The Future of American Jewish Religion: Perspectives from Demography

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It has been said that the only ones who are wrong more often than economists are demographers. Thus it is with some trepidation that I write on the future of American Jewish Religion from the perspective of a demographer of the Jewish community trained in the discipline of Geography. Contributing to this concern is the fact that so many have been so wrong with their predictions in the past. A few examples will suffice.

First, on May 30, 1934, *The New York Times* headline stated, “Religion Among Jews Found To Be Waning.”

Second, on May 5, 1964, *LOOK* magazine ran a cover story by Thomas B. Morgan entitled "The Vanishing American Jew." *LOOK* postulated that due to assimilation, low birth rates, and intermarriage, the American Jew would disappear by the end of the 20th century.

Third, in 1986, *Israel, the Ever-Dying People, and Other Essays* was published, exploring some of the difficulties of survival in the diaspora.[1]

Fourth, *New York Magazine*, in its 40th anniversary issue (September 28, 2008), declared “Success Ruined The New York Jew.” What makes this article unique is its startling thesis: As the New York Jew disconnects from rituals and observance, opting for “universalist” values above all else, then the New York Jew will become like everyone else in the universe. No more “New York Jew,” except as an ethnic curio.

Fifth, Edgar Bronfman, a billionaire philanthropist, was interviewed in the October 5, 2008 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. Mr. Bronfman was asked why he donates

to Jewish causes instead of broader social causes. "There are not that many of us in the Jewish world who understand that we are 'in crisis'" he responded. "We are not in crisis because of anti-Semitism; we are in crisis because we are disappearing through assimilation." (However, note that *U.S. News & World Report* found a Jewish "Return To Tradition" last winter [December 13, 2008].)

Sixth, one recent study by a renowned group of researchers predicted that in the next 80 years, America's Jewish population would decrease by one-third to 3.8 million if current fertility rates and migration patterns continue.[2]

The demise of the Jews has been predicted in the past as well. King Louis XIV of France, over three hundred years ago, asked Blaise Pascal, a great French philosopher, to provide proof of miracles. Pascal answered, "Why, the Jews, your Majesty–the Jews." In Pascal's work, *Pensees*, he opined that the fact that Jews had survived until the seventeenth century was nothing short of a supernatural phenomenon.

Arnold Toynbee, in his classic twelve-volume analysis of the rise and fall of human civilizations, *A Study of History* (1934-1961), was troubled by the one exception to his universal rules governing the inexorable decline of every people. Only the Jews had survived, in defiance of Toynbee's carefully reasoned analysis. Toynbee declared that the Jews were "a vestigial remnant," a people destined to perish soon.

Like Mark Twain, who read his own obituary in the newspaper, Jews can respond that the report of their death "is highly exaggerated."

One could counter the argument of the loss of the American Jewish community with data on the growth of a variety of Jewish institutions over the past decades. There are now

hundreds of Jewish Studies programs in the United States, with thousands of professors and thousands of courses offered. Almost none of this existed 50 years ago. Thousands of websites have emerged over the past fifteen years on Jewish-related and Israel-related topics. The Florence Melton Adult Mini-School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem opened in 1986 and is an international network of community-based schools offering adults the opportunity to acquire Jewish literacy in an open, trans-denominational, intellectually stimulating learning environment. Sixty-two schools exist in 60 American Jewish communities. New Orthodox institutions, particularly Chabad and Aish HaTorah, are flourishing and attracting many non-Orthodox Jews to Jewish religious and cultural programs. Many Jewish museums, most notably the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, have opened in recent decades. Jewish book fairs and Jewish film festivals attract thousands of participants in Jewish communities around the country. Israel Independence Day celebrations are attended by tens of thousands. The 2,851 synagogues in the United States in 1936 had increased to 3,727 by 2001.[3]

A myriad of new programs have been developed and funded which are designed to cement Jewish identify in the next generation. The Foundation for Jewish Camp provides scholarships nationally to encourage Jewish parents to send their Jewish children to attend one of about 150 Jewish overnight camps. Over the past decade, birthright Israel has taken over 150,000 American Jewish young adults to Israel on free ten-day educational trips. Hillel on the college campus has seen significant redirection and strengthening, and there are now more than 100 Chabad Houses on American college campuses.

Migration and the Maintenance of American Jewish Religion.

The maintenance of Judaism in America requires the preservation of American Jewish institutions. These institutions include synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish organizations, Jewish Federations and their agencies (such as Jewish Family Services, Jewish education agencies, Jewish day schools, Jewish preschools etc.), mohalim (those who perform ritual circumcisions), Jewish camps, Jewish seminaries, mikva'ot (ritual baths), eruvim (unbroken, delimiting boundaries necessary for Orthodox Jews to carry items on the Sabbath outside their homes), Jewish funeral homes, Jewish cemeteries, kosher restaurants, kosher food stores, kosher butchers, Judaica stores, Jewish books stores, and Jewish newspapers and other media. Just like a department store cannot stay in business unless a certain minimum, or *threshold* number, of shoppers enter each week, each Jewish institution has a certain threshold number of "customers" needed for the institution to maintain itself. Improved transportation and communication over the past 50 years have increased the *range* or maximum distance that people are willing to travel to participate in certain Jewish activities. Thus, in many instances, the Interstate Highway System has made it possible for Jewish day schools to attract students from significant distances and the Internet (and the mail system) has extended the range of Judaica shops to the entire world.

The migration of Jews, however, has acted to put some Jews outside the range of existing Jewish institutions. Jews are about twice as likely as other Americans to move.[4] That a significant shift has occurred in the past few decades in the geographic location of American Jews is well documented by all three National Jewish Population Surveys (NJPS

1971,[5] NJPS1990,[6] and NJPS 2000-01,[7]) and by data presented annually in the *American Jewish Year Book*, published by the American Jewish Committee. Table 1 shows that in 1960, 67 percent of American Jews lived in the Northeast; 14 percent in the Midwest; 9 percent in the South; and 11 percent in the West. By 2009, the percentage in the Northeast had decreased from 67 percent to 44 percent, and the percentage in the Midwest decreased from 14 percent to 11 percent. On the other hand, the percentage in the South increased from 9 percent to 21 percent and the percentage in the West increased from 11 percent to 25 percent.[8] NJPS 1990 and NJPS 2000-01 confirm this trend by examining the region of birth in each Census Region and noting that as of 2000 large percentages of Jews in the South and the West were born in the Northeast and the Midwest compared to 1990, although NJPS 2000-01 suggests a slowing of this trend, This has important implications. Six million Jews within a short distance of existing Jewish institutions can meet the threshold numbers for those institutions. When Jews move to other areas of the country, outside the range of those institutions, some thresholds can no longer be met, and some institutions cease to exist.

Even within existing areas of Jewish settlement, the suburbanization process has moved Jews outside the range of many Jewish institutions, which, as a result have had to close or move because of an inability to meet their threshold number of customers. The movement of Jews to the American suburbs has been one of the most profound geographic changes for the American Jewish community over the past seventy years, affecting both Jewish residential location and the location of Jewish institutions. Examples of this include the recent closing of synagogues in Middlesex County, New Jersey, Miami,

Florida and Buffalo, New York, and the closing of Jewish Community Centers in places like Portland, Maine and Dallas, Texas.

