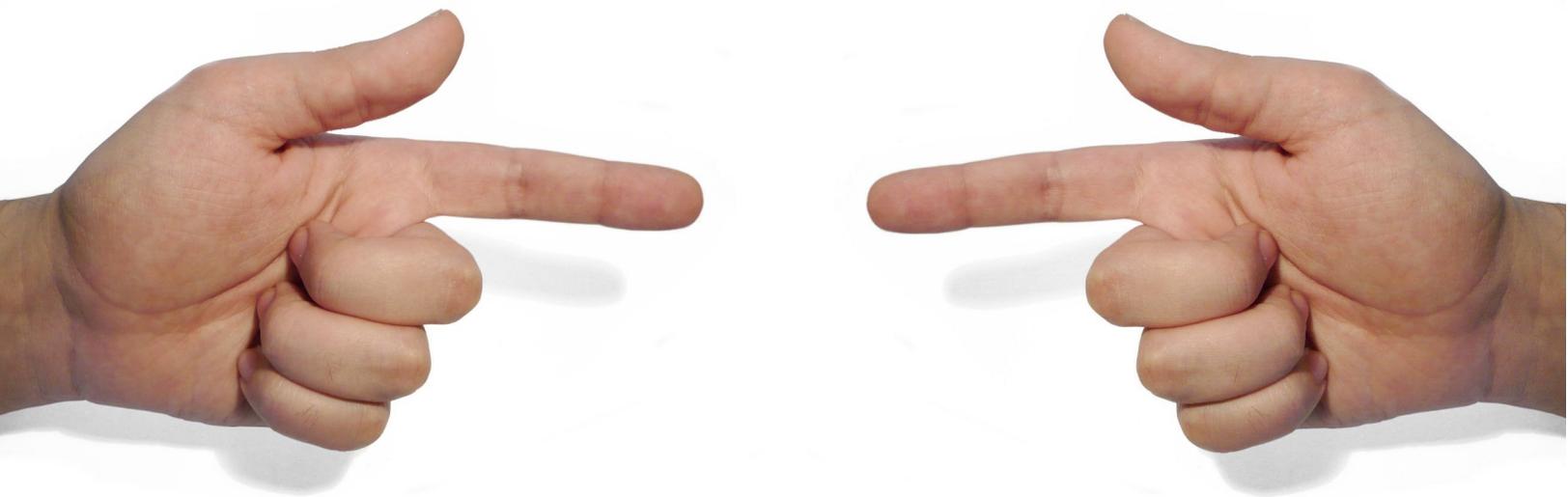


# BJPA

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*February 2014*



## Before Pew: Debating the Future of US Jews in Earlier Times

*Edited by Seth Chalmer with Steven M. Cohen*

# Guest Introduction from Prof. Shaul Kelner

Associate Professor of Sociology & Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt

2013 was a good year for prognostications about the American Jewish future. The Pew Research Center released [findings of a national survey of Jews](#), and the data were rich enough to spark intense wrangling over their implications.

For those trying to make sense of the current debates, or for those who think about the future by first considering the past, the Berman Jewish Policy Archive presents this guide to demographic debates of yore.

In the pages that follow, readers will find discussions of method and interpretation dating back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but with a special focus on the three major National Jewish Population Surveys of 1970, 1990 and 2000-1.

Considered together, the readings prompt questions about the degree to which conversations about Jewish American demography exist in linear or cyclical time.

As social science, the population surveys help build knowledge cumulatively. The conversations around them can and should move forward from decade to decade.

But the surveys and their reports also serve as Jewish communal documents. They enter into the Jewish textual tradition, with its *midrashic* interpretations and ritualized readings. Just as the Jewish holy days are marked by the chanting and study of particular texts—the Scroll of Esther on Purim, the Book of Jonah on the Day of Atonement—the publication of a new Jewish American demographic survey every decade or so punctuates time, creating a moment for the community to take stock and look ahead. A Rosh Hashanah for statistics, so to speak.

In cyclical time, the American Jewish conversations around each new survey appear as ritual reenactments of the biblical story of the Israelite spies reporting back from Canaan. Having glimpsed a future filled with opportunity and peril, they give voice to the competing pulls of hope and trepidation. The tension between the two is enduring, and fundamental to the human experience of change. Hence its recapitulation, time and again.

