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Wandering Jews: Global Jewish Migration

The Jewish Role in American Life

An Annual Review of the Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life

Wandering Jews: Global Jewish Migration

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An Annual Review of the Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life

Volume 18

Steven J. Ross, *Editor*
Steven J. Gold, *Guest Editor*
Lisa Ansell, *Associate Editor*

Published by the Purdue University Press for
the USC Casden Institute for the Study of the
Jewish Role in American Life

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Production Editor, Marilyn Lundberg

Cover photo supplied by Steven J. Gold.
Booth for the Israeli Division of the United Jewish Fund, Los Angeles Jewish Festival in Rancho Park, California, June 2, 1991.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-61249-667-2
Paperback ISBN: 978-1-55753-998-4
ePDF ISBN: 978-1-61249-620-7
ePUB ISBN: 978-1-55753-999-1

Published by Purdue University Press
West Lafayette, Indiana
www.press.purdue.edu
pupress@purdue.edu

Printed in the United States of America.

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Foreword

Jews have been in motion for thousands of years, moving across continents, nations, and cities—sometimes voluntarily, often because there was no alternative. How Jews moved, where they moved, what they experienced, and the ways they dealt with their new surroundings is the subject of this innovative volume of The Annual Review. Our guest editor, Steven Gold, has assembled a series of seven cutting-edge essays that examine multiple aspects of Jewish global migration in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Placing their work within the relatively new field of migration studies, our contributing authors reveal that while Jews may share a common religion, their patterns of migration and acculturation were as different as the many nations from which they came. As volume editor Steven Gold notes in his Introduction, the essays are divided into two categories. Several authors explore the hardships Jews faced in migrating to the United States and other countries, while others focus on the problems of adjusting to life in new lands or new cities within the same country. We learn how survivors and refugees in postwar Europe worked with Jewish aid groups to navigate the difficult process of obtaining visas to move the United States. Another essay traces the diverging experiences of Jews migrating to the United States from the former Soviet Union, Israel, and Latin America. Jews who remained in Europe faced their own particular difficulties. One essay focuses on the myriad experiences of Jews who migrated to Paris, Brussels, and Antwerp, while a final essay on migration patterns reveals how the Israeli government attempted to lure highly skilled Jewish émigrés back to their homeland.

Once in the United States, Jewish immigrants encountered a remarkably wide array of experiences. Not only did Jew have to adjust to living alongside Christians, but in the case of Polish Jews, they also had to adjust to living alongside German Jews who often treated them with as much disdain as their American Christian neighbors. Iranian Jews also encountered difficulties in their new land; some were caused by the contempt of Ashkenazi Jews, while

other problems emerged from the Iranian community's tendency to isolate themselves from others, Jews and non-Jews alike.

Finally, we learn that internal migration could pose just as many problems as external migration. American Jewish academics who came from large cities with vibrant Jewish life often found it difficult to move their families to college towns such as East Lansing, Michigan, which lacked a Jewish infrastructure.

Taken collectively, the essays in this volume offer new looks at the multiple experiences of Jews as they attempted to immigrate and then adjust to life in a new homeland or new city.

I wish to thank our guest editor, Steven J. Gold, for helping to make this volume a reality. I also wish to thank Marilyn Lundberg Melzian for her wonderful work as our volume's production editor.

Steven J. Ross
Myron and Marian Casden Director
Professor of History

Editorial Introduction: Recent Advancements in Jewish Migration Studies

by Steven J. Gold

A long-standing topic of research, the study of Jewish migration, has recently revealed new levels of growth and innovation. The increased visibility of diverse forms of migration on a global scale—from refugees and labor migrants to transnational entrepreneurs—has contributed to enhanced interest in the subject.

This book brings attention to compelling examples of new scholarship in this field. While available space precludes an exhaustive evaluation of the reasons underlying this development, this introduction reviews three fundamental factors that have contributed to the growth and intellectual expansion in the study of Jewish migration. First is the expansion and broadening of migration studies in general that has occurred in recent decades. Second is the increase in financial and institutional support for Jewish studies. Finally, a third reason for the field's growth is ongoing instances of Jewish migration—both within and across national borders—that compel immigrant-aid organizations and migration scholars to learn about and assist their peripatetic landsmen.

A number of leading scholars have reflected on the transformation of migration studies, noting that the topic is currently examined by a wider range of academic disciplines than ever before.[1] The creation of diverse and innovative approaches to the topic has been widely celebrated.[2] As a case in point, the authors of a recent article devoted to mapping migration studies conclude that the field has finally "come of age."[3]

Observers of migration studies assert that even as the field has expanded and diversified, it has managed to become more rigorous, more international

in focus, and more firmly grounded in theory. Moreover, this scholarly endeavor has maintained a significant degree of integration and continuity across disciplines, nations, and world regions. As a consequence, its methods and findings are increasingly applied to a broad range of concerns. Migration research informs policy making by governments, NGOs and immigrant-aid organizations. It also counters the assertions of anti-immigrant movements.[4]

Given the recent upturn in interest and support for studies of migration, a variety of disciplinary associations have established sections, committees, publications, conferences, awards, and other endeavors devoted to the study of migration. This reflects a significant transformation in the field's foci over a relatively short time. As the authors of *What Is Migration History?* point out,[5] until the 1970s, the study of migration was fixed almost exclusively on Western Europe and the US, was androcentric, elitist, overwhelmingly devoted to workforce issues, and indifferent to migrants' interpretations of their own experiences. Subjects such as stratification, slavery, refugees, forced migration, and re-migration were rejected as suitable topics for migration research.

The fact that a significant fraction of contemporary migration scholars are themselves migrants, has helped move migration studies from a narrowly framed undertaking to one now much more ambitious and wider in scope. By and large, scholars who have a personal or familial connection to migration are much better equipped to understand the complex realities encountered by migrants than those with little immediate connection to the process. As a consequence of historical and social factors, Jews have been very well represented among those who have developed the ways through which migration research has been conducted and how knowledge resulting from this examination is put to use.[6]

Historian Tobias Brinkmann[7] has advanced our understanding of how Jewish scholars and activists have fashioned the study of migration. Drawing on his research on the Jewish population of Chicago during the nineteenth century, Brinkmann demonstrated how Jewish communal organizations' efforts to assist recently arrived co-ethnics led to the development of many of the frameworks and methods that are now used in ethnic, migration and community studies.

