

Counting the Jews of New York, 1900–1991: An Essay in Substance and Method

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The population history of the Jews of New York is a very disproportionate part of the story of the total American Jewish community. Beginning in 1654 with 23 refugees from the inquisition which the Portuguese had brought to Brazil, the New York Jewish community was, at its peak, over two million souls. New York City grew from a small Dutch trading colony occupying a foothold at the very southern tip of Manhattan to become a city of 8 million persons occupying over 300 square miles within the city limits, with several million more persons in the surrounding suburbs. As New York has grown, so has Jewish New York grown.

New York has special significance for American, and indeed, world Jewry. At its maximum, the New York City Jewish population constituted as much as two fifths of American Jewry and as much as one sixth of the entire world Jewish population. Many American Jews who are not now New Yorkers either once were, or are descended from earlier generations of American Jews who at the very least passed through the Port of New York on their way to their new homes in the New World.¹

In this paper I shall examine estimates of the numbers of Jews over a ninety-year period. In examining the growth and then the decline of the population I shall also analyze and discuss the various methods employed to estimate the Jewish population. This, then, is a paper dealing with both substance and method.

Who Counts and Who Is Counted?

A recent study of American ethnicity is subtitled “Choosing Identities in America.”² In the main, Americans are what they choose to be, what they say they are. One ethnicity was woven into the fabric of American law and society from the very beginning. For purposes of representation in the House of Representatives, African-American slaves were to be counted as three fifths of a man. The constitution is clear on that matter but is not clear on just who is to be counted as black and who as white. Just how much “black blood” made one worth 60 percent of a white man? That was a matter that was to be left to the several state

¹ For the period 1899–1910, 64.2% of the Jewish immigrants who came through the Port of New York gave New York City as their expected ultimate destination (Joseph, 1914 [1969], p. 149.)

² See Waters (1990). The ambiguities generated by discrepant subjective and objective criteria for establishing ethnic identity are developed further in Hout and Goldstein (1994).

legislatures and the courts. In the late nineteenth century, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) defined and stigmatized another ethnicity with respect to admissibility into the United States and naturalization. The immigration acts of the 1920s went further in defining desirable and undesirable ethnicities through the notion of national origins. More recently, affirmative action has broadened the public interest in ethnic identity to specify "protected minorities." Still, for most European-origin persons, ethnicity is voluntary and one can choose who one wishes to be.

Without an established church, America has had relatively little interest on a legal level in religious identity, even less than ethnic identity. While a Census of Religious Bodies was conducted regularly from the 1850s through the 1930s, a religion question *per se* never appeared in the decennial census mandated by the Constitution of the United States. Officially, religion in America is a private affair and, as with ethnicity, one is free to choose an identity. Religious bodies and communities in turn are free to define their boundaries and to decide who is in and who is out, who is a member of the sacred community and who is an "other", an unbeliever, a "gentile."

When we count the Jews, whom shall we count? Jewish law is reasonably clear on the question, defining a Jew by descent rather than belief or practice. One is a member of the holy community through birth or conversion and that status is indelible. Until recently, most Jews lived in communities governed by Jewish law. The boundaries of those communities were clear enough and both Jews and gentiles shared a consensus as to who was a Jew. In a secular age, an age in which Jewish law is upheld by a minority of Jews, the answer to the question of who is a Jew becomes murky. Rather than defining a Jew by the criteria of Jewish law, Jews become defined as such by commonsensical standards which can be at variance with Jewish law.³ A Jew is someone who thinks of himself as a Jew and whose declaration of Jewishness is accepted by other people who declare themselves to be Jews. That sort of circular definition inevitably leads to ambiguity and complicates the life of the social scientist. Different ways of identifying Jews will give rise to different identities and different counts. Despite the conceptual muddiness, sample surveys and other procedures have arrived at a practical consensus and have gone on to count Jews (Kosmin, 1991, p.1).

The Number of Jews in New York

The number of the Jewish population of New York in 1654 is the only figure we can cite with real certainty. The study of the Jewish population of New York (and of the United States more generally) has had to work with estimates generated by a variety of unofficial sources using a variety of methods. Only once, in 1957, did the United States government publish an estimate of Jewish population for the

³ A famous instance is the case of Brother Daniel, born a Jew but converted to Christianity, whose claim to Israeli citizenship as a Jew under Israel's Basic Law of Return was rejected by the Supreme Court of Israel. The Court recognized that Brother Daniel was a Jew by Jewish law but took his conversion to Christianity as evidence that he was no longer a member of the Jewish people. Had the matter come before a Rabbinic Court, Brother Daniel's claim to Jewishness would have been accepted. The secular court took a more stringent view of the matter.

United States that could be relied upon. All the other estimates for the United States as a whole or for any locality are based upon approximations generated ultimately in local Jewish community studies or as by-products of some more general sample survey effort in which the number of total and Jewish cases makes for reasonable reliability.

There are "guesstimates" of total American Jewish population and New York Jewish population going back to the early nineteenth century. It is estimated that by 1836 there were 2,000 Jews in New York City; by 1850, 16,000. These and other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jewish population numbers are either informed guesses or later historical reconstructions made by scholars using the methods of historical demography.⁴ Fortunately, in 1878, at the beginning of the period of mass migration of East European Jews, a study was conducted by two of the central national Jewish bodies which gave estimates of 60,000 Jews in New York City and another 13,000 in the then still separate City of Brooklyn (Board of Delegates..., 1880). The first contemporary attempts at scientific estimation of Jewish population in the newly consolidated City of New York occurred in 1900 with the work of two sets of investigators. We begin our discussion, then, with these estimates which are presented in Table 1, along with their sources, the Jewish fraction of the City's population, the white and non-Hispanic fraction of the City's population, and the Jewish fraction of the white non-Hispanic population. In some instances, we have multiple estimates for a year. In such cases, the preferred estimate is marked with an asterisk. The table reports the Jewish population in thousands (column D), the total general population in thousands (column E), Jewish population as a percentage of total population (column F), the percentage of the population which is white non-Hispanic (column G) and Jewish population as a percentage of the white non-Hispanic population. In this section we concentrate on the Jewish population estimates. In the next we shall examine the changing rates of growth and decline over the ninety-year period.

1900

The work of Walter Laidlaw and the Census Committee associated with the Federation of Churches and Christian Organizations of New York City began a new era in the study of New York Jewish population.⁵ Organized to generate religious census statistics generally, Laidlaw's group produced the first Jewish population statistics for New York Jewry using at least some semblance of modern statistical method rather than "guesstimation." Laidlaw's scientific working group invented a method that combined official federal census statistics with data

⁴ An excellent discussion of Jewish population dynamics in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America may be found in Cohen (1981). See for a summary of early estimates of American Jewish population, Diamond (1966); on the question of Jewish demographic statistics more generally, Engelman (1960); on the special problems of American Jewish population studies, Diamond (1977).

⁵ For the sake of convenience, we shall refer to the work as that of [Walter] Laidlaw. He was the organizer of the effort and is usually credited for the work and its shortcomings (Laidlaw, 1905). The results for the period 1900 through 1930 are summarized in Laidlaw (1932).

collected by his committee. Laidlaw interviewed households in a sample of New York City's wards. In those interviews Laidlaw ascertained both the national origin and the religion of the household.

Since national origin, unlike religion, was routinely noted by the census, on the basis of his survey, Laidlaw was able to use national origin as his basis for estimating religion. Thus, if for a given unit in New York City (i.e., a ward, county or the city as a whole) the number of "Russians" was given, Laidlaw translated Russians by nationality into Jews by religion. Laidlaw did this with the major nationality groups, each one of which had its fraction of the religious groups. Based on interviews, Laidlaw estimated that 90% of the Russians were in fact Jews. The number of Russians in a geographic unit was multiplied by 0.9 to arrive at an estimate of the number of Jews. The Austrian nationality population was estimated to be 70% Jewish. Thus census Austrians were multiplied by .7 to arrive at an estimate of the number of Jews. Using this method, Laidlaw estimated that there were 598,000 Jews in New York City, or 17.4% of the City's total population.

Laidlaw's group did no interviewing in Brooklyn and Queens. Yet, the relationships that the Census Committee found between national origin and religion in Manhattan and the Bronx were attributed to Brooklyn and Queens as well. We know, however, that Polish Jews and Polish Gentiles did not live in the same neighborhoods. Thus, using Manhattan Polish-Jewish (or Russian-Jewish prior to the reestablishment of the Polish State) ratios would distort the actual religious distribution in an area such as the Polish Catholic Greenpoint neighborhood in Brooklyn, and would cause an overestimate of Jewish population. However, since half of New York City's population lived in Manhattan where the distortion was minimal, the Laidlaw group's order of magnitude for the city was much better than it was for the boroughs outside Manhattan.

