Maurice and Marilyn Cohen
Center for Modern Jewish Studies

The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is devoted to the study of contemporary American Jewish life. The Center has become a national resource, serving as a think-tank and providing policy-oriented research findings to Jewish communal institutions, the academic community, and Jewish communities in North America. The Cohen Center's research focuses on diverse issues, such as Jewish family life, intermarriage and assimilation, Jewish education and identity, Jewish philanthropy and voluntarism, antisemitism in America, the relationship between Israeli and American Jewish communities, and social service needs in the Jewish community.

The Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University was established in 1980 as a result of a challenge grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. In 1986, Maurice and Marilyn Cohen provided an endowment gift to the Center which now bears their names. As part of the Philip W. Lown School of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, the Center is housed near two complementary departments: the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, an academic program granting both undergraduate and graduate degrees; and the Benjamin S. Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, a Master's degree program for Jewish social service professionals.
Cohen Center Faculty and Staff
Gary A. Tobin, Director, Associate Professor of Jewish Community Research and Planning
Marshall Sklare, Founding Director, Klutznick Family Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies and Sociology
Lawrence Sternberg, Associate Director, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Perlmutter Institute for Jewish Advocacy, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service
Sylvia Barack Fishman, Senior Research Associate
Mordechai Rimor, Research Associate
Gabriel Berger, Research Fellow
Sylvia J. Riese, Executive Secretary
Peter Y. Medding, Director, Division for the Sociological Study of Jewry, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor

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Earl Raab, Director, Perlmutter Institute for Jewish Advocacy, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Joseph Reimer, Assistant Professor, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Bernard Reisman, Director, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Susan L. Shevitz, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish Education, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Gerald L. Showstack, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Stephen J. Whitfield, Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, American Studies Department, Cohen Center Adjunct Professor
Cohen Center Publications

The Cohen Center is an active publisher, making it possible for Jewish communal professionals and lay leaders to receive the most up-to-date information available about American Jewish life. The Center’s publications include Research Notes, Policy and Planning Papers, Research Reports, and books on a wide variety of topics. Research Notes are brief, easy to read newsletters which highlight the most exciting recent findings revealed by ongoing research at the Cohen Center. Policy and Planning Papers are in-depth studies, which provide critical information for policy decisions and planning. Research Reports are substantial, innovative, and systematic studies focusing on specific populations or concerns in American Jewish life. From January 1989 through December 1990 the following publications were completed.

Research Notes

Gabriel Berger, Can We Increase American Jewish Volunteering?

Gabriel Berger, Is American Jewish Voluntarism Lower Than Average?

Mordechai Rimor, Feelings and Reactions to Intermarriage

Mordechai Rimor, Intermarriage and Jewish Identity

Policy and Planning Papers

Sylvia Barack Fishman, Jewish Households, Jewish Homes: Serving American Jews in the 1990s

Gary A. Tobin, Israel and American Jewish Philanthropy

Gary A. Tobin, Using Research in Jewish Community Planning

Gary A. Tobin, Lawrence K. Ellis Milder, Lawrence Sternberg, and Sanford Seltzer, Synagogue Affiliation Among Reform Jews

Research Reports


Lawrence Sternberg, A Profile of Hillel Leaders
Publications by Cohen Center Faculty

In addition to having its own publications series, Cohen Center faculty are actively involved in publishing major articles in books, journals and magazines, as well as producing planning reports for Jewish organizations. Below is a list of articles by Cohen Center faculty published from January 1989 through December 1990.


Sylvia Barack Fishman and Gary A. Tobin, Greater Dallas Jewish Community Study: Demographic Profile; Greater Dallas Jewish Community Study: Human Service Needs Assessment; and Greater Dallas Jewish Community Study: Community Development, Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, August 1990.


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Gary A. Tobin, Greater Dallas Jewish Community Study: Philanthropy; and Greater Dallas Jewish Community Study: Executive Summary, Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, August 1990.

Conference on Intermarriage

The Cohen Center periodically sponsors conferences which focus on specific topics of concern to the American Jewish community. In October, 1990, a conference on Intermarriage was held at the New York office of the American Jewish Committee, which, together with the George and Beatrice Sherman Family Charitable Trust, co-sponsored the conference with the Cohen Center.

