

Socio-demographic Processes: Significance and Implications

The Jewish Family and Jewish Demography

Egon Mayer

The forces of modernity – pluralistic tolerance, economic opportunity, the equalization of the sexes, the primacy of the individual good over the needs or requirements of the collective – have generally had a negative impact on traditional forms of family life. In the case of American Jewry, these forces have tended to diminish birthrate, nuptiality, marital stability, and have increased greatly the tendency for mixed marriage between Jews and non-Jews.

Beyond simply recording these basic demographic facts, students of Jewish demography, since the days of Ruppin, have tended to interpret them with a lachrymose view, suggesting that these long-term trends can, or will, or must result in inevitable decline of American Jewry in something other than merely a numerical sense. What has been ignored in that common line of analysis is the strong possibility that the demographic trends that characterize contemporary American Jewry constitute a functionally adaptive response on the part of Jews and Jewish families for thriving in their society. Thus, some of the positive consequences of late marriage and smaller family size have been totally ignored in terms of their possible long-term good for both individuals (e.g. women) and for the Jewish community as a whole. Also overlooked in the examination of intermarriage trends is the relatively high rate of conversion to Judaism on the part of non-Jews who marry Jews (c. 25%), and the potential for increasing that rate by means of affirmative “outreach” activity.

Mixed Marriages: Cultural Aspects and Demographic Issues in a Small Jewish Community in Argentina

Rosa N. Geldstein

A major issue related to world Jewish population is the low or even negative demographic growth experienced in recent years by the majority of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. The main causes pointed out are the decline in fertility – and the ensuing aging process – and losses due to out-marriage and assimilation. Furthermore, the socio-demographic and cultural factors underlying these phenomena are supposed to have stronger effects on populations of a small size.

This paper has a twofold aim: 1) to describe the mixed marriage patterns in the small Jewish community of Salta – capital city of a N.W. province of Argentina, and 2) to evaluate quantitative and qualitative effects of out-marrying on the growth and composition of that population.

A population census was conducted, and from that source, a total of 1,000 individuals from 319 Jewish households (i.e. with at least one member of Jewish origin) were interviewed, during November–December 1986.

Some demographic characteristics of the population are summarized to provide a framework for the analysis of out-marrying. Description of mixed couples and of population of mixed origin are made in comparison to Jewish couples and to individuals of only-Jewish origin respectively. These groups are observed through several demographic and socio-cultural characteristics, including subjective expression of group identity.

Out-marrying shows that about four out of ten present couples are mixed. The proportion of mixed couples is inversely related to the age of the spouses, showing the increase of exogamy over time. Furthermore, children of mixed couples show the highest propensity to out-marriage. Mixed couples have both higher fertility levels and a greater proportion of women in reproductive ages than Jewish homogamous couples; as a result, there is a high and increasing proportion of individuals of mixed origin. In spite of these indicators of integration, a significant proportion of people of mixed origin still identify themselves as Jews, and so do the majority of Jewish partners who out-married, even though it was established through objective

indicators that the children of mixed couples are weakly oriented to a Jewish life by their parents.

The very small size of the Jewish population, and sex imbalances at marriageable ages, are objective and very strong limits to the practice of endogamy within the boundaries of Salta. So, out-marrying seems to be one of the alternatives in a set of "marriage strategies" aimed at overcoming the marriage market constraints; others being marriage to a person of mixed origin, and marriage to a non-Salteno Jewish partner. But, at the same time, several indicators show that a secularization process is operating, which is connected in a two-way relation with demographic constraints. These issues suggest that the Salta Jewish community has a low probability of survival unless thoughtful and efficient policies are developed by the community leaders.

Sociology of the Jewish Family in the Diaspora: Algerian Jewish Families in France

Joelle Allouche-Benayoun

This paper deals with the primordial role played by families which make an emotional "investment" in their children's scholastic success (as shown for instance by Bourdieu and Passeron), and in general with the integrational role of school and the army.

For some years now we have been setting down the life stories of Jewish women aged 55 or over, all born in Algeria when it was still a province of France, and of members of their families.

All of these women, whatever their social milieu (in our sample, the respondents in general came from a milieu of office workers or shopkeepers), liked school which they considered the key to their Frenchness: going to school, learning to read, meant becoming really French for these women from a community which had already demonstrated its total adherence to the values represented by France. Algerian Jews, who became French by the Cremieux edict of 1870, rapidly, massively and unhesitatingly sent their children to the schools opened by the colonial power: school was a sign of Frenchness for all, a sign of emancipation for the women.

