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## The American Jewish Periphery

Levy Institute

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*Thought*, an annual compendium of rich and inspiring writing from leading secular Jewish thinkers throughout the world. Personally an active and committed secular and cultural Jew, Ms. Baron founded a secular Jewish community in New York City in 1991, is co-chair of its cultural Sunday school and director of the cultural bar/bat mitzvah program, through which she works to inspire and engage secular Jewish youth and their families in their Jewish cultural heritage, history, values and commitment to social justice.

**Lynn Davidman** (Ph.D., Brandeis University, 1986) is a qualitative sociologist who is Professor of Judaic Studies, American Civilization and Gender Studies. She works in the fields of gender studies and the sociology of religion. She has published books and articles that offer feminist perspectives of Jewish Studies, and explore the topics of women and religion, women and Judaism, and gender and religion. She is currently working on her new book, *Leaving Home*. She is the author of the book *Motherloss* (University of California Press, 2000) and is a member of the advisory board of the Center for the Study of Religion, and the Editorial Board for *Qualitative Sociology*. She is also co-author of the following three forthcoming articles, currently under review: with Arthur L. Greil, "Two Characters in Search of a Script" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*; with Shelly Tenenbaum, "It's in My Genes: Biological Discourse and Essentialist Views of Identity Among Contemporary American Jews"; and with Nurit Stadler, "Leaving Faith Behind: A comparative Analysis of Ex-Orthodox Jews in Israel and the United States."

**Todd M. Endelman**, the William Haber Professor of Modern Jewish History, received his B.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1968 and his Ph.D. at Harvard University in 1976. He taught at Yeshiva University and Indiana University before going to Michigan in 1985. He is a specialist in the social history of the Jews in Western Europe and Anglo-Jewish history. His publications include: *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (1979); *Racial Assimilation in Anglo-Jewish History, 1656-1945* (1990); and *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (2002). He has also edited *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (1987); *Comparing Jewish Societies* (1997); and *Disraeli's Jewishness* (2002). His current research project is a comparative study of conversion and other forms of radical assimilation in Europe and North America from the enlightenment to the present.

**Nancy Foner** is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She has studied Jamaicans in their home society as well as in New York and London, nursing home workers in New York, and has written widely on immigration to New York City. She is particularly interested in the comparative study of immigration - comparing immigration today with earlier periods in the United States, the immigrant experience in various American gateway cities, and immigration in the United States and Europe. She is the author or editor of thirteen books, including *In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration* (NYU Press, 2005), *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*



**The American Jewish Periphery**  
A conference of The Levy Economics Institute

October 26-27, 2006

**PARTICIPANT BIOS**

The seeds of **Richard Alba's** interest in ethnicity were sown during his childhood in the Bronx of the 1940s and 1950s and nurtured intellectually at Columbia University, where he received his undergraduate and graduate education, completing his Ph.D. in 1974. He is currently Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Public Policy at the University at Albany, SUNY, where he also directs the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis and the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research. His teaching and research focus mainly on race/ethnicity and international migration, in the U.S. and in Europe, where he has done research in France and in Germany, with the support of Fulbright grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the German Marshall Fund. His books include *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (1990); *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (1985); and, most recently, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (2003), co-written with Victor Nee. The last book won the 2004 Thomas & Znaniecki Book Award of the American Sociological Association and the 2005 Mirra Komarovsky Award of the Eastern Sociological Society. It was also the 2003 Honorable mention of the Association of American Publishers for the Professional/Scholarly Publishing Annual Award in Sociology & Anthropology.

