

**International Round-Table on Intermarriage
at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.**

(17 – 18 December 2003)

THE ARGENTINE CASE

**Yaacov Rubel
Buenos Aires**

Introductory Remarks

Among all the phenomena reflecting secular processes of modern times from the Enlightenment and the Emancipation period, the exogamic marriage is undoubtedly one of the most evident signs of integration and acculturation.

We could say, as a way of solace - or perhaps, as a sign of feeling impotent- that if this happened to Tevie's daughter in her Russian shtetl with its plethoric Jewish life, then we should not be surprised if the decision to get married to people from other religions or different ethnic and cultural background has become increasingly frequent in open societies.

As many other sociological topics related to the Jewish experience in Argentina, the topic of intermarriage has not been a subject of systematic study up to the present. We should point out that psycho-social and socio-demographic studies on Argentinean Jews are very scarce.¹ In this sense, our purpose is to put forward in this presentation every piece of significant information which can contribute to a better understanding of this issue.

There have been cases of mixed marriages from the beginning of the Jewish community in the country since the second half of the 19th century. The municipal census of the City of Buenos Aires carried out in 1887 included a question about religion. The table on this variable revealed the presence of 289 Jewish immigrants: 210 men and 79 women. In view of these figures, it is easy to hypothesize that, even in those days, this lack of balance between the sexes made at least some of these men marry non-Jewish partners.²

A case that illustrates this situation is that of Henry Joseph, the first Rabbi of the "Congregación Israelita" (the first Jewish institution, founded in 1862), who was appointed to his position in spite of being married to a Catholic woman. The same happened to Luis Brie, who was the first president of the "Hevra Kedusha," which with the passing of time would become AMIA, the Ashkenazi Kehila in Buenos Aires.

It is likely that after 1889, the massive Jewish immigration to Argentina from Eastern Europe (especially from Russia) and to a lesser extent from the Ottoman Empire have substantially changed the situation. The immigrants who started arriving in the last

¹ The lay leaders of the Jewish organizations have paid little attention to this topic and only for brief periods did they decide to assign funds, usually insufficient, to carry out studies about the different aspects of Jewish life.

I deem it important to draw the attention to the fact that in Argentina there is no space for Jewish social research sponsored by Jewish institutions. Besides, no university has a Judaic Studies department nor – with a few exceptions – are there scholars carrying out research on Jewish sociological, demographic, or historical topics as part of their academic activity. (In the last years, a group of several Jewish sociologists and anthropologists created a framework for exchange and discussion though without financial possibilities of generating research projects).

² Censo Municipal de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Censo General de Población, Edificación, Comercio e Industrias, 1887. [Municipal Census of the City of Buenos Aires, General Census on Population, Building, Trade and Industry], 1887], Buenos Aires, 1889, Volume I, p. 54.

decade of the 19th century tended to have endogamous marriages. On the other hand, many of those immigrants arrived with their families and a deep ethnic and cultural sense of belongingness.

This strong link with the endogroup was not only a distinctive aspect of the Jews. Most of the studies show that at least until 1914, in the periods of massive migratory flows this tendency was also shared by members of other migratory groups.³

As regards Jewish immigration, we have found two studies related to this topic. The first one is a survey carried out by Fabiana Tolcachier in a rural district in the south of Buenos Aires province. This study shows a clear trend towards endogamic marriage in the first generation of Jewish immigrants and their children.⁴

The second one is a study of Moroccan Jews in Buenos Aires by Diana Epstein. The analysis of civil marriage records in the city of Buenos Aires until 1910 led her to the conclusion that most of the marriages were endogamic. She also stressed the fact that the Moroccan Jews, at least in the first generation, developed different strategies to marry members of the endogroup, including the decision in some cases to travel to their native countries in order to return with a Jewish wife.⁵

On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that this was not the case for other young Moroccan Jews, who, at the same time, settled in cities far away from Buenos Aires where there were no Jews. Therefore, they did not have any alternative to marrying non-Jewish spouses.

The concern about mixed marriages between the two World Wars

Although we lack empirical data about the period between the two World Wars, there are many historical sources which show that mixed marriages were on the community agenda. Victor Mirelman's book "Jewish Buenos Aires" includes a special chapter devoted to this subject.⁶

³ From the numerous articles on this topic, we will quote: Baily, Samuel: Marriage Patterns and Immigrant assimilation in Buenos Aires, 1882-1923, in "Hispanic American Historical Review," 60:1 (1980) p. 32-48. Seefeld, Ruth: La integración social de extranjeros en Buenos Aires según sus pautas matrimoniales: Pluralismo Cultural o Crisol de Razas? (1860-1923) [The social integration of foreigners in Buenos Aires according to their marriage patterns: Cultural Pluralism or Melting of Races? (1869.1923)] in "Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos," 1:2 (April 1986) p. 203-231; Marquiegui, Dedier Roberto: Revisando el debate sobre la conducta matrimonial de los extranjeros. Un estudio a partir del caso de los españoles y franceses en Luján [Checking the debate about marital behaviour of foreign people. A study based on the Spanish and French case in Lujan, 1880-1920], "Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos," 7: 20 (April 1992) p. 3-35.

⁴ Tolcachier, Fabiana: Continuidad o Ruptura de Identidades Etnicas: el Comportamiento Matrimonial de los Israelitas en el Partido de Villarino, (1905-1934), [Continuity or breaking of ethnic identities: marriage behavior of the Jews in the Villarino district (1905-1934)], "Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos," 7: 20 (April 1992), p 37-69.

⁵ Epstein, Diana: Los judeo-marroquíes en Buenos Aires: pautas matrimoniales 1875-1910 [Moroccan Jews in Buenos Aires: marriage patterns 1875-1910], EIAL –Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe, 6: 1 (January-June 1995) , p113-133.

⁶ Mirelman, Victor A: Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1930. In Search of an Identity. Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1990, p. 102-109.

The “Hevra Kedusha” minutes books of the 1920s, provide an additional source verifying the existence of mixed marriages, mostly in the form of Jewish men married to non-Jewish women. The question of mixed marriages rises within the frame of several debates about whether or not the burial of a Jew married to a non-Jewish woman should be permitted. During these years, some Sephardic institutions also discussed similar issues.

From this perspective, a very interesting source which reflects the seriousness of this problem in the period between the two World Wars is the “Herem,” which was decreed by Rabbi Shaul Sithon Dabbah, spiritual leader of the Sephardic Congregation, in order to prohibit conversions in Argentina. This extreme measure has been taken as a consequence of the prevailing anarchy of the city. To put it in Rabbi Sithon’s words:

“Life in this city [Buenos Aires] is exceedingly unrestrained, and everyone does what he pleases; there is no rabbinical authority to be minded and respected... Hence, anyone who so desires takes an alien woman for his wife without her being converted; or he chooses individuals at random [to serve as witnesses] and “converts” her in their presence... I disseminated announcements that it is forever forbidden to accept converts in Argentina... Whoever wishes to be converted may travel to Jerusalem; perhaps the court there will accept the applicant.”

