### ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF JEWS IN THE SERVICE AREA OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF PALM BEACH COUNTY: LESSONS FOR ALL JEWISH COMMUNITIES

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Many American Jews, perhaps the majority, identify themselves as being "ethnically" Jewish. That is, they view themselves as being of Jewish origin, irrespective of synagogue membership or religious observance levels. In spite of this, the United States Bureau of the Census traditionally has viewed Jews as a religious group. Due in part to the doctrine of the separation of church and state, data on religious preference has not been collected by the US Census (with the exception of a study conducted in March 1957). A major demographic study with national supervision was completed in 1971 (the National Jewish Population Study — NJPS — Massarik and Chenkin, 1973), resulting in estimates of the Jewish population for the country as a whole, for various regions, and for a number of major metropolitan areas. Such a study may be repeated in 1990 (Goldstein et al., 1988).

More than 50 American Jewish communities have commissioned demographic studies since 1975, representing more than 75% of American Jews (Chenkin, 1982: 11; Kosmin, 1986: 25). While such studies produce a wealth of data on demographic, geographic, and religious dimensions as well as profiles of organizational and philanthropic behavior, the most sought after and most published result is the estimate of the Jewish population in the service area of the Federation commissioning the study. In some cases, the numbers are perceived to have significant impact on Federation funding decisions and may lead to considerable controversy (Ritterband and Cohen, 1984).

A variety of methods have been used to derive estimates of the Jewish population of particular cities. These include procedures involving absences from public school on major Jewish holidays<sup>1</sup>, death-rate methods<sup>2</sup>, methods using Distinctive Jewish Names (DJNs) (Cohen, Cooper, and Cantor, 1981; Sheskin, 1982; Sheskin, 1984; Wheeler, 1980; Ritterband and Cohen, 1984)<sup>3</sup>, questionnaires<sup>4</sup>, random digit dialing survey (Varady and Mantel, 1982), surrogate census variables,<sup>5</sup> and various other methodologies (Diamond, 1977).

A common technique for estimating the size of Jewish populations, for many of the demographic studies completed in recent years, has been random digit dialing (Phillips, 1980; Sheskin, 1987; Population Research Committee, 1982). Four-digit random numbers are generated for each telephone exchange code in a metropolitan area to form a 7-digit telephone number. These telephone numbers are then called and the percentage of households reached which contain a Jewish person can then be derived. This percentage is then multiplied by the number of telephone households in the area, to obtain the total number of Jewish households (which is then multiplied by the household size, derived from the survey, to obtain an estimate of the Jewish population).

This technique had to be modified for the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County demographic study, so that the final procedure employed was a combination of RDD and DJN procedures. While some of the reasons for the need to modify the standard RDD procedure may be unique to Palm Beach County, it is suspected that the procedure outlined below will yield superior results for other Jewish communities as well. It is also suspected that past studies using RDD methodologies may have underestimated Jewish populations.

Prior to a discussion of the methodology, it should be explained that the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County services Palm Beach County from Boynton Beach to Jupiter/Tequesta. (The South County Jewish Federation, which was a branch office of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County until 1979, services the Boca Raton/Delray Beach area.) In addition, the Jewish Federation services the Stuart/Port St. Lucie area (Martin and southern St. Lucie County). This paper first explains the "RDD-DJN/Geography" Population Estimation Procedure used in the Palm Beach County protion of the service area and then the DJN Methodology utilized for the Stuart/Port St. Lucie area.

## THE "RDD-DJN/GEOGRAPHY" POPULATION ESTIMATION PROCEDURE

The Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County demographic study employed a "standard" methodology which has been used by many Jewish demographic studies for estimating the size of an area's Jewish population. However, as this methodology failed to produce results consistent with two additional measures of the Jewish population size, it had to be modified significantly. A procedure employing distinctive Jewish names was utilized, supplemented by a knowledge of the Jewish geography of the county gained during the conduct of the study. This section proceeds to outline the:

- (1) Use of the "standard" methodology;
- (2) Methods indicating that the standard methodology produced erroneous results;
- (3) Methods used to check the reliability of the parameters produced by the "standard method"; and,
- (4) "DJN/Geography" Population Estimation Procedure to provide more realistic estimates of the Jewish population.