**Myrna Baron** serves as Executive Director of the Center for Cultural Judaism in New York City, where she develops and implements educational and outreach programs designed to promote Jewish pluralism and to engage the broad and diverse population of cultural Jews. Among the most recent endeavors of the Center is the development of grants to colleges and universities for courses in the study of the secularization of Jewish thought and culture. These courses, known as the Posen Project, are underway in nearly 30 U.S. and Israeli institutions, a number that is expected to double in the coming years. Ms. Baron worked closely with the late esteemed sociologist Egon Mayer to publish two important population studies of American Jews, the American Jewish Identity Survey (AJIS 2001), and *Parental Perspectives of Their Children's Jewish Education* (conducted in 2003, published in 2005), for which she also served as editor. She also edits and publishes *Contemplate: The International Journal of Cultural Jewish*

Alice Goldstein has been active in many Jewish organizations. She is a past president of Career Women's Affiliate and of the Bureau of Jewish Education and a former chair of the Pillar on Building Jewish Neighborhoods of The Partnership (JFRI). She is currently a Vice President of the RI Holocaust Museum. She is also active at Temple Am David, chairing its Adult Education Committee and serves on the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island. As a survivor of Nazi Germany, Alice has been a speaker for the RIHM for the past decade. She is the recipient of a 2004 Outstanding Volunteer Award from the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island, and in 2005 received the Never Again Award of the Jewish Federation.

**Sidney Goldstein** is George Hazard Crooker University Professor Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Brown University and Professor of Population Studies (Research). He served as Director of Brown's Population Studies and Training Center from 1965-1989. Reflecting his primary interest in population studies, Prof. Goldstein has done extensive research and writing on various aspects of the population of the United States and a number of foreign countries, including especially Denmark, Thailand, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Guatemala, and South Africa. He is an internationally recognized authority on problems of urbanization and migration in less developed countries, and has served as consultant to a number of private and government agencies and foundations, including the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the United Nations, and the Ford Foundation. He is a former Fulbright Scholar and Guggenheim Fellow. Dr. Goldstein served as President of the Population Association of America in 1976-77. In 1981 and 1983, Dr. Goldstein received awards from the National Academy of Science's Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China to lecture and do research in China on the relation between population change and economic development. Goldstein was named the 2005 Laureate of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Reflecting his interest and involvement in the Jewish community, Dr. Goldstein has conducted a number of studies of the Jewish population of the United States, including work on the Jewish population of Rhode Island. He is the author of a number of reports on the Jewish population, including *A Population Survey of the Greater Providence Jewish Community of 1963*, *Jewish Americans*, and *The Jewish Community of Rhode Island: A Social and Demographic Survey, 1987*, the latter two co-authored with Calvin Goldscheider. He has completed a monograph (with Alice Goldstein) on the mobility of Jewish Americans, *Jews on the Move*, based on data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. In addition, he has published a large number of articles on Jewish demography. In recent years, Dr. Goldstein has, with support from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture, also studied the Lithuanian Jewish community in collaboration with Alice Goldstein. This research resulted in two reports: "Jewish Identity in Lithuania," issued by the *Jerusalem Letter*, and a monograph, *Lithuanian Jewry 1993*, published by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University. Prof. Goldstein has been active in the Jewish community of Rhode Island, serving on the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the Bureau of Jewish

(Yale University Press 2000, winner of the Theodore Saloutos Award of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society) and (with George Fredrickson) *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2004). Among her other activities, she has been a member of the Social Science Research Council Committee on International Migration and a president of the Society for Urban, National, and Transnational Anthropology; she is currently the Chair-elect of the International Migration section of the American Sociological Association and a member of the Executive Board of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

**Nathan Glazer** is the author of *American Judaism* (University of Chicago Press, 1957 and later editions) and "Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654-1954," in the *American Jewish Year Book*, 1955, and many articles and discussions on American Jews. His books include *Beyond the Melting Pot* (with Daniel P. Moynihan, MIT Press, 1963 and 1970), *Affirmative Discrimination*, *Ethnic Dilemmas*, *The Limits of Social Policy*, and *We are all multiculturalists now*, the latter four in print with Harvard University Press. He was part of the original editorial staff of *Commentary* magazine, edited *The Public Interest* from 1974 to 2004, taught sociology at the University of California, and at Harvard from 1969 until retirement. His most recent book, *From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture's Encounter with the American City*, will be published by Princeton in 2007.