Shortly after Laidlaw's estimates were made public, Joseph Jacobs, editor of the English page of the Yiddish newspaper *Jewish World*, published his estimate of 585,000 Jews for the city as of 1902 (Jacobs, 1902, p. 8). Using Jacobs' 1902 estimate and going back to 1900, subtracting Jewish net-migration for 1900-1902 to New York City as well as Jewish natural increase for the period, we come to an estimate of approximately 490,000 for 1900.⁶ Jacobs employed Jewish deaths and death rates as the elements in his computations.⁷ If both Jewish deaths and death

⁶ When calculating population figures from their multiple sources, i.e. births, deaths and migration, return migration is a complicating factor. Many immigrants came to the United States for relatively short periods and then returned home. What is needed is an estimate of *net* in-migration. That is, the number of immigrants who remained permanently in the United States. Jews had, by far, the lowest rate of return migration to the "old country." During the period 1899-1924, 5.2% of the Jews who came as immigrants left the United States, as compared to 56.4% of the Southern Italians (Price, 1980, pp. 1033-1044).

⁷ The earliest use of the death rate method that I could find was published by Isidore Loeb (1878, p. 27), cited in Szajkowski (1946). That use gave an estimate of the size of Paris Jewry as of 1780. The method was later used in Great Britain (Rosenbaum, 1905). There was enormous variability in death rates by ethnicity, or as it was then called, "race stocks," for the period under study. Some of the variability of course was a function of age distributions. However, even when standardized by age, the differences remained

rates were known, the calculation of population would be a simple arithmetic procedure, i.e.:

Jewish population = number of Jewish deaths/Jewish death rate.

Thus, if there were 100 Jewish deaths in a given area and the Jewish death rate was 15 per thousand population, then the Jewish population would be equal to $100/.015 = 6,667$ persons.

The method employed by Jacobs was first used in the United States by Barnett (1902) to estimate Baltimore's Jewish population for 1900.⁸ The numbers of Jewish deaths for both Baltimore and New York were relatively easily ascertained by noting the cemetery of internment of the decedents. It was assumed that few if any Jews would be buried in Christian or non-denominational cemeteries and few if any Christians would be buried in Jewish cemeteries. The question of death rates was a far more difficult one to resolve. General death rates were known but their application to the Jewish population would lead to false and misleading results. As immigrants, Jews had a distinctive age structure (they were young) which obviously made for a distinctive death rate. Moreover, holding age structure constant, Jews had a death rate quite unlike that of the population generally and far below that of some other immigrant groups at that time.

Thus, the death rate of all white Baltimoreans for 1900 was "something over eighteen," and Barnett (1902, pp. 47–48) concluded that the death rate for immigrant Jews in Baltimore was less than 13 per thousand while that of the "longer settled Jews" was 14 per thousand. For New York City, Jacobs assumed a Jewish death rate of 15 per thousand with 7,997 deaths for the year ending July 1, 1901, giving rise to an estimate of 533,133 Jews ($7,997/.015$) for 1901. As we noted above, to arrive at our 1900 estimate we subtracted net migration and natural increase for 1901.⁹

large. In New York State, Russians, for the most part Jews, and Italians had the lowest standardized death rates among the foreign stock populations, and Irish the highest (Dublin, 1916). In data brought together by Engelman (1960, pp. 1524–1528) it is clear that both traditional and modernized late nineteenth century Jewish populations experienced death rates and birth rates significantly below those of the environing non-Jewish populations. In the twentieth century, Jewish and non-Jewish death rates have converged and in some instances Jewish death rates exceed those of non-Jews. Presumably, the change reflects the aging of the Jewish population and the improved general health level (particularly lower infant mortality) of the populations among whom Jews live. An excellent review of the basic data and literature dealing with the health and thus, by implication, the sources of specific Jewish death rates may be found in Dwork (1981).

⁸ The impetus for carrying out the study in Maryland came not from a social scientist or statistician but rather from a rabbi in a small town in the state (Barnett, 1902). The actual work of combing through the death records and establishing the basic facts was done by Henrietta Szold, Secretary of the newly founded Jewish Publication Society who later established Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization and later still, Youth Aliyah, an instrument designed to save Jewish children during the Nazi period.

⁹ The migration data by ethnicity were routinely collected and published by the Commissioner of Immigration from 1899 through 1943. Prior to 1899, the figures came from Jewish immigrant aid organizations. More acculturated Jews objected to the classification of Jews *qua* Jews rather than as Russians or Austrians because of its

Jacobs' estimate of Jewish population depended on his count of deaths and death rates. A relatively small change in death rates would generate a significant change in the population estimate, an issue discussed in the later literature (Jaffe, 1943). Jacobs' use of a death rate of 15 per thousand was somewhat arbitrary. He noted Jewish death rates in the congested and heavily Jewish immigrant wards of Manhattan (average ca. 16 per thousand) and then reasoned that the death rates would be lower in the less congested wards. However, of the two methods (Laidlaw, Jacobs), that of Jacobs does not have the systematic bias we noted in the work of Laidlaw. We find Jacobs' estimate for 1900 preferable to that of Laidlaw. Laidlaw's group continued to publish estimates of the religious composition of New York's population through 1930. I shall be referring to Laidlaw estimates for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930.

1910

The census of 1910 offered the next occasion for estimating the Jewish population of New York City, with Jacobs and Laidlaw again presenting the low and high estimates, respectively, each repeating the methods used for the 1900–1902 estimates reported in Table 1. Jacobs reported that there were “roughly” 11,000 Jewish burials in 1910 (10,944 in Jewish cemeteries plus another 75 to 100 in an “undenominational” cemetery). With an assumed death rate of 13.5 per thousand, Jacobs arrived at an estimate of 820,000 Jews in New York City in 1910. Jacobs' figures were disputed by Laidlaw who estimated that there were 1,265,000 Jews in New York in 1910, or a Jewish population more than 50% larger than that estimated by Jacobs.

Jacobs' 820,000 estimate was clearly too low since 861,980 persons in New York City reported Yiddish or Hebrew as their mother tongue in the 1910 census, the first census to ask mother tongue. It is reasonable to assume that few if any Gentiles gave Yiddish or Hebrew as their mother tongue; thus the large number of Yiddish/Hebrew language respondents must clearly be the minimum for the number of Jews in New York City. To them must be added third generation American Jewry, first and second generation German speakers, Levantine Jews who were speakers of Ladino, Greek or Arabic and other scattered Jewish language/nationality groups.

Using Jacobs' method and accepting his estimates of the number of Jewish deaths but using a death rate of 10.5 per thousand, Chalmers calculated a New York City Jewish population of 1,050,000 for 1910 (Chalmers, 1916). Chalmers' death rate estimate was based upon the same few heavily Jewish wards which Jacobs had used to establish the Jewish death rate for 1900. Chalmers noted that Jacobs underestimated the decrease in Jewish death rate as compared with the decline in the decrease in the general City death rate during the decade 1901–1910. Given the large fraction of young people in the Jewish migration of that

implications for Jewish nationality and their own sense of themselves as Americans by nationality and Jews by religion. The classification “Hebrew” was based largely on linguistic criteria (Yiddish mother tongue) and until 1904, included steerage passengers only (Kuznets, 1975; Goldberg, Letschinsky and Weinreich, 1945).

decade, the death rate clearly declined further than Jacobs assumed. As we shall see, it is possible to assume an even lower death rate.

