

**PARTNERSHIP MINYANIM IN THE UNITED STATES: PLANNING
THEORY IN ACTION**

by

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Introduction

In 2001, a group of Jerusalem academics troubled by the dichotomy between their Orthodox Jewish and feminist beliefs, and feeling that this gap “compromised their religious integrity”, founded a congregation called Kehillat (Congregation) Shira Hadasha¹ (Kehillat Shira Hadasha, 2004; Keller, 2007). The new congregation explicitly aimed to increase opportunities for women to take public roles in Jewish prayer within the confines of halakha,² or traditional Jewish legal sources (Sofer, 2007). The congregation’s commitment to the Jewish legal tradition meant that any innovations had to be grounded in those legal arguments; unless the halakha could honestly be interpreted to allow increased gender equality, the congregation’s hands were tied. Fortunately, around this time an Orthodox journal published two influential articles that argued that, at least under certain circumstances, halakha permitted women to assume certain roles in public prayer (Shapiro, 2001; Sperber, 2002). The halachic justification for Kehillat Shira Hadasha’s innovations – though many disagreed with it – was thus provided. Kehillat Shira Hadasha’s feminist innovations, along with the congregation’s exceptionally melodic prayer services, quickly drew large crowds in Jerusalem, and made Kehillat Shira Hadasha a must-see for those visiting Israel (Gross, 2003).

Kehillat Shira Hadasha has been enormously influential across the Jewish world, and in the 6 years since its founding approximately 25 other similar congregations – almost all of which explicitly model themselves on Kehillat Shira Hadasha -- have been established (E. Holzer, personal communication, October 11 and 17, 2007). Such

¹ Hadasha is pronounced with a guttural H, as in Hanukah. And, like Hanukah, or Chanukah, some spell ‘Shira Hadasha’ ‘Shira Chadasha’.

² Three spellings of halakha will be found in this paper. I will follow the academic convention and spell it ‘halakha,’ but quotations from participants and other sources also spell it ‘halacha,’ and ‘halakhah.’

congregations are often referred to as “Shira Hadasha style” congregations, in honor of the original Jerusalem congregation (Lando, 2007; Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia). Because at least one of the congregations in the United States took its inspiration from sources other than Shira Hadasha, this paper will follow the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) in calling them “partnership minyanim” (JOFA: Resources -- Partnership Minyanim). Minyan (plural, minyanim) is Hebrew for quorum and is commonly used as metonymy to refer to a prayer community (because Jewish public prayer require a quorum) that is somewhat less institutionalized than a full synagogue. Because these minyanim strive to include women as much as possible, public prayer becomes a partnership between men and women.

These congregations may be found in five countries (Israel, Australia, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States), on four continents. As of December 2007, 18 partnership minyanim had been established.³ These congregations exist or have existed around the country, in seven different census bureau defined metropolitan statistical areas (although 10 are in the New York – Northern New Jersey – Long Island Metropolitan Statistical Area), in seven states and the District of Columbia. (E. Holzer, personal communication, October 11, 2007)

They have been established in urban areas and in suburbs, in college towns and major metropolitan areas, by men and women, Jewish professionals and lay leaders,

³ This total excludes those minyanim that were founded by undergraduates at Hillels, Jewish student centers on university campuses. To the best of my knowledge, there are at least three such minyanim: Shalva, at the University of Michigan, which meets every Friday night (University of Michigan Hillel); Lalekhet, at Columbia University, which meets one Friday night per month (Lalekhet email announcements, October 12, 2007); and the New Minyan, at Yale University, that existed for only one semester during the 2004-2005 school year (E. Bar-Asher, personal communication, February 25, 2008). These minyanim were excluded from the study because I suspected that systematically different issues might arise among minyanim that were run by college students, on college campuses. This total also excludes Shirat Miriam, which was a satellite minyan of the Harvard Hillel Orthodox minyan (A. Cooper, personal communication, March 19, 2008).

students in their twenties, professionals in their thirties, forties, and fifties, and a retiree in her eighties. Some draw almost entirely single people, others almost entirely families with children. Some meet every Sabbath, others monthly, and others in between. Some have sparked tremendous controversy and a deluge of opposition, while others have been quietly accepted as new players in the local Jewish community. Four have disbanded or suspended operations. Each has a fascinating story to tell.

The first section of this paper will do three things. First, it will provide an introduction to Kehillat Shira Hadasha and the controversy and issues surrounding it and other partnership minyanim. Second, it will provide a summary of this study's findings on partnership minyanim. Because there is much about this phenomenon that may be of interest to planners, and because there has thus far been no comprehensive overview of all partnership minyanim in either the academy or the press, substantial space will be devoted to these sections. Third, it will tell the stories of 16 of these 18 minyanim, organized thematically, with the aim of bringing out some contrasts and similarities. I have not included the minyan in Ann Arbor, MI as my wife and I were among the leaders and organizers of that minyan, and I was unable to conduct an interview with leaders of the partnership minyan in White Plains, NY. Those minyanim are, however, included in the summary of findings on partnership minyanim.

The second section of this paper will explore these minyanim through the lens of planning ethics and planning theory. First, the paper will demonstrate the ways in which these minyanim, despite their generally very similar goals, have adopted different planning styles. In particular, the leaders of several partnership minyanim have engaged in what planners would call advocacy planning, whereas others embody the collaborative

or communicative model of planning. Second, this paper will suggest that the goals of these minyanim are in many ways analogous to the goals and aspirations of planners, as articulated by the American Planning Association's Ethical Principles for Planning. Many partnership minyanim are committed both to increasing opportunities for women in religious life within the confines halakha (the Jewish legal tradition) and also to creating inclusive and participatory organizations in which participants feel a sense of ownership over their religious experience. The APA's Ethical Principle for planning similarly commit planners to especially plan for those who are disadvantaged and to uproot structures and institutions that promote such injustice and to encourage public participation such that plans belong to and are shaped by the communities for which they are made, and not just planners (Lucy, 1988).

This paper will analyze the ways in which partnership minyanim prioritize their values and show that these values of advocacy and participation sometimes conflict; so too for planners. While public participation and advocacy for the disadvantaged are both admirable and important goals, planners must be aware of the potential for conflict between these values in order to successfully navigate that conflict.

Methodology

When I began this project my first step was to look for a list of the partnership minyanim in the United States. Although I found many articles in the Jewish press (Blas, 2005; Sugarman 2007) and in major newspapers such as the Boston Globe (Sege, 2005) on individual partnership minyanim or the phenomenon generally, I determined, to my surprise, that there was no published comprehensive and accurate listing of all of the partnership minyanim in the United States, let alone the world. JOFA maintains a list of minyanim with contact information for each minyan, but I immediately determined that it was incomplete: the Ann Arbor minyan, of which I was a leader, was not listed! As I later found out, JOFA's list has the incorrect name for one minyan, invalid contact information for others, and does not distinguish between those minyanim that no longer hold services and those that do⁴ (JOFA: Resources – Partnership Minyanim).

I next contacted Elie Holzer, a co-founder of Kehillat Shira Hadasha, whose speech on Shira Hadasha and the growth of partnership minyanim in February, 2007 sparked my academic interest in the topic. Holzer (personal communication, October 11, & October, 17 2007) was able to provide – and confirm, in cases where I'd heard of something he hadn't mentioned – a list of each of the partnership minyanim in the United States. Like JOFA, Holzer was not able to tell me which of those minyanim were currently active (personal communication, October 17, 2007).

⁴ The shortcomings of the JOFA list are surely due in no small part to the fact that JOFA relies on the leaders of each partnership minyan to contact JOFA and request that the minyan be listed. While I appreciate JOFA's desire not to give out *contact* information for a minyan without authorization, I am utterly puzzled as to why this otherwise excellent organization doesn't at least list the minyanim.

Holzer's list of eighteen minyanim became the basis of my research. During the course of my research I learned of only one other partnership minyan, one that began holding services in Chicago in 2008 (Anonymous Board Member, personal communication, March 4, 2008; D. Kalb, personal communication, February 13, 2008). This was beyond my cut-off date for the study and so this minyan was not included. The fact that after all of my internet research and all of my interviews only one additional minyan emerged is strong evidence that Holzer's list of eighteen minyanim was exhaustive, as of the end of 2007.⁵

I then obtained contact information for leaders of these minyanim from the JOFA list and through social networks. To learn about these minyanim I conducted open-ended interviews with representatives of 16 of them. In some cases, I spoke with one of the founders of a minyan, in other cases I spoke to a current leader who volunteered to speak with me.

To avoid tedious and awkward citation practice, this paper will not cite the relevant interview for every proposition regarding a specific minyan. Instead, citations for those interviews will be provided here. All information regarding a minyan should be regarded as based on my interview with a leader of that minyan unless otherwise cited.

The citations for the leaders of these minyanim are as follows:

⁵ Some lists of partnership minyan also include San Francisco's Mission Minyan and Atlanta's Chevre Minyan (Minyan Tehillah: Partnership Minyanim (2007); Shira Hadasha Minyanim World-Wide). I chose not to count the Mission Minyan as a partnership minyan because a board member of that minyan suggested to me that their minyan did not so identify (J. Esensten, personal communication, November 26, 2007) and chose not to include the Chevre Minyan because that minyan provides mixed seating (Atlanta Chevre Minyan: Experience, 2008) and having a partition between men and women is one of those things that characterizes a partnership minyan (JOFA: Resources -- Partnership Minyanim)

Minyan	Interviewee Date	Position
10/10	Abigail Yasgur, February 28, 2008	Founder
Darkhei Noam	Josh Getzler, February 20, 22, and 27, 2008	Co-chair
Forest Hills Minyan	Florence Zeman, February 15, 2008	Founder
Kol Echad	Chaim Trachtman, February 17, 2008	Founder
Kol Sasson	Rochelle Katz, February 21, 2008	Founder
Migdal Or Minyan	Steven Exler, February 25, 2008	Board member
Minyan Tehillah	Alanna Cooper, January 22, 2008	Co-founder
Minyan Urim	Elitzur Bar-Asher, February 21, 2008	Founder
Or Chadash/ Kehillat Ohel	Daniel Geretz, January 17, 2008	Founder
Rosh Pina	Jamie Salter, March 2, 2008	Founder
Shachar	Sally Mendelsohn, February 14, 2008	Founder
Shira Hadasha of Teaneck	Betty Samuels, February 23, 2008	Founder
Shira Hadasha, Evanston	Sam Fleischacker, January 20, 2008	Founder
Tehilla	Anonymous Board Member, March 4, 2008	Board member
Tehillah Minyan of Forest Hills	David Goldstein, January 23, 2008	Founder
Yavneh Minyan	David Kalb, February 13, 2008	Founder

I. Partnership Minyanim

This section introduces Kehillat Shira Hadasha and the issues surrounding it and other partnership minyanim. It also provides information on American partnership minyanim and tells the stories of 16 partnership minyanim.

a. An Introduction to Kehillat Shira Hadasha and Partnership Minyanim

Orthodox Judaism has traditionally forbidden women from taking any part in the synagogue service, and, as other streams of Judaism began encouraging women's participation, this recalcitrance has become one of the defining characteristics of Orthodox Judaism (Gruen, 2005). In 2001, an American-born Israeli named Mendel Shapiro, trained as a rabbi and lawyer in the United States and practicing law in Jerusalem, published a groundbreaking legal analysis in the journal *Edah* that challenged the absolute nature of the prohibition on women's involvement in the public prayer service. While noting that "[f]rom the Orthodox point of view, it is clear that halakhah cannot endure the sort of egalitarian service that is now commonplace in the Conservative and Reform movements," Shapiro explained that "there is one portion of the synagogue service – *qeri'at ha-Torah* (the public Torah reading) – where the bar to women's participation may not be absolute" (Shapiro, 2001, p. 2).

As Shapiro showed, there are three major halakhic issues that might prevent women from reading Torah in a synagogue service: the different obligations of men and women regarding Torah study⁶, *qol isha* (the prohibition against hearing a woman's

⁶ This is the reason why women are thus far not able to lead the major services even in a partnership minyan, but only those optional (yet arguably substantial) portions of the service for which there is no obligation (Sofer, 2007), and, of course, as Shapiro argued, the reading of the Torah. However, two of the participants in my study told me that they, or someone they knew, were currently exploring halachic arguments that would allow women to lead all of the synagogue services (A. Cooper, personal

singing voice), and *kevod ha-tsibbur* (a prohibition against taking actions that negatively affect the honor of a congregation or community). After explaining that there were halakhic authorities who held that men and women were equally obligated to hear the reading of the Torah, and that halachic authorities frequently limited and dismissed the application of *qol isha* in similar matters, Shapiro then went on, with tremendous thoroughness and length (52 pages and 278 footnotes) to argue that the prohibition of *kevod ha-tsibbur* could be waived or superseded.⁷ There was therefore no strictly legal objection to having women read from and be called to the Torah in synagogue. (Shapiro, 2001)

Violating a binding custom was another matter. After much analysis, Shapiro conceded that where an innovation “directly challenges existing practice or causes much dissension” – and that women reading Torah in synagogue was such an innovation – it should not be introduced into established synagogues in contravention of their usual way of doing things (Shapiro, 2001, p. 52). Shapiro nonetheless concluded that “where womens’ *aliyyot* (being called to the Torah) and Torah reading take place in self-selected groups, the practice may not be attacked on the grounds that it violates binding *minhag* (custom)” (Shapiro, 2001, p. 52). In other words, as Shapiro stated in response to a critic’s assertion that anyone who instituted such a practice could not be considered Orthodox, “newly organized congregations of like-minded persons that institute women’s *aliyyot* (being called to the Torah) should be acknowledged by the Orthodox community

communication, March 19, 2008 ; D. Kalb, personal communication, February 13, 2008) . In one case this argument would circumvent the notion of obligation altogether and argue that in modern settings one who leads services is really a song-leader, and not a prayer-leader, and hence different obligations in prayer would be irrelevant (D. Kalb, personal communication, February 13, 2008).

⁷ Professor Rabbi Daniel Sperber subsequently published an article affirming the arguments of Shapiro (2001) and further arguing that the prohibition against women’s participation based on congregational dignity is superseded by the halachic principle of human dignity, that is, the dignity of women who feel excluded by their inability to read from and be called to the Torah. (Sperber, 2002).

as being Orthodox synagogues” (Henkin & Shapiro, 2001, p.1). Less than six months later, just such a congregation, calling itself Kehillat Shira Hadasha (New Song), was established in Jerusalem.

