority, as much as the experienced help of the businessmen and professionals, produced unexpected results, and huge sums were raised in Williamsburg, sums proportionately much higher than those raised in other, wealthier communities. Not only the rabbis, but the rabbinical students of the *Yeshivoth* began to emerge as a potent force in those days of emergency. The crisis also did a great deal to weld the various elements of the community together, as they took concerted action for the relief of the victims of persecution and war. In one single emergency campaign to save several hundred people from the gas chambers, the students of the largest Williamsburg talmudical school, an institution of national scope, collected over $40,000.00 in two days. This one campaign contributed a great deal towards heightening the public prestige of the rabbinical students who had previously, and especially during the years of Phase I, been considered impractical *"battlanim,"* (loafers), out of place and out of step with the American scene, and certainly unable to carry out anything of a business-like character. The committees of businessmen and professionals who sometimes labored for months to raise similar amounts, gained a new respect for the rabbinical student and his capabilities.

As important as the change in the role of the rabbi was another change in the class structure of Jewish Williamsburg during Phase II, that, caused by the diamond boom.[26] This economic development

26. See Supra Ch. III, Phase II, p. 54.

brought new elements to the forefront in all communal affairs and generally upset the occupational and valuational pattern of the neighborhood.[27]

Jewish Williamsburg went through a period of drastic change or innovation in the most important phases of its communal life. New people, generally of superior religious and scholastic training, yet who would have been forced to take a backseat in the Phase I situation, moved into positions of leadership. Under their guidance new schools were organized, and synagogues built; some of the finest buildings in the neighborhood were taken over for religious institutions and organizations; and campaigns for the Displaced Persons and for Israel, as well as for local improvements were successfully carried out in a manner which would hardly have been possible during Phase I.

One of the consequences of this advancement of the better-educated elements which shifted to the diamond trade and left their positions as teachers, slaughterers, and cantors, was that the social position of those religious functionaries who held on to their jobs, sank somewhat during Phase II. Only those who distinguished themselves by high scholarship retained or even increased their social recognition. Typical for their attitude is this statement of one of the local teachers:

> "Everyone considered me a fool for going on teaching, while others who quit their jobs and worked in the diamond line make four times as much as I," complained the teacher. "But I am not sorry," he continued as an afterthought, "I think, even though they make fun of me when we get together, they really envy me. I am still a professional and do something for the future, while they grind stones."

Another group that lost some of the public esteem in which it had been held during Phase I, was that of the government workers. The factor of job security, despite a limited income, which gave them standing during the difficult years, lost its appeal during the war boom, when jobs were available and the average worker could easily bring home more than the government employee whose salary did not rise commensurately with the general rise of wages and prices.

On the other hand, a good many small tradesmen rose considerably in social standing, as their income was sky-rocketed upward by war shortages and price increases. Of the four owners of local groceries who belonged to one major organization, two earned enough to sell their groceries and buy into other businesses. One became a textile

27. See discussion in Ch. III.

wholesaler, the other a partner in a real estate firm. The two other grocers kept their businesses, but bought large, expensive houses, and had their apartments decorated by interior decorators, in a manner patterned after the work done in the house of the wealthiest member of the organization, whose company they now cultivated. Before the war boom they would not have aspired to such lofty association, beyond common membership in the organization. Nor would they probably have been accepted into the inner circles of the top business strata in the degree to which they now were.

Even those skilled workers who did not move into the diamond trade profited from the war boom. Despite the fact that their income rose considerably, their position did not change. Only those who went on to establish their own businesses gained in social status by being accepted into the inner circles of the wealthier businessmen and professionals. They did not, however, win public recognition by election to higher offices.

The semi-skilled and unskilled jobs sank even lower in the public esteem. Seventy per cent of the semi-skilled workers of one congregation switched to the diamond line and only one physically disabled person maintained his unskilled job.

Many more young men than in 1938 were students preparing for a rabbinical or professional career. Seventy per cent of all the members of a group of 80 members were still attending a Yeshivah, or had attended one until the conclusion of their high school career. For, to a much higher degree than during Phase I, it had now become the accepted norm in Williamsburg for a boy to attend a talmudic academy at least until his graduation from high school. This meant that the average boy in the community had twelve years of thorough Hebrew study before he entered the field of his professional choice. More than fifty per cent of the boys who come from religious homes in Williamsburg continued their studies at a Yeshivah even after high school graduation, for at least a year or two. As a consequence, too, of this more intensive Hebrew training, twice as many as in the corresponding group in 1938 chose the rabbinical profession. This was in line with the generally higher recognition of the rabbi in the social structure of the community. Not a single member of the aforementioned junior group had entered any form of government service. Two, however, are studying to become high school teachers.[28]

28. Not a single member of this particular organization, like the membership of most Orthodox organizations in Williamsburg, attend public school. This reflects in the fact that three of the local public

Thus both from the professional careers of the first group which has matured and become part of professional life by the end of Phase II, and from the picture of the junior group whose oldest members have just entered the world of business or the professions, it becomes apparent that there has been a definite shift in the ranking of the various groups. This shift corresponds to the shift in general valuation on the part of the community. There is much less interest in a business career among the young, and a considerably larger number choose the rabbinical and Hebrew teaching professions. Except for the diamond trade fewer people enter the skilled and semi-skilled trades. The unskilled jobs have been almost completely abandoned. On the basis of both the changes in the community leadership and the professional choice of the young, the following ranking evolves for Phase II:

WILLIAMSBURG CLASS STRUCTURE

PHASE I	PHASE II
1. Successful businessmen	Successful businessmen
	Rabbis, scholars
2. Professionals	Professionals
3. Rabbis, scholars	Small tradesmen
4. Government employees	Skilled workers
Religious functionaries	Religious functionaries
5. Small tradesmen	Government employees
6. Skilled workers	Business employees
7. Semi-skilled workers	Semi-skilled workers
Business employees	
8. Unskilled workers	Unskilled workers

The changes suggested in the previous discussion are:

1. The rise of the religious leaders to the top, on an equal level with the successful businessmen.

schools, P. S. 33, 71, 166, have closed down since the end of Phase I. Two of them are now used by Jewish parochial schools for girls.

In the other main public schools, P. S. 16 and P. S. 122 the Jewish enrollment has dropped from 89.3 to 78.9% between 1940 and 1950, and their total enrollment has dropped from close to 4000 students to 3300. In the same time the Jewish parochial schools have almost tripled their registers for a total of over 3000 students, compared to 604 in 1940, despite the fact that large segments of the Jewish community have moved to other neighborhoods.

2. The rise of the small tradesmen to the upper half due to high war-time earnings.
3. The limited rise of the skilled workers due to high income and recognition won by the diamond workers.
4. Government workers lose some standing during war boom.
5. Business employees have not gained in social position, but they stand higher than the semi-skilled workers, most of whose capable workers have gone over to the diamond trade.

The overall trend is the increasing weight given the valuational as against the economic factor, and the increasing role of the newcomers in the professional and communal life of Williasmburg.

4. PHASE III (1949 - 1954)

The trend toward valuational status ranking grows stronger during Phase III, as most of the factors responsible for the changes of Phase II continue to affect the social structure of Williamsburg.

In the first place, the largest of the groups of newcomers, the Displaced Persons and refugees from the various troublespots of post-war Europe, have settled in Williamsburg since 1948. They have changed the balance of the ethnic composition and with it the external and internal makeup of the community. The approximately three hundred earlier refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland had fitted themselves into the Russian-Polish, and even better into the Galician Polish type of community life they found upon their arrival, because of similar religious and secular background. Close to three thousand Phase III refugees who have settled in Williamsburg since, two-thirds of them of the Hungarian Chassidic type, and one-third of the Polish Chassidic type, changed the predominance of the Phase I Russian-Polish population and their type of community life.

Even externally the change is unmistakable. Few of the old community's members were distinguishable by special clothing, even on holidays, except for one small group of extremists. Only a few older immigrants wore *kaftans* or *shtreimels* or *shtievel.* Now the dark *kaftans,* or black velvet or fur hats, long *Peyes,* side-burns, and beards of the Hungarian newcomers have become a common sight. Many of the women dress distinctively, too, in long dresses, dark stockings. kerchiefs and *sheitels.* Hungarian Yiddish, even Hungarian itself, can be heard in the streets almost as much as English, or the Russian-Polish, Lithuanian or Galician Yiddish that had previously been dominant. Hungarians have taken over many of the local stores, and one can see numerous Hungarian signs side by side with Yiddish

or English. They have bought houses in all the zones of the neighborhood and acquired several of the best-located buildings for their own religious centers, synagogues and schools.

More important than the sheer number of the Hungarian newcomers, was the ability of their famous leaders to impress the character of their intense Orthodoxy on most phases of the communal life. Not only did they attract followers from other parts of New York, and from the steady stream of newcomers after the end of Phase II, their overwhelming personality and stature as some of the greatest figures in world Jewry gave them a standing that could not be ignored by any part of the Jewish community of Williamsburg. Their authority as scholars, as well as Chassidic leaders, had to be recognized even by the Russian-Polish or Lithuanian Jews who ordinarily cared little about the leaders of the Chassidic movement. Their scholarship, plus their worldwide following, combined to give them extraordinary standing in the community, far above that of even the most successful businessman or professional, which had formerly been the very summit of the social ladder in Williamsburg as in all other American-Jewish communities. Instead of dictating and directing local projects, as they had done in the past, the former lay leaders became assistants, the select associates chosen by the *Rebbe,* to carry out his will. There is the example of a ritual bath which had been planned for years, but was never built, for lack of concerted action and sufficient drive and leadership. Discussing this situation one of the outstanding former lay leaders remarked partly enviously, partly gleefully: "One word of the Rebbe was able to produce more results than all our talking, meetings, and work for the past ten years." There are those, of course, who disagree with the whole Chassidic pattern of living and religiosity, and dislike the reverence and homage paid to the *Rebbe.* Even they cannot but recognize the power of the *Rebbe* to produce action and wield authority even in fields other than the religious, and the beneficial results of this authority for the community as a whole.

Herein, perhaps, lies one of the most important functions of these distinguished Chassidic leaders. As large numbers of the Hungarian newcomers settled in Williamsburg, it became almost inevitable that they should build a community life of their own within the community, centered about these famous rabbis, or smaller leaders who gathered their limited congregations about them. This was bound to produce friction and misunderstanding, rather than the harmony vital for social integration of new groups into a community; but, working together under the direction of the *Rebbe* for the welfare

of the neighborhood led to mutual respect and sympathy. Beyond this external binding force, the presence of these famous figures, and the kind of religious experience they represented, had a strong emotional appeal for all elements not openly negative and unwilling to share this experience.[29]

These factors, the numerical and spatial replacement of the older elements by the newcomers, and the superior new leadership, were largely responsible for the change from the Phase I type of community leadership and its economically-determined social status ranking to the predominantly religio-cultural valuation of social standing. Income still plays a major role for the lay leader who wants to rise to the top of Williamsburg's communal and social hierarchy. But scholarship and piety or religious standing play a considerably more decisive part

29. Here is the reaction of one young, married professional who is far from the intense Orthodoxy of the Hungarian groups and who has a rich secular background, (his religious background is of the moderate Polish kind). He participated in one of the high points of the religious ceremonies of the holidays, when thousands of people of all types from all over the United States come to be with one of these Chassidic Rebbes:

> "On Simchath Torah, when I spent the early morning hours between 2:00 and 5:00 A. M., with the Satmarer Rebbe, all the differences between me and the hundreds of people, Chassidim or not, disappeared. We were all crowded into the huge hall, one big mass of singing, swaying people, sweat running down our brows in the almost unbearable heat. But I felt nothing of this. My arms were interlocked on one side with a tall, husky Satmarer *Chassid*, in a long *Kaftan*, a heavy *Shtreimel* on his head, with leather boots and *gartel* (belt), on the other side with a real American Yeshivah boy, a kid at home in Dallas, Texas, as well as on Bedford Avenue, by his appearance. I did not know the melody they were singing. But its lilting rhythm caught my ear and a few minutes later I was part of the singing, sweating, shouting crowd that occupied every inch of the hall, climbing up to the very rafters, looking into the high windows from the adjoining roofs. Even if we had wanted to, we could not have moved. We were dancing on the spot, our upper bodies swaying back and forth, our feet stomping up and down to the catchy tune. Then the Rebbe came dancing all around the hall, the crowd crowding together even further, making room for the frail figure with the long white beard, his whole body covered with the Tallith, in his arm the Torah scroll. Only the deep-set, burning eyes, half-closed, looking upward, far beyond the crowd were visible. I am not a Chassid, my father and grandfather were not Chassidim, nor do I expect my children to be Chassidim. But when I saw the Satmar Rebbe dancing all around the hall, in the sweltering heat, un-

in the selection of the people who are to be responsible for local projects and for taking the initiative in running the affairs of organizations and institutions.

Quite a few of those who by their high income had risen to the top during Phase II gradually faded out again, as they were unable to give large enough contributions and keep up with the standards of personal expenditure and social participation set for the top level. Without friction or conflict they dropped out of the boards of institutions and the administrations of organizations and congregations, unless their scholarship and personal stature had earned them sufficient respect to maintain their standing.

> tiringly, through a narrow passage between the walls of the swaying, sweating people, I felt an electric current pass through me, a fire of inspiration that seemed to burn in all the people around me. I have never felt the joy of deep devotion and religiosity as much. Now I understand what Chassidism did for the Jewish masses."
>
> "Something else, I felt, too. You see, some of these people you find at the Satmarer look rather peculiar. I am thinking of one small, heavy fellow, for example. He looks like a real comic opera type of a Chassid. He was standing right across the way from me when the Rebbe passed through our side of the hall, sweating, singing, swaying. Once in a while I looked at him and I saw all that I felt and much more that is strange to me, because I know so little of all this. We meet frequently on Bedford Avenue, and we greet each other like good friends. We shared an experience that somehow has transformed us and made us comrades regardless of his appearance or language."
>
> "There are many more I greet since that memorable night in the fall when I went to bed long after sunrise, not tired at all. If all the people of Williamsburg participated there would never be the petty arguments that arise once in a while between the two groups. And there were plenty of people there. I am sure they must have counted several thousand."

One can easily see that this young man, who holds a responsible position as an executive, and works with people who are not Orthodox, or even Jewish, has an entirely different attitude toward the newcomers, and an appreciation of their attitude of reverence for the leader, even if he himself is not a "Chassid." The famous rabbi is not only the man who wields authority and exerts influence by his scholarship and fame. He becomes a social bridge between the elements which ultimately will produce harmony between them. For the young man's experience is repeated in less dramatic and extreme form every Sabbath and holiday by the people of the community who come out of curiosity, if for no other reason, to crowd into the houses of these famous rabbis.

At the first meeting of a major local organization in the fall of 1950, a member of the new administration remarked somewhat facetiously:

> "The era of the diamonds seems past. This is the first time in six years that we don't have a vice-president or at least a treasurer who is a diamond cutter or dealer. It's almost like old times again."

Incidentally it is quite significant that the newly-elected president of this post-diamond administration was a young rabbi, a brilliant scholar. He was the first rabbi to hold this office since the early days of Phase I, when another rabbi who had grown up in the ranks, had been president. His co-officers are businessmen for the most part, although one, a scholar of considerable standing, is a butcher by trade. The lower offices are held by the same skilled workers who have held them for years.

Similarly, the diamond people have dropped out in other organizations, too, and their place has been taken by people from the original population or from the ranks of the newcomers who have made a name for themselves as businessmen or scholars. In one congregation, for instance, which for years had been dominated by diamond workers and brokers, a new administration brought one oldtimer, a furrier of Phase I, and a newcomer, a successful investment banker, to the highest offices.

In general it is during this period of reshuffling, at the beginning of Phase III, that quite a few of the newcomers who meanwhile have made good, get the chance to take over social positions held by others who have either moved away or been forced to withdraw because of personal circumstances.

Due to the general reshuffling, and the instability in the business world during the years of Phase III, government workers have regained the high regard they lost during the years of the war and post-war boom.[30] In one organization which did not have a single public employee during Phase II, two became accountants for the tax department, one became a member of the FBI, one a government physicist, one a public school teacher, and one a high school teacher. Although still not as highly-regarded as the man who has made a go in the free enterprise world of business or the professions, the government employee is esteemed for his general education and

30. According to the 1950 U. S. Census figures the percentage of Williamsburg people in Gov't. Service, increased by 55%, from 4.2 to 7.0%

steady income. He is drawn into communal affairs as the active committee element, the man who knows procedures and technical routines, although he is not often elected to the highest offices. Only in one case was a certified public accountant with a government position elected to the presidency of a local organization, at the beginning of Phase III. As if to bear out the general attitude toward the public employee he proved able to handle the routines of the office, but not too skillful at directing, initiating and furthering the various causes of this Jewish political organization. Soon after the end of his term in office, he moved to a different neighborhood. Unlike the government employee who had been president during Phase I, he remained active and helped establish and direct a new branch of this organization in his present community.

This recognition of public service expresses itself in the choice of a career for the young. The three fields which most of the local college boys and girls select are teaching, accountancy or some field of physics, with the ultimate goal of entering government service. Of a class of boys who graduated from a local Yeshivah high school in 1947, twenty-one out of thirty-four attended college. Twelve of the twenty-one prepared for the rabbinate or Hebrew teaching field, at the same time that they attended college. Six of their classmates continued their Hebrew studies full-time, planning to attend college later. The nine others who went to college graduated in 1951, five majoring in education, mostly high-school, one in business administration, two in theoretical physics, and one in electrical engineering. In the class graduating in 1948 the distribution is similar, but five are studying accounting. Of a parallel girls' high school graduating class of 1948, only eighteen out of thirty-five are attending college. Few will actually graduate, since most of them will probably marry first. Already ten of the eighteen are teaching in Hebrew schools, while four hope to enter public or high school teaching. One studies chemistry, the last took up textiles. Ten of the seventeen who did not enter college started out as bookkeepers, secretaries or clerks. With the exception of three who still work, they are all married.

With the increasing trend toward going to college few of those young people who have parents to support them strike out in business for themselves. It is mostly the young newcomers who must earn their livelihood, or cannot depend on later help from their relatives, who get together and start some line of business. Both the young newcomers and the American-born who learn skilled trades prefer technical crafts, such as radio and television, refrigeration,

printing, and electrical engineering. Only the fur trade[31] and pattern-making, of the Phase I trades, are still popular, while housepainting, carpentry, plumbing, and similar crafts are hardly chosen, except by some of the younger newcomers, who are also the only ones to enter the semi-skilled trades.

The following incomplete breakdown of the careers chosen by the graduates of one major local Yeshivah high school from 1940-1949, will give additional insight into the valuation of the professionals during Phase II and the beginning of Phase III. This was the time that these boys began to enter on their careers:

PROFESSIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE GRADUATES OF A WILLIAMSBURG YESHIVAH H. S. 1940-1949

Rabbis and Hebrew teachers	170
Lawyers	14
Secular teachers (P.S., H.S., colleges)	15
Accountants	57
Other Professions (chemists, doctors, physicists, statisticians, pharmacists, etc.)	29
Independent Businessmen	24
Business executives	11
Business employees	38
Skilled craftsmen	40
Semi-skilled craftsmen	14
Deceased	6
Unknown	44
Total	480

31. The Fur trade, too, has since come to a virtual standstill, and furriers of long standing had to change professions.

Since the majority of Williamsburg's Orthodox Jewish boys attend a Yeshiva high school,[32] this breakdown is sufficiently indicative to show the strong trend toward the rabbinate and Hebrew teaching, and the lessened interest in business or the crafts during Phases II and III. It further points up the preference for accountancy and the concentration on the middle-class professions.

From this discussion of the change in community participation and leadership and the choice of careers by the young, one can see clearly the rise of the religious leader, the rabbi and scholar, to the top of the social order. The skilled trades, particularly through the decline of the diamond industry, have lost their standing. The average small tradesman has come down to a middle position. The few bigger ones have moved up into the category of the successful businessmen, some even having shifted from their grocery or dairy stores to wholesale textiles and similar higher-ranking businesses. Government employees have regained their former Phase I recognition. The skilled and semi-skilled trades have only gained new ground among the masses of newcomers, who have chosen them as a source of livelihood. Otherwise only the technical crafts appeal to the youth of Williamsburg. Unskilled workers are as rare in Phase III as before, although some newcomers use this lowest type of work as a start, until they find better jobs. Business employees, too, have held their social standing; but in line with the general decline of interest in business, fewer of the young are starting out as clerks or salesmen.

During this process of reshifting from the war and postwar situation of Phase II to Phase III, newcomers have entered practically all levels of the social structure on an equal footing, by virtue of their high religious standing and their success in business, the professions or a trade. Like the immigrants of Phase I, they have concentrated particularly on the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy, the skilled and semi-skilled trades.

A comparison of the ranking of occupational classes during the three phases yields the following picture:

32. From 1946-1948 alone there was an increase of 31.4% in the enrollment of Yeshivah H. S. (U. Engelman, *All-Day Schools in the U. S.*, American Assn. for Jew. Ed., Inform. Bull. No. 15, N. Y., 1949, p. 8). In the four Williamsburg Jewish Parochial high schools the total enrollment increased from 160 in 1938 to 1650 in 1952. See discussion in Ch. VI.

WILLIAMSBURG SOCIAL STRUCTURE

PHASE I	PHASE II	
1. Successful businessmen	Successful businessmen Religious leaders, rabbi	Religious Leaders, rabbis Successful businessmen
2. Professionals	Professionals	Professionals
3. Rabbis, scholars	Small tradesmen	Religious functionaries
4. Government employees Rel. functionaries	Skilled workers Rel. functionaries	Government employees
5. Small tradesmen	Government employees Business employees	Small tradesmen Skilled workers Business employees
6. Skilled workers	Semi-skilled workers	Semi-skilled workers
7. Semi-skilled workers Business employees		
8. Unskilled workers	Unskilled workers	Unskilled workers

5. SOCIAL MOBILITY

The preceding discussion of the changing class structure and community leadership of Jewish Williamsburg indicates that its social system is not rigid. Like the American social pattern in general it is open and fluid, and gives the individual a chance to advance from the lowest to the highest social level. However, in a valuationally-structured community like Williamsburg this advancement is not primarily determined by economic factors, but by the following largely cultural criteria:

1. The basic Orthodoxy of religious beliefs and practices
2. Rise in the occupational order and its corollaries of income, wealth, and status symbols
3. Extension of one's social relations through affiliation with associations, congregations, and interest groups
4. Acquisition of the pattern of superior-class behavior
5. Talmudical scholarship

The *first criterion,* of Orthodoxy, is the basic prerequisite not only for advancement, but for any minimal standing in an expressly religious

community. Failing to abide by the basic standards of daily prayers, Sabbath observance, kosher food, proper marriage, and other requirements of the Jewish Law automatically precludes acceptance and advancement, even if the other criteria are met. With the gradual intensification of the religious standards of Williamsburg from Phase I to Phase III many of the non-religious elements and those less strictly Orthodox moved to neighborhoods that were not at all religiously observant, or were not sufficiently organized to bind the individual by their standards. Since 1950 this trend has become so strong that not only have most of the financially qualified left, but even the members of the lower-middle-class have joined the movement out to the suburbs of Long Island, mostly in order to avoid the impositions of rigidly Orthodox community life. On one block only three children were left by the end of 1951 who did not wear a *Yarmulke* (a skullcap). The parents of the last of these have now purchased a house on Long Island. On the other hand those who appreciate the Orthodox life of the community, accept its basic premise of Orthodox faith and practice. This acceptance has become the primary bond uniting the old and the new elements despite all internal differences.

The *second criterion,* of the rise in the occupational hierarchy, is customary for mobility in any social system, as it gives the individual the means to gain higher income and wealth, and the means to get together with those who can afford the symbols of a higher standard of living, like better residence, clothes, and car.[33] Beside the material means, it enhances the status of the individual by the higher valuation placed on the higher occupation. Home ownership or car ownership, though not as important as in the case of large class differences, give a man, even in the Williamsburg society, the external means of penetrating into the inner circles of the wealthy members of the community. Home ownership itself is no longer a symbol, as practically everybody who needed an apartment during Phase II or Phase III, was forced to buy one, whether he meant to stay in the community or not. Similarly a fur coat has lost its distinctive quality as the status symbol of the woman of the higher classes, as practically every office girl or diamond cutter was able to purchase one during Phase II. Only a mink coat is still a rarity, where a Persian lamb coat had once been the mark of the superior classes.

A distinction more typical for Williamsburg is the power to contribute to the various worthy causes solicited for in all synagogues at regular

33. Comp. Warner-Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups, op. cit.,* Ch. V.

intervals. An individual rarely dares to give less than others of his class, and the proper amount to give is largely fixed in a staggered system, for which the scale is set by the highest class. In one major organization, for example, the importance of an appeal and its probable success can be measured by the first reply of the wealthiest member. If he starts with $100.00, he sets a scale which declines proportionately for the others. If he starts with $10.00, the appeal is doomed to very low results, for each member gauges himself in proportion to him.

The *third criterion,* the relational configuration of an individual, is as important as his rise in the occupational hierarchy, for it provides him with the social contacts which, if he meets the other requirements, will be his admittance into the inner circles. The basic area of contact in a community like Williamsburg is, of course, the synagogue, to which practically all, even the not so religious, belong. For it is, as Louis Wirth has said, "the central institution in the whole community," and the "most effective organ of approach."[34] Within the synagogue, various groups are formed which reflect the social stratification. At which table one sits, and with whom one associates in the synagogue, more or less defines one's social status, despite the fact that basically all are equal in the synagogue. There is again the example of the small tradesman, the grocer, who, when he felt his social status had risen because of his high income, left his seat at the table of the tradesmen to sit close to the corner where the wealthiest have their place. Or there is the example of a student in an organization who had sat with the other young men in his organization's synagogue. After he became a professional he left the benches and moved up to a table where only people of high social standing sit. At first he was rather shy and self-conscious. Then, as he put it:

> "I realized that the others were asking for me, if I did not come; they invited me to join their discussions; and ultimately they invited me to the "Kiddush" in their homes, where only those go who are part of their group. Then I knew I had become established as one of them."

It is criteria like being invited to the *Kiddush,* a small occasional party after the services in the home of one of the members of the group to which one aspires, which tell whether the individual has been accepted as a member of the group. Only at rare, larger occasions, are these dividing lines of the cliques crossed. The progress a newcomer makes toward acceptance by the congregations or organizations he joins, could well be measured by the degree to which he is able

34. L. Wirth, *The Ghetto, op. cit.,* p. 209. See detailed discussion in Ch. VI.

to enter their cliques or inner circles. This will be shown by the subsequent illustrations. The amount of social resistance to the acceptance of the newcomers could be measured equally by the time it takes them to be invited to the homes of the original population. One major organization, for example, made a point of giving the newcomers full status immediately, as a matter of valuational policy, while another organization, that is higher on the social scale, refused for years to grant them full standing. In the one organization newcomers were voted into administrative positions, and inter-marriages occurred frequently, while in the other no effort was made to integrate the newcomers who had joined their groups. As a result the latter lost importance much faster than the organizations that were open to the newcomers.

Of equal importance with the synagogues and their inner cliques, are local branches of the Jewish political organizations, such as Agudath Israel, Mizrachi and Young Israel, which hold services of their own. After the congregations, they played a decisive role in communal affairs until Phase III, when they were largely supplanted by the new congregations formed under the famous Chassidic leaders, which attracted people from all the various organizations and became politically neutral foci of the community life. They offered the best openings for newcomers to enter into the community; for, besides the common religious values their Zionism, Agudism, or other ideologies helped to overcome external diffierences.[35]

Other important factors in social mobility are common-interest cliques, made up of those who work for the same social or educational institutions or communal projects. After he had become successful in his business, a young accountant joined the boards of several local institutions because, as he said: "This was the best way to get together with the better class people in the community." Newcomers, particularly of the early refugee groups, gained prominence by becoming active on the board of a local educational institution for girls, where they met with the active leaders of the original population and gradually gained their respect and friendship. Similarly, those who took an active hand in the emergency campaigns became well-known in all the circles to which they turned for help, and gained a recognition which might normally have taken years to achieve. Other groups of newcomers gained admission to higher social circles by their special skills or common interests. There is the example of one young refugee who

35. Cf., Appendix II: Case History of a Williamsburg Organization.

by profession and income should long ago have advanced into the higher circles in his organization. Being shy by nature, he more or less neglected to make any overtures in this direction. Once when visiting a museum, someone tapped him on the shoulder. Turning around, he saw one of the leading members of the organization, a man with whom he had hardly exchanged more than the conventional words of greeting. That meeting on common-interest grounds provided the opening for a close association of the two families, and with it for the admittance of the young newcomer into the social circles of this member of the highest group. Another newcomer in the same organization made the advance into the inner circles by his skill at playing tennis, a third by becoming active on the editioral board of the local newspaper, and showing his proficiency as a writer and an ideological force in the movement. Thus, in many different ways the newcomers found points of common interest which opened the doors to the inner circles of the society within which they moved.

Of lesser importance, yet necessary to overcome the social resistance, is the *fourth criterion,* that of the acquisition of the pattern of superior class behavior. This was perhaps the most serious obstacle in the way of the integration of the groups of newcomers into the Williamsburg community's higher circles. While many of them qualified by their professional background and common interests, it took time before they had lost the habits and social customs of their former homeland and adjusted to the new ways and manners of the social group into which they wanted to fit themselves. A young intellectual who had joined a local Jewish organization to which he had also belonged in Europe, expressed this problem of adjustment in this way:

> "At first they invited me to their homes, to their parties, and to their outings. But soon they stopped inviting me, and if they had invited me, most probably I would not have gone myself. I did not know their card games. We would never have stooped to playing cards. I could not joke with them, and found it rather silly for young men to kid around. At gatherings of people of their standing — they are teachers, accountants, businessmen and professionals — we would have had discussions. We would have read some serious or even light literature, poetry, and things like that. But when I ventured to start a discussion on a political problem that was very current then, no one responded. I thought they were rather empty or superficial. It took me almost two years to know them better, until I acquired their ease at light conversation, and realized that political questions are not always in place. I discovered that most of them were quite intelligent, and I came to admire one as a serious thinker whom I had at first shrugged off as one of those who would not

> engage in intelligent conversation at any price. I just did not realize that in his group people do not like to "problematize" as frequently and as unfruitfully, as we Europeans had done in the enthusiasm of our newly discovered intelligence. Later on, at proper occasions, we would engage in discussions that lasted into the wee hours of the morning.

Like this young man, the newcomers had to re-learn social manners, they had to acquire a basic knowledge of the topics of discussion, read the literature, and acquire a feeling for the fine nuances of idiomatic language which make up the give and take of a social conversation which at first seemed incomprehensible or foolish to them.

Whereas the newcomers of the early groups wanted to become adjusted, and had little difficulty in doing so because they showed a similar secular and religious background, the newcomers of Phase III, of the Hungarian type, rarely aspired to this kind of acculturation. They had a large enough circle of their own, and they preferred to move among their own, rather than adjust to the mannerisms and customs required for admittance into the higher circles. The moving away of the upper-middle class and part of the lower-middle class population, spared them this extra effort. The levelled-down social structure of Williamsburg in Phase III was open to them largely on the basis of their religious, economic and associational qualifications. So, their adjustment to the American aspects of the community's life in proceeding much slower than the acculturation of the earlier refugee groups.

The *fifth criterion,* the possession of talmudical scholarship, which became more important with the intensification of the religious life of the community, though it had played some role in the advancement to the higher communal circles during Phase I, is certainly in favor of the adjustment of the newcomers. They have contributed a great deal to make Hebrew scholarship something to be regarded with respect, rather than with pity for its impracticality, as had been the fashion among many circles of the higher classes in Phase I. The *Talmid Chacham* actually stands outside the regular social structure, and regardless of his profession, of his rank in the occupational hierarchy or the income scale, he commands the recognition of the community. If he combines scholarship with the other requirements of social mobility, he is bound to advance to the top ranks of a community like Williamsburg, particularly in Phase III. Some among the elite of the newcomers have thus become leading figures in all community projects, and are invited to join social affairs as well, because they represent the ideal combination of the valuational with the economic status qualifications.

6. SUMMARY

The social structure of Williamsburg shifted largely from a primarily economic to a valuational pattern of status ranking in the course of the war and postwar years. This was due to the replacement of the old social leadership by new elements from the ranks of both the native youth and the newcomers, and to a more intensely Orthodox populace.

The open social system of Williamsburg which centers about the synagogue and other communal associations and institutions, permits all those who qualify on the basis of their religious and occupational standing, to rise to the higher strata through active participation in the community life, regardless of the length of their residence in the community and their Jewish-American background.

V

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

1. INTRODUCTION

"THE FAMILY," says Robert M. MacIver, "more profoundly than any other organization, exists only as a process, and we can understand it only through a study of its changes... the changes which occur within it in the life history of each individual example (group)."[1]

If it is true that the shift in the ethnic composition and in the valuational configuration of the Jewish community of Williamsburg affected all aspects and phases of its life pattern, the structure of its family must necessarily reflect this change.

Following the pattern of the preceding chapters we shall therefore show the processes of change that cut through all levels of the community life in Williamsburg in the course of its development from Phase I to the present, and the concomitant changes in the relationships, functions, and aspects of the most sensitive of its social organizations, the family.

2. GENERAL REMARKS

The Jewish family has frequently been described as the protoype of a patriarchal pattern. Beyond the characterization of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the patriarchs *per se,* the Bible has contributed much to the basic concepts of the patriarchal structure of the family prevalent in our culture. The image of God as 'our father in heaven," the relative roles of the father as the head of the family, of the mother as the unseen ruler of the household, and of the children duty-bound to honor father and mother, have become part and parcel of occidental thinking and living since the replacement of the pagan cults and culture by the Judeo-Christian philosophy.

The importance of the Jewish family depends not so much on its basic functions as the economic unit, with the father as the provider,

1. Robert M. MacIver, *Society, op. cit.,* p. 196.

as on the intrinsic relation between the Jewish faith and the family. One contemporary Jewish thinker has characterized this relationship as follows: "The Jewish religion is a religion of the family, springing from the cell of the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and developing with its growth to nationhood."[2] Judah Halevi, the most famous Jewish poet and philosopher of the Golden Era of Spain, centers his treatise about the Jewish religion, *Al Khazari,* on the idea that the Jewish faith depends exclusively on the tradition from father to son, rather than on theological argumentation. That "the survival of the Jewish faith, as well as of the Jewish nation, depends on the strength and cohesion of the Jewish family as the carrier of Jewish tradition," is his main theme, and is repeated time and again throughout this classic of medieval Jewish philosophy. Louis Wirth, in *The Ghetto,*[3] has expressed this same thought on the level of contemporary social discussion:

> "The real inner solidarity of the ghetto community always lay in the strong family ties."

And negatively:

> "To the extent that the solidarity of the family has been affected by modern life has the community been weakened and the allegiance to the old heritage been periled."[4]

Both the philosophical and the sociological analysis point to the valuational factor as decisive for the role of the patriarchal Jewish family as the backbone of Jewish society, in America as well as, or even more than in the other countries of Jewish settlement and assimilation. In a situation of social re-rooting under new and difficult living conditions, in a pattern of economic and cultural values that conflict with and contradict the basic philosophy in which the immigrant has been reared, the solidarity of the family unit must offer a firm anchor of orientation and reorientation to the newcomer, as the basis for his social adjustment and acculturation. Immigrant literature, fiction and non-fiction alike, abounds with examples of this function of the family. Conflicts, demoralization, delinquency and various forms of psychological or social maladjustment are attributed to the complete lack or weakening of the valuational pattern that binds the family together.

The structural changes in the Jewish community of Williamsburg

2. I. Breuer, *Elija,* J. Kauffmann Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 1928.
3. L. Wirth, *The Ghetto, op. cit.,* p. 37.
4. *Ibid,* p. 109.

highlight the importance of this valuational factor of the family pattern for the community at large, and for the resistance to the internal disintegration which has caused the spread of juvenile delinquency.

3. PHASE I

Family life in the Jewish community of Williamsburg during Phase I, particularly in the lower-class community that evolved after World War I, reflects many of the conflicts and problems that are ascribed in such classics of this period of American Jewish life as *The Mother,* by Shalom Ash, or the 1948 Harper Prize winner, *Wasteland,* by Jo Sinclair, a native of Williamsburg. These same conflicts have been systematically analyzed by the majority of the American Jewish community studies.[5] Here, too, the long and wearing process of adjustment on the part of the Russian Polish Jews to the conditions of the American scene, broke down many of the strong family ties that the immigrants had brought with them from the Old Country. As the father was busy hunting for a job or working from dawn to night, he had little time for his family, for supervision, guidance and discipline. Consequently, much of his authority as pater familias was transferred to the mother. She had to make daily decisions, and beyond household worries she had to assume responsibility for the spiritual, as well as the physical welfare of the children. She had

5. A study made by the Jewish Board of Guardians for the year 1932 showed that the percentage of Jewish juvenile delinquents from the Williamsburg district arraigned before court during that year was 15.7%, compared to 10% for the rest of Brooklyn. It also pointed out that one particular section of this district, Health Area #6, which takes in almost half of the neighborhood with which this study deals, plus some adjoining areas of Old Williamsburg, north, east and southwest, had the largest number of Jewish children arraigned before court in all of Brooklyn. One of the main causes of this situation of delinquency and neglect in Williamsburg suggested by this study was the gradual disintegration of the Jewish family, as part of the general economic and social decline of the neighborhood.

This study of Jewish juvenile delinquency was made at the very bottom of the depression. Yet the conditions which produced such alarming results prevailed until the end of Phase I, as pointed out in Chapter II. In subsequent years, however, Jewish juvenile delinquency for the area with which our study concerns itself, dropped to approximately 1% at the end of the Forties, coinciding with a general drop in the rate of juvenile delinquency in the Jewish communities of New York. (Approximately 4% in other Jewish neighborhoods of New York, in '49.)

to deal with the school, with the teachers, and with the authorities in case of problems. She had to determine much of the children's lives, without being able to do more than consult with her husband at night, after he returned home, worn-out from work and physically unable to cope with the minor or major problems of the household.[6]

As a consequence, the wife gained more self respect and independence than she had possessed in the structure of the old patriarchal family pattern. She became more of an equal partner in the business of running the family, instead of being subjected to the absolute authority of the husband. Her status came to be closer to the status of the American wife in general.

This position of the woman was further enhanced if economic circumstances forced her either to seek gainful employment, or to take an active part in her husband's business. Although she was thus bound to lose some of the influence wielded by the mother who took complete charge of the children, she gained the independence and freedom which she could not possess while completely dependent on the husband's earnings and his allotment of funds to her household budget.

On the other hand, if financial circumstances enabled the wife to be free of worries and to spend more time on social and leisure activities, she gained the independence that stems from social recognition. She attained much higher social status than she could have gained in the role of slave to the needs of the household, under the old pattern.

The role and the attitude of the children, too, changed under the influence of the new living conditions. Being able to adjust more quickly than their elders, they grew up in the new environment tending to look down upon the foreignness of the manners, knowledge, views and demands of their parents. By virtue of their American education, or their need to go to work at an early age, and their financial independence or even superiority,[7] they rejected the absolute authority of the father and the strong influence of the mother imposed on them by the patriarchal family pattern.

Although all these problems and conflicts, which produced the breakdown of the old family pattern in other ethnic groups,[8] also existed in Jewish Williamsburg during Phase I, the situation here was somewhat different. For here the Orthodox atmosphere of the community

6. Comp. Life History #1: *M. B.*, App. I.
7. Comp. Jake Brown in *"Wasteland"* by J. Sinclair, (N. Y., 1948).
8. Comp. Warner-Srole, *The Social Systems of Am. Ethic Groups*, *op. cit.*, p. 112 ff.

aided and intensified the effect of the traditional form of the family life far more than did the social pattern of other Jewish immigrant communities. Sabbath observance apparent in the streets, as well as in the homes, the social focus of the synagogue and the ritual life, the local chapters of ideologically-inspired and inspiring Jewish organizations, and the gradually developing Yeshivah education all contributed to the retardation of the assimilation process as a chain of conflicts. Instead of the breaking or disintegration of the close family ties of the patriarchal pattern, these intrinsic and environmental factors of the Orthodox community life provided a less traumatic, less painful and demoralizing transition, which in the long run resulted in a better form of adjustment and assimilation to the new life pattern.

While these influences were prevalent and effective in aiding the traditional family pattern, they were not strong enough during Phase I to do more than slow down the break of the younger generation with the Orthodox life of their elders. In one of the most important synagogues of the Phase I Russian-Polish type with a membership of 120, only 18.5% of the children have remained Orthodox in terms of the minimum postulates of the observance of Sabbath and the dietary laws. Only a few of the children of the religious functionaries and officials were among those who maintained the religious standards of their parents. Naturally, if compared to the figures for other communities of New York, this percentage is still high. It is almost twice as high as the percentage of youngsters who continued their Hebrew studies for more than a year in a comparable congregation of Brownsville, and three times as high as the percentage among the children of one of the largest synagogues of the East Bronx, according to a study on Jewish Education in the Mid-Thirties.[9] By Williamsburg standards, however, this percentage is rather low, and may perhaps be attributed to the fact that the members of this important congregation were of the Russian-Polish type who followed the less emotional Ashkenazic ritual during Phase I, in Williamsburg, as in other American-Jewish communities.

The situation is different in the case of the Chassidic Polish, and then the Hungarian congregations, which follow the Sephardic rite. The children of the oldest Chassidic congregation, founded in the middle of the Twenties, although also of Russian-Polish background, have not only maintained the standards of their parents, but, under the influence of the intensified Jewish Orthodox atmosphere of Phase

9. Assoc. of Hebrew Talmud Torahs Survey, Mimeographed, Unpublished, N. Y., 1935.

II, have become in many cases more extreme, some wearing beards, and some girls covering their hair. Only approximately twenty-five percent have deviated from the strictly Orthodox life pattern of their elders. Even of those, many who moved to different, less stringently Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods, have become stalwart members, and even leaders, of their religious communities. Of a second congregation made up mainly of Chassidic Polish Jews, little more than five percent of the children are no longer Orthodox. This figure become even smaller in the case of Phase II and III congregations.

Obviously, the ethnic and religious background from which they come, has some bearing on the degree to which the young will preserve the valuational pattern that governs their families. The degree, however, to which the home can be effective depends on other factors in the community, the educational institutions, the welfare organizations and the streets. And in all of these aspects Phase I families had less support than the parents of the later phases. For all three of these factors, and particularly the educational institutions, which had grown much stronger, were able to exercise a more beneficial influence by the end of the 1930's.

The trend was already obvious in Phase I. Most of the children who attended a Yeshivah, where the students are impressed with the same traditional values that govern the Orthodox home, remained faithful to them.[10] Regardless of ethnic and ritual background, the higher the percentage of Yeshivah students among the boys, the higher the number of those who remained Orthodox. In the Phase I synagogue cited above, 25% had attended a Yeshivah, and 18.5% remained Orthodox. Eighty percent of the oldest Chassidic congregation's youngsters studied at a Yeshivah, almost 75% continued the life pattern in which they had grown up.

The reason for this is not only the fact that home and school pull in the same direction; but as the father is embroiled in the difficulties of making a living, as he has less and less time for his children, and as his authority is weakened by the conflict between the values of the Old World and the new spirit which face the children of the immigrants, the Yeshivah teacher takes over part of the father's original responsibility. For, the teacher has the time and the spiritual equipment to deal with the American-born or reared youngsters. Unlike the father, who has little opportunity to assimilate the facts and conditions that form the children's world, the good teacher must be fully acquainted with them and can utilize them for

10. Cf. Supra figures in footnotes 1 on pp. 101, 109.

his purpose. While the children of the immigrants became antagonistic to their parents because of the conflicts between the world at home and in the street, and discarded the values that governed the home as a consequence of this conflict (or because they seemed to symbolize for them the foreignness of their parents), the teacher was able to present these very same values as valid and desirable under the conditions of the new world. Through him, if he was skillful, the conflict between the generations on a personal level did not necessarily become a conflict of values. As a substitute parent the teacher served as a bridge for the spiritual assimilation of the new pattern without the otherwise inevitable discarding of the traditional values. One principal of a Williamsburg Yeshivah of Phase I said:

> "We here had to be father and mother, as well as teacher. For it seemed difficult for our students and parents to understand each other. Some parents were too strict with their children and others too lenient. Both did not help much in giving their children the understanding and appreciation for those things that meant most to them. Then they were surprised if the children did not turn out the way they expected, especially in matters of religion."

Unfortunately, however, many of the teachers of the Phase I schools were themselves not sufficiently equipped to deal with this problem, and therefore did not have the success their younger colleagues achieved during the ensuing phases.

Another factor in the situation, however, was that neither the parents nor the teachers could operate very effectively during Phase I, since the majority of the youngsters had to go to work at an early age. Of one particular youth organization, approximately 90% held some job before they were eighteen years old, compared to only 35% of the members of the same organization during Phase II, and only 30% in the beginning of Phase III. This, of course, had a considerable effect on the children and on the entire family structure. Not only were the children less dependent on their parents, they wielded a much greater influence than the patriarchal family structure allots them. Even girls who, under the old system, would hardly have dared to look for a job, now went to work. They did not attend college to any marked degree, nor did most finish high school during Phase I, as practically all, even the children of recent immigrants, did during Phases II and III. Most of them held some form of secretarial position. Only about 5% of the members of a junior women's organization worked in factories as operators or seamstresses, or in similar forms of unskilled or semi-skilled work. There was a higher percentage of semi-skilled work among girls during Phase II,

due to the fact that many Williamsburg girls entered the diamond industry as operators and cutters. Those who did earned excessively high wages, at least for the span of two to three years, with marked effects on their family lives.

One important factor in the relation of Jewish girls to the pattern of their homes during Phase I, was the complete lack of any Jewish schools for girls comparable to the Yeshivah for boys. Several attempts were made towards the end of the first phase to establish such an institution, under various names and constantly changing management. They all failed, while the ones established at the beginning of Phase II, which included full elementary and high school education, flourished and became institutions of national renown.[11] As a consequence, those daughters of Orthodox Jewish homes who were educated in the public elementary and high schools during Phase I, were under a constant influence which did not always help or harmonize with the type of values upheld in the family. Conflicts and open breaks were frequently the result. More than half of the parents of Phase I, questioned about the cause of their daughter's departure from the Orthodox pattern of life, responded like the woman who said bitterly:

> "Whatever we in the house said did not count. The teachers in the high school stole my girl's heart from me. The friends did the rest. We were ignorants, foreigners. She knew everything better. Had I only sent her to work, like other mothers, then she would not have had so much time for foolish ideas."

School and friends were responsible in practically all cases for the breakup of the family harmony on which the survival of the traditional value pattern depends.

The contacts, friends and co-workers, which those women who left the home to work made on the job, had some influence in emancipating them from the role of inferiority to the husband or father in the family. Being unable to provide for the whole unit by his work, the latter lost that authority as the provider which is generally basic in a patriarchal family pattern. In a community like Williamsburg, however, this particular factor was not so effective because the community's valuational substructure made the authority of the husband or father less dependent on his economic function than it was in other communities. In the Old World pattern of Russia and Poland it was quite acceptable for the woman to work, while her

11. See Ch. VI-A.

husband concentrated exclusively on his talmudical studies.[12] There it affected neither the husband's, nor the wife's social standing. Nor did it affect the woman's feelings towards her husband, since she was taught that study of the Torah was the highest occupation a man could engage in, and that the woman who took care of the family's physical needs while her husband did so, got her proper reward. This attitude was still strong in the American-Jewish family and it diminished the effect of a woman's going to work or helping in her husband's business.[13] Divorces which are frequently the result of such a situation,[14] are generally rare in Orthodox Jewish circles. The five cases of divorce known in Williamsburg for all three phases have different, more personal causes. In general, however, the question of women's economic independence is not of major importance in Williamsburg, because the percentage of those who do work is relatively small. Most husbands prefer that their women stay at home and take care of the family, even if they possess special skills which would command good salaries. Typical of this attitude is the reaction of a young businessman who married a teacher. When approached about sending his wife back to work at a higher salary, he said:

> "No money in the world can replace the wife and mother in the house. I'd rather work twice as hard, or do without certain luxuries, then permit my wife to return to work. *In my family I am the provider.*"

As the social level of the Jewish community of Williamsburg rose from a generally upper-lower-class basis to a lower-middle-class one, women became less rigidly bound to the housework that had absorbed all their time in the early years of Phase I. Toward the end of Phase I we find them becoming active figures on the local scene. However, until the end of the Thirties philanthropic and synagogue affairs, ladies' auxiliaries or *Landsmannschaften,* take up most of their spare time.[15] Only then do the Jewish political organizations and wider community projects approach the women of Williamsburg, who now begin to organize strong and influential groups. From the ranks of these groups came two national leaders of large Jewish women's organizations, and

12. Cf. The Shtettel in Zborowsky & Herzog, *Life Is With People,* op. cit.

13. Cf., R. M. MacIver, *Society,* op. cit., p. 214 ff.

14. Cf., E. R. Groves & W. F. Ogburn, *American Marriage and Family Relationships,* New York, 1928, Chapters 22, 23.

15. Cf., M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism, op. cit.,* on role of ladies auxiliaries, p. 228, et. al.

members of executive committees of national PTA's and of Jewish educational movements. Even in the later years of flourishing social activity during Phase II the women of Williamsburg were rarely able to spend more than one or two evenings outside their homes. All of these activities are dedicated to some cause, philantropic, educational or political. There is not a single group which organizes purely social affairs, except in the case of holiday celebrations. The principal of a school in Williamsburg, who had previously worked in the Bronx said:

> "Up in the Bronx I was able to get the mothers together for any purpose for which I needed them at my school. And beside working on our committees these women attended card parties and game nights and socials in their own private circles. Here I am lucky if I can get our mothers every two weeks, and then there must be a definite program that seems attractive and worthwhile, or else they will not come. I don't know of a single mother that plays cards here. And if I were to arrange a game night for our school, the way I used to do it in the Bronx as part of our parents activities, I am afraid they would throw me out of my job in Williamsburg."

