Regional Differences Among American Jews

Bruce A. Phillips

Migration to the Western United States is among the most significant changes taking place among American Jews. The last half century has seen a dispersion of Jewish population throughout the United States away from its traditional concentration in the Northeast and the East North Central states. In the half century between 1937 and 1987, the proportion of Jews living in the Northeast dropped from over two-thirds (70%) to just over half (53%) (Kosmin, Ritterband and Scheckner, 1987). The East North Central region also lost Jewish population, falling from 13% to 9% of the Jewish population.

The Western United States has been a beneficiary of this migration. During the last fifty years, the Jewish population of the Pacific and Mountain States (Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada) grew from 5 to 17% of the Jewish population. It is possibly even higher because several western Jewish communities such as Orange County and San Diego, California, which have experienced considerable growth in the last decade, have not conducted Jewish population studies and could well be underestimating the size of their Jewish populations. Further, Los Angeles has not conducted a study since 1979 and it is very likely that the Jewish population estimate for the second largest Jewish community in the world is also too small. It is thus conceivable that between one-fifth and one quarter of American Jews will reside in the West by the end of the century.

The geographic dispersion of American Jewry has resulted in a greater number of significant Jewish population centers. Kosmin, Ritterband and Scheckner have calculated that in 1937, 90% of the American Jewish population was found in 17 metropolitan areas. By 1986, 30 metropolitan areas were needed to make up 90% of the American Jewish population (Kosmin, Ritterband and Scheckner, 1987). The western migration has produced new communities with significant Jewish populations. Houston, Dallas, San Diego and Orange county have populations that are as large or larger than such “Big Sixteen” Jewish communities as Cleveland, Detroit, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and Minneapolis.

Jewish regional concentration has been a persistent feature of American Jewry. What does this migration mean for American Jews? There are several structural reasons to assume that Jewish communities in the West will be less cohesive and will be Jewishly weaker than those in areas of historical Jewish settlement: Selective migration of more marginal Jews, a general environment which is religiously weak, and Jewish environment which is communally weak.

The leading students of American Jewish demography have consistently maintained that Jews with the weakest attachments to family and community are the most likely to migrate (Cohen, 1983; Goldstein, 1981, 1982).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the most significant changes has seen a dispersion of way from its traditional central states. In the half 1970s living in the Northeast 33% (Kosmin, Ritterband so lost Jewish population, this migration. During the decade and Mountain States (Idaho, Nevada) grew from 5 to 10 because several western go, California, which have not conducted Jewish study since 1979 and it is very urgent Jewish community in between one-fifth and one end of the century.

sited in a greater number of rand and Scheckner have population was found in 17 needed to make up 90% of and Scheckner, 1987). The with significant Jewish county have populations communities as Cleveland, feature of American Jewry. there are several structural will be less cohesive and will Jewish settlement: Selective it which is religiously weak, geography have consistently family and community are 1, 1982).

Research about American religion in general has shown that the West is an "Unchurched Belt" (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985). Other research on American religion has indicated that migrants tend to adapt to the religious norms of their new region of residence (Stump, 1984). This would suggest that Jewish migration to the American West should result in a diminution of Jewish religious and communal attachments.

The Jewish environment in the West is structurally weaker than in the East and Midwest for three different and equally important reasons. First, the ports of disembarkation for Jewish immigrants were not in the West. There are no immigrant neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side in New York or Maxwell Street in Chicago or the North End of Boston to exert a continuing cultural influence over Jewish life, even if Jews no longer reside in those neighborhoods. Second, frontier Jews were accepted into the civic life of the western towns during the latter half of the 19th century. Unlike the East and Midwest where Jews were concentrated in immigrant neighborhoods, Jews played a prominent role in the emerging cities of the West as well as in the territorial and, later, state governments of the West (Rochlin, 1984; Libo and Howe, 1984). The early Jews thus put more of their efforts into building the general community than into creating an elaborate and complex Jewish communal infrastructure. Third, western Jewish communities have a significant proportion of recent migrants: half of the Jewish households in Phoenix and Denver and a quarter of the Jewish households in Los Angeles had arrived within the ten years previous to the study (Phillips, 1981; Phillips and Aron, 1983).

Jews in western communities must establish their Jewish ties anew, and rarely are there other Jews who know them from their previous communities who will solicit their involvement. When a Jew in Chicago, for example, moves to the suburbs or exurbs, it is likely that other Jews will also have made the same move. There will thus be Jews who know each other and may even have influenced each others' move. Because they know each other, they are in a position to solicit each others' involvement in Jewish communal life. When Jews move to western communities, on the other hand, the likelihood of a continuing reference group is greatly diminished.