Readers of the biblical spy story have the benefit of knowing what happens later in the book, and evaluating the spies' reports based on the subsequent unfolding of the narrative. No such luxury is afforded to those in the midst of the conversations around new demographic studies. This BJPA sourcebook will help readers evaluate the reports of the future proffered in earlier rounds of the American Jewish demographic debates. Their future, after all, is our present, and in some cases already our past.

As for our future, however, it remains to be written.



# NJPS 1970-1 and its Reception

[National Jewish Population Study: Work Paper A, 1968 - Procedural and Technical Status, NJPS](#) | *Fred Massarik. Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Dec 1967*

## [National Jewish Population Survey \(NJPS\) 1971](#)

*Fred Massarik, Bernard Lazerwitz, Morris Axelrod. Council of Jewish Federations*

## [The United States National Jewish Population Study: A Note on Concept and Reality](#)

*Fred Massarik. Jewish Population Studies, 1970*

## [The National Jewish Population Study Sample Design](#) | *Bernard Lazerwitz. Jewish*

*Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1970*

## [Use of Multiplicity Rules in Surveys of Jewish Populations](#)

*Sidney Goldstein, Monroe G. Sirken. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman*

*Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1973*

## [A Changing Era in the U.S. Jewish Population Research: Multiple Research Strategies -](#)

[Indexes and Heuristics](#) | *Fred Massarik. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman*

*Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1981*

## [The Census: Yiddish Mother Tongue Subpopulation and the National Jewish Population](#)

[Survey](#) | *Frances E. Kobrin. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of*

*Contemporary Jewry, 1981*

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# NJPS 1990 and its Reception

[A 1990 National Jewish Population Study: Why and How - Occasional Papers 1988-04](#)

*Sidney Goldstein. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1988*

[National Jewish Population Survey \(NJPS\) 1990](#) | *Council of Jewish Federations*

[The 1990 Demographic Study: Some Good News; Much Bad News](#)

*Daniel J. Elazar. JCPA, 1991*

[New data on Demography and Identification Among Jews in the U.S.: Trend](#)

[Inconsistencies And Disagreements](#) | *Sergio DellaPergola. Contemporary Jewry, 1991*

[What of the Future? The New National Jewish Population Study](#)

*Sidney Goldstein. Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly, 1991*

I reject the view that population issues are marginal... The socio-demographic structure of the Jewish community... is both a product and a cause of change... Quality and quantity are inexorably linked... and we need therefore to be concerned about both...

A major step in this direction is the NJPS... The fluid character of the American Jewish community is at the heart of the findings...

[Similarities and Dissimilarities in National and Community Surveys: The Case of](#)

[American Jews](#) | *Uzi Rebhun. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of*

*Contemporary Jewry, 1993*

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# NJPS 1990 and its Reception

[Beyond the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey: A Research Agenda](#)

*Sidney Goldstein. Contemporary Jewry, 1993*

[Jewish Involvement of The Baby Boom Generation: Interrogating the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey](#)

*Elihu Katz, Mordechai Rimor. Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, November 1993*

[The Changing American Jewish Family Faces the 1990s](#) | *Sylvia Barack Fishman, 1994*

[Measuring the Quality of American Jewish Life](#)

*Calvin Goldscheider. American Jewry: Portrait and Prognosis, 1997*

[How the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey Was Used by Federation Professionals for Jewish Continuity Purposes](#)

*Hayim Herring. JJCS, Spring 2000*

[A Misleading Portrait of American Jews](#) | *Charles S. Liebman, 2000*

My argument is that the portrait of American Jews which Jewish communal leaders have derived from the NJPS and from similar studies is misleading and some proposals which derive from this mistaken portrait will weaken rather than strengthen the Jewish community...