This ban was written with the advice and support of Aaron Halevy Goldman, rabbi and leader of Moisesville, the first Jewish agricultural settlement in Argentina, which was settled by Russian Jews in 1889.⁷

Although in those years, most Jewish families rejected marriage to a non-Jewish partner, the intermarriage phenomenon was a fact. Nevertheless, we are not able to estimate the proportion and consequences of this process at that time. An article written by Schmuël Rollansky, which was published with the title: “Di epidemie fun di gemishte Hasenes...” [The epidemic of mixed marriages...], is another source accounting for the existence of this problem in that period⁸

Now I would like to make a brief reference to the context of the recipient society. In order to properly understand the process of gradual incorporation of the Jews into the Argentinean society, it is necessary to highlight the fact that Argentina is a Catholic country. This Catholic stamp pervades many aspects of the political culture as well as the way of being of the Argentineans.

Notwithstanding the influence of the Catholic Church, many of the new immigrants and their children born in the country grew up in an intellectual and cultural

⁷ For a detailed analysis of this issue see: Zemer, Moshe: The Rabbinic Ban on Conversion in Argentina, *Judaism*, 37:1 (145) (Winter 1988) p. 84-96.

⁸ *Di Yidische Zeitung* (February 3, 1933) p.5 In our paper (see p. 23) we will make reference to a survey about young people born in 1980. This survey includes a question about the religious-ethnic origin of their parents. Some of the answers allow us to learn about a number of grandparents and even great grandparents of these youngsters who married non-Jewish women and also decided to give up their Jewishness. Chronologically, the dates these grandparents and great-grandparents got married would correspond to the first decades of the 20th century. Although the number of cases that were found cannot be considered as representative of the whole process of intermarriage, they are important testimonies which suggest that the exogamic process has its roots at an earlier stage.

environment influenced by secular ideologies. These ideas had a great influence on the intellectual and cultural development of the Jewish community. Most of the Jewish immigrants were of Ashkenazi origin, stemming from Eastern Europe. Secular ideas were actually part of many of their ideological values: Socialists, Bundists, and even Communists (especially after the Russian Revolution of 1917).⁹

The case of the Jews of Sephardic origin, especially those coming from Aleppo and Damascus, who by and large organized their family and community life around the synagogue and under the guardianship of a strong religious leadership, was different. Obviously, we can find cases of assimilation or processes of acculturation among Jews of Sephardic origin as well (especially in the youngest generation), but the very structure of the Sephardic communities was much more linked to religious values and traditions. From this perspective, it is interesting to highlight that the attempt of some leaders to “modernize” the Aleppo community in Buenos Aires in the thirties and forties of the twentieth century was shunned by several members of the community. Under the leadership of Rabbi Itzhak Chehebar, who had been specially brought from Syria, this community was once again led by strict criteria of religious orthodoxy.¹⁰

The decade of 1960 as a turning point

The data of the 1960 national census – the last one asking the religion of the respondents – allows us to gain new insights with regard to considerable changes in the socio-cultural profile of the Jewish population in comparison to earlier decades. The first and most decisive was the fact that Jews were less and less an immigrant group and more and more a community of native Argentines.¹¹

The 1960s were also the temporal framework for a series of innovative processes in the institutional life of the Jewish community, especially in the city of Buenos Aires. In the area of Jewish education, for instance, there was a transformation of almost all supplementary schools into day schools.

Another important phenomenon was the foundation and subsequent development of the Conservative movement, resulting from the arrival of a young Rabbi, Marshall Meyer, from the United States. Thanks to his charisma and enthusiasm, he succeeded in establishing the first conservative congregation in the country. During the sixties and seventies, this movement became an innovative pillar of Jewish spiritual life in Buenos Aires.

The evaluation of Rabbi Marshall Meyer's contribution to Jewish religious life in Argentina is beyond the scope of this paper. Still, it is interesting to point out that the Conservative congregations gradually replaced, as time went by, the synagogues and

⁹ For a detailed analysis of the evolution of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires up to 1930, see Mirelman, Victor, op. cit. and, specially, chapters 2 and 5.

¹⁰ Brauner Rodgers, Susana: La comunidad judía alepina en Buenos Aires-De la ortodoxia religiosa a la apertura y de la apertura a la ortodoxia religiosa(1930-1953) [From religious orthodoxy to openness and from openness to religious orthodoxy], EIAL, 11:1, (January-June 2000) p. 45-64

¹¹ See: Schmelz, Uziel- Dellapergola, Sergio : Hademographia shel Haihudim Beamerika Halatinit , (in Hebrew) The demography of the Jews in Latin America, Horowitz Institute, Tel Aviv University, 1974.

praying places created by the Jews who had arrived from Eastern Europe, even when they were not strictly orthodox people. This new "nusach" of Jewish religiousness was accepted by many Jewish Argentine-born families.

One of the most significant aspects related to this was the creation of the *Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano* (Latin American Rabbinical Seminary). Among other tasks, the Seminary created a special department for conversion-related issues. The development of the conservative movement also provided the possibility to gain non-Jewish members of exogamic marriages as members of the Jewish community (especially women, some of whom were ready to convert themselves into Judaism).

Nonetheless, the number of conversions throughout the years has not been significant. According to the information we have been able to gather, the number of participants in the groups created for that purpose in the past years is about 50 people per year.¹²

So far, this period has never been studied in a systematic way by historians and social scientists.¹³ Therefore, we can only presume, based on very fragmentary data, that the new Jewish society developing after the 1960s reflects the first signs of a growing heterogeneity. We can also discern that the tendency toward integration into the Argentinean society tended to expand. In this context, it is also possible to reckon a slow but systematic increase in the number of exogamic marriages as from those years.

To complete this description based on the 1960s, we should add that the Orthodox religious groups were, until those years, small in number and had very little influence over the public Jewish affairs. Not until the 1970s did the first changes anticipating their expansion and development occur, particularly from the '80s to the present.

Actually, this description reflects the situation of the Jewish population in the City of Buenos Aires. This is not the case with Jews living in suburban areas of Buenos Aires. In spite of the closeness to the city, the inhabitants of each of these districts developed their social and working lives within the geographic areas of their homes.

The Jewish desocialization process was much faster in most suburban areas than in Buenos Aires City. The Jewish population of the areas located west and south of Buenos Aires are mostly middle and lower class. On the other hand, many families moved from such areas to Buenos Aires. The sum of all these factors has weakened the Jewish life of many small communities that had organized during the migratory period. However, after the 1960s, many signs of Jewish vitality started fading. A clear illustration of this is related to Jewish education: in 1964, there were 20 schools (19 supplementary and one day school) scattered in the different suburban areas of Buenos Aires, but by 2003, only three Jewish day schools survived. These institutional

¹² Testimony from Rabbi Ruben Saferstein, Director of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary Conversion Department.

¹³ Horowitz, Irving Louis: *The Jewish Community of Buenos Aires*, *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 18:2 (December 1962), p.147-171. This article is the first which deals with the Jewish community from a sociological standpoint. (Horowitz had been in Argentina as a professor invited by the Department of Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires). During his stay he tried to approach the Jewish experience in Argentina. One of his most interesting findings is the characterization of the Jewish community in relation with the global society in these years as "adjustment without integration".

weakening processes at the suburban areas of the capital had also a correlation, as we will see, in a very significant increase in the rates of mixed marriages in the last 30 years.