Kehillat Shira Hadasha was founded by university professors Elie Holzer and Tova Hartman, Jerusalemites who, interestingly enough, actually first met at a Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) conference in New York (“Lysistrata,” 2004; Sofer, 2007). Holzer and Hartman are each parents of daughters and each felt an “unhappy dissonance” between the values they were trying to teach their daughters and those embodied by the Orthodox synagogue experience (Sofer, 2007). As Hartman explained, “We could no longer accept living with a split between the davening (praying) self and the inner self and secular public selves. We could no longer socialize ourselves into that split; more important, we no longer wanted to” (“Lysistrata,” 2004). They therefore began exploring the possibility of creating “a viable Orthodox synagogue experience that would allow expression for the voices and ideas of women and at the same time preserve their commitment to observance of Jewish law” (Sofer, 2007). Kehillat Shira Hadasha was born.

The new congregation was a stunning and rapid success and soon began drawing large numbers, including high-profile observant Jews such as Senator Joseph Lieberman (Gross, 2003). As a critic of the congregation conceded, “[t]hey’ve clearly tapped into something very deep” (Gross, 2003). The crowds at services often overflow Kehillat Shira Hadasha’s cavernous auditorium premises, and have repeatedly been estimated at over 500 persons (Gross, 2003; Gruen, 2005; Sofer, 2007).

Kehillat Shira Hadasha has also inspired a wave of similar congregations worldwide; those in the United States are the topic of this paper. According to Kehillat Shira Hadasha's co-founder Elie Holzer, similar congregations have been established in cities in five countries: Israel (various areas of Jerusalem and elsewhere), Switzerland (Zurich), Australia (Melbourne), Canada (Toronto), and the United States (personal communication, October 11, 2007).

At Kehillat Shira Hadasha and partnership minyanim, women may read the Torah and be called to the Torah and may also lead some of the prayers: the Kabbalat Shabbat service on Friday night, the P'sukei D'zimrah service and Torah service on Saturday morning (JOFA: Resources – Partnership Minyanim).

The significance of Kehillat Shira Hadasha lies not so much in the fact that it allowed women to lead parts of the synagogue service; the 'liberal' or 'progressive' branches of Judaism (such as the Reform and Conservative movements familiar to many Americans) embraced gender egalitarianism decades ago (Gruen, 2005). Kehillat Shira Hadasha was, however, the first congregation to justify prominent roles for women in public prayer within the context of the Orthodox tradition of Jewish law, a development that The Jerusalem Report, a well-respected Israeli English language monthly, described as nothing less than a revolution (Gross, 2003). Kehillat Shira Hadasha thus laid claim to Orthodox Jewish legal legitimacy while at the same time asserting that Orthodoxy does not require the total exclusion of women from public participation in prayer services (Ibid). This has been an extremely contentious assertion that has drawn intense criticism of several sorts.

Some criticism of Shira Hadasha has been in the way of reasoned and sober analysis of the halakhic arguments relied upon by Kehillat Shira Hadasha. This criticism engages with the arguments put forward by Shapiro (2001) and others and evaluates their intellectual and halakhic persuasiveness, almost invariably unfavorably (Gross, 2003; Henkin, 2001; Rothstein, 2005 in Sugarman, 2007). For example, one Israeli rabbi known generally as an advocate for increased opportunities for women nonetheless rejects Shapiro's (2001) argument that women may read Torah for men on the grounds that it was achieved by "rummaging through the texts and manipulating the halakhah ... using a narrow reading to attain what they want." (Gross 2003). Another line of criticism argues that Kehillat Shira Hadasha's practices must be forbidden because no major Orthodox halakhic arbiter has sanctioned them, and because no other Orthodox congregations have ever adopted similar practices (Gross, 2003; Henkin, 2001).⁸

There has also been another type of criticism altogether – vicious invective that condemns Kehillat Shira Hadasha and partnership minyanim as betrayers of the Jewish people and halakha. For example, one prominent Israeli rabbi announced that "anyone who is truly God-fearing will not join in such a minyan since this is how the breaking of Jewish tradition begins" (Sela, 2006). Another announced that "people should not pray in this synagogue" because "[o]ne cannot come closer to God by violating Jewish law" (Ibid). As recently as February 2008, over six years after the founding of Kehillat Shira Hadasha, this rabbi was still inveighing against minyanim like Shira Hadasha as "the product of radical feminist agendas" – 'feminist' is a slur in some Orthodox circles

⁸ Of course this is quite a circular argument – since no major authorities have permitted it, it must be forbidden, and since it is forbidden, how could a major authority argue that it is permitted? Likewise, the fact that no other congregations share these practices is taken as both effect *and* cause of the ruling that they are prohibited.

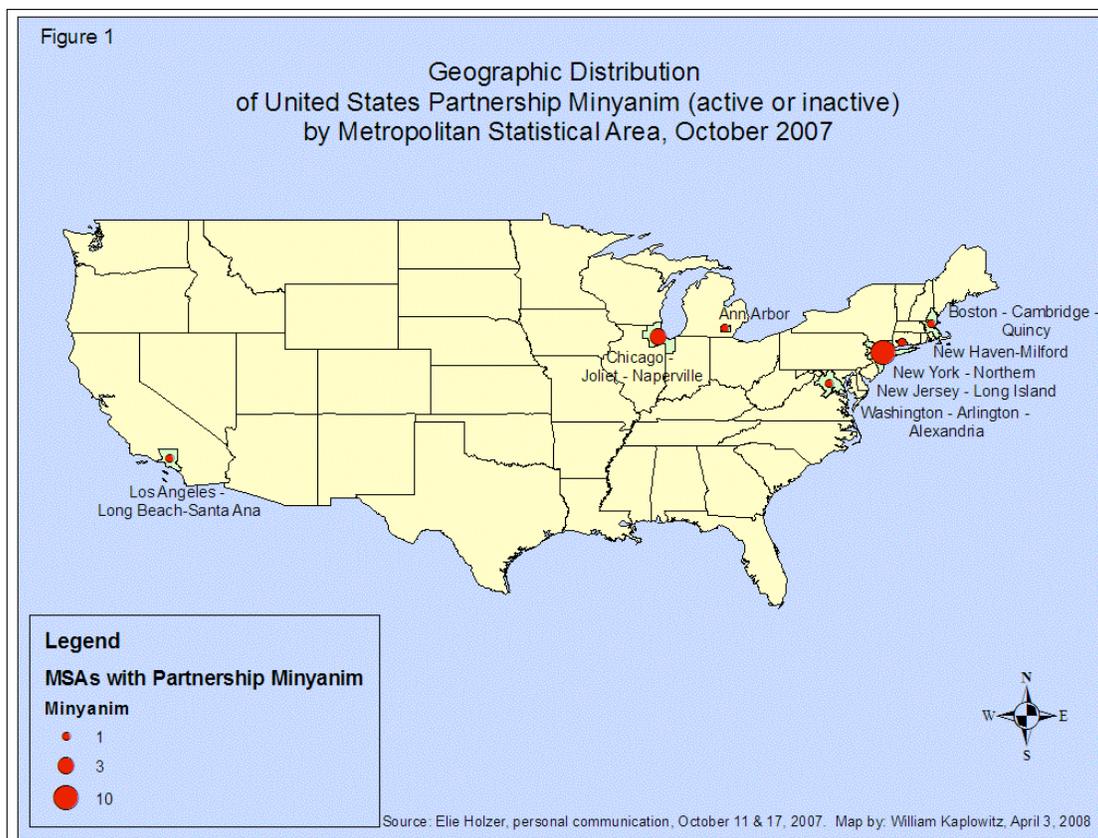
(Lando, 2007) – and claiming that “they are a departure from normative Judaism” (Wagner 2008).

The American partnership minyanim that I studied have faced similar controversy, to the extent that the leadership of one minyan was asked, “Why are you destroying the Jewish people?” (S. Exler, personal communication, February 25, 2008). Another minyan was condemned from the pulpit of every Orthodox synagogue in the local community on the same Sabbath (R. Katz, personal communication, February 21, 2008). Other minyanim have also faced controversy and conflict. The founder of one such congregation was banned from leading services or serving on the board of his home synagogue, a synagogue of which he had previously been president (D. Geretz, personal communication, January 17, 2008). A member of another congregation that was merely discussing such innovations left that congregation in protest (S. Fleischacker, personal communication, January 20, 2008). Those who have led services at several partnership minyanim have found themselves banned from leading services at their own synagogues by the rabbis of those synagogues (C. Trachtman personal communication, February 14, 2008 ; J. Getzler, personal communication, February 27, 2008). And when one partnership minyan advertised on a local Orthodox listserv that it would be hosting a reading of the Book of Esther (the *Megillah*) in which men and women both would participate, the board received this hateful response: “Why don’t you just have dogs read *megillah* for people?” (S. Exler, personal communication, February 25, 2008)

Despite this controversy and opposition, American partnership minyanim have spread and grown in the six years since Kehillat Shira Hadasha was established. The next section provides a summary of this study’s findings on those minyanim.

b. Summary of Findings on Partnership Minyanim

As Figure 1 shows, as of 2007, partnership minyanim had been established in seven census bureau defined metropolitan statistical areas. They are 1) New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, 2) Chicago-Joliet-Naperville, 3) New Haven-Milford



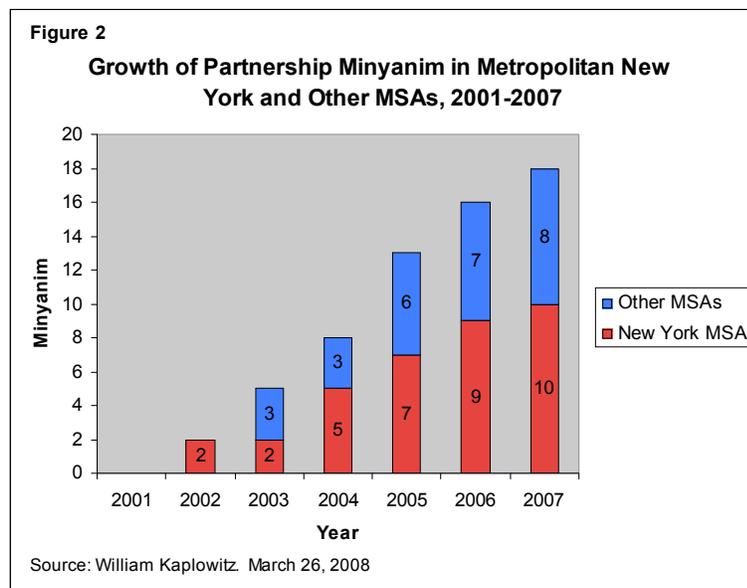
4) Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, 5) Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, 6) Ann Arbor, and 7) Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana. As Figure 1 also shows, over half of the minyanim thus far established (regardless of current activity) -- 10 of the 18 -- are in the New York area. The Chicago area is next, with three. No other area has more than one. (E. Holzer, personal communication, October 11, and October 17, 2007)

It is worth noting that, aside from the dominance of New York, the distribution of partnership minyanim does not particularly correspond to the distribution of Jews across

metropolitan areas, as estimated and categorized by the 2002 National Jewish Population Survey (United Jewish Communities, 2002).⁹

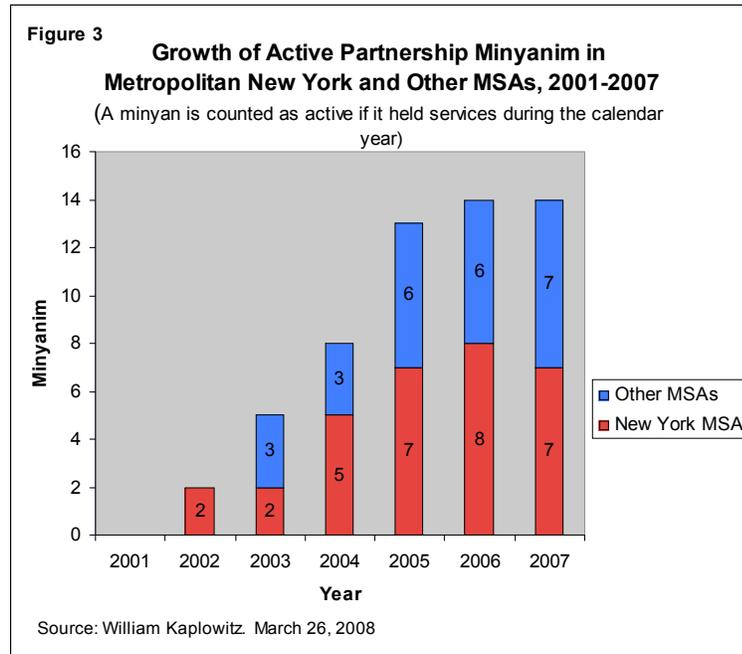
Here are a few interesting differences. The Los Angeles area, with around two times as many Jews as the Chicago area, has one partnership minyan to Chicago's three; Southeast Florida, with about twice as many Jews as Chicago, has none. New Haven has a partnership minyan, but Philadelphia, with around twelve times as many Jews, does not. Ann Arbor has a partnership minyan but neither Detroit, Cleveland, nor Baltimore, each with over twelve times as many Jews, does (United Jewish Communities, 2002). In fact, it is worth noting that there are no partnership minyanim in the Sunbelt except for that in Los Angeles; none west of the Atlantic sea-board and east of Michigan; and only one west of Chicago.

As Figure 2 shows, the first American partnership minyanim were established in New York in 2002. In 2003, three were established outside the New York area. Since 2004 the majority of established partnership minyanim have been in metro New York.