Arriving in Chicago in the 1840s, Jews from Bavaria recognized the social and economic needs encountered by members of their community as they sought to adjust to life in the US. Drawing upon pre-migration traditions, they formed self-help associations like the United Hebrew Relief Association (UHRA) to provide struggling co-religionists with social support.

Through a detailed examination of UHRA's annual reports, Brinkmann discovered that in order to accomplish its goals more efficiently, the organization shifted its structure from that of a voluntary association to a professional body. "By the 1880s, professional social workers and administrators were replacing volunteers. The communal representatives visited immigrant families in their homes to study poverty and offer advice about hygiene and education."[8] Such a change, Brinkmann asserts, "correlated with a shift from stereotypical perceptions of migrants to more differentiated assessments of social problems."[9] In so doing, Jewish immigrant organizations involved in communal self-help developed the approaches that are used by a wide range of migration scholars today. As Brinkman notes:

> The first detailed studies about immigrants in industrializing cities, so-called social surveys, were compiled by social workers in settlements in London, New York, and Chicago after 1880. When pioneering urban sociologists like Louis Wirth and other students of the Chicago school . . . began to conduct field research in Chicago's immigrant neighborhoods in the 1920s, they acknowledged the work of communal organizations in representing different immigrant groups and social settlements.[10]

In order to record, document and apply practical information about Jewish immigrants and their resettlement, Jewish communal organizations, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), commissioned the writing of detailed studies about the experience of migrant Jews. For example, in 1943, the American Jewish Committee commissioned Mark Wischnitzer, himself a German Jewish immigrant with decades of experience assisting migrants in both Europe and the US, to compile a survey of Jewish migration as a reference to inform the resettlement of Jews in the US after WWII. According to Brinkmann, Wischnitzer's book *To Dwell in Safety* remains the most comprehensive study of Jewish migration between 1800 and 1948.[11]

Following Brinkmann's description of the Jewish communal origins of migration studies, we see how an array of Jewish scholars and aid workers contributed in important ways to the growth, conceptual richness, and methodological advancement of the interdisciplinary study of migration.

At the same time, Brinkmann reminds us to recognize the significant contributions of members of other groups who documented the experience of their own and other migrant populations. Among these are Florian Znaniecki, Tamotsu Shibutani, Kian Kwan, W. E. B. DuBois, Alain Locke, Arthur Huff

Fauset and Hanna Arendt. Immigrant scholars' research on a broad range of communities laid the groundwork for contemporary inquiry in migration studies.

Aware of the enhanced interest in and endorsement of studies of migration, a growing number of scholars and students began to produce works in migration, Jewish studies, ethnic studies, and related topics. As E. Cohen,[12] Brinkmann,[13] and others contend, the growth in migration studies has yielded a productive exchange and cross fertilization of concepts, terminology, analytic models and methods between researchers concerned with a variety of groups. Finally, scholars interested in the application of recently developed approaches in migration scholarship have chosen to revisit established concepts and works in the field.[14] Their systematic re-evaluation of classic studies helps contemporary scholars understand the origins of their fields' approaches to research and analysis. In this way, scholars are able to apply contemporary perspectives to the investigation of historical communities and concerns.

A second significant reason for the expansion of Jewish migration studies is the availability of increased levels of financial and institutional support. Philanthropists, institutions of higher learning, academic associations, publishers, students, and audiences interested in works on migration have contributed much to the growth of Jewish migration studies. A sizeable fraction of this programming has been driven by the largess of Jewish donors. However, as Judith Baskin contends in her article "Jewish Studies in North American Colleges and Universities: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," "it is important to point out that there are positions and programs at institutions, both private and public, where external funding has not played a role."[15] Among these are University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University at Albany, State University of New York and several other state-supported institutions. The allocation of funding directly from college and university budgets demonstrates that such institutions regard the field to be a fundamental component of higher learning.[16]

This increase in resources has generated opportunities for training, employment and publication for scholars involved in Jewish studies generally and Jewish migration research in particular. The Association of Jewish Studies, which began in 1969 with forty-seven members, now has 1,800. The association's website lists more than two hundred Jewish studies programs or departments and 230 endowed positions at North American colleges and universities.[17] Data from the 2000–2001 National Jewish Population Study indicate that 40% of Jewish students take a Jewish studies course during their academic career.[18] Reflecting the field's broad appeal, a significant number of

students taking Jewish studies courses and majoring or minoring in Jewish studies are not Jewish.[19]

A third reason for the continued activity of scholars of Jewish migration is that Jewish communities persist in migrating—both within and across national borders. The documentation and analysis of on-going patterns of Jewish migration is important for both practical and scholarly reasons. Indicating Jews' high level of recent involvement with international migration, Pew[20] notes that while only 5% of Christians and 3% of Muslims globally have moved internationally during their lifetime, some 25% of all living Jews no longer reside in their country of birth.

Since the 1950s, Jewish migrants have continued their long record of migration to the US and other countries. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the largest migrant population was Russian-speaking Jews. They settled in Israel, the US, Canada, Australia, and Germany.[21] Since the 1990s, Jewish migrants from France, Israel, Iran, Latin America, the Maghreb, Syria, Yemen, South Africa and Central Asia have settled in Israel, North America, Europe and other locations.[22]

As recent arrivals and bearers of cultural traditions relatively uncommon in their points of settlement, the ability (and for some, the level of interest) of these new migrants in integrating into the host population (Americanized Eastern European Jews) has been limited. Making matters even more complex, recent Jewish migrants' arrival occurred during a time of increasing segmentation and diversity within local Jewish communities. New synagogues, Jewish associations and economic niches maintain disparate ways of life, forms of religious practice, cultural orientations, expressions of nationality, sexuality, politics, and other aspects of being.[23] Faced with such challenges, Jewish, secular and public community agencies, youth programs, synagogues, and immigrant-aid organizations like HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) whose work has been informed by Jewish migration research, have aided in the resettlement of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in Israel, Europe, Australia, and North and South America.

In addition to documenting the needs, values and concerns of recent migrant populations, scholars devoted to Jewish migrants have created a significant body of research that affirms, contradicts and otherwise elaborates on customary understandings of Jewish migration and adaptation recorded in earlier studies.