**Alice Goldstein** is Research Associate Emeritus of the Population Studies and Training Center of Brown University. She received her BA at Connecticut College, and an MA at Brown. As a demographer, her research has focused on problems of how people respond to modernization. She has studied such diverse situations as migration and fertility in Thailand, changing marriage and fertility patterns of Jews and Catholics in nineteenth century Germany, and residential and occupational mobility patterns of Jews in Providence, RI from 1880-1930. She and her husband, Sidney Goldstein, have studied the demographic situation in the People's Republic of China in light of the efforts there to modernize the economy and changing population patterns in Vietnam, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and South Africa. She has published widely on these topics, often in collaboration with her husband. Alice Goldstein has also collaborated in the 1987 study of Rhode Island Jewry, *The Jewish Community of Rhode Island: A Social and Demographic Survey*. Her analyses of data from that study have focused particularly on women, voluntarism, and philanthropy. She has also investigated the mortality patterns of Rhode Island's Jews. She has participated in the analysis of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. The research has resulted in the publication of two reports (co-authored with Sylvia Fishman) focusing on the relation between Jewish education and Jewish identity of adults and children. She is also the co-author of a monograph (with Sidney Goldstein) on *Jews on the Move*, which has just been published. She served on the National Technical Advisory Committee for the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey. A resident of Rhode Island for almost 50 years,

Middle East study group of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. Dr. Gordis has written and lectured extensively on the pressing issues of contemporary Jewish life, the American Jewish community, Jewish education and interreligious pluralism. He lives in West Newton with his wife, Dr. Felice Gordis, who is Associate Professor and Chair of the Social Sciences Department at Lasell College. They have two married daughters and four granddaughters.

**Bethamie Horowitz** is a socio-psychologist who has carried out significant research about major issues facing the American Jews and Israelis. For the first years of her professional work she studied "images in conflict" among Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians and Americans. In 1988 she directed nightly polling of the Israeli electorate for the Labour Party under Shimon Peres. Since 1989 she has addressed a broad range of issues affecting American Jewry. As Research Director at New York Federation she conducted the 1991 New York Jewish Population Study, a social survey about the largest urban Jewish population in the world. She developed a groundbreaking inquiry into American Jewish identity entitled "Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity" which was published by UJA-Federation of New York in 2000, and has changed the way we think about assessing Jewish identity. For the past six years she has served as research director for the Mandel Foundation Israel. In addition, she writes the "Trend Spotting" column about noteworthy developments affecting American Jewry for *The Forward*, the only independent national Jewish newspaper in the U.S. A graduate of Harvard University, she received her doctorate from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She lives in New York City with her husband, Barry Holtz, and their two teenagers.

**Barry Kosmin** is a Research Professor in the Public Policy and Law Program and Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture in Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. Dr. Kosmin was previously a member of the doctoral faculty in Sociology at the Graduate School of the City University of New York, Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish/Non Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton, Director of Research for the North American Council of Jewish Federations, New York, and Founding Director of the North American Jewish Data Bank at the City University of New York. He was also a Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Hebrew University and Executive Director of the Statistical and Demographic Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Dr. Kosmin has directed many demographic and social surveys including: the 1990 CJF National Jewish Population Survey, the CUYN 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification, the National Survey of South African Jews 1998, the CUNY American Religious Identification Survey of 2001, and the CUNY American Jewish Identification Survey of 2001. He was joint series editor (with Dr. Sidney Goldstein) of the monograph series "American Jewish Society in the 1990s" for the State University of New York Press. Dr.

Education, the Jewish Seniors Agency, the Jewish Family Service, the Hillel Advisory Board, the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association, and Temple Am David. Nationally, Prof. Goldstein has served as a member of the American Jewish Committee Task Force on the Future of American Jewry and on the Board of Directors of the Association for the Sociological Study of Jewry. In 1984, Dr. Goldstein was named Chair of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Jewish Population Statistics (NTAC). In recognition of his research on the demography of American Jewry, holds an honorary appointment at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University. In 1987, Professor Goldstein was elected as the first occupant of a position on the Board of Directors of the Council of Jewish Federations reserved for an academician. He is currently on the Board of Directors of the Association for Jewish Demography and Statistics. Dr. Goldstein was selected as co-chair of the International Scientific Advisory Committee to help guide the 1990 round of worldwide surveys of the Jewish population being sponsored jointly by the Jewish Agency, the Government of Israel, the World Jewish Congress, and the Hebrew University. In 1990, Dr. Goldstein held an appointment as a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry. In recognition of his innovative work on Jewish demography, Dr. Goldstein was named a Laureate of the National Association for Jewish Culture in 2001 and awarded the Council of Jewish Federation's Plaque for Outstanding Leadership in the Field of Jewish Population Studies in 1992. In December 1992, he was also given a Citation for Distinguished Contributions to Jewish Demography by the Association for the Scientific Study of Jewry.