As a consequence of this concentration of the women on their home life, the family structure remains relatively strong, in spite of such factors as the partial decline in the prestige of the father, the growing independence of the children, and their partial turning away from the traditional values, and the gain in status on the part of the women as, with increasing leisure time, they engage in social and communual activities. The child's pre-school years, and even more and more his first years of formal learning, are decisively influenced by the woman, if she spends enough time and effort on the child and his growth. Helped by the Orthodox atmosphere, and the ceremonies and customs of the Sabbath and holidays, the mother can impress on him the traditional values that are so vital to the family's inner cohesion.

In one respect, however, the Jewish women of Williamsburg differ radically from those in less Orthodox communities like the one described by Warner and Srole in *Yankee City*. There is no question for them of that struggle for "equality" in the synagogue which plays such an important role in that Connecticut town's Jewish family pattern.[16] To the Jewish women of Williamsburg, who have a thorough knowledge of the basic laws and ideology of the Jewish faith, this aspect of their position is not a matter of social status, it is a religious

16. *Op. cit.*, p. 216ff.

law that makes sense, and from which they would not deviate. They do wield a tremendous influence on the synagogue through the ladies' auxiliaries and through their position as the factual, if not the formal heads of the family. They themselves would object to the introduction of mixed seating, which was considered a triumph by the women of Yankee City. They are satisfield with running most of the social affairs that are a main source income to the congregations, institutions and causes championed by them. Only in this way, and not by changing fundamental religious laws, do the women gain public recognition and a higher social status than they ever held before.

Special attention must also be paid to the role of the grandparents in the family structure of an immigrant community like Jewish Williamsburg. For they, most of all, represent the Old World pattern and the perpetuation of the traditional values of the family.[17] Few of them gain more than superficial knowledge of English. They speak mostly in Yiddish to their grandchildren, who are thus introduced to the language of the Old World, and the whole world of values it embodies. Yiddish conveys the spirit of the traditional values and the Orthodox life pattern, and through it many grandchildren, most of whom understand it, if they themselves do not speak it, are at least superficially acquainted with the world which their parents have left behind them in the course of their assimilation. In Williamsburg this function of a bridge to the third generation is less important than the fact that the grandparents strengthen and intensify the traditional life of the family. They can take over part of the responsibility which the father is unable to handle, and they provide an emotional appeal to the child, especially the young child, by virtue of their closeness to him. The *Zeide* and the *Bobe* are among the most appealing figures in the religious culture pattern and they exert an influence on the young that is stronger than their real position in the social structure. They are also mainstays of the synagogue life, particularly in the Phase I congregations where there is much less youth to be found, even in Williamsburg, than in the Chassidic congregations, or in the services of the Jewish political organizations.

On the other hand, however, the grandparents become the symbol of that association which links traditional values to the old and the old-fashioned, rather than the young and enlightened. The intensification of religious life in Phases II and III, however did much to bring grandparents and children together on the basis of a common

17. Comp. *Commentary on the American Scene*, p. 184, et. al.

appreciation of the same values. During Phase I grandparents were the symbol of the tradition with which the young who rebelled, broke. In Phase II they became the focus of the return of the young to the old family pattern.

This process, common to all immigrant communities, differs somewhat in Williamsburg because the general Jewish atmosphere helps maintain the traditional family pattern. Gradually developing schools and Jewish organizations make themselves increasingly felt as forces counteracting the influences tending to break down the unity of the family and its value structure. This resistance to the destruction of family unity increases in direct proportion to the religiosity of the family. There is a marked difference between the reaction of the Russian-Polish immigrant type family of the early Phase I years, which more or less follows the pattern set in other Jewish communities, and that of the Chassidic, Polish or Hungarian type which settled in Williamsburg during the later years of Phase I, and whose strong emotional approach and intense Orthodoxy impedes the disintegration of the traditional family pattern to a higher degree.

4. PHASE II

Phase II of the Jewish Community of Williamsburg shows a continuation of the trend toward intensification of the religious family pattern that became apparent at the end of Phase I. This is a consequence of the following factors:

1. Higher *economic* status of the population.
2. Expansion and intensification of the Williamsburg Jewish *educational* facilities.
3. The effect of the settlement of large groups of Orthodox *newcomers.*

1. *Higher economic status of the population* — The rise in economic status of the population of Williamsburg, had both a positive and a negative effect on the structure of the traditional family. In the first place, it eliminated many of the major causes of conflict and disintegration present in Phase I because fathers began to have more time for their families, as the economic insecurity which had warped their authority, gave way to security and some comfort and luxury; mothers were no longer required to go to work to implement the family income; and children were no longer required to go to work at an early age, and were able to complete their studies and reach out toward higher professions and admittance to higher social classes. The average home of the Jewish community of Williamsburg

became comfortable, and despite the shortages of war economy, there was hardly any need for many of the philanthropic activities which had meant so much during the lean years of Phase I. The social welfare department of one local Jewish organziation, for example, which usually spent several hundred dollars in food and clothing for needy families in the immediate neighborhood just before the Passover holidays, was left with only a few old men and women to care for. Most of the others had found some source of gainful employment and no longer needed to accept charity.

On the other hand, however, the easier economic situation did not bring only benefits. Soon after the war had brought ample job opportunities for all, even for youngsters of school age, some evil effects on the family situation became apparent. Typical of the attitude of high school boys who worked in after-school jobs is the reaction of the son of a local kosher butcher when his father asked him for help during the holiday rush:

> "Look, Dad, why should I work here in the dirty butcher shop. My boss in the drug store on Lee Avenue pays me as much for being a soda jerk from four to eight as you make all day working yourself to death from the morning till night. I'll gladly pay a kid who wants to help you and do the deliveries."

The consequence of such an experience for boys and girls like this one was naturally a considerable loss of respect for their parents and a growing sense of independence. In general, the authority of the parents declined, and the result was often a complete breaking-away from the family unit, on the part of the young. Boys who could earn enough in after-school jobs to support themselves were not willing to brook restrictions on their newly-discovered freedom. Except in those cases where the local atmosphere and the Jewish educational institutions and organizations helped to intensify and strengthen the traditional value pattern of the family, it was difficult for Williamsburg parents, as well as for parents in other communities to maintain the control and authority over their children they had possessed before the economic windfall.

The effect of the higher earning power of women and girls on the structure of the family was also partially negative. Those who were married were less willing to subject themselves to the authority of their husbands to the degree to which they had been accustomed under the old pattern. New social contacts, higher demands and wider interests affected at least the younger couples still flexible enough to change. No longer was the husband alone the ultimate arbiter

of the budget, expenditures, and the social and cultural activities in which the members of the family engaged. The role of the young, unmarried girl changed considerably as a consequence of the improved economic situation. She, more than any other member of the family, had been dependent upon the parents' authority and their economic support. Her social contacts were rather limited and subject to paternal approval. The rise of the diamond industry and the opportunities it offered young girls as well as men of all ages, changed a great deal. Although girls did not earn as much as men, their income was still incomparably higher than it would have been in the secretarial, teaching or clerical jobs they would have held under Phase I conditions. As a consequence, they were able to afford better clothes, and enjoy forms of entertainment and leisure activities hardly known to them before. Above all, they now met a much wider range of people socially. Much, if not all, of the paternal control and authority was automatically eliminated. Of the women of one particular local organization, practically all those who had married during Phase I, had mates of a similar background, if not of the immediate neighborhood. The younger set, many of them working as diamond cutters, left the community in practically all cases. A third married rabbis or teachers, but over fifty percent married workers in the diamond industry and moved to midtown Manhattan, Boro Park, Queens or Crown Heights. That not a single one of them chose a non-Orthodox husband is due more tao the fact that most of the people in the diamond industry were Orthodox, particularly the richer Belgian dealers, than to the strength of their conviction or their obedience to the wishes of their parents. One girl, for example, whose parents had complained of her choosiness and unwillingness to accept the marriage proposals thought suitable by them, stated the case clearly:

> "We have become acquainted with a wider world and our parents will have to realize that we will no longer accept their limited views and tastes. I know what I want. I am young yet and can afford to wait till someone comes along who suits me."

Important, of course, in this connection, is the fact that even girls like this one, who freed themselves of complete dependence on the paternal authority, hardly went so far as to discard the religious value pattern which had been at the base of the family structure. Upon further questioning this very same girl stated unequivocally that her own choice would hardly be one to shock her parents.

> "I just can't see myself marrying the customer peddler or the vain son of a Williamsburg bigshot to whom they wanted to "shadchen" me off."

She ended up by marrying a promising young rabbi with a college

degree and a good position in a large Jewish community in the Midwest. Although he is not exactly the Williamsburg type of rabbi, her parents are quite happy and satisfied with her choice.

This case is typical of the changes discussed here. Although these changes follow the general pattern set in other communities, they are not as radical, because of the influence of the general atmosphere and the increasing effect of Jewish education along the Orthodox pattern of valuation. Even less than the boys would the girls make a clean break. They merely accepted the situation of their widened horizons to raise their standards above those set by their families.

2. *Expansion of Jewish educational facilities* — The second and most potent factor, after the rise in economic status, on the preservation of the traditional family structure of Williamsburg during Phase II, was the effect of the growing religious educational system discussed in Chapter VI.

The result of this thorough formal and informal training along the lines that define the valuational structure of the old type of family in Williamsburg, is tremendous. It means that one of the factors operating most strongly against the traditional family pattern elsewhere, works here not only in harmony with it, to intensify it and to place it on a higher, and, to the youngster, more meaningful level. Instead of the widening rift between the generations, children find that they have much in common with their parents' views, after they have acquired a position of their own. For example, there is the son of a local small businessman, who grew up during the late years of Phase I, finished public high school and went to college to emerge with an attitude of disregard or merely indulgent respect for his father, who is a talmudical scholar. For, although this man spends his night hours poring over the Talmud, he had little to give his son, and was unable to help him when he had difficulties with his home work. The younger brother and sisters who attend Williamsburg Jewish schools have an entirely different attitude. The boy, now a college senior, while doing graduate work in a Talmudical academy, put it this way when questioned about his relationship to his father: "I wish I knew as much inside the *Gemoro,* as my father remembers by heart." Although this young man goes to college and is quite a scholar in fields of which his father, as an immigrant of the late Phase I years, has little knowledge, he has only the highest regard for his parent, who despite his long hours in the business finds time every day to study the Talmud. He is, however, in no respect less "American" than his older brother, who left the family and lives in California as a research fellow. He is a better baseball

player, and knows more about American literature, or any other phase of American cultural life. The only difference is that the younger brother attended schools which impressed on him the values of his father's traditional pattern of life, instead of creating a conflict with them.

Similarly, the girls who attend the local parochial school and high school for girls, have a new respect for their fathers who can help them in their Hebrew homework, even though they may be tie operators or salesmen. That they wear beards or abide by the conventions of the Orthodox Jewish pattern matters as little as the fact that the mothers cover their hair and observe the daily practices of a religious home which may seem old-fashioned or foreign to those who know nothing of the basic ideological valuations behind them.

3. A third factor that had an increasing effect on the structure of the family as Phase II progressed, was the large number of newcomers who settled in the Jewish community of Williamsburg. Their arrival set in motion an increasing tendency toward the amalgamation of the various Phase I and II elements of the population by intermarriage of the old and the young. Widows and widowers among the older members of the community were glad to be able to select partners from the newcomers, many of whom had lost their whole families in the extermination camps of Europe or during the flight from their homes, and were eager to build new homes. But an even stronger factor was the rate of intermarriage between the boys and girls of the old and new groups of the population. One American father, when asked whether he did not object to the marriage of his son to a refugee girl, replied:

> "Why shouldn't he! These refugee girls are good looking, they have nice and pleasant manners, a good education, and a fine Jewish background. If I were young and single today, I myself would marry one."

He put his finger on the factors that induced more than a third of Williamsburg's native young men or girls to select mates from the ranks of the German, Austrian, Belgian, Polish, Czech or Hungarian newcomers, their good looks, their generally good education, particularly those of the western European countries, and most of all their excellent Jewish background.[18]

18. Of one congregation of sixty refugee families, five of the eleven elegible young men married girls from older families of the community, and twelve of the sixteen girls, or 75%, married American young men from Williamsburg and similar Orthodox communities of New York. Their well-integrated secular and Jewish cultural background made them ideal partners for the young Americans who had

The effect of this increasing amalgamation of the two groups on the solidification of the traditional family pattern was considerable. For the newcomers brought a strengthened sense of the value of the old family pattern back into the community.

A less immediate, but equally important consequence of this absorption of the new elements into the community was the revival of interest they brought with them in such integral parts of the Jewish religious family life as the *Mikvah,* the ritual bath, the covering of the hair of the women, and certain restrictions on leisure activities, such as mixed bathing. During Phase I some of these aspects had been partially neglected, and even the older Orthodox elements had come to make compromises that progressed toward the complete relaxation of definite religious laws. Whereas one inadequtae *Mikvah,* or ritualarium, previously served the whole community, three others have now been added. Similarly, few young women of the community will now be seen without partial or complete covering of their hair. Many of them have even consented to wearing wigs. One young graduate of a local Jewish high school for girls stated flatly:

> "My years of study at Beth Jacob have taught me enough, so that I would not marry anyone who does not demand covering of the hair of me."

It has to be added, of course, that the wigs or kerchiefs of those young girls who choose to wear them are quite fashionable, and a far cry from the crude, foreign-looking types worn by their mothers or grandmothers. However, without the influence of the new elements, many of these changes vital for the spiritual basis of a Jewish family life could not have taken place.

In general, the changes wrought in the Jewish community throughout Phase II by the rise in its general *economic* status, the developments in the *educational field,* and the *influx of newcomers,* served to strengthen the traditional structure of the family, which had become weakened during the years of assimilation in Phase I.

grown up in the increasingly religious atmosphere of the Yeshivah-educated late Phase I and Phase II community. In an organization of 160 young men, a third of the eligible married girls from the various groups of newcomers who had arrived since the beginning of Phase II; and of the affiliated young women's organization more than half married newcomers, either from Williamsburg or from the wealthier communities. Similarly, of an organization of seventy-two young newcomers, seven of the fifteen who married towards the end of Phase II selected mates from the old-established population of Williamsburg or communities like Boro Park.

5. PHASE III (1949 - 1954)

The trend toward a more intensively religious orientation that developed toward the end of Phase I, and grew strong during Phase II, came to its culmination in Phase III, profoundly influencing the family structure, as well as most other aspects of the community life of Jewish Williamsburg. Largely due to the influence of the newcomers and their famous leaders, those at the center of the community became more Orthodox, and those at the periphery withdrew further or became completely estranged from the intensive life pattern that dominates the local scene.

The hundreds of newcomers, particularly of the Hungarian Chassidic type, who settled in Williamsburg after the war, affected all phases of the communal life by their high standards of religiosity. Stimulated by their example, and guided by reverence for their famous rabbis, as well as by the economic and educational factors discussed in Phase II, the Orthodox elements of the original population, particularly the youth, intensified their own standards of religious life. The most Orthodox immigrants of Phase I could not, in their most hopeful dreams, have anticipated that their college-educated grandsons would willingly grow beards, and wear conservative black or dark blue clothes even in the hot summer days, and their grand-daughters long-sleeved dresses, and wigs or kerchiefs to cover their hair, as demanded by the strict Chassidic standards. There is, for example, the case of a brilliant young violinist with a thoroughly American background, a former member of the NBC symphony orchestra, who under the influence of one of the famous Chassidic *Rebbes* grew a long beard, and wears a heavy silken *Chalat* on Sabbath and holidays, as well as the silken belt that symbolizes the separation of the upper, spiritual half of the body from the lower half. Or there are the six sons of a clean-shaven Williamsburg citizen, a textile jobber, born and educated in America, all of whom wear beards, and have become important figures on the local or national Jewish scene, as educators, rabbis, and leaders of movements. Or there are the three sons of another key figure in the Jewish community of Williamsburg, a clean-shaven, wordly, and highly successful businessman; the three young men, all excellent sportsmen, and as American in their personalities as any youngster who grew up on Main Street, have grown beards and become the leaders of other young Americans in their intensive form of Chassidic life.

Numerous are the cases of young girls, mostly graduates or students of the local parochial high school and teachers seminary, who

marry refugee scholars or young Americans with beards and *Peyes.* They are willing to make great personal sacrifices for the sake of their religious ideals. Many of these girls work as teachers or office workers after they are married, in order to enable their husbands to continue their postgraduate talmudical studies. They are as well versed in the details of movieland and Vogue as any high school graduate. A large proportion of them[19] have attended college. Their valuational training has been such that they willingly forego many personal liberties and advantages for the sake of setting up a family life that abides by the highest religious standards.

Obviously such valuation in the choice of a mate has a deep bearing on the family structure. Girls who adopt it will hardly demand privileges, or forms of equality which are contradictory to the Orthodox regulation of the husband-wife relationship. There is much less of a chance for the conflict between the generations that contributed so much to the break-up of the family in Phase I, if parents, grandparents and children are able to agree on the basic traditional value pattern to such a high degree. Only rarely does it happen that parents object to the extreme form of Orthodox life which their children have chosen under the influence of their education and the leadership of the famous rabbis who were able to attract the young. If they themselves are not as strictly Orthodox as their children, they appreciate the value of the attitude and the stamina it takes to live up to its most stringent standards. There is a small minority of those who object, with an apparent admixture of inferiority feeling, like one father who said: "I am just as good a Jew without a beard. I don't know why my son thinks the beard places him on a pedestal. Anyway, I think it's just a passing fad. After all, we are not Hunks or Chassidim."

On the other hand, however, this intensification of the local Jewish life in Williamsburg proved too much for those elements of the original population which had been able to go along with the moderate pattern of Phase I and even most of Phase II. They objected to the extreme forms which much of Williamsburg's community life assumed under the influence of the newcomers and the other factors described above. In particular, the young who have not been drawn into the general current of religious fervor, object to being forced into a pattern of life whose validity they do not recognize. While they may have gone through a Yeshivah, or the ideological training

19. Between forty and fifty percent of one local young women's organization, for example.

of the local Jewish political youth movement, they now gradually move toward the periphery of organized Jewish life by making other associations and joining movements of a less Orthodox character, or groups that meet outside of Williamsburg. In one particular Orthodox youth movement, 75% of the intermediary age group (16-19), those who had been most eager and active during the first half of Phase II and who had promised to take over the leadership of the senior movement by virtue of their thorough ideological and practical apprenticeship, have left the movement. Some have done so in order to concentrate on their scholarly studies, to join the ranks of those active in the Chassidic movements, or to utilize their training in some professional field. But close to fifty per cent of those who left did so as part of a general movement further toward the periphery of organized Jewish life. Five per cent became unreligious to the point of walking about without a hat, engaging in mixed dancing, and neglecting to abide by the strict standards of kosher food demanded by those at the center of the Orthodox community life. Two per cent have moved so far away from their former position that they openly violate the Sabbath and the basic dietary laws. The majority of the fifty per cent have not veered so far from the traditional way of life. Most of them have married and immersed themselves in their professional careers to a point at which they have no more interest in the ideals that meant so much to them during their teens. Others simply have no time, despite their professed interest. The consequence, however, in most of these cases is a gradual moving outward from the valuational pattern that was the basis of their lives while active in the movement.

While most young couples of native Williamsburg residents tend to move, as soon as they marry, to sections where they find a less extremely Orthodox community life, and less stringent standards of family relations, the majority of the mixed couples of natives and newcomers remain in Williamsburg, if they can find rooms, if necessary, even in Zone IV.[20] Generally the newcomers, who have been forced to live alone, and who have lost most of their kin through war or persecution, make very good husbands or wives, and are devoted to their homes and families. One of them, when asked how he spends his leisure time, replied enthusiastically:

> "I don't need any clubs, organizations, movies or theaters. All these years of misery I dreamt of a house that I could call my own, a real place that means something to me, after the

20. Comp. Ch. II, The Residential Pattern, Ph. III, p. 51.

horrors of the camp barracks, and the impersonal rooms; a home with someone who cares for me and for whom I care. That's all I want right now. As long as my wife is satisfied with it, we'll go on feeling and living like this. It's sheer heaven to me."

Another aspect of the intermarriage between natives and newcomers in Phase III, is the lack of much of the flirtation and pre-marital experimentation which is customary for American youth,[21] and which in resented by Orthodox parents even more than by others. For most of the newcomers are very eager to get married. After a relatively brief courtship they try to get married and settle down for good, with beneficial effects on their marriages.

It is however also a well-known fact that not all the marriages between newcomers, or between natives and newcomers, are successful. For, most of these unfortunate people have gone through the horrors of extermination camps, and have travelled across the countries of Europe as hunted prey; many lost all that was dear to them. They are not always able to summon the patience and nervous strength which is so vital for mutual adjustment. In many cases, these marriages, even in Williamsburg — though here less than in non-Orthodox refugee families — have resulted in friction, constant quarrels, and eventual divorce. Though only one instance of a marriage concluded in a Displaced Persons camp has resulted in actual divorce, separations and futile attempts at reconciliation are among the serious problems which rabbis in the community have to cope with not infrequently.

Another factor that matters less in Williamsburg, than in other Jewish communities where former inmates of the concentration camps have settled, yet that has to be reckoned with, is that some of the younger elements have experienced so much immorality under the Nazis or in the inhuman living conditions of the camps that their own moral standards have suffered. While restrained by their religious values and the standards of the community, there is a certain looseness in the relationship of the younger elements which is somewhat out of step with their general conduct. Although this affects not only those who are not part of the extreme groups, and although the sexual behavior of even this group would be perfectly acceptable and routine in other communities, it causes some talk in the Williamsburg community if boys and girls of an otherwise thoroughly Orthodox or-

21. Comp. both Kinsey reports on the Sexual Behavior of the Human Male and the Female. (Alfred C. Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* Philadelphia 1948. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female,* Philadelphia 1953.)

ganization of newcomers have such joint activities as outings, week-ends at hotels and mixed singing. When questioned about these matters, an officer of the organization stated bluntly:

> "Believe me, if after what we went through in the camps, we have not become animals, we must be made of steel. I can tell you, each one of us is a "Tzaddik," (a morally perfect being). You should know what is going on in other organizations. And from what I hear of the American fellows and girls, we are saints."

Obviously a great deal of patience and understanding is required for the successful normalization and adjustment of these new elements, especially in realms like family life and the relation between the sexes. And this is true, even in a community like Williamsburg, where the standards and patterns of valuation are so similar to their own.

In general, Phase III has brought an even stronger return to the traditional pattern of the family, as those at the center become more Orthodox. But it has also resulted in a loosening of the traditional life pattern for those whom the intensification of the Orthodox community pattern has pushed outwards towards the periphery of Williamsburg society. On the other hand, increasing assimilation of the new Orthodox elements has strengthened the valuational basis of the traditional family structure, except for some negative effects of the traumatic experiences of the newcomers.

6. SUMMARY

The traditional patriarchal family structure which the people of the Jewish community of Williamsburg had brought with them from the Old World, disintegrated gradually during Phase I, with the increasing breakdown of its underlying value system, though at a slower pace than in similar non-Orthodox communities.

This disintegration, which reached its low point in the depression, reverses itself at the end of Phase I, and throughout Phases II and III, with the improvement of economic conditions, the development of a complete educational system, the growth of the Orthodox youth movements, and the settling of large groups of newcomers of a thoroughly Orthodox background in Williamsburg. All three factors help to rally young and old around the same values, to close the gap between the generations, and to re-establish the inner strength of the traditional family structure, with some minor adjustment necessitated by the contemporary American-Jewish scene.

Thus the religio-cultural value system proved to be a force capable of overcoming the factors working for disintegration in the changing structure of the Jewish family in Williamsburg.

VI

THE EDUCATIONAL PATTERN

1. INTRODUCTION

THE perpetuation of the basic values and ideals of a community through education is essential for its existence and survival. The educational pattern is therefore the criterion of a community's character; and any changes that take place in it will be reflected in the upbringing of its young.

From its beginning the Jewish people has been known as the People of the Book, because it has lavished more attention on education and study, particularly of the Sacred Scriptures, than most other nations in history. Twice daily the Orthodox Jew recites the command of teaching one's children in the most important of all prayers. Throughout the centuries of independence as a nation, and even more so after its dispersal into exile, the Jewish community has concentrated its best efforts and produced its most creative contributions in the fields of religious, philosophical and legal research as a result of its intensive education for the young as well as the adults. In the diaspora each Jewish community has made its own particular adjustment to the host nation, depending on the degree of acceptance and integration into its cultural life. The Jewish educational pattern in each country has therefore been a corollary of this adjustment.

America has been particularly favorable to the growth of the multiple culture pattern of its ethnic groups, and has permitted communities like Williamsburg to develop their own educational system for the perpetuation of their values and cultural heritage.

2. PHASE I (-1938)

Phase I in Williamsburg was characterized by the socio-economic adjustment problem of its immigrant population. Children had to go to work as soon as possible, in order to implement the family income. Sweatshop conditions cut down much of the leisure time and the chances for more than minimal education. Parents had little opportunity to take an active interest in the children's schooling and after-school activities. Even if they did have the time and interest,

language difficulties, lack of understanding and general culture clash caused the young to rebel against the Old-Worldishness of their parents, and to reject their values.[1]

On the other hand this very revulsion against the low socio-economic and cultural level of their parents fired the desire of the younger generation to strive for higher economic, social and professional goals. More education was one avenue of escape from the squalor of such ghettos as the Lower Eastside and Old Williamsburg. Not only the young, the parents themselves were anxious to give their children a better chance in life, and insisted on their getting a higher education, as soon as their economic conditions allowed such luxury, frequently even at great risk to their own life and to the spiritual heritage which they had acquired in the intensive training of the Old World. The new generation was to have all the benefits that they themselves had to forego. Hence both the day, and the evening sessions of the local high school were crowded, and growing, while the school population in the neighboring districts of Old Williamsburg was decreasing by as much as two thirds at the height of Phase I.[2] At the same time P. S. #16 and Eastern District High School, the two major public schools of Jewish Williamsburg, were holding their Jewish population and were enjoying a high reputation that was partially due to the high calibre of their largely Jewish student body.

This phase of the picture is as typical for most Jewish neighborhoods of New York, as for other Jewish immigrants communities where the young had free access to public school facilities.

The picture is also typical for Jewish education up to the middle of the Thirties, when a study of the community reports: "The increase (of Hebrew School enrolment) up to approximately 1928 corresponds to a general increase in Hebrew School enrolments throughout the city of New York.... The percentage of Jewish children aged 5-14 years now receiving religious instruction is 23.8% of the total number of Jewish children in this age group; this compares favorably with the average for the entire city."[3] The type of Hebrew education given in these Hebrew schools, two private schools, three congregational schools, and five Yiddish schools of the Work-

1. Cf., *Jewish Education in the U. S.*, A. Dushkin & U. Z. Engelman, Amer. Assoc. For Jew. Ed., N. Y. 1959, pp. 2, 3.
2. *Study of the Jew. Comm. of Williamsburg*, Jew. Welf. Bd., N. Y. 1936, unpublished, pp. 24, 25.
3. Ibid., p. 37.

men's Circle of Folk Schule variety, was good. The largest one, the Hebrew School of Williamsburg, at 310 South 1st Street, was known as one of the best in the country. What the boys and girls received was only the usual basic Hebrew instruction after public school hours, which ended generally with the Bar Mitzvah for boys, and for girls even earlier. The predominance of this type of Hebrew School education in the U. S. was largely responsible for the decrease of Jewish scholarship and of the Jewish community at large.

But already at the height of Phase I started the new trend that was to influence the pattern of Jewish education in Williamsburg, and subsequently in many other American Jewish communities, the Yeshivah or day school movement.

Williamsburg's oldest Hebrew Day School, the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, soon to become the "mother of American Yeshivoth", was founded in the late Twenties by a group of spirited "Baale Battim," private individuals, who wanted more than the usual smattering of the Talmud Torah variety of Hebrew education. Two such Yeshivoth had already been established previously on the Lower Eastside. Yeshivah Torah Vodaath was different and unique in its intensive form of the combination of Lithuanian scholarship with the Polish Chassidic spirit, that became stronger throughout the Williamsburg community, particularly in Phase II. In 1936, less than ten years after its founding, the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, with a large building in the very heart of the neighborhood, at 206 Wilson Street, had already an enrollment of 751 students, second only to the Hebrew School of Williamsburg, at South 1st Street, which had then still 800 students, but was on the decline. Meanwhile Torah Vodaath, was to double its size in the next ten years, with a junior high school building on Bedford Avenue, and a large high school and dormitory building on South 3rd Street, and a graduate school in Monsey, N. Y. Much of this rapid expansion was due to the personal leadership of an unusual educator, Rabbi Feiwel Mendlowitz, a man of foresight and courage. His inspiration carried over to the hundreds of his students who subsequently filled pulpits and held responsible professional and lay positions in key institutions of the American Jewish community, and who were responsible for much of the growth of the Day School movement throughout the country. It was he who created the particular American Jewish synthesis of Jewish scholarship and Chassidic inspiration that was to move the youth of Williamsburg and that was to produce the intensively Orthodox pattern of communal life in Phase II.

The curriculum of the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath is divided into two distinct departments.[4] The morning session is dedicated to intensive Hebrew studies, and the afternoon to secular studies under the supervision of the State Education department. This curricular division into two completely separate and largely unrelated departments was copied by most of the Orthodox Yeshivoth in the country, while other somewhat less Orthodox, or more nationalist day schools introduced different forms of integrated religious and secular curricula, with the accent on modern Hebrew as a spoken language. Torah Vodaath employs Yiddish as the language of instruction and translation, and accentuates the study of the sacred Scriptures and of the talmudic research, rather than of the modern Hebrew literature. The policy of the administration, inspired by the late Rabbi Mendlowitz, was to produce learned "Baalebattim", laymen, rather than rabbis, and to educate young people who were prepared and ready to spend time on daily study of Torah, in fulfilment of the commandment which bides every Jew, regardless of age, to dedicate some time of the day and night to this sacred learning. The purpose of the graduate division to be established later on in a suburban community, was to produce young native scholars to replace the lost reservoir of the Easteuropean academies of advanced research.

The impact of this educational philosophy was tremendous. Torah Vodaath attracted not only the foreign-born or native second generation of Orthodox immigrants. It drew students rfom wider circles from all of New York and many other cities of the United States, so that this institution founded for the needs of the immediate community, had only one third Williamsburg students at the end of Phase I. It also attracted new elements to Williamsburg who might have preferred living elsewhere, yet wanted to afford their sons the intensive Jewish education of Torah Vodaath without having to travel or stay in the dormitory. This trend was one of the most important factors in the creation of Jewish Williamsburg of Phase II, as a hub of Orthodox Jewish life, not only of New York, but of the United States. The spirit inculcated in the young, prepared the road for the mutual adjustment of the American and the new immigrant elements on a common basis of Torah values, and made the innovations introduced subsequently by the largely Chassidic elements, acceptable to a degree unheard of elsewhere, in other American Jewish immigrant communities.

4. Cf. *Jewish Education in the U. S.*, by A. Dushkin & U. Z. Engelman, Amer. Assoc. For Jew. Ed., N. Y. 1959, Ch. VII, p. 178.

The effect of this type of education diminished the size and influence of the once strong Talmud Torahs and Hebrew schools and all but eliminated the Yiddish schools of the Workman Circle or Sholem Aleichem type that had been popular in the Old Williamsburg community, and in similar first stage immigrant ghettos.[5] At least 25 percent of the Williamsburg students at Torah Vodaath came from families who previously would have sent their children to public schools and to afternoon Hebrew schools. Despite the long hours, from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., and despite full sessions on Sundays a good many sent their sons to the Yeshivah, because they realized the weakness of the Talmud Torah education, as compared to the intensive Yeshivah education.

Many of these Yeshiva students from the less Orthodox homes left after their graduation from elementary school. From their ranks a considerable number, sometimes as much as fifty percent, would continue their combined Hebrew and secular studies at the Mesifta Torah Vodaath, the high school department, which further reinforced the spirit of Torah scholarship and love and zeal for Orthodoxy and communal responsibility in its students. The best of Williamsburg's youth went through this intensive training at the "Mesifta". From its ranks came the leaders of the youth movements and organizations, and later on the rabbis and teachers of Williamsburg, and communities far beyond it.

This growing Jewish consciousness of Phase I Williamsburg which produced Torah Vodaath, and which in turn prepared and molded the spirit and the community of Phase II to a high degree, because of its Torah centered value pattern, brought about the creation of similar elementary and high schools for girls towards the end of Phase I. Early attempts failed because Williamsburg Jews were not yet prepared to send their girls to Hebrew all-day schools and to support them financially. The gradually increasing stream of refugees from the Nazi-occupied countries, especially from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, helped set the stage for an equally strong and intensive Hebrew educational school system for girls.

At the end of Phase I there were approximately 860 students attending day schools in Williamsburg, and about 1200 in the various Hebrew schools, Talmud Torahs and Yiddish Folk Schulen. The general trend was apparent, and it affected the future of Jewish education outside the community as much as in Williamsburg itself.

5. Cf. ibid. Ch. VII, p. 181, 2, "down to 1% of all Jewish school enrolment."

The decrease of non-Orthodox elements and the influx of Orthodox Jews from all parts of New York and from small towns because of Torah Vodaath, was to decrease the proportion of the afternoon schools, and to increase the enrolment of the day schools rapidly within the span of a very brief period in Phase II.[6]

PHASE II (1939-1948)

The growth of Jewish educational institutions and their influence on the youth was one of the three important factors of change in Williamsburg during Phase II, next to the war and its socio-economic effects, and the influx of newcomers and their absorption into the community.

Interestingly enough the proportion of newcomers' children to first generation American youngsters was only one third to two thirds at the height of Phase II in the three major institutions of Williamsburg. The change that had begun with the growing influence of Torah Vodaath, and with its attraction of new Orthodox families to Williamsburg, and with the effect of some of the more forceful elements and leaders among the newcomers, had been responsible for this new situation. A new generation of young parents had meanwhile grown up, who had been educated at Torah Vodaath or at the Eastside Yeshivoth and had become imbued with active Jewish communal responsibility in the local Orthodox youth movements. Their children represented the finest type of synthesis of the American and Jewish culture pattern. They were among the best students, and they more than any other factors, helped the young newcomers fit themselves rapidly into the formal and informal life of the Yeshivah, of the community and of the Williamsburg streets. Between them, the students from out-of-town, and the newcomers Torah Vodaath more than doubled its size within a few years after the end of Phase I; and before Phase II ended three more institutions for boys of a similar structure were founded and flourished.

Similarly, where there had not been a single Jewish girls school in Williamsburg during Phase I, except for some feeble attempts

6. "The number of parents giving their children a Jewish education in 1950 was more than twice as large as it was in 1900. (U. Engelman, Am. Jew. Yearbook, Vol. 52, p. 97). Most of this gain came during the years of Phase II. In 1946-47 alone the increase of attendance at All-Day schools was 20%. "Of the 43 All-Day schools outside of New York City, twenty eight organized in the years of 1944-1947, the remaining fifteen between 1939 and 1943." (ibid., Vol. 49, p. 162).

mentioned before, a full elementary school, then a high school and finally a teachers seminary were established. These institutions, going under the name of *Bais Yaakov*,[7] a worldwide Orthodox Jewish girls school movement founded in Poland after World War I, have similar educational goals, and imbue their students with the same inspiration and zeal for a Torah true Jewish life as individuals and as members of their community. They are directed by alumnae from the original Teachers seminaries of Cracow or Vienna, and by some of the most forceful educators and youth leaders among the newcomers of the early years of Phase II. They grew by leaps and bounds at an even more rapid pace than Torah Vodaath, and assumed citywide, and eventually even national stature as pace-setters in Orthodox Jewish girls education. By the end of Phase II, the elementary school had over 800 students, and was forced to move into considerably larger quarters of a former public school building. Subsequently it acquired more adjoining buildings, and has now in Phase III an enrolment of over 1000 students, despite the fact that other similar schools had meanwhile been established by Phase III Chassidic groups. The high school and teachers seminary proved equally successful and produced some of the finest teachers, and educated Jewish women and women leaders in the country. They too grew enormously, and established branches in other neighborhoods.[8]

Both the boys and the girls schools established a pattern of intensive American Jewish education, that harked back to European examples. Yet they formed their own synthesis of a harmonious religious and secular education second to none, as witnessed by the high Regents and scholarship records of their students and of their alumni at college.

The effect of these intensive day schools not only on the youth, but on the entire community, particularly on the family life, as described in the previous chapter, was powerful. In place of the forced interest and the limited level of the Talmud Torah education there developed a genuine interest in religious learning and practice in the younger generation that made it easy for them to relate themselves to the older generation of American background and to the newcomers. The joy of genuine community spirit and participation, the appreciation of the underlying values, developed in them a total perspective and produced an integrated American Jewish personality

7. "Beth Jacob" is the anglicized version used by some schools.
8. Cf. Ch. III.

that was quite different from those of other, less educated and Jewishly inspired communities.

This new spirit gendered by the influence of the day schools, was largely responsible for the acceptance of the newcomers by the young to a degree that was markedly better than their acceptance by many of the older people of the Phase I mentality. It also made it easy for the young to accept the higher standards of Phase II for many of which the newcomers were responsible. Students of the Yeshivah or of Bais Yaakov had less of a struggle than most of their elders to do without mixed bathing and dancing, to limit dating, to stop eating in non-kosher or unreliable restaurants, that had been frequented by the Phase I Williamsburg youth. Their intensive training had taught them that these practises were not in agreement with the letter or the spirit of the law. So they did not only not object, but they heartily approved and chose the new and higher level of the intensively Orthodox community. Many grew beards and *Peyes.* They got used to speaking Yiddish among each other, and many made a point of speaking it exclusively with their children, so that they would have no difficulty later, when they attended a Yeshivah. This was not the Yiddish cult of the Folk Schule spirit.[9] To the new generation Yiddish was the traditional language of Torah study, and the common bond with the newcomers. Graduates of Baiss Yaakov would not only not protest, but actually search for husbands who wanted them to wear a *Sheitel,* a burdensome wig, and who would insist on spending a few years of married life at one of the advanced Talmudic research academies.

The very fact that there were young men who were ready to dedicate themselves exclusively and for such a long time to Torah study, when others meanwhile prepared themselves for a profession, and were well established, while they satisfied themselves with the barest minimum, is perhaps the highest credit to the spirit of the Yeshivah, and would not have been possible at any time in Phase I. At an informal meeting of counsellors at the Mesifta camp in 1943 three of the finest older students of Torah Vodaath, two of them native Americans, and one a Phase II immigrant orphan from Vienna, made the following decision: "We are going to spend the next twenty years on studying all those aspects of Torah and the practical ritual law, which are usually overlooked by the average Yeshivah student and rabbinical aspirant. It is our task to replace the European rabbis, sages and scholars who gave guidance and decided questions

9. Cf. ibid. Ch. VII, p. 182.

of the ritual law in the past. They are gradually dying out and there is no one to step in where they left off. The formerly inexhaustible reservoir of Eastern Europe is gone, and it is up to us young American Yeshivah products to prepare ourselves for this great task of the future." These three, then still youngsters in their late teens, were the nucleus of the graduate division subsequently established by the Mesifta Torah Vodaath in Monsey, N. Y. for advanced talmudic research. These three are still there and are literally fulfilling the pledge made so long ago, while their contemporaries have long since become established in the rabbinate or in other professions, which afford them a good living, while they subsist on the meager salary paid to the fellows of the graduate division who are married. Meanwhile similar institutes of advanced rabbinic study were established by other Yeshivoth, and hundreds of scholars from the great academies of Eastern Europe have come to the United States after the war, to partially fill the vacuum that those earnest youngsters foresaw when they made this pledge.

This trend of continued Torah study in advanced institutes was for a while, partially at least, interrupted by the lure of the diamond trade. There was little question among the graduates of the elementary division about continuing and completing the Yeshivah high school departments; some of the approximately 70%, who went on for several more years after graduation, completely disregarded college. Others attended night or during the summer, for a good part of their profsional training. When the large earnings of the diamond trade became known, and it was apparent that young Yeshivah students were as adept, or even more than the older generation that flocked to it, a good many left the Yeshivah for good. Others studied during the day and went to work in the late afternoons and evenings, while the boom lasted. Despite the fact that the Yeshivoth benefitted greatly from the high income of the Williamsburg elements who turned to this trade, it set back some of the fine young elements, who eventually lost the impetus, zeal and sincerity of purpose that they had absorbed before the lure of the high wages of diamond cutting and other war time jobs stopped them.

Generally, Phase II saw a sharp increase in the length and type of intensive Hebrew education for boys and for girls in Williamsburg. This produced the open-minded attitude towards the newcomers and towards their new ways that became accepted standards in the course of Phases II and III. As a result the entire community life benefitted from this inspired and intensively Jewish attitude promulgated by

the day schools of Williamsburg. They, in turn, grew to major status and became a source of attraction to Williamsburg for parents who lived in other communities.

PHASE III (1949-1954)

Phase III further intensified this trend of more and deeper Torah study, as the masses of new immigrants from the camps settled in Williamsburg. But whereas the newcomers of Phase II had readily accepted the system of education that had been established towards the end of Phase I, and whereas they had contributed more than their share towards improving and expanding it, the newcomers of Phase III established their own schools and partially imposed their pattern of education on the community in general.

These Phase III newcomers, primarily of the Carpatho-Russian and Hungarian Chassidic type, were led by their famous Rebbes whose word is command and who insisted on maintaining their own standards and independence. Though the general goals of the intensive Polish Chassidic and Lithuanian pattern of Yeshivoth like Torah Vodaath were identical with theirs, the new Hungarian Yeshivoth developed the following essential differences of method and content: 1) They place much greater accent on the quantity of their learning, rather than on the depth approach of the Lithuanian style adopted by the American Yeshivah. 2) They place greater stress on the study of practical topics and tractates in the talmudic research, with meaning for the actual conduct of the students, whereas the Lithuanian Yeshivah accentuates the purely theoretical study, independent of its applicability at this time. 4) They place considerable value on following the development of the actual law, from its early talmudic discussion through the commentaries to the decisions and their discussion in the Code of Law and its commentaries. This phase of learning is hardly touched by the average Lithuanian-Polish Yeshivah student, unless he is preparing for a rabbinical degree or engages in advanced research. Yet it is quite common for a young Hungarian Yeshivah bochur to study and know the ramification of the laws in the "Shulchan Oruch", soon after he has mastered the basic technique of the Gemoroh. 5) Yiddish is the exclusive language of instruction, communication and informal discussion among the students. In the American Yeshivah much discussion and informal talk is carried on in English, or in the more modern day schools in modern Hebrew. The teachers of the Hungarian Yeshivah must wear beard and Peyes, to serve as examples for total devotion and dedication to the Chassidic ideal. However, some of the finest teachers in the Torah Vodaath type

Yeshivah are young Americans who can play handball and baseball with their boys during recess or on a class outing. Interestingly enough, most of these young teachers at Torah Vodaath have grown beards in recent years. Yet, their methods of instruction are still relatively modern, compared to the old "Cheder" drill and discipline of the Hungarian Yeshivah. 6) Children of the Hungarian type Yeshivoth start actual study at an early age, some even before they are four years old, while the American type Yeshivah would not start their students on actual study before school age. The result of this is a clear superiority of the Hungarian type Yeshivah boy in terms of age level. He learns *Chumash,* the Bible translation, while the Torah Vodaath boy would struggle with the Aleph Beth. He would learn Gemoroh, apparently easily, by sheer drill and mechanical repetition at an age when the American Yeshivah boy would just about be ready to start reading Rashi, the main Bible and Talmud Commentary. This sharp difference evens out by the time the young adolescents engage in the intensive study of the Talmud, though the broader background of the Hungarian Yeshivah boy would be apparent for a long time.

In some of these aspects and differences the Hungarian type newcomers exerted a rather strong influence on the Jewish education of Williamsburg. Their influence might have been even stronger, had they not insisted from the very beginning on forming their own Yeshivoth and even girls schools, despite their difficulties of economic adjustment. They were so intent on maintaining their own standards, that they refused to accept the largely external differences in the existing institutions, and within a few years built four larger and five smaller Yeshivoth and some private study groups directed by Chassidic Rebbes. They also established three girls schools and several independent kindergartens, in which they perpetuate their own system of intensive education.

Their influence on the general Jewish education system is strong, despite the fact that they did not become integrated, like the newcomers of Phase II. The age limit was lowered in most American institutions, because many of the interested parents threatened to send their children to a Hungarian Yeshivah. In fact quite a few parents of Polish Chassidic or Lithuanian and American background, began to send their children to the new Yeshivoth, because they saw that they gave their students a head start, without any apparent harm to their natural growth. Similarly the pace of progress in the curriculum of Phase II institutions was stepped up because of the constant comparison with the accomplishments of the Tzelemer, Satmar or

Klausenburger Yeshivoth. Special classes for gifted children were established within the existing Phase I and Phase II institutions that were to beat even the Hungarian Yesivoth at their own game of faster, more intensive and broader learning, and less time for English studies.

Typical for the change of attitude and the influence of the new Yeshivoth on American natives of Williamsburg, is this reply of a young rabbi, who is a teacher in a Torah Vodaath type Yeshivah, once the star of an acrobat team, who now wears beard and Peyes. When asked where his own children study, he replied:

> "At the Satmarer Yeshivah. I think, I am a pretty good "rebbi" myself. Yet I see that their *Chinuch*, their education, produces terrific results. I therefore send my children there. I don't care if their pronunciation is different than mine, and that they spend less time on their English studies. They can always catch up on that. Later on I may perhaps decide to sent them back to good, old Torah Vodaath or to the Telsher Yeshivah in Cleveland."

This attitude is not unusual, and accounts partially for the rapid success of the new Yeshivoth, which have grown by leaps and bounds, because most Hungarian Chassidic families have a large number of children, and because they are extremely loyal to their Rebbe and to his institutions.

An important factor for the choice by the afore-mentioned rabbi of the Satmarer Yeshivah for his children, as for many other parents of modest income, may be the low tuition charged by the Hungarian Yeshivoth. They charge nothing or little, where the older Yeshivoth were forced by the constant rise of the budget, of maintenance, salaries and conveniences expected of them, to raise tuition rates to the point where it hurts the low middle class family man who represents the bulk of the parents. The newcomer Yeshivoth occupy old, outmoded buildings. Their facilities are relatively primitive, and their salaries are minimal. They also depend a great deal on charity, on collectors who appeal to the wider community for contributions, and on the strong solidarity of the newcomers themselves, who will do what their Rebbe demands, regardless of the economic hardship it may impose on them. A young man like the young rabbi, will find it almost prohibitive to send his children to a regular Phase I or II Yeshivah and to Baiss Yaakov schools, because tuition, even at a low rate will take too large a slice out of his meagre income. This reason, plus his interest in the advantages offered by the intensive training of the Hungarian Yeshivah, make it easier for him to adjust

to the strange situation that he, the son of a native American Williamsburg Jew, one of the active leaders of the old Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, and quite a successful businessman, now wears beard and Peyes under the influence of the new attitude, and sends his sons to a Hungarian Chassidic Yeshivah, and gloats over it.

There are yet stronger examples of quite a few young men from normal American Jewish Williamsburg homes, who against the will of their parents went to join one of the Rebbes, and his private study group or his Yeshivah. The Klausenburger Rebbe, for example, had a strong influence on many young native Williamsburg Jews. They wear long *Kapottes, Shtreimels* on Sabbath, have long beards and Peyes, and are hardly distinguishable from the regular students of the Rebbe who have grown up in this type of environment.

An important result of the influence of the new Yeshivoth is the negative attitude towards college and secular education in general. The students of the Hungarian type Yeshivah tend to leave their institutions at an earlier age than the products of the older Mesifta. They generally endeavour to enter some business, learn some trade, or start out as plain workers, with the intention of working their way up to the top, in which many of them succeed amazingly fast. In contrast a large proportion of the Mesifta students do attend evening college, while still pursuing their advanced Hebrew studies by day. They represent a sizeable segment of Brooklyn College's Evening Session, and have their own prayer services there in one of the club rooms. It has recently become not unusual for students of a Mesifta, to become instructors in the varius New York colleges and universities. Among Columbia's best young brains in the mathematics and theoretical physics departments, for example, are young Yeshivah students who make it their business to continue their advanced Hebrew studies daily, even though they have the rabbinical degree and have no intentions of making their livelihood from it. They are perhaps one of the most characteristic products of the harmonious synthesis of the American and Jewish Williamsburg educational and valuational pattern. They are not at all self-conscious about teaching classes at Columbia University, even with beard and Peyes, because they have acquired assurance and inner strength that comes from a firm Weltanschauung. There are other young Williamsburg Jews who teach college and who do not have beard and Peyes, despite the fact that they are as learned and thoroughly convinced as those with these external signs of their Phase III direction. The differences are essential and a matter of degree of their identification with the new pattern.

One slightly negative reaction of these external diffierences is the

relative perspective of the youngsters, which reflect some of the foolish prejudices they have absorbed from their elders, and which they have not yet had time and adequate training to overlook. Two boys who live on the same block in the heart of Williamsburg, and who were playing stickball together with the same zeal and skill as any youngster from Main Street in Middletown, were asked what Yeshivah they attended. "Torah Vodaath, of course," replied the older one, with the normal hairdo and the prescribed length of sideburns. "I am not an Hungarisher Yeshivah boy." The second one, wearing long *Peyes* and short, cropped, hair in the Hungarian Chassidic fashion, said disdainfully: "Not to the one of the *"Shkotzim"* (gentiles, not pious Jews). I go to a real Yeshivah." Such minor prejudice does exist, but vanishes as the young become ever more intimately acquainted, as they inter-marry, and above all as they learn to understand the common basis of their valuation.

The informal aspect of the education of the young in the youth movements has suffered somewhat from the intensification of their education. Those who are under the influence of the great Chassidic rabbis object to the political directions of the youth movements. Others are so intent on their Torah study, that they consider the weekly meetings and the separate youth services a waste of time or an unnecessary diversion. As a whole, however, the more intensely Orthodox youth groups, have maintained their strength, and are especially effective in complementing the formal education of the Yeshivoth with a wider horizon and a feeling of greater community responsibillity and participation in worldwide actions and campaigns.