In sum, the recent growth and diversity in studies of Jewish migration can be traced to transformations in the way that migration scholarship is

conducted, to increases in funding and institutional support for Jewish migration scholarship, and to the on-going migrations of Jewish people throughout the world.

The authors featured in *Wandering Jews* are leaders in the development of inventive scholarship on Jewish migration. The works of these seven scholars are divided into two categories. The first set of chapters addresses the experience of various Jewish groups settling in the United States and other countries. Laura Lamonic compares the experiences of Post-WWII Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Latin America and Israel living in the United States. Nahid Pirnazar examines the story of Iranian Jewish migration and subsequent acculturation to the United States.

Nir Cohen explores the experience of another contemporary Jewish migrant group—Israeli high-tech migrants—as he evaluates actions pursued by both the Israeli governmental and private sector organizations to encourage their re-migration. Lilach Lev Ari concludes the section by exploring the contexts encountered by three groups of Jewish migrants (Israelis, North Africans, and members of an Orthodox community) who have settled in lucrative but increasingly anti-Semitic Western European locations.

The second set of chapters explore Jewish responses to societal changes imposed by migration. Historian Gil Ribak presents a poignant analysis rooted in the historical perspective of the twenty-first century to reconstruct the evolution of Eastern European Jewish migrants' views of Germans—from admiration to foreboding—during their travel from The Pale of Settlement to the US during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Libby Garland discusses Jewish Americans' efforts to resettle Jewish refugees after WWII. Finally, Kirsten Fermaglich examines the experiences of Jewish academics and their families building lives and communities in East Lansing, Michigan, from the late 1960s to the present.

The topics of these seven chapters reflect considerable diversity in terms of location, historical period, theoretical and methodological approach, scale of analysis, population characteristics and academic discipline. At the same time, each embodies the energy and excitement that underlies the recent growth and creativity generated in this field. Drawing upon innovative and varied approaches, the volume's authors advance the study of Jewish migration, and migration studies more generally.

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Jewish Identity among Contemporary Jewish Immigrants in the United States

by Laura Limonic

INTRODUCTION

Jewish identity, practice, culture and religiosity are intrinsically tied to the nations where Jews reside. National economic and political structures impact the development of Jewish communities while cultural and social influences are important factors in the construction of Jewish identities. Jews from Latin America, for example, largely function within close-knit, centrally organized communities, ones where non-religious communal life is at the heart of Jewish identity. For Israeli Jews, on the other hand, Jewish religious life is interwoven with the Israeli political and social landscape. Other global Jewish communities have formed under diverse constraints. Some members of global Jewish communities may have little knowledge of Jewish religious rites, as was the case for many of the Jews in the former Soviet Union, whereas other communities might place religiosity and adherence to religious rites at the center of Jewish identity. What happens when members of these communities migrate and settle in the United States? How do American Jewish culture and communal structures affect their lived Jewish experience? In this chapter, I compare three immigrant groups from distinct geographic locations: the former Soviet Union, Israel and Latin America. By comparing demographic and socio-economic characteristics as well as markers of Jewish identity and behavior across these three immigrant groups we can widen our understanding of immigrant communities that comprise the larger US Jewish group. I use data from the Pew Research Center,[1] to construct variables aimed at measuring Jewish identity. Scales of Jewish identity are composed and measured across

Jewish immigrant groups and Jewish native-born adults in the United States—providing insight into the changing nature of Jewish identity and the process of assimilation into the larger US Jewish community.

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

At the turn of the twentieth century, millions of immigrants from multiple countries and of diverse faiths descended upon the shores of the United States. These immigrants brought with them new languages, foods, cultures and religious practices. During the peak of this large migration wave, Protestantism was the dominant US religion. Yet the United States, with its constitutional emphasis on religious pluralism, was primed to accept new religious groups, even if de facto acceptance would arrive decades later.[2] The descendants of this first generation of Catholic and Jewish immigrants from eastern and southern Europe created new ethno-religious communities and eventually forged a path for the integration of Catholicism and Judaism as part of the tripartite Judeo-Christian civil religion in the United States.[3] The children and grandchildren of the large wave of southern and eastern European immigrants not only changed the US religious landscape, they themselves altered their own religious practices. One example of this is the increased participation in Reform Judaism which espouses a Protestant style of convening and practicing religion and is more palatable and adaptable to being Jewish in the United States.[4]

Jewish Immigrants

The majority of the descendant of the first wave of immigrants successfully integrated into US mainstream culture. The children and grandchildren of Italian, Polish, Irish and Jewish immigrants seized opportunities that allowed them to assimilate into the economic, social and political landscape.[5] Jews in particular made deep in-roads into American society, while also influencing US culture.[6] The first group of Jewish immigrants arrived from Germany in the mid-1800s, assimilating into the middle class and gaining a strong economic foothold through commercial activities in the retail and clothing trades.[7] Subsequent waves of Jewish immigrants of varying socio-economic backgrounds and levels of religiosity, largely from eastern Europe arrived in the United States and faced discrimination from native-born Americans and

their German coreligionists.[8] Over time, turn of the century Jewish immigrants adapted to the realities of life in the United States and descendants of German as well as eastern European Jews morphed into an "American Judaism," which grew directly out of interaction with US society.

Contemporary Jewish Immigration

The decades following the large wave of immigration to the United States witnessed a paucity of new arrivals due to a combination of factors. The Great Depression and World War II were preceded by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act which essentially banned new immigrants from "undesirable" regions, particularly southern and eastern Europe. Post-World War II, the United States began accepting refugees from the war, but the majority of contemporary immigrants arrived as a result of the change in immigration laws in 1965. The Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 paved the way for millions of new immigrants from all over the world to enter the United States. Post 1965, Jewish immigrants, many of whom were fleeing politically tenuous situations in their home countries, made the United States their home. The demise of the Soviet bloc was the catalyst for the largest wave of immigrations of Jews from the FSU.[9] Numerous political and economic crisis prompted Jews from Latin America to leave their communities and immigrate to the United States. Latin American regional out-migration streams occurred in waves. Peruvian Jews made their way to Miami during the height of the Shining Path guerrilla movement in the 1980s, whereas the largest wave of Argentine Jews arrived during the economic crisis of 2001. Venezuelan Jews are the newest arrivals, fleeing the political and economic turmoil experienced since Hugo Chavez first took office in 1999.[10] There has been a steady increase of Israeli Jews migrating to the United States since 1970, many of who came for "economic opportunities (including education), family factors, and a need for broader horizons."[11]