**David M. Gordis** is President and Professor of Rabbinics at Hebrew College, founding Director of The National Center on Jewish Policy Studies and the Interreligious Center on Public Life, both affiliates of Hebrew College. Over the past 12 years, under Dr. Gordis's leadership, Hebrew College has become one of the premier Jewish institutions of higher education in the country in both academic and community education programming. Using cutting-edge technology to expand access to advanced Jewish education and offering a wide array of innovative programs, Hebrew College is educating students of all ages and backgrounds to become knowledgeable participants, educators, and leaders in the Jewish community and the larger world. Guided by Dr. Gordis's vision, the College was dramatically transformed into a campus-based institution, moving from its former home of 50 years in Brookline, Massachusetts, to a new seven-acre campus in Newton Centre in 2001. Prior to assuming the presidency of Hebrew College, Dr. Gordis was vice-president of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. He was born in New York City and holds bachelor and master degrees from Columbia University, as well as Master of Hebrew Literature and Doctor of Philosophy in Talmud degrees from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he was ordained in 1964. Dr. Gordis has held a wide range of leadership positions, both in the Jewish and interreligious arenas. He currently serves as a founding member of the Association of Colleges of Jewish Studies, a board member of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Publication Society, and has been a member of the

Mollenkopf), (Russell Sage Foundation Press); and *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965* (with Reed Ueda and Helen Marrow), (Harvard University Press). She is also author of *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (Harvard University Press, 1999, paper ed. 2001). This book won five scholarly awards including the Mira Komarovsky Award of the Eastern Sociological Society, the Otis Dudley Duncan Award of the Population Section of the American Sociological Association, the Thomas and Znaniecki Award of the International Migration Section of the American Sociological Association, the Best Book Award of the Section on Race and Urban Politics of the American Political Science Association, and the Best Book Award of the Center for the Study of Inequality of Cornell University. Her other books include *Becoming New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the New Second Generation* (co-edited with Phillip Kasinitz and John Mollenkopf) (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2004), *Social Inequalities in Comparative Perspective* co-edited with Fiona Devine) (Blackwell Press, 2004), *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* (co-edited with Joel Perlmann) (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2002, paper 2005), *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (co-edited with Peggy Levitt) (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2002), *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (University of California Press, 1990) and *From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America* (with Stanley Lieberson) (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 1988). She is also the author of over 40 articles and chapters on racial and ethnic identity and immigrant assimilation. Waters currently has four ongoing research projects: *The New York Second Generation Project*, *Coming of Age in America*, *Katrina and Its Aftermath in the Lives of Community College Students*, and *The Second Generation in Europe and the United States*.

**Jack Wertheimer** is the Provost of The Jewish Theological Seminary, in which capacity he acts as the Chief Academic Officer. He is also the Joseph and Martha Mendelson Professor of American Jewish History and the Director of the Joseph and Miriam Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism. The Ratner Center preserves the records of the rabbis, synagogues, and organizations of the Conservative Movement, and also promotes research on the history and the contemporary state of Conservative Judaism. Dr. Wertheimer is the author of *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany*, which was published by Oxford University Press in 1987. He is also the editor of *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1987. Dr. Wertheimer published three books in 1993, two of which are edited volumes: *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (JTS/Harvard), and *The Modern Jewish Experience – A Reader's Guide* (NYU Press). He also wrote *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (Basic Books), which won the National Jewish Book Award for the best book on contemporary Jewish life in 1993–1994. *A People Divided* was reissued by the University Press of New England in September 1997. Dr. Wertheimer has also edited a two-volume history of JTS entitled *Tradition Renewed*. This richly illustrated history contains freshly commissioned essays by forty scholars from the United States, Canada, and Israel. Dr. Wertheimer has also

Kosmin's latest book (with Ariela Keysar) is *Religion in a Free Market: Religious and Non-Religious Americans*, Paramount Market Publications, Ithaca, New York 2006.