In general Phase III has carried the trend of Phase II to a new height of intensive education, with two divergent patterns, the Polish Chassidic, Lithuanian and American synthesis of the Torah Vodaath type, and the even more intensive, externally different pattern of the Hungarian Yeshivoth. There are variants of these two patterns, such as the new Yeshivah established by the only Ashkenaz congregation of Viennese-Hungarian Jews of the "Adas Yereim", with their peculiar mixture of German-Yiddish. Essentially the products of these Yeshivoth and girls schools come ever closer, as they learn to realize the common basis of their Weltanschauung, and the minor character of their differences.

The recent withdrawal of some of the great Chassidic leaders to independent suburban settlements of their own, where there are no outside influences, such as pervade even the streets of Williamsburg, may retard this process of mutual approach, adjustment and agreement. For the boys and girls who live in Williamsburg, the sharing of the

total life pattern of the community, together with their intellectual and ideological growth, promises much for their future as conscientious American Jews, regardless of the inessential, external differences in their background and upbringing.

It is important to note that both patterns of Williamsburg's intensive Jewish education have been exported to other Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods of New York, and even beyond it to other cities where the day school movement has mushroomed, and where Phase III newcomers have settled in sufficient numbers to establish their own type schools. The developments there are similar, and are worth watching for their influence on the future of the Jewish communities in America. In this respect Williamsburg may perhaps become the center of a renaissance of a well educated Jewish American community, whose sons, unlike the "lost generation" of their elders, have returned to the high level of Jewish scholarship that was typical for the immigrant generation of the Old World, thanks to the work of the day schools.

VII

THE PATTERN OF THE SYNAGOGUE

1. INTRODUCTION

ESSENTIALLY the synagogue is not only the house of prayer and the seat of the organized Jewish religion, but the focus of the entire community. Directly or indirectly all phases of the individual's personal and social life are connected with the synagogue through ceremonies or formal and informal group functions.[1] The rabbi, its highest functionary, is also the supreme authority in all questions of a social, political, cultural or economic nature that affect the Orthodox Jew's thinking and actions. Hence any change in the pattern and spirit of the community must express itself in the basic structure of the synagogue.[2]

1. Cf., Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto*, op. cit., pp. 52, 55, and Warner-Srole, *Yankee City*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 194.

2. The current pattern of the general American synagogue has been amply discussed by Marshall Sklare in his dissertation on Conservative Judaism.* Sklare has showed the close relationship between the economic status of a community and its synagogue. Basing his observations on the work of the Chicago school, particularly the local research of Louis Wirth and his associates, Sklare points out** that the Orthodox Synagogue is generally the social and cultural haven of the low-class Jewish immigrants living in the ethnic ghetto, or First Settlement, as he calls it, where they absorb the shock of acculturation. The low-middle class Jewish neighborhood of the Second Settlement, like Chicago's Lawndale, is the community which fosters the growth of the Conservative Synagogue as a form of social and religious compromise in response to the new spiritual and physical needs of higher economic status. The Third Settlement of the upper-class Jews in the exclusive residential areas, is the home of the Reform Temple, where membership becomes a social function, rather than the fulfillment of a primary spiritual need, like the function of the church in Middletown.***

* Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, op. cit.

** *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

*** Cf., Lynd R. S. & H. *Middletown*, op .cit., Ch. XXII, and Warner-Srole, op. cit., p. 194.

The gradual dissociation of the Jew from the Orthodox synagogue in the course of his rise in economic and social status is typical for most American Jewish communities. It affected Old Williamsburg as much as the other American Jewish low-class neighborhoods, though at a somewhat slower pace than those outside of New York City. Many of its numerous large and small synagogues are boarded up or gradually disintegrating. Others have been sold and converted into garages or light industrial establishments. Those which are still used are empty, except on the high holidays. An interviewer who visited the largest of these synagogues on a weekday and found only the usual quorum of ten old men, surprised these last hold-outs when he declared that he had come to pray, not to say *Kaddish,* like the handful of other young men who came in later for this purpose and were hardly able to read the few words of Hebrew of this mourners prayer.

This same pattern sketched by Sklare should have led to the disintegration of the equally numerous synagogues of New Williamsburg a decade or so later. With the socio-economic rise of their membership they too should have fallen apart. For, according to Sklare,[3] the Orthodox synagogue was unable to answer the challenge of the American secularism that affected the communities whose members had outgrown the dependence of the disoriented newcomers on the Orthodox synagogue pattern as a cultural constant and an aid to acculturation.

Yet the very opposite process has taken place in Jewish Williamsburg. Instead of the gradual decline which did indeed begin to affect the large Phase I synagogues, as described in previous chapters, the synagogues of Williamsburg have multiplied and gained a degree of importance that has been achieved by the synagogues of few other low or middle-class Jewish communities in the United States. Instead of becoming monuments to a bygone era, and of "institutional decay," they have become the very center and focus of the social, cultural and political, as well as spiritual life of the community. Instead of yielding to the pressures that produced the Conservative synagogue patterns in other Second Settlements, the synagogues of Williamsburg have gradually done away with some of the original compromises made by the early community.

As in the preceding chapters, the changes in the basic structure of the Jewish community of Williamsburg since the late Thirties will be shown to be responsible for this reversal of the expected

3. M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism,* op. cit., p. 79, 91, et. al.

pattern. In the case of the synagogue, however, these changes have been even more important because they have restored the basic valuational substructure of the community to the central role assigned to it by the Jewish faith.

Differences of *"Orthodox practice,"* rather than of *"Orthodoxy,"* are responsible for the variations of the two basic rituals, of the Synagogue the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic, which developed in the Middle Ages, the first representing the Spanish tradition, and the second the tradition of the Franco-German school of exegesis and rites. It accounts also for the differences between the Russian Polish, Lithuanian or German Ashkenaz synagogues and the Polish or Hungarian Chassidic synagogues, which are all represented in the various phases of the Williamsburg community. It is partly ethnic background, and partly such Jewish philosophical traditions as separate *Chassidim* from *Mithnagdim,* those who follow the schools founded by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov and those who oppose them, which have been responsible for the intricate patterns of customs, mores and folkways, which differentiate each group. Yet all of them are Orthodox, at least in their subjective conception of this term. The Orthodox German Jew who had adopted much of the formality and abstractness of his former cultural milieu, yields nothing to the informal, emotional Polish or Hungarian Chassid, regardless of the fact that there are many customs which the latter consider binding, while he does not. Nor does the Chassid consider himself in any way less Orthodox than the Lithuanian or Russian-Polish Mithnaged who follows certain stringencies of the religious code, for example the time of prayer, which he by Chassidic tradition feels free to modify. Nor does a well-educated member of one of the Williamsburg Russian-Polish Ashkenaz synagogues feel less observant because he does not abide by the stringencies of apparel and appearance which the Hungarian Chassid requires. To him these are matters of Orthodox practice, born of regional assimilation or dissimilation, which have no relation to the purely spiritual content or the basic code of conduct of the Jewish faith. He may even object to such extreme forms of dress as the *"shtreimel,"* white stockings and *Kaftan* worn in public by the *Chassid* on *Sabbath;* while to the *Chassid* these customs have become vital indications of a precious tradition.

It is a matter of group or individual judgment and temperament how far they accept the most stringent standards of Orthodox practice. The degree to which they live up to the various patterns created in the main Jewish centers of Eastern and Central Europe and modified assimilation to New World conditions, is responsible for the differences

in the synagogues of Williamsburg and their affiliated social and cultural community life.

Basically it is with respect to the following phases of their inner structure that the various types of Williamsburg synagogues differ from one another:

1. The role of the rabbi and the other religious functionaries
2. The type of services and rites
3. The customs and mores
4. The role of women in the synagogue

1. *The Role of the Rabbi and the Other Religious Functionaries:*[4] The major types of synagogues in Jewish Williamsburg, as in other Orthodox Jewish communities of cosmopolitan character are:

a) The large Ashkenaz Russian-Polish synagogues of Phase I
b) The Polish and Hungarian Chassidic synagogues and "Shtieblach" of the second half of Phase I
c) The Ashkenaz or Sephardic Chassidic synagogues of the local Jewish political organizations for young men, and of the educational institutions, also of the second half of Phase I
d) The German-Austrian, Czech-Hungarian Ashkenaz synagogues of Phase II
e) The synagogues of the famous Chassidic *"Rebbes"* of Phase II and III

The rabbi plays an important part in the functions of both the early Russian Polish Ashkenaz synagogues, and those of the recent Chassidic congregations. The synagogues of the moderate middle groups are mostly lay congregations which either do not employ a rabbi at all, or employ only one for occasional religious functions.

Even among the first two types the role of the rabbi is quite different. In the case of the large Ashkenazic congregations the rabbi is primarily the religious functionary who commands respect for his scholarship, for his powers of oratory and for his skill in public relations and the direction of the communal activities affiiliated with the synagogue. The world-famous Chassidic *Rebbes* who settled in Williamsburg in the latter half of Phase II, and in Phase III, command the personal reverence of their followers, and of large numbers of people who turn to them for inspiration or counsel without any ideological ties. They are spread throughout the world. It is the im-

4. Cf., M. Sklare, *op. cit.*, p. 264, and Jerome E. Carlin & Saul H. Mendlowitz, *The Rabbi*: A Sociological Study of a Religious Specialist (Unpubld. MA thesis, University of Chicago, '51).

mediate followers that makes up their congregations. Only on holidays do other Chassidim outside the community come to Williamsburg to spend the festive occasions with their *Rebbe.* This charisma of the *Rebbes* is partly of their own making due to their scholarship, and their outstanding qualities as personal leaders and as examples of a high-minded, inspiring religious form of living. It is also partly due, however, to the fact that they trace their lineage to the great leaders who headed the Chassidic school of which they are present leaders. The Rebbe thus carries the prestige of descent from these world-famous historical figures, regardless of his own personality, a factor which makes for a large degree of independence. Although he does not have to worry about election or contracts, he must remain in the public eye in order to increase his personal appeal to the masses, particularly the women who, except in the cases of the most outstanding *Rebbes,* are a main source of his income. Indirectly and informally the Chassidic Rebbe, too, has to give consideration to his public standing, a job that is usually handled for him by some close co-worker. This is particularly true for the rabbis of smaller stature; the very famous Rebbes who arrived in Phase III have such wide appeal that they do not have to worry about this quasi-professional approach.

Most of the moderate Chassidic synagogues, which were usually formed by people from a specific region or town, or by followers of a Chassidic school during the late 1920's and the 1930's have no rabbi. There are numerous well-known rabbis available in the community, to whom they turn for advice, decisions on questions of religious law, or when they need someone to officiate at a religious function. Otherwise they conduct their services and congregational functions completely on a lay basis. Only when they have grown so large that informal lay leadership is insufficient, do they employ rabbis to serve as their religious functionaries. Basically they remain lay congregations, in the sense that the actual conduct of the congregation's affairs is in the hands of the lay activists.

The Austro-Hungarian, or German *Ashkenazic* synagogues are of the more formal type, though they are not as formal as the large Russian-Polish *Ashkenazic* synagogues. They are, however, even more dependent on a rabbi as the center of their ritual. Most of the Hungarian and Austrian congregations started with their own rabbis. Another, which branched off from a local Jewish political organization during Phase II, hired one of the famous European rabbis soon after its own synagogue was established, while its parent organization, which was of the informal Chassidic Polish type, attempted

to hire one, but was unable to maintain him. The respect in which the rabbi is held by these congregations is much higher than that accorded him in the large Phase I synagogues, because the European type of congregational discipline is rather strong in these congregations. This respect, however, is far from the personal charismatic bond that unites the *Chassidim* congregations and their *Rebbe.*

Those Jewish political organizations whose services are of the Chassidic Polish type have no rabbi; while the one large Ashkenazic type organization employs a well-known local scholar as its rabbi for formal functions.

The same alignment that divides the synagogues concerning the employment of a rabbi, applies also to the employment of a cantor, and, to a lesser degree, to the employment of a beadle. The larger Ashkenazic synagogues, and even some of the smaller ones, employ a Cantor to conduct their formal services, while not a single one of the Chassidic synagogues, large or small, would think of engaging one. It would contradict their basic ritual structure, which is informal, and focussed on the emotional participation in the religious experience of each individual member. Except for High Holiday services, when some of the larger Chassidic synagogues may occasionally engage a good *Baal Tefilah,* a man with a pleasant voice and mastery of the difficult texts, laymen from the congregations themselves will serve as readers. A general knowledge of the *Nussach,* the pattern of recitative, plus a few lively *Niggunim,* the folktunes typical of the Chassidic rite, are sufficient, while the Ashkenazic rites demand cantorial mastery of the more elaborate, formal style of their services.

Every established congregation of means employs a "Shammes," a beadle. While he merely handles the physical work and minor tasks of administration in the Sephardic synagogues, he is an important figure in the more ceremonious Ashkenazic synagogue structure. In some instances he is more powerful than the rabbi, because he handles most of the daily services, functions as general secretary, business manager and power behind the administration, and does much of the public relations work in the community.

The developments of the most recent phase have again introduced the "shochet," the ritual slaughterer, for the individual congregations of the more famous rabbis who settled in Williamsburg. The synagogues of the preceding phases were satisfied with the general "Shechita," the community-wide Kosher meat slaughtering supervised by the heads of the rabbinic organizations.

2. *The types of services and rites* — The general temper of the Ashkenaz synagogues, from the early Russian-Polish congregations to

the smaller more recently established Hungarian, Austro-German ones, is formal, ceremonious and introspective. The Polish Galician and other Sephardic groups have given their services the informal character which corresponds to their highly individualistic and emotional type of religiosity.

Characteristic of the two types of tempers are the seating arrangements. A formal, auditorium style, with long rows of benches and aisles is part of the relatively rigid decorum demanded by the larger Ashkenaz synagogues. There is no walking about during the services. Each man has his seat or pew in a pattern that reflects the social structure of the synagogue. The Chassidic Sephardic synagogues also have their pattern of seating corresponding to the inner social structure. Here the seating arrangements are informal. People sit around tables in self-chosen, fluid groups. They may get up and walk about freely, even excitedly, pacing back and forth in the fervor of their religious experience of the prayer. The distinctions between groups disappear as they melt into each other during the moving about, or in the communal round dances that mark the high spots of the Chassidic ritual on certain holidays. Even those large Sephardic synagogues which do have rows of benches, do not insist on the formal pattern of conduct these may seem to imply. This does not constitute an actual lack of respect on the part of the Chassidim, it is only the expression of their "feeling at home" at the synagogue, as one of their famous nineteenth century leaders had put it.[5]

Equally characteristic of the two major types of synagogues are their *Nussach,* the pattern of recitative and melodies used by the reader. The Ashkenaz Nussach is formal; stylized, and of a sober, almost rational nature; while the Chassidic *Nussach* has many mystic parts included in the regular order of prayers, some of them in the difficult language of the medieval Cabbala. The Chassidic service is highly emotional, and many of its high points are expressed through *Niggunim,* melodies of all types, sad and serious, introspective, or happy and light, some of them real march tunes, or dance ditties. The entire community sings with the reader, swaying with the rhythms, and enjoying the emotions conveyed through them. This type of Chassidic community-singing differs essentially from the community-singing frequently employed by the *Ashkenazic* synagogues of moderate size, where much of the ritual is sung in a formal, stylized, unchanging pattern.

Important also is the different role of the *sermon.* While it is an

5. A. Marcus, *Chassidism, op. cit.*

integral part of the Ashkenazic services, and one of the most decisive functions of the rabbi, it is hardly customary in the Sephardic synagogue. Only at special occasions will a sermon be preached.

There is a considerable difference in the contents of the Ashkenaz and the Sephardic services of the Chassidic, not the Spaniolic version. Both have the traditional prayer texts created by the famous scholars and religious poets of the Jewish past, particularly since the men of the Great Synagogue. The Chassidic school, founded by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov in the middle of the eighteenth century, has introduced new versions and prayers which originate in the Cabbalistic esoteric tradition. They are written by such outstanding Cabbalists, as the famous "Ari," Rabbi Isaac Luria, or by the founders of the various branches of Russian, Polish or Hungarian Chassidism.[6]

In general, the Ashkenaz synagogue is more rational and adheres more strictly to the exact, formalized traditional pattern. The Chassidic synagogue is informal, emotional and individualistic.

3. *Customs and Mores* — The patterns of customs and mores correspond to this difference in the character of the Ashkenazic and Chassidic synagogues. The rational, frequently scholarly Ashkenazic ritual is bound more closely to the exact letter of the Jewish laws. The emotional Chassidic tradition concentrates more on less well-defined aspects of the religious life of the Orthodox Jew, especially since a great deal of it is directly or indirectly derived from the Cabbalistic interpretation of the relations between man, G-d and the universe. The gamut of Orthodox attitudes toward these customs runs from the strict "must" of the extreme Chassid, to the "should" of the moderate Sephardic Jew, and the "may" of the average Orthodox Ashkenaz Jew, to the dubiousness of the enlightened Ashkenaz, who considers them unnecessary or even improper outgrowths of Old World living conditions.

Typical of these borderline areas between the written and unwritten religious precepts or laws, are such traditions as the wearing of the beard and sideburns (*Peyes*) for men, and a wig or other covering of the entire hair for women. While the Ashkenaz will not make them required for communal acceptance, they are a sine qua non

6. Their language is frequently difficult and inaccesible to the average Chassid, unless he is acquainted with the terminology used to convey this mystic Weltanschauung and interpretation of the traditional religion. In spite of the more difficult passages, the Chassidic ritual is more intensely emotional in the character of its recitative and its highly personalized, emotional form of prayer, which inspire the individual, regardless of the depth of his understanding.

for anyone who wants to be a member in good standing of a Chassidic synagogue. A cleanly-shaven man, or one whose wife goes about in her own hair, is acceptable to an Ashkenazic congregation as Cantor or lay reader. The moderately Chassidic synagogues will not permit him to function on high holidays, when special stress is placed on strict observance of all religious laws and mores for all those who hold any official position. He will never be permitted to officiate in any official or unofficial capacity in an extreme Chassidic congregation.

Another example of the variation of attitudes toward basic religious customs is that toward the visiting of a *Mikvah,* the ritual bath. While it is observed equally by all types of Orthodox Jews, as far as women are concerned, the men of the Ashkenazic communities hardly ever make use of it, except once a year, the day before *Yom Kippur.* The moderately Chassidic Jew will visit a *Mikvah* before every holiday. The intensely Chassidic elements visit the ritual bath at least every Sabbath, and many even every morning, before attending services. A person who has not been in the *Mikvah,* may be denied the right to participate in the services, because he is considered impure.

Similarly the wearing of a *Gartel,* a symbolic belt-like girdle of spun black silk or wool, which is tied about the center of the body during services, to separate the upper, spiritual half of the body, from the lower, physical side, is not at all accepted by the followers of the Ashkenazic rite. Yet it is customary for anyone who wants to be accepted in the Sephardic congregations.

As may be seen from these examples, some of the customs that are part of the ritual of the more intensely Orthodox Chassidic synagogues, and an integral part of their mystic Weltanschauung, are rejected by the others. Only those customs which are clearly enjoined in the codes of law are binding to the *"Mithnaged,'* the Ashkenazic opponent of Chassidism, who is frequently on a higher level as a talmudic scholar, while the Chassid will spend more time on studying the ethical, philosophical or mystical Chassidic literature. On the other hand, there are certain customs and mores which the Mithnaged will observe more stringently than the Chassid, for the very reason that they are expressly prescribed in the code of laws, the "Shulchan Aruch," while the Chassid does not feel absolutely bound by them. His tradition, based on the mystic universal view, and on the dependence on charismatic leadership, permits him, for example, to have an entirely different time schedule for afternoon and evening prayers than the Mithnagdim, who will point out that the hours at

which the Chassidim pray, contradict the law. The Chassidic tradition is the more liberal in many similar religious practices.

4. *The Role of the Woman in the Synagogue*[7] — In the German and Russian-Polish Ashkenazic synagogues women share the religious life of the men to a somewhat higher degree than is permitted by the Chassidic ritual. Just as the Orthodox Ashkenazic Jew will generally be less insistent on the *"Sheitel,"* the complete covering of the hair, or an extreme type of reserved clothing, he is less stringent about the segregation of women in the synagogue proper. Not only do Ashkenazic women attend services more regularly than the Chassidic women, who generally visit a synagogue only at special occasions or on the high holidays, but in the Ashkenazic synagogues the women's gallery either has no curtain, or is merely a token partitioning, while practically impenetrable curtains make communication between men and women in the Chassidic synagogue virtually impossible. Many of the smaller Chassidic *Shtieblach,* or synagogues, have no women's section at all. Their women are supposed to acquire equal religious merit by staying at home to tend to their household duties and their children. Only on high holidays, or for such festive occasions as the religious ceremonies that precede a wedding or the celebrations of a *Bar Mitzvah,* the confirmation of a boy on his thirteenth birthday, will they rig up a curtain to set off a women's section in the synagogue.

Women will be able to share most of the social affairs organized by the Ashkenazic synagogues, while they are virtually excluded from the communal meals and get-togethers which are part of the Chassidic ritual. Men serve the food, and pass it to the participants once the Rebbe has taken his share. Women have access to the Rebbe only in private audiences to get his blessing or counsel. Otherwise they may only view the spectacles from a distance. At the parallel affairs of the Ashkenazic congregation, women usually serve and if there is no mixed seating they will at least have their own tables near those of the men.

In neither type is there any question of mixed seating during the services, as in the communities described in *Yankee City.*[8] Orthodox Jews do not consider this a discrimination against women. The separation is mandatory for reasons of family purity and to assure the spiritual concentration required for the proper devotion. Women who appreciate these religious values will not resent the segre-

7. Cf., M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism, op. cit.*

8. Warner-Srole, *The Social System of American Ethnic Groups,* op. cit., p. 216, 217.

gation, nor will they object to their relegation to kitchen and household duties while the men engage in prayers or religious studies, since they know that the atmosphere of the home and its religious standards are as important to the faith as the services in the synagogue. They consider this their primary religious task, in spite of the fact that the modern trend in Orthodox Jewish girls education has changed the Old World pattern by which the woman was generally ignorant in matters of Hebrew literature and religious education. Such institutions as the "Beth Jacob" schools which have developed in Williamsburg and other Jewish neighborhoods, have helped give Orthodox women a deeper appreciation of their place in the religious universe. It is mostly women who lack this intensive religious education who rebel against the superficial discrimination against their sex in the seating order of the synagogue.

The one area directly connected with the synagogue in which women do have a major share is the social welfare work traditionally carried on by Jewish congregations. Every type of synagogue, regardless of its rite, has its sisterhood which cares for the needy and sick as well as for the physical needs of the synagogue. In the Ashkenazic synagogue these sisterhoods have become powerful groups with great influence on the administrations. In the Chassidic synagogues their influence does not extend beyond social functions. This difference extends even to the religious political movements which hold services of their own. In the Ashkenazic organization the women are a powerful influence. In the two Chassidically orientated movements their influence is minor, and their activities are generally more of a social than a political nature.

These differences between the various types of synagogues represent the framework within which the changes in the structure of the synagogue took place in Williamsburg during the three major phases of its history as a Jewish community.

2. PHASE I

The Jewish community of Williamsburg, except for the very first[9] wealthy group of Reform Jews, was dominated by the Russian Polish immigrants who built most of the Jewish neighborhoods of New York in this century. Hence the important synagogues that were established during Phase I were of the large Ashkenazic type, with its formal ritual. As the wealthier elements moved westward across

9. See Chap. I. Comp. Sam P. Abelow, *History of Brooklyn Jewry, op. cit.*

Broadway from the old sections of Williamsburg, Bushwick, Greenpoint, or the Lower East Side, they purchased the large church buildings that were gradually vacated by the upper-middle-class non-Jewish population which had previously resided in this area. Instead of splitting up into the numerous small synagogues or *"Shtieblach"* of the Polish and Hungarian Chassidic groups of the late 1920's and 1930's, they concentrated in the eight major synagogues which are scattered over the three zones. Each of these synagogues has a large seating capacity. Three of them are among the largest synagogues of the city. Only on special occasions like the high holidays were they ever filled, even during their best years. The largest and most beautiful of the eight never had an active, registered membership of more than a hundred and seventy-five men. Throughout Phase I these Ashkenazic synagogues were the foundation of the entire community, and their leaders were also the social and political elite of the neighborhood. Their moderately Orthodox standards set the pattern for all phases of the local religious and social life, and their customs and mores were decisive for most levels of the Jewish population of Williamsburg.

Power in the large Ashkenazic synagogues of Phase I is wielded by the social leaders, the wealthy businessmen and successful professionals, especially lawyers and political figures; and by the activists, the relatively small group of men who do most of the actual work of administration. The membership at large has practically no influence at all. Even the open elections are engineered in advance by these inner circles, so that their slates of officers will be nominated and elected. The Jewish political attitude of these congregations is officially of the Mizrachi, the religious Zionist type. The accent is rather more on the Zionism than on the religious party line, especially among the membership. At the same time, the large Ashkenazic synagogues of Phase I were also centers of general political activity, in contrast to the other types, which were either neutral, or completely aloof to the general political scene in the Williamsburg community. Two of the synagogues were practically the Jewish branches of the local Democratic club. The leader of the larger synagogue was at the same time one of the well-known politicians of the city; and the head of the Kelly machine of Brooklyn fame was the intimate of the rabbi of the second largest synagogue, and his guest of honor at public celebrations of Jewish holidays. With the waning influence of these synagogues their active influence in politics too has declined, and only the old-timers among their leaders are still participating in the gradually crumbling activities of the local machine.

Quite different in structure were the small and large Chassidic synagogues, or *"Shtieblach,"* as they are called in Yiddish. Most of them

sprang up during the late 1920's and the 1930's. The social structure is thoroughly democratic, because these Chassidic synagogues do not have the large class differences which divide the upper classes of the Ashkenazic congregations from the masses of their general membership, many of whom are craftsmen or workers. There are no cantors or choirs in the Chassidic synagogues, and no sermons, except occasional addresses by famous guests, scholarly discourses twice a year, before the holidays, or appeals for communal causes.

More important still, while the daily services are of secondary importance in the large Ashkenazic synagogues, which concentrate mostly on the Sabbath and holiday assemblies, the daily rituals are of major concern to the Chassidic congregations of Polish and Galician origin. Practically the same number of people who attend their Sabbath services will take part in the morning rites. In the largest of these synagogues of late Phase I, the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, continuous services from dawn till late in the morning give all types of people a chance to pray with the required quorum at a time that suits their work schedule. True to their basic pattern of informality, this large prayer hall is one of the liveliest places of communal activity at all times. As many as five different Minyanim, in the main hall and the siderooms, may pray at the same time, and within hearing distance of each other. Simultaneously, study classes may be conducted in some corner or backroom, or lively conversations on internal or communal problems may erupt, or even interrupt the services, in a manner unthinkable in the formal Ashkenazic synagogues. While the smaller *Shtieblach* of this type may not have such a colorful and variegated service, they all share its basic character as a communal get-together that goes beyond the mere religious function of prayers. Typical is the serving of liquor and cookies at the frequent *Yahrzeiten* (the commemoration of the death anniversaries) of Chassidic leaders, or those of private persons being commemorated by members of their family. People who otherwise would not think of touching liquor, will share the Yahrzeit offerings and wish each other *lechayim* in the symbolic act of drinking to each other's health at the commemoration of death, accompanying it with the further wish that the soul of the departed may rise to greater heights on the merit of this commemoration. Similar good wishes over a few drops of liquor and cake are the custom if a member of the congregation celebrates some family event. It adds to the atmosphere of informality and enjoyment of the communal meetings which are typical of the Chassidic synagogue, even in the moderate form of the Phase I *Shtieblach.*

A third type of synagogue to develop during the middle and latter half of Phase I, were those in which services were conducted under the auspices of the local Jewish political organizations. All three of these organizations began as youth movements, one formally neutral as to Zionism, the other religious Zionist, and the third Orthodox non-Zionist. From modest beginnings in the late Twenties they grew to play an important role in the communal life of Williamsburg. A major factor of their growth and increasing influence on communal affairs was the inclusion in their programs of regular religious services, particularly on Sabbaths and holidays. This added steadiness and standing as a positive force for Orthodoxy to their formal and informal political and social work.

The oldest of the three, similar in structure to the Ashkenazic synagogues, is the Williamsburg branch of *Young Israel.* While the other two were being organized about the middle of the 1920's, it had already acquired one of the most exclusive club houses of the neighborhood, at the very center of the main social avenue[10], and opened its doors to all age groups of the moderately Orthodox local youth. Its political leanings, though officially neutral, are of the enlightened religious Zionist type, with some wings being closer to the General Zionists, and others closer to the non-Zionist Agudist movement. Officially, the organization is strictly Orthodox, but actually it does not meet some of the stringent standards of Williamsburg Orthodoxy, especially as they developed during Phases II and III. This applies also to the conduct of their services, which are very popular among the adolescents and young men and women eager to meet members of the opposite sex. They can see and communicate with each other over the wooden knee-high wall that fences off the women's section. The ritual itself is Ashkenazic, although instead of the ceremoniousness prevalent in the large Ashkenazic synagogues where a majority of the parents of the Young Israelites pray, the stress is on community singing. The singing itself is formal, and follows a pattern which is standard in all branches of this movement, and has been copied by many synagogues outside of New York.

The second organization to become a power as a Jewish political movement as well as a communal force, *Agudath Israel of Williamsburg* also started as the local branch of a youth movement.[11] In this case, also, the Sabbath services were a central factor in the develop-

10. Cf., Milton Richman, *A Descriptive Analysis of a Local Orthodox Jewish Synagogue*: Unpubl. M. A. Thesis, N. Y. School for Social Research, N. Y., 1943.

11. See App. II — Case History of an organization.

ment of its influence in the community. Founded in 1926, *Agudath Israel* was not yet strong or important enough in 1935 to receive even a mention in the Williamsburg study made by the National Jewish Welfare Board.[12] This local branch of a world-wide movement dedicated to "representing the Orthodox masses in all matters of concern to the preservation of traditional Judaism," was then still located in a basement. Only four years later, coinciding with the end of Phase I and the beginning of Phase II, did it gain recognition as a major movement, when it moved into its own building on the main social avenue, with spacious facilities for senior and junior services, as well as for political and social activities. Till then only the immediate membership had participated in the services and religious observances. The ample new facilities and the central location attracted a wider attendance from people outside the ranks of the movement. This changed its basic character from a limited, homogeneous group, to a *Minyan,* a congregation meeting for services and religious activities. Only the strong leadership of the ideologically-trained activists maintained its ties to the wider national and international movement. For several years, from 1939 to 1943, the local branch building became the national headquarters, and the membership of the branch was in close contact with all national affairs and activities, some of which took on world-wide scope with the initiation of a large refugee rescue campaign.

The services of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg, like those of the other moderate, Chassidic synagogues founded in the second half of Phase I, are without the ceremoniousness of the large Ashkenazic synagogues. Lively, informal, and emotional, the congregation maintained the happy lay spirit of its early phase as a youth movement, even though its membership matured and outside elements participated in the services. Many rabbis grew out of its ranks, or took part in its religious activities. Only for a very short period did it employ one of its own scholars as the official functionary. Financial limitations, and the unwillingness of the membership to change the freedom of its original lay structure, brought about the end of this period. Although all of the members are married, there was no women's section up to 1953, except on the high holidays or on special festive occasions.

The third organization, *Hapoel Hamizrachi,* also founded in the latter half of Phase I, is the branch of a world-wide religious Zionist movement. Its religious standards are midway between those of the

12. N. Y., 1935.

stringent Agudists and the moderately Orthodox Ashkenazic congregation of Young Israel. It also bears an exclusively lay character, although it it much less Chassidic than the Agudist congregation. Its services are very popular among the younger element, especially since boys and girls can meet freely there, although they do not come together as exclusively for social purposes as in Young Israel. Religious functions and social affairs are here always mixed with a conscious Israel-mindedness, which gives all the organization's activities its special political direction and prevents the branch from becoming just another congregation.

As Phase I drew toward its end these three youth organizations and their services were still on the rise toward the peak of their popularity. The situation of the large Ashkenazic synagogues was different. Economically, their congregations became lower-and-upper-middle class, and the more wealthy began to leave the neighborhood to move into better sections of the city or the subures. The average age of the membership climbed. While the oldest elements began to die out, more and more of the younger elements began to leave these congregations. More than half of one of the large synagogue's young men left it, losing interest, or faith, or moving away as they married or entered the professions. Most of these who remained Orthodox joined one of the three youth movements, attending services there. As a consequence there was little youth left in the large Ashkenazic synagogues by the time Phase I ended. At the same time, the spiritual level of the remaining membership itself had dropped, as the older generation of immigrants died out and the remaining middle-aged members became absorbed in their business or professional and political activities. Zionism supplanted piety and interest in religious affairs as the focus of the spiritual interests of the congregations.

The smaller Ashkenazic synagogues of the early years of the community were even more affected by this process of inner and outer decline. The decline itself began toward the end of Phase I and increased rapidly in the following period.

The Chassidic synagogues, however, were at their very peak at the end of Phase I. They too had suffered from the years of depression, and gained from the years of recovery in the late 1930's. Their membership was generally younger, and even those who had already reached the higher income and social levels, did not start to leave Williamsburg until the beginning of the Forties. Only the top few whose financial status was above the average had already begun the outward trek to Crown Heights. The majority was content to rise on

the social scale of the community and to replace the old leading elements that had come from the large Ashkenazic synagogues.

By the middle of the 1930's the most important of these Chassidic synagogues, the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath Congregation, had taken over actual leadership of the community and its members were those who headed the important projects and campaigns of Jewish Williamsburg. In the synagogue itself there was a thorough mixture of all age groups, with the accent on the young who had advanced from the back sections held by the adolescents to the front sections where internal politics were carried on. The general level of scholarship was rising, due to the increasing number of classes on all levels of religious study being given in the morning and in the evening by lay scholars or teachers of the Yeshivah.

Another important difference between the large Ashkenazic synagogues and the Chassidic congregations, particularly those like the Yeshivah congregation, was the ease with which newcomers to the community could fit themselves into the flexible structure of the latter, compared to the much greater difficulty of penetrating into the formal, rigid pattern of the Ashkenazic synagogues. This is the comment of one young man who came to Williamsburg in 1938:

> "I had grown up in Germany and was always used to the Ashkenazic rite. But when I came to Williamsburg and attended the services in the various synagogues, I found that I was a stranger who would be doomed to stay on the outside if I remained in one of those huge *Ashkenazic Chevroth.* One day my uncle took me along to the Yeshivah *Minyan,* and I was quite overwhelmed by the din and constant commotion in the large place. But I can tell you, I felt right at home. I picked myself a niche in one of the side sections from which I had a good view of all that was going on in back and in front, and no one looked at me as if I was an intruder. I took no one's seat away, and made friends immediately. I rather changed my way of praying and became a fervent *Sephardi.* If they pay me I would not join the stiff *Ashkenazic Shuls* where I tried to find a place for myself at first."

For this very reason of their open social structure and informality synagogues like the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath were the places where the many Hungarian newcomers who began to settle in Williamsburg during the 1930's, felt most at home. They entered them and soon began to mix with the Chassidic Polish and Galician elements. By the end of Phase I they were among the most active members of the Yeshivah, and had won social acceptance, though occasional goodnatured friction between the ethnic groups did take place. Many of the early refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria who came to Williamsburg in

the late 1930's found a warmer reception in these synagogues than in the closer ranks of the large Ashkenazic congregations.[13]

The total impression made by the Chassidic synagogues like the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, is one of growing piety and scholarship, despite the rise of its membership to the middle classes. The strong mixture of young people and the strengthening of the ranks by the constant admission of new elements, add vitality and fluency to the social structure. They point to the direction in which the developments of the next phases were to move the Jewish community of newcomers, and rising standards of Orthodoxy, or rather of Orthodox practice.

At the same time the large Ashkenazic synagogues, while to the outside still at the peak of their power and influence at the end of Phase I, had already begun to show the signs of their eventual decline in their aging membership, the increasing departure of the highest social class, and the turning away of the young of Phase I, from the relatively low Orthodox pattern of their parents.

The congregations of the Jewish political organizations begin to play an important role, as their membership matures and their services attract outsiders as well as followers of their ideologies. Active participation of their leaders in the wider community affairs gives them official status as a bridge between the generations.

In general, as the early phase of the Russian Polish Ashkenazic type of communal life in Williamsburg begins to decline, the basis for the new phase has already been laid.

3. PHASE II (1939-1948)

Phase II with its changes in the economic and social structure of the Jewish community of Williamsburg due to war and increasing settlement of large groups of newcomers from Nazi ravaged Europe, intensified the decline of the Ashkenazic synagogues and their influence on the community life.

The large Ashkenazic synagogues which had been the pillars of the Jewish community in Phase I, did not share the general improvement experienced by the Chassidic synagogues soon after the beginning of Phase II. Here the moving away of the wealthier elements was felt much more, because it affected a higher percentage of the membership. In the oldest of the large synagogues, at the border of

13. Cf., Ch. IX.

Zone III, forty per cent of the membership had left by 1940, according to the statement of its rabbi in his appeal to the younger elements to take over. In the other seven large synagogues, the percentage was closer to thirty per cent because their members lived in the better areas of the immediate neighborhood and did not move as quickly. By the end of Phase II, the largest of these Ashkenazic synagogues had lost thirty-five per cent of its leading members either by death or moving out of the area.

At the same time a considerably lower percentage of the younger elements remained with the synagogues, or, if they stayed on, showed less interest in it than the members of their own age in the Chassidic synagogues. While more than sixty per cent of the twenty to twenty-five year old age group in the largest Chassidic congregation, the synagogue of the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, had completed a Yeshivah elementary school, and fifty per cent had finished a Yeshivah high school, and thirty per cent had continued their talmudic training even further, only thirty per cent of the comparable age group in the largest Ashkenazic congregations who were interested in Judaism, joined the than ten per cent had gone beyond it. The young people in the Ashkenaciz congregations who were interested in Judaism joined the junior political movements and attended their services, thus leaving few to fill the gaps left by the departure of the wealthy and the death of the old.

The closely-knit social pattern of these large synagogues made it difficult for the many newcomers who settled in Williamsburg during Phase II to join and become fully accepted members. The Ashkenazic synagogues found therefore no source of replacement for their depleted memberships, in the masses of refugees.

The picture is different in the Chassidic congregations of Jewish Williamsburg. Not only do they attract a good many of the newcomers with similar ethnic and religious backgrounds — or even different backgrounds, as was illustrated in the example of the young German Jew who joined a Sephardic congregation because of its informal, friendly atmosphere — their number increases even while some of the smaller Ashkenazic synagogues either cease to exist or dwindle down to their last *Minyan* of old members. Although an average of ten to fifteen per cent of their wealthy members move out of the neighborhood, their place in the active leadership of the Chassidic synagogues is taken by the younger elements who have married and entered professions since the beginning of Phase II. In one of the larger Chassidic synagogues all offices, except the presidency, which is the monopoly of the grand old man of the congregation,

have been taken over by these younger elements who generally have a good secular and Jewish education, though they may lack the high talmudic scholarship of their elders who grow up in the *Yeshivoth* and *Chadorim,* the Hebrew academies of Europe. Others of the former leaders are capably replaced by newcomers from the refugee groups, who have joined the Chassidic congregations since the end of Phase I. One medium-sized Chassidic *Klaus,* for example, located at the end of the main thoroughfare, had lost a third of its members, especially by death or their departure to Boro Park or Crown Heights, one year after the beginning of Phase II. Three years later, at the end of 1943, its membership had doubled, because of the many refugees of Polish German background who had been attracted to it, and had become active members and leaders.

As the number of the newcomers, particularly of Hungarian and Austrian or Czechoslovakian background, increased, they set up their own congregations, which with few exceptions were *Sephardic Chassidic,* differing somewhat from the pattern of the Chassidic congregations of the Polish and Galician synagogues of Phase I. These older Polish or Galician synagogues were either neutral, in the sense that they paid no allegiance to any particular school of Chassidism, or loosely affiliated with one of the world-wide organizations paying allegiance at least in name and ritual to one of the famous Chassidic leaders of Eastern Europe. Six of them, scattered through the middle and lowest zones of the neighborhood, had *Rebbes* of their own, with small local followings. These rabbis could compare neither in scholarship nor in stature with the Chassidic *Rebbes* who settled in Williamsburg during Phases II and III. As a consequence of this difference in the basic structure of the old and the new Chassidic congregations, much of the pattern of the Phase I Chassidic synagogues described above, was changed. In the first place, the almost-exclusively lay character of all religious and communal activities and affairs, and the all-pervading informality of the services and assemblies gave way to a considerable degree of formality and ceremoniousness centering about the Rebbe as the focus of every detail of the communal life. The services, as well as the informal religious or social gatherings of the congregations acquired a festiveness that turned each of them into a religious experience far more intense than any even Williamsburg's Chassidim had been used to. Such previously little-appreciated religious gatherings as the Friday evening "Tishen," the communal meals, such as the *"Melaveh Malkehs,"* on Saturday night, attracted many curious spectators, in addition to the regular followers, and the solemnity and beauty of these gatherings turned a good many of

former sceptics into faithful believers. One of these newly-arrived Rebbes, the descendant of a long line of famous rabbis of a Russian-Polish Chassidic school famous for the creation of *Niggunim* (Chassidic folk melodies), drew tremendous crowds to his gatherings. Young and old came to hear him sing his new and old melodies, which took Williamsburg by storm and spread throughout the Jewish world. Another of the newcomers, the first of the Austro-Hungarian Chassidic leaders, set standards of Orthodox practice for his large following which were unusually high for Williamsburg then, and set the pace for the religious revolution that was wrought in Williamsburg by the subsequent waves of Chassidic refugees. In the synagogue itself he took over many of the functions formerly performed by lay leaders, like the reading of the biblical portions, acting as cantor on high holidays and special occasions, sounding the *Shofar* on New Year, and becoming the "Mohel," to circumcise the children of the community. Only a short while after he formed his congregation this Austro-Hungarian rabbi, pacemaker for the others to follow during Phases II and III, was able to acquire a beautiful building on the main social avenue of the neighborhood, for use as a combined synagogue and private residence. His prestige rose still further when he later added a Yeshivah of rather high standards, and a modern ritual bath, to the religious center he had built. Both the Yeshivah, which had to meet the competition of the largest Orthodox education institution of its kind in the United States, and the ritual bath contributed to the movement away from the moderate Russian-Polish to the intense Hungarian Chassidic pattern, with its stress on such external signs of piety as the beard and *Peyes* for men, and the *Sheitel* or complete covering of the hair for women.

Another factor that contributed a great deal to this revival of Orthodoxy in Jewish Williamsburg during the early Forties, was the rise of the diamond industry. It enabled the lower-class members of the community to increase their financial support of their synagogues and their functions and to replace the support once given by the wealthy people who had now moved out of the neighborhood.

The causes for which these donations were solicited were not always related to the synagogue, its ritual or informal affairs or its physical plant. For Phase II more than any other recent period demanded a great deal of philanthropy and community spirit of the members of the American synagogue. Refugee salvation and rehabilitation of all sorts became urgent tasks from which the members of the Jewish communities could not withdraw. Although much of

the huge amounts of money, food and clothing collected depended largely on the sizable contributions of the wealthy, the donations of the lower classes were equally important because they gave regularly. In one Phase II synagogue, for example, no two Sabbaths passed without an appeal of some sort for a worthy cause. In fact, in those days of Phase II, when the SOS calls from European Jewry became ever more urgent, appeals for funds were practically part of the ritual, and to respond properly, by giving far above what was previously the normal standard, was considered a vital religious duty for every individual and the entire community. This new prosperity naturally enabled the people of Williamsburg to do much more than could have been expected before the rise of the diamond industry.

Beyond the response to these extraordinary appeals for funds the members of the Williamsburg synagogues were also in a position to be more liberal in their spending for the routine dues and contributions usually made in a congregation, such as the prices paid for *Aliyoth* and the *Nedarim,* pledges by those who are called up for the reading of the biblical portions. As a consequence, the budgets of the synagogues expanded, and the salaries of the functionaries were raised to almost double their extremely low Phase I level, without however, measuring up to the comparable level of increased earnings of the average community member. The rabbi of one of the major synagogues, for example, had started out with a weekly salary of $30.00 in 1929. Ten years later, at the end of Phase I, he received $50.00 per week, as one of the best orators of the neighborhood who attracted many people to his forums, sermons and well-conducted services. Four year later his salary had risen to $85.00 per week, with some added side-income from functioning at private religious ceremonies. The rabbis of the smaller synagogues received proportionately less.

In respect to scholarship and learning, however, Phase II could not measure up to the accomplishments of the Phase I congregations. They had studied the talmudical literature at home and at the synagogue in communal study classes, early in the morning before work, in the evenings after work, and on Sabbaths and holidays. While the young generation below the age of twenty-one received a much better education, their parents, who had gone to work soon after their arrival in this country as children or adolescents, were far less interested in religious studies.

This does not altogether apply to the medium-sized and smaller synagogues of Williamsburg in Phase II, because their congregations were not dying out like those of other Jewish neighborhoods. As the

older generation of immigrant scholars began to disappear, and the middle generation became involved in professional life, there was considerably less study of the traditional literature. The classes of talmudic research are more significant of the true status of a congregation of the Orthodox type than any other part of its structure. In one congregation of a major Jewish organization whose membership had entered business and professional life during the end of Phase I and the beginning of Phase II, the number of classes had dwindled down to a third, and their attendance to half of what it had been during the latter half of Phase I. The daily evening-study class once attended regularly by at least ten members disappeared completely. Instead a thrice-weekly class of half the attendance carries on the tradition. The Sabbath classes, too, count only twenty-five participants at most, while twice as many had attended them around the end of Phase I. Similarly, the oldest Chassidic synagogue of Williamsburg, which had been known for its aristocracy of scholars, who started their daily studies at 3:00 A. M. in the morning and studied in shifts until 12:00 midnight, because there were not sufficient books and room to sit, has lost its scholarly distinction. Only the old men still alive, with an admixture of youngsters from the local academies who prefer the atmosphere of this scholar's haven for their intensive study, keep up the illustrious tradition of this famous synagogue. Few people in their thirties and forties have replaced the old men who have died and the middle-aged who have left the neighborhood.

This slack was, however, partly taken up by many of the new congregations of Phase II refugees who took over some of the old, small synagogues of Williamsburg, or built their own synagogues. In one of these middle-sized Chassidic congregations of 60 members there are two Talmud study classes held every morning, and one brief study class every evening, between services. Three nights a week those men who cannot attend the morning classes meet in a Talmud class. The youngsters of the congregation have a study class of their own which meets on Friday evening, and three other classes suiting the various levels of knowledge, meet throughout the Sabbath, with a sizable attendance for such a limited membership. The attendance of the daily services of this typical Phase II Polish Chassidic congregation contrasts sharply with the attendance of the daily services of the large Phase I synagogues.

In general, Phase II marks the decline of the large Ashkenazic synagogues as the spiritual and communal leaders of Jewish life in Williamsburg. Their place is taken by the smaller Chassidic

synagogues and their mixture of old and new members of the community. The increasing departure of the wealthy elements to better neighborhoods makes room for the active younger, and partially for the new elements, to come to the fore as leaders within the congregations, and consequently as leaders of the affiliated communal activities.

The rapid rise of the Williamsburg population to higher income brackets, spurred by the war economy and the development of the diamond industry as a lucrative profession largely dominated by Orthodox Jews, contributes to the intensification and improvement of the synagogues and their ritual and social activities. On the other hand, with the death of an increasing portion of the early immigrant generation the level of scholarship among the Jewish population is lowered, at least in the synagogues of the older congregations, whose new membership is too occupied with its professional and social life, and whose education is not as intensive as that of its elders or its children. There is also a general loosening of values among the younger elements in the synagogues who earn too much for their spiritual welfare, and who leave the extreme group to join more moderate associations and congregations, or leave the neighborhood.

As the new religious leaders settle in Williamsburg, there is a stronger concentration on the person of the rabbi in all ritual and congregational matters. The informal lay structure of the synagogues, especially of the Chassidic type, yields to this spiritually authoritative pattern with its influence on the general level of the local religious and communal life.

The increasing number of Hungarian newcomers to the community and their rapidly growing congregations, combine with these other factors to intensify the formerly moderately Orthodox pattern of the Jewish community life in Williamsburg.

4. PHASE III (1949-1954)

Phase III brings to a climax the shift in communal predominance from the moderate Russian-Polish Ashkenazic synagogue to the extreme Hungarian Chassidic synagogue which centers about the hallowed personage of a charismatic leader, the Rebbe.

At the end of Phase I, the gradual dying-out of the older generation and the moving away of the wealthier elements had begun to challenge the supremacy of the Russian-Polish group in the Jewish community of Williamsburg. The removal of the war and postwar shortages and the start of a new economic boom speeded this movement away from Williamsburg for the majority of those Phase I

elements which were not tied to the neighborhood for personal reasons. In one junior political organization, sixty-five percent of the older members active in the movement in Phase I and II, and had left by the end of 1952. Of the sixteen men who had been members of the administration of the largest Ashkenazic synagogue, three had died and eight had moved to different neighborhoods. Five of the six former presidents of a moderate Polish Chassidic synagogue founded in the beginning of Phase II had moved to Crown Heights, Boro Park and Queens by the end of 1952. And over sixty per cent of those who had occupied the first ten activist rows of the front section of the largest Chassidic synagogue in Williamsburg in Phases I and II had left the neighborhood at the end of 1952.