#### Use of the "Standard Methodology"<sup>6</sup>

This section outlines the application of the "standard" RDD methodology as applied in Palm Beach County.

- (1) Information was obtained from Southern Bell on the number of residential telephones in July 1987 for the telephone exchange codes in the Palm Beach County study area. The total number of residential telephone lines was 249,883.
- (2) During the course of the random digit dialing telephone survey, about 11.5% of the households reached contained one or more Jewish persons. This includes a small adjustment because some percentage (estimated to be about 5% in other studies) of persons deny that their household is a Jewish household when in fact it is (Tobin, 1986).
- (3) The above implies that about 29,000 Jewish households live in the Palm Beach County study area (11.5% times 249,883 total households).
- (4) The results of the survey indicate that the household size is 1.98. Multiplying this figure times the number of Jewish households (29,000) yields an estimate of 57,000 persons in Jewish households.

#### Methods Indicating that the Standard Methodology Produced Erroneous Results

While the above procedure is a "standard" methodology used in various Jewish communities around the country for estimating the size of the Jewish population, it yielded an erroneous figure for the Palm Beach County study area. This was known to be the case for at least two reasons.

First, an alternative procedure (completed prior to undertaking the demographic study) employing distinctive Jewish names (DJN) had estimated the number of Jewish households in the area at 39,000. It seemed improbable that this other procedure was "off" by 10,000 households (39,000 - 29,000).

Second, and more importantly, about 22% of the interviews occurred in the Century Village/Golden Lakes subregion of the county. This subregion contains two large adult retirement communities: Century Village, with 7,850 units and Golden Lakes, with 1,550 units for a total of 9,400 units, of which the overwhelming majority (perhaps over 90%) are Jewish. Several smaller condominium developments also were included in this area. But 22% of the 29,000 Jewish households estimated by random digit dialing yielded an estimate of only 6,380 Jewish households in the Century Village/Golden Lakes region. Because the 22% was known to be "correct," the implication was that the 29,000 Jewish household estimate was too low.

Thus, both procedures suggested that the estimate of 29,000 households was too low.

#### Methods Used to Check the Reliability of the Parameters Produced by the "Standard Method."

It became clear that the estimate of 29,000 Jewish households was too low. Recall that the RDD estimate of 29,000 households was based upon taking 11.5% of the 249,883 telephone households. Thus, it was concluded that something was amiss with either the number of telephone households or the percentage of persons estimated to be Jewish.

To check the reliability of the Southern Bell information on the number of telephones, the following procedure was used:

(1) Information was obtained on the number of households in Palm Beach County as a whole, for 1980 through 1986, from the Population Program, Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida. While other estimates are available, these are official statistics, in the sense that the Florida legislature uses them for official purposes. These estimates, however, omit seasonal units and units held for occasional use, an estimate of which is available for 1980 only from the 1980 US Census of Population and Housing.

- (2) Because a 1987 figure for the number of households in Palm Beach County was needed, a straight line regression was used to project such a figure from the 1980-1986 data. Thus, it was estimated that approximately 325,000 households (excluding seasonal units and units held for occasional use) were in Palm Beach County in 1987.
- (3) Because the Palm Beach County study area omits South County (Boca Raton/Delray Beach) and the Belle Glade/Pahokee area, it was necessary to estimate the proportion of the 325,000 households living within the study area. To accomplish this, the reverse telephone directories for the area (which contain information on the number of residential listings per zip code) were consulted and it was estimated that about 67% of households with telephones in Palm Beach County were located within the study area.
- (4) The above implies that in 1987 about 215,000 households lived in the study area (325,000 times 67%). To this figure an estimate of the number of units for seasonal and occasional use was added. This estimate was based upon the assumption that the percentage of housing units in these categories had remained the same. This yielded a total estimate of 248,493 housing units, very close to the 249,883 figure for residential telephones from Southern Bell.

