Probing Changing Patterns in American Jewish Life

Center to Explore New Areas

What are Jewish families like now, and what problems do they face? What impact does Jewish education have on Jewish identity? How can Jewish community planners meet the needs of the very young and the elderly, the poor and the isolated? Which short-range and long-range goals would most enhance Jewish life in the United States?

During the next five years, the Center for Modern Jewish Studies will initiate crucial new research and continuing education programs as well as amplifying and expanding its operations on a number of important fronts," announced Director Gary A. Tobin. "Our goal is to become a national resource, serving as a think tank for Jewish communal institutions and for the general academic community."

The Center's Five-Year Plan calls for increased activity in several areas, including independent and sponsored research, continuing education, publications, community consultations and planning, and the recruitment and training of scholars and planners.

"Our knowledge of contemporary Jewish communities has depended, thus far, on the uneven information contained in a variety of individual city studies and on qualitative research conducted by independent scholars. We must systematically explore and evaluate, on a national level, how Jewish communities behave, what their problems and needs are.

Simultaneously, we will work actively to disseminate information we gather; we are planning conferences and workshops for academics, Jewish community professionals, and the general public, as well as a new publications series," explained Professor Tobin.

"In accordance with its original mandate, initiated by the founder and first director of the Center, Professor Marshall Sklare, the Center should contribute to the level of scholarly research on American Jews while assisting the Jewish community in addressing the social policy and planning issues it faces," Tobin added.

Original research will include both innovative national studies collecting information on broad trends in American Jewish life and sponsored research projects answering focused questions for cooperating agencies. In both these areas, the Center will carefully control the design of the studies and the quality of their implementation.

A Program of Continuing Communications

In addition to continuing the publication of large-scale research findings through books, the Center will also release a daily newsletter summarizing important recent research findings and key scholarly articles on ongoing research.

Center personnel will continue to teach at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, enriching course offerings in the sociology and communal functioning of American Jews.

Marilyn and Maurice M. Cohen, who have given a $1 million gift to the Center for Modern Jewish Studies in the form of an endowment, will be honored by Brandeis University at a dedication of the Center in the Spring of 1987.
Responding to Change

by Gary A. Tobin

In a time of social and political ferment in the 1960s, Bob Dylan wrote a foreboding lyric, announcing that "The Times They Are A-Changin." Most of his political visions have been turned upside down in the 1980s, and the social order he predicted never emerged. But he was certainly right about one thing: "The Times They Are A-Changin."

For American Jews, the shifts have been dramatic, and sometimes radical. In a generation or less, the fabric of Jewish life in the United States has undergone profound changes. The typical Jewish family, two parents and one or more children, is now a distinct minority of all Jewish households. Together singles, single parents divorced, childless couples, the widowed, and parents whose children have grown and left home far outnumber the households with parents and children.

A majority of Jewish women with children now work outside the home for pay, either part-time or full-time, including substantial proportions with children under two years of age. Women are far more likely than a generation ago to get divorced, often remarrying and creating new family constellations. Jews are marrying later, and having their children later. It looks as though they are having as many children as prior generations is the United States, but Jewish birth rates have been low for some time. At the American population grows, the Jewish population remains static in size and comprises a decreasing proportion of the people in the United States.

"Contemporary Jewish life begs for high quality research and its dissemination to the people who can best use it."

The landscape of Jewish life has changed as well. The Jewish populations of Atlanta, Phoenix, Denver, and other Sunbelt communities have been booming, especially in Florida. Jewish neighborhoods are less densely settled in most cities than in the 1950s, and Jews are far more likely to live among non-Jews. Many Jews live on the geographic fringes or may be totally removed from Jewish neighborhoods.

While most Jews continue to marry, other Jews, the proportion of intermarriages grew substantially in the past 25 years. The rate of increase seems to have slowed recently, but intermarried couples comprise a large segment of Jewish population. Such couples often rear their children as Jews, live among Jews, and observe some Jewish religious practices.

Jewish institutions and organizations have been slow to respond to these and many other basic changes in Jewish life. Demographic shifts have been accompanied by attitudinal and behavioral changes in social, religious, and political life. Often institutions and organizations find themselves unable to cope with the world that is evolving around them, for the change is constant and it is extremely difficult to keep pace.

Many Jewish organizations and Institutions feel the severe constraints of fiscal pressure. Some are simply beset by inertia, but most are eager to respond to the changing environment around them and are demanding information to help them plan.

"Contemporary Jewish life begs for high quality research and its dissemination to the people who can best use it."