At first it seemed that this revolution in the synagogue and in communal life wrought by the new leaders of Phase III would last only as long as the curiosity of the masses who were attracted to the quaint forms of an Old World religious pattern. Surprisingly, not only those who had grown up with it before their coming to the United States, but wide circles of the older elements in the community and of the youngsters just out of school were drawn to this intense form of congregational activity. One newspaper reporter who had come to Williamsburg to observe the strange rituals of a piece of Eastern Europe transplanted to the American soil, discovered that, "there were as many American youths singing along, dancing along, and swaying back and forth in the sacred rhythm of religious ecstasy that filled every nook and crany of the huge prayer-hall of the Klausenburger *Rebbe,* as there were refugees with long *peyes,* beards and shtreimels."[14] The youth of Williamsburg, like youth in general, is of course easily impressed by the emotional appeal and mysticism of this type of ecstatic devotion. It is the general atmosphere of the community, plus the intensive training many of its members have undergone in the Yeshivah and in the ranks of the Orthodox youth movements, which makes them open to the attraction of charismatic leaders like the famous Klausenburger or the Satmarer *Rebbe.*

But older people too are affected by this spirit. This is the typical reaction of one such older member of a Phase I synagogue to the unrestrained pattern of Chassidism.

> "At first I went to the *Rebbe* because I was curious. Then I ridiculed the foolish people who spend so many long hours with the *Rebbe.* But ultimately it got the better of me. I began to like the spirit that seemed to flow from the *Rebbe* to the last and smallest of his congregants. Almost against my will I was drawn to the services and *Tishen,* with their catchy melodies

14. *The Jewish Journal,* Tishri 26, 5712, N. Y., '51. (Translat.)

> and the fervor that somehow imbued every moment of the prayers and feasting with the kind of faith that I had never known before. I wish I could get over the last blocks in my upbringing to really become a Chassid."

Thus in the shared religious experience the various elements of the Jewish community of Williamsburg meet at close range and overcome the many differences that separate them externally. This provides a more fundamental basis of mutual acceptance than superficial assimilation in a milieu devoid of this valuational factor.

As a consequence of this rapid recognition, all of these *Rebbes* of late Phase II and of Phase III were able to acquire buildings in the very heart of the neighborhood, at choice locations on the main thoroughfare or its feed streets. One of them has taken over a large movie-theater, (one of the two that were still left in the neighborhood), displacing it not only physically, but spiritually, too, by his substitution of a leisure life organized around the synagogue. Another purchased the largest social hall of the entire area and converted it into a large religious center with synagogues and rooms for all religious and educational purposes. In addition he has separate buildings for girls' and boys' schools on the avenue. He has also built a ritual bath in the basement of the main building following the example of the Phase II rabbi who was the first to take active steps in this vital aspect of Jewish ritual life. A third Phase III rabbi has followed suit, and had the basement of his synagogue and residence converted into a ritual bath.

This new interest has also resulted in open resentment and an entirely new evaluation of their own and the community's standards on the part of those Phase I members of the community who once used to be the religious and social leaders of Williamsburg. The main figure of the largest Ashkenazic synagogue, for example, when approached for permission to make an appeal for an urgent religious community project remarked: "Otherwise we are not *Frum,* pious enough for you. If we are *treifoh,* then our money is *treifoh,* too." Obviously, in addition to the resentment, one can see that this man, who had been one of the foremost social leaders of the Old Williamsburg, now feels practically inferior, for his standards of religiosity and Orthodoxy no longer meet the standards of the community. The heightened value pattern created by the Phase II immigrants and by the Chassidic leaders and masses of Phase III has thus rearranged the entire social order through the shift in the religious structure.

The strongest external indication of the change in the synagogue pattern of Williamsburg and in the relation of the synagogue to the entire community is the form of such a holiday celebration as *Simchath Torah,* the festival of Torah, which is the finale of the high holidays. Whatever festivities and celebrations the large Phase I synagogues observe are contained within the synagogue or the home, and there is little relaxation of the rigid formality which characterizes their services, even on this happiest of the holidays. The Chassidic synagogues of Phase II go so far as to let down the barrier of the curtain that separates men from women on *Simchath Torah.* The dancing of the men and children with the Torah scrolls, flags and candles, lasts till late in the evening and through the following day. Here too the festivities are contained within the synagogue, though the people permit themselves a high degree of informality, and even some moderate drinking. The celebrations of the Phase III large Chassidic synagogues spill over into the street, and become a community festival. People from far and wide come to witness and participate in the frenzy of religious joy, which lasts through the entire night and the following day. The largest and busiest thoroughfare is blocked off by police and huge crowds, displaying bemusement or eager interest, mill back and forth from one center of the festivities to another.[15] To the Phase I congregations such an open display of religious sentiment and celebration would be in bad taste, and some of the hardened old-timers walk around on such days grumbling and forewarning of public reaction and anti-semitism, because the neighborhood still has many non-Jews.

In this particular divergence of attitude lies perhaps the crux of the difference between the old and the new patterns of the synagogue and the communal life. The Phase I population tries as far as possible to be like the rest of the population, to avoid any display of open differences in their pattern of life. The new elements are so convinced of, and immersed in the value and inspiring beauty of their Chassidic pattern of Orthodoxy that they proudly display it; and instead of feeling the need for restraint, for keeping their Judaism within the walls of the synagogue, try to carry its spirit into the very streets in which they live. This attitude, they feel, makes for better understanding and mutual respect even on the part of their non-Jewish fellow citizens. "Our Christian neighbors will respect us all the more," said one of the famous Chassidic Rebbes, "if we show

15. Cf., Natl. Jew. Post, 10-24, '52 N. Y., p. 9.

that we take our religion serious; if we try to fulfill every one of our sacred precepts in our daily lives; if we can prove its high ethical level in our conduct and in our righteous thinking."

5. SUMMARY

Unlike the synagogues of other low-or middle-class Jewish neighborhoods whose population rose on the socio-economic scale, the synagogues of Jewish Williamsburg did not empty or disintegrate. They became the very foci of the community life. Its religious heads became the actual leaders of their congregations, instead of servants of a lay elite, because the changes in the composition and ethos of the communty restored them to their central role in the Jewish faith.

The moderately Orthodox Russian-Polish Ashkenazic synagogues of Phase I declined because they did not follow the religio-cultural value pattern which replaced theirs in most realms of the local life. The now-dominant, intensely Orthodox Hungarian and Polish Chassidic synagogues were strengthened and expanded as a consequence of the socio-economic rise of their membership. They fortified their positions by intensive educational, cultural and social activities. Their charismatic leaders became the central figures, and their religious celebrations the outstanding events of the social life of Williamsburg.

Instead of the disintegration, or subordination of the spiritual to the social function, typical of the synagogue in neighborhoods without its religio-cultural value pattern, the new developments in Williamsburg made the synagogue the most important institution of the community, and the spiritual realm predominant over all other areas of community life.

VIII
THE ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNITY TOWARD THE NEWCOMERS

I. INTRODUCTION

THE DISCUSSION of the preceding chapters has made it clear that the change in its ethnic composition has been one of the major factors in the transformation of the Jewish community of Williamsburg. Obviously the process of assimilation, rejection, acceptance, and mutual adjustment has largely hinged on the value clash and conflict of the various groups. And an investigation of the effect of the transition from the predominance of the Phase I Russian-Polish group to that of the Phase III Chassidic Hungarian elements on the attitude of the original community is imperative for any conclusion about the socio-cultural interaction.

Newcomers in general, and particularly immigrants from countries with different patterns of customs, mores and manners, face the problem of adjusting to and becoming accepted by the original population. They have to overcome external differences and the less obvious, but more essential variations of values which may partially coincide and partially clash with those of the new community. In neighborhoods of contingent residential configuration the external differences suffice to impede the acceptance of newcomers who do not adjust quickly. On the other hand those who adjust easily become assimilated without much difficulty, because such loosely organized communities do not require deeper, ideological acculturation.

The situation is different in the case of communities like Jewish Williamsburg, which are organized around a definite cultural pattern. Here the newcomers must adjust their basic values to those of the original population to become fully accepted. Easiest, of course, is the assimilation of newcomers who share the basic valuations of the new community from the very outset. External differences of customs

and manners will hardly prove to be serious obstacles to their adjustment, once both sides realize that their basic views agree. On the other hand external adjustment of appearance, mannerisms, language, clothes and customs will not suffice, as long as the newcomers refuse to adjust their clashing values to the basic pattern of the new environment. If they are isolated individuals, they will be and feel rejected. If they have entered the community in sufficiently large numbers, they will band together and form a community within the community, a minority ghetto that perpetuates the life pattern of their old home as much as circumstances permit. It takes a new generation to breach these invisible walls and bridge the gap of conflicting values. In some instances the number of newcomers may be so large that they will influence the life pattern of the new community, and replace the original population, which prefers to leave the neighborhood rather than adjust to the new pattern imposed on them by the newcomers.[1]

The preceding chapters have dealt with the various adjustment patterns of the smaller and larger groups of newcomers who settled in Williamsburg since the end of Phase I, and with their increasing influence on the life pattern of this neighborhood.

The present section is devoted to the analysis of a survey conducted in the Jewish Community of Williamsburg in connection with this investigation, to determine the attitude and reaction patterns of the original population of the community toward the newcomers. Just as the adjustment of the new elements depended on their basic acceptance of the values of the community, their successful assimilation and eventual acceptance into the inner strata of the social structure of Williamsburg hinged equally on the attitude of the people who lived there before their arrival.

In line with the general hypothesis underlying this investigation, it was the predominance of the religio-cultural values in the commual life of Williamsburg that enabled the newcomers to become accepted by the original population with whom they shared the primary Orthodox Jewish valuation, in spite of external differences of customs, manners, and mores.

The analysis of this survey, conducted at the end of Phase II, at the height of the assimilation of large groups of newcomers, and in the beginning of Phase III, when the new pattern began to

1. Cf., Irving Mandel, "The Attitude of the American Jewish Community Towards East European Immigration, as Reflected in the Anglo-Jewish Press, 1880-1890." *American Jewish Archives*, III, June 1950, pp. 11-36.

crystallize, will point up the role of the valuational factor on the attitude of the original population of Williamsburg, in comparison with the role of other factors.

II. THE SURVEY

1. *Size of the Sample*

Althogether 250 *men and women* of varied ages, professions, income, education and degree of Orthodoxy were questioned in three separate sample groups within a year and a half, half a year apart, to allow for changes in the attitude of the community. The three samples run as follows: SAMPLE A: 60 Interviews, SAMPLE B: 60 Interviews, SAMPLE C: 130 Interviews.

The last group includes fifteen interviews with non-Jewish residents of Williamsburg, to test their reaction to the questions primarily directed at the Jewish population.

The stratification of the sample population is as follows:

2. *Age*:

I)	17—21 years	45	Interviews
II)	22—49 years	160	"
III)	50 years & over	45	"
	Total	250	Interviews

Stress was placed on the age group of the 21-49 year olds who deal with the newcomers on a competitive basis and have most reason for negative feelings towards them. A high percentage of those younger than 21 have grown up in close personal association with refugees. Thus conditioned, and with only vague memories of Williamsburg before the arrival of the newcomers, their attitude reflects less clearly the reaction pattern investigated in this study. Similarly, less weight was placed on the views of the oldest age group, which takes little part in the active life of the community.

3 *Sex and Marital Status*:

I)	Male	120	Interviews
II)	Female	130	"
	Total	250	Interviews

1. Single	70	Interviews
2. Married	170	"
3. Widowed	7	"
4. Separated	2	"
5. Divorced	1	"
Total	250	Interviews

Here too the focus has been on the married, middle-aged who compete with the newcomers in the local social and economic life. The small number of separated and divorced cases reflects the low divorce rate among religious Jews.[2] The one divorced respondent is a non-Jew.

4. *Religious Attitude*:

I) Non-religious	85	Interviews
II) Religious	65	"
III) Orthodox	85	"
IV) (non-Jewish)	15	"
Total	250	Interviews

The informants were not asked whether they are non-religious, religious or Orthodox. Indirect questions concerning synagogue membership, community activities, and views on changes in the religious pattern of Williamsburg provided the desired information, and avoided the bias involved in the direct request to the informants to label themselves.

More stress was placed on groups I and III, the non-religious and Orthodox, because they offer a clearer picture of the role of religious attitude in the reaction toward the newcomers. Of the religious group a good 75% are close to the Orthodox view; and only about 25% are closer to the non-religious type of informants, at least in terms of the rather strict standards of Williamsburg.

The attitude of the small non-Jewish group will be discussed separately.

III. ANALYSIS

1. GENERAL RESULTS

As a whole the tabulated results of this study seem to verify the hypothesis of a preponderantly positive attitude on the part of the

2. Comp. A. Cahan, *Statistical Analysis of American Divorce*, (N. Y., '32.)

Orthodox Jewish elements among the original population of the Williamsburg community towards the newcomers, as a direct consequence of their religious attitude. Most of the resentment and negative feelings registered were the direct or indirct products of non-religious or antireligious views.

Those who displayed a negative attitude, were opposed to the extreme religiosity of the recent newcomers, which they consider "fanaticism," "insanity" and "backwardness," particularly its external expression in appearance, customs, and behavior. They did not particularly resent them as newcomers. They have accepted the earlier groups of refugees who were willing to mix more and to adapt themselves to the life pattern of the community. They object strongly to the "fanatics" who are trying to impose their pattern of religiosity on the community.

Only a small minority of those who show definite dislike for the newcomers have voiced all-out condemnation of the refugees for personal reasons, or as refugees. An even smaller group, less than five percent, voiced eagerness to leave Williamsburg because of the influx of the new elements and the deterioration of the neighborhood attributed to them. Economic competition and objection to the extreme forms of religiosity of the newcomers were the main motives of those who expressed a negative attitude.

Less conclusive, yet highly interesting, were the effects of age, sex, economic status, place of birth and education on the attitude of the informants toward the newcomers.

2. PATTERN OF ANALYSIS

The results of this study of the reaction of the American population of the Jewish community of Williamsburg toward the newcomers have been analyzed in terms of the age, sex, marital status, income, education, length of residence in Williamsburg, and country of birth of the informants. The effect of each of these factors on their attitude towards refugees has been tested against the possible influence of their religious background.

Thus each tabulation has been broken down into the three major categories:

I) Nonreligious II) Religious III) Orthodox

3. RELIGIOUS POSITION AND REACTION TOWARDS NEWCOMERS

Each of these groups has been analyzed in terms of these four main patterns of reaction towards the newcomers:

1. *LIKE* (L) — Wholehearted acceptance of the refugees in the community and positive attitude toward their eventual assimilation
2. *NEUTRAL-POSITIVE* (NP) — Display of neutral attitude, with expression of favorable aspects and at least partial approval and hope of assimilation
3. *NEUTRAL-NEGATIVE* (NN) — Neutral attitude with display of some resentment, unfavorable views, and fears
4. *DISLIKE* (D) — Open rejection of refugees, unfavorable comments, prejudice, even hate

a) TABLE I

Rel. Pos.	*Like %*	*Neutral Posit. %*	*Neutral Negat. %*	*Dislike %*	*Total Cases*
Non-Religious	47.1	12.9	9.4	30.6	85
Religious	47.7	21.5	15.4	15.4	65
Orthodox	85.9	10.5	2.4	1.2	85
Non-Jewish	20.0	60.0	6.7	13.3	15
Total Cases	147	43	21	39	250
%	58.8	17.2	8.4	15.6	100.0

b)

A. The overall picture shows that close to 60% of the American Jewish population of the Williamsburg community express wholehearted acceptance of the newcomers and of their eventual assimilation. Augmented by the number of those who express a positive attitude with some reservation, a total of 75%, or three-quarters of the Williamsburg population, have a favorable opinion of the newcomers and of their participation in the community life.

Reasons given for this attitude are humanitarian, such as: "They've earned the right to be treated as Americans by a long and hard struggle, and if given half a chance they'll prove worth while." Or "They are just like the rest. They have just as much right to live here as anybode else." Other reasons are typically American, stating in one version or another: "Aren't we all newcomers, we, our parents, or our grandparents. So, why discriminate?"

Most of the reasons, particularly those given by Orthodox informants, stress the common religious bond and express outright admiration, if not respect. "They have given me a wonderful example and a higher goal to live up to," said one of the interviewed. Others put it plainly: *"A Jew is a Jew, regardless of his particular background, as long as he lives by the laws of the Torah."*[3]

25% of the American Jewish population of Williamsburg express partial or total dislike for the newcomers, mostly for religious or, to a minor degree, for economic reasons. "They are fanatics," "They don't belong here. Let them go back where they came from," "They try to force us to be Orthodox like them," or in milder form: "Why don't they forget those ancient customs. This is America." "They'll never adjust as long as they stick to the European wear and rituals." Economic reasons given run along these lines: "They are shrewd businessmen. They take our business away." "They do everything cheaper and spoil our jobs." "They are cut-throats."

There was a slightly higher percentage of open dislike in the first two samples, 18.2%, which however, was balanced by a higher percentage of those who voiced a Neutral-Negative attitude in the third, indicating perhaps that the open resentment has subsided somewhat into more reasoned antipathy.

B. Broken down by the religious position of the informants the general picture becomes more distinctly indicative of the importance of the religious factor for the attitude of the population.

The polarity of the reaction pattern of the Non-religious group is the product of more than half being completely indifferent to the religious aspect of the newcomers and being tolerant or humane enough to view their entrance into the community positively; while a little more than a third feel and utter resentment against the fanaticism of the largely-Orthodox newcomers, either for religious reasons, being consciously anti-religious, or for economic reasons, or reasons of general resentment against the otherness of the newcomers.

C. Least significant or conclusive, but most variegated, is the reaction pattern of the *religious group,* approximately 75% of whom are close to being Orthodox by any standard, except the extreme one of Williamsburg.

Although the total of favorable answers amounts to roughly 70%, the percentage of those who express a wholehearted like attitude is only slightly higher than the likes of the non-religious group. The

3. Perhaps the best formulation of the attitude of Orthodox Williamsburg Jews, and typical for value-determined reaction.

difference comes significantly from the higher percentage of those who display a partially neutral, partially favorable attitude. Similarly, the 30% of unfavorable reaction among the Religious is evenly divided between those who voice open dislike and those who have a negative attitude with some positive reservation. This contrasts with the 30.6% of dislike and 9.4% of neutral-negative reaction among the Non-religious, or the 13.3% dislike and 6.7% neutral-negative among the Non-Jewish informants.

The reason for this less extreme reaction is obviously the equally half-hearted position of this group concerning religion. Though they are religious, they have made compromises and translate them into their own attitude toward those who are less compromising. Typical for the reaction of the Religious is this statement of one of their informants: "I, as far as I myself and my family are concerned, would not do these things. But I respect all those who have the courage to do them."

This attitude accounts largely for the high percentage of favorable reaction. On the other hand no other group, not even the Non-religious, is as outspokenly critical in its discussion of the purely religious aspect of the newcomers as the Religious. They belong to the relatively large group which, though not unreligious, ridicules the Orthodox, or extreme Orthodox views, customs, and most of all external manners and habits of the newcomers. "I am just as good a Jew as they; who do they think they are, looking down at me, just because I don't grow a beard, or carry a pocketbook on Saturday." "I wouldn't let the fanatics in. Let them stay in Europe. I think it is wonderful for a person to be religious and I respect them for it. But they have no right to hand us down the rules and regulations for *Kashruth* and religion."

From a merely resentful neutral position this latter attitude turns frequently into outright dislike and as a result produces such violent outbursts as these: "They have a tendency to become parasitic." Or: "They think they own the place. They're running it lock, stock, and barrel. Williamsburg is becoming a refugee town." Most of the criticism, or the occasional open friction between the newcomers and the original population, is due to the Religious group, rather than the non-religious who are too far from the position of the newcomers, or too uninterested, to be involved, while the Religious care enough to show concern.

D. Almost 86% of the *Orthodox group* voice wholehearted acceptance and appreciation of the newcomers as a valuable asset to the community in Williamsburg. An additional 10% display a relatively favorable attitude with some reservations toward the refugees.

Obviously it is the fact that a majority of the newcomers who settled in Williamsburg are Orthodox and share their basic values and valuations with the largely Orthodox Jewish population that accounts for such high correlation between the religious position and a positive reaction. What the Orthodox Americans and the newcomers have in common, outweighs certain resentment or objections that would loom much larger in the reaction of others who do not share these basic values. If an Orthodox Williamsburg Jew does not grow a beard, or if his wife does not cover her hair completely, he realizes that, strictly interpreted, the Jewish Code of Law, or historically-anchored custom not only justifies, but actually demands these outer marks of the distinction of the Orthodox. If he is intellectually honest, he cannot resent these customs and more which he knows should be his own too. As a matter of fact, quite a few of the Orthodox young men who normally, before the influx of the new elements, might not have thought of living up to the letter of these laws, are now growing beards. If their wives do not wear wigs, they wear kerchiefs or hats that cover the hair, and they purchase the kinds of food, meats or bakeries, produced under the particularly strict supervision originated and made popular by the newcomers.[4] Like the non-Orthododx elements in the Williamsburg population, they may object to certain stringent customs imported by the refugees. But rarely will this objection result in hidden or open animosity. As one very Orthodox young rabbi of the Polish Chassidic type remarked:

> "I personally would rather not wear a *Streimel* (the customary East European fur cap worn on holidays). I feel it has the very opposite effect which it should have. But if they (the Hungarian type of Chassidim) insist on wearing it, it's their business."

Even if the Orthodox Williamsburg Jew has, or expresses some resentment, he soon corrects himself in terms of his own ideology. On immediate reaction something in the conduct of the newcomers may appear ridiculous or even wrong to him. Knowing that the person is a Chassid, a learned man, and a pious observer of the law, he will automatically revise his first impulse in terms of respectful understanding or tolerance. To the Orthodox Jew, the scholar stands at the top of the social pyramid, and his standards of piety and Orthodoxy must be accepted with respect.

As a result we find reactions like these, ranging from: "The problems that their (the newcomers) coming has created, are overshadowed

4. Cf., supra., Ch. III, the Economic Pattern of Williamsburg.

by their fine contribution to Williamsburg." Or: "I understand them, but would not meet their standards myself," to such enthusiastic remarks as: "They have changed the drab spirit of the Jews in Williamsburg. They have kindled a flame." Or: "We have to adjust to their ways, not they to ours." Or the above quoted comment: "They have given me a wonderful example and a higher goal to live up to."

The percentage, among the Orthodox, of those who openly express dislike is negligible, and in most cases may be attributed to abnormalities in their personal circumstances, such as the unemployment of the young man whose personal failures and jealousy are at the basis of his hostile attitude. The very recent developments have produced a slightly higher percentage of partial resentment among those Orthodox informants who have suffered from the economic or social competition of the refugees.

E. *The Non-Jewish Group*: As indicated in the introduction, a small sample group of non-Jewish residents of Williamsburg was submitted to the same questioning as the large segment of the Jewish population for whom it was intended, as a reaction to the fear expressed by a Brooklyn organization that the question might rouse or even instigate animosity and friction.

Though of *little significance or value because of the size of the* sample, the results were interesting. 12 of the fifteen informants had a positive attitude, but only three of these twelve were wholeheartedly favorable, while nine had some reservations or criticisms. One showed a reserved, negative neutrality, while two voiced open dislike.

Though the sample is small, these figures are indicative of the generally neutral, cautiously reserved, yet undeniably favorable reaction of the non-Jewish population of Williamsburg. "It's their own life to live," one stated flatly, in explanation of his lack of concern over the different ways of the newcomers. "Everyone to his religion," said several others, expressing the attitude with which a good many of the non-Jews of Williamsburg regard the newcomers' otherness. They feel that it is the Jewish religion that prescribes these customs and habits, and generally they do not ridicule or even resent anything that has a religious background or origin. "We all have our own beliefs, and I don't mind their beliefs. They are nice and don't bother anyone," is the typical reaction of a housewife who has lived in Williamsburg for only three years, and who hails from a city where she had known little Jewish community life.

Most interesting was the comment concerning the question of intermarriage. Except for a few who objected for religious reasons, even those three who had expressed dislike or resentment, would

not interfere if their children were to marry refugees. "If they are happy together, why not" said a businessman who expressed his resentment of the competition of the newcomers. "We are all the same," said a woman of Russian (Greek Orthodox) extraction, who had been the most outspokenly anti-refugee of all the non-Jews questioned.

The objections raised by the non-Jewish informants were, in general, of much milder character than some of the resentment expressed by the negative informants of the Jewish community. Comparing the Jewish Refugees with "Negroes and Puerto Ricans who are coming into the neighborhood," one man, an operator by profession, said: "The Jewish refugees don't bother anyone. They shouldn't go around the way they do because it just doesn't look nice. In the Catholic faith they don't walk around like that." He also objected to intermarriage, stating that "marriages out of religion never last."

The general agreement, with two exceptions on the part of people who felt that the newcomers would not adjust because they did not mix, was that in the long run the differences will disappear. "In generations to come there won't be any refugees. They'll all be Americans," commented one worker of Spanish-Catholic background at the end of the interview, though he had spoken of economic competition. Others made the very fact of business contact the bridge of inevitable adjustment. "They'll have to mix, especially in business."

"It's a free country. They can do as they please." This comment by a local businessman, more or less sums up the general attitude of the non-Jewish group.

4. INCOME AND REACTION TOWARD REFUGEES

a) Table II

I) Less than $2000.— per year income
II) $2000.— - $4999.— per year income
III) $5000.— and more, per year income
O) No income, housewives, no answer

Income Class	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
I	70.0	16.6	6.4	6.4	30
II	66.6	16.6	4.4	13.3	90
III	55.2	15.0	5.2	29.0	38
O	50.0	20.6	14.1	15.3	92
Total Cases	147	43	21	39	250

b) On first sight it may seem that these overall results of the three sample groups recorded in Table II point to a clear trend: The higher the income, the less favorable the attitude of the informants, and the lower the income the more favorable the reaction.

Although the trend remains valid, it becomes much less significant when broken down by sample groups, and by religious position of the informants, and when correlated with the economic situation of the Dislikes.

Sample group A, of 60 interviews, had brought the surprising results that all members of the highest income group had reacted positively and favorably. To test this result the second sample, Group B, concentrated on those members of the highest income group who could be expected to resent the competition of the newcomers, such as Williamsburg physicians. Up to the time of the arrival of refugees, all the doctors of the community had been non-religious. There are now five refugee doctors, of whom three are religious, (they are all doing very well). There was a high percentage of Dislike reactions among the non-religious respondents of Income Group III, while the wealthier among the Orthodox did not show any stronger resentment than the members of the other income classes. Although even the non-religious physicians stressed the fact that their earnings had been increased by the influx of the newcomers into the community, they expressed open rejection: "Many of them (refugees) are among my clientele. But I don't care. I don't like any of them."

The third sample group, properly stratified by income classes and those who would or would not have reason to resent the competition of the newcomers, showed a considerably more positive result than the weighted second sample group. The total of favorable replies approximated the 75% of the entire sample population, thus proving that the factor of higher income does not necessarily mean a more negative attitude. Only in cases where there was cause for fear of economic competition and no religious motivation for a more positive attitude, did the wealthier respondents prove more resentful than those in the lower income group.

This assumption is corroborated by the results in the lowest income group, among workers, clerks, and salesmen, who generally expressed a positive reaction, except for two who voiced open dislike. Both are non-religious. This would indicate that the lowest income group is the one least afraid of the economic competition from the newcomers.

Closest to the general picture in the community are the results obtained in the middle income group, which actually represents the majority of the Jewish population of Williamsburg. There is a somewhat higher percentage of Likes and a slightly lower percentage of Dislikes than in the overall figures, which may be due to the fact that more Orthodox people belong to this income group than to the others. They are the small businessmen, the white collar workers, communal officials, and skilled workers who generally do not show too much competitive resentment of the newcomers. If they do show it, however, they are quite outspoken in their criticism. Most of the businessmen in Williamsburg gained by the large influx of newcomers, but the few who face the keen competition of the many stores opened by newcomers state openly: "They have taken our business away." "They are cut-throats." "They'll do anything to lure away your customers."

On the other hand a good many of the middle-class people of Williamsburg make statements like this: "They have improved business in Williamsburg. Nearly all of them have stores and are good businessmen."

A number of the non-religious businessmen object to the fact that the increasingly Orthodox force of public opinion forces them to close their stores on Jewish holidays, and attribute this to the influence of the newcomers. "They force you to do as they want, if you want to compete with them. Or else they won't buy in your store." Others complain that the newcomers "stick together. And if you don't speak their language, they wouldn't buy from you."

The *No income* group, consisting of housewives, students, the unemployed, and those refusing to indicate their income, shows a more variegated picture than the others. Its results are, however, almost identical with the equally variegated results of the Religious group of the complete sample, though slightly less than the 75% totally or partially favorable replies of the overall tabulation. This latter fact may be due to the generally negative attitude of those who refuse to indicate their income. Generally negative is also the attitude of the small group of unemployed respondents; perhaps because of competitive jealousy toward the more successful newcomers. Practically all of the Orthodox students are positive, because they respect or even admire the Orthodox newcomers as examples of piety and scholarship. The attitude of most of the non-Orthodox students is also positive, because they are consciously or even conscientiously tolerant

in their attitudes, views and behavior pattern. The only criticism among students came from the Religious, who object to some of the "fanaticism" of the newcomers who, they claim, enforce their own forms of life on the rest of the community.

The only surprising fact among the figures of the Orthodox is the Dislike in the middle income class. "They are taking business away, raise the cost of living, and make it harder to support myself," one respondent said, showing that competitive resentment was the cause of his attitude. This despite the fact that he himself is German-born, of Polish descent.

In conclusion of this section on the effect of income on the reaction of the Jewish population of Williamsburg to the newcomers, it may be stated that except where strong religious feeling for or against them affects the attitude, economic considerations such as competitive fear or jealousy, may be decisive, rather than income itself.

5. EDUCATION AND REACTION TOWARD REFUGEES

A) Secular Education

a) Table IIIA

I) Less than average (Elementary School)
II) Average (Some High School)
III) Above average (Some College)
O) No answer, no education

Education Group	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
I	55.5	20.4	5.5	18.9	54
II	53.7	23.2	10.9	12.2	82
III	63.3	12.2	10.0	14.4	90
O	69.8	8.3	—	23.3	24
Total Cases	147	43	21	39	250

b) All education groups have roughly the same percentage of positive and negative replies,and correspond to the overall figures of 75% positive and 25% partially or totally negative reaction.

The picture is clearer when broken down by the percentages of those who express total or partial approval, and those who express total or partial rejection of the newcomers. If we disregard, for the present, the last group (No Answer or No Education), a trend becomes apparent which may be expressed in this way: the higher the education, the less probable the rejection of the newcomers.

The lowest education group, those who have not completed elementary school, show a lower percentage of those who voice outright Like, and a higher percentage of outright Dislike, than the overall results of the total sample. They are much more extreme in their negative reactions than in their positive ones, which are often qualified.

The middle group, graduates of high school and beginning college students, have an ever lower percentage of outright Likes, but a higher percentage of those who display a partially positive attitude. On the other hand, however, they are also less extreme in their negative attitude. Higher education apparently makes for a less unqualified reaction.

The highest education group, mostly college graduates, show a much higher unqualified approval of the newcomers, which at first reaction may be attributed to their higher degree of rationalization and intelligent tolerance. On the other hand, they show also a somewhat higher Dislike than the middle group. Again, however, religious and economic factors must be considered before any conclusions are drawn. The high percentage of Dislike is again the product of the weighted second sample group, among whom were the doctors and other professionals who had cause for competitive resentment. On the other hand the high percentage of Likes must at least partially be attributed to the very high educational standard of the Orthodox element among the informants and the community in general. This will be brought out in the cross tabulation of religious position and education below.

The No answer or No Education group has the highest positive as well as the highest negative reaction, with little or no qualification. The reasons for these results are that in this group there are both many women of the older generation who generally have a positive disposition, and people who refuse to give specific answers because of their generally negative attitude.

B. Religious Education

Table IIIB

I) Less than average (less than 4 years)
II) Average (4-6 years)
III) Above average (7 years and more)
O) None, no answer

Rel. Educ. Class	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
I	43.2	19.0	19.0	19.0	37
II	56.6	20.7	7.5	15.1	53
III	77.2	11.4	6.3	5.1	79
O	57.6	10.6	6.1	25.7	66
	147	43	21	39	235 *

b) — The figures of this table on the relation between religious education and the attitude of the Jewish population of Williamsburg toward newcomers point even more strongly, than those on the effect of secular education, to education as a major factor in the making of the reaction pattern. Whereas further breaking down of the general figures in terms of the religious groups proved the primary importance of religious background among this group, the figures on religious education maintain their validity, as might be expected from the close relationship between religious attitude and religious education.

The high percentage of Dislike in the No Answer group may be due to the fact that those who have a very low religious education seem ashamed of indicating it, or are generally uncooperative because of their negative attitude. Also, the very small amount of qualified negative response. Since the No Answer group does also contain a number of people, mostly older women, who have no religious education, but are Orthodox, the total of negative replies is lower than the total of negative replies in class I. Similarly, the percentage of favorable replies in the No Answer-No Education class is considerably higher, and more positively favorable, than the much lower and more qualified favorable replies of Class I.

The middle class of average religious education has the highest percentage of qualified positive response, whereas most of those who are negative are wholeheartedly so. The middle group is usually

* *Less the* 15 *cases of the non-Jewish group.*

positive, but voice resentment of certain extreme, to them excessive and fanatical customs, habits and mores, which the Orthodox overlook or understand; and which induce the non-religious or less religiously educated to a more radically negative position.

In conclusion it may be stated that religious education, usually a concomitant of a person's religious position, has a direct bearing upon the attitude of the Jewish population of Williamsburg toward the newcomers. The better the religious training, the more probable a positive attitude.

6. NATIVE BACKGROUND AND REACTION TOWARD REFUGEES

a) Table IV

I) Second Generation Americans
II) First Generation Americans
III) Foreign-born, naturalized Americans

Native Background	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
I	51.6	19.9	8.1	20.9	62
II	55.7	13.9	10.4	19.9	86
III	65.6	19.6	5.8	8.9	102
Total	147	43	21	39	250

b) At first glance it seems that the second generation Americans have the most negative, the first generation less, and the foreign-born Americans the least negative feeling toward the newcomers. Closer inspection, however, shows that though the foreign-born, of course, do have the most positive attitude, the total of negative as well as positive responses among the second generation group is also identical with the total among the First Generation Americans. The proportion of favorable replies among the Second Generation Americans is 71.5% as against 69.6% among the First Generation Americans.

What the figures tell is that the attitude of the Second Generation is less pronounced in the case of the positive responses, while it is more pronounced if the respondents are negative.[5] The explanation for this situation may perhaps be that the First Generation Americans are still closer than the members of the Second Generation to the

5. Comp. Literature on Self-hatred, by A. Kardiner & Kurt Lewin.

sights, customs, and feelings of immigrants. Although they may resent these customs more and may have tried intentionally and conscientiously to be differented from their immigrant parents, they will not voice such unqualified resentment as the Second Generation Americans who oppose the behavior and sheer presence of the newcomers. Since they do feel themselves apart from the immigrants, they will, even if they take a favorable position, qualify it with statements like these: "The less Orthodox ones are fine people." Or: "When the refugees have the guts to break down the Ghetto walls that they have brought with them, they will have no difficulty at all, and will offer no problem to the community.

7. AGE AND REACTION TO REFUGEES

a) Table V

I) 17-21 years old
II) 22-49 years old
III) 50 years and above

Age Group	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
I	62.2	17.7	11.1	8.9	45
II	57.0	16.2	9.4	17.5	160
III	62.2	20.0	2.2	15.5	45
Total Cases	147	43	21	39	250

b) Two trends seem to stand out from this general tabulation of the relationship between the age and the reaction of the Jewish population of Williamsburg to the newcomers. In the first place the young, those below 22 years, have the most positive attitude. To them Williamsburg before the influx of refugees is not a strong memory. Their most impressible years were shared by the newcomers, and having gone to school they are most rational and consciously tolerant, as a consequence of the teachings of equality and liberty and America as a haven of refuge. From them come statements like these: "Why should they be different or be treated differently from anyone else." "They are humans just as we are." "They have earned the right to be called Americans by a long and hard struggle." "Because they have come from Europe, doesn't change anything."

While there is considerably less dislike among the young, a relatively large group expresses qualified resentment, whereas the

members of the oldest age group who have twice as much open dislike, show only a small amount of partial resentment, but a larger percentage of qualified approval than the young. Those among the old who are against the newcomers express it strongly, while the young are not as vehement or quarrelsome, and are more reasonable even in their negative judgment.

Interestingly enough, the reaction of the middle age group, those between 22 and 50 years, is the least positive and most strongly negative. They are the ones who meet the newcomers in daily competition and unless they are favorably disposed toward them, for some prior reason, such as the religious one, they are apt to resent and dislike them most.

In conclusion it may be stated, that unless stronger reasons, such as religious conviction or emotional difficulties, interfere, the young will display a less negative attitude than their elders, especially the middle-aged who compete with the newcomers in business and social life.

8. SEX AND REACTION TO REFUGEES

a) Table VI

Sex	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
Male	59.2	16.6	6.6	17.5	120
Female	58.5	17.7	10.0	13.3	130
Total C.	147	43	21	39	250

b) Although the totals of favorable and negative replies of the men and women match each other, the females are less extreme in their negative attitude than the males.

Among the non-religious, women are considerably more positive in their attitude than the men. They have a percentage of 56.5% favorable replies against 36% for the men, and their Dislike reactions amount only to 21.7% as against the 39% of the men. Though this last difference may be somewhat exaggerated by the weighted selection of the second sample group, the trend is strong enough to be significant. Non-religious women, if they have no special bias, are apt to be less harsh, particularly since they do not compete with the newcomers in business and are not as affected by the competitive motive as their husbands.

The situation is similar in the case of the religious group, where women also show a higher percentage of favorable replies than the male.

Only in the case of the Orthodox group are the responses of men and women alike (except for the one man who expressed dislike). In fact, in this group the females show somewhat higher resentment by a more qualified reaction than the males, since the men have better religious backgrounds, and therefore a deeper understanding than the less learned women, they will overlook more than the women who, though Orthodox, resent certain customs or mores of the newcomers which affect the entire community.

In conclusion it may be said that although women are generally more sympathetic than men, they are less affected by the religious factor as a determinant of their attitude toward the newcomers in the community.

9. MARITAL STATUS AND REACTION TOWARD REFUGEES

a) Table VII

Marital Status	*Like* %	*Neutral-P* %	*Neutral-N* %	*Dislike* %	*Total Cases*
Single	61.4	20.0	5.7	12.8	70
Married	60.0	15.3	10.0	15.8	170
Widowed and Divorced	30.0	30.0	10.0	30.0	10
Total Cases	147	43	21	39	250

b) Conforming to the trend apparent in the relation between age and the reaction of the Jewish population of Williamsburg, this table shows that the single people, who are mostly below 25 years of age, are less negative in their attitude than older people beset by more competitive fear, insecurity and bitterness. Again, they qualify their positive attitude more than their elders and are more outspoken in their resentment, though they are less resentful than the older, married people. The total of positive replies of single people rises considerably above the average of 75% of the overall tabulation, while that of the married group is practically identical with it.

The figures of the widowed and divorced cases, though only of limited value due to the small number of such informants, in line with the generally low divorce rate in Williamsburg, reflect the

insecurity and inclination to resentment typical of this particular group. Their positive replies are highly qualified, while their open Dislike reactions rise considerably above the average. They cannot help being more negative toward the newcomers as a suitable outlet for pentup resentment.

IV. SUMMARY

Close inspection of the economic, social, and personal factors in the background of the two hundred and fifty Williamsburg respondents of this survey shows that their primary valuation is the conclusive determinant of their attitude toward the newcomers in the community. Income, economic pressures, education and ethnic background play a part in the reaction pattern of this sample group of the original population. Yet at best they are secondary when compared to the effect of the religio-cultural values on the acceptance and eventual assimilation of the newcomers, despite considerable areas of inner and outer divergence.

The major trend that evolved from this investigation shows that the more Orthodox a member of the Williamsburg Jewish community is, the higher is the probability of his favorable disposition toward the predominantly Orthodox newcomers, since they share the same basic values.

Thus this survey of a major area of potential conflict supports the main hypothesis of this study of Williamsburg in transition, which is that of the religio-cultural determination of its basic structure.

IX

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

1954

IN ACCORDANCE with Thomas and Znaniecki's definition of the task of sociology as the study of social organization and the observation of its changes under the influence of new attitudes[1] this study of the Jewish community of Williamsburg has attempted to analyze the process of change that took place in this particular community since World War I. Through a blending of objective and subjective material it has tried to convey a depth perspective of the correspondence of the changes in attitude and valuation, with that in the inner organization of Jewish Williamsburg, caused by the turnover in the population and in the economic and political situation.

The developments and changes that took place in Jewish Williamsburg through its major phases up to 1954, show that the entire life pattern of the community is largely determined by its religio-cultural values, rather than by the other factors that affected its growth. Ecologically and economically doomed to rapid decline and eventual collapse at the end of Phase I, Jewish Williamsburg came into its own in Phase II, and kept up or even increased its intensive communal activities despite the changes in its population, ethnic background, social structure and economic pattern.

In the discussion of the *residential pattern* it became obvious that the factors causing the deterioration lost their effectiveness in the course of these developments in Williamsburg proportionately to the increasing stress on the religio-cultural values of the changing population. Rentals, standards of housing and living, the value of real estate, and the zonal configuration improved, contrary to the basic ecological and economic considerations and interests.

This change counter to normal expectations was shown to be equally, if not more effective in the *economic structure* of the community life in Jewish Williamsburg. Despite the loss of a large percentage of its wealthiest elements, the income, standards of living, local business and spending on cultural causes and projects rose considerably. Even temporary setbacks did not halt this economic

1. Thomas & Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant*, op. cit., Vol. I. p. 33.

advance of the neighborhood because of new sources of income, concentration on local business and new trades fostered by the religio-cultural valuation of the population, and the presence of highly respected charismatic leadership.

Similarly, the changed valuation of the population, and the effectiveness of their new religious leaders produced the shift from a primarily economic status ranking in Phase I, to a largely valuational status ranking in the *social structure* of Jewish Williamsburg during and after the war. Both from the ranks of the Yeshivah-educated native youth and from the active elements among the newcomers arose a new communal elite that replaced most of the Phase I leaders who had moved away, died, or lost in standing due to the new valuation.

The gradual disintegration of the traditional patriarchal *family structure* which had set in toward the end of Phase I, with the partial breakdown of its underlying value system, was arrested by the return to the traditional values of the Yeshivah-educated native youth and the intensely Orthodox standards of the newcomers.

Even more did the *synagogue pattern* of Jewish Williamsburg prove the effectiveness of the changes in the valuation of the new community, with its mixture of old-timers, young natives, and newcomers. Instead of the decay of the Orthodox Synagogue anticipated by the social analysts, from the example of its disintegration in other "Second Settlement" neighborhoods, the synagogues of Williamsburg became the very center of most communal and social activities, in addition to their religious functions. Although some of the old Phase I synagogues declined in importance and size and status of membership, numerous new ones took their place and expanded the scope and intensity of their religious and communal activities far beyond normal expectations.

The change in the valuation of the community of Williamsburg is reflected also in the opinion survey conducted in connection with the present study. The *attitude of the original American population toward the newcomers* proved to be primarily the product of their religious values, although economic, ethnic and general social factors did have some influence on their reaction to the new elements and the changes they had wrought in the community life.

Thus, going beyond Walter Firey, who demonstrated the importance of cultural values as independent causative factors in the spatial organization of a community,[2] this study has attempted to show that the basic changes that took place in the major phases of the community life of Jewish Williamsburg were primarily due to changes in the religio-cultural values of its population.

2. Walter Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston,* op. cit.

Further community studies will have to corraborate this conclusion before it is possible to generalize the findings of the present investigation, particularly in the case of communities with less pronounced valuational patterns than those of Jewish Williamsburg.

Inevitably, though, the question will be raised of the prospects of survival for a community like Jewish Williamsburg. Does it merely reflect a temporary reversion to the ethnic immigrant ghetto, which will disintegrate with the growth of a new generation and the socio-economic adjustment and advance of its successful members?

The answer must, of course, remain a matter of speculation and of personal bias. However, as indicated in most chapters of this study, the external symbols of the Old World traditions, the Shtreimels, Kaftans, and beards may vanish, or the locality of the Jewish community of Williamsburg may be transplanted to other sections, as seems to be indicated by the present concentration of Orthodox Jewish life in Crown Heights; but the intense value pattern which underlies its communal structure will be increasingly perpetuated by the generations of young American Jewish boys and girls, the children of the various ethnic groups of immigrants and of native Americans who now flock to the Yeshivoth and All-Day schools throughout the Jewish neighborhoods of New York and beyond. In these intense educational efforts rest the hope of the Orthodox Jewish community to perpetuate such total environments as that of Jewish Williamsburg at the present writing.

As of Spring 1954, the following pattern of development shapes up: Most of the non-Orthodox elements leave the neighborhood for surburban communities. Most of the Orthodox members of the old community move to Crown Heights, Boro Park, Queens, or such small Orthodox surburban communities, as Monsey, N. Y., and Far Rockaway. Most of the Hungarian Chassidic elements remain in Williamsburg. They move into the outer zones, if necessary. They buy houses or pay high rentals to live in Williamsburg, because they want to be near their Rebbes and have their children grow up in the intensely Orthodox atmosphere which prevails, and even increases to a marked degree, despite blocks that were torn down in the center of the neighborhood, to make room for the Brooklyn Queens Highway.

As long as the Chassidic Rebbes and their institutions remain, Williamsburg will probably continue to exist and to function as one of the most intensely Orthodox Jewish communities in the country.

X

WILLIAMSBURG IN TRANSITION

FIVE YEARS LATER — 1960

FIVE YEARS after the completion of this study Williamsburg has not changed much externally, though it is going through a stage of transition, the direction and results of which are still indefinite and inconclusive.

The trends that were apparent in 1954 continue to effect a general change in the community pattern. The Williamsburg section of the Queens Connecting Highway is complete, and its clean lines add to the outer beautification of the neighborhood, though at the expense of some of the finest blocks, nicest houses and best elements of the population. The outward trend has not ceased. Despite the fact that public low income and private low middle class housing projects were or will be started in the very near future in the very heart of the community, the young and the higher income and higher status residents continue to move to Boro Park, Crown Heights, Queens and the new Orthodox suburbs like Spring Valley-Monsey and Far Rockaway.

A decisive factor in this intensified movement away from Williamsburg is the considerable increase of such lower class elements as Puerto Ricans. Attacks on individuals in the very heart of Williamsburg after dark, and recently even in broad day light, have become more frequent. Thefts, robberies have become daily occurences, and are specially frequent on Jewish holidays, during the time of services, and in the summer. Even cases of rape have been reported, and police protection seems rather ineffective. Some of the expanded lines of Phase III Williamsburg have been drawn in again slightly, as most of the newcomers who settled in the marginal areas, try to get closer to the core of the Jewish neighborhood, where apartments are still at a premium, and the rental far above the true value. Recent newcomers have replaced those of the old Williamsburgers, and particularly of the Phase II refugees who have outgrown the Phase III Hungarian pattern socially or intellectually.

Walking on Bedford Avenue, the community promenade, on a visit to their parents for a holiday, a couple of Phase II young refugees who had grown up in Williamsburg and who had left it only four years ago, was asked whether they would like to move back into Williamsburg. The wife said emphatically: "Never again. There is hardly anyone of our old friends left." The husband who for ideological reasons is fond of Williamsburg and what it represents, replied: "I'd love to move back here. The *Air* here is better than any place else." After a few minutes hesitation, he added: "It wouldn't be so easy now, after we have gotten used to living comfortably, with a garden behind the house, and with ample space for the children." The children themselves were enthusiastic about moving back to Williamsburg, because their grandparents live there, and because they enjoy the intensively Jewish life of the holidays, and their playmates on the street, many of them Phase III children. Even they have outgrown Williamsburg in their whole pattern of living. Similar reactions were voiced by other visitors questioned on the promenade. Once the break has been made, there seems to be no way back, even for those who prefer the ideological climate of Williamsburg.

Economically most of the recent newcomers who are capable of holding a job, have adjusted normally, despite the fears expressed by numerous people that they could never become absorbed into the American economy, unless they would cut their beards and Peyes. The trains to and from Williamsburg during the rush hours are crowded with them, and one can see them in factories, business and trades anywhere in New York. They drive cars, trucks and busses, and seem to be handy with tools. Many are doing amazingly well for the short time they are in the country. A good number work in the post office of New York. Naturally, quite a few have sought employment in lines that deal with the religious or ritual aspects of the Jewish community life. Practically all stores in Williamsburg itself, have been taken over by them, and new ones have been opened, that never existed there before. Generally, they are very enterprising and switch fast, if they see a chance for improving their prospects. Quite a few of the older men who cannot work physically, have gone back to collecting funds for religious institutions or for special campaigns or causes, as had done many of the early Hungarian immigrants before World War II. They fill a vital need. Not only do they help these institutions to survive, despite the fact that they keep fifty percent or even more of the money. In many instances they are the only liaison between Jews who live in smaller cities and towns outside of New York, with Jewish communal life and its institutions.

The Jewish religious life of Williamsburg has not suffered, despite the turnover of population and the constant departure of the young and the better elements. More small synagogues have been opened everywhere, and have drawn off from the older congregations. New schools were established, and religious community functions have been organized to a degree that astonishes even those who are well acquainted with Williamsburg and its high standards. Some of the lines that separated the various groups in the neighborhood have largely vanished. Essentially there is no difference now between the services of Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, of Phase I fame, the Tzelemer synagogue, of early Phase II prominence, and of the Szigeder synagogue of Phase III importance, for example. In all three there are continuous services from early morning, almost until noon. In all three synagogues pious Jews, young and old, in European or in modern American garb, with or without beards mix and join in prayer. In the large Adas Yereim congregation mix all those who follow the Ashkenazic rite. Only on both extreme ends there is little mixing. The large synagogues of Phase I, like the Hewes Street Shul, still serve mostly the old Williamsburg elements that have remained. In the synagogue of the Satmar congregation, few outsiders are found among the huge crowd of "ultraorthodox", as they are called frequently by outsiders.