For the moment, assuming Jacobs' 1900 and Chalmers' 1910 estimates as the best available, we will examine migration and natural increase figures to see if we can account for a growth in Jewish population of 560,000 — this being more than double — between 1900 and 1910. First I estimate the net Jewish migration to New York City for the period as 539,000. This is based upon the published figures for Jewish in- and out-migration and destination as reported by the immigrants. In all, 976,263 Jews entered the United States during this period. I estimate (from their declarations) that 60% remained in New York. There was a Jewish migration out of the country of 7.9%. Thus the Jewish net migration into New York City is:

$$976,263 \times .6 \times .921 = 539,483$$

In addition to migration we have to account for natural increase, i.e., the difference between crude birth and death rates. While simple in principle, the job is complicated by the absence of good birth rate statistics. For the city as a whole it was estimated that approximately 15% of the births in 1905 went unregistered (Rosenwaike, 1972. p. 103). The City Health Department estimated the true crude birth rate at 30 per thousand. However, that number tells us little of Jewish birth rates. In 1910 the crude birth rate for Italians was 52.6 per thousand while the rate for the rest of the population was 23.8 per thousand (Rosenwaike, 1972. p. 105). In Russia, the former home of most of New York's Jewish immigrants, the Jewish birth rate was 34.4 per thousand in 1900–1904 with a rate of natural increase at 1.77% per annum (Kuznets, 1975. p. 63). The immigrants had an age distribution more favorable to high birth rates and low death rates but the sex ratio, though far more equal than among Gentile immigrants, was not the ratio one would find among non-immigrant populations. That is, there was a deficit of females. With some factors suggesting higher rate of increase and others a lower rate, we will take the indigenous Russian Jewish rate of 1.77% as a first approximation of natural increase among New York's Jews. We take the total number of Jews present in 1900 and half the 1901–1910 migration as the base population and with a natural increase rate of 1.77% per annum, we estimate the total Jewish natural increase for the period. Summarizing the components, we arrive at the following:

Population 1900	490,000
Net migration	539,000
Natural increase	<u>183,000</u>
Total	1,212,000

The estimate developed by calculating the components of immigration and natural increase is higher than the Chalmers estimate of 1,050,000 for 1910. There are several possible sources of the discrepancy. Changes in the magnitude of the death rate lead to considerable changes in the estimate of the population size. As noted above, Jacobs assumed a Jewish death rate of 13.5 while Chalmers posited a rate of 10.5. Louis Dublin published estimated death rates for New York State foreign-born populations ten years of age and older by country of birth and sex. The crude death rates for Russian-born males and females were 7.7 and 6.6 and for persons born in the dual monarchy they were 9.3 and 7.4. These numbers suggest that the actual Jewish death rate might have been even lower than that used by Chalmers.

As an approximation, if we assume that infant and child mortality contributed disproportionately to the death rates of immigrant populations, then the "true" Jewish death rate might well have been higher than that cited for the heavily Jewish national origin groups 10 years of age and older. Thus, simply for illustration, if we assume an actual Jewish death rate of 9 per thousand, the Jewish population would be calculated as 1,220,000. A lower death rate would of course imply a somewhat higher rate of natural increase.

A second major source of the discrepancy is Jewish migration out of the city. There was concern that the concentration of Jews in New York City would call too much attention to them and might contribute to the sentiment to restrict immigration. During some years, as many as 70% of the Jewish immigrants elected to remain in New York, a proportion almost two and one half times that of non-Jewish immigrants (Kuznets, 1975, p. 113). Various agencies in the Jewish community worked at dispersing the Jewish immigrant population around the country. One in particular, the Industrial Removal Office, aided 60,000 Jews in finding a place out of the city between 1901 and 1910 (Rischin, 1970 [1962], p. 54).¹⁰ Some were likely to have left on their own. Unfortunately, we have no independent record of Jewish migration within the United States.

Taking into account the sponsored out-migration, there remains a discrepancy of approximately 100,000 persons, or about 8% between the Chalmers estimate and the calculated Jewish population size.

1916

While the estimates for 1900 and 1910 were occasioned in part by the availability of census data, the next estimate, 1916, arose out of forces within the Jewish community and the graduate work of Alexander Dushkin, a young Jewish activist intellectual. For some years efforts had been under way to create a *Kehillah*, an omnibus Jewish communal structure. Galvanized by the need to respond to accusations of Jewish criminality, the acculturated German-origin Jews joined with their immigrant Russian "co-religionists" in the enterprise.

As the *Kehillah* movement attempted to rationalize and democratize Jewish communal life, the decision was taken "to help the community to know itself..." (Jewish Communal Register..., 1918. p. iii). To that end a massive almanac of New York Jewry was prepared by a group of young Jewish communal technocrats under the leadership of Samson Benderly, the head of the *Kehilla's* Bureau of Jewish Education. As part of that effort Alexander M. Dushkin developed estimates of the Jewish population of New York.

As an educational researcher and reformer, Dushkin had already computed estimates of the Jewish school-age population, using Yom Kippur absences and Jewish names. As part of his dissertation research on the state of Jewish education, Dushkin had collected data on school absences on Yom Kippur for 1913 and 1914 as indicators of Jewish school enrollment. Dushkin found that 40.5% of the children were absent from school on the Jewish holy days. However, he calculated

¹⁰ Another scholar estimates that in all, the Industrial Removal Office helped 100,000 Jews move out of New York City up until the First World War. (Romanofsky, 1975).

that some non-Jewish children, particularly in heavily Jewish districts, absented themselves as well, leading to an estimated effective absence rate attributable to Jews of 38%.

Adjusting for non-public school attendance, children working and not attending school and other factors, Dushkin estimated conservatively that there were 275,000 Jewish children in the public schools, ages 5 to 14. That number is the methodological equivalent of the number of Jewish deaths in Jacobs' and Chalmers' calculations. As the equivalent of Jacobs' and Chalmers' death rate, Dushkin took the census-reported rate of children 5-14 in the general population of 18%. Dividing 275,000 by .18 and rounding down, he concluded that there were 1,500,000 Jews in New York City in 1916. Dushkin's figure of 275,000 did not include private and parochial school children; he calculated that inclusion of these children would raise the 5-14-year-old population count to close to 300,000, giving a Jewish population count of 1,667,000 ($= 300,000/.18$). Dushkin's conservative estimate might have been an underestimate (Dushkin, 1918a; b).

To check on his Yom Kippur absence method, Dushkin went through the card file of the Bureau of Attendance of the New York Board of Education. Drawing a random sample of families ($N = 4,215$) and children ($N = 10,332$), Dushkin concluded that 33% of all the school children in New York City (i.e., public, private, parochial) were Jews. The classification of children was based upon surnames, first names, naming practices (i.e., Ashkenazi Jews traditionally do not give children their parents' first name) and kind of school attended (i.e., those attending Catholic schools were automatically defined as non-Jewish even when they bore names that were shared by ethnic Jews and Germans). Using names as his criterion of judgment, Dushkin estimated that there were 307,149 Jewish children ages 5-14 in New York. Dushkin's assumption of the Jewish age distribution (i.e., 5-14-year-olds as 18% of total Jewish population) gave an estimate of 1,706,383 Jews for the city.

Using 18% as his estimate of the 5-14 year old proportion of the Jewish population Dushkin may well have underestimated the relative size of the Jewish child population and thus slightly overestimated the total Jewish population. Rather than use the 5-14-year-old proportion for the total population, Dushkin should have taken the population for specific districts which were known to have large Jewish concentrations (as did Chalmers), or in some way find a Jewish-specific age distribution. In his count of families and children using the onomastic criterion, Dushkin found that on average the Jewish school family had 2.5 children, as compared with 2.35 children in the non-Jewish family, that is, 6% more. This suggests that Jews had a birth rate greater than the rest of the population (see our discussion above) and, as a consequence, the 5-14 age cohort was relatively larger among Jews than among non-Jews. In the absence of a specifically Jewish age structure we can correct Dushkin's estimate by using the ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish number of children per family ($2.5 - 2.35/2.5 = .06$ or 6%) and correcting our higher estimate with that factor. This would give us $1,706,000 \times .94 = 1,604,000$.

Taking Chalmers' estimate for 1910 as the baseline, Dushkin's 1,500,000 estimate requires an increase in Jewish population of approximately 450,000, or 45%, in six years. While that is a large number, the component elements suggest

that it makes sense. Between 1911 and 1914 net Jewish immigration to the United States was 400,000. In 1915 and 1916, as a result of the onset of the First World War, Jewish migration declined sharply (as did all migration) to slightly less than 40,000 for the two years. For the six-year period, then, total Jewish migration was 440,000 of whom we estimate approximately 55% or 240,000 settled in New York City. We estimate the rate of natural increase to have been on the order of 2% for the period, giving a natural increase of 140,000 for those settled in the country by 1910 and the new immigrants combined. The two sources together then come to 380,000, or 70,000 less than estimated. If we were to use the alternative estimate for 1910, i.e., the estimate based upon a death rate of 9 per thousand for 1910, then our calculated estimate would approximate Dushkin's corrected estimate.¹¹

1920

In 1920 Laidlaw's group once again computed an estimate of Jewish population using the same method employed initially in 1900. They estimated a Jewish population of 1,643,000, or an increase of 140,000 over Dushkin's 1916 estimate. The war-interrupted flow of net migration was just under 37,000 for the entire period with an estimated 20,000 settling in New York (Kuznets, 1975; Goldberg, 1948). Natural increase had begun to slow down (Goldberg, 1948, pp. 31-32; Rosenwaike, 1972, p. 108) to approximately 1.5%, giving a total natural increase of approximately 120,000 for the period, or a total increase of 140,000 (Rosenwaike, 1972, p. 108). The order of magnitude makes sense given the Dushkin 1916 estimate.

