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Family and Identity: Marshall Sklare, the Social Scientific Study of America's Jews, and Jewish Communal Policy

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Abstract
The contents of *Contemporary Jewry*, the journal of Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ), are examined in an effort to evaluate arguments of overemphasis on the issues of intermarriage, fertility, and continuity. The findings do not indicate such an overemphasis. A socio-historical account of the field of the social scientific study of American Jewry, including an analysis of the perspectives of the new discipline's pioneer, Marshall Sklare, is then presented in an effort to explain how and why the issues of intermarriage and birth rates became central to the research of some of the major figures in ASSJ and the field in general.

Keywords Intermarriage · Fertility · Contemporary Jewry (CJ) · Marshall Sklare · Family · Demography

Following the public exposure of a series of alleged sexual harassment actions by a prominent Jewish sociologist, Steven M. Cohen, in July 2018, a number of well-known American Jewish scholars and critics suggested Cohen was the "gatekeeper" of the social scientific study of Jewry; he played central roles in the 2001 National Jewish Population Study (NJPS) and the 2013 Pew Forum survey of American Jews; and he was the driving force of an unjustified emphasis on "survival," and especially intermarriage and birth rates.[1] Some went so far as to assert that Cohen's actions "reflect the troubling gender and sexual politics long embedded in communal discussions of Jewish continuity and survival, the focus of Cohen's work." Others,

[1] See, for example, Sales (2018). In fact, Cohen played no role in the formulation and direction of the 2001 NJPS and was actually publicly critical of it as well as the 1990 NJPS. With respect to the 2013 Pew survey, he was one on a panel of about a dozen advisers. As for his positions on intermarriage, they will be discussed below.

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both in the public media and in private internal discussions, have called for serious rethinking of the approach prevailing in the social scientific study of Jews. On the listserv and in the Newsletter of the Association for the Social Scientific Association for the Study of Jewry (ASSJ), the primary scholarly association of scholars whose research deals with contemporary Jews, scholars all over the world, individually and as a group, expressed implicit criticism of an overemphasis on intermarriage, fertility, and continuity, and called for redirection. The objective of this article is to examine the argument of overemphasis empirically and then provide a socio-historical account of the founding of ASSJ as well as a perspective on how and why the issues of intermarriage and birth rates became focal to the research of many in ASSJ.

The Critics and the Data

To test the legitimacy of the assertion of the critics who argue that there has been an excessive emphasis on the subjects of intermarriage and fertility, I reviewed the contents of all thirty-eight volumes of *Contemporary Jewry* that have been published to date. I found only a small minority of articles that focused on or even dealt with intermarriage, fertility, or Jewish continuity. Out of more than four hundred articles, no more than twenty dealt with intermarriage and most of those mentioned it within a larger context, such as family. Fewer of the articles dealt with fertility among America's Jews, and some analyzed fertility of Jews in other countries, especially Israel. Even fewer of the articles focused on "continuity." In addition, a variety of perspectives were manifest among the authors of those articles. Actually, over the years the journal's articles covered a wide spectrum of topics in which Jews and Judaism have been analyzed social scientifically. Special issues have been devoted to such topics as the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), Jewish community surveys, ultra-Orthodox Jews, American aliya (immigration to Israel), women in the Holocaust, economic frameworks for understanding Jewry, and Israeli Jewry; individual articles have ranged from an analysis of rabbis' salaries to a historical study of Jewish women physicians in Central Europe. Most of the contributors are from North America, with the second-largest group (many of them native English speakers) based in Israel.

If intermarriage and fertility represent only about 5 percent of the topics covered in the ASSJ's journal, *Contemporary Jewry*, then it seems reasonable to assume that they are a minority among all the topics American Jewish social scientists study. Yet there seems to be a public perception that these are the main focal topics of Jewish social science in the United States. What is the source of that perception? Perhaps the primary reason for the public perception that intermarriage and fertility are the main focus of Jewish social science, especially in the United States, is that marriage and fertility are core demographic patterns that are readily quantifiable, and the fact that the emergence of the social scientific study of Jewry had its roots in the origins and development of social demography, beginning with basic records as to population size.

Cultural Background

Jewish tradition, as well as those of many other cultures, condemns the counting of individuals, and the Bible explicitly asserts plagues as punishments for carrying out censuses by counting heads (Exodus 30:12 and 2 Samuel 24). A census was, nevertheless, necessary at times, for example, for the military draft and for the distribution of land (Numbers 1 and 26), and the Bible prescribes an indirect method, via the half-shekel, to obtain the necessary count (Exodus 30).[2]

Despite the aversion to counting heads, Jews have a long history of interest in the numbers and well-being of the group. Censuses apparently posed no ideological problems if undertaken under non-Jewish auspices, and data from them served as a focal empirical base in the emergence of the social scientific study of Jewry.

Origins and Development of Jewish Demography and the Social Scientific Study of Jewry

The German Jewish historian, Leopold Zunz is considered to be the forerunner of Jewish demography. He and several colleagues founded the first organization of what came to be the field of academic Jewish studies, the Verein fur Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden (The Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews), and he edited its journal, the *Zeitschrift fur die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Journal for the Science of Judaism). In one issue, he published a detailed listing of his vision of the components of "Jewish statistics," a demography of the Jews (Zunz 1823). Almost a century later, Arthur Ruppin, who directed the Bureau for Jewish Statistics and Demography in Berlin, wrote the first major demographic and sociological study of the impact of emancipation upon the Jews (Ruppin 1913), which provided a perspective on assimilation later echoed by many American sociologists.

In 1925, a major Jewish demographic and social scientific institute was established in Vilna (Wilnoor Vilnius—now Lithuania, then Poland). YIVO, the Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Yiddish Scientific Institute), now known as YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, was founded by, among others, Jacob Lestchinsky, a social scientist and demographer who developed and headed its Economic-Statistical Section and edited YIVO's *Bleter far idisher demografye, statistik, un ekonomik* (Papers on Jewish Demography, Statistics, and Economics) from 1923–1925, and its *Shriftn far ekonomik un statistic* (Journal of Economics and Statistics) from 1928 to 1932.

In the United States, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) established the Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research in 1914, to collect and study data on the social, cultural, and religious aspects of Jews in the United States. In 1919, the Bureau merged with the Bureau of Philanthropic Research and the Field Bureau

[2] There are many traditional Jews who, when counting people in a small group, will use a symbolically indirect way, such as counting "not one, not two," etc. When Orthodox Jews want to determine if they have a quorum for prayer services, they often count by using the words in a ten-letter Hebrew verse, especially Psalms 29:9, in place of "one, two, etc."

of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, and became the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. Its goal was to study the condition of US Jewry, to improve its philanthropic administration, and to serve as a database and clearinghouse for sociological information on Jews around the world. Almost invariably, the study of Jewish demography was tied to social policy for what were viewed as social problems. It is for that reason that "communal agencies and specialized institutions dominated the social scientific study of contemporary Jewry" (Ritterband and Wechsler 1994: 202). Jewish communal agencies were established to deal with what were perceived as the needs of or problems in the Jewish community, and demographic data and social scientific analyses were viewed as necessary to understanding the problems and, possibly, how to deal with them.