**Joel Perlmann** is senior scholar at The Levy Economics Institute and research professor at Bard College, where he teaches courses in history and sociology. His publications include *Ethnic Differences: Schooling and Social Structure among the Irish, Italians, Jews, and Blacks in an American City, 1880-1935* and *Italians Then, Mexicans Now: Immigrant Origins and Second-Generation Progress, 1890-2000*. He is co-editor, with Mary Waters, of *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals*. His current research includes 1) the demographic history of American ethnic intermarriage through the machine-readable samples of the 1850-2000 censuses; 2) a social profile of Russian Jewish emigration around 1900 based on the Russian census and American immigration records (working papers on the Levy website); and 3) an intellectual, bureaucratic, and political history of the "races and peoples" classification used for half a century by U.S. immigration authorities and nearly adopted by the U.S. census authorities.

**Benjamin Phillips** is a research associate at the Steinhardt Social Research Institute and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, where he is also a Ph.D. candidate in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Sociology departments. He is presently preparing to defend his dissertation, "Numbering the Jews: Evaluating and Improving American Jewish Population Studies," which analyzes the validity of past and present methods for studying American Jewish populations and testing a number of innovative approaches. Currently, Benjamin manages the 2005 Boston Jewish Community Study, scheduled for release in November 2006. In addition to his interest in survey research, Benjamin studies ethnic and religious status change, and is the author of two forthcoming articles in *Sociology of Religion* on ethno-religious switching and apostasy and on Jewish intermarriage as a test case of the notion of ethnic capital.

**Bruce Phillips** is a Professor of Jewish Communal Service in the School of Jewish Communal Service, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles. Dr. Phillips is among the leading sociologists studying the contemporary Jewish community, specializing in the sociology and demography of American Jewry. He received his B.A. at Brandeis University (1971) and Ph.D. at UCLA (1975).

**Mary C. Waters** is the M.E. Zukerman Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. She specializes in the study of immigration, inter-group relations, the formation of racial and ethnic identity among the children of immigrants, and the challenges of measuring race and ethnicity. Waters received a B.A. in Philosophy from Johns Hopkins University in 1978, an M.A. in Demography (1981) and an M.A. (1983) and Ph.D. in Sociology (1986) from the University of California at Berkeley. She has taught at Harvard University since 1986, and was chair of the Sociology Department from 2001-2005. She is the author of two forthcoming books, *Inheriting the City: The Second Generation Comes of Age* (with Jennifer Holdaway, Philip Kasinitz, and John

coordinated a major sociological study of Conservative synagogues under a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. A volume of essays on the project, entitled *Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and Their Members*, appeared in the summer of 2000. A two-volume edited collection of essays, entitled *Jewish Religious Leadership – Image and Reality*, appeared in late 2004 and was based upon two conferences Dr. Wertheimer organized at JTS. Most recently, he has edited volumes on the interplay between families and Jewish education, and also on the ways in which Jews have imagined the nature of Jewish community in the United States. Dr. Wertheimer is currently writing a book on the transformation of the American Jewish community in recent decades.





**Welcome to The Levy Economics Institute Conference on  
"The American-Jewish Periphery"  
October 26-27, 2006**

**Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup>**

Continental breakfast will take place at Blithewood beginning at 8:30 a.m.

**Vans will pick up passengers at the Beekman Arms at 8:15 a.m.**

**Checkout time at the Beekman Arms** is 12:00 noon. You should check out before boarding the van or driving to the Institute. Luggage may be brought to the Institute where it will be stored for you.

If you are traveling back to an airport, train station, or another destination via Institute provided transportation, please verify your time of departure from the Institute with registration desk staff.

Levy Institute staff members will be available at the registration desk and meals. They can be identified by the blue staff ribbons on their badges and will be happy to assist you in any way they can.