The situation in the different provinces of Argentina is not less worrying. Many communities are small or medium-size. A priori, that implies a very restricted “pool” of candidates for marriage. Therefore, it is not surprising that the intermarriage process has already become significant especially since the 1960s.

Unlike the situation in the suburban areas of Buenos Aires, many of the non-Jewish women marrying Jewish men showed a tendency to take part in community life, even without having converted themselves. Up to this day, we can find in these communities that in many families it is the non-Jewish women who are most interested in sending their children to the local Jewish school. We have also found cases of these non-Jewish partners participating in women’s organizations like WIZO.

One of the many paradoxes arising in Jewish institutional life in Argentina is that the Zionist ideological parties that have controlled the AMIA (the Ashkenazi Jewish community) in the past 50 years are, basically, secular. However, the Rabbinate of the AMIA is orthodox. This situation is especially important from the perspective of our subject matter since the AMIA, through the Vaad Hakehilot (i.e., the Federation of Jewish Communities) is the umbrella institution of all the communities in the provinces of Argentina. In spite of this diversity, all of them have, to a greater or smaller degree, a very limited “marriage market.” A direct and inevitable consequence of this situation is the systematic growth in the number of exogamic marriages.

Partial studies carried out in the late 1980s, 2002, and 2003 show that the exogamy rate is currently very high. Although we lack an overall study, all partial proofs allow us to reasonably put forward that the intermarriage process has accelerated, especially in the past 10-15 years.

Although the issue of mixed marriages or intermarriage has become so critical that it jeopardizes the very same survival of the Jews as a differentiated group in many Jewish communities all over the country, there has not been any convention or assembly to deal with this issue thoroughly. However urgent the situation is, no discussion has been carried out about the pros and cons of applying “outreach” policies.

Paradoxically, the only institution investing efforts today in retrieving the children of exogamic marriages is Chabad Lubavich. This attitude is a direct consequence of the serious socio-economic crisis in 2002 in Argentina, which obliged Jewish institutions to develop an extensive social aid plan not only in Buenos Aires city but throughout the country. In this context, Chabad developed an informal Jewish education program for Jewish children and teenagers who did not participate in regular Jewish education. The children of Jewish mothers married to non-Jewish spouses were one of the targets of this program.¹⁴

¹⁴ In a list of 138 families whose children participate of the educational project “Morasha,” 29% were exogamic families constituted by a Jewish woman married to a non-Jewish man.

To this date, we have no comprehensive Jewish population study which would enable us to fully examine of the demographic situation of the Jews in Argentina. While I am submitting this paper, the first stage of a field study of a representative sample of Jewish households in Buenos Aires is being carried out by the Jewish Agency in the frame of the “Initiative for Jewish Demography.”

One characteristic of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires is the number and variety of the Jewish organizations. This is not the case in the Jewish communities in the different cities outside Buenos Aires, which have, if any only one school, only one synagogue, only one community center, etc.

Partial Findings and Data

In spite of the lacks and gaps in the field of Jewish social research, we hope that the global presentation of partial findings will provide for a first approach to the “state of the art” in Argentina in this issue. Let's start with the provinces.

We will begin by pointing out that Argentina is a country with a surface of approximately 3,000,000 km² [1,800,000 mi²] and with important differences in the development of different regions. Buenos Aires is not only the capital city. It also concentrates many economic resources and a great deal of the political power. This culture of concentration of power is also reflected in the organization and decision-making process of the central institutions of the Jewish community.

Most of Jews (between 75 and 80%, according to current estimations) live in the Metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. With the exception of Rosario and Cordoba (with Jewish populations between 8,000 and 10,000 people), most Jewish communities basically settled in the capital cities of each province. These populations are, generally, made up of 200 to 400 families. This circumstance obviously affects their capacity to develop all the community services. On the other hand, the small number of Jewish families has a direct influence on the out-marriage and in-marriage processes.

The Jewish community in Salta, a city located to the North of the country, bordering Bolivia, is a good case study for this round table. In 1986, a census of the whole Jewish population in the city was conducted. This survey included 311 families accounting for a total of 1000 individuals.¹⁵

The issue of intermarriage (or "mixed marriage," as it was called in the survey) was included in the questionnaire. A paper devoted to this topic was presented at the

¹⁵See Geldstein, Rosa: Censo de la Población Judía de la ciudad de Salta/ [Jewish Population Census of the City of Salta], 1986. Final Report. Buenos Aires, CEHIS – [Historical Studies and Social Research Center], AMIA/Vaad Hakehilot(Federation of Jewish Communities). Buenos Aires, 1988, 176 p.

Jewish Demography Conference in Jerusalem in 1987.¹⁶ In order to visualize how this process developed over time, we have selected four age groups. The following table (Table 1) allows us to compare the proportion of individuals born in homes where both parents were Jewish to the proportion of individuals born to families where only one parent was of Jewish origin.

Table 1
The exogamy process over time: the case of the Jewish population in Salta: comparison among different age groups.

Age	Jewish Parentage		Mixed Parentage		Non-Jewish parents		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 - 4	28	34.1	50	61.0	4	4.9	82	100.0
20 - 24	34	55.8	18	29.5	9	14.7	64	100.0
40 - 44	45	68.2	8	12.1	13	19.7	66	100.0
60 - 64	38	82.6	2	4.4	6	13.0	46	100.0

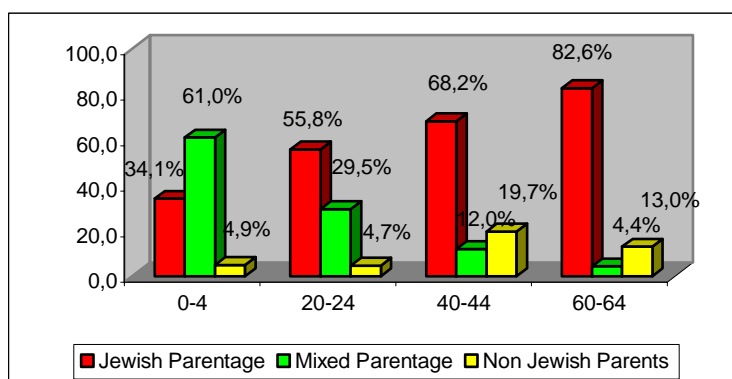
Eighty-two percent of the people between 60 and 64 years old were born in endogamic homes, in contrast with 4.4% that were raised in exogamic families. As time went by, these proportions gradually changed: the number of children born to mixed parentage families has tended to increase. The most abrupt variation was experienced in the youngest age group. Only 34.1% of the children between 0 and 4 years old had been born to Jewish parents, whereas 61% were being raised in intermarried families.

The following graph (Figure 1) clearly illustrates the variations experienced along time:

Figure 1

¹⁶ A Spanish translation of this paper was published. Geldstein Rosa: Matrimonios Mixtos en la población judía de Salta. Un análisis sociodemográfico. [Mixed Marriages in the Jewish population of Salta a sociodemographic análisis] Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos, 3:9 (ages to 1988) p. 217-237.

