

## Preface

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This volume in the new series of *Contemporary Jewry* under the general editorship of Samuel Heilman is dedicated to Demographic studies. It is part of the new concept of the Journal that—along with issues dedicated to general themes—will periodically offer the readers articles devoted to a certain more specific thematic or disciplinary focus. The Journal's new format also testifies to a broad effort to join forces by the international scholarly community interested in the social scientific study of Jewry.

The present issue incorporates articles that were initially contemplated for publication in the *Jewish Population Studies (JPS)* series. *JPS* appeared since 1970 at the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics at the A. Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Its 29 issued volumes of monographs and collected papers plus several occasional papers constitute a central point of encounter and discussion for those interested in demography of the Jews. It is hoped that with a periodicity of about one issue per year, *Contemporary Jewry* will continue to address themes and topics related to Jewish demography.

The disciplinary focus of this issue of *Contemporary Jewry*, as of past publications on Jewish population, extends far beyond the formal limits of the demographic discipline. A more accurate definition of our field of interest would probably refer to the comprehensive study of Jewish populations and societies undertaken with the help of quantitative tools of data analysis. The scope is then characterized by an essentially empirical approach to realities relevant to the Jewish collective, defined in the broadest possible sense, with attention given to all manifestations of the human lifecycle, social interactions, mobility, attitudes and norms and, to the extent that this is feasible, also to organizations and social policies.

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Demography is a fundamental existential process inherent in the daily experience of every society at the individual and collective levels. Demography also offers an ever-expanding body of accumulated knowledge, theories and hypotheses, empirical observations usually synthesized in the form of quantitative data, descriptive and analytic tools and techniques, and emerging policy recommendations. Throughout the history of the Jewish people, demographic change was not only a dependent variable but did play an important independent role in shaping cultural, social and geopolitical transformations of most crucial importance. The contemporary Jewish demographic scene is perhaps less dramatically changing than in those past occurrences, but the imperceptible daily impact of demographic change nonetheless carries deep consequences for Jewish corporate and individual existence.

In recent years, a number of lively debates have developed around different aspects of Jewish population processes and their implications for a broader appreciation of the odds of Jewish corporate existence. One hotly debated issue concerns the size and composition of American Jewry and whether it still holds the role of the largest Jewish concentration in the world, a position it has held since the twentieth century's interwar period. Beyond a full array of technical questions that cannot be dealt with here, the undisputable reason for many of these disagreements is the growing difficulty in defining the boundary and contents of the Jewish sub-population. This in turn reflects the patterns of interactions that develop in ever more complex ways between the Jewish collective and other parts of the social universe. A relativization of knowledge is the unavoidable consequence of the many alternative options that are available to define the relevant empirical target, which in turn often affects perceptions of the nature and direction of observed trends.

Another intriguing issue relates to the confrontation between Jewish and Palestinian demographic trends and their implications in the framework of the Middle East conflict. Different rates of growth of Jews and Palestinians reflect the respective fertility, mortality and migration patterns, and the very different age compositions that both ensue and predict these same processes. These changes affect the majority/minority status of the different actors, and impinge upon Israel's likelihood to face the future as a Jewish society, or a democratic society, or both, or neither. Political options and choices and their implications are intertwined with the outcome of demographic patterns in an unfolding, highly charged and non-consensual debate.

In both the American and the Israeli case, these and other questions seem to touch upon sensitivities that extend far beyond a mere matter of numbers, characteristics, or even interpretative paradigms. There seems to be a highly charged connection between quantitative aspects of population change and entrenched perceptions about one's own security, legitimacy, or even survival—hence the nervousness of some of the recent debates on Jewish demography.

One question of interest, in this context, concerns the disciplinary quality and the theoretical and empirical soundness of the materials that constitute the basis for such debates. The quality of data sources, as well as the ability to analyze the data with the appropriate technical tools, can be crucially important in a situation in which there are wide disagreements about the very definition of the collective to be examined. Openness of databases, and repeatability of data processing with the

same or other definitional and theoretical assumptions, should always be one of the prerequisites for such debates to be productive and conducive to an expanded cognitive horizon, rather than to mere disagreement.