1925

In 1928 the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, under the direction of Samuel Goldsmith, published estimates of the Jewish population of the City and its constituent parts for 1925. The Bureau study employed both the Yom Kippur absence method made popular by Dushkin and the death rate method. The Yom Kippur absence method, it will be remembered, required two numbers, the rate of absence on Yom Kippur and the proportion of the total population that was of school age (defined as 5-14 years of age). Dushkin assumed that Jewish age structure was the same as that of the city. As we noted, Dushkin's own evidence made this assumption problematic. For their 1925 estimate the Bureau initially asserted, without explanation or discussion, that the 5-14 year-old group among Jews was 21% of the population, a fraction that would give a smaller Jewish population size if used in the calculation. However, for calculations, the Bureau used Dushkin's 18% figure to be consistent with Dushkin and because the 18%

¹¹ The age and sex structure of the Jewish immigrant population made for a high rate of natural increase. For example, during the period 1908-14, 44% of the Jewish immigrants were female as compared with an average of 30.2% among non-Jewish immigrants. A large fraction of the Jewish immigrant population consisted of families with children (Kuznets, 1975, p. 96). Jacobs estimated that the Jewish natural rate of increase for the period under discussion was 2%. (Jacobs, 1914, p. 342).

figure gave results similar to those generated by their death rate calculations (Goldsmith, 1928, p.1).

The Yom Kippur absence method gave a Jewish population of 1,750,000, while the death rate method gave a Jewish population estimate of 1,713,000. These are "remarkably" close estimates, but in part the comparability was created by "result guiding." That is, the choice of figure for child population was influenced in part by the results of the death rate method. The two methods did not produce fully independent estimates of Jewish population.

To estimate population by the death rate method, it was necessary to collect data on the number of Jewish deaths and to estimate the Jewish death rates. In order to accomplish both these tasks a sample of the city's total population was drawn based upon geographic units known as sanitary districts. In all, 16 sanitary districts were selected as having large concentrations of Jewish population. The actual number of Jews in these districts was ascertained by identifying names and places of birth on the enumerator's schedules for the 1925 New York State census. Having identified Jews in the sanitary districts, the Jews' death certificates (identified by name of decedent, place of birth, mother's maiden name, nativity of parents, place of burial and undertaker's name) were geo-coded and the number of deaths of residents of the sample sanitary districts was ascertained (Goldsmith, 1928, pp. 13-18).

With the number of Jews in the 16 sanitary districts and the number of Jewish deaths known, the researchers computed a Jewish death rate of 7.9 per thousand. Given the total number of Jewish deaths which had already been computed for the entire city, it was a matter of simple division to calculate the Jewish population ($13,552/.0079 = 1,715,443$). The 1925 use of the death rate method was an improvement upon the method as employed by Jacobs and Chalmers.

As we noted in our discussion of the Laidlaw 1920 estimate, the First World War significantly diminished all migration into the United States. Jewish migration did not pick up until 1920 and increased enormously in 1921 (118,557 net Jewish migration). From 1922 through 1924 Jewish net migration remained high for a total of over 150,000 for that period. The effect of the National Origins Quota Act of 1924 was immediate and dramatic with a net Jewish migration of only 10,001 for 1925. For the rest of the decade the net Jewish migration ranged from about 10,000 to 12,000 persons.

For the entire period 1917 through 1926 the net Jewish migration was 326,000, or approximately half of what it was during the previous decade. Of this number, we estimate that slightly more than half or approximately 170,000 settled in New York City. This estimate is admittedly somewhat arbitrary. The natural increase of Jews had begun to slow down markedly. The post-World War I immigrants were older on average than those who came before the war; in fact, the fraction beyond the usual child-bearing age (i.e., 45 years of age) more than doubled (Goldberg, 1948, p. 31). Along with this change there was the aging of the prewar immigrant population, both together tending to produce a higher crude death rate.

More significant than changes in death rates were changes in Jewish birth rates. For example, in Brooklyn in 1925 the Jewish crude birth rate was 18 per thousand as compared with 22.95 per thousand for all of Brooklyn (Goldsmith, 1928. p. 19;

Goldberg, 1948. pp. 34-53).¹² The presumably higher death rate and the documented lower birth rate together led to a decline in the Jewish rate of natural increase. Rosenwaike estimates Jewish natural increase at 1.5% per annum in 1920 (Rosenwaike, 1972, p. 112). After examining the 1925 data, Goldsmith concluded that the Jewish rate of natural increase was 1%, i.e., less than that of the non-Jewish population (Goldsmith, 1928. p. 19).

To estimate the expected New York Jewish population for 1925 we begin with the population of 1916, add to that number the net migration for 1916-1925, and then add the estimated natural increase for that period. For the period 1916-1920 we take 1.5% as our estimate of natural increase and for 1921-1925 we take 1% as our rate of natural increase. The calculations are as follows:

Population 1916	1,503,000
Net Migration 1917-25	158,000
Natural increase 1917-25 base population	165,000
Natural increase immigrant population 1917-1925	8,000
Total expected	1,834,000

Comparing the "expected" population (i.e., 1916 population + migration + natural increase) of 1,834,000 with the "observed" population of 1,750,000, we find a discrepancy of 84,000 persons, or 5%. The work of the Industrial Removal Office had ceased by 1914, so that there no longer was planned collective Jewish migration out of the city. The 1916 and 1925 published and corrected estimates could be in error. A second possible source of error is in the presumed rate of natural increase. A third possible source might lie in the immigration data. The alternative is the possibility of Jewish migration out of New York City to the suburbs and beyond.

While we cannot pinpoint a specifically Jewish stream of migration out of the city as we did in our reference to the Industrial Removal Office, we can point to a substantial out-migration of native whites of foreign parentage (Rosenwaike, 1972, pp. 99-103). It may well be that the movement out of the Lower East Side and out of Manhattan generally did not stop at the city line. While massive Jewish suburbanization did not occur until the post-World War II period, it is likely that some occurred during the 1920s as war-induced prosperity and acculturation prompted social mobility and thus geographic mobility among the more fortunate of New York's Jews. In addition, there was some Jewish migration to other parts of the country.

1930

We have two estimates of Jewish population for 1930. The first is one of 1,877,000 prepared by the Laidlaw group, the last estimate that they published. After the publication of the 1930 estimate, the Census Committee ceased functioning. The

¹² There was a general pattern of declining birth rates from the immigrant generation to the first American-born generation across ethnic groups already manifest in data generated by the 1910 federal census (Morgan, Watkins and Ewbank, 1994).

second estimate, prepared for the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, was 1,825,000 with a discrepancy between the two of only 3%. The Federation estimate was not actually made until the 1950s (Horowitz and Kaplan, 1959, p. 15). Thus there was no contemporaneous effort published using Jewish community-generated data between 1928 and 1959, a period of over 30 years. As we shall see, there were estimates made in the intervening years but they were essentially by-products of larger studies. The organized Jewish community essentially went out of the population business for a very long time.

Horowitz and Kaplan improved upon the Yom Kippur estimate as employed in 1916 and 1925. Rather than take the general population age structure as their measure of Jewish age structure (i.e., for the fraction of the population that was of elementary school age), they developed estimates based upon small area statistics. That is, they examined the age structure of aggregates of health areas termed revised statistical districts (RSDs). Since the RSDs were ultimately composed of census tracts, the researchers could use the statistics available on the tract level. They assumed that the Jews would have the same age and sex distribution as did their neighbors. They noted that in a Catholic neighborhood where the family size was large, the assumption could lead to erroneous conclusions. Where there was a significant non-white population in the neighborhood (5% or more), they used the statistics for whites alone (Horowitz and Kaplan, 1959, pp. 83–88). Since small areas are likely to be more homogeneous with respect to ethnicity, religion, social class and immigrant status, all of which influence family size, Horowitz and Kaplan's use of the small area statistics was likely to produce more precise estimates than those generated by Dushkin (1918) and by Goldsmith (1928). Schools were assigned to RSDs and then for each district an estimate of Jewish children and Jewish age structure was made. From these they computed the Jewish population of the RSDs and then summed them for the boroughs and the city (Horowitz and Kaplan, 1959, pp. 83–88).