Having checked the reliability of the Southern Bell data, it was concluded that the problem had to derive from the assumption that 11.5% of the population was Jewish. This percentage had been calculated in the following manner:

(# of Jews Contacted) divided by (# of Jews Contacted + # of Non-Jews Contacted)

The number of Jews contacted included those completing a survey, refusals, ineligibles, terminations (respondents completing part of a survey), and failed attempts at call back. The number of non-Jews included all those households in which the respondent indicated no one in the household was Jewish. Recall that a

correction was added to these figures for those Jewish households indicating that no one was Jewish.

Thus, the problem with the random digit dialing procedure had to lie with the estimate that only 11.5% of the 249,883 telephone households were Jewish.

The problem was traced to the fact that about 250 households hung up repeatedly, refusing to indicate if any Jews lived in the household, and 900 households were never at home, even after four attempts were made to reach them (once during the day, once on the weekend, twice on two different evenings). Thus, it was decided to check if these 1150 households were more than 11.5% Jewish, because if such was the case, then the estimate of the rate of 11.5% Jewish for the entire area was too low. Note that by not doing this check, the implicit assumption (and the assumption made by the "standard" procedure) was that 11.5% of these 1150 households were Jewish.

Good reason existed to suspect that the 250 households who hung up repeatedly were disproportionately Jewish. First, refusal rates in Jewish demographic studies (in fact, in all telephone surveys) are rising around the country because of increasing suspicion of telephone solicitation and increasing fear of crime. Non-Jewish households could quickly volunteer the information that they are not Jewish and courteously hang up. This could mean that the 250 hangs ups were more than 11.5% Jewish.

A second reason may be posited for the 250 hang ups being disproportionately Jewish. In neighboring Dade County, the response rate to the 1982 Greater Miami Population Study (Sheskin, 1982) was only 70% in the South Beach area (where the median age was 67) and 95% in the South Dade area (median age 35). This is some evidence that the elderly in south Florida are somewhat less likely to cooperate. Because the Jewish population of Palm Beach is 58% elderly (age 65 and over) and the general population is less than 25% elderly, it is likely that more Jews than non-Jews hung up without indicating their religious identity.

Good reason also exists to suspect that the 900 households in which no one was home were disproportionately Jewish. First, although we called during the period when the season population in Palm Beach County is maximized (late January, early February), a much higher proportion of the Jewish population is involved in part-year residency and is less likely to be in town at this time of the year than are full-year, non-Jewish residents of the area. Second, Jewish residents of Palm Beach County have

a significantly higher income than do non-Jewish residents, meaning that the Jewish population is more likely to be on vacation at any given time. Third, much of the Jewish population is comprised of young, active elderly who live in condominiums and lead very active social lives. It is common for many to eat at restaurants often and to socialize in the homes of other persons almost every evening. Fourth, Jewish household size was found to be 1.98, smaller than the 2.09 figure for the general population. Thus, among Jewish households, there are fewer persons in the household to be home at the time a call arrives. All of these factors might help to contribute to a disproportionate percentage of Jews among those never answering their telephones.

#### "DJN/Geography" Population Estimation Procedure to Provide More Realistic Estimates of the Jewish Population.

The only information available on these 1150 households was a telephone number. All 1150 telephone numbers were checked in a reverse telephone directory. Such a directory lists telephone numbers in numerical order, followed by the names and addresses of the individual assigned the numbers. More than 650 of these telephone numbers could be found in the reverse directory. On the basis of surname, first name, and geographic location, each number was then classified as "Jewish," "non-Jewish," and "don't know." Israel Cohen would be assumed to be Jewish; Jose Gonzalez would be assumed to be non-Jewish. Bob Freedman in Century Village (an area that is at least 90% Jewish) would be assumed Jewish; Bob Freedman in Riviera Beach (a black area containing little, if any, Jewish population) would be assumed non-Jewish. Names which were not "clear cut" were reviewed by a panel of three persons ranging in age from 36 to 70, two of whom had significant knowledge of Yiddish.