Fertility and Intermarriage

During the third quarter of the twentieth century, leaders of American Jewish communal organizations and among many social scientists of American Jewry began to sense that a steady decline was taking place in both the quality and quantity of American Jewish life and in the US Jewish community. The 1963 *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB) contained an article by Erich Rosenthal, a social scientist at Queens College, with data showing that the birth rate among Jews in the United States was significantly lower than that of white Protestants and Roman Catholics, and there were reasons to question whether even a replacement level could be maintained (Rosenthal 1961). Two years later, Rosenthal wrote another lead article in the AJYB, "Studies of Jewish Intermarriage in the United States," which reported survey findings indicating a doubling of what had been the known intermarriage rate just six or seven years previously, and that "in at least 70 percent of the mixed families in Greater Washington the children were not identified with the Jewish group." This, Rosenthal concluded, raised questions about "the future demographic balance of the Jewish population in the United States" (Rosenthal 1963: 53).

In the broader media as well, issues of American Jewish fertility and intermarriage were seen as serious Jewish social problems in the United States that raised questions about the future of US Jewry. In the fall of 1953, Milton Himmelfarb, editor of the AJYB, published an article in *Commentary* magazine titled "The Vanishing Jews" (Himmelfarb 1963) bemoaning the low Jewish birth rate in the United States and suggesting that it threatened the future of US Jewry. In April 1964, Marshall Sklare wrote an article in *Commentary* in which he warned that intermarriage is "a matter more crucial to Jewish survival than any other" (Sklare 1964: 46), and projected a bleak outlook for the Jewish future. The following month, an even gloomier prognosis for the future of US Jewry was provided in a cover story of the widely read *Look Magazine* titled "The Vanishing American Jew," which focused on the declining American Jewish birth rate, the high intermarriage rate, and the loss to the Jewish community of close to three-fourths of the children of those mixed marriages (Morgan 1964). So widely read were these articles that AJYB reported that the problem of the "vanishing Jew" was "the major preoccupation of American Jewry during 1964" (Shub 1965: 311). Though not directly related to this

"preoccupation," there were elements of the concerns that probably played a latent role in the idea of forming ASSJ.

The Origins of the ASSJ

Before the emergence of ASSJ, although various US sociologists had occasionally written about Jews, few if any of them specialized in the sociology of Jewry. The major exceptions were Marshall Sklare and Charles Liebman.[3] Sklare was actually the pioneer and became "dean" of American Jewish sociology (Sarna 1993: x) and went on to shape the field in a number of significant ways (Liebman 1993). Although most of his articles were published in Jewish journals, most of his books, especially his earlier ones, were published by major US publishing houses.[4] His influence on the field and on ASSJ was attested to in the editor's introduction to an early issue of the Association's journal: "Before there was a *Contemporary Jewry*, even before there was an ASSJ, there was Marshall Sklare. Indeed, it is partially due to his pioneering work, his professional visibility, and his influence on two decades of students, colleagues, and peers that the ASSJ and *Contemporary Jewry* exist and thrive" (Binderman 1977–1978). Sklare placed the field on the scholarly map and thus spurred the introduction of academic courses in it on college and university campuses. This was spurred by its having occurred at an especially propitious moment, the second half of the 1960s when the country experienced a rise in ethnic and subsequently religious consciousness.

However, Sklare viewed the study of Jews as more than an "objective" endeavor. In fact, he argued that it always sprung from an underlying ideological perspective, which he proceeded to spell out. In one of his major essays in a non-Jewish scholarly journal,[5] Sklare analyzed three perspectives held by Jewish academics who have written about US Jewry.[6] The first was the "assimilationist," which is characterized by a subtle antipathy toward ethnoreligious particularism viewing the ethnic community as a relic, a false escape from the "real" world of modernity, which survives only because of the hostility of non-Jews. Sklare identified Louis Wirth as

[3] Liebman began specializing in the social scientific study of Jewry in the 1960s, though his work in the field was not widely recognized until the following decade with the publication of *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Liebman 1973).

[4] Sklare's first book, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (1955), was published by The Free Press, perhaps the most prominent US publisher of sociological works at the time. The Free Press also published his pioneering edited volume, *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group* (1958). His book, *America's Jews* (1971) was published by Random House in its series "Ethnic Groups in Comparative Perspective," and his book, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in the Open Society*, with Joseph Greenblum, was published by Basic Books in (1967), and in a second edition by the University of Chicago Press in 1979.

[5] *Ethnicity* 1(2), 1972: 151–173; reprinted in *Observing America's Jews* (Sklare 1993: 158–180). All references are to the 1993 printing.

[6] Another version of the analysis, which elaborates on aspects of the original, appeared as an article in Sklare's edited volume, *The Jew in American Society* (New York: Behrman House, 1974), 1–27, and was subsequently included as a chapter (181–202) in his *Observing America's Jews*.

the prototype of this perspective. A colleague of Robert Park at the University of Chicago, Louis Wirth wrote one of the first studies of immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe in the United States (Wirth 1928), and it fast became a classic work. Wirth had the advantages of being an "insider"—he had been an immigrant Jew from Germany who arrived in the United States at the age of fourteen, and was familiar with Judaism and Jewish culture—but was careful not to overtly identify with the subjects of his study. Sklare as well as Fred Matthews (1987) argue that Wirth personally was an assimilationist and that his work reflects that perspective.[7] Others, however, argue that he was not personally an assimilationist (Birnbaum 2007; Miller 1992). As far as Sklare was concerned, being an assimilationist was "worse" than being assimilated (1993: 7). In any case, Wirth saw the ghetto as a haven from the real world of the metropolis and assumed that it would die as soon as prejudice diminished and its inhabitants had sufficient opportunity to prepare themselves to participate in the wider community. Wirth viewed the Jewish community, Sklare argued, as a dying entity and he was not saddened by that (1993: 168).

In an earlier review essay of Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964), Sklare spelled out another and more fundamental difference between the assimilationist perspective and his own, which he later identified as "survivalist." "Why is it," he asked,

> that sociologists . . . who can so readily understand the attachment of people to their class, have so much difficulty in understanding their attachment to a religion, an ethnic group . . .? Perhaps because sociologists are so secular, they cannot fathom why anyone should wish to preserve a religion. Perhaps because they are so attached to the urbanities of the academy, they cannot fathom why individuals of any sensibility could be satisfied with the parochial life of a minority and must attribute their loyalty to an ethnocentric ideology or to disabilities produced by social rejection, whether actually experienced or only imagined. (Sklare 1965: 66)

Sklare acknowledged that Gordon understands the complexities of class and ethnicity better than most of his colleagues and is an advocate of pluralism, but he saw ethnic beliefs and values in the United States as only temporary. Gordon, he says, actually "looks forward to the day when all men of good will can be enrolled in a kind of secularized *yeshivah.* Those like myself who believe they belong to a long and profound tradition rather than merely to an ethnocentric ideology will find Gordon's social eschatology singularly unattractive" (1965: 66). In other words, there is a basic conflict between the perspective that looks forward to the disappearance of minority beliefs and values, which are part of minority group identity, because they impede the complete absorption of minorities into the "open society," and a perspective that values minority group identity and seeks to perpetuate and strengthen it in

[7] Wirth married a non-Jewish woman and, according to his daughter, whom Sklare quotes, he had "assimilationist inclinations and principles" (1993: 168).

an open and accepting society. As will be indicated, it is this conflict of perspectives that for Sklare underlies much of the challenge of intermarriage.[8]