According to Hertzberg:[9]

> Between 1945 and 1965, about a third of all American Jews left the big cities and established themselves in the suburbs. The small-town synagogues which already existed in these areas were transformed into large, bustling congregations, and hundreds of new communities were created . . . In the 1950s and 1960s, at least a billion dollars were raised and spent building a thousand new synagogue buildings. It was the largest building boom in the history of American Jews.

Most of the recent local Jewish community studies support the fact that the suburbanization process has continued.[10] Clearly, the migration of Jews has contributed to the difficulty of maintaining American Jewish Religion, which depends both on numbers and geographic distribution.

Whether at the regional or urban scale, an important implication of this migration has been the need to rebuild Jewish institutions, at clearly significant costs, to service new Jewish population centers. Funds that might otherwise have been devoted to programs to improve the quality of Jewish services and programs had to be diverted to capital projects to house those services and programs.

Goals of this Chapter

Thus, one goal of this chapter is to examine the size of the American Jewish population as it is now and as it is projected to be in the future. Of course, it is difficult to make such a projection of the Jewish population, particularly by geographic area. In the beginning of the 19th century, who could have predicted the great migration of Jews from Europe to the United States from 1880 to 1917? In the beginning of the twentieth century, who could have anticipated the size and geographic redistribution of the world Jewish population resulting from the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, and the large scale migration of Jews from Europe and the Middle East to Israel? Thus, it is with great trepidation that this chapter attempts to prognosticate about the future of American Jews.

Perhaps most helpful to this analysis is the fact that never before has more data been available on the demography and geography of American Jews. In addition to the data from the National Jewish Population Surveys completed in 1971, 1990, and 2000-01, more than 50 local Jewish communities have funded in-depth Jewish community studies of their Jewish federations' service areas since 1990 and reports and data from more than 200 such studies completed in the past 100 years can be found on the North American Jewish Data Bank's web site (www.jewishdatabank.org), and it is upon these sources that this chapter relies. Also, the *American Jewish Year Book* has published an article on American Jewish demography for more than 100 years.

This chapter attempts to answer three questions:

1) How many Jews live in the United States?

2) Is the Jewish population of the United States increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same?
3) Given that the losses to American Jewry due to assimilation, what light does data on Jewish continuity have to shed on the question of the future of American Jewish Religion?

This chapter will show that the answers to the first two questions are not at all clear. The problems in answering these questions are related to two issues. First, there is no agreed-upon definition of a "Jew." Second, the US Census does not ask questions which allow the direct identification of Jews, and, thus, other methods have been devised, none of which have the accuracy that a complete enumeration yields. An overriding conclusion from the analysis of question three is that there is not one future for American Jews, but different futures, depending upon where one lives. The chapter concludes by looking at the political, economic, and psychological impact of a decreasing Jewish population.

Question 1:
How many Jews live in the United States?

Definition of Jewish Identity

The problem of defining who is, and who is not, a Jew is discussed in thousands of books and articles, and the basic parameters are certainly well-known to many readers of this volume.[11] Dashefsky, Lazerwitz, and Tabory state that "Jewish identity has not remained the same throughout the four millennia which span the development of Jewish civilization."[12] The current period of Jewish history is one in which three important events

have changed Jewish history and Jewish identity: the Holocaust, the birth of the State of Israel, and the existence of the world's largest Jewish community in a country which, for the most part, protects the rights of Jews and also encourages assimilation of all ethnic minorities. That is, American Jews are in a "transformational" period in history during which time the nature of Jewish identity is changing.

In broad terms, some define "being Jewish" solely in religious terms, while others recognize the ethnic component of being Jewish. During biblical times, Jewish identity was determined by patrilineal descent. During the rabbinic period, this was changed to matrilineal descent. In the contemporary period, officially, Orthodox and Conservative Jews only accept matrilineal descent (the practice in the Jewish community from the second century CE until the rise of the Reform movement in the 19th century), while Reform (as of 1983) and Reconstructionist Jews accept, under certain circumstances, both matrilineal and patrilineal descent. Orthodox Jews only accept as Jews those Jews-by-Choice converted by Orthodox rabbis. All four branches believe that ethnic Jews who have accepted Jesus as the messiah (messianics) should not be considered as still being Jewish. In Israel, the Orthodox establishment follows the matrilineal descent criterion, but the government, at least for the purpose of the Law of Return, defines Jews as persons with at least one Jewish grandparent.

In general, social scientists involved in using survey research in the study of American Jews, not wishing to render judgment among the competing definitions, have adopted the stance that all survey respondents who consider themselves to be Jewish will be counted as such (with the exception of messianics). The *vast* majority of persons

counted as Jews by social scientists were born or raised as Jews. A small percentage of survey respondents, counted by some social scientists, but not by others, were born or raised as Jews, but when asked if they currently consider themselves Jewish, answer in the negative. Most of these respondents are found, in fact, to be involved in Jewish practices and to be emotionally attached to Israel, but answer negatively to "considering themselves to be Jewish" because they are atheists, agnostics, or of "no religion." However, they are clearly culturally and ethnically, even if not "religiously" Jewish, and most Jewish community studies do count them as Jews. A very tiny percentage of persons consider themselves Jewish and are involved in Jewish religious practice without their having formally converted, often because they are married to a Jew. Thus, even within the broad definition used by social scientists, there are definitional issues which can result in researchers deriving different estimates of the Jewish population of a community.[13]

In sum, one reason for the uncertainty concerning the number of American Jews is the lack of total consensus on whom to include and whom to exclude as part of that number.

Various Procedures for Estimating the Size of the American Jewish Community

The number of American Jews has been a constant source of debate almost since the beginning of European settlement in North America. More than 350 years ago, a group of 23 Jews from Recife (Brazil) fled Portuguese persecution and sought a safe haven in New Amsterdam (today New York City). These 23 paved the way for the later migration of

millions of Jewish immigrants, first Sephardic Jews, then German Jews, and then Eastern European Jews. But the “23" may be the last accurate count of American Jewry.

In recent years, three methods have been employed to derive estimates of the national Jewish population:[14]

First, major National Jewish Population Surveys (NJPS) were completed in 1971, 1990, and 2000-01, which provided estimates of the Jewish population of the country as a whole. The latter two studies used state-of-the-art random digit dialing (RDD) procedures. NJPS 2000-01 estimated 5.2 million American Jews and the American Religious Identity Survey (ARIS), using a similar methodology, estimated 5.5 million Jews or persons of Jewish origin.[15] The authors of NJPS 2000-01 suggest that their estimate is probably too low and the reasons for the assumed underestimation are explained by Sheskin and Dashefsky.[16]

Second, a new method developed at the Brandeis University Steinhardt Social Research Institute, by Saxe et al.,[17] uses a technique called *meta-analysis*,[18] which combines the results of more than 30 national RDD surveys which asked questions about religion. This study suggests a population of between 6.0 and 6.4 million Jews, the same range found by Sheskin and Dashefsky in the *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJYB*).[19]

Third, for decades, the *AJYB* has been providing annual estimates of the Jewish population of the United States by summing local community estimates for almost 1,000 American Jewish communities. The local community estimates derive from four sources. The first source is scientific, RDD telephone surveys.[20] The second source, for communities in which no scientific study has been completed, are local informants who

generally have access to information on the number of households on the local Jewish federation's mailing list and/or the number who are members of various local Jewish organizations and synagogues. The third source are Internet estimates. In such estimates, local informants, reporters, and local researchers have published estimates of small Jewish communities on the Internet. The fourth source, used only for Kiryas Joel, Monsey, and New Square New York, are estimates from the United States Census.