Proportion of children born to families of mixed parentage along time in the city of Salta



Although no demographic studies have been carried out in other small communities in the rest of the provinces of the country, we can assume that the process was very similar.

Another example that will help us comprehend this phenomenon is that of the Jewish community of the city of Rosario, one of the two largest Jewish populations of the country outside Buenos Aires.¹⁷ The study was carried out in 1990 and included 2741 families. Also in this case, we have selected the same age groups as in Salta.

Table 2

The exogamy process over time: the case of the Jewish population in Rosario: comparison among different age groups.

Age	Jewish Parentage		Mixed Parentage		Non-Jewish parents		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 - 4	153	43.2	167	47.1	34	9.6	354	100.0
20 - 24	338	69.7	124	25.6	23	4.7	485	100.0
40 - 44	380	75.5	34	6.8	89	17.7	503	100.0
60 - 64	412	87.1	9	1.9	52	11.0	473	100.0

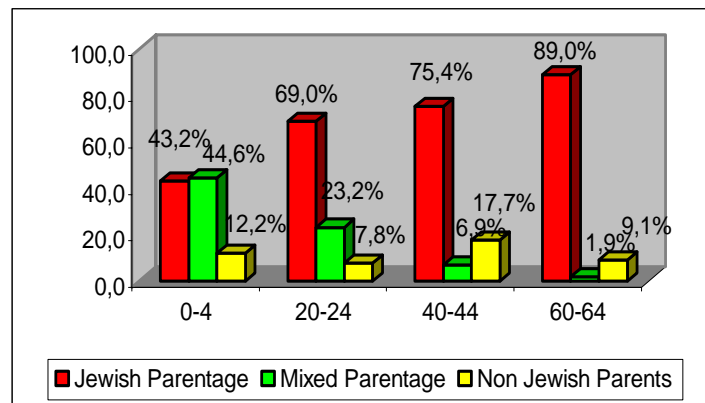
As expected, 87.1% of the grown-ups surveyed at that time (1990) who were between 60 and 64 years old, had been born to Jewish parents. The younger the people, the lower the percentage. In the age group 20-24, the percentage of children born to Jewish parents was 69.7%. The growth of this process was reflected in the 0-4 age group.

Unlike Salta, where the number of children born to exogamic families make up a large majority, in Rosario the proportion of children born to endogamic and exogamic families is very similar, although there is already a slight difference in favor of the children born to intermarried families (47.1 and 43.2, respectively).

¹⁷The other important Jewish community, is located at the city of Cordoba.

Graph 2:

Proportion of children born to families of mixed parentage over time in the city of Rosario



Although the figures by themselves are not enough to describe, explain, or evaluate the consequences of the intermarriage phenomenon, there is no doubt, at least in the Argentinean case, that exogamic families have a lower level of involvement with the community life and also a lower level of observance of Jewish customs and rituals.

From this perspective, it is undoubtedly true that beside quantitative information, we need studies based on anthropological techniques or with a psycho-social approach. As far as we know, the only one study of this kind was carried out in Argentina, in the 1980s by Daniel Bargman, a social anthropologist who worked in those years at the Historical and Social Studies Center of AMIA (CEHIS). In a summary published in 1990, we can read some illustrative testimonies about the feelings, opinions and attitudes of some intermarried partners.¹⁸ Although they do not represent all the universe, these testimonies provide good insight into the ways in which different couples negotiate or make decisions related to Jewish identity issues.

The following is Marcos and Dolores's testimony. At that time, this family had two children, one aged 21 and the other 18. This is what the husband said to Daniel Bargman:

"I had no option than being coherent with my own way of thinking." [He is making reference to his "humanistic," "universalistic" perspective.] *"I wanted my children to choose their identity freely. But it turned out that there were 'belongingness needs.'"*

And his wife added:

"My husband and I have made a serious mistake: when we decided to have children we thought they would decide by themselves whether they would be Jewish, Catholic, or Muslim when they were old enough. But I think religion is not something you choose, but rather something you breathe since childhood, that you are fed with in the same way you are fed with milk. Some children may have no problems with their identity, but Pablo did, and I think that it is important to be identified with a certain group."

¹⁸ Bargman, Daniel: *Matrimonios Mixtos y Continuidad Judía: Dilemas y Desafíos*, [[Intermarriages and Jewish Continuity: Dilemmas and Challenges], CEHIS/AMIA, Buenos Aires, 1991, 14 p.

(After detecting this "belongingness need," they decided that their children should attend ORT secondary school).

Another aspect to take into account is connected with the social class or socio-economic situation of the intermarried couple. In another testimony gathered by Bargman we may just see an example of this situation. Leonardo, 51 years old, said:

"Now it is more difficult to be Jewish... because the monthly fee of all institutions one could become a member of, like Macabi, Hebraica or Hacoaj, are equivalent to 25% of the basic salary of a shop employee." [To this person, the attendance of his two children to ORT secondary schools and Rambam, even with partial subsidies, meant an important part of his salary.] "An employee... can not pay X dollars in tuition fees for each of his children at schools or sport clubs. That is why one is forced not to send them to a Jewish school..."

Undoubtedly this problem goes beyond the issue of exogamy. However, if we consider that in the last years there have been many mixed families of scarce resources, we should not overlook the incidence of these factors if we intend to keep many of these intermarried families within the Jewish community.

The critical economic crisis in Argentina of the year 2002 obliged many local Jewish institutions and international organizations like the JDC to address plentiful resources to help thousands of poor or impoverished families. An interesting phenomenon both in Buenos Aires and in all the Jewish communities in the provinces is that many of the people asking for assistance were in mixed marriages with low resources and, until then, had no link at all with the organized Jewish community.

This provides for new research approaches we need in order to better understand this phenomenon, not only in its causes but also in its consequences.

Data from the Buenos Aires Civil Marriage Registry

To conclude our remarks on the issue of intermarriage during the 1980s, I will refer now to another research experience. In 1990, we got access to the archives of the Buenos Aires Civil Marriage Registry. One of the researchers of the center had the chance to review the records of the marriages carried out during 1989 in one of the branches of the Civil Marriage Registry located near some neighborhoods with a high number of Jewish families. This gave us our first opportunity to get first hand information about the dynamics of mixed marriages.¹⁹

From a total of 2560 marriages recorded that year at this office, we detected 317 marriage certificates involving people of Jewish origin. Although the table below (Table 2) can not be considered as representing the trends of the total Jewish population in Buenos Aires in these years, this is a very important source which allows us to widen our perspective on this subject.

¹⁹ Bargman, Daniel: Informe sobre casamientos de judíos registrados en un Registro Civil de la ciudad de Buenos Aires (publicación interna, 1991) [Report on Jewish marriages recorded in an office of the Civil Registry of the City of Buenos Aires] (non published report) CEHIS/AMIA (1991).

One hundred seventy-six out of the 317 marriages were exogamic (56%) and only 141 were endogamic (44%). In 141 endogamic marriages, the number of people involved is 282 (i.e., 62% of the Jewish individuals). Likewise, 176 individuals of Jewish origin married non-Jewish partners, accounting for 38% of the Jewish individuals.