A second kind of perspective, Sklare suggested, is held by the American Jewish sociologist "who wished to retain his Jewish identity but who at the same time felt alienated from the Jewish community" (1993: 169). The "critical intellectual" is often on the left of the political spectrum and, when writing about Jews, presents a "critical, alienated, and even deprecatory view of the Jewish community" (1993: 164). Rather than viewing the ghetto in negative terms, the critical intellectual tends to romanticize it. The physical, social, and economic hardships of the immigrant ghetto are minimized, the sense of *community* therein is emphasized. Contemporary American Jews have lost their sense of community and values, argues this American-Jewish sociologist, and as a result, he rationalizes, he feels alienated from them. Sklare pointed to the work of Judith Kramer and Seymour Leventman (1961) as exemplifying the "critical intellectual" perspective, but the prototype for him was Melvin Tumin. Tumin was a Jewish sociologist at Princeton University, best known among sociologists for his critique of the prominent functionalist theory of Kingsley Davis and Wilbur Moore (Davis and Moore 1945; Tumin 1953). In the fall of 1963, Tumin gave a paper at a meeting of the editorial board of the quarterly journal of the American Jewish Congress, *Judaism*, at which Sklare and others were invited to respond. Tumin's paper, as well as the responses, were subsequently published in the journal. Tumin was sharply critical of US Jewry, alleging that it had turned its back on its traditional role as outsider and radical critic of the establishment, and that Jews "have rushed in to take advantage of [the] opportunity to become insiders . . . accepting fully the essentially conservative character of their enterprises, becoming ardent partisans of the 'normal' way of life, and treating as enemies all those who stand outside and criticize, or who, worst of all, criticize from the inside out, and loudly" (Tumin 1964: 139). In his conclusion he asked, "What can it mean, in all honesty, for the average Jew in America to claim he comes from a heritage and tradition of social justice, of respect for knowledge and learning, of concern for culture?" (1964: 142). Interestingly, Sklare did not respond by pointing to the empirical evidence indicating that American Jews were much more liberal than others groups holding similar status.[9] Rather, he focused on Tumin's radical political ideology "and his unconscious Jewish ethnocentricism" [*sic*] that led him to make "such difficult demands upon us." The underlying problem, according to Sklare, is Tumin's yearning for Jewish distinctiveness without any Jewish separatism.

> He feels negatively about Jewish centers and synagogues, Jewish day schools, Jewish universities. He is unsympathetic to all institutions within whose confines a distinctive Jewish vocation could be nurtured. Of course this rejection of Jewish separatism makes considerable sense ideologically if not sociologi-

[8] It should be noted that, although it is legitimate to evaluate one's work as to whether it is assimilationist or not, it is much more difficult to characterize individuals as to whether they are personally assimilationist or not. As a colleague once said, sociologists should not attempt to be psychoanalysts. I would add that those whose works are being analyzed should likewise not assume that they are personally being analyzed.

[9] See for example, Fuchs 1956. The data continue to confirm those liberal patterns (Wald 2015).

> cally: Jewish radicalism has always called for a cessation of all parochialisms, among them Jewish parochialism. (Sklare in Tumin 1964: 150)

As will be indicated, it is this issue—whether Jews and other minorities should be allowed to and can remain separate in an open US society—that underlies much of Sklare's writings on intermarriage, a subject to which he soon turned.

The third is the "survivalist" perspective that, at the very least, rejects the goal of assimilation and views immigrant life in more negative than positive terms. Moreover, survivalism accepts the middle-class lifestyle of US Jewry as a given, and focuses upon the problems of identity produced by rapid mobility. It was those of this perspective who founded ASSJ.

ASSJ was founded in 1971[10] and is one of a number of special-interest associations within the field of social science in the United States; others include the Association for the Sociology of Religion,[11] the Society of Catholic Social Scientists,[12]and the Association of Black Sociologists.[13] All of these organizations were founded to fill a perceived gap in the discipline. As recalled by Harold Himmelfarb, a former president, the ASSJ was meant to provide a forum for "scholars interested in the social scientific . . . study of Jewry," and in particular to "encourage and support scholars who were interested in doing work in the area, because it was not a mainstream sub-discipline in either the social sciences or in Jewish studies." Another former president, Allen Glicksman, cited the importance of "getting members of ASSJ to participate in the wider world of social scientific research," while at the same time "engaging our colleagues outside of Jewish Studies in the discussion about the social scientific study of Jewry."[14]

The idea of forming an organization of sociologists specifically interested in the study of Jewry first surfaced at an annual conference sponsored by the American Sociological Association (ASA) in 1966. One of the sessions at that conference, titled "Sociology and History," was attended by Werner J. Cahnman, a German-born

[10] At the time of its founding, the association was known as the Association for the Sociological Study of Jewry. The name was changed in the 1980s in order to attract other social scientists of Jews and Judaism.

[11] The Association for the Sociology of Religion was founded in 1938 and was originally named the American Catholic Sociological Society. Among the incentives for its founding was the experience by many Catholic sociologists of marginality stemming from a sense that the profession of sociology was dominated by Protestants, and a sense that sociology was displacing religion and served as a new, secular religion (Dynes 1974; Kivisto 1989; Morris 1989; Swatos and William 1989). For its early history, see Rosenfelder 1948.

[12] Founded in 1992. The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) was founded in 1949 as the Committee for the Scientific Study of Religion; its current name was adopted in 1956, and it was not strictly a social scientific society. Some of those active in the founding and early years, especially Ralph Burhoe, who was then the Executive Director of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, hoped that SSSR "would come to include a natural science component and involve natural scientists working alongside social scientists and religious scholars in the study of religion and from a perspective that, among other things, would include efforts to strengthen the religious component of life" (Glock 2000: 423).

[13] Founded in 1970.

[14] Personal communications from Harold Himmelfarb and Allen Glicksman (September 2011).

historical sociologist who was later affiliated with the Chicago school of sociology.[15] Cahnman introduced himself to Norman L. Friedman, who had just delivered a paper, and when they subsequently learned of their mutual interest in the study of Jewry, a strong collegial friendship ensued. Several years later, meeting in Boston at the annual meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, they discussed the formation of a group focusing on the sociology of Jewry, which could present sessions at ASA annual conferences.

According to Friedman, the ASSJ had its unofficial launching at a special-interest group meeting that was organized and co-chaired by him and Bernard Lazerwitz, a quantitative sociologist and survey researcher who specialized in ethnicity and religious involvement (Friedman 1986). This meeting, billed as a special session on "The Sociological Study of Jewry," took place in September 1970 at the ASA annual conference and was attended by thirty-five individuals, among them Solomon Poll, Mervin Verbit, and Arnold Dashefsky. These three submitted a motion to establish a formal group, which was voted upon and accepted; a year later, the first official meeting of the association took place. Friedman served as secretary-treasurer and Verbit was elected its first president. He was followed by Sklare, who was president from 1973 to 1975.[16]

As suggested above, a number of factors, some connected to US society at large and others specifically Jewish, led to the establishment of the ASSJ at this particular juncture. For one, the preceding decade had been characterized by broad social activism. Toward the end of the 1960s, a growing number of committed Jews had become involved in the ongoing protest campaign on behalf of Soviet Jews wishing to emigrate, as well as in efforts to alleviate the situation of poor Jews in US cities. Meanwhile, on the academic front, there was widespread rejection of the rigid, "values-free" approach within sociology in favor of more intensive engagement in matters of race and ethnicity. Indeed, American society as a whole was characterized at this time by heightened ethnic consciousness.[17] The period of the late 1960s was also marked by a heightened religious consciousness, which seemed to spell an