⁹ The National Jewish Population Survey uses its own categorization system that combines MSAs and CMSAs and other geographies in order to better approximate the true geography of local Jewish communities. (United Jewish Communities, 2002)

As Figure 3 shows, the story is slightly different when we look only at active minyanim, here defined as those minyanim that held services during a calendar year. When it comes to those minyanim, the predominance of the New York Area is reduced; in 2007 there were seven active minyanim in New York and seven elsewhere. The other way of looking at this is that three New York area partnership minyanim are no longer active, whereas only one outside of New York has



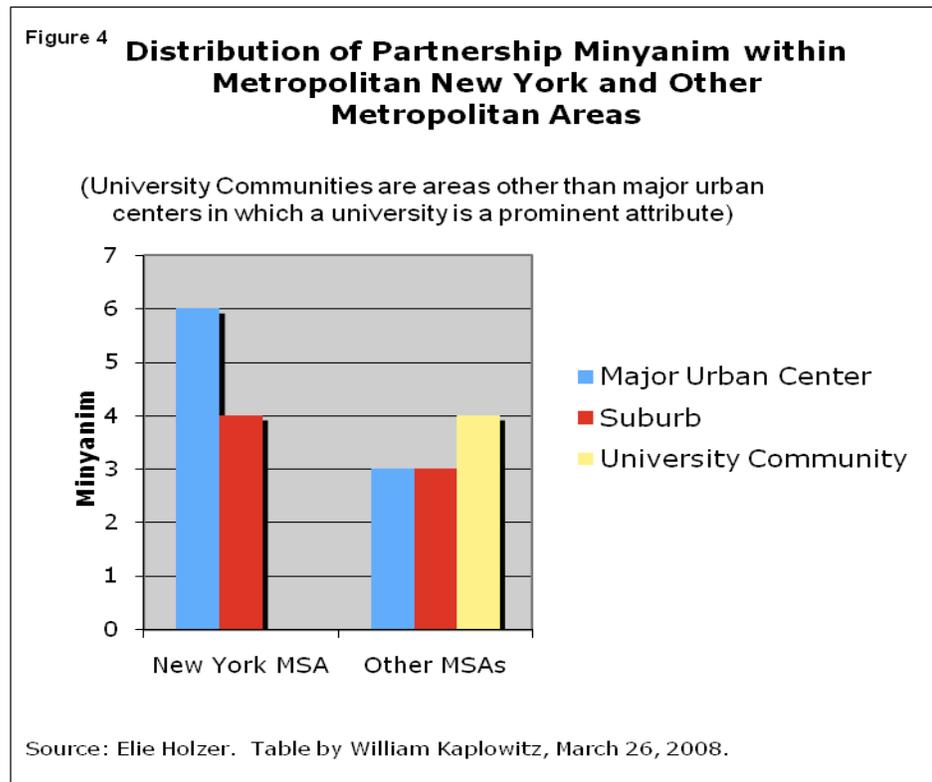
ceased holding services. As Figure 3 also indicates, it was not until 2006, the fifth year of this phenomenon, that any minyanim ceased activity.¹⁰ One might have expected there to be a high rate of attrition in the first one or two years of the phenomenon generally as the most cutting-edge experiments failed. This has not been the case.

It has been asserted, sometimes with pride (Sege, 2005) and sometimes dismissively (Sugarman 2007), that partnership minyanim are a phenomenon confined to hip urban centers, particularly the “ultra-cosmopolitan” Upper West Side of Manhattan (Sugarman 2007), and to college campuses. This is not the entire truth.

¹⁰ These minyanim actually stopped holding services in 2005, but because they met during 2005 they get counted as active for 2005 and then inactive thereafter.

As Figure 4 shows, six partnership minyanim have been established in New York City (although only one of those – admittedly, the first, most regular, and best-attended – is on the Upper West Side). Of the eight outside the New York area, three have been established in major urban centers, here defined as the central cities of the ten largest MSAs. Four have been established in university communities, which I use to refer to places other

than major urban areas in which a university is a major feature of the locality, namely: Ann Arbor, Cambridge, Evanston and New Haven.



Three minyanim are located in the suburbs of major MSAs, but of these, only one, in Skokie, IL, is not a university community. On the other hand, four of New York’s partnership minyanim have been established in suburban Westchester County and New Jersey. It is therefore fair to say that partnership minyanim are largely – though by no means exclusively – found in urban centers and university communities.

Table 1 presents a list of all partnership minyanim that were actively holding services as of December, 2007, sorted by year of founding.¹¹

Table 1

Active Partnership Minyanim, December 2007

Minyan	Location	Year Founded	Services	Meets	Attendance	Membership Demographic
Darkhei Noam	New York, NY (Upper W. Side)	2002	Saturday morning, periodic Friday night	Weekly	125-150	Families with children, late 20s to mid-40s
Shachar	Bronx, NY (Riverdale)	2002	Saturday morning	Monthly	60-70	Families in their 40s and up
Kol Sasson	Skokie, IL	2003	Saturday morning, Friday night, holidays	Weekly (monthly Friday nights)	30	Families in their 30s and 40s
Minyan Tehillah	Cambridge, MA	2003	Saturday morning, Friday night, some holidays	Bi-monthly (monthly Friday nights)	50-70	Couples and families in their 30s
Kol Echad	New Rochelle, NY	2004	Friday night, Saturday morning	Monthly (alternate Friday night & Sat. morning)	30	Families in 40s and 50s
Minyan Urim	New Haven, CT	2005	Saturday morning	Weekly	25-45	Graduate students, undergraduates, a few families.
10/10	Los Angeles, CA	2005	Friday night	Monthly (occas. Sat. morning)	60	Families and singles in their 20s-60s
Shira Hadasha, Evanston	Evanston, IL	2005	Saturday Morning	Monthly	30-40	Families in 40s & 50s
Shira Chadasha of White Plains	White Plains, NY	2005	Friday night, rare Saturday mornings	Irregularly, every 2-3 months	40-50	Families in their late 30s-60s,
Tehillah Minyan	Queens, NY (Forest Hills)	2006	Friday night	Monthly	18-27	Couples in 20s & 30s
Yavneh	New York, NY (Upper E. Side)	2006	Saturday morning	Monthly	100	Families in their 40s
As yet unnamed	Ann Arbor, MI	2006	Friday night	Bimonthly	18-25	Graduate students, families
Rosh Pina	Washington, D.C.	2007	Friday night, Sat. morning or afternoon, special events	Monthly	60-70	Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s
Migdal Or	New York, NY (Wash. Heights)	2007	Friday night	Bi-monthly	40-50	Single students and professionals in 20s

¹¹ The minyan in Ann Arbor held services through December, 2007 but has not held services in 2008 .

As Table 1 shows, three of these fourteen minyanim meet every Sabbath; most meet monthly, a few meet bi-monthly, and one meets irregularly. As Table 1 also shows, some of these minyanim meet only on Friday nights, some only on Saturday mornings, and others a mix. Attendance varies wildly: the biggest minyan, Darkhei Noam, attracts 125-150 people per meeting, while those in Ann Arbor and Forest Hills may be lucky to draw 20 people. To my surprise, most minyanim draw mostly middle-aged families, though there are several that draw mostly people in their twenties and thirties without children. Data on Shira Chadasha of White Plains comes from Raquel Ukeles (personal communication, March 9 & March 11, 2008).

As Table 2 shows, four partnership minyanim were no longer holding services as of December, 2007. Insufficient ideological commitment prevented one from carrying forward when its initial founders departed, insufficient membership brought about the end of another, insufficient membership brought on by community social pressure brought about the end of a third, and rabbinic and community pressure forced another to stop meeting.

Table 2
Partnership Minyanim No Longer Active, December 2007

Minyan	Location	Founded	Suspended Operations	Services	Met	Attendance	Membership Demographic	Reason for Suspension
Tehilla	Chicago, IL	2003	2005	Friday night	Monthly	25-30	Singles and couples, age 25-35	Lack of ideological commitment
Forest Hills Minyan	Queens, NY	2004	2006	Friday nights or Saturday afternoons	Monthly	30	Families, middle-aged	Insufficient membership
Shira Hadasha of Teaneck	Teaneck, NJ	2004	2006	Saturday morning	Weekly, few Friday night	??	Middle-aged to elderly	Insufficient membership, community opposition
Or Chadash	Highland Park, NJ	2005	2005	Friday night	Met only twice	70	Middle-aged	Community and rabbinic opposition

A great majority of the partnership minyanim aspire to emulate not only Kehillat Shira Hadasha's inclusion of women in the Orthodox synagogue setting but also the congregation's extraordinarily beautiful and musical prayers. Some, including Minyan Tehillah of Cambridge, Shachar of Riverdale, and 10/10 of Los Angeles have, according to their leaders, succeeded. Others, including Kol Echad of New Rochelle and Kol Sasson of Skokie have struggled to create services featuring the same sort of energy and melody as those at Kehillat Shira Hadasha. Two minyanim, Darkhei Noam of Manhattan and Minyan Urim of New Haven, explicitly distinguish themselves from Kehillat Shira Hadasha with regard to singing during services. A leader of Minyan Urim asserted that "for us, it is not at all about beautiful tefillah (prayers)," and that his is "a regular minyan," with no particular focus on singing. Darkhei Noam tries to strike a balance between a desire to have beautiful singing and a desire to finish services expeditiously, and its leadership contrasts Darkhei Noam with Shira Hadasha in this regard.

It is important to note that the rise and growth of partnership minyanim in the United States is, in some ways, part of-- and certainly contemporaneous with -- a broader trend toward what are being called "independent minyanim" (Cohen, 2006; personal communication A. Cooper, January 23, 2008). According to a recent report in the Jewish press, "these loose-knit communities are defined by their inclusiveness, pluralistic nature, intense worship style, fluid organizational structure, high Jewish literacy and fierce aversion to labels" (Fishkoff 2007). These minyanim have more than quintupled in number since 2001 (the same year that Kehillat Shira Hadasha was founded), and now number over 80, spread across 27 cities in the United States (Banerjee, 2007; Fishkoff, 2007).

There are two major differences between partnership minyanim and independent minyanim generally. First, according to the results of a recent study on independent minyanim, most participants in these minyanim are under 40 and unmarried (Fishkoff 2007). My research has shown that many, maybe even most, partnership minyan attendees are married and have children. Second, independent minyanim are committed to many things, such as “inclusiveness and pluralistic nature,” but Orthodox halakhic legitimacy – concern for which is one of the cornerstones of the partnership minyanim movement -- is not one of them.

It is also worth observing that although partnership minyanim are at their heart a movement within Orthodox Judaism, it is quite typical for partnership minyanim to attract a significant minority of non-Orthodox, usually Conservative, Jews. For example, Kol Echad draws about 33% of its participants from the local Conservative synagogue, Or Chadash drew 20% from a Conservative synagogue, Rosh Pina draws approximately 50% of its participants from a local independent egalitarian minyan, and around half of the participants at Minyan Tehillah of Cambridge at least sometimes attend various egalitarian or Conservative minyanim. Shira Hadasha, Evanston and Shachar also draw an un-quantified number of Conservative participants. Other minyanim draw an even larger percentage from beyond the Orthodox community: 10/10 draws fully 66% of its participants from various Conservative communities, and the Forest Hills Minyan drew 60% from Conservative synagogues.

This is striking because the Conservative movement embraced egalitarianism years ago, and so the very thing that makes partnership minyanim so exciting from the Orthodox perspective – the ability of women to take some major ritual roles during

synagogue services – should be utterly passé. So why do these Conservative Jews who already have the option of praying in a setting in which women can participate fully attend these minyanim that are less than fully egalitarian? The answer seems to be that these minyanim offer serious, traditional prayers that are sometimes very exciting and spirited, and that their feminist innovations make them more palatable to persons used to egalitarianism than a similar Orthodox synagogue would be (S. Fleischacker, personal communication, January 20, 2008; S. Mendelsohn, personal communication, February 14, 2008)

c. Case Studies

This section tells the stories of 16 American partnership minyanim.

1. It All Began with a Bat-Mitzvah: Shira Hadasha, Evanston (IL) and 10/10 (Los Angeles)

The partnership minyanim in Evanston, Illinois, and Los Angeles, California each grew out of a bat-mitzvah. In each case, the parents of an adolescent daughter wanted their daughter to be able to read from, and be called to, the Torah at her bat-mitzvah, just as a boy usually is at his bar-mitzvah. In each case, the initial partnership minyan was intended as a one-time forum for the bat-mitzvah celebration, but, in each case, the format instantly struck a chord and immediately inspired conversations about creating a regular partnership minyan. In each case, the desire to provide role models of female participation and opportunities for daughters provided much of the impetus for making the minyan regular, and in each case a sympathetic local Orthodox rabbi provided support for the minyan. And in each case there are tensions between democracy and the minyan's other goals. Shira Hadasha, Evanston is run by one person, who does all the work and makes all of the decisions himself. The leaders of 10/10 are themselves all Orthodox – and this dictates the practices of the minyan – but fully two thirds of the members are Conservative. They come for the spirited services but have no particular commitment to the Orthodox restrictions that are imposed on them by the founding minority elite.

There are two noteworthy distinctions between Shira Hadasha, Evanston and 10/10 (pronounced “10 and 10”) in Los Angeles. First, the founder of Shira Hadasha, Evanston had never been to, nor even heard of, Kehillat Shira Hadasha when his family

began planning their daughter's bat-mitzvah. Rather, the partnership minyan format was suggested to him as a solution to their difficulties creating a bat-mitzvah with which they were comfortable. By contrast, the founders of 10/10 had been to Kehillat Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem many times and so intended, from the start, for their daughter's bat-mitzvah to occur at a partnership minyan. Second, 10/10, like other partnership minyanim, draws its membership from a subset of the members of a local Orthodox synagogue: some members of the synagogue attend 10/10 when it meets, most do not, and the synagogue carries on. On the other hand, Shira Hadasha, Evanston, unique among partnership minyanim, draws the entire membership of the very small local Orthodox minyan; when Shira Hadasha, Evanston meets, the local Orthodox minyan does not – or, perhaps more accurately, it meets as Shira Hadasha, Evanston.

i. Shira Hadasha, Evanston

As Sam Fleischacker and his wife, Amy Reichert, members of a very small Orthodox minyan, began planning their daughter's bat mitzvah in 2002 they faced a dilemma. It was terribly important to them that their daughter read Torah at her bat mitzvah -- to do otherwise offended their egalitarian sensibilities -- but they thought that this couldn't be done in an Orthodox service.

Then, in mid-2002, the rabbi of the local Orthodox minyan mentioned to Fleischacker that there was a minyan called Kehillat Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem that allowed women to read Torah during services. Fleischacker was intrigued but, he noted, "I think I took him to be joking, or mentioning something he didn't himself believe in" (personal communication, January 27, 2008). During a follow-up conversation the rabbi explained that he himself would indeed attend such a minyan, and offered to put

Fleischacker in touch with the leaders of Kehillat Shira Hadasha. Fleischacker took him up on his offer, and began talking with members of the local minyan to see how they felt about this option. To his surprise, everyone he talked to, with one exception, was comfortable with it.