As we noted above, the flow of migration was reduced sharply after passage of the National Origins Quota Act of 1924. From 1926 to 1930 the net Jewish migration to the United States was 56,088 as compared with 280,287 in the previous five-year period. Jewish migration in 1926-30 was one fifth of what it had been during 1921-25. In addition, as noted, Jewish natural increase was down significantly as the immigrant population aged and birth rates fell among the younger and second generation Jews. A rate of natural increase of 1% per annum would give a population increase of 88,000. The two sources of increase together came to 116,000, giving an expected Jewish population size of 1,866,000, reasonably close to the estimates published by Laidlaw's group and Horowitz and Kaplan.

1935

From 1900 through 1925 the major estimates of Jewish population were made using either the death rate or the Yom Kippur absence rate method. In 1935 for the first time we have a sample survey of a total city population where the three major religious groups were identified. This was the City Youth Survey, a study designed to determine the recreational needs and practices of the city's youth population, i.e.,

persons 16-24 years of age. A sample of New York's housing units was developed and young people in those households were interviewed. The sample size was large ($N = 9,041$), thus there was a small sampling error. In that sample the researchers found that 31.4% reported that they were Jewish, 48.6% Catholic, and 17.8% Protestant (Deardorff, 1955, p. 154).

The question is: to what extent did the youth population represent the total population of the city and each of the religious groups? If 16-24-year-old Jews represented 31.4% of the youth of the city, was the total Jewish fraction of the city's people equal to 31.4%? We are essentially back to the death rate and Yom Kippur absence rate, except that we now have only one unknown: the age structure of the population.

We have no total city population estimate for 1935, so we compute one by interpolation between 1930 and 1940. Taking 31.4% of the interpolated population of 7,193,000, we arrive at a Jewish population estimate of 2,259,000, a number that is not consistent with the time series. The best evidence we have suggests that the relative size of the youth population of the Jews was greater than that of the non-Jews. In a study comparing the characteristics of persons living in Jewish and other neighborhoods, Maller found that among Jews, 15-20 year-olds constituted 13.3%, while for the rest of the population, the 15-20 year-olds were 10.55% of the total (Maller, 1934). If we compute a ratio of these percentages we obtain a weight to correct the Jewish youth fraction ($10.55/13.13 = .804$) and multiply that weight by the Jewish population estimate which we previously calculated ($2,259,000 \times .804$), we reach an adjusted estimate of 1,816,000 Jewish persons in all, or 25% of the population.

There was very little Jewish immigration during the early 1930s, amounting to only 18,000 for the total United States and an estimated 8,000 Jews for New York City. Both the death and birth rates were quite low, giving a rate of natural increase of less than 1% per annum. If our estimates are correct, the data suggest a continued Jewish migration out of the city of about 69,000 persons over the five-year period. However, given the problem of generalizing from the youth survey, we should not rely too heavily on the 1935 estimate.

1940

For 1940 we once again have the Horowitz and Kaplan retrospective estimate computed during the mid-1950s and published in 1959. For 1940 they estimated that there were 1,785,000 Jews, down 40,000 from their count of 1,825,000 for 1930. During the depression years the city's population as reported by Horowitz and Kaplan declined by 2%. As we noted above, Jewish immigration during the first half of the 1930s was very low; however, from 1936 through 1940 Jewish net migration reached almost 117,000. Jews, largely refugees from Germany and Austria, were 38% of all immigrants arriving in the United States during this period.

The rate of natural increase during the 1930s was extremely low. American birth rates generally had been going down steadily from the early 1800s through 1930 in an essentially linear form. With the onset of the Great Depression birth rates plummeted, reaching below 14 per thousand by the second half of the 1930s.

The crude birth rate of the city in the late 1930s was approximately half of what it was in the quinquennium prior to the First World War. Death rates by contrast were relatively stable from the 1920s through the 1960s (Rosenwaike, 1972, p. 178). During the first half of the 1930s (1931-1935) the average rate of natural increase was 4 per thousand, and during the second half (1936-1940) it was 3 per thousand.

For the 1930s as a whole then, assuming that half the immigrant Jews remained in New York, the Jewish increase from immigration was 67,000 and the natural increase was about 55,000. Taking Horowitz and Kaplan (1930) as our baseline (1,825,000) and adding immigration (67,000) and natural increase (55,000), we arrive at an expected population of 1,947,000, far greater than Horowitz and Kaplan's estimate of 1,785,000.

There is a general pattern of "expected" population being greater than the "observed." This might indicate an overestimate of Jewish natural increase as well as an underestimate of Jewish migration out of the city. While the observed and expected estimates are frequently close, the error usually appears to be in the same direction, suggesting a systematic rather than random source of error.

A second estimate of 1940 New York City Jewish population was developed by Rosenwaike using data from the 1935 youth survey (see above), the Yiddish language statistics from the 1940 census, information on country of origin, and, for decedents, religious identity of cemetery. Using these data, Rosenwaike concluded that there were 1,242,000 native-born and 752,470 foreign-born Jews in New York City, for a total of 1,994,550. This estimate is significantly higher than that reported by Horowitz and Kaplan, but is consistent with our expected estimate of 1,947,000 (Rosenwaike, 1972, pp. 122-130).

1950

The Federal census, despite its problems of alleged undercounts and other kinds of error, remains the standard against which all population studies are measured. The census has several methodological advantages. First, and most obvious, it is the work of the Federal government. Residents are legally bound to respond. The resources behind the decennial census are those of the United States Treasury. More subtle, and to us more interesting, the census either draws total enumeration, or for some compositional variables, large samples (e.g., 1 in 5 or 1 in 15 respondents). In addition, while the census has the ability to report on small special populations, it does not sample directly for them. That is, Census Bureau reports on small ethnic groups are not based upon searching out and sampling members of the ethnic group; rather they are based upon a sample or enumeration of the total population in which the rare group is imbedded. Only once, in 1957, did the Bureau of the Census include religion as one of the questions asked in its Current Population Survey (CPS), a sample survey of the American population. The decennial census does not include religion; thus the various ingenious techniques devised to estimate Jewish population.¹³

¹³ While popular wisdom has it that the absence of a religion question reflects the constitutional ban on the establishment of religion, this notion is not supported either by

One must contact large numbers of persons as background sampling for Jews or any other relatively small group is expensive for the Jewish foreground. The non-Jews are of interest fundamentally as contrast and as part of the denominator (along with Jews) in determining the Jewish fraction of the total population. In the absence of the government census, one would want to have good samples, i.e., large and unbiased, of all of New York to develop estimates of the Jewish population and characteristics within the New York context. For 1935 we had such a sample of the youth of the city; however, in order to estimate Jewish population of all ages we had to adjust for the differences in age structure of Jews and non-Jews. For the 1948-1952 period we have, for the first time, good samples of all of New York from which we can identify the Jewish sub-sample. These were studies conducted initially for the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP), and two studies of public opinion conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). In addition, there was a Horowitz-Kaplan estimate made using the Yom Kippur absence method.

In 1952 the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP) carried out a random sample survey of the households of New York. The HIP survey collected data on 4,190 households which included 13,558 persons. Fortunately, the HIP survey asked the religion of the household head. The head's religion was imputed to the rest of the members of the household, generating some bias regarding intermarried households. In addition to health questions of interest to the sponsoring group, the HIP survey collected standard demographic, social and economic data making it a uniquely rich source of information on New Yorkers generally and New York's Jews particularly.

The HIP survey used a proper sample design large enough to give reliable estimates of distributions for the city's population and also to permit analysis within religious groups. We have estimates of Jewish population which are not dependent upon the distributions of indicators of Jewish population (death rates, Yom Kippur absences, national origins, youth population), but are rather the outcome of direct questioning of a population. The sources of error are those normally associated with any standard sample survey of a population. The data are reported by several scholars (Seligman, 1958; Deardorff, 1955; Cohen, 1956).

For 1952 it was estimated that 26.4% of the population lived in households headed by a Jewish person. Given the low rate of intermarriage at the time, we feel comfortable in counting all persons in a Jewish-headed household as Jewish (see below). Assuming a total city population of slightly over 8 million for 1952, Seligman calculated a Jewish population of 2,130,000 for that year. Using the HIP survey and working back to the census year of 1950, Cohen concluded that there were 2,110,000 Jews in the city. In other words, Cohen calculated a decline in Jewish population of 20,000 between 1950 and 1952.

judicial decision or legislation (Good, 1959). The 1957 sample survey noted in the text was intended as a preliminary study for part of an expected religion question for the 1960 decennial census. While the question on religion drew little broad based opposition, the vehement objections of the American Civil Liberties Union and the major Jewish defense agencies was enough for the Bureau of the Census to abandon the notion of including a religion question or questions on the 1960 census (Petersen, 1987, pp. 221-222).