As Jewish organizations and institutions have become more aware of the kaleidoscopic nature of the changes around them, the need for information has become recognized as a critical dimension of efficient and creative management and planning. Change cannot be addressed if the nature and scope of the issues are unclear.

The Center for Modern Jewish Studies is a major research resource for the American Jewish community. It provides vital information, addressing a wide variety of issues, Jewish education, service delivery, fundraising, and leadership development are among the key areas of research for the Center. The Center conducts survey research, sponsors conferences, engages in continuing education, and publishes important research notes, articles, and books.

Contemporary Jewish life begs for high quality research and its dissemination to the people who can best use it. The Center is a bridge between the scholarly world and the Jewish communal arena. The Center is proud to play this important role. We cannot predict change. But perhaps we can help guide its direction and manage its consequences if we are better informed.

Focus On Faculty

Sylvia Barrack Fishman, research associate at the Center, is currently researching transformations of the Jewish family in America, changes in the role of Jewish women, older Jews, and Jewish education. She edits Centerpieces and other Center publications. The recipient of a Ph.D. from Washington University, she has taught at Washington University and at the University of Massachusetts/Boston. Dr. Fishman previously served as director of public relations at Boston University School of Law and as director of Generations Growing Together, a social service program for the Hillel Council of Greater Boston.

Arnold Gurin, professor emeritus at Brandeis' Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare, will enrich the Center's offerings as adjunct professor. Professor Gurin served as dean of the Heller School from 1971-1976, and was the Maurice B. Hester Professor of Social Administration. He has served as a consultant and has directed research projects for many organizations, including studies of Jewish Federation manpower for the Council of Jewish Federations; Community Representation in Community Action Programs for the Office of Economic Opportunity; Community Organization Curriculum Project for the Office of Social Work Education; and Cost Analysis of Day Care Services for the United States Children's Bureau. Among his books, monographs, and articles, Professor Gurin has written Community Organization and Social Planning and Community Relations Aspects of Communal Service Programs.

Sylvia Barrack Fishman is Modern Jewish Ethics: Theory and Practice, and a forthcoming book is entitled Jewish Legal Concepts and Values. He is presently engaged in writing a major work on the Philosophical Foundations of Jewish Ethics. Before joining the Brandeis University faculty, he was a professor of philosophy at Ohio State University for many years, and he has served as visiting professor of philosophy at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at Bar Ilan University. The Lown School is composed of NEH, the Horstein Program, and the Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

Allan Gal, senior research associate at the Center, received a joint Ph.D., with distinction, from Brandeis in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and History of American Civilization. He has taught and lectured in Israel and the United States on American society, politics, and culture. Currently on leave from Ben Gurion University, he has held teaching and research positions at Tel Aviv University and Boston Hebrew College, as well as Brandeis. Dr. Gal's books and articles include major works on Justice Louis Brandeis and on David Ben Gurion. He is currently doing research toward a book entitled The Jewish State in the Mind of American Jews: 1937-1951.

Leon A. Jick, professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, joins the Center as adjunct professor. Previously at Brandeis he was director of the Lown Graduate Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies for 13 years, chairman of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS) and Philip W. Lown Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Brandeis University. He is president of the Association for Jewish Studies and is a founder and member of the Executive Committee of the Institute for Judaism and Contemporary Thought in Israel. Professor Fox is the author of over a hundred articles, reviews and monographs. His book Kant's Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals is a widely used text. His most recently published book is Modern Jewish Ethics: Theory and Practice, and a forthcoming book is entitled Jewish Legal Concepts and Values. He is presently engaged in writing a major work on the Philosophical Foundations of Jewish Ethics. Before joining the Brandeis University faculty, he was a professor of philosophy at Ohio State University for many years, and he has served as visiting professor of philosophy at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at Bar Ilan University. The Lown School is composed of NEH, the Horstein Program, and the Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

Martin Fox is director of the Lown School of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, chairman of the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS), and Philip W. Lown Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Brandeis University. He is president of the Association for Jewish Studies and is a founder and member of the Executive Committee of the Institute for Judaism and Contemporary Thought in Israel. Professor Fox is the author of over a hundred articles, reviews and monographs. His book Kant's Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals is a widely used text. His most recently published book is Modern Jewish Ethics: Theory and Practice, and a forthcoming book is entitled Jewish Legal Concepts and Values. He is presently engaged in writing a major work on the Philosophical Foundations of Jewish Ethics. Before joining the Brandeis University faculty, he was a professor of philosophy at Ohio State University for many years, and he has served as visiting professor of philosophy at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at Bar Ilan University. The Lown School is composed of NEH, the Horstein Program, and the Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

Centerpieces is a biannual publication of the Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University.