About 38% of the 250 households who hung up without indicating whether anyone Jewish lived in the household, were judged Jewish, as were about 35% of the 900 households for which repeated dialings did not yield an answer. Overall, about 35% of the 1150 households were assumed to be Jewish. Making this assumption implies that the 500 telephone numbers not in the reverse directory were more like the 650 that were in the directory than like those households who answered the telephone and indicated whether someone Jewish lived there.

This methodology lent support to the theory that Jews were

disproportionately represented among the 1150 households who either refused to indicate if they were Jewish or were never home. While one can certainly argue that distinctive Jewish names and geographic location will not be perfect predictors of religious identity, I believe a stronger argument can be made in support of the estimate that 35% of the 1150 households are Jewish than can be made for assuming that only 11.5% are, particularly in the Palm Beach County context. While some researchers and planners have problems with the use of DJN's in some contexts, I believe that, combined with the detailed knowledge of the "Jewish geography" of the area, the DJN method is reasonably accurate and, hopefully, errors of calling all "Levines" Jewish are offset by the Jewish "Fernandez's."

Assuming that 35% of these 1150 households are Jewish and that 11.5% of the households we reached were Jewish, implies that the Palm Beach County study area is 16.2% Jewish. Then, 16.2% of the 249,883 residential telephones yields an estimate of 38,487 households, which at an average household size of 1.98, yields an estimate of 76,200 persons in Jewish households.

Recall that the DJN method estimated  $78,\!100$  Jews. The "RDD-DJN/Geography" procedure estimated  $76,\!200$ . This is a difference of only 1900 Jews, or 2.5%.

### A DJN METHODOLOGY FOR STUART/PORT ST. LUCIE

Because a random digit dialing survey was not used for the Stuart/Port St. Lucie area, a methodology had to be employed based upon the usage of a list of 36 distinctive Jewish names. These names are those suggested by the Council of Jewish Federations and have been tested in a number of different applications. It has generally been found that close to 90 percent of persons with these names are Jewish and that about 10-12 percent of Jews have one of these names. In the 1986 Stuart telephone directory, there were 279 households that have one of the 36 DJN's. A telephone survey was conducted in which 126 of the 279 households in the telephone directory were contacted. The response rate was 97%.

Only 50% of the households contacted were Jewish, versus the 90% found in other areas (87% in Dade County, for example). This is not totally surprising, as Stuart is an area with a much smaller Jewish population, comprising a small percentage of the total population. Thus, in this area, most of those named "Jacob,"

"Stern," and "Weiss" were not Jewish. Given that 50% of households with a DJN were Jewish, and given that there were 279 households in the telephone directory with a DJN, implies that there were 140 Jewish households listed in the telephone directory with a DJN (.50 times 279 = 140).

A correction to this figure of 140 must be made to account for the fact that not all households choose to have their telephone numbers listed in the directory. To estimate this percentage, the membership lists of seven Jewish organizations in the area were collected. These lists were combined into one Master List of 367 households (belonging to one or more Jewish organization). About 23% of households on this Master List were not in the telephone directory. Thus, it was assumed that 23% of Stuart area Jews chose not to be listed in the directory. This 23% figure is close to the 27% figure for the general population in Dade and Palm Beach counties.

Recall that there exist 140 Jewish households in the Stuart telephone directory with one of the 36 DJN's. Given that 23% of Stuart Jews have unlisted numbers, implies that, if all Jewish households with a DJN were in the telephone directory, there would be 172 Jewish households with a DJN in the telephone directory (140 times 1.23). Of the 367 households on the Master List, 39 (or 10.63%) had one of the DJN's. (This figure is well in keeping with the 10-12% figure given by the Council of Jewish Federations.)

We can now assume that because 10.63% of Jewish households on the Master List had one of the 36 DJN's, the same percentage of all Stuart area Jewish households would have one of these names. That is, the 172 households with a DJN in the telephone directory (including the 23% unlisted) represented about 11% of all Stuart area households. Thus, the number of Jewish households in the Stuart area was 1,628 (172 divided by .1063).