[15] On Cahnman, see the editors' introduction to Cahnman (2004). Recalling Cahnman, Judith Marcus and Zoltan Tarr wrote:

After Cahnman's escape from Germany, he entered the United States in 1940 and soon after partook in a summer seminar for foreign scholars and teachers at the Brewster Free Academy in Wolfsboro, New Hampshire. Here he first encountered the sociologist Robert E. Park of the University of Chicago, and Herbert A. Miller who evaluated Cahnman's background and designated him as a "race and cultural specialist" in sociology, with a recommendation for a Visiting Position at the University of Chicago. In due course, as he recalled, he became a "Chicago sociologist," in close contact with Everett Hughes, the anthropologist [Robert] Redfield, and, above all, Park, who greatly influenced his thinking. The relationship with Louis Wirth was more complicated. In spite of their common interest in things Jewish, their perspectives differed: Cahnman had a strong survivalist perspective, meaning the survival of ethnic groups from both normative and empirical viewpoints, while Wirth maintained a strong assimilationist outlook, that is, the inevitability of the absorption of the Jews, as any other ethnic group, into the mainstream of the larger society. (Cahnman 2004: x; see also Marcus and Tarr 2004).

[16] In 1973, when Friedman requested to retire from the position of secretary/treasurer, Cahnman asked me—I had taken two undergraduate courses and one graduate course in sociological theory with him—to take over take over from Friedman, I agreed.

[17] For many Jews, the watershed event was the Six-Day War of June 1967.

end to previous discussions concerning "the death of God" or the United States as a secular society (Staub 2004; Waxman 1983).

Among college and university students, in particular, a new breed of Jews seemed to be emerging—some of them survivors of the Holocaust or the children of survivors, many of them Orthodox or traditional Conservative in religious orientation—who were proud to be "Jewish Jews." They were, as Seymour Martin Lipset pointed out, frequently derided as "individuals who are too preoccupied with an ethnic identity, and who lack the universalistic orientation prized by social scientists and American intellectuals generally" (Lipset 1970: 149). Notable among these were individuals who had gone to Jewish summer camps, who belonged to Zionist or synagogue youth movements, and/or were members of Jewish student organizations such as Hillel or Yavneh.[18] One of the main outcomes of this heightened Jewish identification was the establishment and rapid proliferation of Jewish studies courses and programs. Reflecting this new trend was the establishment of another specifically Jewish academic association, the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS). Founded in 1969, the AJS had about 1,400 members by 2000 and 1,881 members by 2011.[19] In 2018, there were about 2,000 members in the AJS.[20]

By contrast, from the outset, the ASSJ had a limited number of members. In 1974, the first year for which membership figures are available, there were 154 individual (as opposed to institutional) members, a number that remained the same a dozen years later. In 2010, the association showed a slight drop in individual membership, down to 149, and in mid-2018 there were 127 members.[21]

On the face of it, this lack of growth may seem puzzling, especially given the impressive expansion of Jewish studies courses, programs, and AJS since the late 1960s. On closer analysis, however, this seeming stagnation may reflect an inherent conflict felt by many Jewish social scientists with respect to their professional versus their personal lives, a conflict alluded to by Sklare in his analysis, discussed above, of the various perspectives of social scientists writing about Jews. In 1955, Seymour Martin Lipset had noted that, with few exceptions, Jewish social scientists in the United States generally abstained from writing about their fellow Jews:

> One reason for the avoidance of Jewish topics by Jewish scholars lies in the fact that for many of them being sociologists and anthropologists has been one way of escaping their Jewishness. Sociology tends to be universalistic rather than particularistic in its underlying philosophical and methodological assumptions. Being a sociologist has meant that one also believes in equality, that all people and values are objects for study, rather than sources of personal identification. If these assumptions are valid, then one would not expect men to study

[18] On Yavneh, see Kraut (2011).

[19] Personal communication from Rona Sheramy, former Executive Director of AJS (28 July 2011). In contrast, as will be seen, the ASSJ has remained fairly constant in its membership.

[20] *Association for Jewish Studies*, https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/about-ajs (accessed 25 October 2019).

[21] These are the total individual memberships worldwide, the overwhelming majority being in North America, with a handful from Israel and elsewhere.

Jews, for doing so would expose them to the possibility of being labeled "Jewish Jews."(Lipset 1955: 178)

Insiders and Outsiders

Some Jewish social scientists, who may not have devoted all of their research and writing to Jews but nevertheless wished to contribute to the Jewish community, joined forces with the Jewish welfare establishment to help improve the condition of needy Jews. Indeed, as Paul Ritterband and Harold Wechsler point out, during the first half of the twentieth century, "communal agencies and specialized institutions dominated the social scientific study of contemporary Jewry" (Ritterband and Wechsler 1994: 202). However, many social scientists, especially those influenced by Robert Park and the Chicago school of sociology, called for the sociologist's complete detachment from the subject matter being studied. The debate, which to some extent continues to this day, revolved around the question of who was better qualified to study a given group, the "insider" or the "outsider." The "insider" position held that only insiders, having lived in and become sensitized to all of the experiences and meanings of the group, could truly understand its nature. Advocates of the outsider position argued that insiders were likely to be blinded (or at least blinkered) by issues of group loyalty. A more nuanced version of the outsider argument was expressed by Robert Park, who suggested that sociologist-researchers should approach their subject *as if* they were outsiders. For example, he told students who were interested in improving race relations that the "calm, detached scientist . . . investigates race relations with the same objectivity and detachment with which the zoologist dissects the potato bug" (Park 1967: xvi).

This is essentially the position taken by Robert Merton as well, who pointed out that both Georg Simmel and Max Weber clearly rejected the extreme insider doctrine in their assertion that "one need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar" (Merton 1973: 123). Merton himself argued for recognition and appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective while at the same time striving for theoretical and technical competence (which transcend both). The ideal, he suggested, was for the insider to study his or her subject as an outsider. As he put it, "The role of social scientist concerned with achieving knowledge about society requires enough detachment and trained capacity to know how to assemble and assess the evidence without regard for what the analysis seems to imply about the worth of one's group" (1973: 133).

Both Lipset and Sklare rejected the notion of conflict between personal identification and social scientific study. Lipset would have probably endorsed Leonard Saxe's "positivist" perspective (Saxe 2014), and Sklare undoubtedly, as will be discussed below, went much further.

Organization: Social Scientific and Communal

Although the ASSJ's numbers remained low, its reputation as *the* home of social research on Jews grew as a result of some of its connections with the interests of major American Jewish communal agencies, especially the Council of Jewish

Federations and Welfare Funds (CJF)—later called United Jewish Communities (UJC); now called the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)—and the American Jewish Committee's Jewish Communal Affairs Department (now called the William Petschek Contemporary Jewish Life Department). CJF is "the closest thing to an umbrella body" of organizations that comprise the polity of the American Jewish community (Elazar 1995: 170). During the third quarter of the past century, CJF had become the center of the American Jewish organizational dynamic. As such, it sought data and other information on America's Jews who were viewed as important for communal planning, and it thus undertook to sponsor the first nationwide survey of Jews in the United States, the 1971 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). Fred Massarik and Bernard Lazerwitz, who were responsible for the survey's sample design and initial computations, were also founding members of ASSJ. As it turned out, no full-scale analysis of the first NJPS ever appeared. However, several important reports were issued in the wake of the survey, and from the mid-1970s until the 1990s, these reports were the major source of empirical data for the growing social scientific literature on Jews in the United States. One of those reports focused on intermarriage, and it showed that the rate of intermarriage continued to accelerate and among them the overwhelming majority of non-Jewish spouses did not convert to Judaism (Massarick n.d.).