More than 80 percent of the total number of Jews estimated in the 2008 *AJYB* is based upon scientific studies; only 20 percent is based upon the less-reliable informant or Internet procedures. An analysis presented in the 2007 *AJYB* strongly suggests greater reliability of informant estimates than was previously assumed.[21]

The 2008 *AJYB* article authored by Sheskin and Dashefsky[22] reported a maximum estimate of 6.4 million American Jews. Sheskin and Dashefsky suggested that some over counting may occur within three groups whose members may be counted twice when a national estimate is derived by summing almost 1,000 local Jewish community estimates: part-year households (households who spend part of the year in one community and part in another); college students (who live in two communities); and households who moved from one community to another between local Jewish community studies. As an example of the last group, imagine a household who moved from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Sarasota, Florida in 1999. This household would have been counted both in the 1996 Milwaukee Jewish community study and in the 2001 Sarasota Jewish community study. Taking into account these methodological issues, Sheskin and Dashefsky have concluded

that 6.0-6.4 million Jews live in the United States. Sergio DellaPergolla has taken issue with the *AJYB* methodology[23] and Sheskin has provided a retort.[24]

In sum, estimates of the United States Jewish population range from 5.2 million Jews to 6.4 million, with neither of the two extremes being likely. This author feels that given the findings of the Brandeis study and the sum of the local studies from the *AJYB* (despite some legitimate methodological concerns), the most likely range for the United States Jewish population is 6.0-6.4 million.

Question 2:
Is the Jewish population of the United States increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same?

As with Question 1, no definitive answer is available, although "increasing" is a *very* unlikely possibility. Table 2 shows that the estimate of the number of Jews provided in the *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJYB*) would imply an increasing Jewish population (by about 9 percent from 1990 to 2006), while the data from NJPS 1990 and NJPS 2000-01 would imply a decreasing Jewish population (by about 5 percent from 1990 to 2000).

But is this really the case? Given the methodology used by the *AJYB*, the 9 percent difference *may* be within the margin of error of the methodology.[25] Given sampling and other error, the 5.2 million Jews found by NJPS 2000-01 *is* within the margin of error of the 5.5 million found in NJPS 1990. But even with the methodological issues involved, it is certainly disconcerting that the two methodologies yield opposite conclusions.

It is possible to look at Jewish population change theoretically using the basic *ethnic* demographic equation introduced by Sheskin:[26]

$$P_2 = P_1 + ❶ \text{ births} - ❷ \text{ deaths}$$
$$+ ❸ \text{ in-migration} - ❹ \text{ out-migration}$$
$$+ ❺ \text{ conversion in/opting in} - ❻ \text{ conversion out/opting out}$$

where P_2 is the population in time 2 and P_1 is the population in time 1.

Factors ❶ and ❷: Two demographic factors suggest that the number of Jewish deaths will increasingly be greater than the number of Jewish births in the United States. First, 16 percent of American Jews are elderly, compared to 12 percent for all Americans. Second, for a population to replace itself, Jewish women need to average 2.15 children each. Jewish women age 40-44 average 1.86 children each, not all of whom are being raised as Jews.[27] Thus, it is likely that the number of Jewish deaths in the United States will be higher than the number of Jewish births.

Factors ❸and ❹: It is also likely that the number of Jews migrating to the United States will continue to be greater than the number migrating out of the United States. Relatively few Jews are leaving the United States, while Jews continue to arrive in the United States from Latin America, Israel, and other places. The large immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union in recent decades had, to some extent, staved off Jewish population decline.

Thus, according to estimates by Sergio DellaPergola,[28] based upon NJPS 2000-01, about 50,000 Jews are born in the United States annually and about 60,000 Jews die annually for a *natural decrease* annually of 10,000 Jews. DellaPergola also estimates an

increase of 5,000 Jews per year due to a net in-migration (that is 5,000 more Jews move into the United States each year than move out). Thus, the first four elements in the equation (➊ to ➍) suggest a loss of about 5,000 Jews per year in the United States, a trivial number as a percentage of the total American Jewish population.

Factors ➎ and ➏: While it is impossible to estimate the number of Jews who convert to other religions or who "opt out" of being Jewish by simply no longer identifying as Jews, it is almost certainly greater than the number of persons who convert to Judaism or "opt in" without conversion. Thus, no doubt the final two elements in the equation (➎ + ➏) have yielded a decreasing number of Jews and will continue to do so.

Thus, the answer to Question 2 is that it is most likely that while the Jewish population of the United States has been relatively stable over the past two decades, this has only been the case because the large immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union from 1998-2002 has, to some extent, counteracted the loss due to "opting out."[29] Yet it is clear that projecting the number of Jews requires us to more closely examine factor ➏, the tendency for Jews to convert out or opt out of being Jewish.

Question 3:

What light does data on Jewish continuity have to shed on the question of the future of American Jewish Religion?

What is clear from the above analysis is that change in the size of the Jewish population of the United States due to natural decrease and net in-migration is, at least at present, not all that significant. Although decreases in the Jewish population due to natural

decrease is likely to increase in the future, perhaps larger decreases in the size of the American Jewish community will likely occur due to the inability of the Jewish community to convince the next generation that maintaining a Jewish identity and raising their children as Jews will improve the quality of their lives. Thus, persons of Jewish heritage will certainly increase in number over time, as it is difficult to imagine a situation that would lead to physical annihilation or mass emigration. The real question is whether Americans of Jewish descent will continue to identify with the Jewish religion and/or with the Jewish people in an ethnic sense, and thus continue to count themselves as "Jewish."

To examine Jewish continuity as an indicator of the future of American Judaism, it is helpful to analyze geographic variations and temporal variations in measures of Jewish continuity. For each, the results of local studies and the National Jewish Population Surveys of 1990 and 2000-01 are examined.

Geographic Variations

Almost all local Jewish community studies examine such topics as population size, geography and mobility, demography, religious practice, intermarriage, membership, Jewish education, familiarity with and perception of Jewish agencies, social service needs, Israel, anti-Semitism, use of the media, and philanthropy. These data provide indications as to the likelihood that the American Jewish community will be successful in transmitting the Jewish heritage from generation to generation. This section examines some basic Jewish identity measures. A major conclusion is that the American Jewish future depends very much on geography. That is, the "future" of American Jewish Religion will not be the

same throughout the country. Some communities will thrive and others will struggle or disappear. Some Jews will deepen and share their Jewish connections while others will assimilate or ignore them.