The Bat-Mitzvah occurred in December, 2003, in space rented from a Unitarian Church. Many of the family's female friends were called to the Torah for the very first time in their lives and "it was quite moving." The bat-mitzvah created tremendous excitement and the possibility of implementing this new approach on a regular basis was discussed at Sabbath meals throughout the very small community for some time.

The first regular meeting of Shira Hadasha, Evanston, occurred in January, 2005, over a year after the bat-mitzvah that started it all. Every member of the local Orthodox minyan attended.

The cohesion enjoyed by Shira Hadasha, Evanston is remarkable, and Fleischacker thinks it may be explained by a powerful element of self-selection. Evanston neighbors Skokie and West Rogers Park, a neighborhood of Chicago, each of which have many Orthodox synagogues and Jewish day schools. That said, it takes an unusual breed of Orthodox Jew to choose to move to Evanston, which has a more intellectual Jewish community, and is a more aesthetically pleasing locale, but which lacks the communal infrastructure of the other neighborhoods. This leads to a small community of decidedly atypical, iconoclastic, Orthodox Jews in Evanston, a community that, because of its self-selection bias, is much freer to experiment than those in other places.

The establishment of Shira Hadasha, Evanston was not entirely without conflict. One member of the Evanston Orthodox minyan left the minyan because he was outraged

by the minyan's, and the rabbi's, willingness to consider the partnership minyan innovations for the fateful bat-mitzvah. This man, an ordained rabbi, felt that partnership minyanim are not halakhically acceptable, and was apoplectic over the rabbi's approval of the format, all the more so because the bat-mitzvah would be held in a church. After a bitter fight with the rabbi in the months before the bat-mitzvah, the ex-member never came to the minyan again. As Fleischacker noted, the fact that this member disagreed so vehemently with the idea of a partnership minyan for the bat-mitzvah that he left the local minyan actually made it *easier* to establish the regular partnership minyan; his departure created unanimity within the minyan.

Fleischacker's biggest concern about his minyan is just that. It's *his* minyan: since it began, he has done all of the work required to keep the minyan running and made all of the policy decisions. Three years ago, Fleischacker decided that he would take the plunge and found this minyan, and then run it for three months, at which point he would hand it over to someone else. No one else has stepped up. Fleischacker believes that unless this changes, the minyan will die. In order for it to survive, its participants need to invest themselves in it, to believe they have a crucial role to play, particularly because Fleischacker himself can't maintain his investment indefinitely. Fleischacker also expressed concern that the minyan is not being governed democratically, though, as he told me, so long as he does all the work, he thinks that it's reasonable for him to have all the decision-making power.

ii. 10/10

Abigail Yasgur and her family had been to Kehillat Shira Hadasha many times, and very much liked the congregation's inclusion of women and the beautiful singing during services. When it came time to plan their daughter's bat-mitzvah, to be held in March, 2005, they knew that they wanted to model it after Kehillat Shira Hadasha, to, as Yasgur put it, "involve women as much as possible within Orthodox halakhic boundaries." They approached the rabbi of their Orthodox synagogue – a rabbi with a progressive reputation about whom Yasgur says, "I adore this rabbi" – to ask whether they might hold the bat-mitzvah in the synagogue's social hall or library. After much conversation and empathy, and with both parties making clear that the conversation would continue and that there were no hard feelings, the rabbi said that he could not let them hold the bat-mitzvah in his synagogue. He did, however, provide support for the bat-mitzvah, loaning a Torah scroll, a *mehitza* (partition) and prayer books for Yasgur to use in the space they rented for the bat-mitzvah.

When the bat-mitzvah occurred, in March of 2005, it was, according to Yasgur, "the first time this style of minyan was done on the West Coast." At the luncheon after the service, to which their entire synagogue had been invited, there was much excitement. People were asking each other, "what's wrong with this? Couldn't we do this?" Yasgur and others from their synagogue decided that they would make their partnership minyan a regular occurrence, but because they liked their own synagogue and didn't want to hurt it, they decided that generally they would not hold their minyan on Saturday mornings, the time when the most people traditionally go to the synagogue. However, there was a need

in the neighborhood for an Orthodox Friday night service “where women, and our daughters, could be more involved,” and where there would be more spirited singing during services.

10/10 held its first regular meeting in August, 2005, only five months after the bat-mitzvah -- 80 people showed up. Unlike Shira Hadasha, Evanston, 10/10 is governed and run by a group of people: though there is no official board, there are many people involved in the different committees that are responsible for keeping the minyan going.

According to Yasgur, 10/10 has two prongs to its mission: to include women in ritual life, and commitment to halakha. The name 10/10 (again, pronounced “10 and 10”) is derived from the minyan’s commitment to delay the beginning of those portions of the service that require a quorum until 10 men *and* 10 women are present (unlike a traditional quorum which requires only 10 men). The slash between the 10s is meant to evoke the *mehitza*, or partition used in Orthodox services. With this name (and symbol) the group hopes to indicate its commitment to inclusion of women, and its emphatic commitment to Orthodoxy and *mehitzah*. As we will see with the case study of Migdal Or, a 10 and 10 policy can sometimes cause friction between those who want to wait for 10 women on principle, and those who have other needs and simply need to pray. Fortunately for 10/10, there is a synagogue across the street, to which a person who needs to begin prayers on time can go, and the minyan’s 10 and 10 policy has not been contentious.

2. Becoming a Shul (Synagogue): Darkhei Noam (New York) and Kol Sasson (Skokie, IL)

Darkhei Noam, the partnership minyan on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and Kol Sasson, the minyan in the Chicago suburb of Skokie, are each in the process of transitioning from a minyan – a prayer community that one may sometimes attend – to a shul – (Yiddish for synagogue) in this context used to refer to a congregation to which one belongs, pays dues, holds life-cycle events and the like. Each now holds services essentially every Sabbath morning. Each in some way began its journey with High Holiday services; progressive High Holiday services provided the model upon which Darkhei Noam was established, and the success of Kol Sasson's first High Holiday services convinced its leaders that they should hold services more regularly. Each has faced at times fierce opposition. A member of Darkhei Noam was banned from leading services at another synagogue after the rabbi of that synagogue learned that he'd led services at Darkhei Noam. Kol Sasson was condemned from the pulpit of every Orthodox synagogue in Skokie on a single Sabbath.

Darkhei Noam and Kol Sasson are distinct in at least three major ways. First, Darkhei Noam was not modeled on Kehillat Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem; actually it was less a follower than a contemporary of Kehillat Shira Hadasha. Kol Sasson was, like many other partnership minyanim, explicitly based on Kehillat Shira Hadasha, founded by people who had been to, and adored, Kehillat Shira Hadasha and wanted to make their own version at home. Along these lines, while the founders of Kol Sasson (whose name means 'voice of joy' in Hebrew) were inspired to recreate Kehillat Shira Hadasha in no small part due to the beautiful singing, Darkhei Noam was founded specifically to make

an ideological and halakhic point,¹² and not to have musically beautiful services. Second, though the membership of Darkhei Noam and Kol Sasson is now fairly similar, the founders of Darkhei Noam were (to the best of my knowledge, single) graduate students, whereas the founders of Kol Sasson were families with teenage children. Third, Kol Sasson and Darkhei Noam have taken very different approaches to the challenges of institutionalizing, of becoming a shul. Kol Sasson, facing the challenge of finding people to read the entire Torah portion each week, has hired a man to read the Torah for the congregation every other week, and recently hired a part-time rabbi. Darkhei Noam, though facing a similar challenge, is ideologically opposed to hiring someone to read Torah for the congregation and has not hired a rabbi, but only a halakhic advisor to guide the congregation's leaders as they make their own ritual determinations. Darkhei Noam is ideologically committed to lay-led services, Kol Sasson is not.

i. Darkhei Noam

Darkhei Noam was founded by Lisa Schlaff, Tamara Charm, and Jonathan Stein; another co-founder, Scott Lipson, apparently ceased involvement quickly. When it began, in March, 2002, Darkhei Noam was the first partnership minyan in the United States, and its development paralleled that of Kehillat Shira Hadasha. According to co-founder Jonathan Stein, the founding of Kehillat Shira Hadasha had nothing to do with the founding of Darkhei Noam.

DN (Darkhei Noam) developed completely independently of Shira Hadashah in Jerusalem, though SH's (Shira Hadasha's) larger numbers and earlier launch date have often meant that DN is viewed as the UWS (Upper West Side) version of SH. I'm not sure I mind the label, but the goings on in Jerusalem did not have any direct impact on the development of DN. (Cohen, 2006).

¹² Darkhei Noam is a Hebrew reference to a halakhic principle that, when possible, a compassionate approach should be taken in matters of Jewish law (Sperber, 2004).

As co-chair Josh Getzler explained, Darkhei Noam took its inspiration from the founders' familiarity with the halachic opinion by Shapiro (2001) and the similar High Holiday services held at Drisha, a progressive institution of women's Jewish learning on the Upper West Side. Even so, Getzler stated that over time Kehillat Shira Hadasha "has become an influence for us."

The founders of Darkhei Noam simply intended their minyan to be a monthly opportunity for them and their friends to pray in a more inclusive halakhic environment. It quickly became a sensation. Attendance, which began at an already impressive 75 people per meeting, peaked at 175-225 per meeting by 2004. During this period, Darkhei Noam was viewed as a great experiment, and many, if not most, of those involved viewed their attendance at this minyan as a type of social action, or political statement. Singing during services was not a priority – the only thing meant to distinguish these services from any other was the involvement of women. During these heady days, Darkhei Noam drew almost exclusively young singles, a great percentage of whom were affiliated with universities. In fact, when one of the co-founders completed her doctoral dissertation, her friends sponsored a Kiddush (reception after Saturday services) in her honor, at which, in reference to all the other budding scholars present, a joking prayer was offered: "*Im Yirtzeh Hashem* (may God desire the same) soon by all of us!"

As the minyan grew, a board was formed, and Darkhei Noam began meeting twice a month, hosted its first bat-mitzvah celebrations, and then began meeting three Saturdays per month. In September, 2007 Darkhei Noam began meeting every week.

Over the years, Darkhei Noam's membership has shifted dramatically, and the graduate students who once characterized the minyan no longer do so. Now the

congregation is overwhelmingly comprised of families, with lots of children. According to Getzler, two dynamics led to this outcome. First, during the days of single attendees, there was a noticeable gender imbalance; far more single women than single men were present. At some point this became untenable for these women hoping to meet a mate at services, and many of the single women left Darkhei Noam to seek out the single men at other Orthodox synagogues. Second, as Darkhei Noam increased the frequency with which it met, families on the Upper West Side started viewing it as a place that could be their shul – the place they went every week, and where their kids could grow up. The number of families belonging to Darkhei Noam increased dramatically.

Darkhei Noam's expansion has brought its own challenges. As Getzler put it, "in order to be a shul, we have to be a shul." That is, if Darkhei Noam wants to become a permanent self-sustaining community, it will have to provide services that it didn't, and couldn't, provide before. In large part, the congregation is rising to the challenge: it is now establishing a burial society and developing volunteer-run pastoral care, and has hired a halakhic advisor, Rabbi Daniel Sperber of Jerusalem, to help inform the congregation's decision-making (but not to make decisions for them). Getzler identified two ongoing challenges for the congregation. First, Darkhei Noam has yet to hold services on the High Holidays, in large part because many Darkhei Noam members have typically attended the services at Drisha that were so pivotal in the forming of Darkhei Noam. That said, Getzler expressed the feeling that so long as its members have to figure out where to go on the High Holidays, Darkhei Noam will never be a real shul. Second, as Darkhei Noam has expanded its service offerings, its need for qualified prayer leaders and Torah readers has also increased, and the congregation has had a hard time finding

congregants to cover everything every week. At several board meetings the possibility of hiring someone to read the Torah for the congregation has been broached, but in every instance the suggestion has been a non-starter. Lay leadership is a significant component of Darkhei Noam's ideology and the congregation's board has rejected any proposal to hire someone to do things that the congregation believes its congregants should be doing themselves. As Getzler said, the board will just "reach out and reach out" to find congregants able to take on those tasks.

ii. Kol Sasson

In August 2003, Rochelle Katz attended services at Kehillat Shira Hadasha for the first time. She observed that having one woman lead services made all the other women feel more engaged, which led to more enthusiastic participation and a more meaningful prayer experience. One Sunday that December, Katz was jogging with a friend, Jane Shapiro, and they got to talking about Kehillat Shira Hadasha. Katz, who at the time was on the board of a synagogue in Skokie and had no intention of creating her own synagogue, and Shapiro decided that they'd like to bring this style of services to Skokie, and would start that very Friday night! They called some liberal Orthodox friends whose children went to the Conservative day school and asked them, as a personal favor, to participate. That Friday night Kol Sasson met for the first time, and every week thereafter for two or three years, never missing a minyan.

Kol Sasson began its transformation into a Saturday morning prayer community and, later, into an organization on the verge of becoming a synagogue, when, for personal political reasons, Katz and her family resigned from their own synagogue in 2005. They became members at another Orthodox synagogue for six months, but didn't much like it,

and were not keen on spending the High Holidays there. Kol Sasson therefore held its own High Holiday services. The services were a great success, and Katz and others thought that if they could pull this off, and make a spiritual space for themselves in which they felt truly comfortable, how could they go back to home synagogues in which they did not feel the same comfort? The following fall, after again meeting for the High Holidays, Kol Sasson began meeting once per month on Saturday mornings. By the following fall Kol Sasson was meeting every Sabbath morning. At the same time, Kol Sasson's once dependable Friday night service attendance has dramatically fallen off, and Kol Sasson now has Friday night services only once per month.

According to Katz, Kol Sasson's mission is to provide "an inclusive and meaningful *davening* (prayer opportunity) for all members." Singing is an important part of this mission, of this goal of inclusion and meaningfulness. As Katz continued, Kol Sasson strives to include a lot of singing during its services, because singing "permits everyone lend his or her voice in a way that lets him or her connect" to the religious experience. That said, Kol Sasson members tend to be attracted not so much by the beautiful singing – which has tapered off on Saturday mornings – as by their lack of a connection to other synagogues or by their ideological commitment to women's issues.