The present issue of *Contemporary Jewry* presents a selection of papers some of which were originally discussed at the 2001 World Congress of Jewish Studies and at the 2002 Demographic Initiative Conference—one of the initial activities of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute in Jerusalem. The papers presented here, although limited in number, cover quite a broad spectrum of themes, and provide a general idea of the scope of the entire field—with one significant limitation that needs to be signaled. The general field of demographic studies tends to be oriented towards increasingly sophisticated measurement and inference techniques that require more specialized training. This may not be the preference of the majority of a wider public of readers who are interested in quantitative research without sharing its more technical requirements. Therefore the editors preferred not to select papers, or sections of papers, that were too heavily technical. The materials presented here nevertheless cover a variety of analytic techniques from the simpler and more descriptive through somewhat more sophisticated techniques of demographic analysis, to non-metric multivariate approaches such as those derived from facet theory.

One of the articles deals with the Jewish population in Brazil, three deal with different aspects of the Jewish population in Israel, and one deals with an aspect of the interaction between Jews in the world at large and Israeli society. The global scope of Jewish population spread and redistribution is expressed by the fact that all five articles in this volume deal with one or another aspect of geographical mobility and international migration. This is the case with the formative processes that led to the establishment and growth of Jewish populations in Latin America and in Israel, but also with country-of-origin related differentials in the mode and intensity of fundamental population trends in Israel. Examples of such influences include differentials in fertility levels and patterns of Jewish identity. Another aspect is the different propensity to participate in visiting programs that in some cases may represent the early stage toward subsequent migration.

Inherent in the study of a culturally determined subpopulation like the Jewish collective is also the fact that lifecycle related biological processes and socio-economic transformations do not constitute the only drivers of demographic change. Indeed, each of the articles addresses, in one way or another, the interactions that exist between normative, attitudinal, and ideological variables, and sociodemographic processes such as family formation, growth and composition, or geographical mobility and place of residence. In other words, normative perceptions, preferences and constraints, along with economic rationality, tend to significantly influence decision-making likely to affect the longer-term chances of survivorship of the subpopulation at stake and its profile.

Four of the papers that follow deal with interactions between policies and sociodemographic processes in the realm of international migration, the family, or regarding efforts to encourage stronger and more permanent relations between Jews across the world and the Israeli experience. Policies, it appears, can be the driving

force behind significant social developments, but they can also be determined or modified as a feedback to the same developments.

The following articles are ordered in a sequence from more general to more particular, starting with a general illustration of the profile of Jews in Brazil, followed by a discussion of changing migration patterns to and from Israel, an examination of family size preferences among Israel's Jews, patterns of Jewish identification in Israel following the large scale immigration from the former Soviet Union (FSU), and a new conceptualization of the background and role of the Israeli experience among recent generations of young Jewish adults in different countries.

René Decol analyzes the demographic profile of Brazilian Jewry. Taking advantage of a question on religion in the national census, he traces the evolution of the Jewish population and major socioeconomic characteristics from 1940 to 2000. Decol shows how Jewish immigration differed from the general pattern with the former arriving in Brazil somewhat later in accordance with push factors in the origin countries of Eastern and Central Europe, and the changing possibilities to settle in preferred destinations especially the U.S. A significant decline in immigration since the 1960s has meant that a growing share of Brazilian Jews is native-born. This, coupled with fertility below generational replacement, resulted in the shrinking of the size of the Jewish population. The Jewish immigrants and their descendants tend to reside in the large metropolitan areas mainly in the southeast and south of the country, and within these cities they exhibit high levels of physical segregation. Low fertility has caused severe aging of the Jewish population, with identificational losses among young adults further contributing to a distorted age structure. Assimilation of the Jews is reflected in high rates of interfaith marriage that are unevenly spread both geographically and by gender. At the same time, Brazilian Jews have experienced impressive social and economic achievements.

Although Brazilian Jewry is only one medium sized community, its demographic processes nevertheless closely resemble those among the Jewish Diaspora more generally. In view of this, Yinon Cohen suggests that, if judged by the proportion of Jews living in Israel out of world Jewry, the proportion of Jews vs. Arabs in Israel, and the growth rate of Jews in Israel, Zionism has thus far been a demographic success. A paramount factor of these demographic processes is immigration. Yet, over the first two decades after independence, immigration to Israel was negatively selective with low levels of education. This aspect of immigrants changed after 1967 and through the mid-1990s when the country turned into a preferred destination for highly educated Jews. Interesting in this regard are the American immigrants whose schooling level declined over successive waves. At the same time, although emigration rates from Israel are lower than those of many other immigration countries, Jewish emigrants stem from the more educated segment of the Israeli population. Many of these highly educated people tend to eventually return to Israel. This demographic picture recently became even more ambivalent as immigrants from two of the largest source countries, namely FSU and Ethiopia, had lower educational achievements than their predecessors from the same origins. Likewise, over the last decade the number of immigrants to Israel declined, while there was an increase in the number of Israelis applying for immigrant visas in their destination countries, as well as of Jews in Israel seeking citizenship of European

countries. Since most of the latter are anticipated to remain in the country, and in light of the recent decline of emigrants from Israel, Cohen argues that overall the demographic success of Zionism has penetrated into the early twenty-first century.