To simplify the presentation, we also consider as endogamic marriages those cases where a son or a daughter of mixed parentage married a Jewish partner. On the contrary, a son or a daughter of mixed parentage married a non-Jewish partner is included in the category of exogamic marriage.

Table 3
Marriage patterns of Jews as recorded in the District Office N° 11
of the Civil Registry in Buenos Aires

Ethnic-Cultural or Religious Background of the couples	Marriages		Jewish individuals involved	
	N°	%	N°	%
Both partners, of Jewish origin	131		232	
A son or a daughter raised in a mixed family married to a Jew	10		20	
Total of endogamic marriages	141	44.5%	282	61.6%
Only one of the partners of Jewish origin	135		135	
A son or a daughter raised in a mixed family married to a non-Jew	41		41	
Total of exogamic marriages	176	55.5%	176	38.4%

According to these figures, only 20% of those raised in mixed families decided to marry a Jew. On the contrary, 80% of the sons and daughters who grow up in mixed families choose a non-Jewish partner. This large proportion of descendants of mixed families who married non-Jews reconfirms the hypothesis that the chances of a son or a daughter of a mixed family choosing a Jewish partner are very low. Finally, these records also allow us to observe another factor significant to out-marriage: a high number of women of Jewish origin (57 out the 135 registered cases or 42%) married non-Jewish partners.

Between 1991 and 2001, no socio-demographic studies were conducted with the exception of a survey on the Jewish population in the city of Cordoba in 1990,²⁰ nor was the issue of intermarriage explored by any researcher.

Findings from a Survey Sponsored by the JDC Office in Buenos Aires

This was not a sample study but an attempt to survey all the families living in specific areas of three neighborhoods in the city of Buenos Aires (around 150 blocks). These families were located through lists of presumably Jewish families obtained from different sources. All in all, 1517 families were polled, which made up for a total of 3584 people (i.e., an average of 2.4 people per family)²¹.

These figures include 242 people of non-Jewish origin that make up the enlarged Jewish population (i.e., 6.7% of the total). As we can see below in Table 4, 65% of this group belongs to the age groups between 30 and 59 years old (i.e., people born between 1943 and 1972)

Table 4
Distribution of the Enlarged Jewish Population According to Age.

Age	Total		Jewish Population		Non-Jewish Population	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-9	276	7.7%	268	8.0%	8	3.3%
10-19	433	12.1%	425	12.7%	8	3.3%
20-29	408	11.4%	386	11.5%	22	9.1%
30-39	354	9.9%	304	9.1%	50	20.7%
40-49	474	13.2%	427	12.8%	47	19.4%
50-59	529	14.8%	469	14.0%	60	24.8%
60-69	433	12.1%	410	12.3%	23	9.5%
70-79	461	12.9%	443	13.3%	18	7.4%
80-89	189	5.3%	184	5.5%	5	2.1%
90-99	20	0.6%	20	0.6%		
N/A	7	0.2%	6	0.2%	1	0.4%
Total	3584	100.0%	3342	100.0%	242	100.0%

As expected, most of the cases are spouses of Jewish partners: 85 men and 118 women. These cases account for 83.9% of the enlarged Jewish population (203 cases). If we even add the 6 cases of non-Jewish women (widows and divorced women of Jewish spouses), this percentage rises to 86.4% of the total.

²⁰ We regret that the findings of this study have not been published.

²¹ Rubel Yaacov: La población judía de 3 barrios de la ciudad de Buenos Aires – Perfil socio-demográfico. [Jewish population from three neighborhoods of the City of Buenos Aires – Socio-demographic profile], Joint Distribution Committee, Latin American Office, July 2003, 81 p.

In order to simplify the analysis of this table, we have divided the surveyed population into three groups according to their ethnic-cultural or religious origin.

Table 5
Distribution by age of the surveyed population according to ethnic-cultural or religious origin.

Age	ETHNIC-CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND							
	Jewish Parentage		Mixed Parentage		Non-Jewish Ancestors		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-4	77	57.9%	52	39.1%	4	3.0%	133	100.0%
5-9	107	74.8%	32	22.4%	4	2.8%	143	100.0%
10-14	135	74.6%	41	22.7%	5	2.8%	181	100.0%
15-19	194	77.0%	55	21.8%	3	1.2%	252	100.0%
20-24	177	76.3%	52	22.4%	3	1.3%	232	100.0%
25-29	124	70.5%	33	18.8%	19	10.8%	176	100.0%
30-34	125	78.1%	5	3.1%	30	18.8%	160	100.0%
35-39	164	84.5%	10	5.2%	20	10.3%	194	100.0%
40-44	187	87.8%	8	3.8%	18	8.5%	213	100.0%
45-49	228	87.4%	4	1.5%	29	11.1%	261	100.0%
50-54	256	88.6%	2	0.7%	31	10.7%	289	100.0%
55-59	205	85.4%	6	2.5%	29	12.1%	240	100.0%
60-64	193	89.8%	4	1.9%	18	8.4%	215	100.0%
65-69	211	96.8%	2	0.9%	5	2.3%	218	100.0%
70-74	239	96.8%			8	3.2%	247	100.0%
75-79	203	94.9%	1	0.5%	10	4.7%	214	100.0%
80-84	125	97.7%			3	2.3%	128	100.0%
85-89	59	96.7%			2	3.3%	61	100.0%
90 +	20	100.0%					20	100.0%
N/A	6	85.7%			1	14.3%	7	100.0%
Total	3035	84.7%	307	8.6%	242	6.8%	3584	100.0%

The first group is made up of all the people born and raised in Jewish homes. For the purpose of this presentation, we have also included in this group the couples in which one partner is from Jewish origin and the other only has one Jewish parent. (The number of cases with this configuration is statistically not relevant, and therefore, does not affect the general picture.)

In order to counterbalance these cases, we have opted for the same criterion when the configuration was the opposite. We have considered as non-Jews those cases where one of the members of the couple was not Jewish and the other spouse had only one parent of Jewish origin. (These cases are very few and they do not distort the proportion of members of the second group making up the enlarged Jewish population.)

The third group is constituted by the sons and daughters born into exogamic families.

As we can see, there is a high correlation between age and membership one of these three groups. More than 90% of people older than 65 years old are to be of Jewish origin. Starting with the next-youngest age group (60-64), this percentage is slowly but systematically decreasing. Still, between 84.5% and 89.8% of the people who at the time of the poll were between 35 and 64 years old were of Jewish origin. Already from the 30 – 34 age group category, the proportion of children born to endogamic marriages is below 80%.

Also in the ages under 30 years old (between 5 and 24 years old) children with Jewish parents represent approximately 75% of the total age group population. This percentage decreases abruptly in the group of people from 0-4 years old. Only 57.9% of the children belonging to this age group had been born to endogamic-constituted families. This represents a direct consequence of the increase in exogamic marriages that took place in the last years, especially during the 1990s. The 52 children of exogamic marriages belonging to this age group account for 39.1% of the total cases of 0 – 4 years old.

At this point, we deem it important to repeat that these conclusions can not be extended to the overall Jewish population in the city of Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that they reflect a significant increase in the rate of marriages or informal unions of an exogamic nature.