Three factors important in measuring Jewish continuity can be used to illustrate these differences: synagogue membership, intermarriage, and Just Jewish identification. All three factors illustrate that the extent of "Jewishness" varies significantly from community to community as seen in Tables 3-5.[30]

Synagogue Membership. Table 3 shows the percentage of households who are synagogue members for 53 Jewish communities in local Jewish community studies from 1993-2008. Synagogue membership usually involves a significant dues payment and is considered a basic measurement of the extent to which a household is connected to a community. In most instances, these *reported* percentages are overestimates of the actual percentages who are synagogue members.[31]

The percentage of households who report current synagogue membership varies from 14 percent in Las Vegas to 60 percent in Cincinnati. The median value is 45 percent. Of the ten communities with the lowest synagogue membership, seven are in the West: Denver (32 percent); Tucson (32 percent); San Diego (29 percent); Phoenix (29 percent); San Francisco (22 percent); Seattle (21 percent); and Las Vegas (14 percent), and three are Florida retirement communities: South Palm Beach (33 percent); West Palm Beach (30 percent); and Broward (27 percent). In these ten communities, the percentage of locally-born Jews is low and the percentage of new residents is high. In these situations, many

households discontinue their affiliation with synagogues in the community they have left without joining a synagogue in their new community. Many social scientists have noted that households who move to the West are often less traditional households. National studies of American religious behavior have noted that the West contains the greatest percentage of “unchurched” households.[32]

Tidewater (Norfolk/Virginia Beach) is an interesting case study. The 58 percent synagogue membership rate in this community is the second highest of the 53 communities in the table. Given that intermarriage in this community is very high and levels of home religious practice are about average, the high synagogue membership rate may be surprising. However, in small, deep-South communities, the church membership rate is quite high and assimilation may actually be expressed by joining the “Jewish church.” Also, in Tidewater, the 37 percent of intermarried couples who are synagogue members is the highest percentage of 40 comparison communities. Note that the other small southern communities in the table (with the exception of Orlando, which has many new residents) have synagogue membership rates at the median or higher: Richmond (45 percent); Sarasota (45 percent); Charlotte (49 percent); Jacksonville (49 percent); and San Antonio (52 percent).

Larger communities tend to have low synagogue membership rates. All seven of the largest communities (by size of the Jewish population) in the table (excluding the Florida retirement communities) have below median synagogue membership rates: New York (43 percent); Chicago (42 percent); Washington (37 percent); Philadelphia (37 percent); Los Angeles (34 percent); Atlanta (33 percent); and San Francisco (22 percent). This finding

is consistent with sociological theories suggesting that persons in large cities tend not to be involved in their communities to the same extent as those in small cities.

Intermarriage. Table 4 shows couples intermarriage rates for 53 Jewish communities. Although some intermarried couples are contributing significantly to the Jewish community, it is also clear that when measures of "Jewishness" for intermarried and in-married couples are compared, intermarriage is affecting Jewish continuity. Levels of religious practice, membership in the organized Jewish community, Jewish philanthropy, and other involvement in Jewish activity are particularly low in intermarried households. In San Antonio, for example, 98 percent of in-married households are involved Jewishly in some way, compared to only 80 percent of intermarried households. And while many intermarried couples have at least some Jewish activity evident in their household, on individual measures, intermarried households are generally much less Jewishly-connected than in-married households. For example, 77 percent of in-married households donated to the Jewish Federation of San Antonio in the past year, compared to only 34 percent of intermarried households. Likewise, 78 percent of Jewish respondents in in-married households feel very much or somewhat a part of the San Antonio Jewish community, compared to just 34 percent of Jewish respondents in intermarried households. Only 39 percent of children in intermarried households in San Antonio are being raised Jewish (which is about average among about 50 American Jewish communities for which such data are available), which does not portend well for Jewish continuity.[33]

Table 4 shows that the couples intermarriage rate varies from 9 percent in South Palm Beach to 61 percent in Portland (ME). The median value is 33 percent. Note that six of the 11 Jewish communities with the lowest couples intermarriage rates (rates of 20 percent or lower) are retirement communities, mostly in Florida. Five of the ten Jewish communities with intermarriage rates in excess of 45 percent are western communities, including two of the top three: San Francisco (55 percent) and Seattle (55 percent). Note as well that three of the top four Jewish communities are in the West.

Just Jewish Identification. Table 5 shows Just Jewish identification for 52 Jewish communities. Jewish respondents have generally been asked whether they consider themselves Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, or "Just Jewish." Jewish identification is based on self-definition and is not necessarily based on synagogue membership, ideology, or religious practice. In fact, discrepancies between Jewish identification and practice are sometimes evident. For example, respondents may identify as Orthodox or Conservative, but report that they do not keep kosher. Respondents may identify as Reform, but report that they never attend synagogue services. Conversely, some respondents who identify as Just Jewish are synagogue members.[34]

The percentage of respondents who identify as Just Jewish varies from 11 percent in Cleveland to 48 percent in Portland (ME). The median value is 31 percent. The percentage of respondents who reply Just Jewish is, in many ways, indicative of the size of the population that does not feel connected to the Jewish community or to their Jewish heritage. However, the Just Jewish are not a uniform group and large percentages are

involved in Jewish activity. For example, in South Palm Beach, 86 percent of Just Jewish households are involved in some type of Jewish activity as defined by that study.[35] Differences in the Jewish behaviors of the Just Jewish exist by community. For example, in Detroit, 59 percent of the Just Jewish always or usually participate in a Passover Seder, compared to 32 percent in Las Vegas. As a second example, in Detroit, 29 percent of the Just Jewish contributed to the Jewish Federation in the past year, compared to 12 percent in Las Vegas.[36]

Table 6 makes a similar point using data from the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey. Note that, in general, measures of Jewish continuity are generally somewhat higher in the Northeast and lowest in the West. For example, for always or usually lighting candles on Friday night, the percentage is highest in the Northeast (27 percent) and lowest in the West (18 percent). As a second example, 42 percent of respondents in the Northeast report that all or most of their friends are Jewish, compared to only 25 percent in the Midwest and 24 percent in the West.[37]

The overall conclusion from this geographic analysis of Jewish continuity is that the strength of religious and ethnic attachment clearly varies by region and by Jewish community. On the whole, the picture is much more positive for Jewish continuity in the Northeast than in the West. Some Jewish communities show significant strength, while others will have severe problems maintaining their institutions, due to their lower levels of Jewish attachment.

Temporal Variations

Tables 7, 8, and 9 show temporal variations in the same three variables: synagogue membership, intermarriage, and Just Jewish identification. For each of the communities included in these tables, two random digit dialing local Jewish community studies had been completed in the years shown in the first column after each community's name. The number of years between studies varies significantly and is shown in parentheses in the first column of each table. With the exception of West Palm Beach (six years) and Cleveland and Sarasota (nine years), the time between studies varies from ten to twenty years. Also note that for six studies (Baltimore, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Rochester) the latest study is more than ten years old. Given the sample sizes in most surveys, only differences of at least six percentage points between the first and second studies in synagogue membership and Just Jewish identification and of ten percentage points in the couples intermarriage rate might indicate that an important change has occurred. Note that while the tables only include communities in which the two studies were conducted with relatively comparable sampling methods and in which the question was asked in an exact or almost exact manner in both years, in some cases slight changes in sampling method and question wording may account for a small part of the change.

Table 7 shows temporal variations in synagogue membership for 22 Jewish communities. Thirteen of the 22 communities show changes that are within the five percentage point margin of error for this variable. Los Angeles shows an 8 percentage point *increase* in synagogue membership. While eight communities show significant *decreases*, only Milwaukee (11 percentage points), San Francisco (11 percentage points),

Seattle (12 percentage points), and Las Vegas (20 percentage points) show large *decreases* in synagogue membership.