Cohen Center faculty prepared a Summary Report for the Conference entitled, Intermarriage and American Jews Today: New Findings and Policy Implications. The Report served as the basis for discussions for the conference and articulated policies for Jewish communal institutions to pursue in relation to intermarried households. The Report was subsequently reprinted for wider distribution to Jewish communal leaders and organizations.

Course Offerings

Faculty at the Cohen Center teach at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, enriching course offerings in the study of contemporary American Jewish life. Below are some of the courses offered by Cohen Center faculty during 1989 and 1990.

American Jewish Life
Jewish Advocacy: A Practicum
Jewish Community Relations
Jewish Community Research and Planning
Methods in Jewish Community Research
The Sociology of the American Jewish Community

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Cohen Center Data Bank

Since 1986 the Cohen Center has been obtaining quantitative data from demographic studies of Jewish populations throughout the United States. These studies, conducted by scholars and funded by the Jewish federations in local communities, are an invaluable resource for information and research on the contemporary Jewish community. In addition the Center has collected qualitative information concerning Jewish attitudes toward philanthropy and voluntarism, Israel, and antisemitism in America from more than 100 focus group interviews and more than 200 personal interviews with Jewish leaders.

Below is a listing of the Jewish demographic studies currently in the Cohen Center's Data Bank. An asterisk has been placed next to those studies which have been added to the Data Bank during the period under review.

*Jewish Federation of South Broward, South Broward Florida Jewish Community Survey, 1990.
Bay Area Jewish Federations, Bay Area Jewish Community Study, 1988.

Palm Beach Jewish Federation, The Jewish Community of Broward County, 1987.


Jewish Federation of Atlantic City, A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Atlantic County, 1986.

Kansas City Jewish Federation, A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Greater Kansas City, 1986.

New Orleans Jewish Federation, A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of New Orleans, 1986.


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St. Louis Jewish Federation, A Demographic and Attitudinal Study of the Jewish Community of St. Louis, 1982.


Survey Research

The Cohen Center is regularly involved in survey research in the Jewish Community. In addition to initiating its own studies, the Center obtains and utilizes quantitative data about North American Jews from all sources, including federation-sponsored Jewish population studies, and academic, commercial, and media-sponsored surveys. Below is a list of survey research projects initiated by the Center during 1989 and 1990.

B’nai B’rith Hillel Leaders

In cooperation with B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations national Center for Campus Study the Cohen Center conducted interviews of 100 Jewish student leaders from 48 campuses nationwide. The questionnaire included information concerning the students’ background, Jewish identity, occupational interests, attitudes toward Hillel and the Jewish community, and political involvement and behavior.
Jewish Leaders and Philanthropy

As part of a project on leadership and philanthropy the Cohen Center is conducting in-depth personal interviews with Jewish communal leaders. These surveys cover a variety of topics including their opinions regarding the most significant problems facing American Jewry today and their levels of involvement as volunteers and philanthropists.

Jewish Community Relations Professionals

Community relations professionals from field offices of national community relations agencies and in local Jewish community relations councils were surveyed regarding their personal and professional assessments of the threats to Jewish survival in America. Included in the surveys were questions regarding assimilation, intermarriage, church-state separation, and antisemitism.

Jewish Congressional Leaders

The Center surveyed Jewish members of the 100th Congress as part of an overall study of politics and American Jews. Questions included political experience and views, attitudes and opinions about Jewish life in the United States, the State of Israel, antisemitism in America, and Jewish identity and Jewish background.

Project Renewal

The Cohen Center collaborated with Dr. Arnold Gurin and Dr. David Rosen in surveying Jewish Federation executives on their perceptions of and experiences with Project Renewal. The results of this survey will assist in identifying those key elements in Project Renewal which may be incorporated in future Israel-related philanthropic initiatives.

Grants and Cooperative Research

United States Information Agency

The Center received a cultural exchange grant from the United States Information Agency for its proposal entitled, “The United States and Israel: Forty Years After.” In the fall of 1988 the program brought twelve young Israeli political leaders to the United States for a two week period, and took a similar group of American political leaders to Israel in the Spring of 1989. The program was designed to provide an intensive educational experience for young leaders, informing them about the ideals and realities of the respective democracies. The tours emphasized the differences in political involvement, the manner in which government functions in the areas of social welfare and economic development, and the role of the voluntary sector in each society.