Another group prepared descriptions of New York's Jewish population for 1948 and 1951, based upon secondary analysis of survey data collected at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) of the University of Chicago (Glazer, Hyman and Lipset, 1952). In addition to data on the city, for the first time we have samples of two of the suburban counties, Nassau and Westchester. Since the sample sizes were small we combined the 1948 and 1951 samples to give a combined sample size of 1,063 cases for the city and 1,201 for the city and suburbs. Glazer, Hyman and Lipset reported on households, not persons. They estimated that 31% of the City households were headed by a Jewish person while Cohen estimated that 27% of the individuals were Jewish. Given the somewhat smaller size of Jewish households, the two estimates are reasonably close to each other.

The immediate postwar period saw two major migratory flows of Jewish population which had significant impact on the number and composition of the New York Jewish population. During the Second World War, Jewish migration from Europe had slowed down to a trickle. In 1941, the last year before America entered the war, 23,551 Jews migrated to the United States (net) while the next year, migration dropped to 10,491, and for the next three years (1943-1945) the average was less than 4,000 per year.¹⁴ Right after the war Jewish survivors and displaced persons began entering the country at an average rate of about 23,000 per year between 1946 and 1950, reaching a high of over 40,000 in 1949. We have no hard evidence on the fraction of the migration that settled in New York City. However, the evidence we do have suggests that this more religiously traditional migration was likely to settle in densely Jewish New York, rather than go out to the Jewish "provinces." The total Jewish migration into the United States for the period 1941-1950 was 159,000. We estimate that approximately 60% or 95,000 remained in New York.

At the same time that Jewish migration into the United States and New York was on the rise, there was an increase in Jewish suburbanization into the surrounding counties. There were Jewish populations in the various New York suburbs going back at least as far as the turn of the century. Yet until the post-Second World War period, the Jewish population of the suburbs remained small relative to the population of the city.¹⁵

Generally the suburban population was (and is) more likely to be second and third generation as compared with the heavily immigrant population of the center city. In addition, Jews faced the disadvantage of active anti-Jewish discrimination in the suburban housing market. It was not until 1948 that the United States Supreme Court ruled that restrictive covenants (which frequently excluded Jews) were not enforceable by the courts. New York State led the nation during this period in passing anti-discrimination legislation (Berger, 1967).

As discrimination fell away and veterans' loans, tract housing and suburban highways all proliferated, Jews poured into the suburbs. Cohen estimates that the

¹⁴ From 1945 on, Jews were not identified as such by the immigration authorities; thus our numbers come from Jewish immigrant aid and refugee organizations.

¹⁵ For 1917, it was estimated that the suburban Jewish population was approximately 1% of that residing in the City (Oppenheim, 1918).

Jewish population of Nassau County grew from 18,000 in 1940 to 110,000 in 1950, and Westchester increased from 32,000 to 58,000 (Cohen, 1956. p. 9). We have no estimate for Suffolk County for 1950 but there is reason to believe that the Suffolk Jewish population was small absolutely and relatively until the 1970s. Glazer, Hyman and Lipset estimated the number of Jewish households for Nassau and Westchester ca. 1950 at 86,000.

Using the Cohen estimate and assuming that the suburban population was almost all from the city, we have an outflow of 118,000 to Nassau and Westchester between 1940 and 1950. There was also some small outflow to the northern New Jersey suburbs in Essex and Bergen counties. In sum, then, we estimate an immigration from abroad to the city of 95,000 and migration from the city to the suburbs of somewhere around 125,000 to 130,000 (118,000 to Nassau and Westchester alone). The in- and out-migration figures give a loss to the city of approximately 30,000 to 35,000 Jews.

During this period (1941-1950) the birth rate rebounded from its 1930 depression lows to levels approximately 50% higher during the late 1940s, while the death rates remained constant. Rates of natural increase for this period in some years were up to the 1% per annum levels recorded in the late 1920s. So there was a natural increase in Jewish population for the city of 187,000 and a decline due to net migration out of the city to the suburbs of 35,000 yielding an expected net change of 142,000. We add this to the Rosenwaike 1940 estimate of 1,995,000 arriving at an expected Jewish population of 2,137,000, or slightly above the Cohen 1950 estimate of 2,110,000.

1957

In 1958 the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York initiated a study of the New York City, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk Jewish populations. The five boroughs of the City and the three suburban counties constituted the catchment area served by the Federation. It was this study that generated the retrospective Horowitz and Kaplan estimates for 1930 through 1950 that we cited above. This series was to be the last set of studies using the Yom Kippur absence method. Shortly after the conclusion of the Federation study, the Board of Education of the City of New York declared the Jewish High Holidays to be school holidays with school closed. Ironically, the school system "recognized" the Jewish holidays just as the Jewish population of the city was beginning its decline. The general city population was estimated for 1957 by means of a special survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in the spring of that year.

Using the Yom Kippur absence method, the City Jewish population was estimated at 2,114,000, an increase of 4,000 over 1950 and for the eight-county area in toto the estimated population was 2,579,000. The city increase was 4,000 and the suburban increase was approximately 270,000, giving an increase for the entire area of 274,000. The Suffolk increase is a "guesstimate" since we do not have data for 1950.

During the period 1951-1958, net Jewish migration into the United States was 63,127. Assuming that 50% of the immigrants settled in the city, we have an increase from migration of 31,000 Jews. At the same time the Jewish population in

Nassau, Westchester and Suffolk grew by approximately 240,000 persons. Some of that growth was due to natural increase (the suburban population was young and fertile) but most of it was migration from the City (Cohen, 1956. pp. 9–10; Horowitz and Kaplan, 1959. p. 23). With the rise of rapid suburbanization it becomes increasingly difficult to disaggregate total population change, including apparent suburban movement, into the elements of migration and natural increase. We do know, however, that the crude death rate for whites in New York remained at the level of the 1930s while the birth rate continued to be high during the “baby boom” period. The city birth rate was approximately 20 per thousand during the 1950s — almost half again as large as it was in the depths of the Depression (Rosenwaike, 1970. p. 150). As a consequence of the migration of the young into the suburbs, the birth rate was higher and the death rate lower than it was in the city.¹⁶ Summing the increases from migration and from births and deaths, we find a total increase in Jewish population of approximately 300,000 for the 8-county area (using Cohen, 1956 as our 1950 benchmark) and essentially no change for the Jewish population of the city.

1970

Through the 1950s, most of our estimates of New York Jewish population have been developed with the ingenious use of proxy indicators (death rates, Yom Kippur absence rates, foreign stock rates). The major exceptions were the HIP and NORC studies which gave us Jewish population and characteristics as by-products of large random sample surveys of New Yorkers. For 1970 we have two sample surveys. For the first time there was a sample survey of the New York Jewish population specifically designed to determine Jewish population size and the characteristics of New York's Jews. The survey was part of a countrywide sample survey of Jews, the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). A second body of information came from the New York City Population Health Survey. The survey was initiated in 1964 as a study of the health status and medical utilization experience of the population of New York, similar in principle to the HIP survey of 1952. The plan called for an annual survey of the population with some questions to be repeated during the multiple waves (Sivin and Densen, 1965). In 1970, the investigators included a question on religious background. We have, then, two independent estimates of Jewish population for 1970.

The NJPS estimate counted all persons in a household in which at least one person was Jewish (Massarik, 1976). Thus in the case of an intermarriage, both the Jewish and non-Jewish spouse were counted in the Jewish population, leading to an overcount of Jews. For 1981 we estimate that the overcount produced by this method would be 5% (Ritterband and Cohen, 1984a, p. 12). Since intermarriage increased significantly during the 1970s we have reduced the NJPS figures by only 3% to arrive at an estimate that would exclude non-Jewish members of Jewish households.

¹⁶ For the period 1959–1960, the ratio of live births to deaths was 1.77/1 for the City and 2.80/1 for the suburban counties (*City and County Data Book*, 1962).

For the city, the unadjusted NJPS estimate was 1,252,000 Jews, and the adjusted estimate 1,214,000 Jews. The NJPS suburban count was 739,000 unadjusted and 717,000 adjusted, for an 8-county total of 1,991,000 unadjusted and 1,931,000 adjusted. The New York Health Survey estimated a Jewish population of 1,413,000 for the five boroughs (Wantman, Israel and Kogen, 1972, p. 19). Both city estimates report a sharp decline in the City's Jewish population from 1957 and the NJPS suburban estimate shows a very substantial increase. The 8-county estimates for 1958-1970 show a decline of 600,000. The Health Survey is based upon a significantly larger sample (ca. 6,800 v. ca. 1,800) and the Jewish estimate arises out of a more general modified random sample survey. For these methodological reasons we prefer it to the NJPS.