As for the American Jewish Committee, Sklare's concerns and influence continued even after he left the AJC in 1966. In 1967, a full-time director, Yehuda Rosenman, was appointed to head the Jewish Communal Affairs Department. During his twenty-year tenure, he developed a range of academic conferences and communal programs, and his department published much of the research conducted under its aegis by scholars whom he recruited to study various aspects of Jewish life in the United States, notably family life, and especially intermarriage. This created a symbiotic relationship in which the scholars enhanced the reputation of the AJC and the AJC enhanced the reputations of the scholars. Prominent among the social scientists whose early careers were substantially enhanced through their work commissioned by the AJC's Jewish Communal Affairs Department are Egon Mayer and Steven M. Cohen.[22] The involvement of some of these scholars as well as that of several Jewish demographers and social scientists recruited to design and carry out the NJPS were proponents of founding ASSJ and continued to be early active members, and they contributed to establishing its reputation as *the* home of social research on Jews.

[22] The scholarly reputations of other notable social scientists were strengthened through their articles in the AJC's *American Jewish Year Book* (AJYB), for example, Charles S. Liebman, Sydney Goldstein, Sylvia B. Fishman, and Sergio DellaPergola, among others.

The Perspective and Influence of Marshall Sklare

Marshall Sklare rejected the outsider perspective; as a committed Jew, he was a staunch advocate of the assertive insider perspective.[23] Though he did not say so explicitly, he would have probably agreed with an idea developed by William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, according to which people construct the meaning of a situation on the basis of both their own personal needs and desires and their group's beliefs, values, and traditions (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927: 68), and for him, the group's beliefs, values, and traditions were clear. He was not only personally engaged in Judaism; he was committed to strengthening Judaism and the Jewish people, and he viewed his research on Jews and Judaism as serving that aim.

In 1964, Sklare began the first of several articles in which he warned of the rising intermarriage rate and of the threat it posed for "the Jewish future." Not coincidentally, these articles were published in *Commentary* magazine while Sklare was, at the time, research director of the American Jewish Committee, *Commentary's* sponsoring organization. It also seems plausible that, since he saw intermarriage as "a matter more crucial to Jewish survival than any other" (Sklare 1964: 46), he wanted to publish in what was then the leading intellectual magazine in the country, the one having a significant degree of influence among the largest liberal American Jewish audience. He challenged "Jewish complacency about the rate of intermarriage" (1964: 48), and attempted to convince "the American Jewish community that it will eventually [have to] surrender the cherished diagnoses and nostrums that have come to obfuscate the true nature of the problem" (1964: 52).

For the survivalist Sklare, the evil of intermarriage was self-evident; the increasing evidence that intermarriage does not necessarily indicate psychological maladies[24] nor necessarily lead to marital disability does not render the threat less ominous. On the contrary,

> It is precisely the "healthy" modern intermarriages which raise the most troubling questions of all to the Jewish community in general and Jewish parents in particular. When his child intermarries, the Jewish parent feels guilty that in some way he must be responsible. Yet how is he to oppose the match? Chances are that he believes that love is the basis of marriage, that marriage is the unit-

[23] Despite his many disagreements with Wirth, he probably would have agreed with Wirth's assertion that "[t]he distinctive character of social science discourse is to be sought in the fact that every assertion, no matter how objective it may be, has ramifications extending beyond the limits of science itself. Since every assertion of a 'fact' about the social world touches the interests of some individual or group, one cannot even call attention to the existence of certain 'facts' without courting the objections of those whose very raison d'être in society rests upon a divergent interpretation of the 'factual' situation (Wirth 1936: xvii).

[24] See, among others, Hurvitz (1965), Levinson and Levinson (1958–1959). The notion that Jewish intermarriage is a manifestation of a rejection of one's Jewish identity, self-hatred, or other psychological maladies was prevalent well into the last quarter of the twentieth century. See, for example, Alperin (2016), Ettinger (1976). Although not explicitly, this is also implied in Neusner (1993). Another popular notion concerning Jewish intermarriage, which at the time typically involved a Jewish male marrying a non-Jewish female, was that it was due to the prevalence of Jewish women who were overbearing and emasculating.

> ing of two individuals rather than two families, and that the final determination of a mate is his child's prerogative. This complex of ideas (which constitutes a radical departure from the norm, if not always the practice, of traditional Jewish society) came to be embraced by some of the more advanced members of the first generation in America, by a majority of the second generation and by an overwhelming proportion of the third. How then can the parent ask his child to renounce what he himself believes in? Moreover, the liberalism of the Jewish parent—his commitment to the idea of equality and his belief in the transitory character of the differences which distinguish people from one another—serves to subvert his sense of moral rectitude in opposing intermarriage. For if he is at all in the habit of personal candor, he must ask himself if the Gentile is any less worthy of the Jew than the Jew is of the Gentile. (1964: 51–52)

It is troubling questions involving intermarriage such as these, Sklare averred, that challenge "American Jewry's dual ideal of full participation in the society and the preservation of Jewish identity."[25]

The issue of intermarriage has become so significant, he argued, that it calls for a major shift in communal priorities and, as a first step, major research into all aspects of Jewish intermarriage. The community needs to better understand "Jews who intermarry and . . . the causes and consequences of their doing so." He also called for "studies to evaluate the various methods in use to combat intermarriage," and for demographic research to be conducted "at regular intervals so that a reliable trend line can be established" (Sklare 1964: 52).

In 1970, Sklare again stressed the danger of intermarriage to "Jewish survival." In fact, he argued, it was a threat that overshadowed all the positive developments in the Jewish community in the United States. "It is intermarriage which weighs more heavily than all the positive trends combined, and which calls into question the 'creative survival,' as the phrase has it, of the American Jewish community. That this should be so is hardly surprising, since intermarriage strikes at the very core of Jewish group existence" (1970a: 51). It is a dilemma for Jews in the United States, because it challenges some of their deepest beliefs and values. As Sklare put it, "American Jews are strong believers in the American creed of equality for all people 'regardless of race or religion.' This conviction, of course, clashes with an equally forceful ethnocentric impulse" (1964: 52).

An American Dilemma

Although Sklare's focus was on American Jews, he was aware that the dilemma is not restricted solely to Jews. It is a dilemma for all minorities desiring to retain their minority identity. As he put it,

[25] Sarna (1990) indicates another challenge to that dual ideal and, indeed, a challenge to all non-Christian minorities in the United States, Christmas.