JEWISH IDENTITY

Religious identity is multi-layered, nuanced and difficult to measure.[12] Jewish identity is not only layered and multi-faceted; the term "Jewish" represents both a religious and ethno-cultural identity, further complicating the conceptualization of Jewishness and Jewish religious identity.[13] The religious and

ethnic tenets that comprise Jewishness are intertwined in different permutations for Jews across various generations and geographies. A myriad of factors affect how one comprises their Jewish identity. Families pass down traditions, level of religiosity, Zionist ideals as well as rituals and practice. Opportunities for interaction and identity development also come into play. For example, in countries with strong Jewish youth movements, Jewish identity formation was centered around participation in such organizations.[14] In Latin America, the strength of Jewish institutions, the lack of public services and a strong Zionist movement are all factors that influenced the development of strong communal Jewish identity.[15] By comparison, Jews in the former Soviet Union did not have access to formal religious or ethno-religious organizations, yet their identity as ethnic Jews was imposed through government classification schemes and overt discrimination.[16] For Jews in Israel, their Jewish identity is intimately tied to the nation state, and they often connect participation in Jewish religious rites, culture and food as "Israeliness" rather than "Jewishness."[17]

A host of literature is dedicated the Jewish experience in the United States, much of it debating the exceptionality of Jewish integration and Jewish upward mobility.[18] While the debate ensues, what is certain is that the descendants of the first large wave of immigrants experienced impressive upward mobility, social integration and political representation.[19] As the children and grandchildren of Jewish immigrants became wholly integrated into the US mainstream, the ethnic component of Jewish identity began to wane. The demise of Yiddish language, loss of ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods, integration into suburban life and assimilation into the white middle-class worked together to create an American Jewish identity that was symbiotic with American political, cultural and social life.[20] Significant changes to Jewish life occurred in the post-war period that shaped American Jewish identity. As Jewish life moved outside of the confines of ethnic neighborhoods, Jewish identity relied on participation in religious organizations (synagogues) and/or religious rites carried out at home.[21]

Ethnicity or Religion?

A number of scholars[22] have argued that ethnicity and religion among Jews cannot be separated because the "sacred and secular elements of the culture are strongly intertwined."[23] Others suggest that religion and ethnicity are not determinately entangled and that Jews can identify with Jews as a people without identifying with the religious or spiritual component of Judaism.[24] Survey

studies of Jews in the United States decidedly support the notion that Jews and Jewish identity can exist independently of religion. While religious rites, synagogue attendance and belief in God and Jewish law may lie at the center of a religious identity, Jews have demonstrated both changing attitudes over time as well as strong attachment to Jewish peoplehood even in absence of robust religious tendencies. Today in the United States, the majority of Jews identify Jewishness with ancestry over religion, and believe that religious tenets such as working on the Sabbath or not believing in God are compatible with a Jewish identity.[25] American Jews today are at liberty to construct their Jewish identity without external constraints—their participation in Jewish life, among non-Orthodox Jews, is at will and results in looser ties and fluid religious and ethnic Jewish identities.

GLOBAL JEWISH IDENTITY

The social, political and economic structures of countries where Jews reside greatly influence Jewish identity formation. Jewish life in the United States flourished as a result of a myriad of factors specific to the political and economic climate at the time of the great migration peak and subsequent post-war period. In much the same way, Jewish identity across the globe is constructed in relationship to the social structures of the state Jews reside in.

Latin America

Whereas Jews in the United States have pushed for and won entry into the mainstream, in Latin America, Jews are decidedly on the border of mainstream society. Jews from Latin America share a common denominator: they are members of a minority religious group in countries where Catholicism influences both public and private spheres. The strong Catholic presence results in an "othering" of Jews in Latin America. While these boundaries are increasingly blurred, Jews in Latin American countries participate in strong ethno-religious institutions that have allowed communal Jewish identities to develop in contrast to religious identities. Jewish identity in Latin America leans heavily towards a sense of communal identity, reinforced by strong Jewish institutions such as socio-cultural community and athletic centers, schools, mutual aid societies, political organizations as well as dense networks of co-ethnics.[26]

FSU Jews

Jews from the former Soviet Union do not have a history of strong communities nor strong religious identities. The practice of Jewish culture and Jewish religion in the former Soviet Union was minimal due to state sanction against religious groups and religious observances. The Jewish identity of FSU Jews was linked in part to persecution and antisemitism, and their exclusion from the mainstream enforced their Jewish ethnic identity.[27] The influx of large numbers of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union to the United States in the 1990s prompted US Jewish groups (religious, educational, and communal) to reach out to Soviet immigrants and instill a sense of Jewish culture and religiosity among them, with some reluctance and pushback.[28] Today, while the religious and cultural affiliation and identity of FSU vary, Jewish identity for FSU Jews remains, overall, tied to ethnicity. In contrast, a US Jewish identity, while cultural in practice, has strong in roots in religious knowledge and rites.

Israeli Jews

Of the three groups of contemporary Jewish immigrants discussed in this chapter, Israeli Jews have the most complex relationship with Jewish identity. Israeli Jews, unlike Jews from the former Soviet Union or Latin America, are neither political nor economic refugees. They are not fleeing discrimination nor antisemitism. Israeli Jews are both an ethnic and religious majority in their home country. Moreover, leaving Israel is often experienced or perceived as a betrayal of Zionist principles.[29] The social and political fabric of Israeli society is intimately tied to Jewish religious practice. National holidays are religious holidays, the workweek is structured around the observance of the Sabbath; even among secular Israeli Jews, life is lived within Jewish religious boundaries. In the United States, Israeli Jews do not seamlessly merge with the larger American Jewish community; their national Israeli identities diverge in culture and behavior from their US Jewish counterparts. As a result, they create close-knit communities in urban areas such as Los Angeles and New York—areas where there are communities of co-nationals as well as employment and business opportunities—and forge ethnic identities as Israelis within the larger Jewish diaspora.[30]