**Methodology**

Three Jewish communities in the West (Los Angeles, Denver, and Phoenix) are compared with two in the Midwest (Milwaukee and Chicago). These five were chosen because they all used an identical Random Digit Dialing sampling strategy.
covering the widest possible geographical area, including areas of low Jewish density where less normative Jews are more likely to reside. They were also conducted about the same time, between 1979 and 1983 (see Table 1).

In this paper I compare the West and Midwest along three dimensions of Jewish "normativeness": family structure and household composition, intermarriage, and formal affiliation with the Jewish community.

Family Structure and Household Composition

The normative Jewish family pattern is to be married and have or have had children (Cohen, 1982, 1983, 1989; Rosenthal, 1970). This is reflected in the age profile, pattern of household structure, and marital status patterns of each community (found in Tables 2, 3, and 4 respectively). In order to present the data in the most economical form, only the categories most relevant to "normativeness" are used in the analysis, and they thus do not add up to 100%. For example, the "household composition" variable used in the analysis had several categories, but only two (i.e. the most normative or most non-normative) are presented in Table 3. These are the conventional or most normative household, the married couple with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2. PERCENT OF JEWS IN EACH AGE CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

children; and the least conventional, the household headed by a single (never-married) person under 40.

No regional differences for household composition were found. With the exception of Denver, the large communities (Los Angeles and Chicago) have a higher percentage of households headed by a never-married person and the smaller communities have a higher percentage of "families" (i.e. married couples with children under the age of 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3. SELECTED HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE (PERCENTAGES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never-married household head under 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three age categories are used: children under the age of 15, aged 20-34 largely tend to be single.

Consistent with household composition, the west found for age. With the exception of Denver, percentage of children under the age of 18 and percentage of young adults.

The non-normative marital status shows the percentage of Jews who are married, divorced. Table 4 does not allow for widow and widowers is more "normative" than other regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4. MARITAL STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Jews never married under 30 &amp; 30+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a pattern of regional differences. The category under the age of 30 percent never married is higher in the western ones.

Divorce, however, does fit into the three age cohorts is higher in the western communities. Los Angeles is less "normative" than Milwaukee.

On the other hand, a community found for age. With the exception of Denver, smaller communities have more single households, fewer families, more single households, more family structure.

With the exception of Denver, the "normative" family pattern observed above is best explained by the migration of normative Jews to the West and has attracted a different population.
area, including areas of low density and have or have had no children under the age of 15 are found in families with children, and “young adults” aged 20-34 largely tend to be never-married.

Consistent with household composition, no pattern of regional difference was found for age. With the exception of Denver, the smaller communities have a higher percentage of children under 15, and the larger communities have a higher percentage of young adults.

The non-normative marital status categories are presented in Table 4 which shows the percentage of Jews who have never been married, and the percent who are divorced. Table 4 does not add up to 100% because not every marital status is relevant to the discussion of regional differences. For example, the percentage of widows and widowers is not relevant to the proposition that the West is less normative than other regions.

There is a pattern of regional difference evident only for the never-married category under the age of 30, but it is the opposite of the predicted direction: the percent never married is higher in the two midwestern communities than in the three western ones.

Divorce, however, does fit the predicted pattern: the percent divorced among all three age cohorts is higher in the West than in the Midwest.

To sum up only one regional difference was found: divorce is higher in the western communities. Los Angeles, Denver, and Phoenix were not found to be less “normative” than Milwaukee and Chicago.

On the other hand, a consistent pattern was found based on community size. Smaller communities have a more normative family structure than larger communities. With the exception of Denver, the larger communities have more single households, fewer families with children, the smaller communities have fewer single households, more families, and more children living in households.

With the exception of Denver, the smaller communities were found to have a more “normative” family pattern in terms of age, household composition and the marital status of Jewish individuals. Denver, however, has a family pattern more typical of the larger Jewish communities. This divergence from the size pattern observed above is best explained by differential migration (Phillips, 1989). Less normative Jews have migrated to Denver which is an unusually cosmopolitan area and has attracted a different group of migrants than has Phoenix, for example.

### Table 4. Marital Status by Age (Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Under 30</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three age categories are used which overlap with the two household types: children under the age of 15 are found in families with children, and “young adults” aged 20-34 largely tend to be never-married.
Intermarriage

Intermarriage is defined by both the religion of origin and the current religion of the spouse. Exogamy means that the spouse was not born Jewish. Mixed marriage means that the spouse was not born Jewish and is not Jewish now. Mixed marriages are a subset of exogamous marriages.