The above procedure established the number of Jewish households in 1986. Estimating the size of the Jewish population requires knowledge of the average household size of the Jewish population. Such an estimate was achieved during a 1983 telephone survey of a random sample of 63 unaffiliated households and 70 affiliated households, conducted by this author under the auspices of the Treasure Coast Jewish Center. The average household size was found to be 2.05. Multiplying the 1,628 households by the household size of 2.05 implies that there were about 3,350 Jews in the Stuart area.

## RESULTS FOR THE SERVICE AREA OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

The Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County demographic study found that approximately 80,000 persons live in Jewish households in the service area of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County (Table 1). The figures in Table 1 represent persons in Jewish households. A Jewish household is defined as a household containing one or more Jews. 6.05% of the persons in interviewed households were not Jewish. Omitting the non-Jews living in Jewish households yields an estimate of 71,600 Jews in the Palm Beach County study area. In addition, approximately 6,400 Jews are in the area visiting for two months or less during January/February. Note as well that 9.9% of households (about 7,350 persons) spend less than six months of the year in Palm Beach County.

Table 1
Current Size of the Jewish Population

Palm Beach County Study . Area	Population	House- holds	Household Size
Part-Year Residents (3-7 months)			
Jews in Jewish households	15,580		
Non-Jews in Jewish households	750		
Total part-year residents	16,600		
Full-Year Residents (8+ Months)			
Jews in Jewish households	55,750		
Non-Jews in Jewish households	3,850		
Total full-year residents	59,600		
Total person in households	76,200	38,487	1.98
Total persons in institutions	800		
Total in Palm Beach County Study	,		
Area	77,000		
OTHER AREAS			
Bell Glade/Pahokee:	12		
Stuart/Port St. Lucie	3,350	1,628	2.05
GRAND TOTAL	80,362		

<sup>+ &</sup>quot;Visitor households" (less than 3 months) 6,400

#### LESSONS FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES

While many researchers and professional planners at Federations would probably agree that population size is not the most important piece of information produced by demographic studies, quite clearly it is the one number that will be cited most frequently by both members of the Jewish community and the secular press. Yet, insufficient discussion has occurred among researchers concerning the methods used to derive these numbers. The major purpose of this paper has been to outline the procedure used to estimate the size of the Jewish population of the service area of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County. This section outlines the lessons that can be drawn for other communities in the process of conducting demographic studies.

- (1) The local telephone company, Southern Bell, was very cooperative in providing information on the number of residential telephone lines in the section of the county covered by the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County. They were unable to provide any indication of the percentage of these lines that were assigned to the same household. This introduces some error because there are actually fewer households than residential telephone lines. Telephone companies apparently do not keep records of the number of households with more than one telephone number.
- (2) Note that a DJN methodology was used to check the accuracy of the RDD procedure, providing a significant clue that something was amiss. Given the perceived importance of the population estimate, it is clearly worthwhile to spend the additional time necessary to implement a DJN estimate as well an RDD telephone survey method. In Palm Beach, this confirmation provided significantly greater confidence in the results.
- (3) The accuracy of the RDD estimate was also checked by examining the derived estimate for one of the subregions (Century Village/Golden Lakes). This methodology is transportable to other geographic locales if the following conditions are met:
  - (A) One housing development or neighborhood (call it Area X) exists in which the overwhelming majority of the households are Jewish.
  - (B) The number of households in Area X is known.
  - (C) The number of households in Area X is a reasonable

proportion of the total in the study area. Obviously, if Area X only represents, for example, 3% of the study area's households (in comparison with the 22% for Century Village/Golden Lakes area), the vagaries of sampling could result in an unacceptable sampling error.

Yet another benefit to the Century Village/Golden Lakes method was that Century Village was a Census Designated Place (CDP) in 1980. The "national origin" question in the 1980 census provided some guidelines to the estimate of the percentage of the population that was Jewish in Century Village.