The educational standards of the numerous day schools for boys and girls are still rising, and even the most extreme have now an organized English or General Studies department. The accent is definitely on intensive Hebrew study, starting at a younger age and continuing for years, even after high school graduation. Here, too, the lines are not as clearly drawn, as in early Phase III. The children of Phase I and Phase II youngsters are now students in all types of Yeshivoth. Many of them have longer Peyes than their fathers, and they wear large black or blue hats, like their classmates from Phase III backgrounds. They also speak Yiddish fluently, much better than many of their parents, though they are as proficient in baseball, or rather stickball, and handball, as the generation of Yeshivah boys of Williamsburg streets before them. Though they have much less time for play, the youngsters of the Phase III institutions are, incidentally, just as good at sports as the rest of the boys with whom they mix freely in the streets and on the new playgrounds created by the highway project. Peyes and skullcaps flying they run bases, catch balls and slug away efficiently, coining their own terminology, if their knowledge of English proves inadequate. But they learn fast.

Despite the fact that most of the Phase II youngsters have a much better Hebrew education, than those of Phase I, a large percentage of

those children of German, Austrian, Czech and Polish parents have also acquired an excellent secular education and are now well established in high level jobs as lawyers, doctors, college professors, accountants, research scientists, etc. Typical is the example of the largest Phase II congregation, the Ashkenazic Adas Yereim, once a small branch of the local Orthodox youth movement of Agudas Israel. The original founders of Viennese and German background are now very much in the minority; yet they still play a leading role in the congregation, which is second only to the Satmar Rebbe's congregation, and has some of the finest, most scholarly, and Jewish conscious, active elements. It has established its own day school, with its own modified version of German-Yiddish, and with a program that hews close to the pattern of the "Chasam Sofer", one of the great leaders of Central Western Europe, of more than a hundred years ago, who molded its intensively Orthodox communal pattern. Though the accent is strongly on intensive Hebrew education, and its youth are among the finest students in the academies of advanced talmudic research, it has as high a rate of first class professionals, as any congregation in Williamsburg, or anywhere else. Among its young are four college teachers, several research scientists, principals of day schools, teachers in public high schools and in elementary schools, lawyers, psychologists, and rabbis. Even those who are not practising the rabbinate, have *Semichah,* the rabbinical ordination. Interestingly enough, though, most of them left Williamsburg, or will leave it as soon as they marry.

In a synagogue like the Adas Yereim, with its numerous children, and with its attraction to the finest elements among the newcomers who follow the Ashkenazic rite, this trend does not matter very much. In such congregations, as the local branches of the Orthodox Jewish movements of Agudas Israel, Young Israel and the Mizrachi, this flight of the young and the higher class members has done a great deal of harm and deprived them of their role as activist cells of the communal life. In their case and in the case of other synagogues, except those of the more famous rabbis, particularly the Satmar Rebbe, the prospects for the future seem rather gloomy. Even such strongholds of Phase II and early Phase III, as the congregation of the Tzelemer Rabbi and of the Klausenburger Rabbi are affected, and have lost much of their former popularity and crowdedness.

The question naturally arises what will happen to the Jewish community of Williamsburg if and when the Satmarer Rebbe will move to a suburban area, as planned.

There is no doubt that this will be a serious loss to the Williamsburg community, because of thee large size, inner cohesion and utter

loyalty of the Satmarer group. The moving of the Squerer Rebbe to Spring Valley, whose settlement incidentally has proved rather successful, despite financial difficulties, has left a minor gap. Similarly the flight of other Chassidic groups of secondery rank, such as that of the Bostoner Rebbe to Crown Heights, has added to the weakening of the community, yet without marked effect. There are still numerous other Chassidic groups left that have their own leaders, such as the Vishnitzer, the Szigeder, the Papper, the Krasner, and other Rebbes. New Rebbes have taken the place of those who left or died.

Then there are still the basic educational institutions which have helped to make Williamsburg what it is today, such as the Yeshivah and Mesifta Torah Vodaath, the Bais Yaakov Elementary and high school and the Teachers Seminary, which continue to keep and to attracted parents to Williamsburg. There also remain all those who are bound to the neighborhood by personal ties, economic and other factors. The increase of Puerto Ricans, of incidents of clashes and robberies, and above all frequently mentioned, the moving away of the Satmarer Rebbe and his huge group of loyal Chassidim will radically affect the pattern of the community.

One other factor must also be considered at this point in the obviously quickening pattern of change, the public and private housing projects that are to go up in Williamsburg in the immediate future. The question is whether they will keep some of the better elements in the community, and attract new, Orthodox families to Williamsburg who thus far did not move there because of the poor housing facilities; or whether they will bring in the type of elements that will not fit into the existing Orthodox Jewish community pattern. Orthodox pressure groups have attempted to prevent the establishment of additional public low income projects that had been foreseen in the original plans of the housing authority. It remains to be seen whether there will be adequate serious, concerted efforts on the part of these interested pressure groups to save Jewish Williamsburg as one of the, if not the most important Orthodox Jewish community in the country.

APPENDIX I
PATTERNS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

SINCE Thomas and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* human documents have become accepted tools of sociological research that reveal the individual experiences of the participants in a changing social organization.[1] Though we no longer believe, with these two pioneers of human documents, that they are "the most perfect type of sociological material," we depend on them as "the device by which one may reach the actual human experiences and attitudes which constitute the full, live and active social reality."[2]

The preceding chapters tried to blend objective facts with participant observation and subjective highlights, for a depth perspective of the process of change in the Jewish community of Williamsburg. The present section introduces four life histories of individual members of the community. Each of them is representative of one of the main types which together make up the community. It is hoped that their true experiences, attitudes and reactions will serve to fill out the more objective account of the major phases of the communal life in Williamsburg. The subjects of these life histories are not constructs composed to reflect the objective evidence of statistics. Yet despite their particular, individual, and therefore partial nature, they offer new insight into the process of change, and the role of the religio-cultural value pattern as the key to the main shifts in the inner organization of the community, just because of their personal point of vantage.

The four life histories represent the major attitude patterns of the Jewish community and its groupings. They are not typical for the more extreme positive or negative viewpoints; nor do they offer unusual, or particularly exciting life stories. They were chosen because they seem to offer a maximum of the characteristic individual backgrounds and attitude patterns.

1. *M. B.*, the first of the life histories, is representative of the early Russian-Polish immigrants who made up the dominant Jewish

1. H. Blumer, An Appraisal of Thomas & Znaniencki's, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, N. Y. 1939, p. 28, 29.
2. *The Polish Peasant*, Vol. II, pp. 1833, 34.

population of Williamsburg in Phase I. He is a member of one of the largest Ashkenazic synagogues in the neighborhoood; but he is not one of the extreme anti-newcomers one can find in the membership of these strongholds of the old community. His own background, and, even more, his participation in his son's education in the broader, more Polish Chassidic pattern, have modified his attitude, and he is one of the large group who take exception only to certain excesses in the conduct and views of the extreme newcomers.

2. *J. N.*, the second sketch, offers the life story of one of the early Phase II refugees from Germany, who was successful in his adjustment because of a Polish childhood. Though he had spent most of his life in Germany, J. N. had no difficulty in reweaving his personal ties to a communal pattern he had known in his youth. He has become a mainstay of one of the congregations founded by Viennese Ashkenazic Jews which have grown to major status in the last ten years. His sons-in-law and son are active leaders of American Jewish life in the East and in the Midwest. They combine the very best of both Hebrew and secular education, and their families are as American as any other American family with a long past in this country.

3. *D. F.*, represents the Phase III Hungarian newcomers in Williamsburg. Like most of them, he has a thorough religious Chassidic training, though he does not belong to the very extreme groups. His religious standards are higher than those of the average Williamsburg Jew, but he is happy to have found in America, contrary to all expectation, a community of such high level Orthodox Jewish life. His round velvet hat, long beard, *peyes* and *kaftan*, do not prevent him from adjusting and becoming accepted because of the common valuational basis of the community life.

4. *J. L.*, is a native Williamsburger in his middle thirties, who combines the background of Phase I with the standards, views and mode of life typical of the community since the beginning of Phase II. He comes of a good Russian Polish Jewish family with that group's moderate religious standards. But his years of study in a Yeshivah of Polish Chassidic character changed his outlook and pattern of life. He is a first-rate Hebrew scholar, an excellent teacher, and represents perhaps the very finest amalgam of the various currents and types of Jewish Orthodox life in America. His point of view makes him acceptable to and accepting all the other Orthodox groups. His life history has been placed last because he mirrors, in many ways, the entire process of change from the latter half of Phase I to the present.

There are no comments or footnotes, in order to avoid any bias that might stand in the way of an unprejudiced, fresh impression on the part of the peruser of the life histories. Three of them are translations from Yiddish or German; one is the verbatim record of long conversations.

II

LIFE HISTORY No. 1

THE LIFE STORY OF M. B.

A Phase I Williamsburg Jew

I was born in a small town of tthe "Minsker Gubernie," the district of Minsk, in Russia. My father went to America when I was a child of ten, because there was no other way left for him to support his large family. Five years later, in 1909, he sent the papers for us and we followed him to the New World about which his rare letters had told us many strange stories.

We moved into a small three room flat on the East Side. My father worked as a presser in a sweatshop, and what he earned was hardly enough to feed us. So it was decided that I, the oldest of the six children, should go to work, while my brothers and sisters would attend school. My father heard of a job as a floor-boy in a shop near his, and I started the daily trip to work at an age when my boy and girl did not yet dream of having to earn their livelihood. Naturally I claimed to be seventeen, instead of fifteen, otherwise they would not have taken me. Thus I got in at the very bottom of the ladies garment line, in which I was to work my way up from the lowest job, until I started my own business. I paid an old operator part of my meager salary for teaching me how to use a sewing-machine, and by the time I was twenty I was an excellent operator who knew how to turn out a perfect seam or hem..

Meanwhile we had moved to a larger apartment across the bridge from the East Side in the old Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. My brothers and sisters went to public school and in the afternoon they attended a Talmud Torah to get a smattering of a Jewish education, while I still had the solid training of the European *Cheder* and could easily have qualified for the rabbinate by the time we emigrated. But even though I was working, I did not neglect my education. Once I was settled in my job I went to evening school to learn English and all about the country, its people and history. For I loved it from the first moment I set foot on the land, despite the dirt, the discomforts and deprivations of our stay on the East Side. I loved it in spite of the hard working conditions that cost my father both his lungs. For things were different then from what they are now. My own factory is a palace compared to the places in which my father and I, and all our friends and associates worked in those days before the laws and unions raised the standards of the garment industry. My father left early in the morning, to heave an old steam-iron back and forth and up and down, to press coat pockets and shoulders and sleeves, til late into the night. And you can bet your life he did not get paid for over-time. He was glad if he was not laid off, and was willing to work at any price during the slow times. Going out of his steaming shop into the the street in any weather, he caught permanent colds, and was coughing as far back as I remember, until his death in 1915.

Then the responsibility to care for the family fell upon me and the brother next in age to me. He and I vowed that our lives would be different from his. We would not go on slaving the way our father had done until a week before his death. My brother Sam was good with figures, and a natural businessman, as he proved early, running a delivery route, and clerking in a neighborhood shop, while he was still going to school. He quit high school a term before graduation, when my father died; but he completed his commercial course in night school, while working in an office. I, too, tried to perfect myself in my line. I went to a trade-school where I learnt cutting and pattern-making, which pay more, and are more essential than operating, and give you a better standing in our line of business. Our plan was that as soon as Sam and I had saved up enough we would start our own small business. But the United States entered the war, and my brother had to join the army, while I was exempt because I had the family to care for.

When my brother came back from France, we started all over again. I knew enough about the garment line, and Sam was the business brain. There was never any doubt in our mind that if given only half a chance, we would succeed. The war years had wised up my brother in many different ways—in some, I thought, for the worse. For, we all had been brought up as good, Orthodox Jews. My father had not let a day pass without praying with the *Minyan* at the synagogue. And he attended a regular *Shiur*, a Talmud study class in the evening, after his hard, long hours in the sweatshop. But sitting together with his friends in the little Shul on Bartlett Street was the best form of relaxation and leisure activity he knew. My mother, too, G-d bless her soul, was a pious woman, such as you will have a hard time finding nowadays. She was an excellent cook, a devoted mother whose house was always spotlessly clean, despite a continuous battle against the vermin and dust that made life in our neighborhood, which is now called Bushwick, a torture for any woman. But my mother's uppermost thought and worry was, before and more so after the death of her husband, that we children grow up as good and upright Jews. Her house was a model of *Kashruth*, the Sabbaths and holidays were celebrated with the proper ceremonies; and the taste of the food, of the singing and fun will remain with me forever. She made sure that all traditional laws, from saying the proper blessings to wearing a *Tallith Koton* for us boys, were upheld. And there was never any question in anyone's mind that we, all of us, would remain observant Jews, though I was the only one fortunate enough to get a thorough Hebrew training before we came to this country and faced the difficulties of adjusting economically. My brothers and sisters did not have the Yeshivoth and Beth Jacob schools which make it easy for the new immigrants to give their children the same Hebrew education they would have gotten in their old home towns in Europe. The little they learnt was apparently not enough in the case of Sam, as soon as he left home and became a man of the world. After his return from the wars he began to mock some of our customs and criticized our rigid observance of the traditional laws. He avoided hurting our mother's feelings by any

open violation of the Sabbath or objecting to our rituals while she was around. But I knew that it was only a question of time till he would go his own way. In fact, a few months later he married a girl from Brownsville and went to live there, as his first and decisive step out of our old home and tradition.

Nevertheless, I did not break with him, and he and I soon started out on the small business of which we had spoken since the responsibility for the family had fallen on us. We began producing a cheap line of dresses and gradually branched out into better lines. We had our ups and many, many downs, when it seemed that we might have done much better to work for someone else. But thank G-d, at the end of the Thirties our firm was well established. We are not "big-shots," but we have a good line with a steady clientele of customers. And something I am proud of, never at any time, despite many a temptation, was our place of business open on a Sabbath or holidays. When we started out, my brother Sam promised me that much, and he has kept his word, though he himself has become what we at our *Shul* call a "high-holiday Jew," and he lives in a swanky neighborhood in Forest Hills.

I, too, married soon after my brother, the daughter of one of my father's friends and study companions. She had grown up in a similar way of life and agreed with me on all major aspects of building a good Jewish and American home and raising a family in the spirit of our tradition. As our neighborhood was getting worse by the day, we decided to follow the trend of most better elements among our people who moved northwest, across Broadway into the present neighborhood known as Williamsburg. We found an apartment on the top floor of a brownstone house across the street from Eastern District High School, then one of the best schools in the city; and we stayed there until our second child was born, and the better class people moved further west around Bedford Avenue, when the non-Jewish people left the neighborhood. Williamsburg became really Jewish though, of course, far from the extreme type it is now. I joined the beautiful, large *Shul* a few blocks away from our house, because I liked its quiet dignity and the type people who attended it. They all had a background more or less like mine, and one of my business associates was a trustee. Only a few short years after I became a member, I was one of the inside people who ran the administration, and I have remained active ever since. I can truly say that the *Shul* has been my second home in Williamsburg. My wife, too, became an active member of the ladies' auxiliary, and we have both found our best friends and associates among the people of the synagogue, especially after some of the uppety-ups who used to run its affairs left the neighborhood.

My son Abe was more fortunate than any of my brothers and sisters. I wanted to give him all that we had missed. He would not have to work as a floor-boy in a sweat-shop. If it was at all in my power, I wanted to give him a fair chance to learn a good profession and become somebody. If he was the type, he should go to college, or if he preferred, he could make a business career for himself. And, something even more important to me, he was to get a good

Jewish education. You see, I did not want to experience the heartbreaks of many of my best friends at *Shul* whose children made good in college or in business, but who came only rarely to *Shul*, on holidays, or at special occasions, pulling the "yarmulke" out of their pockets before they entered the building. They have to be coached when they are called up to the Torah, or when, G-d forbid, they have to say Kaddish, because they graduated from the little Hebrew learning they got at the Talmud Torah, as soon as they were *Bar Mitzvah.* This much I realized, that if there was to be a Jewish future, if all our work and personal adherence to the tradition was to make any sense, our children would have to get a different Jewish background. We were always the people of the book, the *Am Hasefer,* and the knowledge of a *Sefer,* of the Talmud, the commentaries ,and the precious literature which I had been privileged to study in my own youth, are a must for our survival as a people. Therefore, while most of my friends preferred sending their children to fancy high schools and colleges, I was one of those who strongly supported the Yeshivah that then developed in Williamsburg, Torah Vodaath. I sent my own son there to get a good Hebrew and secular education. He was to make up for my own inability to spend more time than a Sabbath class on regular Hebrew studies. Thus Abe got in at the bottom.

My girl was not so fortunate. In those days there was no equivalent of a Yeshivah for girls, as we have now in Williamsburg and in many other Jewish neighborhoods of New York. She went to P.S. 16 and then travelled across the bridge to attend Seward Park H.S. I am sorry to this day that she missed out on getting the type of integrated Jewish and secular learning which the girls her age get nowadays.. My wife and I could have been spared many, many days and nights of worry, during the years that she attended the public high school and associated with all kinds of youngsters whose influence was different from what we wanted for her. Many a night we sat up waiting till she came home from the school socials, from the Sweet Sixteen parties, and the informal get-togethers with her school friends. We even invited them to our house, because we did not want to be inhospitable and "old-fashioned." But we did not like it a bit. There were times when her ideas worried us. They were too radical for our taste, and we feared all kinds of consequences from the close association with friends whose background was quite different from ours. To our great relief she joined the local Young Israel, where she met a nice young man who studied accountancy, and eventually they married. They live in Flatbush, have a nice Jewish home, two swell kids who, by the way, go to Flatbush Yeshivah, and we are satisfied, though my mother would have found much to criticize, had she lived long enough to check on the observancy of my daughter's way of life, as she checked ours. But under the circumstances we were glad things turned out the way they did.

With Abe it was different. He became a real Yeshiva boy. He learnt, fought, played ball, came home with torn pants and dirty face and hands. But how proud he made me. He was one of the few youngsters who regularly attended services at our *Shul* ever since

he was old enough to stay at my side and follow the prayers. Gradually he became a real *Talmid Chochom*—a young scholar who had little trouble pressing me hard with his question when I *verhert* (tested) him on Friday evenings, as my father had done when I went to Cheder, before he emigrated to America. As he moved up into the high school division, both in his Hebrew and secular departments, Abe was able to teach me much that I had forgotten, and I was glad to recognize old friends in the *Seforim*—the books he brought home for his talmudic studies. With him I re-lived much of my own youth, and all my hard work was worth seeing Abe grow up in a manner which would have made my father and mother proud of him. He was as good a handball and baseball player, as any American kid his age, and his photography darkroom and chemistry home-lab were good, solid growing up stages of a future professional. Yet at the same time he was a real Yeshiva boy, returning to the *Beth Hamidrash* in the evenings, against my wife's will, for she did not understand that a Yeshivah boy needs those extra hours, at least on *Mishmar night*, Thursday evenings. Many of my friends, too, criticized me and him, but I was glad, and I was grateful for every moment of living in Williamsburg which offered me such an opportunity to bring up my boy as a good American Jew.

I continued to stay on in Williamsburg when it became fashionable for the better people to leave the neighborhood and settle in other, less Jewish sections. In my own synagogue most of the wealthy members followed this trend to Crown Heights or Queens or Long Island. Some of my good friends urged me to do the same. They pointed out to me that real estate value in Williamsburg would fall down considerably as the neighborhood deteriorated, and that it was not befitting for a man of my social standing to remain with the lower class elements who had no choice but to stay on. But my own attitude was different. I too saw that Williamsburg was changing, and that my house might perhaps lose in value, which by the way is not true. It is now worth three to four thousand dollars more than when I bought it, because the war and post-war changed this whole situation from what it was during the time when these discussions went on, around 1938 and 1939. But even if it did, I would not have cared, for the changes that did take place in Williamsburg did not harm the Jewish atmosphere of the community. And to me that was the decisive aspect to be considered in the choice of a place of living.

The changes increased with the war years as many refugees from Germany, Vienna, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary moved into the neighborhood. We all had a great deal of pity for them and tried to help them settle down. I took one of them into my business and taught him to work as an operator. But after a while he wanted more money than I could afford to pay and he took another job. For jobs were plentiful now that the war scarcities offered plenty of work for anybody. I did not mind as much as did some of my friends who criticized the refugees, for I remembered well my own youth, when a few dollars more a week meant a great deal for our whole family. As a matter of fact I began to get a great deal of respect for them, as I observed many of these recent newcomers adjust themselves very

quickly in business or in a profession. And they had little difficulty becoming part of our community, for those that settled in Williamsburg were mostly Orthodox, and they fitted themselves very well into the local scene. I had a neighbor, for example, who soon spoke better English than I, even though he was only three years in the country, compared to my close to thirty. His son learnt together with my Abe, and looking at the two it would have been difficult for anyone to tell who was born in this country. Both prepared themselves for the rabbinate, and attended Brooklyn College at night.

Few of these newcomers joined our *Shul.* They blended themselves very well into the smaller *Minyanim,* especially those with a Chassidic background. And as many more came, they formed their own congregations, and eventually established their own shuls, several of them large enough, and much more crowded than our own, except on the high holidays. But they became active in many other phases of th community, especially in my organization, where they proved to be good workers and group leaders. They took over stores and built them up or opened new ones. Others became active in the educational institutions as teachers, executives and administrators, especially those with a good background in the Jewish educational field.

The change became more abrupt and radical when the Hungarian elements began to gain the upper hand. As long as they were few, they were part of other groups in the community. But when the end of the war brought so many of them, they soon assumed the leadership in many fields where their attitude is very different from ours. Far be it from me to criticize them personally, but they had no need to change everything to suit their own tastes and customs. No doubt, whatever they did was for a sincere motive and well-founded in their tradition. They have the leadership of great rabbis and scholars who set the pattern for them. If they preferred to wear beards and cover their wives' hair, they certainly were right and within the law. But as far as I and my people are concerned, I think one can be equally pious and observant without these. My father did wear a short beard, but he told us many a time that beard and *peyes* still did not make a good Jew. I also don't believe in the need for walking around with a *Bekeshe* and *Shtreimel.* They may have been proper in the old home town in Europe, but to me it seems they have little place here in Williamsburg. They are only bound to create misunderstandings and ridicule on the part of the non-Jews. Yet, if to them it does mean something of a tradition, it is alright with me. I just don't like the feeling one gets in their company that they are the ones who represent Orthodoxy, and everyone who looks or acts differently just isn't as good a Jew. They made themselves independent in most aspects of the community life, and thus created a differentiation that had not existed before, and that forces those of us who have not yet left Williamsburg to change the style of our living in quite a few respects. For example, we all buy *Glatt Kosher* meat, something we never knew of before the Tzelemer Rebbe started that fashion. But here I can see that it is an improvement in *Kashruth,* and I am sure my own mother would not have wanted us to buy the other meat, if we can get higher standards of Kashruth. We are

also glad that there are nc y reliable companies, where we had e general population did.

But my criticism refer vould not patronize a store whose ow k a great deal of Hungarian, especial visited me recently and we went for a walk on Bedford Avenue, he said, "Why, Williamsburg is becoming Hunksville. What are you still doing here?" In a way he was right, even those who spoke Yiddish did so with a strong Hungarian-German accent. Now, I personally love Yiddish, it was my mother-tongue. But I also can't stand their singing and coarse accents. The only thing is this. When I look at the people who do speak this language, I still realize that they are good Jews, many of them are scholars, though it seems to me most of them are good solid *Am-ratzim,* ignoramuses, despite their beards and Shtreimels. They will Americanize quickly enough; just look at their youngsters, despite their long Peyelach. Yet they mean more for the Jewish future than do people like my brother Sam whose children know little more of their Jewish heritage, than what they see on their annual visit to our home on Passover.

It is this kind of reasoning that makes it difficult for me to make a decision about my staying on in Williamsburg.. My wife and I are no longer youngsters and we don't have to worry about our own Jewish attitude, regardless of where we settle down, if we move. Our children are both grown up and each has gone his own way. My boy Abe is happily married to a Boro Park girl and has a weekend position as rabbi in a town of New Jersey. During the week he works with me in business. He hasn't decided yet where his future will be. Most probably I can induce him to stay with me and be independent. As long as he has the knowledge of a rabbi, I am perfectly satisfied. It is more than I could have expected in the days when I was his age. My daughter, too, as I told you before, is settled in Flatbush. They have plans of eventually moving to Far Rockaway, where, they say, a nice Jewish community of American families is building up. So, I really don't have any particular reason for wanting to remain in Williamsburg. If we still had young children, we would have to worry about living in the right environment with the proper Jewish atmosphere. As it is, I am considering either moving to Boro Park, where my son has his home, or waiting for my daughter's family to settle in Long Island. Eventually they will build that Queens highway extension through Williamsburg. And there is no telling what the neighborhood will look like then. I am afraid it will be the end of a wonderful chapter of American-Jewish community life. Much as I hate to think of it, our days in Williamsburg are numbered.

LIFE HISTORY No. 2

THE LIFE STORY OF J. N.

A Phase II Refugee

I was born in 1895 in Kolomea, a small town in Galicia, then part of Austria, later to be returned to the re-established independent Poland.

I hardly knew my parents, as they died while I was still an infant. Thus from the very beginning I was born into a life of hardship. Although my uncle took very good care of me and of my four sisters, he was in no position to provide us with anything resembling security. For he was a poor man, old and physically unable to give us more than the very basic necessities of life. Himself a scholar, highly respected for his learning and piety, he of course would have wanted me to spend my youth in a talmudical academy. And I surely would have wanted nothing better than that. However, circumstances being what they were, I had to be happy that I was able to attend school and "Cheder," the basic Hebrew pre-academic training school, until I was eleven years old.

At the age of 15 I left Poland. With the help of a friend I settled in Heilbronn, a small town in Southern Germany, where I worked hard, married and had 2 daughters and one son. Highly successful in a furnishing business that I built from the scratch, I was wealthy and socially accepted, until Hitler forced us to leave Germany, in November 1938.

We left Germany, despite the fact, that we had to leave practically everything behind. With little more than I had once come to Germany as a youngster full of hope and expectation, I left it again. The small fortune I had amassed in years of hard and industrious work, was frozen in German banks. I had no illusions as to its ever being returned to us. All my plans of being able to retire from business life at the age of fifty, with the help of insurance, savings and investments, were of course shattered. Now close to that age when I had hoped to take it easy and to dedicate myself to my children and to Hebrew and secular studies, for which I longed so much, but which I had never been able to undertake because of the need of providing for my sisters, then for my own family, was past. I gradually attempted to get used to the idea that I would have to start all over again from scratch. I had absolutely no illusions, and put all my trust in the L-rd and in my readiness to work.

After a few days in France we sailed for America, happy to have escaped the living hell of Germany, yet with uncertainty and anxiety in our hearts. Having been permitted to purchase our passage in Germany, we were able to enjoy the most luxurious comforts a ship like the Normandy could afford. It was only too short a voyage for us; we would have liked to prolong this breathing-spell of temporary carefreeness on ship infinitely. As we approached the coast of our new home one of us remarked woefully: "Alas, that we did not book passage on the Normandie for a whole year's round trips." For, now,

as the voyage ended, we could no longer suppress and conceal our worries for the future. I was no longer a youngster. America, we knew all too well from the letters of our relatives who had preceded us, was in the grip of a depression that caused millions of native Americans to roam the streets unemployed. And the little money I had in my possession could hardly last long enough to maintain our family of five. With a prayer in my heart and with a smile of confidence, I embraced my family as we pulled into the harbor of New York. It was more the thought of my young children, than of my wife and myself, that inspired me as we glided past the Statue of Liberty into the shadow of the huge skyscrapers. They, I hoped, would find here the land of opportunities that is so kind to the young and energetic.

Quite appropriately, it was Thanksgiving, November 25, 1938, when we arrived in New York. And we were truly grateful for the new chance America gave us, at a time when practically every country closed her doors to the German Jewish refugees. What I knew of American Jewish life made me confident that my innermost goal of bringing up my children as good Jews, with a proper Hebrew background, would be quite possible, perhaps even more than it had been in Germany. There, to my taste, Jews had only a relatively superficial Jewish education, beside their secular learning. And I wanted my son to attend a good "Yeshivah," at least for a while.

Thus our feelings of anxiety were mixed with gratefulness and anticipation, as we set foot on the American soil. Several of my wife's relatives had preceded us, and they awaited us at the pier. Like most of the German refugees, they had settled in Upper Manhattan, and it was natural that they looked for a residence for us in the same location. As we had to expect that our "lift," a crate containing our belongings, would be several months late, we sublet two small furnished rooms from a refugee family which made a living by leasing a large apartment and renting it out. It was, of course, quite a change for us, who had once lived in a beautiful spacious apartment. But having experienced the Nazi pogroms, two rooms were more than enough, as long as we no longer had to fear the boots in the nights, and the mobs burning and looting.

Out of appreciation and eagerness to become one with America and its people, we spent the first morning after our arrival at the United States Immigration and Naturalization Department, to file our applications for first citizenship papers.

Then began the first and hardest months. Neither my wife nor I knew English. We had no rich relatives to help us, beyond inviting us to their "fancy" homes and giving us good advice, especially about forgetting such foolish and old-fashioned ideas as the observance of our religious laws and customs, particularly of the Sabbath.. There was nothing further from my own and my family's thoughts than such an easy surrender to the sophistication of our relatives who had grown up in the Reform movement of the American German Jews, led by Rabbi Wise. We rather limited our dealings with these relatives, and set out to find work of any kind, as long as it would permit us to live up to the commands of our religion. And we had

no illusions about it. My wife's brother and brother-in-law both slaved hard in most unsatisfying, unhealthy and badly paid jobs. And I had no right to expect anything better. For, as I knew all too well, there were millions of Americans, and hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers out of work.

I still had enough money to last us for a few months of economical living and I did not apply to any of the organizations that helped refugees like us financially. But I went to all of them for advice and for registration on their lists of job-seekers. Unable to wait until they came through, I set out on my first American venture. I went to Orchard Street and purchased some dry goods from one of the innumerable jobbers, and started ringing bells as a peddler. In my heart I hoped that the years of travelling salesmanship in Germany would enable me to make a go of it. Had I only waited a little longer, until I knew more of the language, the people, and conditions, I am sure I would have succeeded. However, never a man to sit around the house, I was too impatient and too anxious to start working. So I was doomed to discouraging failure. This was the time when people's wages were at an extreme low, and no one bought anything until he really needed it, and at the most favorable price. In the end I always lost by having to sell below the wholesale price, and was forced to abandon peddling, two months after I had started it hopefully.

The next half year was one of utter dejection, discouragement and self-torture. I roamed the streets looking for work. And when I tired, I spent hours in the Forty-Second Street Library, to search the papers for opportunities, and to study American life and business conditions At home I was irritable, and my family suffered together with me from this seemingly unending period of waiting for the right moment and work.

One day I saw the advertisement of a man seeking a partner for a grocery store on the East Side. Glad to have anything at all I invested most of my already considerably-shrunk capital in this venture. I had to get up in the middle of the night to be at the store at five in the morning, and I worked hard till the evening. After a half-year of most strenuous and futile slaving, I had again to concede defeat, and pulled out of the grocery store, without regaining a single penny of my initial investment. Again my insufficient knowledge had caused me to contribute health, strength and the little I possessed to a lost cause. However, I gained a better understanding of the people. I relearned my Yiddish, which had become rusty during the twenty-five years I had spent in Germany. And I had acquired the caution of a burnt child about entering into ventures that were not well-founded and secure. Perhaps I was burnt so badly that I acquired an overdose of this caution. For whenever, during the better years that were to come, I had the opportunity to make myself independent, instead of working for other people, I hesitated, while other people, with much less experience and knowledge succeeded far beyond expectation.

Again I was stranded without work, and set about hunting for a job. At the same time I looked for something else that was equally important to me. I was not at all satisfied with the environment in which we lived, and in which my children grew up. Our and the children's acquaintances were mostly refugees. We spoke German and the Jewish atmosphere which I desired so much for my girls and boy was non-existent. I had no worries about their Americanizing themselves. At school, in special classes for foreigners, they quickly acquired a good English accent and changed their habits and manners, some of them not at all to my taste. In our building lived Spanish speaking children whose company was not very wholesome. True, they still remembered their upbringing and their former schooling in the Jewish school of Heilbronn. But I wanted my children to be in the company of boys and girls who knew more and were better Jews than they. For I knew too well how thin and superficial their Jewish education had been. My wife, of course, felt happy and satisfied in the section because her relatives, earlier and later newcomers, had all gathered there, and she was able to live on in the German world, in most respects. Although I personally tried every thing in my power to help organize a Jewish congregation in our neighborhood, I was dissatisfied even for myself. My own shortcomings were obvious to me, yet here I had to be a leader of a congregation of mostly ignorant and only half-hearted Jews. During the half year on the East Side I had come to know what good American Jews look like, and I felt the need for a warm and lively religious community life. Thus for the sake of my children, who had hardly more than a few hours of Hebrew instruction by incompetent teachers, and for my own sake, I decided to find a section that would give me these things.

I spent much time in the Bronx and in Boro Park, as the supposedly best prospects. Boro Park was not yet as Jewish as I wanted the section to be to which I would change. And, besides, its standard of living was far beyond the means at my disposal, especially since I was without work. The Bronx would have been more suitable, but somehow it did not suit me. In the East Bronx Jewish life was disintegrating, physically and spiritually, and in the West Bronx I found little to recommend a change from Washington Heights.

I knew nothing of the existence of a section like Williamsburg. By pure chance I paid it a visit. The congregation of our neighborhood, which I had helped found, and in which I was very active, as I was still unemployed, had reached the stage where it was fixing up a rented hall for services. .We had engaged one of the noted German Jewish scholars as rabbi, and we tried to save every penny in furnishing the empty place that was to serve us as a synagogue. I had been told accidentally of an *"Oron Hakodesh,"* a Holy Ark, that was available in a synagogue of Williamsburg, the section across the river from the Lower East Side, in the shadow of the Williamsburg Bridge, and I was immediately attracted by its obvious Jewish character. I had, of course, seen much better, cleaner and healthier places in New York. But, as I walked through the streets, looking at the children and adults, as I went into houses of prayer and into

Yeshivoth, houses of learning, I realized that it was here, if any place in New York, where my children would grow up as good American Jews.

The only way I could convince my family to leave the nicer section of Washington Heights and to move into Williamsburg, was obviously by finding work there. I therefore, spent all my time hunting for a job. After a few days, I found work as a helper in a grocery store, for $10.00 a week. But I was willing to do anything to bring my family into this neighborhood and to send my boy to the Yeshivah, and my girls to similar institutions if there were any.

When I first brought my wife and children to Williamsburg they were of course angry at me for thinking of moving into this section where hardly any trees grew, and where there was not even a park for the children to play in. However, gradually I convinced my wife that the job in Williamsburg was important to me, because I wanted to learn all there was to know about running a store of my own. And the travelling back and forth was impossible. I had to get up at 4:00 A.M. and returned at the earliest at nine in the night.

In February I started working in Williamsburg, and, in March, we moved into a nice apartment in the same house in which we still live. I enrolled my boy in the Yeshivah Torah Vodaath, one of the best and largest Yeshivoth in the United States, and my girls had to go to public schools, as there was still no good Jewish school for them. But I was happy, for now I knew that the very streets, the stores and people breathed the Jewish spirit for which I had longed all this time. I knew Yiddish very well, and my English increased gradually, though I had no time or energy to attend school. My wife, of course, missed her German friends and relatives, and she and the children had a hard time getting acquainted with Yiddish and the peculiarities of the Jewish life in Williamsburg. But I had no doubts, nor qualms about having put them in this difficult situation. Eventually, I was sure, they would get used to it and like it. Now they, even more than I, are happy and satisfied, despite the fact that they would like to have some park or trees in Williamsburg.

One difficulty I had little anticipated, when I decided to move into Williamsburg, concerned myself, and my adjusment to a suitable congregation. I myself had not realized how and to what a degree the twenty-five years spent in Germany had molded my ways of thinking and religious habits and needs. After all, I had only been fifteen when I left the Polish town and my formative years were spent in Heilbronn. Thus, in a way, I had become estranged from the type of service, the informal ways of praying, and rites of the so-called "Sephardic" synagogues, as differentiated from the "Ashkenazic," German-type services. Now, if any part of New York is capable of serving every taste and preference in Jewish synagogues, it is Williamsburg, the section often called the "Little Jerusalem" of America. I was offered a wide choice, and I really availed myself of it. For weeks and weeks I attended services in the various types of synagogues of the neighborhood. They were, first of all, the large and stately ones. They, perhaps, come closest to the German ideal of formal service and rite. But it did not take me long to find out that

the formality of external behavior had penetrated the feeling, thinking and praying of the congregation. I had a feeling of chill, impersonal, dutiful and respectful, but not wholehearted praying. I realized that the warmth and inspiration I sought could not be found in the beautiful temples. Disappointed, I spent Sabbath after Sabbath making the rounds of the different synagogues of the neighborhood. The very "Chassidic" houses of prayer were too informal for me, although I appreciated their all-out enthusiasm and religious fervor. The small congregations in the one-room synagogues that are present in practically every block of every street of this section did not appeal to me much because they are frequented by old people mostly. And neither I nor my boy would feel comfortable. I then turned to the numerous Jewish organizations whose local branches center about religious services in their own buildings. Here I found the most rewarding atmosphere. For they attracted the kind of youth with whom I wanted my son to associate. Some of them were still too much affected by the stiffness of the Temples. But one in particular, where I have now been a member since 1940 suited me in every respect. It was the local branch of a Jewish Orthodox world organization, the Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg, at 616 Bedford Avenue, with locals a block from my house.

Here, too, I had to go through various stages of adjustment before I was completely at home. I liked it at first sight, because here was Orthodox youth actively engaged in religious and social work. I liked to pray with them because they were enthusiastic and wholehearted, yet maintained a certain formality, which had become a need to me, after so many years in Germany. A good many fathers of the young men and boys who formed the organization prayed together with their children, so that I did not feel out of place. My son was immediately at home. He joined a junior group of his proper age, and made friends as quickly as he did in the *Yeshivah*.

However, despite my being pleased by the religious and educational activities of the organization, somehow I never felt fully at home. Of course I was a stranger, and it did take quite a while until I made friends. All the people were very polite and friendly. They were more open to association with refugees than any other organization in Williamsburg, as far as I know. Yet, for me, who had once been very active in community life, it was difficult to play the role of an "also-member," one who attends services, and is greeted by all members who have gotten around to know him personally. Not that I cared to become an officer or member of the executive board immediately. I fully realized that in order to become accepted and recognized, one has to do all kinds of spade work, and spend much more time and effort and money than I could afford. I had no ambitions in this direction. But somehow I felt ill at ease when I came to realize that I did not take a place of my own within the community. Whether I came or not was not really a matter of concern to the organization, except perhaps to a few individuals. I had no need for honors, but I wanted to be a member of equal standing. And it took too long for me to reach this status, especially since I

had still another difficulty, namely that of readjusting to the *Sephardic rite*, which I had left behind in the small Polish town.

So, in a way, I felt greatly relieved when a group of Viennese Jewish refugees who had gradually moved into Williamsburg and joined my organization, partly because of pure chance, partly because they agreed with its ideology and had been members of its European branches, decided to form their own congregation within the local branch of the organization. Their main reason, too, was that they had not been able to adjust to the Sephardic services, and wanted to adhere to the *Ashkenazic* rite used in Vienna as well as in Germany, though with slight variations. In addition, they had intentions of reorganizing their former Viennese community, and calling their former rabbi, then still in London, to head it. One group amongst them would have preferred to leave the organization and its building completely, and establish themselves independently. Yet the majority of them were strong Agudists who insisted on remaining affiliated. The ideological reasoning prevailed over the tendency to reestablish their own, independent community life.

Actually I had not much more in common with the Viennese than with the other members of the community, except for the fact that they spoke German, too. However, I, like several other German Jews, who had been drawn closer together within the Agudah Youth Congregation, felt that here we had a better chance to lead the religious and community life along the lines to which we were accustomed, without having to leave the organization. Thus we joined the Viennese group in the formation of the "Ashkenazic" congregation of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg. We occupied the second floor of the building, while the Sephardic, or main congregation held the much larger main floor. Although this place has long since become too small for us because of the constant addition of members among the newcomers to the section, we are still at this location.[1]

Quite frequently I felt that, although I certainly am as respected and recognized as I care to be, I would like to sever my connections with this special branch of the organization, for in a way all the local "politics" and narrow viewpoints of Viennese elements have been carried over and are carefully cultivated. On the other hand, however, I realize that at no other place will I find such a thoroughly organized community life, such utter care for all religious practises, and such a satisfactory educational program, as in this congregation. My wife has adjusted herself very well to it, likes the women and is liked and respected by them.

My children, however, do not condone it. They constantly try to talk me out of remaining with the "Yeckes," a somewhat contemptuous nickname. Even my son, whom I always forced to sit by my side during the prayer services, although he would have preferred to join the separate junior community of the organization on the floor above ours, told me frequently that he would leave it as soon as I gave

1. This Ashkenaz congregation has long since acquired its own large building. Cf., infra App. II pp. 273, 4.

him permission. He does not act against my will, but he ridicules much of the behavior and customs of the congregation of Viennese and Germans.

In general, he has become as well adjusted as we had hoped when I moved into Williamsburg. Externally, he was as "American," as any Jewish boy of the neighborhood, only a few weeks after our arrival. He acquired their slang and mannerisms in unbelievably short time. He became an expert at all their games and sports, and was fully accepted in their society. Yet the first few years he had some difficulty at the Yeshivah, where there was then a staff of old-fashioned teachers who had little understanding of the needs of a newcomer and whose general educational level was far from what I consider desirable, and far from what it is now that younger and better-trained men have largely taken their place. They had no compunctions about making my boy feel that he was a refugee and had no suitable method of helping him overcome his lack of knowledge of Yiddish. Thus in the first few years I was not too satisfied with the progress he made at school, particularly in the Hebrew department. In the English department he was quickly at home and progressed as quickly as could be expected in view of his good average capability. Only after my son had mastered Yiddish sufficiently well, and I was able to give him some extra help, did he make great strides in his Hebrew studies. He is at present studying in an advanced rabbinical school in Brooklyn, which enables him to concentrate on it as much as possible, before he will learn a profession and help me care for the family.

My daughters went an entirely different way. They attended public school, and from there transferred to the local high school. The older one kept to herself for almost a year, until she was sure of herself, and felt that she was completely up to the standards of her American friends, that no one even thought of her as a former refugee. Her accent and carriage were perfectly Americanized. She was very successful at school, and graduated from high school in less than four years, because she was admitted into rapid advance classes. In her spare time she worked as assistant to a dentist. Immediately after her graduation she became engaged to a young man who has the same background as I and whose parents were among my best friends in the community. He was a member of my organization, and an active leader in its educational work ever since he came to Williamsburg, a few weeks before we arrived in this country. Although he was born in Germany, he has a thorough American education and is active in Jewish education, both professionally and in his spare time. It was not so that my daughter had any special preference for a German-born husband. As a matter of fact she always stressed that she would never marry a German Jewish young man, because she felt that they were so much more formal than the boys with whom she went to school. It was rather a matter of pure chance, though pleasant to my wife and her family, more than to me, that she chose as her husband a young man who was well acquainted with our former life, and had similar views about most things.

My second daughter went through a great deal of hardship during the first few years of our residence in Williamsburg. She did not wait until she had thrown off everything that identified her as a former refugee. She tried to make friends with her Jewish classmates, and was partially made to feel that she was not their equal. Only a few were willing to overlook this fact and remained her faithful friends to this very day. She too entered the local high school and was among the highest group of her class. Like my older daughter she attended Brooklyn College, although at present she is concentrating on Hebrew studies. She has learnt the profession of kindergarten teacher, and is the well liked kindergartener of a local Jewish girls' school. She is engaged to a young man who, although born in Lithuania, is what is called "American." He is preparing himself for the rabbinate, and they hope to get married as soon as he has his rabbinical degree, a year from now. He has graduated from college with honors, and is a well-mannered, well-educated man. Although my wife and I still prefer to speak German at home, and he hardly speaks or understands German, we have become well accustomed to one another. When some of my German relatives remarked that I seemed to pick sons-in-law that are not German Jews, I realized how far all this seems to me living in Williamsburg, where there is such a happy and understanding living together of Jews from all centers of Europe, and where people lost all interest in making such distinctions; where German Jews, Polish Jews, Hungarian Jews intermarry practically every day, without anyone even giving it a second, or perhaps even a first thought.

The one among us who is less adjusted than the rest is my wife. But she certainly is as happy and satisfied in the Williamsburg community, as she would be any other place. I had never been completely "Germanized," and my children were young when they came here, and their experiences in Germany did not help to give them any liking for anything German. My wife had been brought up in the tradition of German Jews to whom German culture, particularly literature and manners, were an essential part of their lives. During the better part of her life in Germany she had possessed the enthusiastic patriotism and love for the country her ancestors had acquired centuries ago. Thus it was and still is more difficult for her to abandon all of the feelings and culture that identify her as a German Jewess, despite her conscious efforts to get away from all this, because she loathes the very thought of Germany, after what she has gone through and witnessed. Quite frequently she catches herself feeling sorry, when she hears that one or another precious building, or beautiful city of Germany lies in ruins, because in her subconscious thinking she still treasures those memories. Yet immediately she regrets her first reaction of pity and regret. Although she writes and knows English better than I and many others who speak it fluently, she has more difficulty talking it in daily conversation, and many of the neighbors speak a mixture of Yiddish German with her. She is liked by her neighbors and is not made to feel that she was, or still is a refugee.

In general, none of us have close friends among the "Americans," that is Jews who lived in Williamsburg before the refugee influx.

But we are acquainted and on good terms with a great many. Our close friends are mostly refugees themselves. But our children have associated closely with boys and girls of all stages and classes of "Americans." Their friends come to our house and they visit their homes, and one would never suspect that only eight years before they would not have been able to understand each other too well.

It is for this that I am most grateful. I still have to work very hard to make a living. All my dreams of building a business of my own have thus far not materialized, and I am waiting for my son to finish his education, so that, perhaps with his help, I shall be able to utilize my business and organizing capacity for myself, instead of for others.

For, in this respect, I have had less success than many others in my situation. After working myself sick, carrying heavy packages and cases for a grocery in Williamsburg, at the ridiculous salary of $10.00 a week, I began working a route as a Fuller brush salesman. Since my first attempt at salesmanship my knowledge of the people, the language, and business conditions had increased, and the general standard of living had risen considerably. So is was not difficult for me to make a go of it. Although I had one of the poorest neighborhoods, the Brownsville slums, I earned a good living selling brushes, brooms and other household articles. I was on my feet all through the day, and in the evening I had to go back to visit more customers who could not be reached during the daylight hours.

After a few happy months of working successfully, all of this had to stop suddenly. The doctor gave me a thorough checkup when I began having trouble with my heart, and he forbade me to do any more stairclimbing. So I again had to break up a promising career and was forced to look for a job. I found a badly paid and physically hard job in a leather factory in my neighborhood. After a few weeks of drudgery, the place closed down, and I was again on the street hunting a job. Another leather goods factory took me on as a chopper, at a weekly salary of $16.00. In this place I kept on working and working hard, until I knew every phase of the production of leather wallets and for the past three years I have been foreman of the shop, in full charge of the production. The original owner, who had understood the technical part of the business, died, and his son sold out to the partner who is mostly interested in the commercial aspects and holds me responsible for the production, and all technical details and handling of the personnel. Of course with the general rise of wages, I too reached an income which in the beginning would have seemed generous. But under present living conditions it hardly suffices to meet the constantly climbing expenses of daily life.

Of course I thank G-d that I am able to work and to maintain my family. But I always have the feeling that I should have more initiative, and use my experience and knowledge and skills in a business of my own, instead of inventing ever new methods of creating higher profits for other people. As I am getting older I realize that my earning power decreases, and any sudden change of business conditions may cost me my position and I would have to face the horrors of looking for a job all over again, with even less chance of success.

Therefore I put my hope in my growing son, with whom, and with the help of G-d, I would like to go into business for myself.

Otherwise, I feel contented and satisfied. I became a citizen of America as soon as possible, and so did my wife and oldest daughter. I love Williamsburg Jewish life, and would not exchange it, unless the spirit of communal life of the section would be moved along with me. I certainly would never dream of going back to Germany, not even on condition that I would get all of my money back, so that I could easily retire, whereas I have to work hard in this country. During the war I contributed my share, as much as possible and President Roosevelt was something of a demigod to me. I am also somewhat frightened by the change in the American home scene. There is too much fear, too much spying, too much mutual accusing of disloyalty, instead of the great American personal liberty and freedom of thought. America seems to be becoming less American, and I cannot rid myself of the feeling of unease and fear that prevailed in 1929 in Germany. I certainly hope that I am completely wrong. But from my amateurish, ignorant way of looking at politics there seems to be a great decline of the things by which one was impressed when one came to America. All the things we immediately loved, because we had missed them so much in Germany, seem to be threatened. But I have full confidence in America and its people, that somehow or other everything will turn out right in the end.

I certainly have much to be grateful for, more than I expected in those dreadful days when I came here as a refugee. I appreciate it all, and I hope that my children will be able to do even more than I can to pay back the great debt we all owe to America.

LIFE HISTORY No. 3

THE LIFE STORY OF D. F.

A Phase III Hungarian Jew

I was born at the end of World War I, and spent the first twenty-five years of my life in a small city of Carpatho-Russia, that had originally been part of Hungary, was given to Czechoslovakia, and returned to Hungary through the Pact of Munich. After World War II it again became part of Czechoslovakia. I am stressing this aspect of my birthplace because, unlike the members of the older generation who were always patriotic Hungarians, even after the creation of the Czech state, I, like the other people of my generation, was an enthusiastic Czechoslovakian. We youngsters were proud of the name "Little America" given to our little republic in those good, old days of Masaryk and Benes. It was a true democracy in which the little men had an equal chance and equal rights, while Hungary was full of discrimination and the type of conservative anti-Semitism which expressed itself in such restrictions as the numerus clausus.