The two factors which affect and probably can be used to measure intermarriage are: propinquity, or the availability of other Jews as marriage partners; and endogamy norms, or the preference for marrying other Jews. Exogamous marriage is affected primarily by propinquity. While the choice of a partner from outside the Jewish group reflects both the desire to have a Jewish partner and the availability of potential Jewish partners in the population, the availability of other Jews will operate regardless of personal preference. Mixed marriage is mostly representative of the norm of endogamy, since the non-Jew by birth can later become a Jew through conversion.

Table 5 presents the exogamy and mixed marriage rates of individual Jews who are currently married. Only two age categories are used because these rates are so low after age 39 as not to be of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no regional differences in the rate of exogamy. Exogamy is higher, however, in the smaller communities among Jews under the age of 30. This is the effect of propinquity, or the smaller number of Jews available as potential partners in communities with fewer Jews and lower Jewish density.

Region is predictive of mixed marriage among younger Jews. There are no regional differences in the rate of mixed marriage among Jews age 30 and older. But under the age of 30 mixed marriage is highest in the West and particularly high in Denver.

The exceptionally high rate of mixed marriage in Denver is consistent with the divergent family patterns already noted. Both exogamy and mixed marriage are highest under the age of 30, indicating that the increase in both rates is a recent phenomenon. It is among Jews under the age of 30 that communal differences based on either size or region are found. Under the age of 30 exogamy is higher in the smaller communities, and mixed marriage is higher in the Western communities.

The relationship between community size and region as they affect exogamy and mixed marriage is typified by Los Angeles and Milwaukee. In Milwaukee 45% of married Jewish individuals have a spouse of non-Jewish origin, whereas in Los Angeles only 21% have. Milwaukee 37% of those spouses are Jewish compared with only 8% in Los Angeles.

The rate of exogamy in Los Angeles very few non-Jews of the age of 30.

The three most used community Jewish organizations are synagogues, federation. Each involvement in a secular Jewish organization is of age for receiving Jewish membership is expensive: religious, depending on dues, religious education, building fund.

Federation affiliation is also a factor, for a Jew does not typically join without being a member of a Jewish organization. Each involvement involves names of Jewish organizations, respondent or other house for affiliation. Finally, even a Federation is the Federation that finds a minimum cost of entry to the organization.

Table 6 presents the percentage of households that hold membership in any of the national Jewish organizations, including the Council of Jewish Women, the Women's Committee, the Jewish Federation of North America, and the local Jewish organization. The three most used Jewish organizations for each community that hold membership is more than 90% in all cases. On the other hand, is higher in the Midwest and the South than in the other regions. The Jewish organization most often mentioned is the Federation for all communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Synagogue membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and the current religion of
Jewish. Mixed marriage
now. Mixed marriages
1 to measure intermarriage
partners; and
Exogamous marriage is
partner from outside the
availability of
other Jews will operate
Become a Jew through
rates of individual Jews who
because these rates are so low
Exogamy is higher,
the age of 30. This is the
table as potential partners in
Jewish Jews. There are no
Jews age 30 and older. But
particularly high in
never is consistent with the
and mixed marriage are
in both rates is a recent
communal differences based
Exogamy is higher in the
Western communities.
as they affect exogamy and
kee. In Milwaukee 45% of
married Jewish individuals under the age of 30 are married exogamously (i.e. to a
spouse of non-Jewish origin), as compared to only 37% in Los Angeles. In
Milwaukee 37% of those spouses of non-Jewish origin had converted to Judaism, as
compared with only 8% in Los Angeles (computed from Table 5).
The rate of exogamy in Los Angeles is lower than in Milwaukee, but in Los
Angeles very few non-Jews convert, so that the mixed marriage rate ends up higher in
Los Angeles.

Affiliation

The three most used measures of affiliation are synagogue membership,
memorandum in a secular Jewish organization, and giving to the local Jewish
federation. Each involvement is of a different nature.

Synagogue membership is initiated by the individual, usually when the first child
is of age for receiving Jewish education (between five and ten). Synagogue
membership is expensive: running anywhere from $500 to over $2,000 per year
depending on dues, religious school fees, and additional assessments such as a
building fund.