When we analyze this chart, it can be observed that people of non-Jewish origin account for more than 10% in each age group between 25 and 59 years old (except for the 40 – 44 age category in which this proportion decreases to 8.5%). On the other hand, the percentage is much higher (18.7%) in the group aged 30-34. This figure is congruent with the high proportion of children between 0-4 years old who in the majority of the cases are children of this group of parents.

One of the most relevant findings that enables us to assess the relationship between intermarriage and some indicators of belongingness and/or involvement in the Jewish community is that connected to the decision to send children to a Jewish school.

Let’s begin with the kindergarten level.

Table 6
Relation between the ethnic-cultural or religious background of parents and the type of kindergarten chosen for their children.

Type of Kindergarten	Type of Marriage			
	Endogamic		Exogamic	
	F	%	F	%
Jewish	37	58.7%	2	6.9%
Private	23	36.5%	18	62.1%
Public	3	4.8%	7	24.1%
No Answer			2	6.9%
Total	63	100.0%	29	100.0%

As we can see, from the 92 children in the age of kindergarten, 63 (68.5%) were raised both in endogamic families while 29 of them (31.5%) had only one Jewish progenitor.

Endogamic-constituted families divided their preferences basically into two: 58.7% chose a Jewish kindergarten while 36.5% chose a private kindergarten. On the other hand, only 7% of the exogamic families chose a Jewish kindergarten compared to the 62% that decided to send their children to a private kindergarten.

In the elementary level (ages 6 to 12) the proportions were not very different. Fifty six percent of the children born to Jewish parents studied in Jewish elementary day schools, whereas only 14% of the children born into exogamic families attended a Jewish day school. As we can see in Table 7, most exogamically married parents prefer to send their children to public schools.

Table 7
Relationship Between the Ethnic-Cultural or Religious Background of the Parents and the Type of Elementary School Attended by their Children

Type of School	Type of Marriage			
	Endogamic		Exogamic	
	F	%	F	%
Jewish	87	55.8%	7	14.0%
Private	31	19.9%	13	26.0%
Public	37	23.7%	28	56.0%
No Answer	1	0.6%	2	4.0%
Total	156	100.0%	50	100.0%

The considerations and criteria for choosing a secondary school are very different from those prevailing at the time of picking a kindergarten or an elementary school. From this perspective, it is interesting to find out if the preferences of the parents for one kind of institution or another differ significantly. The following chart (Table 8) provides a first answer to this questioning:

Table 8
Relationship between the endogamic and exogamic nature of the marriage and the type of secondary school attended by their children.

Type of School	Type of Marriage			
	Endogamic		Exogamic	
	F	%	F	%
Jewish	102	52.0%	11	21.6%
Private	25	12.8%	12	23.5%
Public	68	34.7%	28	54.9%
No Answer	1	0.5%		
Total	196	100.0%	51	100.0%

The majority of these parents and their children divide their preferences between two main options: Jewish secondary schools (45.7%) and public secondary schools (38.9%). (The latter include as well two schools related to the University of Buenos Aires.)

When analyzing the type of institution chosen at the kindergarten and elementary levels, it seems clear that in the families where one of the partners is not Jewish, the desire to provide their children with a Jewish educational background was quite low. This trend somehow changes when we analyze the type of choice at the secondary level. On the one hand, the proportion of children of endogamic families attending Jewish secondary schools (52%) is slightly lower compared to the percentage of students attending elementary schools (55.8%). At the same time, it is interesting to notice a relative increase in the proportion of students stemming from exogamic families attending Jewish secondary schools (21.6%) compared to the percentage we have observed in the Jewish elementary school (14.0%).

In order to properly understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to stress that this is largely a consequence of the high academic level of ORT school. This is the main reason driving parents and their children to choose this school. Although Judaic studies are just a marginal part of the curricula, many students raised in exogamic families have the possibility to connect for the first time with Jewish culture contents. Even when no research has been done on the incidence of this experience on this type of students, ORT schools are undeniably a frame (at least potentially) of Jewish socialization. This is why we consider this an interesting fact to highlight.

The Cohort of Youngsters Born in 1980

I will present now the findings of a study that we have recently concluded. This work provides several findings which are very relevant for the topic in question.

As you may be aware of, the Jewish Agency has decided to develop a socio-demographic study about the Jewish population in Argentina within the frame of the “Initiative for Jewish Demography.”

The research tools used in this case are very different from the methodology applied, for instance, at the JNPS of the United States. We have built a database with all the last names and first names of presumably Jewish origin. (In Argentina, people can only change the last name under exceptional circumstances, which makes it easier to detect typical Jewish surnames.) The names were gathered from the membership lists of all the Jewish organizations and also from non-Jewish sources.

The most important official sources are two: the electoral roll (which includes Argentinian citizens of 18 years and over) and the National Social Security Records. We also included data from phonebooks. In an attempt to ensure the truthfulness of the employed sources and assess the accuracy of the existing estimations, we decided to poll all the people with presumably Jewish last names who were born in 1980.²²

Thus far, the total number of the interviewed youngsters is 1,997. One of the questions they had been asked was related to the religious or ethnic-cultural background or intra-ethnic origin of their parents (i.e., their Ashkenazi or Sephardic ancestry). Another important aspect of the survey was to find out if there was any correlation between the Ashkenazi or Sephardic origin of a Jewish man and his tendency to marry a non-Jewish woman.

The same reasoning is valid, of course, in the case of Jewish women marrying a non-Jewish partner. In the surveys conducted in Buenos Aires, we pay special attention to these interethnic differences because in our opinion they help to achieve a better understanding of the intermarriage processes. (For example, in the table below we can observe that the percentage of men and women of Sephardic origin, married to a non-Jewish partner, is lower than the proportion found in men and women of Ashkenazi origin).

Another important finding of this table is connected to the differences observed in the ethnic cultural and/or religious background between the youngsters who live in the city of Buenos Aires and those who live in the suburban areas. In the City of Buenos Aires, the youngsters born to endogamic families account for 80.9 %, whereas in suburban Buenos Aires, the children of Jewish parents account for 58.0%. This shows that in suburban areas, the proportion of exogamic marriages between the parents of surveyed youngsters (who married during the 1970s) was much higher than the cases recorded in the city of Buenos Aires. As a matter of fact, 42.0% of these suburban youngsters were born to exogamic families. In Buenos Aires city, the proportion is quite different: only 19.1% declared to have a mixed parentage.²³

²² Due to budget limitations, the survey focused on the youngsters residing in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. The universe to be interviewed was 4500 cases. This number also included families with surnames that are used both by Jews and non-Jews. The poll was conducted on the phone. Of course, not all the youngsters were located. In other cases, we did not have the phone number. There were some cases of young people who were not Jews although their surnames seemed to be Jewish (for example, Klein, Jalife, Abecasis, Schneider)

²³ Rubel Yaacov : The cohort of youngsters born in 1980. Jewish Agency, Initiative for Jewish Demography, 2003. Unpublished preliminary report

Table 9
Cohort born in 1980: relation between the ethnic-cultural or religious background and their geographic area of residence

Ethnic cultural or religious origin of the parents	Buenos Aires City		Suburban areas around Buenos Aires		TOTAL	
		%		%		%
Jewish parentage	1247	80.9	185	58.0	1432	77.0
Ashkenazi Father/Non-Jewish Mother	188	12.2	102	32.0	290	15.6
Sephardic Father/Non-Jewish Mother	38	2.4	12	3.8	50	2.7
Ashkenazi Mother/Non-Jewish Father	58	3.8	17	5.3	75	4.0
Sephardic Mother/Non-Jewish Father	11	0.7	3	0.9	14	0.7
TOTAL	1542	100.0	319	100.0	1861	100.0

The previous table does not include the cases of young people born in 1980 who were contacted on the basis of their Jewish last names who, although they did have a Jewish ancestor, they considered themselves Catholic.