Kol Sasson has approached the challenges of establishing and institutionalizing its congregation very differently than Darkhei Noam has, in some part probably because its membership base is so much smaller than Darkhei Noam's. Darkhei Noam may draw 130 people; Kol Sasson, only 30. Many people whom Katz had expected to participate in her group do not, to her "shock." As we will see in the case of Shachar and Kol Echad,

this reluctance to participate, even on the part of progressively minded people, is not at all uncommon.

While Darkhei Noam adamantly and on principle refuses to hire someone to read the Torah, Kol Sasson has in fact engaged such a person – ironically, a man – who does all the Torah reading for the congregation every other week. Similarly, while Darkhei Noam has historically decided ritual matters through study by its own leaders, often followed by debate, Kol Sasson has addressed such issues by covertly contacting either a local Orthodox rabbi who did not want his involvement publicized, or a co-founder of Kehillat Shira Hadasha. Whatever answer that person returned, Kol Sasson implemented. For example, based on the advice of the local rabbi, Kol Sasson does not wait for 10 men and 10 women to start services.

Kol Sasson is also in the process of engaging a local Orthodox rabbi to serve as its part-time rabbi, both to support its halakhic legitimacy, and to offer those families who no longer belong to any other synagogue the services and leadership of a rabbi. It seems that Kol Sasson's leadership feels that it is more important achieve their goal of inclusive and meaningful prayer service than to achieve it all on their own, without professional assistance.

3. Halakhic Advocacy: Minyan Urim (New Haven) and Rosh Pina (Washington, DC)

Minyan Urim and Rosh Pina each draw mostly younger people, in their 20s and 30s (though Minyan Urim has more men than women, and Rosh Pina more women than men). Each was founded and is led by an individual or couple who provides the inspiration and set direction for their minyan. Interestingly, in each case, those leaders were outsiders who had been involved with similar minyanim elsewhere. Within months – or even weeks, in the case of Minyan Urim – the newcomers found themselves founding a partnership minyan in their adopted hometown. In the case of Rosh Pina, its founder, Jamie Salter had been a member of Kehillat Shira Hadasha since it began, and founded Rosh Pina nine or ten months after moving to Washington, DC. The founders of minyan Urim, Elitzur Bar-Asher and Michal Bar-Asher Siegel had been leaders of Minyan Tehillah in Cambridge. Within two weeks of moving to New Haven they had founded Minyan Urim. Each minyan has faced substantial opposition and each has countered that opposition.

There are at least two major differences between these minyanim. First, Rosh Pina holds services once a month so as to avoid friction with other synagogues to which its members belong; Minyan Urim meets every week because its members don't belong to any other prayer communities. Second, while Rosh Pina models itself on Kehillat Shira Hadasha, including Kehillat Shira Hadasha's embrace of music during services, Minyan Urim explicitly does not model itself on Shira Hadasha and does not emphasize singing.

i. Minyan Urim

In August, 2005, Elitzur Bar-Asher and his wife, Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, moved to New Haven from Cambridge, MA, where they had been halachic advisors – what Bar-Asher called “unofficial rabbis” – to Minyan Tehillah. Their very first week in New Haven they had lunch with some people they had never met before, but who knew of their work in Cambridge and asked whether the Bar-Ashers would help them start such a minyan in New Haven. The Bar-Ashers said that they would be happy to talk to anyone who wanted to come over to learn about running a partnership minyanim; the next Sunday, 25 people showed up at their home. In Bar-Asher’s experience such minyanim, such as Minyan Tehillah, often take a very long time to establish, with many meetings devoted to determining the minyan’s ideology and direction. That was not the case this time; the group “immediately accepted” the Bar-Asher’s leadership and ideology and set about dealing with practical details. Because the Bar-Ashers knew that debate over the selection of a name could lead to distraction and delay, Bar-Asher decided that there would be three days to suggest names for the new minyan, and then ten hours to vote via email for the name. Within two weeks of the Bar-Ashers’ move to New Haven, Minyan Urim had been established; within three weeks it met for the first time at Yale Hillel. The speed and ease of this took even Bar-Asher by surprise; as he told me, “We couldn’t believe it happened.”

The Bar-Ashers serve as both halakhic advisors and general overseers of the minyan who make sure that, as Bar-Asher told me, “everyone is doing his or her job properly.” This requires a lot of their time and energy, but they are willing to do it because they are so ideologically invested in the success of partnership minyanim.

Actually, the Bar-Ashers do not call their minyan a ‘partnership minyan,’ but rather a ‘Halachic Minyan,’ because they want to emphasize that all of their decisions are based on halakha.

One thing that is very striking about Minyan Urim is its relationship, or lack thereof, to Kehillat Shira Hadasha, and its rejection of certain other basic premises of other partnership minyanim. Bar-Asher asserted that he has never been to Kehillat Shira Hadasha and that he “didn’t need” the Shapiro responsa to tell him that women could read from and be called to the Torah; his own understanding of the *Shulhan Arukh*, the Code of Jewish law, told him that. In fact, Bar-Asher believes that the Shapiro responsa, which goes on for 52 pages, could have reached the same conclusion in three lines! Bar-Asher does, however, appreciate the way in which the Shapiro responsa and Kehillat Shira Hadasha showed the world that such a minyan could actually succeed in practice, and so paved the way for minyanim like Minyan Urim.

Minyan Urim also does not embrace the singing so characteristic of Kehillat Shira Hadasha and other partnership minyanim. “For us, it is not about singing,” and it is “not at all about beautiful tefillah (prayers).” Minyan Urim is just “a regular minyan,” but one in which, crucially, women have more equal opportunities.¹³ Halakha unfortunately will not allow true sex-equality in synagogue services, but Bar-Asher believes that it is imperative to move towards equality in every way that is halakhically permissible. Ironically, because Minyan Urim, unlike most other partnership minyanim, attracts more men than women, Minyan Urim does not follow the custom of other partnership minyanim who wait for ten men and ten women both before prayers begin.

¹³ However, Blas (2005) reported, to the contrary, that Minyan Urim “strives to create an uplifting and song-filled tefillah.”

Minyan Urim has been controversial, and Bar-Asher has been notably unabashed about wading into that contention. There have been two major sources of opposition, both rabbinic. First, a rabbi of one of the Orthodox synagogues in New Haven condemned Minyan Urim and told those who run services at his synagogue never to call Bar-Asher to the Torah on that account. However, this particular act of opposition did not dissuade anyone from participating in Minyan Urim. Quite the opposite, in fact. According to Bar-Asher: “we got more respect from other people” because of it! The second source of opposition was the Orthodox rabbi affiliated with Yale’s Hillel Center, at which Minyan Urim meets. This was a more serious threat, as an earlier attempt at having a partnership minyan at Yale Hillel had failed in part because this rabbi had told Yale students that halakha prohibited such a minyan. Bar-Asher knew the rabbi from time they spent together in an Israeli yeshiva, and so approached him when Minyan Urim began. Bar-Asher told the rabbi – nicely, he said – that he would *not* sit quietly by and accept the same treatment that the rabbi had given the earlier minyan. Bar-Asher told him that “if you say anything against us halachically, I’m going to fight like crazy, and prove you wrong.” The rabbi has not spoken out against Minyan Urim.

The Bar-Ashers have actively promoted the halakhic underpinnings and validity of partnership minyanim, with some success; many people who would not attend the services of the abortive partnership minyan do attend Minyan Urim. Every year the Bar-Ashers teach a class on the halakhic underpinnings of partnership minyanim, and they have even published an article, called the “Guide for the Halachic Minyan,” that they hope will guide and legitimate the halakhic decision-making process of partnership minyanim.

ii. Rosh Pina

Jamie Salter had been living in Israel for approximately a decade, and had been a member of Kehillat Shira Hadasha since its founding, when he moved to Washington, D.C. in the summer of 2006 to take a position as a Judaic studies teacher in a high school. Salter moved to the heart of the District and became deeply involved with a well-known Modern Orthodox synagogue, even co-teaching a class on Maimonides after early services on Saturday morning. Salter and his co-teacher, a woman, wanted to publicize their class and so desired to sponsor a *Kiddush*, an after services reception, in honor of the class. Salter's co-teacher would make the relevant blessings, which Salter knew to be halachically permissible according to some major authorities.

Salter was told that the rabbi of the synagogue would not allow a woman to make those blessings. This really upset him and struck him as close-minded, and so he began discussing the possibility of creating a minyan based on Kehillat Shira Hadasha that would show the Orthodox community what was halakhically possible. Moreover, it would make the point that there were halakhically committed people who wanted their religious life to better correspond with their feminist values, something that the rabbi did not seem to acknowledge. In this regard, Salter decided that it was important that the founders be people who led unimpeachably halakhic lifestyles so that their minyan would not be able to be discounted as something that only people who didn't care about halakha would attend.

Around ten months later, in May, 2007 Salter's new minyan, which he named Rosh Pina (Hebrew for "Keystone")¹⁴ held its first meeting. Since then, the minyan

¹⁴ The name comes from the Biblical verse, recited in the Hallel service, "The stone that was rejected by the builders has become the keystone." According to Salter, he just liked the way the name sounded and that it

meets once a month, for Friday night, Saturday morning, or special events, in party space that the founders rented and equipped with their own money. There are already two very well established congregations in downtown Washington whose members are very loyal to each : the Orthodox synagogue which meets weekly, and an egalitarian minyan that meets every week, but alternates Friday nights and Saturdays. Salter believes that even if a person from one of these communities entirely agrees ideologically with Rosh Pina, those people won't attend Rosh Pina more than occasionally, because they are loyal to their home communities. Rosh Pina therefore tries to avoid head to head competition with either community and looks for niches in which it can offer something neither does. For example, Rosh Pina is holding services for the New Month (something that the egalitarian minyan simply does not do), in which a woman will lead the celebratory Hallel service (something that the Orthodox synagogue would not allow).

The rabbi of Salter's Orthodox synagogue has been resolutely opposed to Rosh Pina. He sent letters to those women from the synagogue who serve as ritual bath attendants that reminded each of them that they must lead halakhic lives in order to remain attendants, which those women who were members of Rosh Pina interpreted as a clear reference to Rosh Pina. The rabbi also gave an unprecedented series of three Sabbath afternoon lectures devoted to demonstrating that partnership minyanim are not halakhically valid. Though the rabbi never mentioned Rosh Pina by name, Salter said that it was clear that Rosh Pina was the object of his talk, so clear, in fact, that it served as great publicity for Rosh Pina, which has continued to grow.

was from the celebratory Hallel service. After deciding on the name, however, he came up with an excellent explanation for it: women, previously rejected and excluded by the rabbis, become the keystone, the center, of the minyan.

4. The Theology of Conversation: Yavneh (New York)

The Yavneh Minyan, on Manhattan's Upper East Side is driven by an ideology that, while inclusive of the practices and philosophy of other American partnership minyanim, also goes far beyond those practices and philosophies. The Yavneh minyan was also founded and is led by a rabbi, which is unique among partnership minyanim (though Kol Sasson recently engaged a rabbi to lead them). For these reasons, Yavneh will be considered separately.

Shortly before Mendel Shapiro's (2001) groundbreaking responsa was published, Blu Greenberg, the founding mother of Orthodox feminism, sent an advance copy to Rabbi David Kalb and ten or so other American rabbis. Kalb was excited and stayed up all night with the opinion, reading it and tracking down the sources and citations, and was convinced. From then on, Kalb reported that his greatest dream was to lead a partnership minyan or synagogue. At the time, Kalb was the rabbi of a synagogue in Connecticut, and thought about beginning a partnership minyan there, but was dissuaded from doing so by the fact that most of his congregants were not strictly observant of halakha. Kalb believed that this would eviscerate the significance of the halakhic statement that he wanted to make, and that it might even hurt the cause of partnership minyanim for the first adopting synagogue to be one of dubious halakhic legitimacy. So he waited.

When Kalb, for family reasons, moved to New York City, friends from his previous synagogue, with whom he'd discussed the possibility of beginning a partnership minyan and who lived on the Upper East Side, suggested that Kalb might start a minyan there. Kalb thought this was a good idea but, since he could not afford to live on the

extremely pricey Upper East Side, he would only spend one Sabbath per month leading the new minyan, which named Yavneh.

Kalb believes that partnership minyan should not be devoted merely to including and enfranchising women in the synagogue. Women, he says, are merely the paradigm and most acute case of those who are disenfranchised by the traditional synagogue setting; there are others, and a partnership minyan should strive to include them as well as to include women specifically. For example, Kalb says that a partnership minyan's prayer leaders should use tunes with which the congregation can sing along, so that they are included as active participants in the worship, and a minyan's decisions should be made communally and through conversation, and not by a small group of elites.

Kalb believes that such inclusion is ultimately what rabbinic – that is to say, post-Temple – Judaism is all about, and so the inclusion of women in a partnership minyan is merely the next step in an arc from the Temple Cult to rabbinic Judaism. In the days of the Temple, Jewish worship consisted of sacrifices in the Temple. This was extremely exclusive: sacrifices could only be done in one place, the Temple, and could only be done by priests. On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, sacrifices could only be done by the *High Priest*, in only one place *within* the Temple, the Holy of Holies. Moreover, the priesthood was exclusive: only those born into priestly families could be priests and conduct the sacrifices. With the end of the Temple Cult, this all changed. Sacrifices ended and were replaced by prayer and study, which anyone, no matter his birth could pursue, and this new form of worship could be conducted anywhere since, in the post-Temple conception, God dwelled everywhere, and not just in the Temple. Kalb believes that struggling with halakha so as to include women, in the same way that Judaism began

including all men after the destruction of the Temple, seems only the logical next step in the progression of rabbinic Judaism.

Kalb named his minyan Yavneh because Yavneh was the place to which the Sanhedrin, the rabbinic high court, moved after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Talmud relates that when the Romans were besieging Jerusalem, and facing fierce resistance from Jewish zealots, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, one of the leaders of the Sanhedrin, held a clandestine meeting with the Roman general Vespasian. At that meeting, ben Zakai beseeched Vespasian, “Give me Yavneh and its sages.” The traditional interpretation of this story views ben Zakai as a pragmatist who, in order to preserve Judaism, and only as a last resort, made a deal with Vespasian in which he acknowledged the defeat of Jerusalem in order to save some semblance of Judaism. Implicit in this view is that had Jerusalem not fallen to the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago, Jews would still be worshipping through sacrifices, and not prayer.