Table 8 shows temporal variations in the couples intermarriage rate for 20 Jewish communities. As would be expected, none of the 20 communities show a decrease in the intermarriage rate. But, ten of the communities show a couples intermarriage rate that has increased by less than ten percentage points. Thus, half of the communities show increases in intermarriage rates that are within the nine percentage points margin of error for this variable. The largest increases occurred in San Francisco (28 percentage points over 18 years) and Las Vegas (22 percentage points over 10 years). Both communities are in the West and both show significant increases in Jewish population over the respective time periods. Five of the seven largest increases are in western communities. San Francisco and Las Vegas show about a doubling of the couples intermarriage rate in 18 years and ten years, respectively. The couples intermarriage rate in Atlantic County quintupled and the rate in Phoenix increased by two-thirds in 19 years.

Table 9 shows temporal variations in the percentage of respondents who identify as Just Jewish for 18 Jewish communities. The four largest changes (a 17 percentage point i*ncrease* in Hartford, a 15 percentage point *decrease* in Atlanta, a 12 percentage point *increase* in Atlantic County, and a nine percentage point *increase* in Rochester) are probably due to changes in question wording (see footnotes to Table 9). Nine of the 18 communities show changes within the five percentage point margin of error for this variable.

All three tables display similar patterns. Of the 55 temporary variations examined for the three variables, 55 percent are within the margins of error of 5 or 10 percentage points as defined above. Only a very few communities show "improvements" in Jewish continuity. A significant number show decreases in synagogue membership and increases in both the couples intermarriage rate and Just Jewish identification that indicate cause for concern about Jewish continuity. While these results portray an American Jewish community which overall clearly displays Jewish continuity concerns, the extent of the "problem" varies by community.

Comparing the results of NJPS 1990 and NJPS 2000-01 is somewhat problematic because of changes in methodology between the two studies, particularly with respect to the definition of who was considered to be Jewish and was, therefore, considered eligible to be a respondent. Despite this, the comparisons between the two studies are still important. In 1990, 32 percent of Jewish households were synagogue members. Adjusting the 2000-01 NJPS results so that the 2000-01 sample better reflects the 1990 sample yields 33 percent of Jewish households as synagogue members, indicating no change nationally. In 1990, 45 percent of married couples in Jewish households were intermarried. In 2000-01, the percentage increased to 48 percent, again indicating little change since the 48 percent is within the margin of error of the 45 percent. In 1990, 26 percent of respondents identified as Just Jewish. This percentage increased to 42 percent in 2000-01. Although this increase is in the expected direction, the magnitude of the increase may be attributable to the fact that in 1990 "Just Jewish" was not offered as a possible response to the respondents (rather, respondents either volunteered this response or another similar

response which was categorized as Just Jewish) whereas in 2000-01 “Just Jewish” was read as a possible response to the respondents. Thus, the national studies support the general conclusion of the local Jewish community studies: issues exist with Jewish continuity. However, this author believes that the differences are not as great as is opined by many Jewish community observers.

Political, Economic, and Psychological Impact of a Decreasing Jewish Population

What is the impact of a decreasing Jewish population on the future of American Jewish religion? The impact depends on the geographic scale at which one examines the issue. Political, economic, and psychological impacts are discussed below.

Politically, if the 5.2 million national estimate of the Jewish population is correct, then Jews constitute 1.7 percent of the American population. If the 6.4 million estimate is correct, then Jews constitute 2.1 percent of the American population. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine that political influence, that is, the ability of the Jewish community to affect public policy on issues of importance to the Jewish community (such as separation of church and state, various social issues, civil rights, and Israel), would be impacted by the difference between these two percentages. Jewish political influence in presidential elections derives from the electoral college system. Of the 269 electoral votes needed to be elected president, 128 are concentrated in four states with large Jewish populations: New York (8.4 percent Jewish), New Jersey (5.8 percent Jewish), Florida (3.3 percent Jewish), and California (3.3 percent Jewish). This same geographic concentration of Jews

helps, in part, to explain the 13 (13.0 percent) Jews among the 100 Senators in the 2008 Senate and the 32 (7.3 percent) Jews among the 435 Representatives in the 2008 House of Representatives.

Continuing Jewish political influence nationally will probably be more dependent on the existence of a core group of politically-active Jews rather than on the overall number of Jews. Locally, it is clear that Jewish political influence also does not require large numbers of Jews: many of the 13 Jews in the Senate and 32 Jews in the House were elected from States and Districts which contain tiny Jewish populations. Thus, while it is hard to argue that a decreasing Jewish population will not have a negative impact on the ability of the Jewish community to influence the political system, it is also clear that Jews can continue to influence the American political system without large numbers or being a large percentage of the population, in part because Jewish concerns are not unique to the Jewish community.

Economically, maintaining a Jewish community is expensive and the cost of Jewish membership, education, and institutional participation is often cited by respondents to local Jewish community studies as the major reason for their non-participation in the community.[38] Economically, if the number of American Jews decreases, much less impact is felt by national institutions than by local institutions, particularly for small Jewish communities. Some larger Jewish communities, such as Detroit,[39] Miami,[40] and Philadelphia,[41] have shown recent decreases in Jewish population, but the impact on the ability of these communities to maintain themselves is not great. Detroit's Jewish population decreased from 89,000 Jews in 1989 to 72,000 Jews in 2005. Miami's Jewish

population decreased from 143,000 Jews in 1994 to 113,000 Jews in 2004. Philadelphia's Jewish population decreased from 240,000 Jews in 1983 to 206,000 Jews in 1996. In all three cases, the number of Jews remaining in the community was sufficient to maintain most existing institutions, even though some merging was required when the thresholds for individual institutions were not met in certain parts of the urban area.

On the other hand, the ability of smaller Jewish communities to maintain their institutions is sometimes affected by a decrease in Jewish population, as has happened, for example, in Atlantic City (NJ),[42] Harrisburg (PA),[43] and Hartford (CT).[44] The number of Jewish households in Atlantic City decreased from 11,200 households in 1994 to 10,000 households in 2002 (11 percent). The number of Jewish households in Harrisburg decreased from 3,800 households in 1985 to 3.200 households in 1994 (17 percent). The number of Jewish households in Hartford decreased from 16,000 households in 1990 to 14,800 households in 2000 (6 percent). The effect of a decreasing Jewish population has been dramatic in the South, where 45 very small Southern Jewish communities which existed in 1960 ceased to exist by 1997 as their Jewish population fell below 100, the generally accepted minimum number to maintain a Jewish community.[45]

Psychologically, at the national scale, many Jews trying to maintain their Jewish identity and instill a Jewish identity in their children and grandchildren are psychologically impacted by information that the Jewish population is declining. For many years, both the secular and Jewish press referred to America's six million Jews. The finding of 5.5 million Jews in 1990 and 5.2 million in 2000-01, combined with very high intermarriage rates, led to two separate reactions. Many Jews, who had themselves chosen to become less

involved in Jewish life, felt that the "correctness" or "inevitability" of their choice was confirmed by the fact that many others had followed the same path. Other Jews reacted with alarm at the implications of these findings. Determined to reverse the trends, Jewish continuity was made a priority in many American Jewish communities (and in the Jewish community nationally) and addressed by "Jewish continuity commissions" in many Jewish communities. This led to additional funding for both formal and informal Jewish education and for programs like birthright Israel.