This finding illustrates a dimension of the intermarriage problem, about which we did not have up to date empirical evidence: sons or daughters of intermarried couples who were raised as Catholics or even, baptized. Another fact, not less relevant, is that in all the cases, the pattern was the same: a *man* of Jewish origin married to a Catholic woman. (We have also found some cases in which even the father of Jewish origin has been baptized. It is clear that the weak ethnic identity of these Jewish-origin parents has paved the way for their Catholic spouses to decide to socialize their children in the Catholic faith.)

Other answers also allow us to illustrate the existence of exogamic marriages even in the generation of great-grandparents of young people born in 1980. In generational terms, this would ratify the existence of exogamic cases in the first decades of the 20th century.

This early separation from the Jewish group has been transferred to the generation of their children. For this reason, young people of the cohort 1980, that is to say the great-grandchildren of those Jews we made reference to above, were totally Catholic and they did not have any emotional bonds with the roots of their ancestors.

The following chart (Table 10) illustrates the encountered differences:

Table 10

Youngsters of Jewish descent born in 1980 who are baptized or identify themselves as Catholic: distribution according to ethno-cultural or religious origin of their ancestors.

Ethnic, cultural or religious origin of the parents	Buenos Aires City		Suburban areas around Buenos Aires		TOTAL	
		%		%		%
1. Ashkenazi Father/Catholic Mother	22	37.3	29	37.7	51	37.5
2. Sephardic Father/Catholic Mother	5	8.5	4	5.2	9	6.6
3. Ashkenazi Grandfather/Catholic Grandmother	11	18.6	28	36.4	39	28.7
4. Sephardic Grandfather/Catholic Grandmother	3	5.1	3	3.9	6	4.4
5. Non-Jewish Grandfather/Ashkenazi Grandmother	1	1.7	1	1.3	2	1.5
6. Ashkenazi Father (baptized)/Catholic Mother	3	5.1	3	3.9	6	4.4
7. Sephardic Father (baptized)/Catholic Mother	1	1.7			1	0.7
8. Ashkenazi Great-grandfather/Catholic Great-grandmother	9	15.3	4	5.2	13	9.6
9. Sephardic Great-grandfather/Catholic Great-grandmother	1	1.7	3	3.9	4	2.9
10. Ashkenazic Great-grandmother/Non-Jewish Great grandfather	1	1.7	1	1.3	2	1.5
11. N/A	2	3.4	1	1.3	3	2.2
TOTAL	59	100.0	77	100.0	136	100.0

(This data has just been processed and deserves a more in-depth analysis than the one we can offer at this stage).

Besides the questions of the ethnic-cultural or religious origin, the questionnaire included one question about educational institutions those young people had attended. This allowed us to draw for the first time a clear picture of the proportion of young people from a specific age cohort that have received Jewish education, at either elementary or secondary level, or both.

When crossing this data with the ethnic-cultural and/or religious origin of the parents and the geographical areas of residence, significant differences come forth. That is why we considered it important to prepare two different tables, one related to the cohort inhabiting Buenos Aires city and the other to the youth scattered among the different districts of the suburban areas of the capital city.

The following chart (Table 11), which illustrates the information about primary and secondary schooling of the surveyed youth in Buenos Aires city, seeks to examine the existing correlation between the endogamic and exogamic nature of the family and the type of primary or secondary school attended by the children. Moreover, we considered it useful to analyze if the Ashkenazi or Sephardic origin of the parents had any influence on the chosen educational option.

We have used a similar dichotomy in the case of exogamic-constituted families, dividing them according to the sex of the Jewish member of the couple. Although we were aware that we could not generalize the findings to other age groups, we found it interesting to examine the eventual correlation between the Jewish origin of the mother, and the greater or lesser propensity to send the children to a Jewish school.

When analyzing the data globally, we observe that the families where the father or both spouses are of Sephardic origin, the propensity to provide children with Jewish education is greater. Eighty-five percent of the children of these families have completed, at least one of the two levels of education, i.e., either elementary or secondary school, in a Jewish school. What is more, 62.3% of them completed both educational levels.

Children from families where the father or both spouses are of Ashkenazi origin have been less exposed to Jewish education. One of the two levels of education was completed in a Jewish setting for 66.4%, and 36.7% of this total has been exposed to a more extended Jewish education, completing both primary and secondary levels. The data related to children raised in exogamic families is very different. In mixed-parentage families with a Jewish father, the number of children who have completed any of the two levels of education in Jewish settings is 15%. In the rest of the exogamic families where the mother is of Jewish origin, the proportion of children attending Jewish schools is twofold higher, accounting for 34.8% of the cases.

In order to accurately describe the figures related to children of mixed marriages analyzed in this paper, we need to make reference to the “ORT phenomenon.” In this case, ORT has been the only Jewish school chosen by youngsters from exogamic families included in our survey. We have already mentioned that the decision of attending ORT is not related to the teaching of Judaic studies (see p 19). What is more, if we excluded these cases from the analyzed table, we would only have 14 cases of children of mixed marriages who have received extended periods of Jewish education: 6 who attended primary level and 8 who completed both levels.

These figures confirm the findings of the JDC survey (see p 18-19)

Table 11

Relation between the ethno-cultural and religious origin of the families and the decision of providing children with Jewish education

Type and level of the schools	Buenos Aires city									
	Ethno-cultural or religious background of the couples									
	Ashkenazi parents Ashkenazi father/ Sephardic mother		Sephardic parents Sephardic father/ Ashkenazi mother		Jewish father/ Non-Jewish mother		Non-Jewish father/ Jewish mother		Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Elementary and Secondary Jewish Schools	334	36.7	210	62.3	7	3.1	1	1.4	552	35.8
Elementary Jewish Schools/ Public or Private Secondary Schools	144	15.9	32	9.5	4	1.7	2	2.8	182	11.8
Public or Private Primary Schools/Jewish Secondary Schools	126	13.8	46	13.6	23	10.1	21	30.4	216	14.0
SUBTOTAL	604	66.4	288	85.5	34	15.0	24	34.8	950	61.6
Non-Jewish elementary & Secondary Schools	306	33.6	49	14.5	192	85.0	45	65.2	592	38.4
TOTAL	910	100.0	337	100.0	226	100.0	69	100.0	1542	100.0

Table 12

Relation between the ethno-cultural and religious origin of families and the decision of providing children with Jewish education