My home town, one of the small cities near Beregsasz, was thoroughly Jewish. Not a single Jew dared keep his store open on Sabbath or holidays, although there was a considerable minority of non-Orthodox Jews who in their private lives did not abide by the

religious laws. Yet in public they showed the proper respect and did not act counter to the generally Orthodox standards of the Jewish community. The rabbi was the recognized and respected leader of the town. His authority was undisputed in all circles, and his seal of approval was valid and reliable and guaranteed the highest standards of Kashruth.

My family belonged to the fifteen to twenty percent of Jews that followed the strong Hungarian Chassidic school founded about a hundred years ago in the days of the old Kahlever Rebbe. We grew up in an atmosphere of Torah and the joyous, intensively traditional life that characterizes Hungarian Chassidism. Like the other youngsters I started *Cheder* at a very early age. I arose while it was still night, and studied Bible until it was time to go to public school. For the law required that we all attend a Czechoslovakian public school five hours a day. Thus from five-thirty till seven-thirty I was in the Cheder; from eight to one I attended public school where I learnt the three Rs and the three languages spoken in our neighborhood, Hungarian, Czech, and the Carpatho-Russian dialect. In the afternoon I returned to my religious studies until nightfall. While this may seem like a strenuous schedule, we enjoyed it and thrived on it.

Unlike some of my friends, I did not leave my home town to continue my Talmudical studies at one of the famous Hungarian Yeshivoth. My Rebbe organized an intensive study group which accomplished just as much and prevented our coming in touch with environments that were less Chassidic Orthodox.

Thus I led a sheltered life, bent on a scholarly career, until the Pact of Munich began to change the situation for us Jews. Though it was a gradual and less radical process than in Germany or Austria, the Jews were deprived of their privileges and rights, as our new Hungarian masters began to imitate their Nazi leaders. Increasing restrictions made it almost impossible to earn a livelihood. Soon the Nuremberg Laws started the segregation and persecution of Jews that reached a climax when the war began. Until 1939 Jews had still served in the army. Thereafter they were not permitted to carry arms. By 1940, they began rounding us up for labor camps. I, myself, spent three years, from 1941 to 1944, in the camps, ruining my health, doing hard labor, building roads and other military constructions. When the Germans marched in they formed the ghettos, and soon the trains rolled to the extermination camps. My own family was taken to Auschwitz, where I lost my father and brother and a sister. One brother was killed in Dachau. Our own camp was near Grosswardein, and towards the end, when the German army retreated before the Russians, we were taken to Bergen Belsen, and from there to Theresienstadt, where I was liberated.

Like most of my co-sufferers I contracted typhoid fever and lay sick for a long time, until I was able to get to Prague, where, a rumor had reached me that my mother and youngest sister were living. Though weak and unable to walk, because my feet had suffered from the years of hard labor and the typhoid fever, I searched every part of the city, and went through files of all organizations for the relief of the returnees from the camps, until I discovered

my mother and sister in a suburban college dormitory. To the credit of the Czech people I must say, they treated us survivors royally. They carried us on their hands and did all they could for us. But of the 147 members of my family only thirteen had survived. And it was hard starting all over, as if nothing had happened. How could I live in a city where each house and street brought back memories of happier years, and rude reminders of people killed, massacred and tortured. It was like living in a graveyard, with fear as constant companion. Although I had married soon after the liberation, and started a small business to support our family, I was very happy when the call to the American Consulate came and an affidavit, provided by an uncle from Chicago, gave us the opportunity to leave Chechoslovakia, especially now that the Communists took over, and began to make life for Jews miserable.

It would take hundreds of pages to describe our suffering during and after the war, and all the adventures until we set sail and came to the United States in 1949. Suffice it to say that I bless every day when I get up in the morning and realize that I live in free America, with all its rights and privileges for anyone who seeks refuge on her shores.

Frankly speaking, I did not come without misapprehensions. My uncle had frequently before sent papers to my father for our family, but we would never have thought of going to the *treifoh* land, where, we heard, it was almost impossible to live as a good Jew. All I can say is that I was very pleasantly surprised when I did immigrate, forced by circumstances, rather than out of my own free choice. I discovered that there was a flourishing Jewish life here, in such neighborhoods as Williamsburg and the East Side, and that there is no country in the world where one can live as easily as a faithful Jew, according to one's own pattern and traditions, as in the United States. Here, perhaps, I think, lies the great mistake of many of the earlier immigrant groups who thought that they had to discard their religion and customs when they entered the harbor of New York. People like I, from a good Chassidic background, who came to the United States because Europe after the war had turned into a living hell, were determined to do what they could not to yield an iota of their faith. I had succeeded even during the harrowing years of the camps in never letting a day go by without putting on Tefillin. They were the only thing I did not permit to be taken away from me. And I had never cut my beard or *Peyes*. I had no intention of acting differently in the United States.

Thank G-d, I found it much much easier and better than I had anticipated. America is truly a great democracy, and people like myself will always have the highest regard for its freedoms and the opportunity it offers to all, because we know what the opposite means. It's people like us who will be grateful come what may.

I spent the first two months after my arrival in this country in one of the refugee hotels provided by the Council for New Americans. An advertisement in a Jewish newspaper brought me to Bushwick, the old section of Williamsburg where there is little left of the once flourishing Jewish life, except empty or dilapidated *Shuls*. One of those hired me as beadle at ridiculously low salary. But I

had a wife and a child, and a second one coming up. So I took the job and tried to make a go of it, while looking for something better. The street I lived in had once been full of Jews. Now there are mostly people of a lower class living there, Italians, Spanish and negroes. My job itself was easy, but it is quite discouraging to pray with a handful of old people and only seeing younger Jews occasionally, if they have to say *Kaddish*, or some stray members of Young Israel who lived in the neighborhood and occasionally dropped in.

Another advertisement in the Jewish paper got me the job in a Williamsburg synagogue at which I am still employed. It is not a well paying job and if not for the free apartment which comes with it, I might have given it up. But it was the opportunity I had longed for all this time, since I had first visited this "Little Jerusalem" of New York, to live in Williamsburg. None of us had ever dreamt that America, the supposedly *treifoh* land, could produce such a wonderful Jewish community life, which can well stand up to the best we had in the Old Home. As late as 1939 my father had refused a rabbi's affidavit to the United States because, he wrote to my uncle, he did not want to *Shmad* his children. I wonder what he would have said if he had survived Aushwitz and could have had a look at Bedford and Lee Avenues on Sabbath, or if he could observe the hundreds of American children studying Talmud *geshmack* in Torah Vodaath or in the other Yeshivoth.

It made a terrific impression on me, for during the years of my stay in the various labor and concentration camps I had met up with all kinds of religious and irreligious people. And I had prepared myself for the worst. Determined to remain staunch, I was ready to make all kinds of sacrifices, if necessary. I was for instance prepared to do without meat, because I had heard of the generally low standards of *Kashruth* in America. I certainly could not have anticipated a Williamsburg where one can have all that the heart desires, without yielding an iota of the highest standards of religious observance and supervision. Naturally it had not always been like this. Only in the last ten, fifteen years, I was given to understand. But when I visited the local Yeshivah and Beth Jacob school and saw the youth born in this country, and not looking any different from the boys and girls anywhere else in New York, I gained a deep and sincere respect and admiration for the immigrants who have come to the U. S. before us and built such a valuable Jewish life.

Of course, if you ask me, I do not think that I want my two boys to grow up looking any different than they do now. They wear long *peyes* and a *yarmulkeh* the way I had done as a child their age. I don't think that the children of the general American Jewish community are perhaps growing up any less Orthodox. But within my family and the atmosphere that I am trying to create in my home there would be too much of a contrast, if they were to talk only English and if they were to cut their *peyes* short and look and act like any youngster in the street. To me these things, including *Shtreimel*, though I wear only a black velvet hat right now, and a short kaftan, are not essential as such. One can, I gladly concede, be just as Orthodox and know more *Gemoroh*, without them. Yet the genuine type of independent Jewish life, proud of its traditions

and customs needs them as a safeguard for the future. Any form of compromise is dangerous, because it breaches the inner discipline. Of course it is not as easy to get a job with beard and *peyes*, as without. But I think nowadays it no longer offers such difficulties, as it did fifty years ago, when it was almost impossible for an *ehrliche* Jew to get into a shop. But look what the children and grandchildren of those who assimilated externally look like today. True, the *Yeshivoth* that have come up in the last twenty-five years, like Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, have done wonders to recreate a young generation of native Orthodox Jews that can open a *Sefer* and sit down by a *Blatt of Gemoroh*. But it is only a drop in the bucket. And even for the minority that attends these schools, the standards are not as high as I would like to see them for my children. I was amazed to find what I did. But this does not preclude my wanting my children to be taught only by teachers who themselves wear beards and *peyes* and have a Chassidic approach to learning and living.

Therefore, I think it was quite an important step forward that several of the largest Chassidic groups of the newcomers in Williamsburg established their own types of *Yeshivoth*. Just as I am not a Satmarer Chassid, I do not want my children to be that extreme and one-sided. I prefer a rather broader horizon, which recognizes all types of Chassidic schools and stresses scholarship as much as *Chassiduth*. But I cannot be satisfied with the lower standards of the general American *Yeshivoth*, which are largely geared to the average children, many of whom come from not so Orthodox homes. Some even come from non-religious homes. Their company, I find, might harm the intensive type of atmosphere and attitude which I demand of myself and of my children.

But that is America. There is room here, I think, for everybody, and anybody can find or found the pattern of life which he prefers. No Jewish community can be as rich and variegated as the American because of this all-pervasive democracy, and freedom of religious practise.

I therefore enjoy living in Williamsburg because my children can grow up in this atmosphere that shows such an intensely Orthodox type of life. Not all wear *Shtreimels*. It is not necessary. But for those who were used to it, it is harmful to do away with it and with the other external symbols of their former existence, because it is a decline and an assimilation which living in America does not require, as was once believed by the old immigrants.

Naturally we don't know what the future holds; whether we are strong enough to perpetuate this type of community life among our children. But as long as I and the hundreds of Chassidic Jews like myself from Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Poland remain firm and are willing to make some sacrifices, there will always be communities like Williamsburg, or like the new project organized by the *Squerer Rebbe* near Spring Valley, where the future of our rich Jewish tradition can be perpetuated with a reasonable chance for the future. And as far as the ridicule of others is concerned, I am not worried. America, I have learned, is big-hearted enough to respect faith and faithfulness to one's cultural or religious heritage.

LIFE HISTORY No. 4

THE LIFE STORY OF R. J. L.

A Native Young Williamsburg Jew

I was born twenty-seven years ago as the fourth child of parents who had come to the United States from the neighborhood of Slonim, in Russian Poland, in 1922. My father was a tinsmith and welder, who made just enough of a living to support the family. But he passed away soon after I was born and my mother was left with one girl and three boys, none of them old enough to go to work until years later. Obviously our youth was not spent in luxury. But we had a pretty pleasant childhood, spent in South Second Street, in the heart of the good old Williamsburg section, which has since deteriorated terribly and become inhabited by Russians, Poles, and Puerto Ricans.

My parents came from a good Jewish background, but like many of their fellow immigrants they gave up much of their Orthodox conduct, while getting adjusted to the American life. They spoke Yiddish to us, and we replied in English. Like my sister and brothers I attended public school, and liked it very much. I was a good student and very active in the school organization. I belonged to the junior group of the *Hashomer Hadati*, the *Mizrachi* organization to which my brothers introduced me. But I was most active in a playground organization of a neighborhood house, called the Tigers. Its membership was half Jewish and half Italian. And we got along fine. I was a good sportsman, loved baseball, basketball and punchball, and was something of a leader in the group. And the others looked up to me. We even had meetings besides our playground activities, and being elected secretary, I had quite a hand in the shaping of the group.

I entered junior high school in our neighborhood and was very fortunate in getting teachers who were interested in their students. I had a gift for writing and was on the newspaper staff, and did some fine art work. I was just about to start taking piano lessons at the insistence of my teacher, when things began to happen that influenced my life radically and changed my whole perspective. Had I gone on, I would have become a good Jewish American young professional with a college career, probably, like my brothers, religious, but not too Orthodox; although my leaders in the *Hashomer Hadati* group tried to make us interested in Palestine and in the Jewish religion.

But Providence apparently wanted it differently. And I cannot imagine how I ever could have felt happy the way I did then. One day I met a young fellow on the playground who was an excellent baseball player, but curiously enough he kept wearing a scullcap, and occasionally his *Tzitzith* were hanging out of his pants. I became friendly with him, and we walked home together, because he lived in the same neighborhood as I. This fellow, Moish, was a fine and quiet spoken boy, who told me all about an organization to which he belonged, and the Jewish school, called a Yeshivah, which he

attended, and which he loved very much. He kept on urging me to come to the meetings of the organization, called the *Zeirei Agudath Israel,* the boys groups of which are called *Pirchei Agudath Israel.* I promised to go with him once. But inadvertently things kept on being put off until winter. Then one day I met Moish again, and since it was the day of his group meeting, he accompanied me to the house, and from there took me down to the *Zeirei* meeting, in their basement local on Rodney Street. All I can say about this first visit to the Zeirei is that I was deeply impressed, as I had never before been impressed by anything else. There was a group of about twenty-five young boys around thirteen, like myself, discussing seriously and intelligently the purpose of their organization, and as a secondary topic whether they should take any boys into the group that did not attend a Yeshivah. Their leader, Mike, was a wonderful, inspiring fellow, who afterwards came to mean a great deal to me. Right after the meeting he spent some time with me, talked with me, and introduced me to the boys. They were all regular American kids, like myself; but there was something different, intelligent and serious about them, which I had never met any place else before. There was something else too about them. You see, until this time I had a Hebrew education, like most Jewish children of my type of a background. I attended a neighborhood Talmud Torah, until the time of my Bar Mitzvah, when I was just barely able to translate *Chumash,* the Bible, though I was far ahead of the rest of my group. But these boys in the *Pirchim* group talked a different language. They were young scholars, and had vocabulary and knowledge which I am sure my Talmud Torah teacher could not match. That was when I first, perhaps still unconsciously, began to wish that I too could be one of them.

But that took a while yet. I did not join the organization right away, but kept on moving in the same circles as before. Only that now I wore a skullcap and *Tzitzith,* under the influence of the friendship with Moish, who kept coming around and talking to me. He also introduced another boy from that group to me. And both kept on working on me to come back for another meeting of the Pirchim group. Finally I did go with them, and I was accepted as a member. Right after the meeting Mike, the leader, spoke to me about leaving public school and attending the Yeshivah. I did not know what it was all about; but he is such a persuasive fellow that he did not have much trouble convincing me that a young, serious Jew like myself should have a Yeshivah education, in order to know the Torah and the literature of the Talmud.

When I came home with this idea, my people laughed at me. "You are an American and have a right to attend public school like everyone else. It's enough if you have a Talmud Torah training. The rest you leave for those who want to become rabbis." That was the kind of argument they gave me. But I was always a stubborn fellow. I was so inspired by the organization and by the leader, that I wanted to find out for myself what it was all about. The first time Moish took me to the *Mesifta,* that is the advanced department of the Yeshivah, I saw a large room packed with young fellows my

age and older, sitting or standing at a *shtander*, a reading-desk, such as I had only seen in the synagogue. On the *shtander* were large open books, the *Gemoroth*, from which the young fellows studied, some for themselves, some sitting together and arguing seriously. Some sang in the pecular sing-song of the Talmud student, which afterwards became so familiar to me, but was then still completely new and impressed me deeply. Then I made up my mind, that I too would have to become a scholar and know how to *learn* like these young fellows, several of whom I know from the meeting of the Pirchim group. One of them, who afterwards helped me a great deal when I faced the difficulty of catching up with youngsters far below my age, came over to me and took time out from his own studies to explain to me what those big Talmud volumes were about. He even taught me something he was just learning, and I understood it very well. This experience made me even more determined to go through with it, despite the opposition of my family, and the need to leave junior high school. For I really loved it there, and was very much at home and popular. Imagine, I was permitted to come half an hour later, because I began to go to Shul in the morning. Or when we had parties, all the food that was bought came from kosher stores. And the Jewish children had to say the blessings, because I asked for it. By the way, in my club, too, even though we had mixed membership, all the kids began to wear hats, we played ball with our *Tallith Koton*, the *Tzitzith* hanging out, all because I wanted it so; because I had learnt to appreciate these things. Not that I understood it all already. But, I respected the young fellow whom I had met in the *Pirchim* group. And if they thought it was right, it was good enough for me too. In due time, I figured, I would be able to grasp the why and wherefores.

Once I had made up my mind definitely I went to see the principal of the Yeshivah, at which I am now an instructor of the advanced department. I was then thirteen, and knew no more than do the others kids who attend a Talmud Torah. I was already a *Talmid Chacham* because I could translate *Chumash*. In the Yeshivah however, children of seven and eight knew more than I. The principal tested me and seeing how little I knew, suggested that is would be too late for me to sit in a low class with small children. Instead, he said, I should take a private teacher to bring me up to a reasonable level, while I was going to public school. When I met Mike, the leader of the Pirchim group, and told him of the decision of the principal, he immediately called up and saw to it that I was accepted without delay.

I did not have an easy time, sitting with kids five years younger than I. But I have to give a lot of credit to my teachers. They spent a great deal of time with me, outside and after class, because they saw that I wanted to learn, and that I had little difficulty grasping and remembering what they taught. It was just that there was so much that I lacked and that could not be made up so easily. Here is where the one member of my Pirchim group helped me. He spent hours in the evenings, studying with me, giving me all the elementary knowledge that I missed. Soon I began to skip from one class to the next, every few months into a higher

one. I really began to love it, even though I missed public school very much and was many a time about to go back. Just that I was so stubborn that I overlooked the hardship of studying with younger children, and of lacking the all-around secular education of public school. Since I had to spend the evenings studying *Gemoroh* at the *Beth Hamidrash*, I had to give up piano, and many of the other things that meant so much to me before. After a while I even had to quit the Tigers. But there was so much to make up for it.

Gradually all the things I had done before, even though I did not understand them, made sense to me. And the more I understood, the more I began to observe the laws of the Torah, which prescribe everything from the way you get up in the morning till the second you go to sleep. But the more I also began to get into conflicts at home.

My mother was willing to put up with quite a lot. She would wait for me at the door of the *Beth Hamedrash* to take me home, when I spent the evenings studying. When persuasion did not work, she consented to my switching from public school to the Yeshivah. But when I began to reform the house, the household, and the whole pattern of living in our home, my mother became exasperated. Imagine my coming home, a fourteen year old boy, insisting that she discard all her dishes, and get new sets, one for dairy meals and one for meat. Not that she did not keep the two separate before. Just that the general *Kashruth* did not live up to the standards which I now considered essential, and which required complete change. I would only eat certain types of butter, or refuse to eat meat or dairies that were not bought in reliable stores. Many a time, in her anger and exasperation my mother would take me to the rabbi of our synagogue, for him to talk to me and get the "nonsense" out of my head. Though I respected him, he would in the end have to agree with me and give in to me, before I would change my mind. Then, of course, I was more radical, and less willing to understand, as I do now that I know more and better, that some form of reasonable gradual compromise would have been sensible. One thing, however, I realized even then and practised it. Other boys in my situation left the home and broke with their families. I would never do that. There were many instances when my own students came into similar situations. I would always advise them not to leave the home and to try to persuade their families to let them go their way, or at least show them patience and understanding. There was, for instance, one of my favorite disciples whose mother was waiting for him with a broom when he came home at midnight from studying with me. At my suggestion he would go over to his mother, kiss and hug her and show her all the consideration and affection a son can display to a mother. Naturally her anger would quickly melt, and she would be disarmed. My own mother or brothers did not wait with the broom for me; but there were plenty of quarrels and difficulties until they finally acquiesced when they saw that nothing could change my mind. My sister and her husband kept on making fun of me, while my brothers supported me by going to work, and seeing me through until I got my *Smichoh*, my ordination as rabbi. Many a time I offered to stop and go to work or take on some job.

But they, with their *Hashomer Hadati* and Young Israel background, realized that if I really wanted to become a *Talmid Chacham* I would have to keep on studying undisturbed. And they saw to it that I could go through with it. Naturally they, and even more so the rest of my family were insisting that I go to college, after I graduated from high school. To them, as Europeans who have gone all the way to become genuinely Americanized, as they conceive of it, this was the peak of social achievement. My insistence on continuing my talmudical study instead, was a relapse into old-fashioned Europeanism which they could not accept or pardon. Take the example of my wearing *Tzitzith* openly, and longer Peyes than the average boy in the street. Many a time my mother would immediately leave a wedding, or some other social gathering of the family because she was ashamed of my openly becoming a *Frumak*, or or lacking the social graces generally demanded of an adolescent. Only gradually, slowly, did I gain their respect and helpful understanding.

On the other hand, I am very grateful in some ways for the conflict at home, because it was a major factor in shaping my general viewpoint and attitude of tolerance. In the first years of radical adolescence I had gone all the way to the extreme, and I might have ended up as a member of the *Mal'ochim*, the extreme group of young Americans who completely refuse any connection with secular culture, who wear large black round hats, and no ties, who do not permit their children to study more than the absolute minimum of English subjects, and who generally live in a world of their own, even within such an extremely Orthodox community as Williamsburg. I admire their courage and inner strength, as I admire all those who wear a beard and *Peyes* and the European clothes, not because I think these things are essential to Orthodox Judaism. These are merely external forms, to build fences from within by creating differences and distinctions from without. I admire the people who do have the stamina to travel in subways and engage in business or profession and do not mind the staring, curious or hostile reaction of others who do not know what this is all about. Of course if it's not sincere, than it's merely a masquerade and hypocrisy. But, in general, I highly respect people who genuinely believe and feel this externally distinctive garb a part of their essential religious pattern. I might have gone in this direction too, if not for the external blocks in the conflicts at home, and the much more important internal counteraction against this extremism in the spiritual atmosphere of the *Zeirei* and the *Mesifta*, in which I grew up.

At home I learnt that it was not necessarily helpful to the understanding and appreciation of my religious viewpoint if I went to extremes. That unnecessary challenge hurt more than it did good. And the *Weltanschauung* which I acquired at first in the discussions of the Zeirei, and then in the higher level of learning in the *Mesifta*, under the guidance of its two spiritual directors, as I grew older, taught me the true perspective under which each facet of the daily life fits without the hardships and conflicts of the extremist. I began to mellow and to grasp what is essential and what unessential, what is genuine and knowing piety, and what merely external practise without meaning in the total cosmos of the Orthodox Jew's thinking

and acting. Having this power of distinction I was able to enjoy playing baseball, like any American young fellow my age; though frankly speaking I had little time left for these leisure activities once I had begun to dig into the endless vasts of the Talmud and allied fields of study. I learnt to appreciate how important it is to preserve external neatness and propriety, and to be able to learn and gain knowledge and insight from all sources. I also learnt what not to do, not because it is forbidden, because I was told not to do it, as was the case in my early stages, but because I understood the reasons. Seeing the total picture, understanding the causes and motives, helped me adjust and balance my own pattern of thinking and conduct, the way I think an American Jew, or for that matter any Orthodox Jew, wherever in the world he resides, should conduct himself.

This is also my attitude toward the Orthodox life of the Hungarian Chassidim which has become so strong in Williamsburg in recent years. I most certainly admire them, and respect these Chassidim for their courage and power to close themselves up on the inside and live only their pecular way of life according to the customs and habits of their former European homes. I respect them and I help them in whatever way I can, as I helped the refugees who came into my organization and into the neighborhood around the time when I began studying at the *Mesifta.* I also am impressed by their power to create things and establish institutions and business such as we had never known before in Williamsburg. But I am very doubtful, whether their way of life and pattern of thinking is the right one. I have to quote a friend and fellow classmate of mine, who told me this story. He had come from Palestine and lived on the East Side. When his neighbor, a fiery Hungarian Chassid, found out that his father sent him to the *Mesifta,* he gave him a big bawling out for leading his own child into an atmosphere where he must become "spoilt." He urged his father to send his son to one of the small Hungarian Yeshivoth that started up around that time. His own sons wore long *peyes,* and would never play baseball, or do the other things American kids do. The end is that he, my friend, is still a very Orthodox young man, a real *Talmid Chacham,* who married a fine Jewish girl, and his sons are sure to attend a *Yeshivah* when they are old enough. The children of that extreme Chassidic neighbor from the East Side, are now far from even the minimal Orthodoxy in their personal conduct. That is exactly how I feel about it, when I see the little children in long *Kapottes* and in large black hats and *peyes.* They won't last. They will not be able to make the proper adjustment, and will break completely, if the strain becomes too strong. Only a small minority will cling to the extreme pattern of their parents. The basic thing they lack is the vital stress on learning. Perhaps you'll accuse me of being biased as a *Mithnaged.* I don't care what name you call it. I can see the good in Chassiduth, its warmth and wholeheartedness. On the other hand, however, I have realized that only a maximum of Torah, of talmudical study, can preserve Judaism. Chassiduth is nice, in addition. But one thing has to be hammered away at: Learning, learning, and more learning. The *Talmid Chacham* can be the only educational goal of the Jewish

future. This is what I am trying to inculcate in my students, the love for study and the reverence and respect for Torah. In addition I am trying to perpetuate that tradition of my great teacher, the late director of my school, who had a wide enough horizon to combine scholarship with interest in general world affairs and with the warmth and heartiness of the Chassidim. His, I think, was the ideal Jewish philosophy of life that has meaning and future in the American environment, or any place else in the contemporary world. It's the form of compromise that will work, and produce natural, uninhibited and thoroughly Jewish and learned *Baalebattim* who will remain Orthodox, and at the same time will produce the few who have the mental capacity and stamina to spend a good part of their lives to become *Talmidei Chachomim*, the Torah scholars on whom our whole religion hinges.

III. SUMMARY

Despite their individual differences and slants, the four life histories stress the fact that their preferenc[illegible] Williamsburg and its communal life [illegible] valuation of its people. The native, [illegible]re all willing to overlook and overc[illegible]aused by their economic, social, or [illegible]joy the spiritual advantages of the [illegible] even more for their children. They [illegible]tages and they agree that they migh[illegible] religious atmosphere and the unl[illegible]s to find the group life of his ch[illegible] transplanted to that other, economica[illegible]ood.

According to the [illegible]s, the religio-cultural values were [illegible] the general process of change that took place in the Jewish community of Williamsburg, and in their own individual adjustment to it.

These subjective human documents, then, serve to illustrate, interprete and substantiate the general hypothesis of this study, which claims the decisive role of the valuational configuration of a community like Williamsburg over and beyond ecological and economic considerations.

APPENDIX II

AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLIAMSBURG

THE CASE HISTORY OF A WILLIAMSBURG ORGANIZATION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The particular value of individual life histories is in that "they enable one to follow the whole process of personal evolution, and so to ascertain the nature of social personality."[1] This type of insight gained from "the course of the total life and not at any particular moment,"[2] which Thomas and Znaniecki stress as a vital phase of their socio-psychological synthesis, can also be derived from the case history of a group within a community, if it is fairly representative of the larger patterns and relationships. For, like the individual human documents, it deepens the understanding of the processes of change and of its factors by the concentration of the problems and trends in the community on a smaller, less diffuse and confusing plane, in spite of the subjective or limited nature of its perspective.

This section introduces the life history of one of the important organizations of Jewish Williamsburg, not in the form of a group study, but as the total record of its evolution from its founding in Phase I to 1954. It reflects most of the processes of internal organization, disorganization, reorganization and partial dissipation which produced the changes in the community at large in the course of the past fifteen years of assimilation of newcomers into the web of its social relations. Thus it may further highlight the role of cultural value determination in the structure of a community, which is the subject of this study.

2. *Agudath Israel of Williamsburg* was selected for this form of research and presentation because the writer of this study has been associated with the organization since 1938, when the absorption of newcomers in its ranks began; and he has followed every step of its development up to the present writing. Total participation in practically all of its formal and informal activities permitted an intimate acquaintance with the long-range reactions, motivations, and overt, as well as underlying attitudes of the members which might escape an outside observer.

1. H. Blumer, op. cit., p. 41.
2. *The Polish Peasant, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1837.

The case history of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg gains further significance from the fact that it is the organization which seems most representative of the process of change in the social, religious, and cultural patterns of the community. It offers valid insight beyond the limitations of its internal trends.

It is mainly for this latter purpose that this section offers the process of evolution of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg as a source of depth perspective for the changes in the community at large.

3. *Agudath Israel of Williamsburg* is the local branch[3] of a world-wide movement of Orthodox Jews which was organized by the outstanding rabbis and lay leaders of Orthodox world Jewry in Kattowitz, Silesia, in 1912. According to its official programme its purpose is "to deal with all problems confronting Jewry in Israel and in the diaspora in the spirit of Torah and tradition." Founded to counteract the progressing secularization of the Jewish people and Jewish culture, Agudath Israel has become the organization and spokesman of the non-Zionist Orthodox Jewish masses in the world. It was particularly strong in Eastern Europe before the war. In Poland, for example, it was one of the official political parties, and its hundreds of thousands of members sent their leaders into the Sejm as senators and deputies. Most of the famous rabbis of the world were its active leaders. Soon after its founding national organizations for men, women, intermediates and juniors were formed to mobilize the forces of traditional Judaism in the Jewish world.

Several times during the 1920's and 1930's attempts were made to organize an *Agudath Israel of America.* But they were doomed to failure due to lack of adequate leadership and the basic community discipline which had enabled Agudath Israel to develop as a potent movement in the various countries of Western and Eastern Europe. Only after the arrival of some of the best of the European leaders, including the world president, did the efforts at establishing an American Agudath Israel succeed in melting some of the native and immigrant groups into one national organization. However, it is still a far cry from the strong movement of Orthodox Jews which existed before the years of persecution and war in Europe.

This partial success in recent years may be attributed to the maturing of some of the best elements of the Agudath Israel youth movement in this country, as well as to the influx of leaders from the Old World. For, while the attempts at establishing a senior organization in America failed, we find considerable success and gradual growth of Agudath Israel youth in the United States ever since the founding of a small branch on the East Side of Lower Manhattan thirty years ago. Organized by several enthusiastic young rabbis and lay leaders, "*Zeirei Agudath Israel,*" the Hebrew equivalent for Agudath Israel Youth, rallied its membership from the masses of first or second generation Polish, Austrian and Hungarian immigrants who had settled on both sides of Delancy Street. Most of the young men in their early twenties had a good Hebrew background and were bent upon making a career in business. To them Agudath Israel was

3. See Chart I, for the organizational structure.

a social, as well as educational movement; but they possessed little of the Jewish political intelligence that characterized the Agudath Israel youth movements in Western and Eastern Europe. Ideological discussions and creative philosophical thinking played a minor role in their organizational activities, while they represented an important phase of the work of Agudath Israel in such countries as Poland, Austria, Germany and Belgium. Religious services, educational classes, social, and relatively few political meetings and affairs represented the program of activities of the first branch, as well as of all the others that sprang up in the neighborhoods where Orthodox Jews established major communities, in Brownsville, the Bronx, Williamsburg, Midtown and Upper Manhattan, Boro Park and Crown Heights. In April 1939 the formerly loosely-allied local branches of New York set up a national office and intensified their program on a national scale, organizing branches in the large Jewish centers of the United States and Canada.

Following the establishment of *Zeirei,* young men's branches of Agudath Israel, were always organizations of girls and young women, called *Bnos,* Daughters of Agudath Israel, and intermediate and junior groups from the age of 6 years and up, called *Pirchim.* By 1939, when the national office and council activities began to function on a wider scale, there were close to 1500 seniors and 1000 juniors registered in the various branches, of which roughly three quarters were active members in terms of attending services, meetings and social and political affairs or participating in fund-raising campaigns. From 1939 on, the national organization of Agudath Israel Youth changed from a federation of youth clubs into a mature movement, substituting for the non-existent senior organization, and taking a vital place in the world-wide activities of Agudath Israel during the war and postwar years.

In 1948 the leaders of the national and local affairs of the organization consented to be called and function as "Agudath Israel of America", though they and the majority of the membership of the youth had long before passed the age limit set for *Zeirim,* the seniors of the youth movement. Their reluctance to surrender the label of the youth organization was due to the fear of losing the spirit and momentum of the *Zeirim* movement, which had a good record, compared to the insignificance and ineffectiveness of the adult organization, which till then had done little beyond establishing offices amid the constant squabbling of would be leaders and competing groups. Despite the fact that the adult movement had a potential membership of many thousands of Orthodox Jewish men and women, it had failed to form a single functioning branch.

There were several reasons for this change in the attitude of the leaders of the youth movement, such as the progressing age, increasing involement in personal affairs and decreasing interest of the once active membership. Then there was the pressure exerted by European leaders who had settled in the United States, and found it ridiculous to perpetuate the name and illusion of a youth movement for a membership whose children were growing old enough to join the junior groups. Most of all there was a definite need for a well-functioning, active adult organization, with a membership and branches

to back it up in dealing with government bodies in this country and the rest of the world. Despite the fame and recognition which some of the activities of the youth council had earned, particularly in the realm of overseas relief and immigration work, the youth label carried a definite stigma that could only harm its leaders at this time. For Agudath Israel in Palestine had joined the Religious Bloc, had sent a minister into the Cabinet and several representatives into high positions of the Israeli government, and had its deputies in the assembly. To carry on its work in America the organization needed official representation with such bodies as the Jewish Agency, the United Jewish Appeal, and so on. Leaders of a youth movement could never hope to gain the recognition and the proper share of responsibility due to them by virtue of their actual work. Hence it was inevitable that the conversion from the youth council to the adult organization was effected both in name and fact. After five years, the process was not complete, as it takes more than a mere change of name and merger of offices, branches and leaders to produce a thorough transformation. The pressures from within and without were strong enough, however, to make it more than a matter of formality.

By January 1, 1950, Agudath Israel of America, comprising the former branches of the youth movement, had a total membership of over 10,000 men, women, seniors, juniors and children. Its national offices occupy a floor at 5 Beekman Place, New York, with separate departments for the adult and junior organizations, for men and women, for overseas relief work, Palestine activities and over-all fund raising.

There was a separate office of the World Executive of Agudath Israel located uptown New York, from which the first and only world president of the movement, Rabbi Jacob Rosenheim, formerly of Frankfurt and London, handled all matters of official concern to the various organizations and divisions affiliated with World Agudath Israel, until his departure to Israel on June 1st, 1950. There was little more than an official link between the world executive office and the national American organization. Although the world president is a man of great fame and international stature, his influence was limited due to his neutrality in the fights and frictions of the competing groups within the national movement.

4. The *basic philosophy of Agudath Israel* is built around the premise of the Orthodox Jewish faith, the divine authorship of the "Torah," both the Written Law, which is contained in the Bible, and the Oral Law, which is the rabbinic tradition crystallized in the Talmud and its codes. Being of divine origin laws have eternal validity and applicability to every age and situation of the Jewish nation and its people. Since the Torah covers practically all aspects of individual and social life in general directives, if not in detail, no problem can ever arise, according to the Orthodox Jewish faith, that stands outside the pale of the Jewish Law. Policies, valuations, ideologies and laws that stem from sources other than the Torah or its interpretation by the rabbis, cannot be recognized and sanctioned by Orthodox Jews. Bound by its faith in the divine authorship of

the Bible, the Jewish people can only accept a "Torah-nation," a "Torah-culture," and "Torah-leadership" in every realm of Jewish endeavor.

Throughout its history the Jewish people had perpetuated this complete interdependence of the national, the religious and cultural aspects of their existence. Those who went astray abandoned their membership in both the religious and the national community of Israel.

The emancipation of the nineteenth century tore down the outer and inner walls of the ghetto, and produced a rapidly increasing movement of assimilation, which meant a movement away from the physical and spiritual aspects of Jewish communal life. No longer forced to abide by the inner discipline of the ghetto, many thousands of Jews left the Jewish nation either directly by conversion, by complete irreligiosity and merger with the society into which they had entered, or indirectly, via the gradual assimilation of the Conservative and Reform movements which relegated Judaism to the synagogue.

Zionism, on the other hand, concentrated on the national aspect of the Jewish existence and, by the words of the Basel Programme, made religion a matter of private concern, and policies and leadership the product of party ideology.

To stem the flood of both cultural and national assimilation, the rabbis and lay leaders of Orthodox Jewry of all types and shades founded Agudath Israel in 1912, in order to organize all those ready to maintain the traditional view of the inseparability of religion and nation; to be their spokesman in all questions of concern; to try to solve all problems concerning Judaism and Jews anywhere in the world in the spirit of Torah; and to regain at least part of the masses of the Jewish people partially or completely lost in the process of religious, cultural and national assimilation. Agudath Israel was to substitute the modern form of voluntary organizational discipline for the cohesion and inner strength of the community life within the ghetto, where the Torah laws had been supreme, and the rabbis and community leaders the highest authorities, but in all spheres of individual and social endeavor.

A world council of the outstanding Torah scholars of all countries was organized as the only body authorized to decide essential questions of policy. All other international and national bodies of the organization were bound to the decisions of this *"Moetzeth Gedolei Hatorah,"* the Council of the Torah Sages, and its national subdivisions. In this way Agudath Israel attempted to exclude all secular influence of the party bigwigs, famous orators, strategists, and wealthy men who had taken over the leadership of the Jewish community at large. They wished to restore leadership to the authorized spokesmen of the Torah, the rabbis and scholars.

The basic philosophy of Agudath Israel was never opposed to the establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine, as is frequently implied by its opponents. Its major concern was the restitution of the authority of the Torah in Jewish life, wherever Jews live. Hence its efforts were concentrated on education, preserving the religious interests wherever threatened, and "helping to solve all problems of

the Jewish people in the spirit of Torah." Being opposed to Zionism as a secularization of the traditional concept of the Jewish nation, Agudath Israel refused to have any share in its movements and agencies, differing from its brother movement, the *Mizrachi*, which joined the Zionist movement as its religious section and profitted from the popularity and rich financial resources derived from this association. At a very early stage in the history of Agudath Israel, however, before and during World War I, some of its outstanding thinkers began to stress the need for intensive Palestine activity by Agudath Israel, despite its independence from Zionist ideology and party affiliations. They realized the importance of Israel for the future of the Jewish people, and insisted that in order to have the voice of the Torah heard and its authority felt in the newly built homeland Agudath Israel would have to make a definite contribution to the reclamation of the land and the shaping of its social and cultural life. Political circumstances helped this view to ultimate victory over those who opposed any participation in work that would demand even the smallest form of co-operation with a ruling group of areligious or anti-religious Zionist leaders. Relatively late and with little, compared to other movements that had always concentrated exclusively on Israel, Agudath Israel took its place in the building of the Jewish homeland.

Further adjustment of the philosophy of Agudath Israel was necessitated by the conversion of the Jewish homeland from a British mandate to the independent Jewish State. In order to fulfill its goal of the maximum strengthening of the religious forces in Israel, Agudath Israel joined its rival party, the Mizrachi, in forming the Religious Bloc which was in the fortunate position of holding the balance of power between the majority party of the *Histadruth* and its leftwing opposition. This coalition lasted until 1951, when the *Histadruth* preferred to join forces with the middle-of-the-road General Zionist party, rather than the Religious Bloc. While the coalition lasted, the Orthodox parties gained concessions on behalf of Jewish religious laws which would otherwise hardly have been possible, in view of the small size of the Religious Bloc. This form of cooperation, however, necessitated the yielding of some of the independence that had always been the basis of Agudist ideology. One of the famous Agudist leaders became a member of the cabinet; others were in high official positions with the government or in the Knesseth. The Agudist network of schools for boys and girls was recognized as one of the four school systems supported by the government, despite its complete internal independence as to content and form of instruction, until the enactment of the Unified Education system in 1953. Ideologically, this compromise was justified, though never officially santioned by the Council of the Rabbis, as a temporary step necessary to gain a maximum of benefits for the religious interests. The proponents of the affiliation with the Religious Bloc argued that it was possible to remain independent of an organization, but not of a state. Only a small group of extremists clung to the philosophy of complete non-cooperation. The majority of Agudists in the world, as well as in Israel, realized that the present struggle between the religious

and anti-religious forces in Israel would be decisive for the future and were concerned with the precarious situation of the Religious Bloc. They did their utmost to strengthen it. Agudath Israel of America was thus in the strategic position of being able to exert pressure and gain financial support for its work, particularly among the new immigrants from Yemen and North Africa, who are strictly Orthodox.

During the more than four years of participation in the government Agudath Israel gained much in stature and actual power and influence in Israel, as well as in the world. The unwillingness of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion to fulfill his promises to the Religious Bloc caused the final break, and the exit of Agudath Israel from the government, while the Mizrachi groups remained represented in the cabinet.

5. *The Williamsburg branch of Agudath Israel,* the organization described in this section, reflects the changes and the stages in the development of the national movement in this country. Its leaders and outstanding members had more than a proportionate share in the making of the national organization and in the guidance of its political course. As the local branch of a worldwide movement it provided a natural background for the assimilation of newcomers who had grown up in this ideology in other countries. On the basis of a common religio-cultural valuation and Jewish political ideology it was not difficult for European Agudists to find their way into the ranks of the American organization. Their process of adjustment was thus facilitated, despite the external differences of life in Williamsburg and the social and Jewish religious and cultural patterns that were new to them.

The following chapters will try to describe these similarities and differences in the process of assimilation of the newcomers which began at the end of Phase I.

II. AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLIAMSBURG IN PHASE I.

1. *The Historical Background*

In 1926, three years after the founding of the first branch of Agudath Israel Youth on the East Side, a group of twenty five young men from Orthodox Jewish homes, averaging 20 years of age, formed the *Zeirei Agudath Israel of Williamsburg,* Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg, popularly known as the *Zeirei,* or the Z. A. I. After being inspired by the speeches of famous European Agudist leaders who visited the United States, and the literature of the movement, they met in the house of the late famous Stolyner Rebbe, at 156 Rodney Street, in the heart of Williamsburg. Though he did not take an active part in the organization, the Stolyner Rebbe remained mentor and host to the infant branch until it had grown sufficiently strong to rent its own local, the roomy basement of a typical Williamsburg brownstone house. Agudath Israel Youth remained here for twelve years, during which time the organization grew and developed, until

the purchase of its own building at 616 Bedford Avenue, a central location in the best part of the neighborhood.[5]

Though founded after the East Side and Brownsville branches, Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg soon rose to prominence and influence within the national movement. Until its supremacy was established it followed its own policy, rather than yielding to the leadership of the older, and at first numerically stronger branches. Within a few years the Z.A.I. of Wililamsburg had almost a hundred seniors and nearly as many junior members. By 1938, when the first large group of refugees began to arrive, their numbers had doubled, though not all were active. The number of junior members had almost tripled and necessitated the purchase of a new building to provide proper facilities.

It was much more than the rapid numerical growth of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg that made it such a powerful group within the movement, and gained the respect of the community. The East Side group, all through its existence, was made up largely of first generation immigrants who had come to the United States as children and had grown up in the rough slum atmosphere of the worst Jewish neighborhood. This was true also of the always weak Brownsville branch. The Williamsburg branch contained some of the best elements in the movement, socially as well as intellectually. Like the members of the older branches they, were first or second generation immigrants, and a good many of them had set out on business careers as clerks, salesmen, and unskilled workmen. On the average their homes were on a somewhat higher economic level; the neighborhood was better, and almost half of the members attended night school, college, evening high school, trades schools, or a talmudical academy. This higher social, economic and intellectual level produced a better group spirit, less internal friction, and a greater capacity to understand and promote the issues, campaigns and activities of the movement at large, as well as those of the local branch and the close community. Veterans of the Williamsburg branch are always wont to stress that "in the old days" there existed a close personal bond between the members, who shared each other's sorrow and joy, helped each other, and cared for each other's needs unselfishly. Moreover, a high standard of Hebrew learning was required of each and every member. One of the statutes of the branch required that every member had to attend at least three classes of Hebrew study per week. Attendance was checked in a rollbook by one of the officers, and members who did not abide by the rule were fined. The veterans of the branch tell with pride of the late Talmud class that was held every night at the local for the many members who attended night schools, and then, after school, came to the local for their regular Hebrew studies. Such intellectual mobility had of course a beneficial effect on the spirit and level of the group, as it expanded and recruited more members from those who moved into the neighborhood from other sections; from among young immi-

5. Comp. Ch. II, The Residential Pattern, Zone I.

grants, or the children of immigrants; and from the ranks of their own juniors, who had an even better Jewish and secular education than the seniors.

2. *The Ethnic Composition*

As important as the social and educational composition of the membership of Agudath Israel Youth, was its rather homogeneous ethnic background. Most of the members were of Polish, Russian-Polish or Galician parentage, if they themselves had not immigrated into the United States from these centers of East European Jewry. Only around the Mid-1930's did the Jewish Hungarian element increase sizably and gain in importance, similar to the German-Austrian, and then the postwar Polish-Hungarian group later on. Since the composition of the organization reflects the ethnic composition of the Williamsburg Jewish community, this common background was important not only for the purely religious aspects and forms of rites and customs, but for the social mores and valuations directly or indirectly derived from it.

The Eastern European Orthodox Jewish groups like the Germans, Austrians, French and Belgians, stress secular culture, and the Jewish scientific approach as much as purely Jewish learning; thus they have a much less intense Hebrew background, though wider cultural interests. The Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian and other South-east European Jewish groups stress the extreme anti-secular attitude. The Polish-Galician Jews display a moderately Orthodox attitude. Hence we find that the Orthodox Jewish youth of Williamsburg, largely of Polish and Galician descent, was able to make moderate forms of compromise, such as going to college, and acquiring worldly culture to a degree unacceptable to the Hungarian elements. This had a decisive influence on the changes in the Williamsburg community that occurred as the Hungarian Orthodox Jewish elements increased rapidly after 1939. It introduced their intensive, Orthodox Jewish patterns of non-compromise, making the formerly wholeheartedly Orthodox Polish Jews appear conservative in comparison, and forcing a good many of them into customs and habits which they had formerly not even thought of adopting.

Until 1938 there was no question of the extreme attitude and position taken by the Jewish-Hungarian Orthodoxy. The membership of *Zeirei Agudath Israel* was Chassidic, in a general way, walking and dressing like the rest of the community, not wearing beards or *Peyes*, nor black or dark outfits. Their women did not have to have all their hair covered, and permitted themselves to dress as fashionably as the rest of the community. Although they did not go to movies and theatres regularly, they had no objection to anyone who attended a play or movie; and they did not maintain a strict separation of the sexes at organizational affairs, meetings and parties.[6] They were interested in sports and outdoor activities and would go to a beach or pool where there was mixed bathing. All this without

6. See Ch. VI, on the separation of the sexes at communal affairs.

feeling that they were violating any basic law of generally accepted attitude of pronounced Orthodox character. Much of this rather tolerant attitude changed later, when the more rigid Central European groups entered the community and partially imposed their life patterns and views on the Orthodox Jewish elements.

There was, of course, even in those early years, a limit to the degree of compromise permissible, as is proved by the case of the Penn Street branch of Agudath Israel Youth. This was a branch formed by a group of American young men of the same background as the members of the main Williamsburg branch, but located at the edge of the community. The group broke up when a majority wanted to introduce dancing and similar activities that were definitely against the spirit of the law, if not against its letter. Some of the more strictly Orthodox elements of the secondary Williamsburg branch joined the main group. The others joined such organizations as Young Israel, which in less Orthodox Jewish communities represents the very Orthodox elements. In Williamsburg it drew those who came from Orthodox homes, but have moved further toward the less strict attitude typical of the religious American Jew of the second of third generation.

3. *The Economic Pattern*

The economic background of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg[7] changed little basically, after the days of its founding until 1938. The young men who had been at the beginning of their professional careers, had advanced mostly along the courses they mapped out for themselves. Some salesmen and clerks had established their own business, and were doing quite well. Several students of accounting had earned their diplomas as Certified Public Accountants and were building up a clientele. Some of the skilled and semi-skilled workers had advanced, and were earning decent salaries. Very few did menial work. One bided his time as foreman in a factory, waiting for a call to a position as teacher of Mathematics. One, an incipient lawyer, had rented a store in the neighborhood, in which he opened a Hebrew school to support himself until he had established himself as a lawyer. Many were going through the hardships of establishing themselves in business on courage, faith, little cash and great expectations. It was a slow and painful process in the late 1930's for young men to compete with established firms which had the cash to hold out while times were bad and unemployment was high. Among the most successful members of the organization were the customer-peddlers who built their routes in the small towns of Long Island, Queens, Jamaica, Ridgewood and other suburbs. They were considered the wealthy class among the members, because most of them had cars and were able to spend money more freely than the other young men. Only few earned as much as $50.00 a week; $30.00 was considered a high income; and the average ranged between $15.00 and $25.00.

7. See Table V, p. 285.

Considering the fact that only a third of the members had married by 1938, and very few had more than one or two children, this income was good in comparison to the average income of the community.

It is quite understandable that anyone who entered the organization around 1938 was impressed by the general feeling of economic optimism. Many of the members had already passed beyond the economic level of their parents; some were actually supporting them; and others had reached out into professions that were far above anything their elders could have dreamt of. Comparison with the economic picture of ten years later shows that their optimism was fully justified, though the brightness of the picture was largely due to the war and postwar boom.

4. *The Social Pattern*

The social pattern of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg[8] revolves around three major factors, a) the family clans, b) the economic level of the members, and c) the leading personalities. The economic factor was of little importance in the early years of the organization's existence. Later on, with the progressive crystallization of economic stratification among the members, it assumed major proportions.

Except for the first twenty five young men who had organized the Williamsburg branch of Agudath Israel Youth largely for reasons of religious and Jewish political conviction, most of its members joined because of friends, neighbors, and relatives. By 1938 more than half of the membership belonged to family clans, of which fifteen had an average of four brothers, plus brothers-in-law and cousins in the organization. Up to 1938 many of the internal struggles originated in clan competition and rivalry for both formal and informal leadership. Intermarriage among some of the clans and the gradual economic success or failure of others narrowed the competition down to five clans, which by 1938 more or less controlled the activities and the social life of the organization. Later developments, among them the moving away of many members, including some whole clans, eliminated this social force almost completely.