At the local geographic scale, this author recently had a conversation with the executive director of a small Southern Jewish community. She stated that she would very much like to undertake a community study of her community. However, she was very concerned that since the community has always thought that its Jewish population was about 6,000 if the study found that the Jewish population significantly differed from that assumed number, or if it showed that the Jewish population was decreasing, such news might depress the community and lead to despair that could hurt fundraising efforts.

Conclusion

Very often, as illustrated by the quotes with which this chapter began, pessimists have dominated discussions about American Jewish continuity, particularly in the popular press and in the hallways of American Jewish institutions. This chapter has shown that evidence from recent national Jewish population studies and local Jewish community studies indicates that the picture is considerably more complex than suggested by the popular press. This chapter has suggested that:

1) Many new programs have been developed in the Jewish community in the past decades to help counter problems with Jewish continuity.

2) The maintenance of American Jewish religion in America requires the preservation of American Jewish institutions. The interregional and intraurban migration of American Jews has acted to loosen ties between Jews and their religious and ethnic backgrounds and has diverted significant funds from services and programs to capital projects.

3) The definition of a "Jew" is not agreed upon. Not only does this impact our ability to count the number of American Jews, but it also affects our interpretation of Jewish demographic data. At one time, intermarriage clearly meant abandoning one's Jewish identity. At one time, being Jewish would have been measured in terms of Sabbath observance and observance of the kosher laws. Today, a Jewish identity can consist of remembrance of the Holocaust, emotional attachment to Israel, or an attachment to liberal, American values.

4) The number of Jews in the United States is unknown, but estimates vary from 5.2 million to 6.4 million. The most likely number is between 6.0 and 6.4 million.

5) The number of Jews in the United States has probably been relatively constant over the past two decades, but only because of the large influx of Jews from the former Soviet

Union. The most likely scenario is that the number of Jews, due to natural decrease and “opting out” will decrease in the future.

6) Perhaps most important is that speaking of the future of American Jewish Religion can be misleading as there are actually many different futures, depending upon the American Jewish community in which one lives (Tables 3-5). The data on synagogue membership, intermarriage, and “Just Jewish“ identification illustrate the significant spatial variation in Jewish identity measures. Most of the negative impacts of the likely decrease in the number of Jews will not be felt at the national level, but at the local level. Almost 1,000 American Jewish communities are listed in the 2008 *American Jewish Year Book*. Some have strong institutions and bright futures. Others, particularly in the South and the West, face significant challenges. Larger Jewish communities can afford to undergo population decreases and still maintain themselves. The medium and small Jewish communities are most likely to suffer the effects of population decrease as their size decreases below the needed threshold numbers for maintaining their institutions.

7) The premise for the pessimism on the issue of the number of Jews and Jewish continuity is that many measures of Jewish continuity are in a continuous downward spiral in the United States. However, Tables 7, 8, and 9 clearly show that such is not the case in many communities.

Thus, was *LOOK* correct? Obviously not, and it needs to be pointed out that Jews are still here and *LOOK* is long gone! The importance of geography is clear. The future of America Jewish religion depends upon where you live.

Table 1
Changes in the Regional Distribution of American Jews

Census Region	1937	1960	1972	1984	1997	2009
Northeast	69%	67%	63%	54%	48%	44%
Midwest	19%	14%	12%	11%	12%	11%
South	7%	9%	12%	18%	21%	21%
West	5%	11%	13%	16%	19%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: American Jewish Year Book, 1938, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1998, and 2008.

TABLE 2
COMPARISONS OF ESTIMATES OF AMERICAN JEWS OVER TIME

Year	*American Jewish Year Book*	National Jewish Population Survey
1990	5,941,000	5,500,000
1991	5,981,000	
1992	5,798,000	
1993	5,828,000	
1994	5,840,000	
1995	5,880,000	
1996	5,900,000	
1997	6,000,000	
1998	6,005,000	
1999	6,061,000	
2000	6,136,000	5,200,000
2001	6,165,000	
2006	6,400,000	
2007	6,462,000	
2008	6,489,000	
2009	6,537,000 *	

* Preliminary estimate. Note that the *American Jewish Year Book* ceased publication in 2008. The 2009 estimates are published at www.jewishdatabank.org.
Notes:
1) Methodological reasons exist for the apparent decrease in the *American Jewish Year Book* estimates between 1991 and 1992.
2) The *American Jewish Year Book* did not publish estimates between 2001 and 2006.

Table 3
Current Synagogue Membership
Community Comparisons

Base: Jewish Households

Community	Year	%
Cincinnati	2008	60%
Tidewater	2001	58%
St. Paul	2004	56%
Essex-Morris	1998	56%
St. Louis	1995	56%
Minneapolis	2004	54%
Rochester	1999	54%
Pittsburgh	2002	53%
Hartford	2000	53%
San Antonio	2007	52%
Baltimore	1999	52%
Cleveland	1996	52%
Lehigh Valley	2007	51%
Detroit	2005	50%
Bergen	2001	50%
Columbus	2001	50%
Jacksonville	2002	49%
Charlotte	1997	49%
Harrisburg	1994	49%
Palm Springs	1998	48%
Monmouth	1997	48%
Milwaukee	1996	48%
Westport	2000	46%
Wilmington	1995	46%
Sarasota	2001	45%
York	1999	45%
Richmond	1994	45%

Community	Year	%
Middlesex	2008	44%
Atlantic County	2004	44%
Boston	2005	43%
New York	2002	43%
Rhode Island	2002	43%
Chicago	2000	42%
St. Petersburg	1994	40%
Miami	2004	39%
Howard County	1999	38%
Washington, DC	2003	37%
Philadelphia	1997	37%
Martin-St. Lucie	1999	36%
Los Angeles	1997	34%
Orlando	1993	34%
Portland (ME)	2007	33%
Atlanta	2006	33%
S Palm Beach	2005	33%
Denver	2007	32%
Tucson	2002	32%
W Palm Beach	2005	30%
San Diego	2003	29%
Phoenix	2002	29%
Broward	1997	27%
San Francisco	2004	22%
Seattle	2000	21%
Las Vegas	2005	14%

Table 4
Intermarriage (Couples Intermarriage Rate)
Community Comparisons

Base: Married Couples in Jewish Households

Community	Year	%
Portland (ME)	2007	61%
San Francisco	2004	55%
Seattle	2000	55%
Denver	2007	53%
Atlanta	2006	50%
Las Vegas	2005	48%
Charlotte	1997	47%
Boston	2005	46%
Tucson	2002	46%
York	1999	46%
Columbus	2001	45%
Howard County	1999	45%
San Diego	2003	44%
Jacksonville	2002	44%
Tidewater	2001	43%
Washington, DC	2003	41%
Phoenix	2002	40%
St. Paul	2004	39%
San Antonio	2007	37%
Lehigh Valley	2007	36%
Pittsburgh	2002	36%
Cincinnati	2008	34%
Rhode Island	2002	34%
Richmond	1994	34%
Minneapolis	2004	33%
Westport	2000	33%
Wilmington	1995	33%