> Intermarriage is an issue that all minorities face. If the minority is assimilationist in orientation, intermarriage is experienced as an opportunity. If the group is survivalist, intermarriage is experienced as a threat. For survivalist groups, the threat exists both on a collective as well as on an individual basis. In its collective aspects, intermarriage menaces the continuity of the group. In its individual aspects, it menaces the continuity of generations within the family, the ability of family members to identify with one another, and the satisfaction of such members with their family roles. (Sklare 1971: 182)

Jonathan Sarna reviewed both the increasingly favorable US attitudes toward intermarriage and the increasing rates of ethnic and religious intermarriage and concluded that we need to seriously consider

> whether endogamy-based minority groups can continue to survive in contemporary America, particularly if they choose to disperse themselves among the mainstream. During the twenty-first century, the American Jewish community will test this question as it seeks to promote its "continuity agenda" in the face of contemporary culture and its seductions. The results bear careful watching, for even as they determine American Jewry's future, they will also furnish vital lessons concerning the viability of America's minority groups and the changing nature of American society as a whole. (Sarna 2007: 133)

Favorable American attitudes toward intermarriage and increasing rates of ethnic and religious intermarriage have accelerated since Sarna reviewed them (Putnam and Campbell 2010: 148–159; Wang 2012), and these patterns are increasingly seen as challenging the ability of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities to withstand their impact. Evidence involving various ethnic groups indicates that children of intermarriage have less firm ethnic identities than those of endogamous marriages; some are more likely to identify with multiple ethnicities, some with similar hybrids, and some with none (Davis 1991; Hout and Goldstein 1994; Waters 1990, 1996; Xie and Goyette 1997). With respect to Jews, although there are differences depending upon whether the father or the mother is Jewish (McGinity 2014), the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that children of mixed marriage have less salient Jewish identities than those with two Jewish parents (Fishman and Cohen 2017: 25, Table 8; Medding et al. 1992: 39; Rebhun 2016: 101, 178; Sheskin and Hartman 2015: 158). As for the intermarried, Pew 2013 found that found that in-married Jews feel more connected to and responsible for other Jews than do those who are intermarried. Among the former, 92 percent say they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people and 80 percent say they feel a responsibility to care for Jews in need. Among intermarried Jews the figures are much lower: 59 percent report a sense of belonging and less than half, 49 percent, state that they feel a responsibility to care for Jews in need (Pew Research Center 2013: 53).

Milton Gordon and Marshall Sklare

Although, as discussed above, Sklare was critical of what he viewed as Gordon's positive attitude toward assimilation, he agreed with much of Gordon's analysis. Intermarriage was seen by Sklare as the greatest threat to Jewish survival, but he was also rather pessimistic about the ability of the affluent cosmopolitan third and fourth generations to transmit a sense of Jewish identity capable of withstanding the many pulls of structural and cultural assimilation. Nowhere are these doubts expressed more forcefully than in his study of the pseudonymous affluent Midwestern community of "Lakeville" (Sklare and Greenblum 1967). That study, a model in-depth study of Jewish identity in a Jewish community in the United States, finds a pervasive decline of traditional Jewish thought and practice. The authors' pessimism was not even thinly veiled. Perhaps their concluding remarks expressed it best:

> Over the generations, the families of present-day Lakeville Jews have increased their financial resources, their general level of education, and their mastery of the environment many times over. While some have multiplied their Jewish resources, many have dissipated them to a lesser or greater degree. It is indisputable that the majority of Lakeville Jews would like to conserve their Jewish resources. But unless an aggressive policy of growth is pursued, the Jewish resources of a previous generation inevitably decline. The press of the general environment is so compelling that instead of being conserved, the inheritance from earlier generations inevitably diminishes. In sum, the long-range viability of the pattern of Jewish adjustment characteristic of Lakeville Jews is in question. (Sklare and Greenblum 1967: 331)

But, it may be asked, was such pessimism appropriate or warranted? And, even if it was appropriate for Lakeville, what about the country as a whole? "Lakeville," after all, was not the whole of the United States, nor did it appear to be even closely characteristic of other Jewish communities in other areas of the United States. It was a suburban community of approximately 25,000—8,000 were Jews, with four Reform temples and a Conservative synagogue. The congregational composition alone indicated the community's atypicality. While they did not suggest that Lakeville was, at that time, a representative Jewish community, Sklare and Greenblum did indicate that it would become increasingly representative.

> True, the lack of certain segments of the Jewish population, such as Orthodox Jews, means that such resemblance will at best be approximate. But the following projections are persuasive: while the present level of education in Lakeville is considerably in advance of the Jews of the nation, it will be less so in the future; while the proportion of foreign-born is much smaller, it will be less so in the future; while the income level is much higher, it will be less so in the future. Thus we may say that if present trends continue, the social characteristics presently encountered in Lakeville will typify ever wider segments of American Jewry. And since important attitudinal and behavioral differences sometimes correlate with these characteristics, our study has a double interest

> as research into a present elite group and also as affording us a glimpse, albeit an imperfect one, into the possible shape of the future. (1967: 44)

Sklare's call to those engaged in the social scientific study of Jewry to be Jewish Jews was, as he perceived it, beneficial to both the discipline itself and to the individuals engaged in it:

> It is high time that sociologists drawn to Jewish subjects affirm their interest in Jews per se, not because the Jews happen to be a minority group or happen to have certain characteristics which can be contrasted with groups holding different characteristics. Finally, we must realize that when we analyze contemporary Jews and contemporary Judaism, it is unproductive from the point of scholarship to gloss over Jewish sources and Jewish history. It is also bad for our mental health. The constant concern that we may exclude ourselves from the mainstream, that we will somehow be diminished as sociologists if we affirm our Jewish interests, is capable of playing havoc with both the quality as well as the quantity of our work. (Sklare 1977–1978: 38–39)

Emerging Debates—Social Scientific and Policy-Oriented

Although Sklare was highly influential in the field of social scientific study of Jewry and in the founding of ASSJ, he was not an autocrat and not all completely agreed with him. There has never been a consensus in either the field or the association.[26] Indeed, Samuel Klausner, who followed Sklare as president of ASSJ, saw the field somewhat differently than his predecessor.[27] As for the field, several significant debates emerged among Jewish sociologists in the United States about the future of American Jewry. As will be indicated, some of these were rooted in policy concerns while others focused on basic processes.

A major debate about the future of American Jewry that emerged in the 1980s was between what were termed "assimilationists" and "transformationists." The former referred to those like Sklare who were concerned about the ongoing assimilation of American Jewry. The "transformationists" followed a perspective introduced by Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman (1984), most extensively presented by Charles Silberman (1985), and further developed by Goldscheider (1986). Their argument is that Jewish continuity is the result of structural factors rather than religio-cultural factors, such as Jewish values and Jewish education. While traditional religious practices change, the basic patterns of cohesion remain. Rather than

[26] At his university, Brandeis, Sklare was not a member of the Department of Sociology. Rather, his position was in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, where he was Klutznick Family Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies and Sociology (Sarna 1992).

[27] See, for example, Klausner (1987). Goldscheider and Zuckerman were even more explicit when they wrote "the study of contemporary Jews is no different from the study of contemporary Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, or whomever. The only difference is that to study Jews one must focus on cross-national analyses, since large Jewish subcommunities are located in many countries" (Goldscheider and Zuckerman 1984: 75).

worrying about the decline of Jewish identity and the prospects for Jewish communal survival in the United States, they point to the structural factors they see as continuing to maintain Jewish group cohesion even as the group is undergoing major transformation. As opposed to concern over the rising intermarriage rates and their implications for the future of Jewish continuity, Goldscheider and Zuckerman argue that the evidence indicates the American Jewish community gains, rather than loses, from intermarriage, conversion, and the Jewish socialization of the children of the intermarried.