However, from the accounts set down, girls seem to have been particularly attached to school since the beginning of the 20th century; and since many of them studied only for short periods, due to lack of means, they seem to have transferred their scholastic hopes to their

children at a later date: these children have been remarkably successful at school and university, and generally the economic, social and cultural integration of Algerian Jews in France has been successful.

American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?

Steven M. Cohen

The recent controversy over the trends in the quality of Jewish life has been seen as a debate between two sides: "Traditionalists" who perceive ever-growing assimilation and "Transformationists" who perceive strength, vitality and continuity. In fact, both camps themselves divide into two varieties of observers. The most extreme traditionalists perceive and predict massive losses to American Jewry due to intermarriage, assimilation and low birthrates. Their more moderate counterparts speak either of slow erosion, or of "polarization" where an assimilating majority is counterbalanced by a sizable, more Jewishly intensive minority. Among transformationists are those who actually discern a "revival" in American Judaism; their more moderate counterparts, of which I am one, speak of "reformulation and stability".

Most observers, no matter where they fit in this spectrum of opinion as to the Jewish future, agree that certain positive trends have been taking place. These include: (1) strengthened Jewish political power; (2) more Jewishly committed Federation leadership; (3) increased day school enrollment; (4) greater traditionalism among Reform leaders and institutions; (5) a more traditional and vital Orthodoxy; and (6) a superior Jewish scholarly world. While concurring on the existence of these trends, observers divide on their import. Traditionalists regard some of these as beyond the scope of meaningful Jewish continuity, and, in any event, see them as pertaining to only the more Jewishly involved. They concede the vitality of the "top half" of American Jewry. Thus, the debate over the American Jewish future is a debate over the "bottom half".

This paper presents findings from the 1981 Greater New York Jewish Population Study (N=4,505) pertaining to this debate. We find that the impact of intermarriage on Jewish identification is far from one-sided. Conversionary marriages score almost as high as the in-married on most measures of Jewish involvement. The mixed married score appreciably lower, but majorities of them profess some connection with Jewish ritual or community.

The Traditionalists' claim that younger people are "less Jewish" than their elders is generally not supported by the data. Younger adults are indeed less active in Jewish life, but that pattern derives from singlehood and childlessness, and almost disappears once we control for family status. In fact, of those already married parents, younger adults are actually more observant than their elders.

Parent-child and generation-by-generation analyses demonstrate that ritual abandonment was primarily a phenomenon of an earlier period in Jewish history, when Jews sought to conform to modernity.

Does Jewish Education Effect Jewish Identification? A Review of the Research

Harold S. Himmelfarb

Over fifty studies of the connection between Jewish education and Jewish identification were reviewed. This topic has occupied more research interest than any other aspect of Jewish education. Nevertheless, our accumulation of knowledge has been quite uneven because of numerous methodological problems of measurement, design, and statistical analysis.

Of some interest to educational planners is the fact that most of this research is unsponsored and unpublished. Indeed, much of it is doctoral dissertations, resulting in studies that are primarily of interest to the investigator and the investigator's faculty committee. Policy implications for Jewish education are only of secondary interest. The lack of funding available for such studies, coupled with the inexperience of the researcher, often results in studies that are designed and executed on a much more modest scale than the research question requires. Despite these problems, there is enough research with similar findings to form some tentative conclusions, at least until more definitive studies are available.

Studies of student achievement indicate that the overall level of achievement obtained by the typical Jewish school graduate is quite low. Achievement is related to personal and family background factors, e.g., intelligence, family social status, family Jewishness. The more time (hours and years) spent in school, the higher the achievement level.

Studies of adult Jewish identification find that:

a) Family Jewishness is generally more important than Jewish schooling with regard to its impact on adult identification.

Nevertheless, Jewish schooling can make an independent contribution in this regard.

b) The amount of time spent in Jewish schools is a good predictor of the impact Jewish schooling will have on adult identification. However, time is not correlated with identification in a linear fashion. There seem to be minimum amounts of time necessary before schooling has an effect, and more schooling beyond certain amounts seems to have only marginal returns.

c) The effects of Sunday schools on adult identification have been shown to be minimal, and in some respects negative.

d) The effects of day schools is positive, although several studies found that there needs to be secondary level day schooling before it has an impact. Also, some argue that the schools are primarily effective in enhancing the identification of those already from homes that are highly religious or identified.

e) The most mixed findings are with regard to afternoon schools. Some studies find no impact net of family background, others find minimal to moderate impact. Still others find that it depends on whether there has been post-secondary Jewish schooling.