Community	Year	%
Harrisburg	1994	33%
Orlando	1993	32%
Chicago	2000	30%
Rochester	1999	30%
St. Petersburg	1994	29%
Milwaukee	1996	28%
Martin-St. Lucie	1999	27%
Atlantic County	2004	26%
Buffalo	1995	26%
St. Louis	1995	25%
Hartford	2000	23%
Los Angeles	1997	23%
Cleveland	1996	23%
New York	2002	22%
Philadelphia	1997	22%
Sarasota	2001	20%
Palm Springs	1998	19%
Broward	1997	18%
Bergen	2001	17%
Baltimore	1999	17%
Monmouth	1997	17%
Detroit	2005	16%
W Palm Beach	2005	16%
Miami	2004	16%
Middlesex	2008	14%
S Palm Beach	2005	9%

Table 5
"Just Jewish" Identification
Community Comparisons

Base: Jewish Respondents

Community	Year	%
Portland (ME)	2007	48%
Las Vegas	2005	47%
Tucson	2002	44%
San Francisco	2004	40% [1]
Howard County	1999	40%
St. Paul	2004	37%
Sarasota	2001	37%
Jacksonville	2002	36%
St. Petersburg	1994	36%
Minneapolis	2004	35%
Rhode Island	2002	35%
Seattle	2000	35%
Westport	2000	35%
Orlando	1993	35%
Washington, DC	2003	34%
Columbus	2001	34%
Hartford	2000	34%
Broward	1997	34%
Milwaukee	1996	34%
Wilmington	1995	33%
San Diego	2003	32%
Charlotte	1997	32%
Harrisburg	1994	32%
Denver	2007	31% [2]
Lehigh Valley	2007	31%
Miami	2004	31%
New York	2002	31%
San Antonio	2007	30%
Bergen	2001	30%
Richmond	1994	30%
Middlesex	2008	29%
W Palm Beach	2005	29%
Atlantic County	2004	29%
Rochester	1999	29%
Phoenix	2002	28%
Tidewater	2001	28%
Monmouth	1997	28%
S Palm Beach	2005	26%
Martin-St. Lucie	1999	26%
Los Angeles	1997	26%
York	1999	25%
Buffalo	1995	23%
Cincinnati	2008	22%
Philadelphia	1997	22%
Essex-Morris	1998	20%
Detroit	2005	19% [3]
Atlanta	2006	18%
Pittsburgh	2002	18%
St. Louis	1995	15%
Baltimore	1999	14%
Palm Springs	1998	14%
Cleveland	1996	11%

[1] Includes 1% of respondents who identify as Jewish Renewal.
[2] Includes 3% of respondents who identify as Jewish Renewal.
[3] Includes 1% of respondents who identify as Jewish Renewal.

Table 6
Geographic Variations in Jewish Continuity Measures by Census Region

Base: Respondents or Households

Variable	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	All
Respondent is Just Jewish	30%	27%	27%	40%	30%
Hold/Attend Passover Seder in the Past Year	79%	76%	73%	66%	74%
Light Chanukah Candles (Most or All Nights)	65%	60%	63%	57%	62%
Mezuzah on Any Door of House	65%	55%	64%	52%	61%
Light Candles Friday Night (Always or Usually)	27%	20%	23%	18%	23%
Keep a Kosher Home	23%	14%	14%	12%	17%
Respondent Attends Synagogue Once per Month or More	26%	25%	23%	19%	24%
Synagogue Membership	44%	47%	40%	31%	40%
JCC Membership	20%	18%	20%	13%	18%
Donated to a Jewish Charity	56%	60%	55%	48%	54%
Respondent Has Been to Israel	40%	30%	35%	30%	36%
Respondent Saw a Movie or Rent a Video Because It Had Jewish Content in the Past Year	44%	46%	48%	44%	45%
Respondent Used the Internet for Jewish-related Information in the Past Year	38%	45%	38%	40%	39%
All or Most of Respondent's Friends Are Jewish	42%	25%	33%	24%	33%
Individual Intermarriage Rate	25%	34%	29%	42%	31%

Source: Sheskin, Ira M. *Geographic Differences among American Jews*, United Jewish Communities Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, Report Number 8 (2005). Also available at www.ujc.org.
Note: Seder and Chanukah were asked of respondents representing all 5.2 million Jews estimated by NJPS 2000-01. All other variables were asked of respondents representing only the 4.3 million more Jewish-connected respondents as defined by the study report.

Table 7
Temporal Variations in Synagogue membership

Base: Jewish Households

Community	First Study	Second Study	Increase/(Decrease) (in percentage points)
Los Angeles 79-97 (18)	26%	34%	8
New York 91-02 (11)	38%	43%	5
Sarasota 92-01 (9)	43%	45%	2
Boston 95-05 (10)	41%	43%	2
Miami 94-04 (10)	37%	39%	2
Rochester 86-99 (13)	55%	54%	(1)
Detroit 89-05 (16)	52%	50%	(2)
Washington, DC 83-03 (20)	39%	37%	(2)
Baltimore 85-99 (14)	55%	52%	(3)
Philadelphia 84-97 (13)	40%	37%	(3)
S Palm Beach 95-05 (10)	36%	33%	(3)
Atlanta 96-06 (10)	37%	33%	(4)
Phoenix 83-02 (19)	33%	29%	(4)
Denver 97-07 (10)	37%	32%	(5)
Cleveland 87-96 (9)	58%	52%	(6)
Hartford 82-00 (18)	60%	53%	(7)
Atlantic County 85-04 (19)	51%	44%	(7)
W Palm Beach 99-05 (6)	37%	30%	(7)
Milwaukee 83-96 (13)	59%	48%	(11)
San Francisco 86-04 (18)	33%	22%	(11)
Seattle 90-00 (10)	33%	21%	(12)
Las Vegas 95-05 (10)	34%	14%	(20)

Note: First column shows community name, the date of the first study, the date of the second study, and the number of years between studies.

Table 8
Temporal Variations in Couples Intermarriage Rate

Base: Married Couples in Jewish Households

Community	First Study	Second Study	Increase/(Decrease) (in percentage points)
San Francisco 86-04 (18)	27%	55%	28
Las Vegas 95-05 (10)	26%	48%	22
Atlantic County 85-04 (19)	5%	26%	21
Phoenix 83-02 (19)	24%	40%	16
Seattle 90-00 (10)	40%	55%	15
Denver 97-07 (10)	39%	53%	14
Boston 95-05 (10)	32%	46%	14
Atlanta 96-06 (10)	37%	50%	13
Washington 83-03 (20)	29%	41%	12
Philadelphia 84-97(13)	12%	22%	10
Milwaukee 83-96 (13)	19%	28%	9
Cleveland 87-96 (9)	17%	23%	6
W Palm Beach 99-05 (6)	11%	16%	5
Los Angeles 79-97 (18)	19%	23%	4
Miami 94-04 (10)	12%	16%	4
New York 91-02 (11)	19%	22%	3
Sarasota 92-01 (9)	17%	20%	3
S Palm Beach 95-05 (10)	6%	9%	3
Hartford 82-00 (18)	21%	23%	2
Detroit 89-05 (16)	15%	16%	1

Note: First column shows community name, the date of the first study, the date of the second study, and the number of years between studies.