Kalb fundamentally disagrees with this interpretation. According to him, ben Zakai recognized that theology had already evolved beyond sacrifices and he needed a place, away from the mainstream, the Temple Cult, to work on this issue. He therefore seized on the Roman siege of Jerusalem as an opportunity to leave Jerusalem and its Temple Cult behind in search of a place where he and the other sages could have transformative debates as to what the future of post-Temple Judaism should like. Kalb stresses that ben Zakai alone could not transform Judaism; this transformation could only occur through conversation, and this is why ben Zakai made a special point of asking the Romans to release his fellow scholars.

For Kalb, conversation and democratization are the essence of Judaism, and he strives to implement this in his own minyan. Kalb notes that, “to the best of my knowledge, I’m the only partnership rabbi in the world.” In keeping with his view of Judaism, being a partnership rabbi means something different than being a regular rabbi. Kalb believes that he should be someone who learns and debates with his congregants, someone who listens as well as speaks. Kalb gives the sermon every other time Yavneh meets, and listens to a congregant teach Torah the other times, and congregational – even halakhic – matters are fully debated and discussed among Kalb and the congregation. To Kalb these conversations represent true partnership, more so even than the usual innovations on behalf of women’s inclusion.

5. Difficulty Attracting Even Putative Allies: Kol Echad (New Rochelle, NY) and Shachar (Riverdale, NY)

Kol Echad and Shachar are each modeled on Kehillat Shira Hadasha (Shachar is an acronym for Shira Chadasha of Riverdale), each meet for services monthly, and the founders of each have been quite surprised by the refusal to attend their minyan on the part of people whom they suspected to be sympathetic to the cause of feminism and Orthodoxy. Shachar is a much bigger minyan than Kol Echad -- Shachar draws 60-70 people per meeting as opposed to Kol Echad’s 30 – and has successfully emulated Kehillat Shira Hadasha’s intense and beautiful singing, something that Kol Echad has desired, but been unable, to do. Whereas the rabbi of the synagogue to which most Shachar participants belong is well-known for his liberal approach to “women’s issues,” the rabbi of the synagogue to which most Kol Echad participants belong is antagonistic towards even the idea of feminism, believing that it is a concept foreign and threatening to Judaism. Lastly, while the founder of Kol Echad is Orthodox and his family are quite

involved with JOFA, the founder of Shachar asserts that “I’m not Orthodox” and will not join JOFA for that reason.

i. Kol Echad:

“It’s straight bourgeois values,” said Chaim Trachtman of New Rochelle, explaining the difficulty that the minyan he founded, Kol Echad, has had attracting participants. “They just don’t want to rock the boat.”

Trachtman first visited Kehillat Shira Hadasha in 2002-2003, and thought it was “monumental,” because of the way that congregation made everyone, man or woman, feel equal and included. Back home, Trachtman met with some interested friends to recruit for their new minyan, which they called Kol Echad, a Hebrew pun meaning both “one voice” and “everyone” (C. Trachtman, personal communication, March 4, 2008). Trachtman and his friends went through the directory of their synagogue, the only Orthodox synagogue in New Rochelle, and culled the names of 80 people whom they thought might be interested. They had only moderate success; many people whom Trachtman knows attend Kehillat Shira Hadasha when they are in Jerusalem “would not be caught dead at Kol Echad.”

One might have expected that Kol Echad would have had a notably easy time attracting participants. According to Trachtman, the Orthodox community of New Rochelle is very relaxed about its ritual observance. This represented an opportunity for Trachtman – none of his neighbors were dead-set against his goals or thought he was destroying Judaism, and this should have made recruiting easier. But because his fellow congregants have a casual view of religion, they have also not been interested in challenging themselves by exploring a new minyan. Trachtman believes that some fear

that they'll be labeled "weirdoes" if they attend Kol Echad, others won't attend because their friends don't attend, and others feel like Kol Echad is not an authentic Orthodox minyan, because it does not have the approval of a white-bearded rabbi.

The vigorous opposition of the rabbi of the synagogue has also made it very difficult to recruit. Before Kol Echad met for the first time, Trachtman approached the rabbi and told him of his plans. The rabbi was not concerned. When, however, the rabbi saw that some of the major prayer leaders from the synagogue were attending Kol Echad, he became quite concerned, and, according to Trachtman, "went right for the jugular." The rabbi told members of his synagogue that if they attended Kol Echad he would not let them lead High Holiday services at the synagogue, and, during the middle of an all-night Torah study session on the holiday of Shavuot, the rabbi forcefully condemned partnership minyanim and other substantially better-established feminist innovations in Orthodoxy. The rabbi bases his opposition on the 1976 opinion of his teacher, the late leading ultra-Orthodox halachic judge, Moshe Feinstein, that feminism is not a Jewish value. Therefore, in his view, anything that is advocated because of feminism is prohibited.

While Trachtman would like Kol Echad to operate based on democratic values, this has not happened. He simply has been unable to get other people to put in the time and energy and so the operations of the minyan are essentially, as he put it, "a one man show."

ii. Shachar:

“I always figured that anyone who was reasonable would be interested” in attending a partnership minyan, said Sally Mendelsohn, founder of Shachar, the minyan in the Bronx neighborhood of Riverdale. She learned this was not the case.

Mendelsohn and her husband had been holding what would come to be called partnership minyanim on special occasions, like the holiday of Purim and the fast day of Tisha B’Av, in their home in Yonkers for over 20 years. In 2002, these became a regular monthly minyan, Shachar, because of two developments: first, Mendelsohn moved to Riverdale, with its much larger observant Jewish community from neighboring Yonkers; second, Kehillat Shira Hadasha was established, which did a great deal to legitimate what Mendelsohn’s group had been doing all along.

Riverdale is home to a very large Orthodox synagogue that at least, as Mendelsohn put it, “talks the talk” about increasing roles for women. As a result, the partnership minyan format is not considered controversial. In fact, according to Mendelsohn, the members of this synagogue all go to Kehillat Shira Hadasha when they are in Jerusalem, and “gush about it.” But they don’t come to Shachar in droves.

Mendelsohn speculated that there are two main reasons for this: first, parents want to attend services at places where their children can see their friends, and this deters parents from leaving the institutional synagogues for Shachar; second, Mendelsohn thinks that while all of these people are happy to experiment with gender inclusion as a tourist attraction, there is a big difference between this and the sort of ideological commitment necessary to leave one’s home synagogue one Sabbath per month for Shachar. All that said, Shachar is actually one of the larger partnership minyanim, but

Mendelsohn believed that because Riverdale is such a favorable climate for feminist Orthodoxy, Shachar would attract far more people.

Mendelsohn herself is something of an unusual person to have founded a partnership minyan, since partnership minyanim are distinguished by their commitment to staying within the bounds of Orthodox halakha. Mendelsohn explained that she would be happy to pray in a serious Conservative, that is, egalitarian, setting and that although the other members of Shachar “are holding onto the Orthodox thing, I’m not.” Because of the concerns of the other members of the minyan – who include many luminaries of feminist Orthodoxy – Shachar stays within the limits of Orthodox halakha, and the gulf between Mendelsohn’s approach and those of the other members does not worry her. “No matter how ridiculous the lines we draw, it works and we’re happy.”

6. Difficulty Remaining Orthodox: Tehillah Minyan (Forest Hills, NY) and Minyan Tehillah (Cambridge, MA)

Minyan Tehillah of Cambridge, MA and the Tehillah Minyan of Forest Hills, NY share more than a name. Each caters largely to couples in their thirties and each provides a social and religious home for that demographic that was not previously available in the neighborhood. Each is devoted to providing a spiritually uplifting and musical prayer experience; neither has faced much opposition. Lastly, each has struggled with its identity as a partnership minyan, that is to say, a congregation that, though rooted in the Orthodox tradition, strives to be more inclusive of woman. While the Tehillah Minyan has never been ideologically committed to staying within the Orthodox tradition, Minyan Tehillah was, in fact, founded for a specific halakhic and ideological purpose, but the congregation’s focus has shifted over the years.

i. Tehillah Minyan

When David Goldstein moved to Forest Hills, he did not find a synagogue in which he was comfortable. He found the Orthodox synagogues spiritually unsatisfying, and the Conservative synagogues not traditional enough for his liking. Most of all, he was looking for a congregation that was friendlier, that sang more, and that had a more spiritual prayer experience.

Goldstein was not alone. Other younger Jews who had moved to Forest Hills from Manhattan's Upper West Side were also finding that the established synagogues met neither their religious needs nor – since the synagogues catered to a much older population – their social needs. Goldstein and his friends therefore began planning their own minyan, which, they hoped would “include everyone who's Jewish and wants spirited davening (prayers).”

Goldstein and his friends considered two models for their new minyan: Kehillat Hadar, a leading independent, and non-Orthodox, minyan on the Upper West Side; and Darkhei Noam, the partnership minyan on the Upper West Side. They decided that Darkhei Noam would be a better fit for the population they were hoping to attract. According to Goldstein, this was purely a pragmatic decision, and did not reflect a commitment to creating greater opportunities for women within the Orthodox tradition. Despite this, the Tehillah Minyan defines itself as a Shira Hadasha style minyan and lists itself on the JOFA partnership minyanim list, which is why the minyan was included in this study (JOFA: Resources – Partnership Minyanim; Kol Zimrah, 2008).

The Tehillah Minyan's future as a partnership minyan is far from secure. Goldstein observed that that if the minyan suddenly went fully egalitarian, leaving behind

the Orthodox tradition, most of its participants would not be troubled. In fact, the leaders of the Tehillah Minyan are currently discussing the possibility of jettisoning the restrictions of the Orthodox partnership minyan approach to become a non-Orthodox and fully egalitarian minyan. Like their adoption of the partnership minyan model, this change, should it occur, would also not be motivated by ideology, but by the desire to attract more participants.

ii. Minyan Tehillah

For years, the Harvard Hillel Orthodox minyan had been the only Orthodox Minyan on the North side of Cambridge.¹⁵ When a friend approached Alanna Cooper about establishing a partnership minyan, Cooper was concerned about dividing the community: didn't everyone go to the Harvard Hillel minyan? Cooper realized this was not the case when over 60 people, many of whom had never been to the Harvard Hillel Orthodox minyan before, showed up at an egalitarian reading of the Book of Esther organized by her friends. This made Cooper realize two things: there was a community of observant people in Cambridge who did not have a home at Harvard Hillel (mostly people in their 30s with no affiliation with Harvard), and there was an unquenched thirst for Orthodox feminism that the Harvard Hillel minyan was not satisfying. It was therefore legitimate to establish another minyan that would both serve the needs of these people and, since it would not meet weekly, still allow those involved with Harvard Hillel to attend that minyan. The planning for Minyan Tehillah began.

The founders of Minyan Tehillah were educated in Orthodox schools and deeply committed to the Orthodox halakhic legitimacy of their enterprise. However, they believed that halakhic legitimacy could be achieved without the direction of a rabbi. As

¹⁵ There is also an Orthodox minyan at MIT.

extremely learned people, they could study the halakhic sources and reach their own legitimate interpretation. This task was assigned to a handful of the most learned members, a group that was jokingly called “The Council of Sages.” This group included Michal Bar-Asher Siegel and Elitzur Bar-Asher who, though not ordained rabbis, served as halachic advisors, and who would go on to found Minyan Urim.

Minyan Tehillah’s participants are couples and families in their 30s who live in Cambridge but have little affiliation with Harvard. This group of people feels like Minyan Tehillah is *their* social and religious home, unlike the Harvard Hillel minyan, that belongs mostly to Harvard students (and also some older long-time member families). In fact, in a recent survey conducted by Minyan Tehillah, the social aspect of the minyan was identified as the biggest reason why people attend Minyan Tehillah. The minyan’s spiritually uplifting services were the second biggest reason.

Identification with the minyan’s core mission or ideology – something with which the founders were very concerned indeed – came in third. Most members of Minyan Tehillah’s current board do not have an Orthodox background, and are not focused on maintaining Orthodox halakhic legitimacy while at the same time pursuing feminist innovations. A very large percentage of the minyan’s members attend the egalitarian minyanim in Cambridge, in addition to or instead of Harvard Hillel, and some of the minyan’s board members are even on the board of an egalitarian minyan in Cambridge.

Although Cooper acknowledges that she has learned a lot from the burgeoning trans-denominationalism of Minyan Tehillah, she is also still very committed to the minyan’s original ideological purpose, and is somewhat disheartened by the current members’ lack of commitment to the minyan’s founding ideals. Ultimately, Cooper

appreciates the involvement of her less ideologically committed co-congregants because they sustain her minyan, thereby allowing her to pray in the sort of service to which she is so committed.

7. Difficulty Remaining Democratic and Feminist: Migdal Or (New York) and Or Chadash/Kehillat Ohel (Highland Park, NJ)

This section will discuss the minyanim in Highland Park, NJ, and the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. The partnership minyan in Highland Park, Or Chadash, faced spectacular controversy and ceased activity after only two meetings. The founders of Or Chadash have since founded a successor organization, called Kehillat Ohel, that does not particularly follow the practices of partnership minyanim, but will be considered here as the continuation of the Or Chadash story. Or Chadash and Ohel will be considered together and compared to Washington Height's Migdal Or minyan in order to appreciate the tension between values held by each minyan.

The leaders of Or Chadash/Kehillat Ohel and Migdal Or have each felt tension between their commitments to democracy and broad inclusion and to greater women's participation. As one of the founder's of Or Chadash put it, "if someone doesn't believe in women leading services, am I excluding that person?" Similarly, although one of the founding values of Migdal Or was democracy, the leadership of that minyan is much more progressive than the rank-and-file membership. The leaders of that minyan have therefore had to ask themselves how comfortable they are imposing their views on the members of their minyan.