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# NJPS 2000-1 & its Reception

## National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01

*Jim Schwartz, Vivian Klaff, Frank Mott. United Jewish Communities (now The Jewish Federations of North America)*

## NJPS 2000: Learning from Controversy

*Charles Kadushin, Leonard Saxe. Jewish Week, September 2003*

[NJPS, 2000-01, By the Numbers](#) | *Ira M. Sheskin. Forward, September 2003*

## The Arithmetic of U.S. Jewry

*Charles Kadushin, Leonard Saxe. Jerusalem Report, November 2003*

## NJPS 2000-01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population

*Steven M. Cohen, Laurence A. Kotler-Berkowitz. DataBank, UJC, January 2004*

[NJPS 2000/01: A Vehicle For Exploring Social Structure and Social Dynamics in the Jewish Population A Research Note](#) | *Frank L. Mott, Vivian Klaff, 2005*

## National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: A Guide for the Perplexed

*Charles Kadushin, Leonard Saxe, Benjamin Phillips. Contemporary Jewry, December 2005*

Because of both its design and implementation, there are numerous difficulties in using NJPS data to understand the contemporary American Jewish community...

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# Methodology & its Discontents

## [Some Problems in the Collection and Interpretation of Jewish Population Data](#)

*H. L. Lurie. JSSQ, Jun 1934*

## [On Some of the Difficulties of Doing Social Welfare Research](#) | *Isidor Chein. JSSQ, 1949*

## [Evaluation of Jewish Population Estimates](#) | *Uziel Schmelz. AJYB, 1969*

## [Aims and Ways of Comparative Research on the Demography of the Jews](#)

*Roberto Bachi. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1973*

## [Review of the Papers Presented - Methodological Aspects](#)

*Gad Nathan. Papers in Jewish Demography. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973*

## [Mixed Marriages - The Demographer's View](#) | *H. V. Musham. Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1977*

Time and again, students of the diaspora use a terminology like the "alarming" spread of mixed marriages or "the *beneficial* influence in reducing the trend toward exogamy..." It is outside the competence of the demographer as a scientist to qualify demographic events, levels or trends as "good" or "bad", "desirable" or "regrettable"...

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# Methodology & its Discontents

[How Many Jews in New York City?](#) | Jack Diamond. American Jewish Congress, Jan 1978

[What We Know and What We Need to Know about the Status of Jewish Social Research](#)

Daniel J. Elazar. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, March 1978

Jews in general tend to be mavens. For mavens by their very nature research is usually something unnecessary...

[The "Real" Jewish Demography](#)

Jack J. Diamond. *Midstream*, Dec 1978

The American Jewish Year Book continues a long tradition of using a bad methodology for calculating the number of Jews in the various communities of the country and the total American Jewish population...

[Needed: a Demography of American Jews](#)

Jack J. Diamond. *Sh'ma*, Nov 1982

[Demography: We Have What We Need](#)

Alvin Chenkin. *Sh'ma*, Nov 1982

[Developing a Data Utilization System for Jewish Demographic Studies](#)

Gary A. Tobin, Nancy Boguslaw. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Dec 1983

[Guidelines for the Design & Use of Jewish Population Studies](#)

Steven M. Cohen, Jonathan S. Woocher, 1984

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# Methodology & its Discontents

[American Jewish Demography: Inconsistencies that Challenge](#) | *Sidney Goldstein.*

*Jewish Population Studies. Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1985*

## [Myths and Facts for Campaigners and Planners](#)

*Barry Shrage, Donald Feldstein. Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 1986*

If something shows up on graphs and tables, it almost has the ring of religious truth. Our job is to resist this idolatry and to maintain a healthy Jewish skepticism--to examine and analyze data, to accept valuable input, but to understand that input is not revealed truth.

[Enhancing Jewish Population Studies](#) | *Daniel J. Elazar. JCPA, 1986*

## [Counting Jewish Populations: Methods and Problems](#)

*Barry A. Kosmin, Paul Ritterband, Jeffrey Scheckner. American Jewish Year Book, 1988*

## [Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey](#)

*Sidney Goldstein. AJC, 1992*

Advantage was taken of the many improvements introduced in sampling and survey procedures since NJPS-1970/71... Moreover, the new survey benefited from... much stronger professional credentials... The results of both the screening phase and the in-depth interviews attest to the validity and importance of the view that conceptual and measurement concerns should enter not only into the initial sample selection process but also into the analytical process.

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# Methodology & its Discontents

[Revisiting Demographic Paradigms: Comments on Sergio DellaPergola "Thoughts of a Jewish Demographer in the Year 2000"](#) | Calvin Goldscheider. *Contemporary Jewry*, 2000

What is missing from Jewish demographic surveys? The demographic questions that are at the heart of our research are particularly problematic... All data collection systems are limited. More importantly, theories or conceptualizations of those factors and patterns that are considered important to study drive all data collection efforts. These theories are almost always implicit. We know that data do not and cannot speak for themselves. We are the voices of the data we collect and analyze.