Along the same lines, Steven Cohen argued that "intermarriage poses no immediate threat to the continuity or survival of the American Jewish community as a *group*. What we are really witnessing is a transformation to, using the current argot, a 'leaner' and 'meaner' American Jewish community, a somewhat pared down version that is, in many ways, stronger, more committed and more observant" (Cohen 1986, 1994; *Moment* 1995).[28] He cited studies that indicated a rate of intermarriage considerably lower than reported in the press based on the 1971 NJPS. Moreover, he argued, "[t]o the extent that intermarriage has increased, not all its consequences adversely affect Jewish continuity" because those who intermarry have weak Jewish backgrounds to begin with, and also because intermarriage leads to conversion to Judaism among some of the non-Jewish spouses, most of whom are women. As for the children of mixed marriages, he indicated, data from the New York Jewish Population Survey indicate that "we estimated that intermarriage actually may be serving to increase the number of Jewish children" (Cohen 1986).

With respect to the decline of the American Jewish birth rate to below zero population growth, Goldscheider argued the available data show a lower-than-average birth rate has historically been the norm rather than the exception for Jews in the United States. And he suggested that Jewish women may have been delaying rather than refraining from having children and that the rates for middle-aged Jewish women might well reach replacement levels. Cohen further argued that an early analysis of the New York Jewish Population Studies "shows that women who are now in the 35–44 age bracket have had an average of 2.1 children" (Cohen and Goldscheider 1984: 41–42) Thus, for all of the changes it was undergoing, Cohen expressed faith in the "vitality and resilience in the American Jewish family." Silberman went considerably further and confidently pronounced that America's Jews are a "certain people," in the sense that the future of their community in the United States is secure, certain, and improving.

A more cautious perspective on the American Jewish family is present in the work of Sylvia Fishman. She analyzed the impact of the larger US culture on the American Jewish family (Fishman 1994) and suggests—although not explicitly using a concept she subsequently developed—that what is taking place is not assimilation but "coalescence" (Fishman 2000), which is the merging and blending of US and Jewish cultures and identities. The individualism and openness of American

[28] Perhaps ironically, Cohen's approach is similar to that of many Orthodox Jews who are not concerned about the issue of Jewish continuity because they believe, based on prophetic promises in the Bible (e.g., Isaiah 37:32), that there will always be a "saving remnant" of religiously observant Jews.

society have wrought change in Jewish families, but it remains a central institution and the contemporary challenge for them to "retain their vitality and cohesion while responding to the opportunities of an individualistic and open society" (Fishman 1994: 35). In her Sklare Award address, she further argued that US culture and its norms present major challenges to the formation of Jewish families, which then has strong impact on transmitting Jewish culture to future generations. She concluded her analysis by addressing both the scholarly community and those engaged in Jewish communal policy:

> Personal Jewish journeys—how Jews ''do Jewish''—are a central component of that transmission, but they are not the whole story or the whole answer. Thinking about that crisis, complacency is not a useful approach, because it encourages the status quo. Despair is not useful either—it produces paralysis. But alarm and optimism are a useful combination: Alarm triggers adrenalin and optimism makes it possible to act, believing that one can—that one must—make a difference. May we be privileged to study, to analyze, to propose—to argue—to move the field forward, and to nurture the next generation of scholars of the study of Jews and Jewish societies. (Fishman 2015: 121)

The Complexity of Intermarriage

A policy debate related to the assimilationist and transformationist perspectives emerged following a study conducted by Egon Mayer for the AJC's Jewish Communal Affairs Department. In 1976, Mayer was commissioned to undertake an initial fact-finding study of the extent of and effects of intermarriage. Not surprisingly, the study, written together with an AJC staff person, Carl Sheingold, found that intermarriage would probably continue to increase and that "the greatest counterbalance to the assimilationist thrust of such marriages, in the short run, would seem to be an increase in the conversion rate among born-Gentile spouses," and recommended that "the Jewish community would do well to examine what steps it can take to encourage such moves" (Mayer and Sheingold 1979: 32). This was, at the time, perceived by many to be a departure from the Jewish traditional stance of American rabbinic and communal organizations to discourage intermarriage rather than to reach out to the non-Jewish spouses in the hope of converting them. Outreach of that kind was previously rejected on both ideological and practical grounds. Ideologically, it was viewed as the acceptance of a phenomenon that has long been anathema, and it was rejected practically because the study's own findings indicated that the probabilities of conversion in such intermarriages were extremely small. There was some debate about Mayer's recommendation but, in the face of the growing intermarriage rate, it was accepted by the AJC.

Within the American Jewish community the outreach proposal was welcomed. A variety of trade books presenting intermarriage in a much more positive light appeared (e.g., Cowan and Cowan 1987) and a range of efforts promoting varieties

of outreach efforts were undertaken by Jewish institutions and organizations, predominantly Reform,[29] across the country. Increasingly, programs were undertaken without addressing a basic issue concerning the limits of outreach. Mayer presented another paper for the National Jewish Conference Center, in which he developed his previous recommendations considerably further and argued that many of the non-Jewish spouses in intermarriages have positive feelings toward Jews and the Jewish community, and they participate in communal organizations and contribute to communal fundraising efforts. This is a growing group among the intermarried comprising "spouses who, according to Jewish religious law, *halachah,* are not Jewish, but who do feel themselves to be somewhat Jewish, in a secular, perhaps ethnic sense." Accordingly, he recommended that that a new category of Jew be created, namely, those who are members of the "people" but not of the "faith" (Mayer 1979a: 7). He was even more explicit in an article he wrote calling for "a kind of 'ethnic conversion' which will respond to the desire of many of the mixed married to see themselves as Jews and to be seen as Jews, but without religious conviction." Presumably motivated by a desire to improve the demographic outlook, he saw hope in the minority of spouses in mixed marriages who he claimed "are Jews through the alchemy of sociology, not of *halachah*"[30] (Mayer 1979b: 64).

Mayer's recommendation to recognize "ethnic Jews" aside, his work on intermarriage was widely hailed and, as indicated, his call for outreach to the intermarried was widely adopted within the US Jewish community. Several social scientists, however, were strongly critical of these developments. For example, Jack Wertheimer, Charles Liebman, and Steven Cohen viewed the outreach boom as more harmful than constructive because of the almost exclusive focus on one sub-community of an American Jewish population comprised of several sub-communities. They also argued that the programs were typically devised to be the least offending and the content appealed to the lowest common denominator among the population. Guidelines for one such program place no moral burden "on the unaffiliated and the intermarried, who have 'feelings and needs,' but [rather] on the organized community and its institutions, which must show 'interest and concern.'" The implication of this and many other calls for outreach was that "the real problem in the Jewish community is not the legions of the disaffiliated but the organizations which have driven them away" (Wertheimer et al. 1996: 48).

In place of a "one size fits all" approach to the issues facing American Jewry, Wertheimer et al. used NJPS 1990 and devised an index of Jewish involvement with a classification system based on levels of religious and communal participation. Among their groupings were the "actively engaged," "moderately engaged," "loosely engaged," and "unengaged." They argued that the groups most likely to ensure Jewish continuity are already more or less engaged. They consistently

[29] In an address to the Board of Trustees of Reform Judaism's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, on 2 December 1978, then president Rabbi Alexander Schindler issued a call to change the "behavior towards those who become Jews-by-Choice, to increase our sensitivity towards them and, thereby, to encourage growth in their numbers" (URJ 1978).