JEWISH IDENTITY AMONG IMMIGRANT GROUPS

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the different Jewish identity trajectories of contemporary Jewish immigrants in the United States. Jewish identity, both ethnic and religious, is born out of lived individual and communal experiences—for immigrants the construction of Jewish identity comprises elements of pre-migration life and post-migration integration into their host society (the United States in this case). The following section provides an analysis of the identity trajectories among the three groups of contemporary Jewish immigrants that are the subject of this chapter and offers a comparison with their native-born Jewish counterparts in the United States.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study are from the Pew Research Center's 2013 Survey of US Jews.[31] The Pew Research Center screened over 70,000 households via random-digit dialing and identified 3,500 households as Jewish. Population weights are applied to the data to yield a nationally representative sample of the US population of Jews. The data estimates there are 6.7 million Jews in the US today, including 5.3 million adults and 1.3 million children, and that Jews are roughly 2.2% of the total US population. For the purposes of this analysis, I limit observations to adults over the age of 18. First-generation immigrants are defined as those born outside of the United States; second generation immigrants are classified as such if they had at least one parent born abroad. All those born in the United States and with US-born parents are defined as native-born Jewish adults. Adults born in Latin America, the Former Soviet Union and Israel are compared to the native-born Jewish population (both second-generation and beyond).

Jewish Identity

Using previous literature on the religious and ethnic identity of Jewish life, I construct two summative scales to measure major components of Jewish identity.[32] Summated factors of religiosity and ethnicity are measured with Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency to test the reliability of these scales.

Research Design

A Jewish religious identity factor was constructed using the following variables:

Importance of observing Jewish law
Fasting on Yom Kippur
Keeping kosher
Lighting Shabbat candles
Frequency of synagogue attendance
Holding or attending a Seder
Handling money on Shabbat
Synagogue membership
Belief in God or universal spirit as essential to being Jewish

The second constructed variable is an ethnic identity scale. Ethnic identity is calculated using factors that pertain to various ways that Jewishness is experienced as part of a communal, group identity and shared history and values. The data from the Pew Research Center asked respondents to rate the importance of certain beliefs and values and on being Jewish. I use the following factors in the construction of ethnic identity:

Importance of eating traditional Jewish foods
Importance of being part of a Jewish community
Importance of being Jewish in your life

In addition, the following variables are included that measure a respondent's ties to Israel:

Importance of caring for Israel
Strength of emotional attachment to Israel

I also included two additional variables to measure respondents' social ties and sense of peoplehood.

Sense of belonging to Jewish people
Number of close friends that are Jewish

Both summative scales have Cronbach's alpha greater than .78, indicating a reliable measure of consistency among the variables that comprise each scale. These scales serve as dependent variables to understand how Jewish immigrant groups diverge across major Jewish identity markers. I control for a number of variables including sex, marital status, age, education, income, religious denomination, presence of children in household and geographic region (see Appendix A for regression results).

RESULTS

The US Jewish population is overwhelmingly native-born. Eighty-six percent of Jewish adults were born in the United States, slightly higher than the overall US population (83% native-born). While 13% of Jewish adults were born abroad, almost 20% of Jewish adults have at least one parent born outside of the United States. Among those born abroad, immigrants from the FSU were the most highly represented group: FSU Jewish adults make up around 40% of the Jewish adult immigration population. Approximately 13% of Jewish immigrants are from Israel and close to 18% are from Latin America.

Demographics

The median age of both native-born and foreign-born Jewish adults in the United States is between 56 and 57 years old. There are larger differences across national origin groups. The median age for Jews from Latin America is 43. Jewish adults from Israel are slightly older—the median age for this group is closer to 50, while Jewish immigrants from the FSU (median age 65) comprise one of the oldest groups among foreign born Jewish adults.

Immigrant Jews are more likely than their native-born peers to have family incomes within lower brackets. Almost 25% of immigrants reported earnings of $20,000 or less in 2012, compared to only 9.6% of native-born Jewish adults. Native-born Jewish adults were also more likely to report family incomes greater than $150,000. In 2012, 26% of native-born Jewish adults were found in this income bracket. By comparison, only 15.4% of immigrants claimed a comparable family income. In 2012, family income for immigrants from Latin America was overwhelmingly within the $50,000–75,000 bracket (60%) and over 25% reported family earnings of greater than $150,000. In comparison, immigrant Jewish adults from the FSU were more likely to be found in lower income brackets–39% reported family incomes of less than $20,000 and only 8% percent earned more than $150,000. Jewish adults from Israel reported a wide range of annual family incomes. Twenty-five percent of Israeli immigrants reported annual family incomes between $20,000 and $40,000, 30% earned between $40,000 and $75,000 per year, and 16% had annual family incomes of greater than $150,000.

Consistent with scholarly research on educational attainment among Jews, both native-born and foreign-born Jewish adults (25 and older) are highly educated—62% of foreign-born Jews and 66% of native-born Jewish adults have a college degree or higher. Immigrants from Israel had the lowest BA and

higher attainment rates (51%), nonetheless a rate considerably higher than the US as a whole (36%).[33] Both immigrant groups from Latin America (67%) and the FSU (62%) reported BA or higher rates in tandem with the general Jewish immigrant population.

Approximately half of the US Jewish adult population (both native- and foreign-born) reported being married in 2012. Jews from Latin America were slightly less likely to report being married—39%—and Israeli born immigrants reported even lower marital rates—32%. Almost 53% of Jewish immigrants from the FSU reported being married. About half of Jewish adults report being married to a partner that is Jewish in some way—either by religion, affinity, no religion, and/or background. Almost 75% of Jews from Latin America are married to someone that is of Jewish background or affinity and more than 60% of Jewish immigrants from the FSU and Israel report a spouse of Jewish identity.

Twenty percent of Jewish immigrants reported one or more children under 18 in their household. Mirroring the trend of the US Jewish population as a whole, 23% of immigrants from Latin America had a child living in their household. Twenty percent of immigrants from the FSU lived with one or more children and Israeli immigrants reported the lowest rate of children in their household—only 11% of Israeli Jewish adults reported one or more children in their household.

Political Leanings

Jewish adults overwhelmingly skew Democrat. More than 58% of Jewish adults considered themselves a Democrat in 2012 and only 10% reported Republican leanings or identification. Foreign born Jewish adults were slightly less likely to consider themselves Democrats (45%) and more likely than the US Jewish population as whole to identify as Republican (13%). Immigrants from the FSU were the most likely to report a Republican political leaning (26%) than any other immigrant group. Jews from Latin America reported the lowest rates of Republican identity (2%); they also had Democratic leanings on par with the US populations as a whole. Israeli Jews had low levels of Republican affinity (8%) and 41% considered themselves Democrats.