There are two noteworthy distinctions between Or Chadash/Kehillat Ohel and Migdal Or. First, Or Chadash no longer holds services and its successor organization is

not a partnership minyan while Migdal Or is still going strong. Second, Or Chadash was established in the suburbs and attracted middle-aged families while Migdal Or is in the heart of Manhattan, and its members are overwhelmingly single people in their twenties.

i. Migdal Or

In 2007, three students in their mid-20s, Karen Shulman, Rachel Berger, and Shani Simkovich Deutsch, decided that they wanted to start their own minyan. They were all loyal attendees at the major Modern Orthodox synagogue in Washington Heights, but found that synagogue lacking in several respects: democratic decision making, leadership opportunities for younger members, responsiveness to needs of a growing progressive contingent, friendliness, and participatory services that would include women.

This led them to found the Migdal Or minyan which they hoped would respond to each lacking. They planned it as a democratic organization that would allow young people leadership opportunities and provide a friendly community for those young people, and that would feature more progressive services, with lots of participatory singing, in which women could play major roles.

Migdal Or has been quite successful in its goal of becoming an energetic and communal minyan for young people in Washington Heights. Around 40 to 50 people show up for each of the minyan's bi-monthly Friday night meetings, and on off-weeks the minyan sponsors Torah classes which attract both Migdal Or members and other young people who are not necessarily comfortable praying in a partnership minyan.

Migdal Or's biggest challenge is remaining a democratic organization in addition to a partnership minyan. According to board member Steven Exler, "in our community,

these really are competing values.” The members of the board are very committed to the minyan’s identity as a partnership minyan, but they are in the minority. Most of the membership could take or leave the progressive partnership minyan issues; they come for the participatory singing and the warm communal feeling. As a result, there have been flashpoints, as Exler put it, “a real sense of us versus them.”

This tension became particularly apparent on a recent Friday night. As noted before, halakhically, public prayer may begin when ten men only are present, but many partnership minyanim, including Migdal Or, wait for ten women as well in order to express their belief that women are part of the congregation too. That night, Migdal Or found that there were ten men present, but not ten women. On principle, the minyan waited and waited for the tenth woman to arrive so that they could begin prayer. The members of the congregation were growing mutinous, late already for their Sabbath dinners. They didn’t care about waiting for ten men and women, so why should they suffer because of the leaders’ ideological hang-ups? To avert disaster, Exler decided that he would begin services, even without ten women.

Exler’s actions were responsive to the desires of the congregation, but undercut the minyan’s claim that a true community for prayer requires both ten men and ten women. Mindful of the tension between its democratic and feminist goals, the board has begun proactive initiatives to prevent future confrontations. These include a membership survey and formation of a committee to study the ’10 and 10’ issue. Exler believes these are appropriately democratic ways to approach a situation that threatens the minyan’s identity as a democratic and feminist organization.

ii. Or Chadash/Kehillat Ohel

After years of wondering whether it was possible to have a service that was both egalitarian (or at least quasi-egalitarian), Daniel Geretz was excited when, in October, 2004, his friend Jennifer Kotzker told him of the existence of Kehillat Shira Hadasha. According to Geretz, the five Orthodox synagogues in Highland Park are extremely right-wing and hostile to women's involvement and leadership, so much so that Geretz's synagogue, known as the most liberal of the five, has never had a woman president and will not allow any women's prayer groups to meet at the synagogue. This did not dissuade Kotzker and Geretz from planning their minyan, but because of the anticipated controversy, they decided that it would be a private, invitation-only, minyan.

In February, 2005 the minyan, which they called Or Chadash, met for the first time. Around 70 people showed up, and the same number came to the minyan's second meeting. Geretz and Kotzker began planning their third meeting, on a Sabbath morning, in May.

Then "all hell broke loose." During a Passover speech, the rabbi of Geretz's synagogue "came down hard" on the minyan. Geretz, who had at one time been president of his synagogue, was subsequently barred by the synagogue's next rabbi from serving as a board member or serving as leader of services. Or Chadash never met again.

Geretz gave three reasons why Or Chadash never met again. First, at this time, his marriage as well as Kotzker's marriage were both falling apart, which substantially reduced their ability to push on. Second, intense community and rabbinic pressure to cease mounted. This led, third, to cold-feet on the part of many Or Chadash attendees.

In retrospect, Geretz was critical of some elements of Or Chadash. Throughout this process, Or Chadash was, according to Geretz, an “oligarchy,” with Geretz and Kotzker as sole governors and decision-makers. As Geretz put it, they had the world on their shoulders. Also by construing their minyan as controversial at the beginning, by acting like they had something to hide, they helped ensure that it was controversial. All this led, in some way, to Kehillat Ohel.

After the furor surrounding Or Chadash died down, Geretz said to himself, “I need to find a place to pray, a place that I really like.” He drew up a mission statement for his ideal synagogue, shared it with Kotzker and others, and discovered that there was lots of interest. The new organization, Kehillat Ohel, would be based on consensus and strive to include everyone, without a particular focus on increasing women’s opportunities for religious participation.

Kehillat Ohel is something like the photo negative of Or Chadash. Where Or Chadash was intensely ideological and oligarchic, Kehillat Ohel is process-oriented and communal – all decisions are made by consensus. Because approximately half of the membership is opposed to women leading services or reading from or being called to the Torah, and because decisions must be made by consensus, women do not have those ritual opportunities at Kehillat Ohel. In fact, because the congregants could not reach consensus on who should be allowed to lead Friday night services, no one does – the congregation picks tunes that will be used in advance, and then they all sing everything together. As Geretz said, “we punted.” As Kehillat Ohel expands it will have to confront more such issues and its consensus model will be put to the test.

8. Three That Didn't Make It: Tehilla (Chicago), Forest Hills Minyan (Forest Hills, NY), and Shira Hadasha of Teaneck (NJ)

Three other minyanim have also ceased meeting, though none suffered such a vicious demise as Or Chadash. Two ceased activity because of insufficient numbers; one because of insufficient ideological investment on the part of members.

i. Tehilla

The founders of Tehilla -- Pam Friedman, David Kaufman, and Tamara Kushnir -- wanted to bring the sort of services they had experienced at Kehillat Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem to the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago. Specifically, they wanted to hold halakhic services in which women really had a voice, and in which people spent the time and energy to sing and therefore create really meaningful prayers. They had no opposition from the Orthodox synagogue -- the rabbi told those who asked him that they could attend Tehilla -- and little trouble attracting participants to their monthly services, followed by a potluck dinner.

While the founders and other five board members were excited by the "religious significance" of their minyan, those who attended Tehilla were not. They came for the dinner and the singing, and if a usual participant received another dinner invitation for a given Sabbath, it was often enough to peel that person away from Tehilla that week. This led to a real commitment gulf between the board members and the other attendees. As a board member noted, "It was the project of the eight of us and other people came."

Ultimately, this ideological commitment gulf between the board and attendees doomed Tehilla. After two years, all of the members of the board, for one reason or another (including marriage, moving, and becoming parents), found that they needed to

lessen their involvement with Tehilla. They looked for new board members to take control of their minyan and found, out of the more than twenty other people who usually attended Tehilla, that there were only one or two people who were committed enough to take charge of the minyan. With no one to take over the minyan when the founding board moved on, Tehilla stopped holding services.

ii. Forest Hills Minyan

The Forest Hills Minyan got its name when JOFA told its organizers that they could not list it on JOFA's website without a name, at which point they came up with the Forest Hills Minyan (which is not very descriptive or distinctive). Until then, the minyan – which was dedicated as much to creating a friendly communal space as to specific partnership practices – was known as “the minyan that meets at Lisa's house,” because it met at the home of Lisa, one of the co-founders. According to co-founder Florence Zeman, this may have been one of the reasons that their minyan ultimately stopped holding services: “Lisa's minyan” sounds like a minyan that Lisa owns, and not a minyan that needs the support and investment of all of its members.

The minyan struggled to attract participants from the start, perhaps because its founders were so wary of community scandal. Ten years prior, a tremendous controversy had erupted when a family in the neighborhood wanted to hold a women's service for their daughter's bat-mitzvah. Mindful of this, the Forest Hills Minyan's founders did not publicize their minyan and in fact kept it as secret as possible. Florence Zeman blamed this for some of the minyan's difficulty recruiting: “I have to believe there are more progressive people in Forest Hills,” who would have come had they known about it.

The experience of the Tehillah Minyan, which began just as the Forest Hills Minyan was wrapping up, suggests that in this regard the leaders of the Forest Hills Minyan may have done themselves in. The Tehillah Minyan has publicized itself – even advertising on the listserv of a local Orthodox synagogue – without drawing the ire of the Orthodox community.

iii. Shira Hadasha of Teaneck

Shira Hadasha of Teaneck met in, and indeed was one of the prayer service offerings of, a struggling Conservative synagogue in Teaneck that was desperate to try new things in an effort to reverse the forces that had led to the loss of 75% of its peak membership. This makes Shira Hadasha of Teaneck unique: it is the only partnership minyan affiliated with a synagogue. Every other partnership minyan was established outside of the synagogue structure.

The minyan was founded by Betty Samuels, an octogenarian retired teacher and member of the synagogue who had been to Kehillat Shira Hadasha. According to Samuels, the core mission of the group was nothing less than “reactivation of the disappearing Conservative community of Teaneck” and to provide “modern Orthodox woman” who had received training in Torah reading a “place to demonstrate their skills.”

Unfortunately, Samuels found that many people whom she expected would attend her minyan refused to do so, *because* it met at her Conservative synagogue. Many people explained that if the minyan met at an Orthodox synagogue they would attend, but they didn’t want their Orthodox friends to see them going into the Conservative synagogue

and getting the wrong idea. As a result, the minyan's numbers diminished to the point that the minyan could no longer meet.¹⁶

The experiences of other minyanim have shown how social pressure can substantially limit the recruiting abilities of a partnership minyan. The leaders of Kol Sasson and Kol Echad each reported that many people whom they thought would attend their minyan would not, because they thought that some members of their community would think less of them for attending a partnership minyan. Here, however, the social pressure was brought to bear not because Shira Hadasha of Teaneck is a partnership minyan, but because it was a partnership minyan that met in a Conservative synagogue.

¹⁶ Samuels' synagogue recently hired a new rabbi who wants the synagogue to identify with the Orthodox movement. He and Samuels hope that this will remove Shira Hadasha of Teaneck's major handicap and so the minyan might resume activity.

II. Planning Theory in Action

This section analyzes partnership minyanim through the lens of planning theory, and suggests that just as planning theory informs our study of partnership minyanim, study of partnership minyanim can inform our view of planning ethics.

a. Partnership Minyanim and Advocacy and Communicative Planning

There are many theories of, or approaches to, planning taught in a course on planning theory. For example Campbell & Fainstein (2003) include articles on theories such as communicativity (Healey, 1996), advocacy (Davidoff, 1965), and new urbanism (Fainstein 2000), along with discussion of the classic rational master planner. These different models prescribe different goals and purposes for planners – for example, the planner as master of successive comparisons or the planner as creator of comprehensive plans. Partnership minyanim seem to embrace two of these theories, or models, in particular: advocacy planning and communicative planning. Before discussing these styles and the ways in which they are embodied by partnership minyanim, it is worth observing that we see these very different planning styles being implemented by organizations that have, at least superficially, very, very similar goals. There seems, therefore, to be more than one way to plan the same sort of new religious experience.

1. Advocacy Planning

In a ground-breaking article, Paul Davidoff challenged the assumption that planners could or should advance a unitary public interest, and urged planners to enter the fray of interests, politics and contention:

Determinations of what serves the public interest, in a society containing many diverse interest groups, are almost always of a highly contentious nature. In performing its role of prescribing courses of action leading to future desired states, the planning profession must engage itself

thoroughly and openly in the contention surrounding political determination. (Davidoff, 1965, p. 211)

Since there was not a unitary public interest, Davidoff called for planners to challenge government agencies and other planning entities by presenting plans that represented the interests of other parties, thereby creating competing plans representing competing interests, what he called “plural planning.” According to Davidoff, this would improve the planning process by “informing the public of the alternative choices open” (Davidoff, 1965, p. 213). Put differently, planners should create plans that would force planning agencies to compete for political support (Checkoway, 1994).

Moreover, Davidoff called upon planners to argue their case, zealously advocating for the interests for whom they created plans, much as lawyers zealously advocate for a client.

The legal advocate must plead for his own and his client’s sense of legal propriety or justice. The planner as advocate would plead for his own and his client’s view of the good society. The advocate planner would be more than a provider of information, an analyst of current trends, a simulator of future conditions, and a detailer of means. In addition to carrying out these necessary parts of planning, he would be a proponent of substantive solutions (Davidoff 1965, p. 214).

There was one more piece to Davidoff’s call for advocacy planning. While planners certainly should embrace plural planning, advocate for their plans, and not fear controversy and contention, Davidoff counseled that this ought to be done on behalf of the disadvantaged. Indeed, Davidoff was instrumental in persuading the American Institute of Planners to include a provision in its code of ethics that recognized the planner’s “special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons,” and that called upon planners to “urge the alteration of policies, institutions and decisions” which stood in the way (Checkoway, 1994, p. 139). In short, in Davidoff’s

view, planning is “contentious, conflicted, driven by ideology, class, and interest, and the planner’s role is to play the advocate especially for the poor and unrepresented” (Marris, 1994, p. 143).

We see each of these three main features of advocacy planning – plural planning, advocacy on behalf of interests that is not afraid of contention, and special attention to the interests of the unrepresented or disadvantaged – in the actions of leaders of partnership minyanim. All of the partnership minyanim embody some of these characteristics. They are all dedicated – or at least de facto do so -- to improving the lot of women, historically disadvantaged in Orthodox synagogues, in the synagogue setting. They are all engaged in plural planning: in every case, the leaders of a minyan have created something that didn’t exist before based on their values and interests, a new option for Jewish worship that would compete with established synagogues for participants based on the quality of the religious experience.

Two minyanim, Rosh Pina of Washington, D.C., and Minyan Urim of New Haven, particularly stand out as examples of advocacy planning. Rosh Pina exemplifies the notion of plural planning, and Minyan Urim very strongly the notion of advocacy.

The founder of Rosh Pina, Jamie Salter, was inspired to start his minyan when he was told that the rabbi of the local Orthodox synagogue would not allow Salter’s friend, an observant and learned woman, to make the Saturday morning blessing sanctifying the Sabbath. Salter knew that there were halakhic opinions that, in fact, allowed her to do so, and was upset that these opinions were being disregarded in favor of other opinions that limited women’s opportunities. Disturbed by this small-mindedness, Salter decided to challenge the Orthodox community by creating a minyan that would show what was

halachically possible for women to do. In Davidoff's terms, he wanted to "stimulate" the community's decision-making by "informing the public of alternative choices open" (Davidoff, 1965, p. 213).