Given the predominance of this kind of schooling in the United States, more research needs to be done to be able to specify the conditions under which afternoon schooling is successful. This might require more attention to the working of the schools as opposed to the current concentration on outcomes.

Residence as a Variable in Jewish Community Life

Vivian Z. Klaff

Although the research on residential distribution patterns of minority groups is extensive, there have been few attempts to conduct a comparative cross-cultural investigation of a specific group in order to examine issues related to the urban ecology of minority groups. The Jewish group is generally considered to be an essentially urban population, and study of Jewish populations in different historical and cultural settings can assist us in examining strategies of environmental adaptation used by a minority group. The perspective of urban ecology has made it possible to draw certain conclusions about the historical development of Jewish populations in urban settings. Although many

of the data are not current and do not bring us completely up to date, nevertheless it has been possible to make summary statements about the residential structure of Jewish communities.

The overall summary statement that seems most applicable from the review of information points to the Jewish trend of decentralization at an ever-increasing rate combined with the tendency to relocate in areas that are Jewish in character. Thus, although clustering, or residential segregation persists, it is diluted; concentration does not necessarily reflect isolation, and Jews living in what might be termed a Jewish environment in the suburbs are nevertheless exposed to greater physical and cultural contact with other groups.

The issue of the consequences of residential distribution patterns is highly complex, for it involves subjective perceptions of the meaning of territory. It is, however, important for groups or community leaders to understand the dynamics of settlement patterns. Jewish communal planners whose declared objective is the strengthening of the Jewish community in all aspects appear to have recognized that current mobility patterns will contribute in no small way to the eventual assimilation of increasing numbers of Jews through intermarriage, nonaffiliation with Jewish institutions, and the acceptance of largely secular value systems. A number of strategies seem appropriate in response to the assimilation trend. On the one hand, a group may view increased spatial redistribution of its members as a successful process of integration. Other people may see the need for a critical mass of group membership to maintain viable communal and religious facilities, and they have begun to develop strategies to cope with residential dispersion.

It has been suggested by some observers of the urban scene that a combination of highly personal mobility and modern communication techniques has rendered the notion of territorial constraints on human association obsolescent. To proponents of this view, the concept of community itself becomes devoid of territorial content. To ecologists and geographers, on the other hand, location remains a major determinant of interaction patterns, and the concept of community is firmly anchored on a territorial base. Developments in transportation and communications technology may have lessened territorial constraints, but place of residence is a major factor in allocating life chances and determining interaction patterns. The whole notion of a territorial base to services (local and other) ensures that locality will continue to be of vital importance in the organization of society.

Some Reflections on the Aging of the Jewish World and the Needs for Research

Jack Habib

Points for discussion:

1. What is the link between issues of aging and the issue of Jewish survival?
2. What are the most relevant ways of disaggregating age distribution data so as to analyze the implications in making projections? What are the most useful aggregate measures relating age groups and how should they be calculated?
3. What are the implications of aging for Jewish communities and how do the implications of the aging process differ between Jewish communities in the Diaspora, Israel and other national societies or whole communities?
4. What are the implications for: a) Total resource needs in relation to income – service needs by age and financial contributions by age; b) The structure and composition of communal services; c) Political influence of the community; d) Communal participation and total human resources available to the community; e) Jewish family life?
5. The importance of expanding our statistics and projections to include other demographic characteristics in relation to age, such as family status and kinship networks and responsibilities and geographic distances. Micro-simulation as a tool to project a wider range of variables.
6. Importance of developing data bases that link demographic variables to measures of need and source utilization to create a data base for projections of these additional variables.
7. The link between national or regional and local survey efforts. The role of each in an overall strategy. The ability of using synthetic techniques to impute characteristics from national surveys to local communities. e.g., disability rates by age and sex, or to impute from local surveys to other areas or national populations. Much work along these lines is being done in Israel.
8. Why aren't local surveys used more to make local projections of demographic trends and their implications as part of communal planning processes. What is the missing link?

9. The older population as a communal resource and intergenerational assistance and contact as a resource for enhancing community survival and as a creative response to communal aging.
10. The importance of the grandparents' role as a resource to promote fertility and Jewish identification.
11. The Jewish community's unique roles as the place to turn for high quality care of the Jewish aged and the strength of communal identification of both the aged and their children.