DISCUSSION

Jewish identity

A key objective of this analysis is to understand how three groups of contemporary Jewish immigrants differ in their strength of Jewish identity across ethnic and religious lines. Using ordinary least square regression (OLS) analysis, I control for variables that influence the strength of Jewish identity and isolate the effect of immigrant status and region of origin. The model compares Jewish identity scales of immigrants from Latin America, Israel, FSU, Europe, the Middle East and Asia to native born US Jewish adults.

Assimilation

Overall, first- and second-generation immigrants show a statistical difference in the magnitude of religious and ethnic identity. Consistent with scholarship on the strength of Jewish identity on contemporary immigrants,[34] first-generation immigrants have deeper ethnic identities than both second-generation immigrants and native-born adults. While religion, as Robert Putnam puts it, ". . . is a bigger deal in America than in any other advanced nation on earth,"[35] public acts of faith and religious rites do not follow suit.[36] For example, US native-born Jews are more likely than their immigrant counterparts to state that believing in God is essential to being Jewish (74% versus 65%). Yet native-born adults are less likely to engage in religious rites such as fasting on Yom Kippur or attending a Passover Seder. Private religious rites are also more likely to be practiced among foreign-born Jewish adults. Almost 20% of immigrants report always lighting Shabbat candles, compared to 9% of second-generation immigrants and 7% of US born adults. A number of factors may account for tendency toward lower religiosity across immigrant generations. An important point for consideration is the role of religion and religious institutions in the migration trajectory of immigrants. Religion has a central role in the adaptation of immigrants—the institution is a link to familiar group and community, while religious practices provide an emotional connection to their pre-immigrant life.[37] The performance of religious rites reinforces in immigrants a sense of self and familiarity. Religion and religious doctrines are also useful instruments by which parents can transfer traditional (pre-migration) beliefs and customs to their US-born children.[38] And, religious organizations have always been central in providing immigrants with much needed information about schools, social services, medical assistance, jobs, and housing.

Jewish ethnic identity is also higher among first-generation immigrants than it is among second-generation immigrants or native-born Jewish adults with Jewish parents. Consistent with literature on ethnicity and ethno-religious identification, immigrants retain a strong sense of ethnic identity. This may be because ethnic identity is ascribed and inescapable as is the case with those who do not resemble the mainstream in appearance or behavior[39] or because it assures a sense of group belonging, particularly in the absence of complete acceptance by the host society.[40] In this study, the immigrants' generational differences points to a diminishing ethnic identity over time, a pattern that mimics the trajectory of Jewish assimilation into American life.[41]

Ethnic Identity among Jewish Immigrant Sub-groups

Controlling for variables such as age, income, region of residence, children and marital status, education and denomination, Israeli Jews have slightly stronger religious identities than their US native-born, FSU and Latin American Jewish adults with native born parents (for full regression results see appendix A). Qualitative studies of Israeli Jews in the Jewish Diaspora[42] find evidence that Israeli Jews continue to practice religious rites such as fasting on Yom Kippur and attending synagogue during the holidays as events that tie them to their Israeli homeland. While the Pew data show that Israelis in the United States are much less likely than native-born Jews to belong to a synagogue (90% of non-Orthodox Israeli Jews do not report synagogue membership), 44% attend synagogue at least a few times per year. Synagogue attendance may be tied to the institutional and social support that synagogues provide for immigrants, or outreach programs geared towards Israeli Jews that often take place in synagogues, such as an Israeli-style Shabbat or Israeli independence day celebrations. Israeli Jews are also more likely to abide by kosher dietary rules (in full or partially) and observe major holidays such as fasting on Yom Kippur or attending a Passover Seder. Again, these rites likely serve to preserve a link between Israeli holidays and culture, that in Israel are built into the social and national culture. At the same time, there is some evidence that Israelis become more religious in the Diaspora, as part of the process of identity construction.[43] Israeli Jews also have stronger Jewish ethnic identities in relation to immigrants and native-born Jews. The identity scale for Jewish ethnicity includes two variables related to Israel—importance of caring for Israel and strength of emotional tie to Israel, which likely bias the scale. Nonetheless, I include them because a relationship to Israel is one of the

strongest indicators of an ethnic Jewish identity revolving around a "motherland" for all Jews.[44]

Jews from the FSU have stronger religious and ethnic identities than US native-born adults. All religious groups in the former Soviet Union faced strict restrictions in carrying out religious practices—leaving FSU Jews little room to partake in Jewish spiritual and traditional gatherings, rites and studies. Upon arrival in the United States, many FSU Jewish immigrants had little knowledge or prior practice of the religious aspects of Judaism. Jewish communal and religious institutions stepped in to offer FSU immigrants assistance with integration to Jewish life in the United States. The efforts on behalf of the US Jewish community were met with mixed results. Some FSU immigrants continued to identify as Jewish but did so beyond the confines of organized US Jewish community while others became more active in religious and communal organizations such as local Chabad centers or Jewish communal institutions. In examining the factors that comprise the religiosity scale, non-Orthodox Jewish immigrants from the FSU are slightly more likely to partake in rituals such as fasting on Yom Kippur, keeping kosher and lighting Shabbat candles. However, they are less likely than native-born Jews to state that believing in God is essential to being Jewish. Consistent with their pre-migration experience, FSU Jews also have stronger Jewish ethnic identities than their native-born peers. The strength of their Jewish identity stems is derived, in part, from a sense of Jewish peoplehood—almost 83% of non-Orthodox FSU immigrants reported a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people compared to 71% of native-born Jewish adults. Jews from the FSU are also more likely to report a majority of close friends as Jewish (60%). These results suggest an increase in the religious identity of FSU Jews post-migration and a continuation of a strong sense Jewish ethnic identity tied to close social ties.