The decline in the New York area population occurred in the face of a continuing (but slowing) growth of national Jewish population. From 1958 to 1970 the national Jewish community is estimated to have grown by 327,000 from natural increase and 105,000 by immigration for a total of 432,000 (Rosenwaik, 1980). While Jewish population was still growing nationally, it was also shifting geographically in two ways. There was a continuing movement from cities to suburbs and a movement from the older areas of settlement in the northeast and midwest to the far west and the south, i.e., from the snow belt to the sun belt, a movement that would accelerate in the next decade (Goldstein, 1982).

New York City's total population grew by about 100,000 between 1957 and 1970 but the net growth was in the non-white and Hispanic populations. The white non-Puerto Rican population declined by almost one million persons. Some of the decline in the City's white population resulted from moves to the suburban counties and some was accounted for by moves to other parts of the country. In sum, Jewish population shifts paralleled general population shifts, though at different points in time. During the 1950s the city's Jewish population reached its apogee, but by the 1970s it was declining rapidly, a process which continued into the 1980s.

1981

The 1981 estimate was generated by the New York Jewish Population Study (NYJPS). The population estimate was made by counting Designated (or Distinctive) Jewish Names (DJN) as they appeared in the telephone books for each of the postal zip codes of the areas under study. The distribution of these names within the Jewish population of the New York area was derived from the donors' lists held by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. The list of DJNs included 3,315 names representing 31% of the Jewish households. As a first approximation of the number of Jewish households, the number of DJNs in a given area is then divided by 0.31. The first estimate is then corrected for non-Jews bearing DJNs. In this case, it was determined that 8% of the population bearing Jewish names was in fact not Jewish. This estimate is then multiplied by 0.92. Through Random Digit Dialing (RDD) the proportion of households with unlisted phones was determined and the estimate was corrected for this factor. Last, the estimate was corrected for multiple listings in households. The number of persons per household was determined from interviews, and an area specific estimate was made to convert households into persons. The estimates from the 1981 NYJPS

were found to be consistent with random sample surveys conducted by New York area newspapers and were found to predict accurately the number of children enrolled in Jewish schools and the size of the recent Soviet Jewish immigrant population. The school and immigrant numbers, which were known to the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies — but not to the investigators — were used by the Federation as checks on the accuracy of the method (Ritterband and Cohen, 1984b).

For 1981 we find a continued decline in Jewish population for the City and for the aggregate of the three suburban counties as well. However, it is also important to note the emergence of two new sources of immigration for New York Jewry: Israel, and the Soviet Union which we shall deal with briefly in the next section.

1991

In 1991, The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York mounted a second sample survey of the Jewish population of New York City and the three suburban counties as a parallel to the 1981 NYJPS.¹⁷ The population count method employed by the 1991 NYJPS followed directly from the sampling method. The phones called were selected by Random Digit Dialing. Including only the residential calls completed, all households reached in which the religious composition of the household could be determined were placed in the denominator, and households with a minimum of one Jewish person were placed in the numerator. (Corrections were made for non-response.) The ratio of the two figures multiplied by the total number of households known from the decennial census gave the estimate of the number of Jewish households in the county. For the estimate of the population of Jewish persons, the number of households containing a Jewish person was multiplied by the average number of Jewish persons per household as determined by the completed interviews.

The 1991 NYJPS found that the Jewish population of the City continued to decline but at a much slower rate than had been the case in the previous decade. The suburban Jewish population decreased at a much steeper rate during the 1981-1991 period than did the city population. While the total population, i.e., Jews and non-Jews, residing in the suburbs grew marginally (approximately 2.5%), the Jewish population decreased by 27%. For the first time for which we have records, the City held on to a larger fraction of its Jewish population than did the suburbs.

The relatively small decline in Jewish population during the two most recent decades is at least in part due to new sources of Jewish migration to New York. In all, over 15 million immigrants settled in the United States between 1946 and 1989. Of these, approximately 2.6 million settled in New York, 17.2% of all immigrants, about 6 times its share of the American population. New York was and is an immigrants' town, setting the City apart from most other metropolitan areas in the United States. Once again, Russia has become an important source of Jewish population for New York and Israel has become a new source.

For a very long time the Soviet Union would allow few of its citizens (including Jews) to migrate. Almost out of the blue in the 1970s the Soviet Union

¹⁷The 1991 NYJPS was directed by Dr. Bethamie Horowitz.

allowed significant numbers of Jews (and a few others) to leave the country ostensibly for purposes of family reunification in Israel. A considerable number chose to come to the United States instead. Both the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Jewish refugee relief agency, and our sample survey estimate that there were 45,000 recent Soviet Jewish émigrés in the New York area as of 1981. Between 1982 and 1989 another 10,778 Soviet immigrants settled in New York City, a bit more than a fifth of the total Soviet immigration during that period. In all, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) estimated that as of 1993, approximately 90,000 Soviet Jews were resident in the New York Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, most of those in the Central City. This estimate includes non-Jewish spouses and other persons sharing a residence with a Jewish person.

While this new "Russian" Jewish migration has neither the Jewish character nor the sheer size of the Russian Jewish migration of the beginning of the century, it has brought new life to some old Jewish neighborhoods and has slowed the demographic decline of New York Jewry.¹⁸

The Israelis are the second large new Jewish migrant group to catch our attention. Unlike the Russians the very counting of Israelis is a problem. Because the Israeli government and people (as well as much of American Jewry) view migration from Israel as an act of Jewish disloyalty, the existence of an Israeli community in New York (and in America generally) has not been "recognized" by local Jewish bodies at the same time that their numbers have been speculated about with ludicrous results. Without specifying the definition of an Israeli (i.e., birth, nationality, citizenship, country of last residence) various sources have estimated the number of Israelis in the United States at 300,000 to 500,000 with over 200,000 in the New York area. Definition is part of the problem. Israel was a transit camp for many Jews who fled from Europe or the Levant and then migrated to the United States. However, taking the most liberal definition of an Israeli (i.e., a householder not born in the United States who lived in Israel for at least a year) and all the members of that person's household (including American-born spouse and children), as of 1981, there were at most 85,000 Israelis in the New York area. If we define Israelis as persons born in Israel and adjust our figures for the possible under-reports of illegal immigrants, we estimate that there were 23,270 Jewish Israelis in New York City in 1980. If we include all household members of Israeli-born heads of household (legal and illegal immigrants) we estimate that there were 39,450 "Israelis" in New York City in 1980.¹⁹ Between 1982 and 1989, almost 8,000 persons born in Israel entered the United States as immigrants.

¹⁸ An excellent survey of the population estimates of ex-Soviet Jews in New York and the United States more generally may be found in Gold (1994).

¹⁹ For a discussion of Israeli population count and a review of the estimates as of 1980/1, see Ritterband, (1986) which appeared in an issue of *Contemporary Jewry* containing other papers dealing with the situation of Israelis in New York during the same period. For comprehensive discussions of the number of Israelis in the United States, see Cohen and Tyree (1994); and Cohen and Habersfeld (1997).

Growth and Decline over a Ninety Year Period

We have now laid out the major sources for the exposition and study of Jewish population in New York City and its suburbs. The period we are discussing contains the years in which New York City's population more than doubled in size (1900-1930) and its Jewish population more than trebled. At its height, New York's Jewish population was larger than that of the Jewish population of any city in the world and larger than all but a of the national Jewish populations in the world. At its peak in 1950 New York City's Jewish population was greater than the entire world Jewish population of the seventeenth century. The Jewish population in the city began to decline significantly in the 1960s continuing into the 1970s with a slower rate of decline in the 1980s.

From 1925 on, the size of the Jewish population in New York City would be maintained by natural increase as the flow of migration was curtailed sharply. However, it was just in this period that the rate of natural increase declined since the Jewish population was aging and Jewish birth rates were declining as New York's Jews went through their own very rapid demographic transition. What was characteristic of the Jews of New York City was also characteristic of other European-origin populations elsewhere. The Jews differed in degree rather than in kind.

During the First World War there was a large influx of Black population from America's south presaging the change from an almost entirely European origin population to an increasingly Black, Hispanic, and Asian population some years later. The non-white and Hispanic population grew relatively slowly during the 1920s and 1930s but during and after the Second World War they grew rapidly, migrating first from the American south, then from Puerto Rico and other parts of the Caribbean, and then from the South American mainland and East Asia. By 1950 the city was 10% non-white, by 1970 two-thirds non-white, and by 1980 almost half non-white (Kuznets, 1975).