Type and level of the schools	SUBURBAN AREAS AROUND BUENOS AIRES CITY									
	Ethno-cultural or religious background of the couples									
	Ashkenazi parents Ashkenazi father/ Sephardic mother		Sephardic parents Sephardic father/ Ashkenazi mother		Jewish father/ Non-Jewish mother		Non-Jewish father/ Jewish mother		Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Elementary and Secondary Jewish Schools	35	21.7	6	25.0	1	0.9	3	15.0	45	14.1
Elementary Jewish Schools/ Public or Private Secondary Schools	22	13.7	3	12.5	3	2.6			28	8.8
Public or Private Primary Schools/Jewish Secondary Schools	18	11.2	4	16.7	8	7.1			30	9.4
SUBTOTAL	75	46.6	13	54.2	12	10.6	3	15.0	103	32.3

Table 12

Relation between the ethno-cultural and religious origin of families and the decision of providing children with Jewish education

Non-Jewish elementary & Secondary Schools	86	53.4	11	45.8	102	89.4	17	85.0	216	67.7
TOTAL	161	100.0	24	100.0	114	100.0	20	100.0	319	100.0

In the suburban areas of Buenos Aires, the situation is completely different from the above. The endogamic nature of the family is still a valued factor, but its incidence is much smaller. The detailed analysis of these percentage differences goes beyond the scope of this work, but the reasons for them are surely of different nature. On the one hand, in these areas the number of Jewish schools is much smaller. On the other hand, we can presume with enough grounds that many of these families were in no condition to afford the tuition. Moreover, we need to take into account the Jewish desocialization processes strengthened by the disengagement from every Jewish institutional frame.

Notwithstanding all these negative circumstances, we can observe that 54.2% of the children raised in Sephardic families have completed, either during their childhood or youth, one of the two levels of education. The youngsters from Ashkenazi families account for a slightly smaller proportion: 46.6% of the total.

The children of mixed marriages living in the suburban areas of Buenos Aires who have attended a Jewish school account for a very insignificant figure. What is more, 8 cases out of the 15 in this situation account for students of ORT School.

In other words, if the attendance at a Jewish school were considered an indicator of belonging and/or participation, the data stemming from these two charts would clearly indicate that exogamic-constituted families, at least in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, show a very low propensity of integration to the core Jewish population.

FINAL COMMENTS

The data presented allows us to hypothesize that the rate of out-marriage is high, specially outside Buenos Aires. According to the 1980 cohort study we have presented, the situation of the Jews in most districts of the suburban area is very different from that of the Jews living in Buenos Aires. High rates of exogamy, along with extreme cases of baptisms or adoption of the Catholic religion of the mother, are very disturbing symptoms of Jewish desocialization processes .

In the city of Buenos Aires, the educational work of dozens of schools, the activities of the community centers and country clubs, the growth and strengthening of different orthodox groups, and the presence of the Conservative congregations provide for a slightly more optimistic vision. Still, we need to take into account that many Jewish families and individuals – the numbers of which we do not know – are not connected to any institution. This lack of information prevents us from accurately estimating the real extent of the intermarriage process.

As we have observed in a survey sponsored by JDC, only a small percentage of exogamic families provide their children with Jewish education. This means that as time goes by, this trend alone will produce a lower number of students in Jewish schools. In the rest of the Argentina provinces, the Jewish population is scattered across several dozen cities, in general capital cities of different provinces and an unknown number of small towns with very few Jewish families. Only some twenty Jewish communities outside Buenos Aires had the possibility to run even some of the services and frames needed to maintain Jewish life and traditions, like schools, synagogues, community centers, youth movements, adult Jewish educational programs, etc.

On the other hand, as we have seen from the exogamy data about communities such as Salta and Rosario, in the last few years, the number of children born to exogamic families is higher than the number of children raised in endogamic families. Taking into account that in almost all the cities of the interior of the country the “marriage market” is very reduced, we can certainly estimate that in the near future, the exogamic families will outnumber the endogamic Jewish families.

The information we have presented is fragmentary. Still, it allows us to arrive to at some tentative conclusions and set forth hypotheses which need to be confirmed in future studies. First, the data on Argentina confirms the findings from other countries about the correlation between Jewish population density and the exogamy rate in that exogamy rates in the provinces of Argentina are much higher than the rates in Buenos Aires city. Nevertheless, the findings obtained from the marriage records of a specific Civil Registry office in 1989 would account for exogamic rates much higher than the ones which were found in the few socio-demographic studies that were carried out up to the present on the Jews living in Buenos Aires City.

Still, the survey of the youth cohort born in 1980 (which means that their parents got married, mainly, during the 1970's) clearly shows that the proportion of exogamic marriages is much higher in suburban areas surrounding Buenos Aires than in the city itself. In this region there were also many more cases of children from exogamic marriages who were already baptized than in the city of Buenos Aires and even in the provinces. In all these cases, the model of the parental couple was that of a Jewish man married to a Catholic woman who socialized her children in her religious faith.

In this sense, we deem it convenient to point out that in the cities from the provinces of Argentina, the marriage between a Jewish man and a non-Jewish woman has other characteristics. In many cases, the non-Jewish woman tries to become part of the Jewish group, even without having converted. It is usually she who encourages the couple's children to attend a community Jewish school. In other cases, she even participates in the board of local Jewish institutions. In spite of these examples, it is undoubtedly true, according to the findings, that the percentage of observance of basic traditional Jewish rituals, like circumcision and bar mitzvah of the children, is much lower in exogamic families.

In Argentina, the study of this topic is only in its beginning. It is still necessary to carry out qualitative surveys in order to provide for a deeper insight of the mechanisms and strategies used by intermarried couples in order to socialize their children.

In spite of the weighty significance of the Catholic Church, the civil society—particularly that made up by wide sectors of the middle class, university graduates, members of the cultural elite, etc., is basically secular. From this perspective, we consider that conversion into Judaism does not seem to be a massively accepted mechanism by the non-Jewish spouse (mainly women). Until this moment, this issue has not drawn the attention of the central bodies of the Jewish community. Therefore, no outreach policies have been developed.

Still, we cannot overlook this issue in connection to the big transformations that took place and the identity and identification processes of the new generations, mainly in the last 10-15 years. Such processes of social entropy endanger the future of the Jewish communities in Argentina even more.

Finally, let me broaden the focus of the analysis into another topic. I consider that together with intermarriage, there is another cultural challenge demanding the adoption of a comprehensive policy. I refer to the role of the Jewish family in the preservation and strengthening of Jewish identity in the Diaspora countries. At a time when the traditional family is involved in a swift process of transformation, we need to find suitable strategies to strengthen the Jewish family.

From this point of view, I would like to suggest that the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute evaluate the feasibility of carrying out a comparative study in different Jewish communities about the identity profiles of the new Jewish families. I hope that this round table will be a good opportunity to broaden the perspective of comparative research suggested by Moshe Davis (z'l), the Head of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, some 30 years ago. Precisely, one of his articles, which has a direct connection with this round table, titled *Mixed Marriages in Western Jewry: Historical background to the Jewish Response*,²⁴ may constitute an invitation to update this perspective and widen it with innovative theoretical approaches, intensive field research, and creative community policies.

²⁴ CCAR_ Central Conference American Rabbis Journal, xix:2 (1972) p. 2-47