Overall Latino Jews arrive in the United States with a strong sense of Jewishness. Many Latino Jews report strong ties to organized cultural and educational Jewish institutions and a sense of belonging to their local Jewish community.[45] Levels of religiosity vary among Latin American Jews across countries, age groups, and Jewish sub-ethnic groups. Latin American Jews have historically placed more importance on the cultural, ethnic and political factors that comprise a Jewish identity, yet many Latin American Jews partake in spiritual rites such as lighting candles on Shabbat and/or attending Shabbat services. Latino Jews in the United States have the weakest religious and ethnic identities compared to their native-born and foreign-born peers. Latino Jews in the United States reported lower levels of ritual observances or

practices associated with Jewish religiosity—such as fasting on Yom Kippur, lighting candles on Shabbat or attending a Passover Seder. Jewish immigrants from Latin America have slightly lower levels of Jewish ethnic identities than their native-born peers. Qualitative studies find strong levels of pre- and post-migration of Jewish identity,[46] stemming from a strong sense of communal interconnectedness in Latin America as well as an ethnic "othering" that occurs across the region. The lower levels of ethnic identity we find in this study are slight, and likely due to a combination of factors including loss of immediate ethnic group and lack of proximal host, defined as the category to which the immigrant would be assigned following immigration.[47] Latino Jews, as a group, diverge across regional backgrounds, levels of communal identification and religiosity. They also differ from existing Jewish communities around language, cultures and Jewish identity. As a result, members of this group are more likely to seek out alternative affiliations or construct new ethnic identities, which may differ in its composition. In other words, it is possible, and even likely, that Latino Jews in the United States have strong Jewish identities; what may differ are the factors that comprise these identities.

CONCLUSION

Immigrants differ in their levels of ethnic and religious identity compared to US native-born Jews. There are also clear differences across immigrant generations. As a whole, first-generation immigrants have stronger Jewish ethnic and religious identities than either second-generation immigrants or native-born adults. Second-generation immigrants have slightly higher ethnic and religious Jewish identities when compared to third-generation immigrants or higher. These trends indicate that, for immigrants, holding onto a sense of Jewish ethnicity and participating in some aspect of Jewish religious life, either in communal or private settings, are in line with past research on immigrant incorporation. Namely that the practice of ethno-religious rites, participation in ethno-religious organizations and a strong sense of ethno-religious social identity serve to both protect immigrants from a sense of loss during the process of migration and also aid in the integration process. The move towards lower levels of ethnic and religious identity across immigrant generations point to the eventual assimilation of Jewish immigrants into US Jewish life.

The diversity among immigrant groups in terms of Jewish identity also highlight the importance of understating pre-migration histories and post-migration trajectories across different groups. While this study is limited in its availability of data, what we can garner is that Jews from the FSU, Israel and Latin America diverge in their levels of Jewish religious and Jewish ethnic identity. These divergences are due to both the experiences in their home countries, including opportunities or lack thereof to partake in religious life, state or socially mandated ethnic "othering," and majority and minority status vis-à-vis the nation's civil religion. Upon migrating a number of factors influence the strengths of ethnic and religious identity—such as opportunities for integration into US Jewish life, accessibility to co-nationals, and acceptance into proximal host groups. When immigrants settle into life in the United States, the strength of their Jewish identity may weaken over time, or, perhaps, it merely changes and new Jewish identities are constructed. At the same time, as the current native-born Jewish population ages, new questions arise surrounding US Jewish life. Will the children of contemporary immigrants re-construct Jewish life and Jewish identity in the United States? Can we expect Jewish immigrants and their children to become active participants in and revitalize cultural Jewish institutions, Jewish schools and synagogues? Perhaps we can look forward towards a US Jewish identity that is more inclusive of all Jewish sub-ethnic groups and widens the current Ashkenazi-centric Jewish identity.

APPENDIX A

Table 1. Regression results for Jewish ethnicity across immigrant generation

Constant	.4698699 (.0043474)
Immigrant generation (Ref: first-generation)	
Second-generation	-.2459564*** (.0014044)
Native-born	-.2969077*** (.0012418)
Gender	
Female	.1073025*** (.0007181)
Annual household income (Ref: less than $20,000)	
$20,000 to less than $40,000	-.1677886*** (.002251)
$40,000 to less than $75,000	-.0257443*** (.0020368)
$75,000 to under $100,000	-.0545276*** (.0020637)
$100,000 to less than $150,000	-.1066563*** (.0020328)
More than $150,000	-.0158685*** (.0019865)
Has a one or more children	.0182178*** (.0008351)
Geographic region of residence (Ref: Northeast)	
Midwest	.1866055*** (.0012188)
South	.1166684*** (.0008912)

West	.023897*** (.0009267)
Age (squared)	.0000126*** (2.66e-07)
Race and ethnicity (Ref: White)	
Black	-.1264667*** (.0033197)
Hispanic	-.0674979*** (.0021463)
Other	.1846814*** (.0032723)
Education (Ref: less than high school)	
High school or equivalent	-.5430041*** (.0040698)
Some college	-.4362431*** (.0041175)
Associate's degree	-.4754976*** (.0041525)
BA or higher	-.4755232*** (.0040009)
Spouse Jewish in some capacity	.4769784*** (.0007413)
Denomination (Ref: Conservative)	
Orthodox	.0546801*** (.0015659)
Reform	-.1724774*** (.0008998)
None	-.4003696*** (.0011204)
Other	-.4336*** (.0011315)

R-squared	0.3117
Number of observations	2,254,352

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicates significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level, respectively.

Table 2. Regression results for Jewish religiosity across immigrant generation

Constant	.5885198 (.003826)
Immigrant generation (Ref: first-generation)	
Second-generation	-.0625898*** (.0013809)
Native-born	-.0802015*** (.0012093)
Gender	
Female	.0997598*** (.0007038)
Annual household income (Ref: less than $20,000)	
$20,000 to less than $40,000	-.1856579*** (.0022327)
$40,000 to less than $75,000	-.2004755*** (.0020501)
$75,000 to under $100,000	-.2231333*** (.0020567)
$100,000 to less than $150,000	-.2846418*** (.0020371)
More than $150,000	-.2626855*** (.0019914)
Has one or more children	.04014*** (.0008214)
Geographic region of residence (Ref: Northeast)	

Midwest	.1526584*** (.0011995)
South	.1391822*** (.0008762)
West	.0161017*** (.0009062)
Age (squared)	-.0000415*** (2.63e-07)
Race and ethnicity (Ref: White)	
Black	.7985836*** (.0031599)
Hispanic	-.1569076***
	(.0020918)
Other	.3064171*** (.0030915)
Education (Ref: less than high school)	
High school or equivalent	-.43972*** (.0035366)
Some college	-.3818444*** (.0035742)
Associate's degree	-.4090179*** (.003607)
BA or higher	-.403596*** (.0034477)
Spouse Jewish in some capacity	.5142995*** (.0007257)
Denomination (Ref: Conservative)	
Orthodox	.1184478*** (.0015163)
Reform	-.2246357*** (.0008834)

None	-.3978196*** (.0010991)
Other	-.3251413*** (.0011118)
R-squared	0.3425
Number of observations	(.0011118)

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicates significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level, respectively.