The non-white and Latin American population replaced the European-origin white population, including Jews. It is useful to compare columns F and H of Table 1. We see that for the first half of the century the Jewish percentage of total population and the Jewish percentage of whites was essentially the same since the non-white population was small. As the non-white population grew the Jewish percentage of the total declined far more rapidly than did the Jewish percentage of the white non-Hispanics. The Jewish percentage of white non-Hispanics remained relatively stable (ca. 30%), except for a small dip to 26% in 1970. The data suggest then that Jews did not leave the city more rapidly than non-Jews concurrent with, or in the face of, the immigration of the non-white population.

Another way of looking at the changes in Jewish population is to examine annual rates of growth (decline) during several periods of this century in comparison with the rates of growth (decline) for the total city and for the non-Jewish white non-Hispanic population.

TABLE 1. NEW YORK JEWISH AND TOTAL POPULATION, 1900-1991

Year	Source	Geographic area	Jewish population (000)	Total population (000)	Jews as % of Total	% White non- Hispanic	Jews as % of whites non- Hispanic
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1900	Laidlaw	City	598	3,437	17	98	—
1901	Jacobs*	City	490	3,437	14	98	18
1902	Jacobs	City	533	—	—	—	—
1910	Jacobs	City	600	—	—	—	—
	Laidlaw	City	1,252	4,767	26	98	—
	Jacobs	City	820	4,767	17	98	—
	Chalmers*	City	1,050	4,767	22	98	—
1916	Dushkin	City	1,500	—	—	—	—
1920	Laidlaw*	City	1,643	5,620	29	97	30
1925	Goldsmith*	City	1,750	5,813	30	—	—
1930	Laidlaw	City	1,877	6,930	27	95	—
	Horowitz & Kaplan	City	1,825	6,930	27	95	28
1935	Deardorf (corrected)	City	1,816	7,193	25	—	—
1940	Horowitz & Kaplan	City	1,785	7,455	24	94	—
	Rosenwaik*	City	1,995	7,455	27	94	28
1950	Cohen*	City	2,110	7,892	27	90	29
	Cohen	8-county	2,278	9,467	24	—	—
	Horowitz & Kaplan	City	1,996	7,892	25	90	28
1957 ^a	Horowitz & Kaplan*	City	2,114	7,795	27	87	31
	Horowitz & Kaplan	8-county	2,579	10,255	25	—	—
1970	NJPS	City	1,252	7,895	16	68	23
	NJPS (corrected)	City	1,214	7,895	15	68	23
	NJPS	8-county	1,991	11,342	18	—	—
	NJPS (corrected)	8-county	1,931	11,342	17	—	—
	Health Survey*	City	1,413	7,895	18	65	26

1981	NYJPS*	City	1,133	7,071	16	52	30
	NYJPS	8-county	1,671	10,543	15	—	31
1991	NYJPS*	City	1,027	7,333	14	43	33
	NYJPS	8-county	1,420	10,807	13	—	24

* Estimates preferred in Table 2.

a. Since Yom Kippur fell on a Saturday in 1957, the Horowitz and Kaplan Jewish population estimates were actually made for 1958. The estimate of total city population was made in and for 1957 by a special census commissioned by the City of New York.

TABLE 2. ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE GROWTH (DECLINE) OF NEW YORK CITY'S POPULATIONS, 1900-1991 (THOUSANDS)

Period	Jews		White non-Hispanic		White non-Jewish non-Hispanic		City total	
	N	Yearly %	N	Yearly %	N	Yearly %	N	Yearly %
1900-1910	560	11.0	1,304	3.9	744	2.6	1,330	3.9
1911-1920	595	5.6	779	1.7	186	0.5	853	1.7
1921-1930	182	1.1	1,133	2.1	951	2.5	1,310	2.1
1931-1940	170	0.0	424	0.6	254	0.5	525	0.6
1941-1950	115	0.6	95	0.1	20	0.03	437	0.1
1951-1960	4	0.03	-321	-0.6	-325	-0.7	-97	-0.02
1961-1970	-701	-2.6	-1,432	-1.6	-712	-2.0	100	-1.6
1971-1980	-280	-1.9	-1,711	-3.2	-1,412	-2.7	824	-3.2
1981-1991	-104	-0.9	-542	-1.5	-435	-1.7	0	0.0

The data for this analysis are presented in Table 2. In the first set of columns we have the change in absolute numbers of the Jewish population for the period indicated, and the relative change (i.e., percent change). The percent change is for comparative purposes. We have presented simple rather than compound percentage changes. The next set of columns gives the same figures for the white non-Hispanic population, the third for the white non-Hispanic non-Jewish and the last columns present the city as a whole. The numbers for the non-Hispanic population present a problem since the census used different definitions of Hispanic at differing points in time. Further, the published census does not treat race (white/non-white) as a category exclusive of Hispanic. For recent periods we have unpublished data supplied by the population division of the Department of Planning of the City of New York where the Hispanic individuals were identified and reported by race, thus eliminating double counting.

For the first decade particularly, but even into the second decade, the rate of Jewish population increase was enormous, far exceeding the increase in growth of the three comparative population groups. For the next 37 years the rate of Jewish increase steadily declined until 1950-57 when it was an infinitesimally small 0.03% per annum. The Jewish population growth did not become negative until the period 1958-1970, although the white non-Hispanic (and non-Jewish) rates had showed a significant decline already between the years 1951 and 1957. Given the acknowledged possibility of error in the Jewish estimates, I would not make too much of this difference. During the 1958-1980 periods all of the population indicators we report point downwards showing decline. The Hispanics and non-whites showed very rapid increase throughout the postwar years. Some American Jews from other parts of the United States settled in New York but more New York Jews left the city to move elsewhere in the United States. Unless there is a radical change in general population dynamics and in the economy of the city and country, we can expect the New York Jewish community to continue to decline. With that decline we can expect changes in the nature of the community and the behavior of Jews as they increasingly find themselves in a smaller and shrinking community.

The Significance of Jewish Population Numbers: Absolute and Growth

The incredibly rapid increase in the size of the Jewish population in New York from 1900 to 1916 strained the community's resources to — and beyond — the breaking point. With all of their problems the Jewish communities of eastern Europe had networks of institutions designed to meet their needs. From birth to death the Jewish communities responded to the concerns of Jews. Schools, relief societies, burial societies — all were part of the organized Jewish community. Much of the history of New York (and larger American) Jewry during the first generation of the mass migration was preoccupied with various attempts to create order out of the disorder engendered by massive population shifts. There was no way in which the community could catch its breath while the mass migration was under way. Oddly enough, the Jewish community did not produce that much in the way of general social pathology (i.e., crime, alcoholism and the like). However, the community's ability to train a new generation was nowhere near the need. Proper

Jewish schools were few in number and only a minority of young Jews received a decent Jewish education.

That is the negative picture. But there is a positive picture as well. The enormous cultural creativity of American Jewry has been made possible in part by the density of Jewish population in New York City. Everything from the Jewish elan of neighborhoods to Jewish theaters and libraries required large populations and population density.

This was particularly true as Jews became secularized. For as the hold of traditional belief and practice was weakened, the immediate physical presence of Jews became necessary to make them manifest to one another. Jews lived in New York City as Jews not so much in the synagogues and houses of study but in the streets of Jewish neighborhoods. One had a sense of the reality of the Jewish people on Yom Kippur afternoon when tens of thousands of young people "paraded" up and down the Grand Concourse in The Bronx or Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn while (some) of their elders were petitioning God to forgive their sins. Temporary "mushroom synagogues" sprang up all over the city to meet the needs of Jews who had once upon a time prayed regularly each Sabbath but then restricted their worship to the "Days of Awe." This phenomenon bespoke a large Jewish population served by few stable synagogues. The Jewish street, crowded with Jews, became the synagogue, community hall, and school for most of the Jews of New York.

What was true of the religious life of Jews was true of other aspects of their lives as well. Jewish politicking went on in the streets where rallies and meetings were addressed by speakers in Yiddish and English. Again the sense of the reality of the Jewish people came from the presence of masses of Jews. A vital secular life required numbers where there was no institutionalized cultural autonomy. However, as we have seen, those numbers have been declining rapidly and with their decline we should find changes in a wide variety of Jewish behaviors including patterns of marriage and intermarriage, friendship and a host of other aspects of Jewish behaviors that require significant numbers of Jews to function well.

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