**Telephone numbers that may be helpful to you:**

Levy Institute	845-758-7700
Levy Fax	845-758-1149
Beekman Arms	845-876-7077



# LEVY INSTITUTE

## THE AMERICAN-JEWISH PERIPHERY

A Levy Economics Institute mini-conference,  
Thursday, October 26 and Friday, October 27, 2006  
(all events at the Levy Institute in the Blithewood building)

Thursday, October 26

6:00 -7:30 pm      **DINNER AND WELCOME**

7:30-9:00 pm      **SESSION 1**  
**THE PERIPHERY: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS**  
**CHAIR: Bethamie Horowitz, Mandel Foundation**  
**Joel Perlmann, The Levy Economics Institute**  
"The American Jewish Periphery: An Overview"  
**Bruce Phillips, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion**  
"Periphery and Core: Connections"

Friday, October 27

8:30-9:00 am      **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

9:00-10:30 am      **SESSION 2**  
**THE PERIPHERY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF AMERICAN ETHNICITY AND RELIGION**  
**CHAIR: Alice Goldstein, Brown University**  
**Richard Alba, The University at Albany**  
"The Sociological Significance of the American Jewish Experience: Boundary Blurring, Assimilation and Pluralism"  
**Nathan Glazer, Harvard University**  
"The American Jewish Periphery – Another Case of Jewish Exceptionalism?"



11:00-12:30 am      **SESSION 3**  
**THE PERIPHERY IN JEWISH PERSPECTIVES**  
**CHAIR: Sidney Goldstein, *Brown University***  
**Todd Endelman, *University of Michigan***  
"The American Jewish Periphery in Historical Perspective."  
**Jack Wertheimer, *Jewish Theological Seminary***  
"The Nature of Community in the Light of this  
Phenomenon"

12:30-1:30 pm                      **LUNCH**

1:30-3:00 pm                      **SESSION 4**  
**UNDERSTANDING THE PERIPHERY: CURRENT**  
**DATA/FUTURE NEEDS**  
**CHAIR: Nancy Foner, *Hunter College and the Graduate Center***  
**of the City University of New York**  
**Barry Kosmin, *Public Policy & Law Program and Institute for***  
**the Study of Secularism in Society & Culture, *Trinity College***  
"Community Surveys and Government Censuses"  
**Mary Waters, *Harvard University***  
"Reflections: Issues to Address, Evidence to Gather"

3:00 pm                      **RECEPTION**

Other participants (from beyond the Bard College community): Myrna Baron, Lynn Davidman, David Gordis, and Ben Phillips.

The Institute gratefully acknowledges supplemental support drawn from a grant provided by the Center for Cultural Judaism to the Jewish Studies program at Bard College.

The term "the American Jewish Periphery" is meant to refer to individuals who identify with Jewishness only marginally, or who do not identify at all – but who nevertheless have Jewish origins in the recent past. While there have always been such people, and by no means do they come only from among the offspring of the intermarried, the size of this peripheral group has increased greatly in numbers since (roughly) 1970, during which time the rate of American-Jewish intermarriage has been high. Survey results confirm that among the adult offspring of the intermarried, there is an especially high concentration of people who identify marginally or not at all as Jews, whether in religious or secular/cultural terms. At the same time, of course, the range of identities that now typify the adult offspring of the intermarried is very diverse; many identify strongly with their Jewishness, many others do not. Thus the periphery is meant to denote those with some recent Jewish origins but with very weak or non-existent ties to things Jewish. This group now constitutes a large and growing fraction of all those with Jewish origins.

Our interest is not to consider the familiar question raised by intermarriage concerning the nature of American Jewish survival over the long term. Rather, the existence of a very marginal group among those with Jewish origins, some of whom call themselves Jews and others do not, raises questions about American Jewish life in the near-term future. Among these are the social characteristics of this American Jewish periphery compared to more mainstream American Jews (education, income, place of residence, etc.) and their political outlook; questions of identity and views of their Jewish origin and of Jewish issues; how this periphery interacts with the Jewish mainstream, including intermarriage patterns. Also important will be how American Jewish institutions define themselves in terms of these people – are these people potential members? Under what conditions? And finally, how can these people best be studied in the near future?