Although the division into clans may have caused some friction and wasted effort, it had a beneficial effect on the social cohesion of the organization and on its group spirit. Some of the families who had formed the clans were among the most respected and influential elements of the community. That their children and relatives joined the Z.A.I., gave the organization social standing and prestige; and it was considered part of the Orthodox pattern of the neighborhood that a young man who wanted to be accepted as truly Orthodox, had to belong to it. Membership in other organizations considered Orthodox in different neighborhoods, was treated almost as an indication of the young man's tendency to deviate from the strictly Orthodox pattern in Williamsburg. In many instances members of families who did not join the *Zeirei*, but these other organizations, did indeed

8. See Chart 3, p. 285, Cf. Ch. IV.

free themselves of the close bonds of the Williamsburg pattern. The members of the clan in the *Zeirei*, however, looked to each other, and after each other, to keep up their morale and prevent their falling from the high level of intellectual and practical life demanded by the organization.

How effective this group spirit was became apparent when, years later, members of the clans moved away into different neighborhoods where they deviated from the strictly Orthodox pattern to which they had adhered while in Williamsburg and active in the Z.A.I. Similarly, some of the members of clans who remained in Williamsburg, while the rest of their families moved away, lost some religious, and therefore social standing. Naturally, all this had a definite effect on the morale of the entire organization. Much of the social disintegration that set in later may be attributed to the gradual disappearance of the old clans and the clan spirit.

Another effect of the clans was that most of the good leaders and officers came from their ranks, as a by-product of the internal struggle for power. Some social, religious or educational functions were always handled by the members of certain clans, who had formed traditions and taught one another the techniques and methods which made for efficiency and high standards. Some members of these families carry on the tradition to this day, if not in Williamsburg, in other branches of the organization.

Beside the officers who were certain to be elected by their clans, there were and still are some individuals who by virtue of their Hebrew scholarship, their personalities or their special capabilities have been in the center of all organizational activities. There is one man in particular, who entered the Z.A.I. accidentally, ten years after its founding, and dominated it ever since. Possessing all the qualities of leadership, oratory, the knowledge of handling people, and seemingly inexhaustible idealism and energy, he quickly rose to the top. He, more than anyone else, changed it from a relatively small youth organization into an effective and mature movement, carrying many of the lesser leaders with him to the highest ranks of the national organization. Through his efforts the junior groups of the Williamsburg branch thrived, and soon counted more members than all other branches together. He organized the loosely connected local branches into a properly functioning council, and gave up a successful business career to dedicate all his time to building and directing the national office. He, more than anyone else, was responsible for the refugee relief work of the organization, which won recognition from the entire American Jewish community and attracted the attention and acclaim of the highest circles of the United States government.

If he meant much to the Agudath Israel movement in Williamsburg, and in the United States, and in the world, he meant more to the local community, which came to look up to him almost as a demi-god. There is hardly a man, woman or child in the Orthodox community who has not at some time drawn on his advice, or help in personal problems. If the community standing of the Z.A.I of Williamsburg may be judged in terms of the effects of individuals connected with it, he certainly contributed most.

Another leader who grew out of the ranks and who, with his six brothers, has been one of the strongest influences in the organization from its founding to the present time, is a successful accountant. Due to his economic standing, and his experience in all technical and financial problems, he has been the advisor to all administrations ever since the founding. Behind the scenes, he is the top social leader and business manager of the organization.

A third type of leader is represented by a rabbi who grew up in the organization and was always its "favorite son," as one of the veterans called him. He was still a youngster when the Z.A.I of Williamsburg sent him to Vienna, in 1928, to attend the World Congress of Agudath Israel as its own representative. In the years since the founding of the organization he grew to become not only the outstanding scholar of the Z.A.I., its spiritual guide, and in later years even its political head; but he became the most prominent Talmud teacher among the native Williamsburg Jews. When the head of a famous Orthodox Talmudical academy died, this still relatively young rabbi was named his successor, together with an older scholar of world fame. Although this heavy burden has prevented him from being as active as before, he is still the spiritual head of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg.

These three top leaders in the political, the social and the spiritual aspects of the organization, represent the highest strata of Z. A. I. society. Until 1938, they were still on the same level as the other members with whom they had grown up as equals, and who treated them as equals, though recognizing their special capabilities and efforts. In time, as there were fewer of the older members left and new elements came in, their social status rose considerably, to a point where they are treated now almost with reverence.

The next level of social recognition was always a matter of unconscious, rather than conscious dispute between the activists and the wealthy. The activists were the members who took more than the usual interest, who pushed and carried through activities and the routine work. Some of them have been doing this kind of spade work from the time they joined the organization to the present. Others moved away or got tired, particularly when their work did not meet with the approval or social recognition which they expected of it. Frequently it was the group of the wealthier, the successful customer-peddlers, or businessmen, who ridiculed the serious efforts of the usually younger, eager activists to participate, or to maintain the proper decorum during the services and meetings. Being members of the oldest group, and knowing their financial independence, they took, and those who are left still take some privileges, though in a good spirit. Between these two groups there has always been the friction that develops between those who are legally and morally right, and those who carry the weight of long-standing prerogatives and privileges. Until 1938 when there were many more on an equal level with the "privileged," this dinctinction did not stand out, and any of the officers elected then felt that he was equal to them and capable of telling them exactly what he thought of them. As the average age of the activists dropped and new elements entered their

ranks, more respect toward those who were able to spend money for the organization and were known as veterans developed. Something of a gap was created between the two groups, with inferiority feelings on the part of the younger elements, and a superiority complex in the others.

Next on the social scale is the large group of members who will never run for office; who are neither activists, nor part of the wealthier group; but who pay their dues, and attend meetings and classes more or less regularly because of friendship or out of belief in the ideas of the organization.

There is also a group of young and some older men, people of the neighborhood who are not registered members, who do not pay dues and show no interests in the ideological aspects or the political and social work of the organization. For incidental reasons they have been attending the services, educational classes of the Z. A. I., and feel at home there. In due time, some of this lowest social strata within the organization did join officially for formal reasons. But by and large they contributed nothing to the movement.

There is still another group of members, increasing, with the years, who exist as members in the books only. At one time or another they have been active, but have moved away, lost interest, or found other affiliations.

5. *Activities*

The *activities* of the organization may be divided into four major categories, (a) religious, (b) political, (c) social and (d) educational.

a) The religious activities center about community services and include practically every phase of congregational prayers, rites and customs. They have been the same ever since the founding of the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg and the establishment of its regular Sabbath and holiday services. For a while, during the peak of the organization's activities, between 1939 and 1941, there was an increase in the religious activities. Daily services were held at the branch synagogue. The rite followed is the *Sephardic,* as most of the members of the Z. A. I. had come from Polish, Galician, and other East European homes. One of the reasons for the secession of a large group of immigrants, the Viennese, German, Upper Hungarian and Czechoslovak refugees, was their unwillingness to give up their traditional *Ashkenazic rite.*

b) The political activities of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg consist of regular membership meetings, special meetings, and conferences for discussion of current political issues and policies; campaigns on behalf of political projects, particularly in connection with the Israel work of the national organization; membership campaigns, political rallies for the local community, and participation in the political activities of the national Jewish organization through representatives. From 1926 to 1938 there was a steady increase in political awareness and active interest, reaching its peak in 1942. From then on political interest decreased until the recent attempt at a revival through the change of name to Agudath Israel of

Williamsburg. Since quite a few of the Williamsburg officers and activists were the leaders of the national organization until the present time, there has always been a greater awareness of Jewish political issues among the active elements of Williamsburg than in most other branches of the movement. Only in the early stages of the movement, particularly the first ten years of its existence, was there a real effort at understanding, discussing and arguing the political issues of Agudath Israel within the organization, and in the broader community. Although some of the leaders gained deeper insight and knowledge of the political issues through first-hand participation, the majority was satisfied with a superficial slogan approach to all problems and discussions. In this respect there was a considerable difference in the background of the newcomers to the organization from the ranks of former European Agudists.

c) The social activities of the Z.A.I., of Williamsburg consist mainly of holiday celebrations at parties, social gatherings in private homes, celebrations of special internal events like weddings, births, and regular social gatherings at the branch local. Until 1939, the members maintained a much closer relationship, sharing each other's personal affairs, sorrows and joys. There was conscientious observation of such social duties as visiting and helping the sick, the needy and poor. Although there was an increase in the social services extended to the refugee groups as they began to settle in Williamsburg, the level and intensity of social life decreased with the years after 1939.

d) The educational activities either centered about Hebrew talmudical and literary study, or about reading and discussion of ideological questions. Both the regular Hebrew classes and the general ideological indoctrination waned within the organization and have dwindled down to a considerably lower level than during the 1926-1938 period of the *Zeirei's* history. As far as the youth group work is concerned, it reached its peak between 1937 and 1942, when there were over twenty junior groups, ranking in age from 5-19 years, some counting as many as fifty members. The men responsible for the senior activities, were also the ones who handled the youth education, in co-operation with some of the olders juniors. As these leaders moved up to national activities, the youth work disintegrated. Only recently have attempts been made to bring them back to the old level, by some of the younger members who had grown up in the organization and carried some of the inspiration and views inculcated in them by the former leaders, into the ranks of the new youth attracted from the parochial schools of the community.

Due to the fact that the national movement has stepped up its educational work in the course of the past few years, in terms of political and ideological forums, lectures and courses for adults in Hebrew and Jewish philosophy or Talmudical literature, the local branch has also experienced a partial rise of the intellectual level.

The differences in the educational level and approach of the various refugee groups who joined the Z.A.I. from 1938 on had both good and bad effects on the general educational work of the organization.

There is another group of activities, which do not fall under any of these headings, such as regular branch publications, social events for

the purpose of raising funds, concerts and plays, outings, and similar informal affairs. They too had reached their height by 1939 and decreased considerably in the later years. In all of these, the first waves of refugees took a great deal of active interest, as will be discussed further on.

In general, the activities of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg until 1938 may not have been as extensive as in the ensuing years, but most of them were more intensive, and a matter of personal concern for almost the entire membership. They took part in practically all the activities of the organization, and a considerable part of their volunteer efforts had later to be carried on by the national office.

III. ABSORPTION OF THE FIRST WAVES OF REFUGEES AND EXPANSION 1938-1942

1. The first refugees from Germany, Austria, and other Nazi occupied countries who arrived in Williamsburg in 1938 and 1939 and entered the Z.A.I., found an organization full of hustle and activity. The membership was constantly increasing and there was a feeling of growth and expansion which made the local seem to be bursting its seams. On an ordinary Saturday, or even on a weekday evening, the place was filled with several large groups of youngsters, and study classes and organizational meetings had to be held in the adjoining kitchen or storeroom.

It is hard to picture a friendlier, more helpful atmosphere and attitude than the one which greeted the newcomers from the first moment they visited the local of the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg. Practically all of them had been members of some branch of the Agudah movement in Europe, and they had no difficulty in establishing rapport from the very outset. Not only were they the objects of sincere compassion, something that might have tended to make them rather uncomfortable; they were immediately shown that they would be treated as equals and brothers of the same movement and views. In addition most of the members of the Z.A.I. speak Yiddish, and if they do not speak it, understand it. They had therefore no difficulty in communicating fully with the newcomers who spoke Yiddish or German. In addition to the language bridge there was another medium in which the two groups met on a basis of full equality. There were the Hebrew classes carried on in the particular Yiddish jargon which is universal for all groups and classes studying the Talmud or its commentaries. A newcomer who sat down at the table the very first day or evening he entered the branch and participated actively in the discussion of a passage or the interpretation of a problem of the Talmud, needed no other introduction to become acquainted with those who had shared this experience of the meeting of the spirit. The Talmudic discussion recognizes no barriers of authority, social distinction, or length of membership, in the study group. Such a truly democratic meeting ground was ideally suited to make the newcomer from the countries of Nazi occupation feel at

home. These factors made the successful entrance and adjustment of the newcomers to the society of the *Zeirei* easy. A prerequisite to this, however, was that the newcomer could meet the intellectual and Hebrew standards of the organization.

Here, though, was the first chance for the newcomer to realize the existence of certain basic differences, which were to play an important role in blocking the easy and quick adjustment of a good many of his co-sufferers.

For, although all really Orthodox Jews, German, Austrian, Polish or American, have the same basic attitude toward "Torah", and its traditions and laws, the valuations, methods of approach and study, and the perspectives on their relation or correlation with "non-Torah" culture vary considerably both in theory and in practise. The Orthodox East European Jew has never put secular study on the same level with his religious learning. To go to a high school, and certainly to attend a college, was the equivalent of assimilation and ultimate departure from the traditional way of life. His main concern was the intensive study of Hebrew literature, particularly of the *Talmud* and the Talmudic literature of commentaries, codes and treatises. Just as he tried to maintain the external marks of distinctive clothing and appearance, he attempted to live in spiritual isolation from the rest of the world in every area but that concerned with earning a livelihood.

Different was the approach of the Western European Jew, who, even if he were Orthodox, attempted to eliminate all external signs of distiction, as long as they were not absolutely required by the letter of the law. *Peyes*, beard, language, even names were adjusted for the sake of being, to all appearances, just like the cultural neighbor next door. On the inside only, in customs, rites, religious practises and services, did his pattern of living differ from that of the non-religious and assimilated. Gradually as he concentrated more and more on being as cultured and informed as his neighbors in their own realms of knowledge and spiritual endeavor, the study of Hebrew culture was lowered from its position as the exclusive source and goal of knowledge to one on a level of equality with worldly culture, if not to minor position of secondary, supplementary study. Even some of the methods and approaches of worldly learning were transferred to the realm of religious study. The systematic German Jew, nurtured in the spirit of the thorough, scientific German treatment of culture and science, would attempt to impose or superimpose this frame of mind on Talmudic study, for instance. Instead of the extensive and intensive learning, memorizing and frequently "hair-splitting" dialectics of the Eastern European Talmud scholar who spent a good many of his years in exclusive study of the multi-branched Talmudic literature, he would substitute the scientific and systematic, well-organized research methods which because of the very nature of the Talmud have little value. The popular saying was that the German Jew knew exactly the dates of birth, genealogies, and philosophical predecessors of the men who created the Talmud literature, but the East European Jew knew the contents of their works. The average German Jew, even if he was Orthodox, spent only a few limited hours per week on the study

of the Talmud; whereas the East European Jew, even the ignorant one, had dedicated a good part of his youth to it, and even after he was forced to leave the four walls of the *Beth Hamidrash*, the house of communal Talmud study, he knew enough to go on studying in his leisure time. The cream of the Orthodox young German Jews waited till graduation from high school to spend a few years in a Yeshivah, a Talmudical academy; while the East European had by then mastered the techniques and major portions of the body of the Talmudical literature.

This difference of background became quite obvious in the meetings of the Orthodox young refugees with the members of Agudath Israel Youth in Williamsburg, as elsewhere. Although the Hebrew background of the average American member, first or second generation, was no longer as intensive as that of the average young man in Poland, Galicia, Russian and Lithuania, he had attended an American Yeshivah, which spends the major portion of the day on Hebrew studies, and only the required afternoon hours, or evenings, on secular learning. Thus the average American Zeirei member was able to study a page of the Talmud through its commentaries and annotations without the help of a teacher, whereas only a few of the West European elements had studied the Talmud long and intensively enough to follow the discussion. This automatically created a distinction that was not conducive to easy acceptance of the newcomers in the field of Hebrew studies, which was one main feature of the organization's activities, and a factor determining social standing.

On the other hand, the average young man of about twenty from Germany or Austria had a much better background and training in general, worldly culture, in philosophical discussion and ideological training. Many of the hours which the comparable Agudah youth group in Poland or America would have spent on the study of Talmud or related subjects, a Western European group spent in the discussion of general and Jewish philosophical problems. This difference of training created a divergence of thinking and valuation tending to disturb or slow down the process of adjustment, because it affected all the intellectual activities of the organization's life, the Hebrew classes, as well as the general ideological and political discussion. In the long run, though, adjustment in this realm was not too difficult, as the newcomers began to adopt many of the Orthodox Jewish valuations of the type dominant in Williamsburg, and in the *Zeirei*, one of its typical organizations. It was perhaps their sad experience with German culture which made it easy for them to copy the atitude of the East European Jew who is rather disdainful of any culture except that of the *Torah*. Thus quite a few, particularly of the adolescents among the refugees, entered *Yeshivoth*, Talmudical academies, and spent much less time on general study or even professional training, than they would have done had they stayed in Europe.

Another, less serious difficulty, though it had immediate effects on the newcomer to the organization, once he had begun to settle down, was the above-mentioned economic optimism of the membership, which grew out of the fact that most of the members were well on

their way to a successful career. The newcomer, however, had been completely thrown off his normal course, and did not know what lay ahead of him economically. Originally the social and economic level of most of the newcomers had been higher than that of the average American Jew of the Williamsburg or Zeirei type. The average German or Viennese belonged to the lower-middle class, or to the upper-middle class; whereas the average Orthodox Jew in the United States up to Phase II, belonged to the upper-lower class, and rarely to the upper-middle class. The younger West European generation would normally have risen to an even higher level. A large percentage had attended a high school, gymnasium, or even university, and would have been able to make careers in medicine, and other professions.

By 1939, all this was gone. As they faced the uncertainty of starting all over again, the newcomers were unable to find the easy tone of conversation that would have put them on an equal social footing with the general membership. They had become worried, unsociable, and insecure. They found it hard to fall into the light pattern of the easy give and take that was typical of the informal conversation and social relationships of the members. Heavy of heart, they would not adjust to the ways of thinking and relatively "boyish" acting that were necessary to be socially acceptable. Thus, they appeared rather clumsy and boorish. Later, however, as they began to settle into some career, usually a different, much less attractive one (at least in the first few years) than they might have expected normally, they gained ease and acquaintance with the habits and patterns of social interaction.

What made it difficult for the newcomers to assimilate to the social life of the organization, in addition to the inner blocks of insecurity, was the fact that they were not entering a newly forming society or a loosely-knit social pattern. As pointed out in the introduction, the social fabric of the organization was primarily a pattern of family-clans centered around certain leading personalities. Despite the fact that the members of the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg had every intention of admitting the newcomers into their ranks and made every effort to make them feel welcome and at home, it was almost impossible for anyone, even if he was not a refugee weighed down by personal problems and his ignorance of the ways of the land, to penetrate into the inner circles without difficulty. If he was invited to private parties he felt out of place because he did not share the interests of the other guests, and could not understand the over and undertones of conversation which play so large a part in the enjoyment of a party.

Socially the inner circles of the organization were closed to the newcomers, who within a few months numbered close to twenty young men, some married, mostly single, half from Germany and half from Austria. They were able to enter fully into the religious, political and social affairs and activities of the Zeirei. Eager to make good, and to bridge some of the open gap that had resulted from the social isolation of their deracination, they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the work. From it they hoped both to regain some of their self-esteem and to establish personal contacts that would substitute for

the acceptance of pity which they felt they had so far been granted. Those with a good Hebrew and intellectual training contributed to the educational activities. Those with good voices introduced new songs into the community singing. Some of them had ample experienece in working with junior groups and volunteered their services. They participated in the outings and sports, trying hard to learn baseball and volleyball, though they would have preferred to play soccer, once their favorite sport. Later, as more refugees joined in Williamsburg and the other branches, they did form soccer teams which played against each other and even attracted some of the American elements.

Most of those who had no special talents or experience to contribute spent extra hours in volunteer office work, mailing, filing and helping in fund-raising campaigns and all the other projects which called for extra effort and sacrifices of time.

Thus in a relatively short time most of the newcomers who had joined the organization during the fall and winter of 1938/1939 were drawn into its social web. It was much longer, however, before any of them really penetrated the closely-knit inner circles.

3. The constant increase in membership, and the need to expand activities, particularly for the large junior groups recruited from the youth of the community, had long necessitated moving from the local which the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg had occupied for twelve years. With less farsighted leadership the organization might have looked for another, larger local that would temporarily fulfill their needs. But, as pointed out in the introduction, the young men responsible for the local work and spirit had meanwhile moved up to become the national leaders of the movement. They realized that both the affairs of the local branch and the national council demanded a more professional approach of coordination and intensification, in order to fulfill the task which obviously lay ahead in the years of the gathering and breaking storm. Against the objections of a good many less farsighted members they pushed the project of purchasing a building at 616 Bedford Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the neighborhood.

What is nowadays a matter of routine and part of the inevitable growth of any organization or congregation in Williamsburg, the purchase of a building on Bedford Avenue, was then quite a daring project, involving the financial burden of years of indebtness. Some of the leading figures in the organization, accountants and lawyers who were acquainted with the technical aspects of financial transactions, worked out the details, and allayed the fears of the inexperienced members who at first obstructed the project, as they did every step the leaders of the organization took to widen the scope of its activities. In February 1939, the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg took possession of its building with a public parade and ceremony in which the entire community took part.

This move into its own building was an important step not only for the local branch, but for the entire movement and for the huge amount of relief work done on behalf of refugees in the course of the next years. It was the first building owned by the organization in any part of the United States, though several other branches were

to follow in the course of years. Automatically, the building on Bedford Avenue became the center of all the campaigns, activities and functions which raised the national Agudah movement to a high level of accomplishment and public recognition.

Soon after the purchase of the building, in April 1939, came the next step that concentrated the national activities in the Williamsburg branch and at the same time stepped up the pace of the activities of the local branches. The National President of the Agudath Israel Youth of America, who, as described above, was also the mainstay of the local branch, gave up his private business career as an executive and opened a national office on the premises at 616 Bedford Avenue. With the help of one young refugee from Germany who remained his assistant for years, he converted the former loose alliance of individual branches into a strong council. He organized the proper administrative bodies and technical machinery to carry out the plans and projects that soon assumed world-wide scope, in response to the rising demands for stepped-up national organization work, overseas relief work, Palestine work, and Refugee relief work. It is the contention of some of the older members of the organization that the opening of the national council office in the Williamsburg branch diverted the efforts of the best local elements toward national affairs, and thus contributed to the gradual disintegration of the strong group cohesion and group spirit of the branch. In reality, however, the very opposite seems true. The establishment of the national office at 616 Bedford Avenue was a source of mutual strengthening both for the local branch and for the national movement. Those who complained were unable to grow with the organization and to grasp the wider scope and higher level of the activities which developed from the change to a professionally-run movement. Only in one respect their claims seem justified. A great deal of work that had formerly been done by volunteer help from the local members, was now handled by the employees of the national office. Consequently, the membership of the local branch came to rely too much on the professional administration of the organization and grew away from direct contact with the work.

Much as this may be true, it cannot alter the fact that the professional touch, the efficient and proper handling of all organizational matters, had a most beneficial effect on the growth of the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg, as well as on all the other branches. In fact Williamsburg benefited most because it was always in the very midst of things. Its officials participated in the projects and promoted local interests. Its members were well-informed, and saw with their own eyes the tremendous amount of work accomplished in their midst. A great deal of the distrust that developed later, when the national office moved to its new headquarters on Times Square, was due to the lack of direct contact with the members. There the work reached an even higher degree of professional smoothness and independence of the volunteer help which had still played an important part at 616 Bedford Avenue. Witnessing the activity in their own local silenced much of the criticism that was later levelled against the large executive apparatus necessary for the national activities. The gradual loosening of the tight bond between the members was

due rather to other factors which will be pointed out later. The four years during which the national council rented space for its offices in the local building at 616 Bedford Avenue were certainly those in which the local branch was at its peak of activity.

3. Only a few weeks after the purchase of the building and the opening of the national council office, the two top floors of the branch local of the Z. A. I. of Williamsburg were converted into a Refugee Home. Its purpose was to offer Orthodox young men from Nazi dominated countries, who came to the United States without family or friends, a temporary shelter, until they would find work and a place of their own. Starting with ten young adolescents, former members of German or Austrian branches of the Agudah movement, the Agudath Israel Refugee Home reached a top occupancy of thirty young and a few older men.

Whereas the joining of individual refugees had no marked effect on the organization as a whole, the establishment of the Refugee Home, and the entrance of a compact group into every aspect of the life of the branch brought both positive and negative changes. Each of the previous newcomers had been treated as an individual, as a new member joining under particular circumstances, evoking perhaps more general curiosity and interest than usual, but not upsetting any social patterns within the group. "The Refugees," the residents of the Home, formed a new social class which was more or less treated as a separate unit below the previous lowest level of the organization's society. They were charges; they had to be cared for, to be invited into the homes of the married members for Sabbath and holiday meals, because these were not provided in the simple kitchen of the Refugee Home. Not that the members of the Z. A. I. minded. On the contrary, it was a challenge to their philanthropic instincts and one way of trying to make up to the unfortunate victims of persecution for what they had suffered. Many of the residents of the Home became part of the families which offered them hospitality. The very fact, however, that hospitality and philanthropy entered into the relations between the members of the organization and the group of newcomers who stayed at the Refugee Home, was largely responsible for the feeling of social inferiority and discrimination which affected the refugees who were sensitive to these distinctions. They were not able to spend any money, and they could not participate in some of the formal functions unless they were specially invited and given a separate table. They did not, naturally, enter into the web of the social relations of the informal group life outside the branch building. Most of the older residents were therefore particularly intent on leaving the Home as soon as possible. Even if they had previously been close to the ideals of the organization, they now tried to get away from the life of the branch where they had experienced the humiliation of being treated as charges. They joined other communities in order to enter into a social life that did not remind them of their initial economic and social dependence.

The situation of the young adolescents who made up the bulk of the residents of the Home was different. To some extent, of course,

they shared the feelings of the older men, but they had never really known complete independence. They were appreciative of the paternal interest many of the leaders and members of the organization took in all their personal affairs. as one said: "The Zeirei was father and mother to me." They mixed very well with the younger elements in the organization, the intermediate and juniors, where the patterns of social groupings were not yet crystallized to a degree that might have hurt them. Many of the younger boys attended the local Yeshivah and went to night school to learn a trade; or, frequently with the help of some of the older and better-established members, they found a position or tried to establish their own business. Whereas the older men hardly ever stayed longer than half a year, many of the younger element spent as much as two years in the Home, and they maintained close relations with the organization after they left. Being young and interested in the ideas of the organization as well as the comradeship of people who belonged to it, they remained loyal, despite some initial social discrimination or patronizing.

The positive effect of the establishment of the Refugee Home arose from the very same factors which had made for some degree of discrimination. The entrance of the newcomers as a group into the life of the branch, into all its activities and functions, forced every active member of the Z. A. I. to become personally acquainted with the inmates of the Home. On closer contact they were no longer "the Refugees," but individuals with names, first names at that, and with personal drawbacks or gifts that made them as valuable members as anyone else in the organization. None was more willing to give whatever they could than the younger, more flexible refugees, because they were eager to show their appreciation and to make good for the sake of their own self-esteem. During the first years in which the office of the National Council was located at 616 Bedford Avenue, these young refugees were of invaluable help in getting things done for which professional help would have been too costly. Although hardly any of them penetrated the inner social circles of the organization, many were able to make good friends on every social level.

As more refugees from Germany, and many more from Vienna, moved into Williamsburg and joined the Z. A. I. because they had been members of the organization in Europe, most of the initial discrimination disappeared, at least superficially. It took several years, however, and many of the changes discussed in the following chapter, before the assimilation of the refugees who remained in the branch was complete.

IV. OUTER AND INNER CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATION

1. After 1940 the organization began to feel a trend that had become apparent in the Williamsburg community at large, and that has affected the pattern of the community and of the organization ever since.

During the years of economic crisis and stagnation the population had changed very little. People did not easily move out of the

neighborhood where they had most of their social ties. As business began to pick up and the whole economic situation improved, and as new elements moved into Williamsburg from the German-speaking countries, from Poland and particularly from Hungary, a gradual shift in the population began. First the wealthy and some of the young, newly-married couples began to look for new areas in which to live. Most of them chose to move to Crown Heights or Boro Park.

At first this trend had little immediate effect as far as the community and the organization were concerned. As the top level of Williamsburg "society" moved up to Crown Heights and Boro Park, many Orthodox families from the East Side or the Bronx or Brownsville began to move to Williamsburg. The reason for this was that Williamsburg was beginning to acquire an increasing reputation as a center of religious community life and as the proper place to bring up children in the truly Orthodox Jewish way. The Z.A.I. of Williamsburg, like the community in general, lost many of its wealthiest and young married members who could not find an apartment to suit them in the neighborhood. The loss was made up by the moving-in of active members from other Z.A.I. branches, mostly fathers whose children were to enter the local parochial schools and join the junior groups of the organization.

Secondly, there was the influx of Orthodox refugees from Nazi-occupied countries, who not only filled the gaps opened by the departure of the wealthy or newly-married, but considerably intensified the Jewish community life of Williamsburg. Many joined the Z.A.I. and became active members who participated in the religious, political, social and cultural activities of the organization.

A third group of new members that entered the *Zeirei* in those years after some of the rich and influential members had moved away, were fathers of junior members who wanted to be near their children and gradually became so accustomed to the life of the organization that they stayed on, even if their children left the junior movement and joined other organizations. Naturally their average age was higher than that of the older membership, and their participation was limited to religious services and occasional social functions.

2. While it is true that the wealthier class left Williamsburg between 1939 and 1942, the general economic level of the organization, as well as that of the entire Jewish community, did not fall. As a matter of fact, from 1939 to approximately 1944 the average income of the members of the Z.A.I. rose from about $25.00 per week to approximately $70.00. Those who had already established themselves in business profited by the general boom of the war years. Many who before had been salesmen or clerks went into business, obtained government jobs, or rose to higher income level. Practically all of the refugees who had settled in Williamsburg by then became economically independent, opening businesses, factories, or offices as professionals, and did much better, generally, than they could have anticipated.

One major field that absorbed many of the refugees and brought

considerable wealth to Williamsburg, was the diamond industry, as pointed out earlier in this study.[9]

Agudth Israel of Williamsburg naturally had its good share of members who took advantage of this economic opportunity, from the very beginning of the diamond boom until its peak had passed, around 1945, when most returned to their old trades.

While this rise in the general income of the membership of the Z.A.I. raised living standards, it contributed to a lowering of morale by loosening the close bonds that united the members, and led to the ultimate loss of a considerable part of those who made friendships with other, less Orthodox circles. Many left their Hebrew academies, their college careers, their educational classes at the organization, to work overtime, or to talk shop in their leisure time. Old friendships and loyalties were abandoned, and much of the intellectual mobility that had once characterized Williamsburg youth, such as the membership of the Z.A.I., disappeared. Naturally this had an adverse effect on the physical and spiritual development of the organization.

3. Another important factor of change during the years from 1942 to 1944 was the drafting of close to 25% of the very best and most active members of the organization to the army or government services. More than half of the activists, those who carried on the functions of the movement, were drafted and left a gap that was not always adequately filled. Others who had gained experience in youth leadership, in the executive work, and in religious and educational functions, were offered positions in other communities and moved away.

Lastly, a number of the very best and highest leaders of the local branch had become so involved in the affairs of the national movement that they had to abandon their work in Williamsburg. Their place was partially taken by inexperienced youths who had grown up in the organization, but would normally have had years of apprenticeship before they had been given such responsible offices as directing the large and highly active junior groups. Consequently, much that had been built in years of tireless efforts collapsed or deteriorated.

4. All these changes in the membership of the organization, the moving away of the wealthier class and many of the newly married, the general rise in economic status, the diamond boom, the departure of the experienced leaders and their replacement by younger elements, and the joining of a large group of refugees, had a considerable effect on the structure of the organization.

In the first place, there was a considerable tightening in the political control of the branch by the remaining few of the "ruling group." Once considered equals, they were now treated with respect, reverence and something like awe. Though they did not run for offices themselves, it was they who in preliminary discussions decided on candidates for the administrative offices and swung the elections in their favor. They controlled all major policy in the organization, regardless of the views of those who had been chosen by the membership.

9. Cf. supra, Ch. III, p. 54.

Decreasing interest on the part of the members, even in the election of officers, played into their hands and helped them wield a much stronger influence than was good for the group spirit or the democratic procedures of the organization. Whereas there had once been strong competition among the clans and power groups within the organization, it now became almost impossible to persuade anyone to run for an office. As a consequence, those who had formly remained in the background because there were other, better leaders and capable functionaries, were pushed into the foreground and assumed responsibilities for which they were not always adequate. Some developed with their jobs and remained in the forefront of the organization's activities. Others dropped out and returned to well-deserved obscurity.

Another group that rose to prominence within the organization prematurely, due to the lack of appropriate replacements for the leaders who had moved away or joined the army, were the former intermediates who had grown up in the junior movement and now became active in the senior branch. Though quite capable, and eager to help, they were too young to command the respect and cooperation of the older elements. Turning to the veteran leaders for advice, approval and guidance, they seemed more like students taking over a class on seniors' day, than officers running the organization. Obviously this had adverse effects on the esprit and functioning of the branch.

This situation of inadequate leadership was further aggravated by the fact that due to personal circumstances the main spiritual guide of the Williamsburg Z.A.I. was forced to limit his attendance and activity in the organization to a minimum. He had once been the one who planned and directed the entire educational program, and was the authority who stood above all personal squabbles, moderating, by his influence, the extremist tendencies on both wings of the organization. Having grown up in the ranks, and being a man of outstanding scholarship, he had none of the difficulties which beset the young rabbis who had moved up from the junior groups, or the refugee rabbis who partially attempted to take his place.

This was all the more serious because the trend in the organization, as in the entire Williamsburg Jewish community, toward an intensified level of Orthodoxy, due to the influx of new elements, caused more tension and internal strife. The membership of the Z.A.I. had mainly consisted of young Americans from Polish Orthodox homes. Born in the United States or brought up here, they had a rather flexible and moderate attitude toward the large area of laws or customs which are not directly and unalterably implicit in "being Orthodox." In the strictest sense of the literal tradition, their neglect may be considered a violation. As in all bodies of law, there is a range of narrower or wider interpretation, of how far one goes in living up to the very last written or unwritten letter of the law, depending on the intensity of one's Orthodox attitude. One can certainly not accuse the old membership of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg of laxity in their Orthodoxy. They were known as the young *radicals* in the community. In 1937, for instance, they stormed a synagogue that had

engaged a popular cantor for a guest performance, because he was known for his irreligious attitude and his performances as an actor. They had organized street rallies for the observance of Sabbath in the neighborhood, and were in the thick of every local enterprise to increase the religious level of the population.

Inwardly theirs was a much more liberal and compromising attitude than that of the Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and related Austrian Orthodox Jews who came into Williamsburg after 1939, and made their influence felt in many aspects of the religious community life. The average Zeirei member of old had little compunction about attending affairs of mixed character, going to a beach with mixed bathing, attending an occasional play or movie, or going to college. He certainly did not go to the extremes of external dress such as *Peyes*, beards etc., which were requirements of Orthodoxy for the Hungarian type Jew. He did not insist on the Kosher milk, or specially supervised bakeries, grocery products and meats, that were introduced by the extreme elements during the 1940's.

These external aspects, the special foods and intensified religious customs, were adopted by the members of the local branch, without much discussion. Conflicts arose when some of the older elements who had joined the organization because they belonged to one of the family clans, or because of incidental friendship, refused to live up to the standards that had become required for the general conduct of the membership. Quite a few of them, some who had been among the foremost and best workers for the organization, left to join other groups which, though Orthodox, were not as stringent. Among those who remained the feeling was always apparent that they resented the extreme attitudes taken by the leadership. The leaders were at that time under the influence of a young rabbi who had grown up in the movement in Belgium, became a considerable scholar and was very active as a leader of the extreme right wing in the national movement. He had little patience with some of the compromises formerly accepted as natural, and condoned by the young American rabbi who had stood at the head of the organization for many years but now had to withdraw. By nature an extremist, he irritated and actually antagonized a good many of the old, and some of the more moderate new members, to the point where he lost the influence he had at first wielded because of his great capabilities as a teacher and leader. In the most recent phase of the organization his place has been taken by another young American rabbi who had grown up in the organization and who had become a noted scholar.

5. By 1941, one might have expected that a continuous stream of newcomers would enter the Z.A.I., and become gradually assimilated and integrated into the social web of the organization. This was not the case, although the stream of refugees who were potential members or who did actually join the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg for a time, continued unabated. The reason for this was that only a few, never more than a fraction of the potential, remained to adjust themselves to the religious, social and cultural pattern of the organization. As soon as a particular group was strong enough it organized its own congregation, or even organization, forming a new society with a

tempo of assimilation and adjustment much slower and less radical than integration into the Z.A.I. would have demanded.

The refugees who remained were mostly those whose background resembled that of the majority of the members in the sense that they shared the moderate Polish type of Orthodoxy. This is particularly true of the refugees from Vienna, who during 1941 and 1942 had been the strongest single refugee group within the Z.A.I., but who seceded with an initial membership of thirty young and middle-aged men to form their own congregation. The only ones who remained, with the exception of one young man, were those whose parents had been of Polish or Galician descent. They liked the *Sephardic* rite, and refused to follow the German-Hungarian pattern of the majority of the Viennese of the so-called *"Schiff Shul"* type.

The adjustment of the approximately forty young men who remained in the local Z.A.I., including a few who had recently moved from the neighborhood, but kept up their membership, proceeded as quickly and pleasantly as could be expected. Most of them had a good educational background, especially in the secular field. They established themselves in business, learned trades, became professionals, doctors, teachers, researchers and executives. In general their income matched that of the majority of the membership. They became important figures in the community life of Jewish Williamsburg as the only Orthodox Jewish physicians, as teachers, community workers, businessman and youth leaders. However, despite their high educational level, their good economic background, and their communal activity they did not reach either the social status of the older members who had moved away or the top level of those who remained in Williamsburg until the end of the Forties. In the ranks of the organization they were soon fully accepted. They became officers in the local branch and in the national movement. Some even married into the family clans that had formed the old power groups of the organization. They have become mainstays at religious, political and educational functions, and they participate in all communal and social functions. The only reserve maintained toward them as a whole, was that they did not penetrate into the inner social circles, into the informal social life forming around some of the central figures until they became highly successful in their professions. They themselves were rather careful not to step on the toes of some of the older elements; in the back of their mind there was still some of the inferiority feeling that had blocked their initial adjustment in the first years of their membership. They, more than the original or relatively-new American members, preserved the respect and awe for the few top leaders. Even as duly elected officers they used restraint in exercising their powers.

As a group they contributed greatly to the political and intellectual life of the organization. Many had a better secular and political training than the average American member. Several have become important in the national movement as well as the local branch. They are intellectual leaders and theoreticians; they function as youth leaders and organizers of educational classes and programs.

They have also taken a great deal of interest in, and contributed to the intellectual and educational work of the community at large. This, perhaps more than their economic capabilities, has helped them to gain higher social recognition and acceptance, together with the self-respect so vital for their full adjustment and acceptance.

V. SECESSION OF REFUGEE GROUPS FROM THE Z.A.I.

1. *Cong. Sheirith Israel — February* 1942

The first indication that the ideological ties of the Agudist refugees who had joined the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg, would not be strong enough to hold all of them permanently, came when a young Viennese rabbi of Polish Chassidic background organized his own congregation in the neighborhood. Even before this, a famous Hungarian-Austrian rabbi had established a congregation and attracted to it the majority of the Orthodox Hungarian Jews in Williamsburg. Since only a few of the members of the Z.A.I. were first-generation Hungarians, it hardly affected the organization. The young Polish Viennese rabbi, however, was the grandson of a widely venerated, famous scholar, and a well-known scholar. It was therefore not very difficult for him to attract a number of the young Viennese refugees he and his brothers met in the Z.A.I.

It was more than personal respect, and loyalty to his famous grandfather, that induced the young married or single refugees to leave the Z.A.I. and form the Congregation *Scheirith Israel,* the Remnants of Israel. They gradually developed a community life of their own, which centered about the Rabbi and his active brothers. Most of them, having come to the United States and Williamsburg between 1939 and 1941, had become financially established by 1942. A majority had turned to the newly-opened diamond trade.

Since the local of the Z.A.I. was crowded beyond capacity, the departure of the approximately fifteen members who helped establish the "*Scheirith Israel*" Congregation did not cause any undue talk or animosity. What did produce some measure of discontent was the fact that beside the young refugees one middle-aged American member also left the organization. This American was neither a leader nor an activist, but he belonged to the large group of somewhat older men who in the course of the years had joined the organization for various incidental reasons, attending meetings, services and affairs regularly and supported it financially. Being one of the generous donors on all occasions, and otherwise a pleasant member, his leaving the organization to become the president and figurehead of the newly-established congregation was regretted and commented on. He had become acquainted with the young Viennese rabbi when the latter conducted a study class of the Zeirei at the invitation of the organization. Naturally the organization did not anticipate that he would recruit the members of his congregation from among those, like the wealthy American member who attended this class.

2. *The Viennese Secession — March* 1942

The first major secession of refugees occurred shortly after the departure of the handful of young Viennese and German refugees who helped form the "Scheirith Israel" congregation in the beginning of 1942.

There were several basic differences between these two groups of Agudist refugees who left the Williamsburg branch of Z.A.I. in quick succession. In the first place there was the matter of the size of the groups. The *Scheirith Israel* group started with the minimum of ten and never increased to more than fifteen of those who had been members of the Zeirei. They were young, or newly-wed. Economically they were still at the beginning of their careers, though they had gotten off to a promising start. Socially they were of little importance to the organization, as none of them showed any special talent or gift for leadership. They shared a background that would have enabled them to assimilate completely into the membership. Although they had come from Vienna and Germany, they were mostly from the moderate Polish Chassidic homes that were typical of the background of the American members of the Zeirei.

The second group of refugees who left the main organization in March 1942, also came largely from Vienna. Here the similarity ends. Their background was entirely different and provided them with a good, formal reason for their departure. They had all been reared in the *Ashkenazic* rite typical of German, Austrian and Hungarian Jewry, whereas the membership of the Zeirei had been brought up in the *Sephardic* rites of the Chassidim of Eastern Europe, particularly of Poland and Galicia.

By 1942 the Viennese refugees who had joined the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg since 1938, numbered more than thirty men, mostly married and with families. Most were past thirty years of age, and they possessed a rich background of communal, organizational, and business experience. They did not have the intellectual, cultural and ideological interests and training of the German Jewish refugees, but most of them had a better Hebrew education and a more strictly Orthodox attitude. This was of course due to their "Oberlander" Hungarian background which, is one of the most stringent and least intellectually orientated. Most of them had belonged to the *Schiffschul*, the highest class of Viennese Orthodox Jewish communities, and practically every one of them, unless they belonged to the younger group, had already played an important role in the Viennese-Jewish community and the Agudist movement there.

Socially mature, they were much less dependent on becoming accepted into the social web of the Z.A.I. They had joined it because they had always been active Agudists; and because it became a focus of their activities and the agency that helped them more than any other organization to adjust themselves. Lastly it enabled them to work for their relatives who were still in Nazi occupied countries, or somewhere in the hideouts of Europe waiting to come to the United States.

Although the difference of the rite provided a good excuse for the rapidly increasing Viennese group to demand that they be given one

floor of the building to establish their own services and congregation, the reason for their secession was deeper. They could not and would not accept the social pattern of the organization, despite the fact that they had quickly gained the recognition and respect of the American membership by virtue of their thorough Hebrew training, their mature personalities, and their business or organizational capabilities. They were not young and flexible enough to adopt the social manners and customs governing the private and official relations of the members. They could not understand the playfulness on one hand and such rigidities as the parliamentary procedure at meetings and certain traditions in the conduct of services and affairs on the other. In many respects the Zeirei was at that time still a youth organization in more than name. Its members still enjoyed engaging in occasional horse play which seemed ridiculous and childish to the mature refugees. It was difficult for them to throw off their dignity enough to participate in such high-spirited customs as dunking the reader on the happy holiday of *Simchath Torah* for instance. Being able to share the fun is part of the social paticipation necessary to become fully assimilated.

Another block to the social adjustment of the large Viennese group of Hungarian extraction was the fact that they would not recognize the social distinctions that had somehow evolved from the economic stratification of the membership. Even the so-called wealthy class impressed these mature and experienced businessmen very little. One of the dry-goods jobbers, for instance, proudly displayed his stock to one of the Viennese. To him, a former salesman every bale of goods meant something as a token of his economic success. The refugee took one look at the stock and said incautiously: "In every corner of my retail store I had more goods." He not only hurt the jobber's feelings and gave him the impression that he was bragging, though he certainly was not; he expressed clearly the difference of economic valuation which made it difficult for the older businessmen to adjust to the social distinctions derived from relative economic status. As a matter of fact, in a few years the average Viennese who went into business did relatively better than most of the successful, younger businessmen among the American members of the organization.

Another even more important factor that made it difficult for the Hungarian Viennese refugees to adjust, was their religious and cultural viewpoint. As described in the introduction, the religious pattern of the Z.A.I. membership was definitely Orthodox, but of the Polish Chassidic Americanized version. The Viennese, too, were not of the extreme Hungarian type, who came to Williamsburg later, after the war. Like the members of the Zeirei, they did not wear beards and long *Peyes*. The average young American member of the Zeirei did not insist on the wearing of a *Sheitel*, a wig, or complete covering of the hair for the young women. The Viennese would not permit anyone to become an official, or function at religious services, unless his wife wore a wig. The average American member did not object to going to the movies or to the theater occasionally, or even to sitting with girls at joint organization affairs to social occasions. The Viennese were strictly opposed to such practises. Some American

members did not think much of attending social dances or going to a beach with mixed bathing, while the Viennese would strenuously object to any member found doing it. The Viennese would not shave during certain semi-holiday or mourning periods of the Jewish year, while the average American member would not think of going to business, or being seen in public unshaven. The average American member would not object to eating dairy sandwiches in a cafeteria, while the Viennese would not drink milk that was not under strict supervision. These and many similar small distinctions created occasional friction and misunderstanding.

It was therefore a logical step for the constantly increasing Viennese group to organize, officially for the sake of establishing an *Ashkenaz* congregation within the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg. Actually, however, their underlying wish was to build a community life of their own, resembling that of the "Schiffschul" of Vienna in as many ways as possible, and to re-establish the social pattern and forms of living together which suited their valuation. At first they were given the second floor of the Zeirei building to house their *Ashkenaz* congregation. They called themselves the "*Ashkenazic* Congregation of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg," thus indicating to the outside and to themselves that their secession from the organization did not affect their Agudist standing. In due course, however, they came to change this name and their attitude.

There were twenty-two families of Viennese in this *Ashkenazic* congregation, all living in the close vicinity of the Zeirei. They were soon joined by a few middle-aged German men, who, although in some respects much closer to the American Zeirei members than to the extreme Viennese, were happy to return to the *Ashkenazic* rite in which they had been reared. Although they have participated actively in every phase of the community life of the newly formed congregation, they have never reached full status. If one or another had at times served as a minor official in the administration it was more or less as a figurehead, with no real authority. The full control of all religious, social and political affairs has remained from the beginning to the present, despite the changes in the composition of the Viennese congregation, in the hands of the few leaders who organized it in March 1942, and only a handful of the later immigrants have reached the top level of their society.

Three years after the founding of the Ashkenazic group the official name of the congregation was changed from "Ashkenazic Congregation of Agudath Israel Youth of Williamsburg" to "*Adas Yereim*," "The Congregation of the G-d Fearing," of former members of the "Schiffschul" and Agudath Israel of Vienna. Thus instead of being the local Viennese group of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg, the congregation has abandoned its political character in favor of becoming a neutral Orthodox Ashkenazic Jewish congregation. Its main emphasis is now on the perpetuation of as much of its members' former pattern of community life as possible, even to the extent of using German Yiddish as the official language at meetings, announcements, and in publications.

With the passing of time the formerly close relationship of the membership of the "*Adas Yereim*" to the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg has

decreased. A majority of the recent members have never had any personal ties to it; they have not even been members of the organization in Europe. Here they have little contact with it. The original Viennese group has lost much of its former loyalty to the organization, except for a few staunch Agudists who, although they are not active and have even withrawn from paying membership, have had a share in the recent attempts to reorganize the Agudist movement in Williamsburg. To many, however, both their Agudism and their belonging to the Zeirei in Williamsburg have become merely memories of which they talk nostalgically.

Had the original Viennese group remained in the Z.A.I., it would certainly have come to play an important part in it, and its members would have adjusted to the American pattern much more quickly than they have in their own community, which tries to maintain and intensify the Austro-Hungarian "Schiff-Shul" pattern. Only when taking an active hand in local and wider community affairs do they meet with other groups, and on these occasions they have won high respect for their zeal and business acumen. They may not possess the intellectual interests of the German types; but they are deeply interested in all Orthodox Jewish communal causes. It is mostly from this angle that the process of their inner assimilation into the American pattern proceeds, aided by the inter-marriage of their children into all groups of the American Jewish population, and by their active business activities.

Recently some of the original Viennese group have moved to neighborhoods like Boro Park and Queens, where they have blended very well into the existing congregations and organizations and are even active leaders of mixed communities. Though the forming of the "Adas Yereim" may have prevented quicker initial assimilation, it contributed to the rapid psychological and social rehabilitation of its members, who were too different and mature to blend slowly into the life pattern of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg.

3. *Poale Agudath Israel*

The third major secession of immigrant groups from the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg represented not so much the departure of a number of members from the organization, as the loss of a large potential membership and the growth of a competitive movement.

It started at the end of 1947, when many of the Orthodox Jewish Displaced Persons, concentration camps inmates, and fugitives from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland began to pour into Williamsburg. Most of them were between the ages of 17 and 35. They were single and were eager to establish a social life that would make up for the lost years of their lives, for the cut-off family relationships and the social ties. They longed to reestablish the inner balance, the self-assurance and the capacity for easy association and communication that they had lost in the years of fright, dissociation and abnormal or subnormal existence.