Another major component in the demography of Israeli Jews is fertility that, unlike Diaspora Jewry and most western countries, is well above replacement level. After a theoretical discussion of the determinants of fertility as a background, and utilizing recently collected data, Sergio DellaPergola analyzes fertility patterns and attitudes among Jews in Israel. Differences in fertility by geographic origin and educational and economic attainment have largely diminished. By contrast, religiosity plays an important role in both actual and intended fertility. Nevertheless, even at the secular end of the self-assessed religiosity, the preference for number of children resembles the present Israeli total fertility rate of 2.8. Over the last 30 years no significant change was observed in actual fertility although the personally intended as well as the ideal number of children have slightly increased. The modal choice of number of children is three. Given their preferences, it is suggested that women would propend to have somewhat more children than men. Overall, the numbers of intended and appropriate children are closely matched; if inconsistency exists, it more often involves the intended number of children being higher than the number considered most appropriate. Likewise, comparisons between the actual and the intended number of children attests to two different trajectories in the Israeli Jewish population with one limiting family growth and the other permitting the course of fertility with limited intervention. On the basis of these findings, DellaPergola predicts the continuation of the recently prevailing Jewish fertility levels in Israel.

A complementary aspect of the immigration of Jews to Israel is their religio-ethnic identification. Shlomit Levy focuses on the largest group of recent immigrants, namely from the FSU. Utilizing data from two comparable surveys from the early and late 1990s, she found that these immigrants have lower levels of identification than do their veteran Israeli counterparts of European–American origin, that they are less definite in their Jewish identification, and are less concerned with different Jewish identity components. Since the number of Soviet immigrants is high, comprising approximately one-fifth of the Israeli Jewish population, they are largely responsible for the increase in the proportion of the non-religious group and have somewhat weakened the overall level of Jewish identification components in both the private and public spheres. Likewise, historical and religio-cultural components, such as the foundation of Israel, Hebrew culture, Jewish holidays and the Holocaust, have less effect on the Jewish identification of the Soviet immigrants than on that of veteran Israelis. Despite the great similarity between the two groups in their ranking of the various components of Jewish identity, veteran Israelis ranked the establishment of the state of Israel first while the Soviet immigrants gave this position to the Holocaust. However, the structure of Jewish identity, which was explored by facet analysis, suggests that the Jewish identification of veteran Israelis is largely shaped by religio-traditional components while that of the immigrants is mainly influenced by historical events. Whether this is, indeed, the long run trajectory of the Soviet immigrants or, as they

gain seniority, will converge with the patterns of the veteran Israelis, is still an open question in this rather early stage of their absorption into the country.

Besides permanent immigration, Diaspora Jews and Israel are connected by tourism. Accordingly, Erik Cohen introduces two new measures of Jewish identity: market penetration of educational youth tours to Israel, and rates of participation in a second tour. Coupled with three other widely used indicators—endogamy rates, day school enrolment, and tourism to Israel—and through a technique drawn from facet theory, he classifies thirteen countries, including those with the largest Jewish populations, into three major groups. The first group, comprised, among others, of the U.S. and France, is characterized by low levels of market penetration and day school enrolment but a high tendency for multiple tours, hence they have a small but strong core of Jewish commitment. The second group, comprising some Latin American countries, Oceania, and the UK, has high rates of market penetration and day school enrolment but a low incidence of participation in multiple trips to Israel. A third profile, which characterizes mainly FSU Jews, has low rates for all three indicators. Still other countries, with significant Jewish presence, such as Argentina or Canada, exhibit other unique combinations of participation rates. These findings suggest some ordering of the countries examined but at the same time attest to the complexity of Jewish identification which is partly determined by specific historical circumstances and country-context factors.

The five articles in this volume of *Contemporary Jewry* thus concern themselves with somewhat eclectic demographic and identificational topics covering different areas of Jewish life. These topics are complementary and, given an appropriate theoretical framework and comparison with non-Jewish populations, provide insights into some unique characteristics of Jews including international migration, fertility patterns and family size, and the multi-faceted nature of Jewish identification. The papers, without any pretension of systematic coverage of the field, offer a sufficiently broad cross-section for the reader to be able to appreciate the diversity of topics and their relevance to a wide range of purely research oriented or policy oriented issues.