Table 9 Temporal Variations in "Just Jewish" Identification			
Base: Jewish Respondents			
Community	First Study	Second Study	Increase/(Decrease) (in percentage points)
Hartford 82-00 (18) *	17%	34%	17
Atlantic County 85-04 (19) *	17%	29%	12
Rochester 86-99 (13) *	20%	29%	9
Sarasota 92-01 (9)	29%	37%	8
New York 91-02 (11) *	23%	31%	8
Cleveland 87-96 (9)	5%	11%	6
Phoenix 83-02 (19)	23%	28%	5
San Francisco 86-04 (18)	36%	40%	4
W Palm Beach 99-05 (6)	25%	29%	4
Denver 97-07 (10)	30%	31%	1
S Palm Beach 95-05 (10)	25%	26%	1
Los Angeles 79-97 (18)	28%	26%	(2)
Detroit 89-05 (16)	21%	19%	(2)
Baltimore 85-99 (14) *	16%	14%	(2)
Philadelphia 84-97 (13)	29%	22%	(7)
Seattle 90-00 (10)	43%	35%	(8)
Atlanta 96-06 (10) **	33%	18%	(15)
Miami 94-04 (10)	31%	31%	0

* Question in first study did not offer "Just Jewish" as a choice.
** Question in the second study did not offer "Just Jewish" as a choice.

Note: First column shows community name, the date of the first study, the date of the second study, and the number of years between studies.

Endnotes

1. Simon Rawidowicz, *Israel, The Ever-Dying People, and Other Essays* (Translated by Benjamin C. I. Ravid) (New York: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986).

2. Sergio DellaPergola, Uzi Rebhun, and Mark Tolts, "Prospecting the Jewish Future: Population Projections, 2000-2080," in the *American Jewish Year Book, 2000, Volume 100* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006) pp. 103-146.

3. Jim Schwartz, Jeffrey Scheckner, and Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, "Census of Synagogues, 2001," in the *American Jewish Year Book, 2002, Volume 102* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2002) pp. 112-148.

4. Sidney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein, *Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996).

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7. Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, et al., *Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population* (New York: United Jewish Communities, 2003) and Egon Mayer, Barry A. Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identity Survey, 2001* (New York: The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 2001).

8. Updated from Ira M. Sheskin, *Geographic Differences among American Jews*, United Jewish Communities Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, Report Number 8 (2005). Also available at www.ujc.org.

9. Arthur Hertzberg. *The Jews in America, Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989) p. 321.

10. See the Community Archive by State at www.jewishdatabank.org.

11. Sergio DellaPergola presents an interesting summary of this issue as it related to modern research in "Was It the Demography: A Reassessment of U.S. Jewish Population Estimates, 1945-2001," *Contemporary Jewry*, Volume 25 (2005) pp. 85-131.

12. Arnold Dashefsky, Bernard Lazerwitz, and Ephraim Tabory, "A Journey of the 'Straight Way' or the 'Roundabout Path,' Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel," in Michelle Dillon (editor) *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 240-260.

13. Debates over how to define Jews have occurred in other periods of history. During medieval times, rabbinic authorities argued over whether to include Marranos or secret Jews resulting from the Spanish Inquisition in 1492.

14. For a description of earlier methods, see Barry A. Kosmin, Paul Ritterband, and Jeffrey Scheckner "Counting Jewish Populations: Methods and Problems," in *American Jewish Year Book, 1988, Volume 88* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1988) pp. 204-241.

15. Mayer, Kosmin, and Keysar, op. cit., p.17.

16. Ira M. Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, "Jewish Population of the United States, 2006," in the *American Jewish Year Book 2006, Volume 106* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006) pp. 133-193.

17. Leonard Saxe et al., *Reconsidering the Size and Characteristics of the American Jewish Population: New Estimates of a Larger and More Diverse Community* (Boston: Brandeis University Steinhardt Social Research Institute, 2007).

18. A meta-analysis combines the results of several studies that address a set of related research hypotheses.

19. Dashefsky, Lazerwitz, and Tabory, op. cit.

20. For a brief description of random digit dialing in local Jewish community studies, see Ira M. Sheskin, *How Jewish Communities Differ: Variations in the Findings of Local Jewish Demographic Studies* (New York: City University of New York, North American Jewish Data Bank, 2001) p. 6.

21. Ira M. Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, "Jewish Population in the United States, 2007," in *American Jewish Year Book, 2007, Volume 107* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2007) pp.136-138.

22. Ibid.

23. Sergio DellaPergola, op. cit., 2005.

24. Ira M. Sheskin, "Four Questions about American Jewish Demography," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel, Volume 20, Numbers 1 and 2 (Spring, 2008) pp. 23-42. Also published on www.jcpa.org and http://www.dailyalert.org.

25. DellaPergola, op. cit., 2005, p. 107 agrees with this assessment.

26. Sheskin, op. cit., 2008.

27. Kotler-Berkowitz, et al., op cit.

28. Sergio DellaPergola, “World Jewish Population, 2006,” in the *American Jewish Year Book, 2006, Volume 106* (David Singer and Lawrence Grossman, editors) (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2006) pp. 559-601.

29. This conclusion is generally supported by Vivian Klaff, “Broken Down by Sex and Age: Projecting the American Jewish Population,” *Contemporary Jewry*, Volume 19, (1998) pp. 1-37 and DellaPergola, Rebhun, and Tolts, op. cit.

30. For a set of similar tables covering numerous demographic and religiosity variables with data from local Jewish community studies conducted between 1982 and 1999, see Sheskin, op. cit., 2001. For a more recent set of tables, see Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Middlesex County* (South River: The Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County, 2009).

31. For an analysis of the disparity between reported and actual synagogue membership, see Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of the Lehigh Valley* (Allentown, PA: The Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, 2008) pp. 7-20 to 7-24.

32. See, for example, Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Bachman. *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society* (New York: Harmony Books, 1993).

33. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of San Antonio* (San Antonio: Jewish Federation of San Antonio, 2007).

34. See also Bernard Lazerwitz, J. Alan Winter, Arnold Dashefsky, and Ephraim Tabory, *Jewish Choices: American Jewish Denominationalism (SUNY Series in American Jewish Society in the 1990s)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

35. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of South Palm Beach* (Boca Raton: Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, 2006).

36. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Southern Nevada* (Las Vegas: The Milton I. Schwartz Hebrew Academy and United Jewish Communities of Las Vegas, 2007) and Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Detroit* (Detroit: The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, 2007).

37. Sheskin, op. cit., 2005.

38. See, for example, the importance of cost in joining synagogues, in joining a Jewish Community Center, and in sending children to Jewish day school in Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of San Antonio* (San Antonio: The Jewish Federation of San Antonio, 2007) pp. 7-33, 7-53, and 8-56.

39. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Detroit* (Detroit: The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, 2007).

40. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Greater Miami Jewish Community Study* (Miami: Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 2005).

41. Ukeles Associates, *Jewish Population Study of Greater Philadelphia 1996/1997* (Philadelphia: Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, 1997).

42. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, NJ* (Atlantic City, NJ: The Jewish Federation of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, 2005).

43. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Community Study of Greater Harrisburg* (Harrisburg, PA: The United Jewish Community of Greater Harrisburg, 1994).

44. Ira M. Sheskin, *The Jewish Federation of Hartford Community Study* (Hartford: The Jewish Federation of Hartford, 2001).

45. Ira M. Sheskin, "The Dixie Diaspora: The 'Loss' of the Small Southern Jewish Community," *Southeastern Geographer*, Volume xxxx, Number 1 (May, 2000) pp. 52-74 and "Jews in the South: An Update," presented at the annual meeting of the Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers, Greensboro, NC (2008). See also Lee Shai Weissbach *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).