ISSN 0887-1639

Sylvia Barrack Fishman, Editor

Gary A. Tobin, Director

Lawrence Stemberg, Assistant Director
the Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870, and other books and articles. He has served as a member of the board of trustees of the Boston Hebrew College, the Commission on Education of the Council of CJP, the Board of Governors of the Center for Contemporary Jewish of The Hebrew University, and the Academic Advisory Committee of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. He is currently a consultant to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and a member of its Museum Design Committee, and a member of the Jewish Affairs Commission of the American Jewish Committee.

Robert Lerman, director of research and senior research associate at the Heller School, serves the Center as adjunct professor. An economist with a specialty in youth and employment, Dr. Lerman was previously a Special Assistant for Youth and Welfare Policy for the United States Department of Labor. He has been a research associate at University of Wisconsin's Department of Economics and at the Brookdale Institute of Gerontology in Jerusalem and a staff economist for the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress. The author of numerous articles, monographs, papers, and books, Dr. Lerman earned his Ph.D. from MIT and graduated Brandeis University Magna Cum Laude with Honors. He has been awarded fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Labor and in 1985 won First Prize in a National Essay Contest on "An Implementation Strategy for Reforming the Nation's Welfare Programs," sponsored by the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies.

Peter Y. Mudding, head of the Division for the Sociological Study of Jews in the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, served as a visiting professor at the Center during 1984-1985 and continues as an adjunct professor at the Center. Dr. Mudding, who is associate professor in the Departments of Political Science and Contemporary Jewry at The Hebrew University, is editor of Studies in Contemporary Jewry, a hardcover annual published by Oxford University Press, New York. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University and has been awarded several fellowships, including a Ford Foundation Research Grant. He has published numerous articles in professional journals as well as five books, including From Assimilation to Group Survival: A Political and Sociological Study of an Australian Jewish Community (1968), What in Israel: Political Organization and Government in a New Society (1972), and Jews in an Australian Society (1973). Dr. Mudding has recently completed a new book entitled The Foundations of Community: The Relationship between Jews in Israel and the World Jewish Community (1979), and has written widely on a broad variety of topics in the Jewish social sciences, and has served as a consultant for communal organizations in Israel, Europe, Latin America, and across the United States.

Bernard Reisman, director of the Horstman Program and professor in Jewish Communal Studies, is adjunct professor at the Center. Dr. Reisman has taught at Brandeis University since 1970, where he received his Ph.D. from the Heller School. He is interested both in academic and practical issues in Jewish communal life. He has written and lectured widely on a broad variety of topics in the Jewish social sciences, and has served as a consultant for communal organizations in Israel, Europe, Latin America, and across the United States. He is a co-author of "Jewish Education in a Multicultural Society: The Challenge of the 1990s," published by The Free Press, Macmillan, Inc., in cooperation with the Center.

Joseph Reimer, who recently joined the Benjamin S. Horstem Program in Jewish Communal Service as assistant professor, will serve as adjunct professor at the Center. Dr. Reimer has an extensive background in Judaica and education: he holds an B.Ed. in Human Development from Harvard Graduate School of Education and an M.A. from Brandeis in Contemporary Jewish Studies and has also studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A research psychologist, he is particularly interested in theories of moral development. His publications include books and articles on the moral development of Kibbutz adolescents, the moral atmosphere of democratic schools, and the relationship between moral education and moral action.

Gerald Shustock, who comes to the Horstem Program this fall as lecturer with rank of assistant professor in Jewish Communal Service, also joins the Center staff as adjunct professor. Dr. Shustock has taught most recently at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, where he was director of special programs at the School of Continuing Education. He also served as academic director of the Summer Seminar in Israel on Contemporary Jewish Issues at The Melton Centre for Education in the Diaspora. Dr. Shustock holds a joint Ph.D. in Sociology and in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University.

Lawrence Sternberg, assistant director of the Center, is interested in gathering information which can help social planners enhance those internal forces capable of binding the Jewish community together. Sternberg, who holds degrees from Brandeis University in Jewish Communal Service and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, does research on the relationship between Jews and the general society and teaches an "Introduction to Jewish Community Relations" course in the Horstem Program; he has also taught courses on American Jewish history, modern Jewish thought, and the destruction of European Jewry. He and Professor Tobis have collaborated as coeditors of a reader entitled Changing Jewish Life: Service Delivery and Social Policy.