Federation affiliation is the opposite of synagogue membership. Unlike the
synagogue, a Jew does not typically come forth to give to the Federation. Instead, it
is the Federation that finds individual Jews and solicits payments from them. The
minimum cost of entry to the Federation rolls is also much lower than synagogue
membership.

Jewish organization membership is problematic in two ways. First, many
volunteer organizations such as Hadassah, Anti-Defamation League, National
Council of Jewish Women, the American Jewish Congress, and The American Jewish
Committee are national organizations. Membership may consist only of sending a
check to the national office. The questionnaires do not go beyond asking about the
names of Jewish organizations, and include no information as to whether the
respondent or other household member is active in a local chapter of the
organization. Finally, even a nominal national membership may not be current.

Table 6 presents the percentage of Jewish households in each community which
hold membership in any of the three types. There is only one regional pattern:
synagogue affiliation is more common in the Midwest. Federation giving, on the
other hand, is higher in the smaller communities. No regional or community size
pattern was found for Jewish organizational membership.
Since other factors such as family composition and household structure are known to be associated with affiliation in general and synagogue membership in particular, these factors must also be taken into consideration.

Mixed-married households are known to have much lower rates of involvement in Jewish life than in-married, and this is true for each community. There is no regional pattern discernible, however, for any of the affiliations within either of the intermarriage categories. There are inter-communal differences, but they are explained by neither size nor region (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Synagogue membership</th>
<th>Jewish organization membership</th>
<th>Federation giving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S.M. Cohen (1982) has convincingly shown that affiliation is related to stage in the life cycle. Three types of households are conspicuous with regard to affiliation (either positively or negatively). Never-married household heads under 40 are the least likely to be affiliated. In-married couples under 40 without children in the household are more likely to be affiliated. In-married couples with children in the household are the most likely to be affiliated. Affiliation has also been shown to be strongly related to mixed marriage (Phillips, 1986, pp. 151-156). To eliminate the effect of differences in household structure and mixed marriage rates among the five communities, communal affiliation rates are compared controlling for household structure and mixed marriage.

Here again, neither region nor community size was related to Jewish organizational membership, given its ambiguous nature.

Neither do region or community size account for the differential synagogue membership rates among the five individual communities with one exception: synagogue membership is higher in the Midwest among the young single households.

Only community size is related to Federation giving. This is because it is the Federation which makes the initial approach. The rates of Federation giving are much lower in Chicago and Los Angeles than in the smaller communities because it is more difficult to find and approach such large numbers of Jews (Table 8).

Contrary to expectation, norms are normative. The similarities between differences. The few regional long range implications for J.

The rates of mixed marriage they are particularly high in concentrated among the young communities may not be few increasing mixed marriage will critical impact in the West.

The rate of divorce is high population of older singles (families).

Synagogue affiliation among the West. This may affect affiliation continues throughout later states.

The relative deviance of W has yet to emerge, which suggests contribute to a loss of Jews important differences are evident the next century, at least in they seem to attract migrants from.
TABLE 8. AFFILIATION CONTROLLING FOR HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE AND INTERMARRIAGE (PERCENTAGES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Non-married under 40</th>
<th>In-married couple under 40 with no children</th>
<th>In-married couple with child(ren) in household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synagogue membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Federation giving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jewish organization membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Federation giving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Federation giving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Federation giving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case

Contrary to expectation, western Jewish communities are not consistently less normative. The similarities between the West and Midwest are more salient than the differences. The few regional differences that were found, however, have important long range implications for Jewish communities in the West.

The rates of mixed marriage are higher in the West for Jews under the age of 30; they are particularly high in one Western community (Denver). Since this trend is concentrated among the youngest cohort of adults (20-29) the full impact in Western communities may not be felt until this cohort begins to have children. While increasing mixed marriage will affect all of American Jewry, it will have a particularly critical impact in the West.

The rate of divorce is higher in the West, which will create a somewhat larger population of older singles (and possibly single parent families and/or blended families).

Synagogue affiliation among young singles is twice as high in the Midwest as in the West. This may affect affiliation later on if the present inclination not to affiliate continues throughout later stages of the life cycle.

The relative deviance of Western Jewish communities discussed in the literature has yet to emerge, which suggests that migration in and of itself does not significantly contribute to a loss of Jewish cohesion. On the other hand, some potentially important differences are evident which could create important regional disparities in the next century, at least in those cosmopolitan communities such as Denver which seem to attract migrants from more traditional communities such as Phoenix.
How many Jewish communities are emerging in the West such as Denver versus how many like Phoenix will be known only with time and additional research.

References