[30] There has developed such a category in Israel, especially with a significant proportion of immigrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). See Cohen and Susser (2009), Fisher (2013).

comprise about 44 percent of the community and it is their level of commitment that should be addressed and enhanced. Rather than reaching out to the loosely engaged or unengaged and their non-Jewish spouses, Wertheimer et al. concluded that "the organized Jewish community would do better to redirect its attention, its funding, and its programming from the periphery to the core; to turn to its most dependable members, whose participation it has taken for granted, and support *their* activities" (Wertheimer et al. 1996: 50).

Along the lines suggested by Sklare, they conclude the basic fallacy of virtually all of the communal outreach efforts is the failure to adopt a view of Jewish identity as being at least partly in tension with the values of liberal, universalist modernity, and any effort to strengthen "the fabric of Jewish life" may necessarily entail challenging if not rejecting aspects of that very ethos, an ethos with which both secular Jewish leaders and many religious ones have been prominently allied (Wertheimer et al. 1996: 51). In other words, differences of perspective in terms of communal policy may well be based on basic differences in what a Jewish community is and what it means to be Jewish.

In contrast to Wertheimer et al., Theodore Sasson argued the rise of unaffiliated Jews reported in Pew 2013 is the result of "the unexpected tendency of most young adults with intermarried parents to identify as Jewish" rather than a growing population of young adults raised in Jewish households "opting out." Therefore, he surmised there is an increase in the number of young adults raised in non-Jewish or partly Jewish households who are now identifying as Jewish, though not by religion, and a possible increase, rather than a decrease, in the size of the Jewish population (Sasson 2013).

As part of the same project, Leonard Saxe, Theodore Sasson, and Janet Krassner Aronson reexamined and reclassified the Pew 2013 data, arrived at a higher figure for the US Jewish population—6.8 million as compared to 5.3 million—and found that there had been a increase in household synagogue affiliation from what had been reported in NJPS 1990. They also found an increase in the number of individuals who said that being Jewish is very important to them and who attended synagogue services, fasted on Yom Kippur, feel somewhat or very attached to Israel, and visited Israel. They also found that about 60 percent of children of intermarried parents who were born between 1981 and 1995 ("millennials") identified as Jewish. This was much higher than what had been found in previous surveys. The millennials are also more likely to have been raised as Jewish, or at least partially Jewish, to have had some Jewish education, and to have had a Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Saxe et al. 2014).

However, Cohen pointed out that children of intermarried parents are much more likely to be among the growing percentage of those who do not define themselves as Jewish by religion, and the differences between those who are Jews by religion and those who are not are great. The latter are nominally Jewish in that they may attend some Jewish events and even participate in some Jewish rituals periodically but, as

the data indicate, their commitments to Judaism and to transmitting it to the next generation are hardly there.[31] The majority increasingly raise their children as not Jewish. Cohen concluded by again emphasizing the need for greater communal support of Jewish educational projects that "create and solidify Jewish social networks and . . . instill Jewish content and meaning to all Jews, including the children of the intermarried" (Cohen 2015).

Sergio DellaPergola had already seen a significant shift in how American Jews define what being Jewish in the United States means in the 1990 NJPS. As he indicated, in place of what had been primarily regarded as a religion or ethnic group, American Jews increasingly defined being Jewish as belonging to a cultural group, and viewed this change in identification as indicative of the "loosening" of the "primordial, exclusive, transmitted character of the Jewishness variable." In its place, culture, "a looser, subaltern concept . . . seems a residual category out of a past stronger Jewish identification"(1992: 93).

In contrast to earlier projections by Cohen, Goldscheider, and others with respect to the fertility issue, Sidney Goldstein and DellaPergola argued that the expected birth rate of Jewish women was declining and, although there were indications that the gap between their and the fertility expectations of all white American women of childbearing age was narrowing, there was no room for optimism because the projected decline in the differential was not due to a rise in the Jewish birth rate but rather to an anticipated decline in the non-Jewish birth rate (DellaPergola 1980, 1983, 1992; Goldstein 1981). DellaPergola's predictions appear to be realized. The Jewish birth rate remains at below replacement level (Pew Research Center 2013: 40), and the anticipated decline in the overall US birth rate has apparently come about (Livingston 2019; Matthews and Hamilton 2019; Stone 2018).

The question about the impact of intermarriage is much more complex. One aspect relates to a basic demographic question, over which there is a significant debate, especially between DellaPergolla and Saxe involving alternative definitions, measures, and perspectives. In a sense, part of the debate reflects the US version of the question "Who is a Jew?" with which the Israeli government grappled in terms of citizenship under its Law of Return (Ben-Rafael 2002). In the United States, at least until the middle of the twentieth century, social scientists defined a Jew according to traditional religious criteria, namely, one who was born of a Jewish mother or one who converted to Judaism. The definition was enlarged in 1983 when the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted a "Resolution of Patrilineal Descent," which defined a Jew as a child of at least one Jewish parent, father or mother, where there are manifestations Jewish identification by, for example, belonging to and attending synagogue or temple service, providing Jewish education, a bar or bat mitzvah, a confirmation, etc. In place of what was traditionally an ascribed status, being Jewish today is an achieved status, by choosing to identify as a Jew. However, there are no precise measures of that identity and identification;

[31] Perhaps it was his observing the identity of children of intermarriage that led to the significant change in his perspective from that which he expressed in 1984 and 1996 on the impact of intermarriage on the size of the Jewish population.

some social scientists adopt minimalist indicators, while other use more substantive indicators.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this survey of the field, the social scientific study of Jewry covers a broad range of topics. The subjects of the Jewish family and Jewish continuity are and have long been major foci of a number of prominent social scientists, but certainly not all nor even a majority social scientists of contemporary Jewry. Those subjects are also central to the concerns of communal policy planners. The connections between them and the interest in the subject within the larger community result in highlighting those areas of study and concern. For example, Harriet Hartman (2017) pointed to the historical centrality of the family in Jewish continuity and systematically analyzed its social current patterns, including the levels of Jewish engagement in the various components and sub-communities, and their implications for continuity. She also emphasized the reciprocity between the level of Jewish engagement of segments of the community and their place within the community. Finally, she outlined unmet services needed by some sub-populations within US Jewry.[32] There will be differences and disagreements with some of her recommendations, but she has provided a most thorough analysis of contemporary American Jewish family patterns and their significance for Jewish continuity.

However, even within that area and its components, no single perspective dominates. Even on the seemingly basic demographic issue of population size and direction, there are debates, as Rebhun et al. (1999) pointed out, because of the use of different scientific methods and different assumptions. DellaPergola stated this clearly when he wrote, "In theory, demography can claim the advantage of objectivity. In reality, demographers, like other social scientists, do make personal choices and are involved in narratives" (DellaPergola 2014: 78). With more explicitly emotion-laden and value-laden family issues such as intermarriage, birth rate, and others, it is not surprising that there are differing perspectives and different policy approaches. Different perspectives using different definitional boundaries will result in different policy recommendations, as DellaPergola indicates in his "simplified model of contemporary Jewish identification" (2014: 89). At times, the policies may flow from the social scientific analyses while at other times it appears that the social scientific analyses may be influenced by public behavior, values, and policy decisions. A careful study of these would be a significant contribution to both social science and social policy.

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[32] Given Hartman's delineated analyses and policy recommendations, and that she is a former President of ASSJ, it is ironic to read charges being leveled claiming that there is an isolated, male-dominated power apparatus of Jewish continuity that resists challenges to "the assumption of a continuity crisis" (Rosenberg et al. 2018).

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