Loeb G. Sacks, lecturer with the rank of assistant professor in the Horstem Program, will be adjunct professor at the Center. Dr. Sacks, who holds a Ph.D. from the Union Graduate School and an M.S.S.A. from Case Western Reserve University, teaches professional methods seminars and directs field work placements of Horstem students in Jewish communal service organizations. He has published and published widely on continuing education and staff development and has served as a consultant for many social service agencies.

Stephen J. Whitefield, chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies and Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, is an adjunct professor at the Center. In addition to articles in scholarly and professional journals, he has published four books, including Into the Dark: Hannah Arendt and Totalitarianism (1985), which won the Kayden Prize for the best book published in the humanities by an American academic press; Voices of Jacob, Hands of Essau: Jews in American Life and Thought (1984); and A Critical American: The Politics of Dwight Macdonald (1984). Professor Whithfield, whose primary interests are in 20th-century American politics and culture and American Jewish history, was Fulbright Visiting Lecturer in American Studies at The Hebrew University. He is a contributing editor of Modern and has been book review editor of American Jewish History.
The Center's New Director

"The Center for Modern Jewish Studies must become an information broker, a translator, gathering and reinterpreting research so it can effect important changes in community planning and service delivery," says Gary A. Tobin.

Tobin, dynamic new director of the Center for Modern Jewish Studies, has formulated his goals for the Center through first-hand experience. As the designer and executor of planning reports in Jewish communities from coast to coast, he has witnessed both the "excellent quality of Jewish professionals and laypeople in the field" and the "bottlenecks which delay the coordination of research and prevent it from being usable in the real world."

"The Center should attract outstanding faculty and staff and support their research on the contemporary American Jewish community," says Tobin. "It should identify desperately needed nationwide studies and collate data from available research, then make all information available to community workers on the frontline."

"We are fortunate, as we seek to implement our ambitious goals, to have the enthusiastic cooperation of Brandeis University, especially of Trustee Maurice Cohen," adds Tobin. "We look forward to his continuing leadership in this area."

"Our studies will ask not only why large numbers of Jews are not involved, but also what institutions can do to become a more intrinsic part of their lives."

In addition to his goals for the Center, Tobin, whose high energy, outgoing style is unusual in the academic world, has a broad range of personal research interests. Tobin, who earned his doctorate in City and Regional Planning from the University of California at Berkeley, was director of the Urban Administration Program at Washington University before coming to Brandeis University. He has published numerous articles on urban transportation, housing, and community development and has written extensively on various aspects of Jewish communal planning.

"We need to understand the ways in which Jewish service delivery systems in the United States are changing," says Tobin. "Our research can tell us about Jewish people with unmet needs—and about services which no longer have a substantial clientele.

"We must learn more about the role that Jewish organizations can play in nurturing Jewish identity and Jewish community involvement. Our studies will ask not only why large numbers of Jews are not involved in institutional Jewish life, but also what institutions can do to become a more intrinsic part of the lives of greater numbers of Jews."

"In order for Jewish philanthropic organizations to thrive and pursue their community service more effectively, we need greater understanding of patterns of philanthropy: why and for what causes are people willing to give their time and money?"

"In a different area, adds Tobin, "We need a better understanding of the continuing impact of perceived anti-Semitism in the lives of American Jews."

"Our research should aim to help the Jewish community retain its vitality," he says. "Jewish communities throughout history have had a special character, an intense and exceptional nature. We do not want to lose that exceptional, that cutting edge: Through scientific national studies we can accurately chart contemporary Jewish behavior patterns, by disseminating the results we can help community planners enhance areas of strength and alleviate problems facing Jews in America today."

American Jews: A Reader

A comprehensive reader on topics in American Jewish sociology, American Jews includes thoughtful, readable essays by more than a dozen contemporary writers. Used extensively at colleges and for adult education courses, the book explores subjects such as social history and group identity, social characteristics, the impact of family, community, and Jewish education upon identity, the evolution of religious life in America, the interaction of Jews and Gentiles; the problem of intermarriage; and the relationship between American Jews and Israel. Professor Sklare's introductions and notes illustrate the essays and place them in a meaningful context.

Understanding American Jewry

This innovative volume represents a uniquely systematic gathering of state-of-the-art research in a spectrum of areas most important to American Jewish life. The foremost scholars of contemporary Jewish review existing studies and delineate future research needs in fields such as Jewish identity, religious life, education, family, population research, immigration to the United States, organizational and community research, intergroup relations, and community structure. Professor Sklare's essay, "On the Preparation of a Sociology of American Jewry," serves both as an overview to the field and an agenda for creating an American Jewish sociology with the scope and standing of more classical areas of Jewish studies.

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