Most of those who had remained Orthodox joined one of the numerous congregations that sprang up about some European rabbi, generally

a Chassidic leader, to whom they owed some previous loyalty. Many who had Agudist backgrounds tried at first to join the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg. They attended the services and social affairs. They were welcomed cordially, but the social pattern was so different, and so rigid that it was difficult for the newcomers to fit themselves into the organization. Only a few individuals remained. Most of the newcomers left soon after they had tried to gain admittance, and joined the congregations of their own people. One larger group of about twenty-five young men, mostly in their twenties, who had a sound Agudist background, organized a congregation of its own under the name "Sheirith Hapleitah," which held its services in the basement of the Z.A.I. building at 616 Bedford Avenue. Most of these men were of Polish background, with so much in common in other respects — their experiences in the camps during and after the war, — that they felt much more at ease with themselves than if they had tried to acclimate to the community life of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg, with its unfamiliar customs, folkways, social pattern and inner distinctions. They had no real leaders, but a few active members who had gained some experience from post-war camp organization in Germany, Austria or France and who commanded the respect of their comrades, either by their Hebrew scholarship or their business and organizational activities.

Their type was entirely different from the German, Austrian, Belgian or even earlier Polish and Hungarian immigrant groups that had come to Williamsburg before and during the war. The years spent in flight, or in the abnormal existence of the camps, facing death and harshest regimentation, the absolute lack of all socialized living, the red tape and catch-as-catch-can existence of the post-war years preceding their immigration, had left an indelible impression on their beings. Most of them wore marks of these harrowing experiences, even externally. Their faces seemed aged or roughened or distorted beyond their years. There was little of the smoothness and grace of youth in their young bodies. Socially, though they did not seem isolated and dejected, however, they adopted what seemed rather a forced lightheartedness and playfulness. There was little refinement about most of them. Their unruliness and apparent inability or unwillingness — out of reaction to the years of forced discipline — to bow to the conventional patterns of social discipline made it hard for them to fit into any of the existing groups, like the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg. This relative lack of discipline created some difficulty in the functioning of their own organizational activities.

The unsavory and narrow facilities of the basement in which the group of the "Sheirith Hapleitah" met, made it mandatory that they find better quarters. At the same time, an important ideological change took place in the Agudist movement. These two factors resulted in the early withdrawal of this group of recent immigrants from the Z.A.I.

The national organization of Agudath Israel, then still Agudath Israel Youth, had lost a great deal of its former unity, spirit, and inner mobility in the course of the last war years and the post-war era. It had become involved in vital relief and immigration work

that consumed the time, efforts and energies of its very best leaders and activists, diverting their attention from the equally important grassroots functions. Meeting the budget for the increased national and international activities demanded professional methods, and general publicity work. This, in turn, did not meet with the approval of the membership at large and created dissatisfaction and a lessening of the volunteer help which had once been the main source of income and efficacy of the national office. While attracting the attention of the highest circles by its outstanding efforts in the field of European relief work, the movement was deteriotating internally because of lack of proper leadership, increasing disatisfaction and decreasing interest.

Normally when the senior leaders and activists left the rank and file to engage in international political and social affairs, new men were ready to take over from among those who had grown up in the organization. But now there were two main blocks. In the first place, few of the former intermediates with qualifications for senior leadership had the time, the interest, or the capacity to step into the shoes of the excellent leaders of old. Those who had not joined the army were engaged in professional studies, or had taken on jobs that consumed all their time and efforts; or they had simply lost interest. Secondly, those who were willing and able to carry on the organizational work, were blocked by the overwhelming control and influence exerted by the few who stood at the helm of the movement. Faced with the task of running the organization in an efficient, professional manner, in order to assure the success of their national and international activities, they could not afford to surrender their authority, and insisted on complete control and implicit faith in their sincerity and devotion to the welfare of the Agudist cause. It was considered an act of distrust implying complete lack of confidence for anyone who questioned the wisdom of any step taken by the top officials.

Naturally this produced a great deal of animosity and distrust. It deprived the organization of the good will and cooperation of those elements which until then had been responsible for much of the success and enthusiasm which had pushed the movement to a relatively high level of efficiency and idealism. In disgust, many of the activists lost all interest and withdrew to their private affairs, which with the passing of the years made greater demands on their time and energy.

Another factor of the dissatisfaction that led to serious consequences was the inability of many experienced or willing former leaders of the Agudah movement in Europe to penetrate the higher ranks of the organization in the United States. In some local branches, particularly those with no well-established leadership, they became the driving and active forces. But once they had reached the national council or the executive board they were stopped by the almost autocratic manner in which the top leaders controlled all policies, and resented or prevented any interference. Many of these formerly interested and capable people dropped out of the national work entirely.

Not all of them, however, dropped out passively. Since 1939 there had been attempts to create a "Poale Agudath Israel", a branch of the Labor movement of Agudath Israel, to counter the overwhelming influence of the Zeirei Agudath Israel. Poale Agudath Israel had been particularly successful in Eastern Europe, in all those countries where there was an Orthodox Jewish working-class. In Western Europe, where the majority of the Jews belonged to the middle class, it hardly existed. Only after World War II did Poale Agudath Israel become the most important Agudist movement in what was left of Europe's Jewish centers. It was always the radical left wing of the World Agudah movement, but its real importance as a political factor grew out of its position as the most influential branch of Agudath Israel in Israel.

Early atempts at building a Poale Agudath Israel in America failed because of the overwhelming position of Zeirei Agudath Israel, and because of the lack of the class consciousness which is the basis of its ideology. Although more than half of the membership of the Zeirei Agudath Israel, and a much larger potential of Orthodox Jewish workers, were actually suitable material, they had no interest in a labor movement because the typical attitude of the Orthodox American Jew, especially the younger one, is based on the hope of being able to rise above the working class. Furthermore, the standard of living of the average working man who might join Poale Agudath Israel, is not low enough to stimulate class consciousness. The kind of extremism that characterized Poale Agudath Israel in Poland, for instance, where it had actually to fight brother Agudists who as factory owners or bosses exploited their workers, would never have succeeded here. Ironically, among the members of the early Poale Agudath Israel of America there was hardly a single working man. Most of them were rabbis, teachers, journalists or businessmen who for one reason or another did not fit into Zeirei Agudath Israel, either because they were newcomers to this country who could not fit themselves into the social pattern or because they did not agree with its policies.

The pre-war and war refugees were not strong enough to form a movement that could compete with the Zeirei Israel, as long as it was an active organization. But with its transformation into a professionally handled, large-scale movement; and the ever-lessening interest and concern of the members, who came to rely on the "office;" with the increase in the number of disgruntled activists in the local branches and in the national bodies; and with the influx of large groups of post-war European refugees from Poland and Hungary, Poale Agudath Israel was the suitable instrument to gather all these different elements into one frame that was to grow into a formidable competitor to the stagnant Zeirei Agudath Israel, for a time, at least. It was not that these people shared the class consciousness of the labor movement of Poale Agudath Israel as it had been in Poland, although there were quite a few of its members and leaders among the newcomers. Poale Agudath Israel was merely a roof under which those with a negative attitude toward Zeirei Agudath Israel, and those who wanted to form a new organization

with a new social pattern, unbiased by twenty-five years of development, could gather. Lastly, it was the branch of Agudath Israel which suited all those who were disgusted with the almost negative attitude of Zeirei Agudath Israel toward Israel. Those who had come from Europe could not see eye to eye with the attitude of the official leaders, who considered Israel an object of philanthropy and a danger to the spiritual existence of the Jewish nation. This had been the old position of some groups in Agudath Israel prior to Hitler. Much more emotional than the German or Austrian, and the American Agudists, the Displaced Persons from Poland and other Eastern European countries had been strongly affected by the pro-Israel sentiment which swept European Jewry after the reign of terror. In their dark days they had received underground help from Palestine, and after the war delegates of all the major groups including Poale Agudath Israel, in Palestine, had spent years in the camps of Europe organizing legal and illegal transports, and establishing training centers, schools, and homes. Because of this, they were much more actively interested in the new Jewish State than other Agudist groups in America, and they clamored for a Poale Agudath Israel.

In a very short time, between 1947 and 1949, they organized branches of Poale Agudath Israel in various Jewish neighborhoods and established a central office. Had there been a really capable leadership, one that was acquainted with the American methods of official organization, they might have done much better, and even surpassed Zeirei Agudath Israel, because they had the mobility and active interest of large groups of enthusiastic young members. But the lack of such capable leadership, and the relatively weak inner discipline offered many problems and obstacles to the growth of Poale Agudath Israel in this country — particularly in view of the heterogeneity of its membership.

Williamsburg, which next to the East Side, was the major center of the Orthodox new immigrants, was ideally suited to form a branch of Poale Agudath Israel. Until 1948 no Agudist organization could possibly have existed beside the Z.A.I., except such a special group as the Viennese of the "Adas Yereim." Yet the disintegration described above, and the reluctance of the majority of the Z.A.I. of Williamsburg, caused the emergence of a competitive organization, such as Poale Agudath Israel. As on the national scene, it recruited its members from the locally disgruntled, from those who did not want to abide by the somewhat calcified and intellectually deteriorated patterns of the Zeirei community life, from the young who clamored for an active Israel policy, and most of all from the young men and girls who had flocked into Williamsburg recently and needed a social life of their own. A few weeks after its official founding, Poale Agudath Israel, formed by those who had belonged to the "Sheirith Hapleitah" which at first met in the basement of the Z.A.I., gathered between two and three hundred members at its regular weekly meetings on Friday evening and Saturday, despite the fact that its local was in one of the large synagogues beyond Broadway, far from the center of

the Williamsburg community. One of the main reasons for its popularity was the fact that boys and girls met together in the same organization, whereas Zeirei Agudath Israel held no joint affairs with its girls' movement, the Bnos Agudath Israel.

The same factors which impeded the growth of Poale Agudath Israel as a national movement, soon caused the rapid decline of the Williamsburg branch of Poale Agudath Israel. There was no adequate leadership and little intellectual interest among the members, who lacked a good cultural background because of the years spent in hiding or camps, and because of their lack of discipline and group spirit. Half a year after the rapid rise of P.A.I. of Williamsburg, the attendance at its regular meetings and discussion groups on Saturday had dwindled down considerably; at this point its leaders took a drastic step and moved their local to the large basement of a huge synagogue, the largest in Williamsburg, next door to the building of Z.A.I. of Williamsburg on Bedford Avenue, in the very heart of the community. In the old days of the Zeirei as a spirited organization such a step would have been impossible without violent repercussions. Now, however, it caused almost no discussion.

On the contrary, a good many of the young men who had been loyal members of the Z.A.I. since their childhood, and who found little to inspire them there, joined the suddenly very popular Friday evening lectures and classes of Poale Agudath Israel. Although the young, idealistic elements which in the beginning had helped form the organization, out of protest to the lethargy of the Zeirei, left in disgust over the low level of the membership; many others were drawn into the reorganized Poale Agudath Israel, largely due to its excellent new location on Bedford Avenue, the main promenade of the neighborhood. Since boys and girls met together, not only many of the new immigrants, but quite a few American boys and girls of the community joined the educational and social program of P.A.I., in the hope of meeting members of the opposite sex.

What started auspiciously, with a large attendance, good teachers and a fine educational program, has again declined due to the lack of edequate leadership, discipline and intellectual interest on the part of the members. Although P.A.I. of Williamsburg still maintains a rather active religious and educational program, it has lost many of those who flocked to its meetings because there was interesting discussion and promising mobility in the beginning.

Despite the active support of the American Poale Agudath Israel by the world leaders in Israel, the national organization is weak and in turn does not offer the backing which P.A.I. needs in order to rally public opinion and support for its cause in Israel, around a militant pro-Israel program. P.A.I. of Williamsburg, as well as the other branches could become a potent movement in this country and offer competition to the supremacy of Zeirei Israel. At present, however, it lacks the leadership and inner discipline to be a real threat.

VI. AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLIAMSBURG — 1954

1. In Spring 1950, Zeirei Agudath Israel of Williamsburg officially became Agudath Israel of Williamsburg, the senior branch of the national movement in this neighborhood. The oldest group of its juniors, were between 17 and 23 years old, and occupied the second floor of the building at 616 Bedford Avenue, was Zeirei Agudath Israel of Williamsburg. Unofficially, in the mind of the members and of the community, however, *Zeirei* was still the name of the seniors meeting on the main floor of 616 Bedford Avenue, and "Agudath Israel of Williamsburg" was something that did not really exist, at least as a concrete and active force in the community.

Actually the official nomenclature was much closer to the truth. What was left of the old, pre-1938 membership, mixed with the various elements which came in afterwards and those who had moved up from the junior ranks, was a far cry from the vigorious, active organization of enthusiastic young men that had been the *Zeirei* as late as 1940. The average age reached the late thirties, bringing with it the inevitable lessening of interest, of time available to be spent away from home, of intellectual and general mobility, and the toning down of the once inspired devotion to the aims and activities of the organization. So quite naturally, the membership became what all other "Agudath Israel" branches were, an organization of adults who in their spare time work for the Jewish political and religious goal of the movement, as far as their professional and private lives permitted, leaving the actual running of all affairs, activities and strategy to the professionals or the select group of advisors and members of the executive board. "Agudath Israel" was no longer a matter of life and death it had once been to them in their fighting days, when it occupied all their thinking and spare time. At best, they had settled down to party membership as an incidental matter limited to paying dues, and occasional attendance of meetings or national affairs like banquets and conventions. At worst they became members of the "Congregation" of Zeirei Agudath Israel, attending services or study classes, and not at all concerned with the political movement behind the congregation. It was therefore only sensible that in line with the decisions of the 1949 national convention, the name of the Williamsburg branch of Zeirei Agudath Israel was officially changed to Agudath Israel.

The new name, however, had implications going beyond the change of address. For Agudath Israel as an organization of Orthodox adults must have a much wider, more inclusive frame than Zeirei Agudath Israel, the youth movement, had. All those who were associated with the Zeirei were part of the Zeirei community, spending most of their religious and social life in its building and activities. Agudath Israel, however, could not concentrate itself in such a way. It had to cut across the various groups within the large community, taking in Orthodox Jews of all types and categories. Agudath Israel was definitely an organization, not a community.

This became obvious at the first large meeting of the organization, which featured the greatest drawing-card in Orthodox circles, the former Agudist minister in the Israeli Cabinet, Rabbi I. M. Lewin,

as its guest speaker, and thus attracted a huge crowd. Inspired by his speech and his very presence, close to five hundred Orthodox Williamsburg Jews signed the Agudist membership card and paid the initial dues. It was, however, obvious that these new names on the Agudah lists, with the exception of a few rabbis, teachers and leaders who attended the executive meetings. proved that the only ones actively interested were the members of the Old Zeirei of 616 Bedford Avenue. The problem facing the administration, which was almost identical with the one elected by the former Zeirei, was how to transform the large membership list into an active organization.

There were the technical problems created by the double set of membership books, one for the wider Agudath Israel of Williamsburg which had close to 500 names; and the membership of the former Zeirei which continued to function as a more or less independent community. The lack of interest and capable leadership, plus the concentration of the new elements on their own congregational realms of activity and Chassidic ideology, made all attempts at fusing the two groups into one functioning organization futile.

2. "Zeirei Agudath Israel," supposedly the successor to the fighting youth organization of old, had the proper age, a better Hebrew and secular education, and a generally better economic background than the membership of the old Zeirei. Yet, its members seem to lack the maturity, inspiration, initiative, and willingness to sacrifice their time and efforts, which had distinguished their seniors and made them one of the most active groups in the community. Despite the change of name they conduct themselves as juniors who still had a long way to go before they could fill the role that has been thrust upon them. Until this time they had always been under the shadow of their elders, and were so used to acting under their guidance that they lacked the necessary initiative to play the role assigned to them under the new set-up.

However, there were signs that the Pirchim groups and their leaders would step into the breach and make up for the weakness of the generation above them. Within a short few month they had reactivated their groups. Under the guidance of some of the experienced seniors of the old Zeirei, they organized intensive membership campaigns and enrolled hundreds of youngsters in their ranks. They, perhaps, would bring back to the Williamsburg Agudist movement the old impetus and idealistic purpose which had been so effective at the end of Phase I and in the first half of Phase II.

3. Whatever frictions and distinctions had existed in the early years of refugee assimilation in the organization, had almost completely disappeared. Many of the early groups of newcomers were considered and treated as part of the very core of the old-timers, particularly by the numerous members who later joined the organization. They played an important part in the formal and informal administration and in all of its cultural, political and educational functions, if they so desired. Externally, they had certainly become indistinguishable in conduct and appearance from the original membership.

They had adopted the customs and mores typical of the community. They spoke English as well, and in many cases better, than many of the old-timers who immigrated twenty years or more before them. They also had long crossed all the barriers of social and economic status which once prevented their admittance into the innermost circles of the organizational structure. Professionally and economically they were on at least an equal level with the members of old. And their educational and organizational talents were utilized, both in the programs of the senior and of the junior movement.

There was certainly no longer a question of distinctions and discrimination in *Zeirei* and *Pirchei* Agudath Israel. In fact no such thing existed from the very first time when the children of the early refugees joined the junior groups. They attended the same parochial schools, played baseball together and went on hikes together. If the refugee children needed a medium which would help them adjust even more rapidly than they normally did in the Williamsburg community, they found it in the ranks of the junior organization of Agudath Israel. Their common experiences and interests there provided a sound basis for their total assimilation. At least a third of *Zeirei* Agudath Israel membership, and more than half of its active leaders came from former refugees homes. Yet, it would be well-nigh impossible for anyone who did not know their backgrounds to distinguish between those who were born in this country and those who had come to the U. S. in the previous fifteen years and had grown up in the Agudist youth movement.

Agudath Israel of Williamsburg has begun an intensive program of organized and supervised junior activities for which they provide the funds and hire professional help. Thus they hope to forestall the eventual doom of the local organization, because of the continued departure of the old elements, and look forward to its revitalization through the members of the present junior groups.

"If Williamsburg continues to exist as a Jewish community," said the president in his installation speech in Fall 1953, "Agudath Israel of Williamsburg will continue to exist. But whether it will be only another *"minyan"* or a potent movement depends on our children in the Pirchim groups. Let our administration dedicate its work to this future of our organization."

VII. EVALUATION

1. At the end of Phase I, Agudath Israel of Williamsburg, one of the important organizations of the neighborhood, should have begun to decline and fall apart, like similar organizations in a comparable situation, due to the following reasons:

a) The mainstays of its previous social structure, the wealthy and active leaders of the clans began to move out of the section.

b) The younger elements which had grown up in the movement and were trained to assume leadership, married out of the neighborhood, or took positions in other communities.

c) The average age of the membership rose to the point at which many became embroiled in their family and business life, and lost interest in the movement.

d) The most important leaders transferred their main activities and the focus of their interest from the local to the national organization of the movement.

2. This normal pattern of decline did not develop. Instead Agudath Israel of Williamsburg reached major proportion as a potent force in the immediate community and beyond it during the years of Phase II. The loss of its wealthiest and most active elements was offset by the assimilation of newcomers who by their religious background, excellent schooling, and gradual economic adjustment replaced the large segments of the membership which had moved away, or lost interest. Instead of losing by the diversion of the interest of its leaders to the national movement, the local branch as a whole gained, and was drawn into the wider social and political activities of the organization. The general economic boom, particularly in the diamond industry, provided ample means on all social levels of the branch to widen the scope of its activities, and carry them out successfully. Most of all, the intensification of religious standards in all phases of the communal life made Agudath Israel of Williamsburg the most typical and accepted organization of the neighborhood, instead of the extremist group as which it had been known during its Phase I days in the Thirties.

3. This process of expansion and intensification of activities ceased partially with the end of Phase II, when more of the original membership left the neighborhood; when the economic boom slowed down to normalcy; when the composition of the newcomers arriving in Williamsburg changed from the Polish Chassidic and Western European groups to the extreme Hungarian Chassidic elements. The large number of these Phase III arrivals enabled them to set up their own congregations centering about famous religious leaders, instead of assimilating into the existing organizations and groups of the community. Even those who by their background and Jewish political views should have joined Agudath Israel, made their ideological position secondary to their religious pattern. So they did not fill the gap in the increasingly declining membership of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg. Even the reorganization in Israel, and the presence of such famous world leaders of the movement as its long-time member of the Israeli cabinet, did not alter the situation. The radical Chassidic elements may have registered in the membership lists of Agudath Israel, but they do not actively participate in the local branch program. Though still recognized as a good, Orthodox group, the "Zeirei" can no longer be considered representative of the highest standards of the Williamsburg community. Looked at from the extreme viewpoint of the Hungarian Chassidic groups, it now takes its place on the moderate level on which such formerly "ultra-Orthodox" institutions, as the largest and oldest Yeshivah of Williamsburg are placed by these newcomers.

4. The general conclusion, then, to be drawn from the case history of Agudath Israel of Williamsburg, is that beyond the political, social and economic factors involved, the religio-cultural values of the organization and wider community were responsible for its growth and decline.

Table I:

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLIAMSBURG

Year	Seniors Zeirim	Juniors Pirchim	Adults Ag.Isr.	Refugees I	II	III*)
1926	25					
1938	160	350		3		
1941	290	650		45	65	
1950	170**)	175		24	19	9
1951***)	110	190	475	35	90	80

*) Ref. I: 1938-'41; Ref. II: 1942-'45; Ref. III: 1946-
**) 20% of these are still members, though they have moved to other neighborhoods
***) After change to Agudath Israel of Williamsburg

Table II:

AVERAGE AGE OF MEMBERSHIP

1926	20 years
1938	24 "
1941	27 "
1950	34 "

Table III:

COMPOSITION OF PRESENT MEMBERSHIP

1. Old Members	62	36.8%
2. Recent Members	12	7
3. Former Juniors	44	26
4. Refugees I	24	14.1
5. Refugees II	19	11
6. Refugees III	9	5.1
TOTAL	170	100.0%

Table IV:

COMPOSITION OF NEW AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLIAMSBURG

1. Former Zeirim	179	36%
2. Refugees	205	43
3. Others	100	21
TOTAL	475	100.0%

Table V:

PROFESSIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WILLAMSBURG

Profession	1926*)	1938	1950	Refug.
1. Unksilled Workers	3	10	6	1
2. White Collar Workers	2	15	8	1
3. Skilled Workers, Salesmen, Business Employees	12	85	42	16
4. Independent Businessmen	1	25	76	20
5. Professionals, Doctors, Lawyers Accountants, Rabbis, Teachers		12	30	14
6. Students	7	13	8	
TOTAL	25	160	170	52

*) 1926 figures are based on estimate of leaders of the group. There are no records available.

Table VI:

THE THREE SECESSION GROUPS

a)

Group	Date Organized	Original Register	Present Membership			Ref.	Americans
			Men	Women	Total		
I) SCHEIRITH ISRAEL	2 - 1942	25	52	30	82	77	5
II) ADAS YEREIM	3 - 1942	60	420	315	635	635	0
III) POALEI AGUDATH ISRAEL	9 - 1948	45	142	54	196	186	10

b)

NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE THREE SECESSION GROUPS

GROUP	Polish Sephard (Viennese, German Sephard)	Viennese Ashkenaz	Hungarian, Czechoslov. Ashk. & Seph.	German & Other Ashkenaz
I)	90%	4%	4%	2%
II)	5	35	45	15
III)	60	3	30	7

APPENDIX III

GLOSSARY

ADAS YEREIM (Hebrew, meaning Congregation of the G-dfearing) A congregation of Viennese and Hungarian Jews who follow the Ashkenazic* ritual. It started as a small group within Agudath Israel* of Williamsburg, and is now one of the largest, best organized and highly effective congregations of Williamsburg. It occupies a large building, formerly a movie house on corner Lee Avenue and Roebling Street.

AGUDATH ISRAEL (Hebrew, meaning Union of Israelites) The name of a world wide organization of Orthodox Jews, with branches in American Orthodox Jewish communities, many of which have their own synagogues and services. (See detailed description in Appendix II).

ALIYAH - oth (Hebrew, liter. the going up or being called up) The honor of being called up to the reading desk, the Almemor, for a portion of the Torah.* Also name of the pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. In modern times immigration to Israel is known as Aliyah.

AM HA-ARETZ, AM HO-ORETZ (Hebrew, meaning liter. "people of the earth," or country folk) It became the derogatory name for the ignorant and uneducated in Jewish matters. The Talmud defines an Am Ha-aretz as one who does not know the law.

ASHKENAZIM,-IC (Hebrew, meaning Germans) This name applied to the Jews of Germany and Northern France from the 10th century on. In the 16th century the term came to include the Jews of Eastern Europe as well. The Ashkenazim have developed a set of distinctive customs and rituals different from those of the Sephardim,* the Jews from the Mediterranean countries and No. Africa. Congregations that follow the traditional rites and customs of either of the two are called Ashkenazic or Sephardic, though the original geographic meaning is lost, especially since the Hassidic rituals of Eastern Europe are mostly Sephardic. (See detailed discussion in Chapter VI)

BAALE-BATTIM - ish BAALE-BOS (Hebrew, *"Baal Habayith,"* meaning master of the house) In modern usage this term is applied to the constituent members of a congregation. In folk usage it has assumed a connotation similar to "philistine" or the German "Spiessbuerger." In a good sense, it refers to someone who maintains good, socially acceptable standards of living.

* Terms marked by asterik are explained in this glossary.

BAAL MELOCHOH (Hebrew, meaning worker) tradesman, craftsman. It has a somewhat derogatory connotation of a low class person, derived from the social hierarchy of East Europe where the craftsman was held in very low esteem.

BABBE, BOBE, BOBBE (Yiddish) grandmother.

BAR MITZVAH (Hebrew, meaning Son of the Commandment) The term refers to the boy who has reached the age of 13, and is expected to accept adult religious responsibilities. This "coming of age" is the occasion for a ritual in the synagogue, (plus informal festivities) where on the first Sabbath of the 14th year the boy reads a part of the day's portion of the Torah* and the appropriate selection from the prophets.

BATLAN - im (Hebrew, meaning liter. unemployed man) Originally this term referred to men employed to help establish the required quorum of ten, the Minyan,* in the synagogue, a job held by aged or those physically unfit to work. In modern folk usage the term frequently connotes an impractical, clumsy person who can't earn a living, or does not face reality.

BEKESHE see Kaftan, Kapotte.

BETH HA-MIDRASH (Hebrew, meaning house of study). Frequently used also as name for synagogue, or for the study hall of a synagogue. Also used to denote a school of higher Hebrew studies.

BLATT (of Gemarah) (Yiddish, from German, meaning page) Usually used for one double page of a volume of the Talmud. Also used to denote a study group or class, esp. in Lithuanian Yeshivoth.*

BNOS — AGUDATH ISRAEL (Hebrew, meaning liter. daughters) Used to indicate girls or women's organizations. Here it denotes the junior women's organization of Agudath Israel.*

CHALAT see Halat, Kaftan.

CHASSIDISM see Hassidism.

CHAZZAN — CHAZEN see Hazan.

CHEDER see Heder.

CHEVRA see Hebra.

CHOL HAMOED see Hol Hamoed

CHUMASH see Humash.

ECOLOGY, ical The scientific study of the distribution of human life and social forms in space and time, and of the forces that determine this distribution.

EHRLICH (Yiddish, from German, meaning honest, decent) Yiddish connotation of sincerely, truly pious.

FRUMAK (Yiddish, from German "fromm," meaning pious) Connotation of this term is that of an extremely, almost fanatically Orthodox Jew.

GABBAI - im (Hebrew, meaning liter. receiver) Originally the term referred to the tax collectors or overseers. In modern usage

the Gabbai is the treasurer of the synagogue, or the minor official in charge of services and honors to be distributed.

GARTEL (Yiddish, from German "Guertel," meaning belt, girdle) A special soft, woven black cotton belt worn by Hassidim for prayer, to symbolically separate the upper half from the lower half of the body and its lower instinct affects.

GEMARAH or GEMOROH see Talmud — a volume of the Talmud.

GESHMACK (Yiddish, from German "geschmack," meaning tasty) Also referring to anything enjoyable.

GLATT-KOSHER see Kosher (Yiddish, from German "glatt," meaning smooth, beyond question). Used in connection with kosher* meat, to indicate special precautions which exclude the use of any meat about which there may be some question or doubt of *kashruth*, dietary usability. Term and trend particularly from Hungarian Hassidic Orthodox life, introduced by Hungarian refugees in Williamsburg and subsequently in other communities as a standard for kosher meat, after much objection and ridicule. The general kosher meat, even by Orthodox standards, is not as stringent in excluding meat from cattle on the kashruth of which some doubt had been cast, but which the rabbi had judged to be kosher. The term "glatt" has come to mean extreme stringency, especially in the kosher food line.

GREEN-ER (From German "gruen") meaning greenhorn, derogatory for recent immigrant.

HASHOMER HADATHI (Hebrew, meaning the Orthodox watchman) Name of Orthodox Zionist pioneer organization affiliated with the Mizrachi.*

HAS(S)ID-im HASSIDISM (Hebrew, meaning pious, godly person) The follower of the Hassidic movement, a religious folk movement of the 18th century, founded by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, giving the common masses spiritual hope and uplifting. Largely based on kabbalistic sources, Hassidism preaches the idea of serving G-d with joy and happiness, and teaches the value and importance of prayer and faith accessible to the ignorant as well as to the scholar. The Hassidic community centers around spiritual leaders, called the (T)ZADDIK* — or *Rebbe** — righteous, saintly men who serve as intermediaries between the Heavenly Powers and man. The admiration and faith of the Hassidim, the disciples or followers of a Tzaddik or Rebbe, have almost boundless faith in the power of his prayer and deeper insight and knowledge, because of his saintly life and total devotion to the service of G-d. The Hassidic movement spread rapidly through all of Eastern Europe, despite the violent opposition of the leaders and more educated masses of Orthodox Jewry. These bitter opponents to the Hassidic movement which introduced new customs, rites and rituals, were called MITHNAGDIM* (Hebrew, meaning opponents). They were led by the greatest rabbinic authorities, at their head Rabbi Elijah of Vilna, the famed Gaon of Vilna. Hassidism developed different interdependent and independent branches

and schools of thought in the various regions and countries of Eastern Europe, each one centering about dynasties of Rebbes* that were founded by particular leaders and further developed by their descendants or elected successors. Many of these various branches and schools of Hassidism are still active, even after the European catastrophe killed millions of their best, and have thousands of followers throughout the Jewish world. (See detailed discussion of Hassidism and Hassidic leaders, their communities, customs and practices, especially in Williamsburg, throughout the study.)

HAZAN - CHAZEN (Hebrew, meaning cantor, leader) Originally name of the caretaker of the synagogue. Now it refers to the reader or cantor, the one who chants or leads the religious service. A Hazan, or Chazen in folk terminology refers to the formal cantor, in contrast to the informal amateur BAAL TEFILOH, a lay reader.

HEBRA — CHEVRAH (Hebrew, correctly Haburah, meaning group) Term for a group or society, familiar in the name of Hebra (Chevrah) Kadishah, the Holy Society, a charitable society, caring for the sick, dying and for the burial.

HEDER - CHEDER (Hebrew, meaning room) Since the Middle Ages it is the name for a traditional school. Usually it was a private institution, particularly on the elementary level, much popularized and maligned in the Yiddish literature and folk saga of Eastern Europe. It has been in disrepute, largely unjustly, despite some inadequacies of formal training of the teachers, who were frequently people incapable of other work, but the majority of whom had been the school masters of the broad masses of the learned Eastern European Jewry.
In the history of Hassidism the Heder refers to the private study group of a Rebbe, or Hassidic master.

HOL HAMOED CHOL HAMOED (Hebrew, meaning the week days of the holidays). They are the week days of the festivals of Passover and Sukkoth, which are considered semi-holy days and on which only certain kinds of work are permitted.

HUMASH (Hebrew, meaning five, the Five Book) The Five Books of Moses or Pentateuch, in popular usage.

KADDISH (Hebrew, meaning sanctification) One of the earliest prayers, recited in the synagogue at certain points in the services. It is best known as the prayer of those in mourning.

KAFTAN, CAFTAN, KAPOTTE, BEKESHE (From Turkish Qaftan) A long sleeved gown, fastened by a girdle, worn by Hassidim in Eastern Europe, especially as part of Sabbath or festive clothes.

KAPTZAN - onim (From Hebrew) A poor person.

KEHILLAH — KAHAL (Hebrew, meaning community) A Jewish community organization managing all affairs and institutions of the Jewish population of a locality, with powers of taxation

and controlling and enforcing rules of the religious and social life. In modern times it is synonymous with congregation.

KIDDUSH (Hebrew, meaning sanctification) Prayer of sanctification that ushers in the Sabbath and major holidays. In folk usage it refers to festive meals served at special occasions of celebrations or holidays at the synagogue, or in the home of the celebrants, to which friends and esteemed members of the congregation are invited.

KLAUS, KLOIS (From German "Klause," meaning a small room) A small study. Used for a small synagogue or the study hall frequently adjoining a synagogue.

KOSHER, KASHRUTH (Hebrew, meaning fit, proper) Something that is permitted, especially referring to food ritually fit or prepared for use. Kashruth is the system of food properly prepared or permissible, meeting the requirements of the Jewish Dietary laws. It is supervised or approved by rabbinic authority.

L'HAYIM, LECHAYIM (Hebrew, meaning to life) Hebrew toast, especially used in Hassidic practice of drinking to each other's wellbeing at Yahrtzeits,* memorial or festive occasions.

MAL'OCH - im (Hebrew, meaning angel) It is the name of an extreme Orthodox group in Williamsburg. It was founded by a man by the name of Maloch in the Thirties. Yet in the local folk interpretation this name, meaning angels, seems quite appropriate for the extremely pious, sincere and devout attitude of the fine American young men who had been attracted to this movement long before the influx and influence of the new immigrants and their extreme life pattern.

MELAMMED (Hebrew, meaning teacher) Teacher of children. Famous as the teacher of the classic Heder. A private instructor. In folk use this title has somewhat pathetic connotations, as of a man who is not fit to make a living in a different position. Still used in derogatory manner, to speak of a Hebrew teacher, even if he works in a modern Hebrew school.

MELAVEH MALKEH (Hebrew, meaning accompanying the Queen Sabbath) It is the name of a special meal, particularly a communal meal, eaten on Motzoe Shabbath, Sabbath, after night, with special songs and customs. It has become popularized by Hassidism as a communal meal in the Rebbe's house or in the synagogue, clothed in kabbalistic mystic aura and practices.

MESIFTA, MESIVTHA (Aramaic Hebrew, meaning a Yeshivah) Name for higher departments of a Yeshivah,* especially in the American Yeshivah system.

MIKWAH, MIKVAH, MIKVEH (Hebrew, meaning collection, esp. of water) Commonly used to designate the ritual bath, ritualarium, required for religious purification. Customary especially for Hassidim for immersal before services on Sabbath and holidays and festive religious occasions. The ritual bath is prescribed for the monthly purification of women, hence an absolute necessity of an Orthodox community.

MINHAG, - im (Hebrew, meaning custom) A religious custom that has no direct basis in the Written or Oral Law. It is made binding by long established usage. Many Minhagim have become laws and are included in the Code of Jewish Law.

MINYAN (Hebrew, meaning number) It is the term used to describe the quorum of ten men required for congregational services. In folk usage it refers to a small congregation that meets informally in a private or public place.

MISHMOR NIGHT (Hebrew, watch night) Name for Thursday night weekly review session at Talmudical academies.

MITHNAGED, - im (Hebrew, meaning opponent) Name for the opponents to the Hassidic movement. See Hassidism.

MIZRACHI (From Hebrew Mizrach, meaning East) Name of a worldwide Orthodox Zionist movement, with branches in all Jewish communities.

MOETZETH GEDOLEI HATORAH (Hebrew, meaning Council of the highest Torah Authorities) Official body of the Supreme Council of the World's Torah scholars, established by Agudath Israel* as the highest authority on all questions of Jewish law, life and policy.

NAZIR, - im, NAZIRITE (Hebrew, meaning one who abstains) One who in Biblical times vowed to abstain from various pleasures, especially wine, for a limited period of time, for the purpose of a more devout life of santification.

NEDER, - orim (Hebrew, meaning vow, pledge) Pledge made for religious or ritual reasons primarily. It also refers to the pledge of a donation made by persons who are called to the pulpit for the honor of reading a portion of the Torah or at similar religious occasions.

NUSSACH (Hebrew, meaning version) Prayer ritual, order or textual versions, used particularly to describe the ritual of the prayer services, such as the Ashkenazic,* Sephardic,* or Nussach Ari, the rite prescribed by the famous medieval Cabbalist, R. Isaac Lurya.

O(I)BERLAND - ER (German, meaning upper region) The Upper Land of the Austro-Hungarian empire, comprising areas of Czechoslovakia, Moravia, used in distinction from the Unterland, of deep Hungary, the Carpatho-Russian areas with their extreme Chassidic population. The Oberlander is closer to the Western European German Orthodox Jewish type. The Oberlander congregations follow the Ashkenaz ritual and are guided particularly by the religious decisions of the Chasam Sofer, R. Moses Sofer, (1763-1839).

OSTJUDEN (German, meaning Eastern Jews) Collective term used by Western European Jews for all Jews from Eastern Europe, in derogatory manner.

PASSOVER, PESSACH (Pessach, Hebrew for Passover) Anniversary holiday of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage, on the 14th day of Nissan. It is observed for eight days. It is also the Spring festival of the Jewish year cycle.

PEYES, PE'OTH (Hebrew, meaning corners, sides) Sideburns, sidelocks worn by Jewish men in Eastern Europe, especially by Hassidim, in conformance with the Biblical precept of Leviticus XIX, 27.

PIRCHIM, PIRCHEI (Hebrew, meaning blossoms, sprouts) Name of youth organization of Agudath Israel.*

POALIM, POALE AGUDATH ISRAEL (Hebrew, meaning workers) Name of Labor movement of Agudath Israel, once very active in Poland, now in Israel. It is a separate movement only loosely affiliated with the mother organization, and more militant and extreme.

POLLACK (German, slang for a Polish person) Used in derogatory manner by Western European Jews for all Eastern European Jews, similar to Ostjude*.

PURIM (Hebrew, meaning lots) Feast of lots, celebrated on the 14th of Adar. It commemorates the day on which the Jews of the Persian empire were saved from their oppressors, led by Haman, as recorded in the Book of Esther, which is read on the evening and morning of this holiday. Purim is celebrated with great merriment, masquerades, gifts to poor, and with many rituals and customs, and special foods.

REBBE, RABBEIM, REBBES Yiddish for rabbi and teacher, or master. Used particularly for the Hassidic charismatic leader, the Tzaddik,* in distinction from Rabbi, the official head of a congregation.

SCHEIRITH ISRAEL or SHEARITH ISRAEL or SHEARITH HAPLETAH (Hebrew, meaning Remnant of Israel) Frequently used as name of a Jewish congregation in exile. Favorite for refugee congregations.

SEFER, - orim (Hebrew, meaning book, books) Though meaning books in general, it is used particularly for sacred books, also for the sacred Torah scrolls.

SEPHARD - im, - ic (See ASHKENAZ - ic) (Hebrew, meaning Spaniards, Jews from Spain and Portugal) Originally used to designate Jews from Spain and Portugal. The customs rituals, services and the Hebrew pronunciation of the Sephardim differ from those of the Ashkenazim,* the Jews originating in Germany, and Eastern Europe. Later on geographic distinctions and origins largely lost. Hassidic congregations following their special rituals and customs, partially derived from the original Sephardim, are also called Sephardic, in distinction from the congregations that maintain the Ashkenazic rituals.

SHAMMES, SHAMMASH (Hebrew, meaning servant) Name of the synagogue sexton, religious functionary, who supervises services and superintends the synagogue. It is also used for the personal attendant of a rabbi or Hassidic Rebbe.

SHECHITAH, SHOCHET, - im (Hebrew, meaning ritual slaughtering) The slaughter of ritually pure animals with a specially

prepared, super-honed knife, at a designated spot in the neck, according to exact religious laws. A SHOCHET is the slaughterer, a specially trained and rabbinically licensed man, a religious functionary, who must generally be a learned man of high moral character. Hassidim are especially careful with the choice of a Shochet. Many Rebbes have their own personal or congregational Shochet even now.

SHEITEL (From German, meaning wig, peruk), A covering of the head consisting of false hair interwoven with a cap of netting. It is worn by strictly Orthodox Jewish women, especially of Eastern Europe, in fulfillment of the ordinance that a married Jewish woman is not to walk about with her hair uncovered. Now available in most modern hair-do fashions for young American Jewish women who by training and background observe this religious ordinance.

SHKOTZIM, plural of SHAIGETZ, SHEIGETZ (Hebrew, meaning an abomination "Sheketz) Derogatory term for non-Jewish young rowdies; also a derogatory term used by the more extreme Orthodox Jews for less pious people.

SHMAD, GESHMAT (Hebrew, meaning conversion, apostasy) Used (in Yiddish) for people who have left the Jewish faith. In contemporary usage it also refers to missionary activities in the U. S. and in Israel.

SHOFAR (Hebrew, meaning horn or trumpet) Traditionally the curved horn of a ram, the animal that Abraham sacrificed in place of his son Isaac. In the Bible it is blown to announce all important occasions. The Shofar proclaimed the Jubilee Year, the beginning of the Sabbath (as practised now in Israel), the New Moon. It is especially noted for its use as part of the Rosh Hashonoh* services, in commemoration of Isaac's offering and as an instrument of calling for repentance.

SHTANDER (Yiddish, from German Staender, meaning stand) Stand, high desk, pulpit, used in study halls, especially convenient for the large Talmudic volumes.

SHTIEBEL, - BLACH (Yiddish, from German Stube, meaning room). Used for a small room. Name of the informal Hassidic congregational synagogue, frequently merely a converted room in a private house, a basement, or a converted store. It is used in distinction from the large, formal synagogue or Shul.*

SHTIEVEL,-n (Yiddish, from German Stiefel, meaning boots) High boots worn in Eastern Europe, especially of certain Polish Hassidic groups as part of their wear (to avoid lacing on Sabbaths)

SHUL, SHIEHL (Yiddish, from German Schule, meaning school) Yiddish folk term for synagogue.

SHUL(C)HAN ARUCH, SHULKHAN ARUKH (Hebrew, meaning a set table) The basic Jewish religious code, consisting of four parts, compiled by Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488-1575)

a native of Toledo, Spain, who settled in Turkey, but spent his last years in Safed, Israel. His code combined the Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions of legal and religious discussion and codification, as put down in the codes of Maimonides, the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Arba Turim* of Rabbi Jacob Tur.

SIM(C)HATH TORAH (Hebrew, meaning The Rejoicing of the Law) The last of the Succoth festival days. A joyous holiday, celebrating the reading of the last portion of a year's cycle of the Torah, and the beginning of a new cycle with the reading of the first portion of Genesis. Special customs, such as the dancing of the "Hakafoth," in a circle around the synagogue with Torah scrolls, and many other exulting customs, special songs and festivities, going on practically all night, make this the most memorable holiday in Hassidic communities, such as Williamsburg. Visitors come there from far to witness and celebrate its festivities.

S'MICHAH, S'MIKHA (Hebrew, meaning the placing of the hands) The act of ordination of a religious leader, originally performed by the ordainer's placing his hands upon the person to be ordained. Now ordination of a rabbi by qualified authorities, vesting rabbi with the authority to render decisions in ritual matters and in monetary disputes.

STATUS, SOCIAL Relative position, rank or standing of a person in a group, or of a group in reference to some larger grouping.

SUKKOH-oth SUCCOH (Hebrew, meaning booth) Festival of Booths, four days after Yom Kippur,* one of the three pilgrimage holidays, celebrated for 8 days, (seven in Israel). Families, especially men, eat and gather in booths covered with leaves. Succoth ends in Shemini Atzereth, and the added day of Simhath Torah.*

TALLIS - eisim (Hebrew, meaning prayer shawl) A prayer shawl, usually of silk or wool, fringed at each corner, in accordance with Numeri 16, 38. It is worn by the male adult Jew.

TALIS KOTON Small prayer shawl, worn all day, even by a child, under the shirt.

TALMID CHACHAM, TALMID HAKHAM (Hebrew, meaning disciple of a wise man) Any scholar or authority on the Talmud and general Jewish religious law and study.

TALMUD TORAH (Hebrew, meaning study house of Torah) Name of the popular afternoon Hebrew schools for Jewish children, either run by congregations or privately. They provide Jewish boys and girls with a minimal Jewish education, usually ending with preparation for Bar Mitzvah.*

TEFILLIN (Hebrew, meaning phylacteries). Phylacteries, consisting of 2 square, black leather boxes that contain four selections from the Bible, inscribed on parchment, which proclaim the existence and unity of G-d and serve as reminder of the liberation of Israel from Egypt. One of the leather boxes, "shel Rosh" (for the head), is placed on the head, hanging

over the center of the forehead "between your eyes"; the other box, called "shel Yad" (for the hand), is placed on the large muscle of the upper left arm. Straps of leather are attached to each box. The strap of the arm phylactery is wound around the arm seven times and three times around the middle finger and the hand. The Tefillin are worn by observant Jews during the morning prayers on week days, in accordance with Deut. 6, 8.

TISH, - en (Yiddish, from German Tisch, meaning table, or table-round). Table rounds, meals eaten by Hassidim in community with the Rebbe on Sabbath, or other festive occasions. The Rebbe's partaking and eating of the food turns the table round into a sacred and inspiring religious function.

TORAH (Hebrew, meaning teaching) Originally only the name of the Pentateuch. Subsequently employed for all kinds of sacred law and religious study and literature.

T'REIFAH (Hebrew, meaning torn) Term for the opposite of kosher.* Originally referring to food that is not permissible for religious reasons. Later term has been expanded to cover any "non-kosher" object, matter, spiritual thought or topic.

TZADDIK (Hebrew, meaning the just one) Term for a saintly, righteous person. It is particularly employed for the Hassidic leader, the Rebbe.*

TZITZITH (Hebrew, meaning fringes) (See Tallith*) Ritual fringes of four woven woolen threads, interwoven, and attached to prayer shawl, in accordance with the command of Numeri 16, 38.

VALUES, ational Objects of human desire or appreciation: Any objects, conditions, or principles around which meanings have grown up in the course of experience of social interaction. A value is the objective counterpart of the attitude and possesses qualities that elicit the common interest of group members. Social values are those objects and activities which have common meanings for the members of a particular group.

VALUE PATTERN Any functional arrangement of social and cultural phenomena, as a culture, civilization, institution, or body of social rules, or social values, i.e. objectives considered desirable by a group.

VERHER(T), FERHER (Yiddish, from German "verhoeren," meaning giving an oral examination) Examination given to children in their Hebrew studies.

WELTANSCHAUUNG Literally world view; a philosophy especially a personal or group philosophy, that gives an explanation of history, or the purpose of the world as a whole or of its particular phases.

YAHSAN, YACHSAN, YICHUS (Hebrew, meaning man of "Yichus," of noble lineage) Used in Yiddish to denote a privileged character, a man of importance, special merits or high lineage. Also used in derogatory manner.

YARMULKE, YARMELKE, YARMIKE Skull cap worn by observant Jews at home, and by children also in the street. It is a sign of reverence for the Omnipresence of the L-rd, and the command not to walk about with head uncovered. Its form goes probably back to the medieval skull cap.

YECKE, - s Popular Yiddish slang term or name given to German Jews by East European Jews, making light of their alleged stiffness, coldness and inflexibility.

YESHIVA, - oth (Hebrew, meaning higher school) A school of higher rabbinical study, higher than the Cheder* or Talmud Torah,* which are the schools of elementary study. In recent American Jewish terminology it is the Hebrew name for the Jewish Day School. The division is made between YESHIVAH KETANA, the Elementary department, and the YESHIVAH GEDOLAH, the high school and college level of rabbinical studies, also called a MESIFTA, or MESIVTHA.*

YAHRTZEIT, YORTZEIT (Yiddish, from German "Jahrzeit," meaning anniversary) Anniversary date, used particularly for anniversary of death of a close relative, and observed by close surviving members of the family with a special prayer, the Kaddish,* and lighting of a 24-hour candle. It is also the term for the anniversary of the demise of a famous Tzaddik,* a famous scholar, and particularly of the famous Hassidic Rebbes,* observed and celebrated with special customs by the descendants and the community of disciples, or Hassidim of this leader. In the case of the Yahrtzeit of some of the very great of the Hassidic movement, it is observed by all Hassidim.

YIDDISH (From German "Juedisch," meaning Jewish) The language spoken by East European Jews. It is approximately a thousand years old, rising in the Jewish communities of France and along the Rhine river. Largely a mixture of medieval German with Hebrew and Slavonic words. In the course of its history Yiddish added words from each language of the nations and cultures that were hosts to Jewish communities, as the Jewish masses moved from W. Europe eastward, and from there to the New World, and to Israel. It was the language of the Cheder* and of the Yeshivah,* and as such has assumed special status as *the* language of Talmud study the world over. As the secular language of the East European masses it has developed a large literature of its own, and a Yiddish press in most countries of the world. It is still the international language of Jews, especially of the older generation, even in Israel, and of the Hassidic masses, and of the Yeshivah youth. Recently its use has been declining, and it is partially replaced by Modern Hebrew.

YIDDISHKEIT (From German "Juedischkeit") Piety, the spirit of Orthodoxy.

YOM KIPPUR (Hebrew, meaning Day of Atonement) The holiest day of the Jewish year, observed as a day of prayer and

fasting from sundown of the ninth, to sunset of the tenth of Tishri. It is the holiday, observed even by non-religious Jews, on which the fate of the individual Jew is decided for the new year. It has numerous rites and customs that stress its supreme sanctity and importance.

ZADDIK See Tzaddik.*

ZAIDE, ZEIDE (Yiddish, meaning grandfather) Zeide and Bobbe, the term for grandmother, among the most cherished images of the Jewish folk life.

ZEIRIM, ZEIREI (Hebrew, meaning youth) Usually the name of a Jewish youth movement, such as Zeirei Agudath Israel, Zeirei Mizrachi, or Zeirei Israel. It has a corresponding term "Zeiroth" for the young women's organizations of these movements.

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