- (4) Given the importance of the figure on the total number of residential lines in the area, and the fact that such information is usually obtained from a person at the telephone company whose "research" and "quantitative" background is unknown, it would behoove all researchers to make an independent estimate of the number of households in the study area. This was not easy for the Palm Beach County study area for a number of reasons: only part of a county was being examined; the available data omitted households held for seasonal and occasional use. Nevertheless, such an independent estimate of the number of households should be conducted to assure that the information from the telephone company is reasonable.
- (5) Reverse telephone directories can form a useful tool in population studies. In this study, they were used to: 1) estimate the percentage of Jews for the 1150 households for which no determination was reached via RDD; 2) estimate the proportion of the population of the entire county living within the study area; and 3) do sampling for small subareas of the county.<sup>7</sup>
- (6) Perhaps the most important lesson is the suggestion that RDD surveys cease making the assumption that, if X% of all households reached who answer the question on Jewishness are Jewish, than X% of all households refusing to indicate Jewishness are Jewish, as are X% of all households who are never at home. I have stated above that at least in the case of Palm Beach County, good reason existed to assume that the percentage who are Jewish was higher among these latter two groups. Such proved to be the case. Even if this is a unique set of circumstances, the argument is forwarded that more accurate estimates of the size of the Jewish population will be had when the reverse telephone directory is used as described

above. In addition, I have found that having done this work somewhat mollifies those persons who are concerned about the effect of non-response on the results.

Most importantly, if the general argument forwarded in this document is correct, that the "RDD-DJN/Geography" procedure is superior to the "standard RDD" procedure, then it is likely that previous RDD estimates of the Jewish population of various areas have underestimated the size of this population.

Although many of the decisions concerning which names and addresses are likely to be Jewish can not be accomplished by the average clerical worker, about 20 person hours were invested in the Palm Beach County project on this task. This is certainly a worthwhile expenditure of time.

#### NOTES

- 1. No matter the level of religious observance of Jews, practically all Jewish children refrain from attending school on the High Holidays. By comparing public school attendance on Jewish holidays with attendance on 'normal' days, it becomes possible to obtain a fairly accurate estimate of the number of Jewish children in public schools. After adding the number of Jewish children enrolled in Jewish day schools, the total Jewish population may be extrapolated, using the proportion of school children in the white population as a whole.
- The number of Jewish decedents may be obtained from death records on which the place of interment may be found. If one then assumes that the Jewish death rate is similar to the white population as a whole, the total Jewish population may be extrapolated (Barnett, 1902; Rosenwaike, 1984).
- 3. Various lists of Distinctive Jewish Names have been developed. The Council of Jewish Federations has published a list of 36 DJNs which they claim, after examination of numerous lists of affiliated Jews, are "held" by about 10-12 percent of American Jews. The number of households in the telephone book with one of these names may be counted, adjusted for unlisted numbers, and extrapolated to produce an estimate of the number of Jewish households. This estimate is expanded by an estimate of Jewish household size to produce estimates of the Jewish population. Certain problems exist with using this methodology in cities with a large German population, because many of the distinctive Jewish names are also held by Germans (Varady and Mantel, 1982).
- 4. The American Jewish Year Book, prepared under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee, presents Jewish population estimates for the United States, each state and various cities. Many of these estimates derive from direct requests via questionnaire made to Jewish communal leaders in various cities. Often, the responses are based upon the

- "intuition" of these leaders.
- 5. The 1970 Census asked the following question: "What language, other than English, was spoken in this person's home when he was a child?" Using information from the 1970 National Jewish Population Study, Rosenwaike (1982) calculated a conversion factor between the number of persons reporting Yiddish and the total number of Jews. The procedure was shown to yield reasonable estimates of the Jewish population of neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the question of mother tongue was dropped from the 1980 Census. Some researchers have used the percentage of Persons of Russian Stock as an indicator of Jewish population (Rosenthal, 1975; Rees, 1970).
- 6. Note that, for simplicity of presentation, the discussion treats the entire study area as one unit. In reality, all calculations were done separately for each of the 44 exchange codes in the study area and then summed.
- 7. When telephone exchange code areas are not coterminous with subregions, and a particular subregion does not have a separate section in the telephone directory, it becomes almost impossible to use RDD or DJN methods to isolate households in these small areas. The reverse telephone directory can become an important tool. A list of all "block faces" within the area of interest can be made and then all households with DJN's can be identified in the reverse directory. All reverse directories have a section which lists all block faces in the area, providing the name and telephone number of all households on that block face.

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