International B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations, Center for Campus Study

The Cohen Center worked with B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations’ Center for Campus Study to explore issues regarding the provision of services to the diverse constituency which Hillel Foundations serve. The first component of this study is a Report based on a survey of Hillel leaders from across the United States.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Committee on the Jewish Family

At the request of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations’ Committee on the Jewish Family, the Center completed a review of data concerning demographic and religious characteristics of Reform Jews. The topics in the analysis
include: synagogue affiliation and preference; drop-out rates among affiliated Reform Jews; age, marital status, and family composition of Reform Jews; and the relation of age, marital status, and family composition to synagogue membership.

**Greater Boston Bureau of Jewish Education**

The Cohen Center worked collaboratively with the Greater Boston Bureau of Jewish Education in undertaking the first in a series of Boston Area Jewish School Censuses. The Census provided information for assessing the nature and size of Boston area Jewish schools, and planning for the future. A report on enrollment and program trends based on responses to the Census will also be prepared for distribution to schools and those interested in Jewish education in Boston.

**Lectures and Conferences**

From January 1989 through December 1990 members of the Cohen Center staff have delivered addresses at academic conferences and throughout the Jewish community. Below are selected topics and audiences.

- “Brandeis University and Jewish Communal Service,” Adenauer Exchange Program, American Jewish Committee.

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- “Impact of Feminism on American Jewish Life,” Brandeis University–University on Wheels, Washington, D.C., and Broward, Brevard, Boca Raton, and Deerfield Beach, Florida.
- “Inter-City Mobility Patterns Among American Jews,” Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem.
“Jewish Political Behavior and Public Opinion,”
Presentation for Hornstein Program in Jewish
Communal Service, Brandeis University.

“Jewish Women: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. Literary
and Sociological Views,” Hadassah Educational
Conferences: Western Massachusetts Region, Central
Florida Region, Northern New England Region.

“Needs Assessment for Jewish Child Care,” and “Political
Implications of Antisemitism,” Minneapolis Jewish
Federation.

“Portraits of Women in Contemporary American Jewish
Fiction,” Brandeis University—University on Wheels,
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Boca Raton, Del Ray, and
Orlando, Florida.

“Preference for Jewish Sponsored Services,” Association for
Jewish Community Organization Professionals,
Western States Conference.

“A Profile of Hillel Leadership,” 1989 General Assembly of
the Council of Jewish Federations.

“The Relationship Between Visiting Israel and Attachment
to Israel Among Hillel Leaders,” Conference on Kibbutz
and Israel Experience, Project for Kibbutz Studies and
Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, and the
Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies.

“The Role of Israel in American Jewish Philanthropy,” City
Director’s Conference, State of Israel Bonds.

“What We Know About American Jews: A Factual Profile,”
Wexner Foundation, Winter Institute.

Public Service

Cohen Center staff provide information to a wide range of
Jewish organizations and agencies and share findings with
academic colleagues. Requests are received from Jewish and
other non-profit organizations, government agencies, the
Jewish and general press, academic institutions, and the
Jewish public. Below is a selected listing of the hundreds
of institutions requesting assistance during 1989 and 1990.

American Jewish Committee, New York
Associated Press, Boston
Atlanta Jewish Times
Baltimore Jewish Times
B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations, Washington, D.C.
B’nai B’rith Monthly
B’nai B’rith Women, Washington, D.C.
The Boston Globe
Bureau of Jewish Education, Boston
Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Boston
Connections: A Program for Unaffiliated Families,
Randolph, New Jersey
Council of Jewish Federations, New York
Connecticut College, Department of Sociology
Detroit Jewish News
Esh Ha-Torah, New York
Haifa University, Departments of Education and Sociology
Hamilton College, Department of Sociology
Harvard University, Project for Kibbutz Studies
Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University
of Jerusalem
The Jerusalem Post
The Jewish Advocate, Boston
Jewish Education Service of North America
Student Research Assistants

The Center has an active program involving graduate and undergraduate students as research assistants. This program provides much needed financial assistance to Brandeis students. Each year more than a dozen students work with Center staff on a variety of research projects. Undergraduates may apply for work–study positions at the Center through the University financial aid office. The Center has also employed graduate students from the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, the Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare, and the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.