

Reinventing Community

Steven Windmueller



Traditional Models of Community (1870-1920)

Crisis-Based Model:

Driven by an agreed-upon agenda

Collective Responsibility:

Demonstrating a significant international focus along with other national, regional, and community-based features

We Are One:

Centralized and Unified borders and boundaries shaped by those who define themselves as part of "community"

A highly **integrated** federation-community model functioning with incremental change

Focus on continuity and institutional maintenance

with a significant emphasis on international Jewish communal concerns.

Multi-issue institutions

Jewish identity and continuity as the primary themes, based on the notion of Jews seeking acceptance and recognition

Generational-Neutral:

Serving all age groups

Generic marketing

Fund development is based on traditional campaign models, with some experimentation on the edges

Traditional organizational and affiliation patterns are prevalent, including a high **premium on belonging and the value of membership**

Built on peer relationships and shared expectations

Institutions and structures as central images and symbols of "community"

Israel and the Holocaust seen as central organizing and sustaining principles

Over time a Jewish "communal" vocabulary has been created that reflected a particular time period and set of players.

Emerging Models of Community (1985-2007)

Entrepreneurial Model:

Driven by the marketplace

Selective Engagement:

Primarily individualized responses directed toward local purposes and personal causes, de-emphasizing the broader commitments to collective responsibility

The Sovereign-Self:

Borders and boundaries are less-significant as expressed in trans-denominationalism and Jewish renewal

New, often highly **diffused** institutional responses, generally initiated on the edge

Driven by innovation and experimentation,

with a specific focus on locally-based interests and activities.

Single-issue constituencies

Jewish identity is seen as one of the competing ideas in an age in which Jewish "acceptance" is complete.

Generational-Nuanced:

Specialized services to particular constituencies

Segmented marketing

A new group of "funders" have entered the scene and are underwriting a significant number of new initiatives and/or capturing older institutions and reinventing them.

The idea of "joining" has given way to **dropping in** and also dropping out. Technology as shaping and reinventing communal practice

Constructed around individuals with shared interests, seeking specific outcomes

Networks of relationships that form and may even disband once defined goals are explored and achieved.

Themes related to relevance and immediacy dominate

A whole new vocabulary is emerging that aligns Jewish ideas with the contemporary culture, i.e. "New Jewish Cool".

FACTS, FIGURES and trends suggest a fundamental reconfiguration of the communal model, resulting in the formation of a new American Jewish paradigm. The challenge ahead involves an understanding of the impact of these external and internal transformational realities on Jewish identity and engagement.

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