Table 3. Regression results for Jewish ethnicity by immigrant birth place

Constant	.5885198
Country of birth (Ref: United States)	(.003826)
Latin America	-.1132657*** (.0028262)
Asia	.0363681*** (.0047049)
Europe	.0581763*** (.0032431)
Middle East	.1812937*** (.0074443)
Africa	.2430184*** (.0041363)
FSU	.4397761*** (.0017986)
Israel	.5962849*** (.0031143)
Gender	
Female	.102737 ****** (.0007135)
Annual household income (Ref: less than $20,000)	
$20,000 to less than $40,000	-.1149636*** (.0022982)

$40,000 to less than $75,000	.0276867*** (.0020769)
$75,000 to under $100,000	-.005211*** (.0020998)
$100,000 to less than $150,000	-.0563502*** (.002078)
More than $150,000	.0471534*** (.002049)
Has one or more children	.0187848*** (.0008297)
Geographic region of residence (Ref: Northeast)	
Midwest	.1957573*** (.0012119)
South	.122822*** (.000888)
West	.0380907*** (.0009317)
Age (squared)	.0000166*** (2.58e-07)
Race and ethnicity (Ref: White)	
Black	.0945297*** (.003618)
Hispanic	.070332*** (.0022704)
Other	.1711674*** (.0033106)
Education (Ref: less than high school)	
High school or equivalent	-.5201063*** (.0040377)
Some college	-.4061612*** (.0040868)
Associate's degree	-.4440951*** (.0041213)

BA or higher	-.4495514*** (.0039701)
Spouse Jewish in some capacity	.4825238*** (.0007368)
Denomination (Ref: Conservative)	
Orthodox	.0401972*** (.0015753)
Reform	-.1884999*** (.0008886)
None	-.4382018*** (.0011312)
Other	-.4459475*** (.0011292)
R-squared	0.3247
Number of observations	2,252,372

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicates significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level, respectively.

Table 4. Regression results for Jewish religiosity by immigrant birth place

Constant	.5218998 (.0038407)
Country of birth (Ref: United States)	
Latin America	-.0348774*** (.0027337)
Asia	.3909379*** (.0048488)
Europe	-.1003404*** (.0029486)
Middle East	-.3497667*** (.0070677)
Africa	.1318604*** (.0039366)
FSU	.0620172*** (.0018329)

Israel	.3266001*** (.0029784)
Gender	
Female	.0961901*** (.000703)
Annual household income (Ref: less than $20,000)	
$20,000 to less than $40,000	-.2017007*** (.0022837)
$40,000 to less than $75,000	-.2117945*** (.0020858)
$75,000 to under $100,000	-.2351182*** (.0020932)
$100,000 to less than $150,000	-.293301*** (.0020793)
More than $150,000	-.2733731*** (.0020533)
Has one or more children	.0187848*** (.0008297)
Geographic region of residence (Ref: Northeast)	
Midwest	.1957573*** (.0012119)
South	.122822*** (.000888)
West	.0380907*** (.0009317)
Age (squared)	.0000166*** (2.58e-07)
Race and ethnicity (Ref: White)	
Black	.0945297*** (.003618)

Hispanic	.070332*** (.0022704)
Other	.1711674*** (.0033106)
Education (Ref: less than high school)	
High school or equivalent	-.5201063*** (.0040377)
Some college	-.4061612*** (.0040868)
Associate's degree	-.4440951*** (.0041213)
BA or higher	-.4495514*** (.0039701)
Spouse Jewish in some capacity	.4825238*** (.0007368)
Denomination (Ref: Conservative)	
Orthodox	.0401972*** (.0015753)
Reform	-.1884999*** (.0008886)
None	-.4382018*** (.0011312)
Other	-.4459475*** (.0011292)
R-squared	0.3247
Number of observations	2,252,372

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicates significance at the 90%, 95%, and 99% level, respectively.

Notes

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The American Jewish community has played a vital role in shaping the politics, culture, commerce and multiethnic character of Southern California and the American West. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, when entrepreneurs like Isaias Hellman, Levi Strauss and Adolph Sutro first ventured out West, American Jews became a major force in the establishment and development of the budding Western territories. Since 1970, the number of Jews in the West has more than tripled. This dramatic demographic shift has made California—specifically, Los Angeles—home to the second largest Jewish population in the United States. Paralleling this shifting pattern of migration, Jewish voices in the West are today among the most prominent anywhere in the United States. Largely migrating from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the East Coast of the United States, Jews have invigorated the West, where they exert a considerable presence in every sector of the economy—most notably in the media and the arts. With the emergence of Los Angeles as a world capital in entertainment and communications, the Jewish perspective and experience in the region are being amplified further. From artists and activists to scholars and professionals, Jews are significantly influencing the shape of things to come in the West and across the United States. In recognition of these important demographic and societal changes, in 1998 the University of Southern California established a scholarly institute dedicated to studying contemporary Jewish life in America with special emphasis on the western United States. The Casden Institute explores issues related to the interface between the Jewish community and the broader, multifaceted cultures that form the nation—issues of relationship as much as of Jewishness itself. It is also enhancing the educational experience for students at USC and elsewhere by exposing them to the problems—and promise—of life in Los Angeles' ethnically, socially, culturally and economically diverse community. Scholars, students and community leaders examine the ongoing contributions of American Jews in the arts, business, media, literature, education, politics, law and social relations, as well as the relationships between Jewish Americans and other groups, including African Americans,

Latinos, Asian Americans and Arab Americans. The Casden Institute's scholarly orientation and contemporary focus, combined with its location on the West Coast, set it apart from—and makes it an important complement to—the many excellent Jewish Studies programs across the nation that center on Judaism from an historical or religious perspective.

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