Salter also intended for his minyan to make a statement to the rabbi, who previously could claim to represent the unitary interests of the Orthodox community, that there were, in fact, serious, Orthodox people who wanted greater equality for women. In this regard, Rosh Pina has served as a challenge to the rabbi, whom we might think of as analogous to an agency head or policy-setter, that the current policies did not serve everyone's interest. In Davidoff's model, this should then have spurred the rabbi to reconsider his decisions and respond to the public pressure. In actuality, the rabbi – perhaps because he is not a democratically accountable public official – has fought tooth and nail against the new minyan and has not been prompted to meet the discontents part way.

The founders and leaders of Minyan Urim, Michal Bar-Asher Siegal and Elitzur Bar-Asher, have epitomized Davidoff's zealous advocate, unafraid to wade into contention in order to represent his or her cause. When the Bar-Ashers founded Minyan Urim, they knew that they faced a dedicated and powerful opponent in the Orthodox rabbi associated with Yale's Hillel center. The previous year, a group of Yale students had established a similar minyan. The rabbi strongly opposed the minyan and told students that it was halakhically forbidden for them to participate in it. As a consequence, the minyan had difficulty attracting participants and folded after only one semester. Like a good lawyer or other advocate would, the Bar-Ashers set out to neutralize this opposition at the start. Elitzur Bar-Asher knew the rabbi personally from

their years in yeshiva in Israel (though it does not seem they were friends!) and told him that “if you say anything against us halakhically, I’m going to fight like crazy and prove you wrong.” The rabbi heeded Bar-Asher’s advice (or threat) and did not oppose the minyan. Davidoff called on planners to acknowledge that they represented interests and then get in the ring on behalf of those interests. The Bar-Ashers certainly did so with regard to the rabbi. Another way in which the Bar-Ashers have thrown down the gauntlet is by calling their minyan the “Halachic minyan.” In so doing, they express their belief that they have as much right to be called halakhic as any other minyan, including those that do not take steps to include women, and that they will not allow themselves to be portrayed as un-halakhic.

Additionally, more than any other leaders of partnership minyanim, the Bar-Ashers have worked to educate the public about, and thereby legitimize, the practices of their minyan and others like it. This informs the public (at least the observant Jewish public) of their options, but also suggests *which* option they should choose. Towards this end, the Bar-Ashers lead sessions devoted to explicating the halakhic rulings that their minyan relies on, and have even published a “Guide for the halachic minyan” that is meant to explain what such minyanim do and why it is legitimate. In this way they are “proponents of substantive solutions” based on halakha and their belief in greater inclusion of women (Davidoff, 1965, p. 214).

2. Communicative Planning

The communicative theory of planning, like advocacy, questions the rational planning assumption that there is a unitary public interest that planners can or should impose. Unlike advocacy planning, the communicative view is in keeping with planning theory's increased interest in procedure, and not just outcomes, in the years after World War II (Alfasi & Portugali, 2007). Communicative theory does not view the job of a planner as zealous advocate for a particular cause, but as someone who, without predisposition to a cause, listens to diverse viewpoints.

Within communicative theory, the planner's primary function is to listen to people's stories and assist in forging a consensus among differing viewpoints. Rather than providing technocratic leadership, the planner is an experiential learner ... Leadership consists not in bringing stakeholders around to a particular planning content but in getting people to agree ... (Fainstein, 2000, p. 175).

This is based on a philosophical belief, derived from the work of Jurgen Habermas, that "our ideas about ourselves, our interests, and our values are socially constructed through our communication with others and the collaborative work this involves" (Healey, 1996, p. 239). Therefore, such discussions have "the power to transform situations" (Healey, 1996, p. 242).

Communicative theory has been criticized as naïve for thinking that "if only people were reasonable, deep structural conflict would melt away." (Fainstein, 2000, p. 176). Communicative theory has also been criticized for failing to address the two-pronged problem of mismatched process and outcome. That is, communicative theory is unobjectionable when a communicative, or open, process, produces a just result. But, according to Fainstein (2000) communicative theory's focus on, and belief in, process

leaves it ill-equipped to protest unjust results reached through open processes and puzzled by the fact that closed processes might produce just results.

Rabbi David Kalb of the Yavneh minyan of Manhattan's Upper East Side genuinely is a communicative theorist, and even elevates the precepts of communicative theory to theological significance. Kalb believes that discussion has "the power to transform situations" (Healey, 1996, p.242), and that such argumentation, which he repeatedly referred to as "transformative conversation," is in fact the essence of Judaism. According to Kalb, the Talmud is at its heart a record of open-minded conversation and debate between rabbis over how to transform Judaism from a Temple cult into a more democratic and inclusive religion based upon study and a personal connection to the Divine. As proof of its inclusiveness, Kalb points to the fact that the Talmud preserves even dissenting arguments for the ages. It matters less whose opinion prevailed than how the conversation was conducted.

Like communicative theorists, Kalb believes process matters immensely. In fact, according to Kalb, unless a partnership minyan conducts its affairs according to this communicative theory, "it's just a more liberal version of an Orthodox synagogue," and there is little point in that. In other words, for all that partnership minyanim represent a revolutionary substantive outcome with regard to women's participation in a halakhic framework, Kalb thinks this is all for naught, barely different from establishment Orthodoxy, unless the process used by those minyanim in guiding their decision-making is markedly different as well.

Like the communicative theorists who believe in inclusionary argumentation, that is, "public reasoning which accepts the contribution of all members of a political

community and recognizes the ways they have of knowing, valuing, and giving meaning” (Healey, 1996, p. 240), Kalb is skeptical of claims that rabbis possess exclusive expertise in deciding halachic and ritual matters. In fact, according to Kalb, the job of a rabbi should be to “help create a community of learners” in which the rabbi teaches but also *learns* from congregants. As Kalb said, “Torah is a conversation, not a soap-box.” For this reason, Kalb does not give the Torah lecture at every meeting of the Yavneh minyan; at alternate meetings, a congregant teaches, and Kalb listens and learns.

Kalb believes that halakhic expertise is a key – but should be far from the only -- factor in halakhic decision-making. Other areas of expertise may well be relevant, and Kalb believes that even a person who could not claim ‘expertise’ in any relevant area still contributes to the decision-making process through his or her unique and fresh perspective. In the Yavneh minyan this communicative approach is applied to both halakhic decision-making and more mundane matters as well, and decisions reached through discussion by the participants. Emphasizing his belief in process and inclusionary argumentation, Kalb is also critical of the leadership of partnership minyanim (such as Cambridge’s Minyan Tehillah, with its Council of Sages) who eschew the authority of rabbis but decide halakhic issues among a small group of non-rabbis. As he asked, “why is lay elitism better than rabbinic elitism?” Like communicative theorists, Kalb believes that every participant has a different perspective and those perspectives – and not just those of some insular elite who claim a monopoly on learning -- should be included in the decision-making process.

Kehillat Ohel, the successor organization to Highland Park’s Or Chadash minyan has adopted the communicative ideal of conversation in pursuit of understanding and

consensus, but its experience indicates the weakness of communicative theory as a means to improve the lot of the disadvantaged. Fresh off the contentious and ultimately unsuccessful experience of Or Chadash, Daniel Geretz set out to create an extremely inclusionary community, Kehillat Ohel. Kehillat Ohel decides all questions by consensus and, as Geretz explained, they have faith that through discussion all issues can be resolved. Like a communicative planner, Geretz disavows a role as an agenda-setter in favor of one who stimulates negotiation.

The problem is that the congregation faces some issues that are not susceptible to negotiation, what Fainstein (2000, p. 176) refers to as “deep structural conflict” that won’t “melt away,” in particular, the ability of women to participate in the synagogue service. Approximately half of the members of Kehillat Ohel are opposed to women taking a greater role in the services. Because Geretz feels that the opinion of these members is just as valid as the contrary opinion, he feels that he would be excluding these members were the leaders of the congregation to impose practices with which they disagree. As a result, at Kehillat Ohel women are not allowed to take roles leading the service and are not called to, nor read from, the Torah. This is a good illustration of how open processes may produce what some, at least, would consider unjust results, and certainly how communicative discourse may not be a good tool when an organization seeks to advance the cause of the disadvantaged.

Theories of advocacy and communicative planning provide us with a conceptual framework that allows us to better understand the conduct of some partnership minyanim. In turn, these minyanim illustrate the principles of advocacy and communicative planning, their strengths as well as their weaknesses.

b. Partnership Minyanim and Planning Ethics

The American Planning Association's Ethical Principles for Planning exhort planners, among other things, to "support citizen participation in planning," and to "expand choice and opportunity for all persons, [and] recognize a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged people, and urge changing policies, institutions, and decisions that restrict their choices and opportunities" (Lucy 1988, p. 149). These principles do not, however, represent a unitary vision of planning, and the principles themselves conflict conceptually (as Lucy (1988) briefly observes). For example, as we have seen both theoretically and in the case of Kehillat Ohel, communicative planning, which puts a tremendous emphasis on participatory process may lead to oppression of minorities Fainstein (2000) in contravention of the mandate to plan particularly for the needs of disadvantaged people. On the other hand, as Fainstein (2000) also notes, paternalism and bureaucracy, modes of decision making that do not encourage public participation and ownership over the decision making process, may produce plans that do particularly consider the needs of the disadvantaged. Advocacy planning, which prioritizes the needs of the disadvantaged may reduce citizen participation in planning (though Davidoff (1965) does indeed call for public input) in two ways: first, because advocacy requires choosing sides in the plural planning process, an advocacy planner at some point must stop listening to public input and start advocating for a side; second, advocacy planning puts the planner, analogized to a lawyer appearing in court, front and center in the planning process, while the public may retreat to the background. In each of these ways, public participation and planning particularly for the disadvantaged represent conflicting values.

The experiences of partnership minyan, organizations whose raison d'être is to advocate for women previously marginalized in the Orthodox synagogue, illustrate that the goal of public participation and advocacy for the disadvantaged often conflict. Four partnership minyanim in particular illustrate this conflict (though it is present in less salient ways in other minyanim).

The leaders of the Migdal Or minyan are committed to increasing inclusion of women in their services, and, as part of this, they try to wait for 10 men and 10 women before beginning services. Much of their membership, on the other hand, is indifferent to the leadership's progressive feminist thrust; indeed, Migdal Or's leadership senses that they are systematically more progressive than their members. As we have seen, the minyan's policy of waiting for ten men and ten women has produced tension – a 'mutinous' response – among those members who feel like they are being put upon because of someone else's ideological hang-ups. To address this problem, the leadership of Migdal Or, which is also committed to democracy and participatory governance, has conducted surveys and town hall meetings, but right now they face a fundamental conflict between their ideological commitments to include women in the prayer community and their commitment to govern their organization democratically.

Or Chadash advocated vigorously for greater inclusion of women, but was, in the words of its founder, governed by an "oligarchy" that made all the decisions and conducted its affairs secretly. In other words, it achieved its aim of increasing opportunities for the disadvantaged through fundamentally anti-participatory methods. Its successor organization, Kehillat Ohel, is much more democratic and administratively inclusive, and makes decisions by consensus. Because it is a 'bigger tent,' that includes

more diverse opinions, and because a substantial portion of its members are not in favor of partnership minyan innovations to include women, Kehillat Ohel's commitment to increasing opportunities for women is substantially less than Or Chadash's. As an oligarchy, Or Chadash advocated for the disadvantaged. As a highly participatory and democratic organization, Kehillat Ohel is impotent in this regard.

Kol Echad and Shira Hadasha, Evanston are each effectively, as the leader of Kol Echad put it, "a one-man show." In each case a single person, the founder, does almost all of the work running the minyan (because he has been unable to find others who are willing to participate, not out of a desire for control) and so makes almost all of the decisions unilaterally. In each case, these minyanim increase opportunities for women to participate in services, but would not function without the governance of an extremely dedicated and benevolent autocrat.

The experiences of these communities suggest that advocacy for the disadvantaged and encouragement of broad participation are conceptually and practically distinct, and often conflict. Some partnership minyanim achieve their goal of creating a more inclusive service with greater opportunities for women through the unilateral actions of committed leaders, hardly a model of broad participation. Others face divided constituents and must decide whether they would like to be democratic and heed public input or instead strive to improve the lot of previously marginalized classes, namely, women. As planners strive to implement their obligations under the APA's Ethical Principles they must be aware that they will probably have to choose, or at least prioritize, between their duties to encourage public participation and their duties to plan especially for the needs of disadvantaged people.

Conclusion

As a graduate student of urban planning, I was of two minds regarding the debates over approaches to planning in my course in planning theory. One part of me thought that the arguments about ethics, distribution of power, different types of knowledge, and the mechanics of decision-making were provocative and went to basic questions about the construction and maintenance of society. Another part of me – like, I suspect, many other planning students – wondered whether any of this mattered in the real world. Does anybody actually act in accordance with these theories or were these just academic debates? Could planning theory be found in ‘nature?’

This paper has attempted to affirm that planning theory does matter, and not just to those conventionally defined as planners. Through study of partnership minyanim – innovative prayer communities that increase roles for women in Orthodox Jewish services and that emphasize ownership of and participation in the religious experience – this paper demonstrates that planning theory can be a useful way to understand cutting-edge phenomena, even those that have nothing to do with physical design or other areas traditionally considered the province of planners. Planning theory helps us appreciate the fact that different partnership minyanim, despite their similar goals, adopt very different approaches to implementing their goals. In particular, we see a split between advocacy and communicative approaches.

In turn, the experiences of these communities illuminate some of the challenges that planners face as they implement their own code of ethics, which calls for planners to encourage public participation and advocate for the disadvantaged and oppressed, along with other professional obligations. This paper has shown that for partnership minyanim,

advocacy for a specific group often conflicts with a desire to be democratic, open, and participatory. Planners, or at least the drafters of the APA Ethical Principles for Planning, may believe that planners can invite participation and advocate for the disadvantaged without tension or contradiction. As the experience of partnership minyanim shows, any such pursuit of similar goals will likely be fraught with tension. Awareness of this tension is essential for a more sophisticated and nuanced approach to planning.

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