[Jewish Demography: Facts, Outlook, Challenges](#)

Sergio DellaPergola. *JPPI*, 2003

[Numbering the Jews: Evaluating and Improving Surveys of American Jews](#)

Benjamin Phillips. *CMJS, SSRI*, February 2007

[Finally, A Jewish Population Study Worth Studying](#)

Bethamie Horowitz. *Forward*, March 2007

[Jewish Peoplehood: Greater Than the Sum of its Parts](#)

Leonard Saxe, Benjamin Phillips. *The Peoplehood Papers*, October 2009

[Bad Things Happen to Good Numbers](#) | Steven M. Cohen. *Sh'ma*, Oct 2010

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# Qualitative vs. Quantitative

## [Research About the Jews](#)

*Leo Wolman. Proceedings of The National Conference of Jewish Social Service, May 1928*

In these days of organized research, with its advanced statistical technic and elaborate counting bureaus... I feel impelled to make a plea for that more informal social research which, conducted with imagination and insight, will illuminate the past and future of the Jews the world over. Impressive as the statistical output of these bureaus may be... they fail in method and in goal in assembling and interpreting that rich material about Jews which alone leads to understanding and to forecast... The new methods of the social sciences are historical as well as statistical, psychological as well as physical, sociological as well as economic...

## [Qualitative Research on American Jewry](#) | *Theodore Sasson. CMJS, SSRI, 2006*

Knowing "how many" does matter. So, too, does knowing whether programs are effective on the basis of objective measures. Neither qualitative nor quantitative research stands on its own...

## [Why Counting Can Be Counterproductive](#) | *Noam Pianko. Sh'ma, Oct 2010*

## [Counting American Jewry](#) | *Leonard Saxe. Sh'ma, Oct 2010*

Unfortunately, conducting demographic research has drained attention and resources from the task of better understanding the dynamics of communal engagement and the effectiveness of our efforts to engage and educate new generations...

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# Local vs. National

[The Research Needs of the Local Jewish Community: Current Trends and New Directions](#) | *Bruce A. Phillips. Understanding American Jewry, 1982*

From one point of view there should be no locally conducted research. Research should be conducted on a nationwide basis to maximize methodological consistency and minimize regional peculiarities. While this is true for subjects such as intermarriage, occupational mobility, and the Jewish family, other issues are best understood in the context of the local community...

[Local Jewish Population Studies: Still Necessary After All These Years](#)

*Ira M. Sheskin. Contemporary Jewry, 1994*

[Comparisons Between Local Jewish Community Studies and the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Survey](#) | *Ira M. Sheskin. Contemporary Jewry, 2005*

[Local Jewish Community Studies as Planning Tools for the American Jewish Community](#)

*Ira M. Sheskin. Jewish Political Studies Review, March 2009*

Although much of a local study's findings could have been guessed by astute observers of the Jewish community, in every study completed, there are always some surprises. In some cases, a Jewish community is actually forced to re-evaluate its very nature and the study results are used to establish new community priorities...

# The Need for More Research

[Research in Jewish Community Planning](#) | Benjamin Rabinowitz. *JSSQ*, Sep 1937

Despite the apparent extensiveness of the research activities conducted, the total amount of such activities is decidedly inadequate... The personnel engaged in this work numbers thirty-two...

[Toward a Bureau for Jewish Demographic Research](#)

Sophia M. Robison. *Committee of the Conference on Jewish Demography*, 1948

[Problems and Techniques in Jewish Demography](#)

Sophia M. Robison. *JSSQ*, Jun 1949

[The Study of Contemporary Jewry](#)

Alexander M. Dushkin. *JJCS*, Fall 1962

[Let Our Population Data Go](#)

Charles Kadushin, Leonard Saxe, Benjamin Phillips. *Forward*, July 2007

Studying our small Jewish population is undoubtedly difficult, but new methods are available that will enable us to better gather information and translate it for policy use. The Jewish community has not been well-served by poor research and deserves better.

[The Community Research Initiative: Data about the community, for the community](#)

*JPR*, January, 2010

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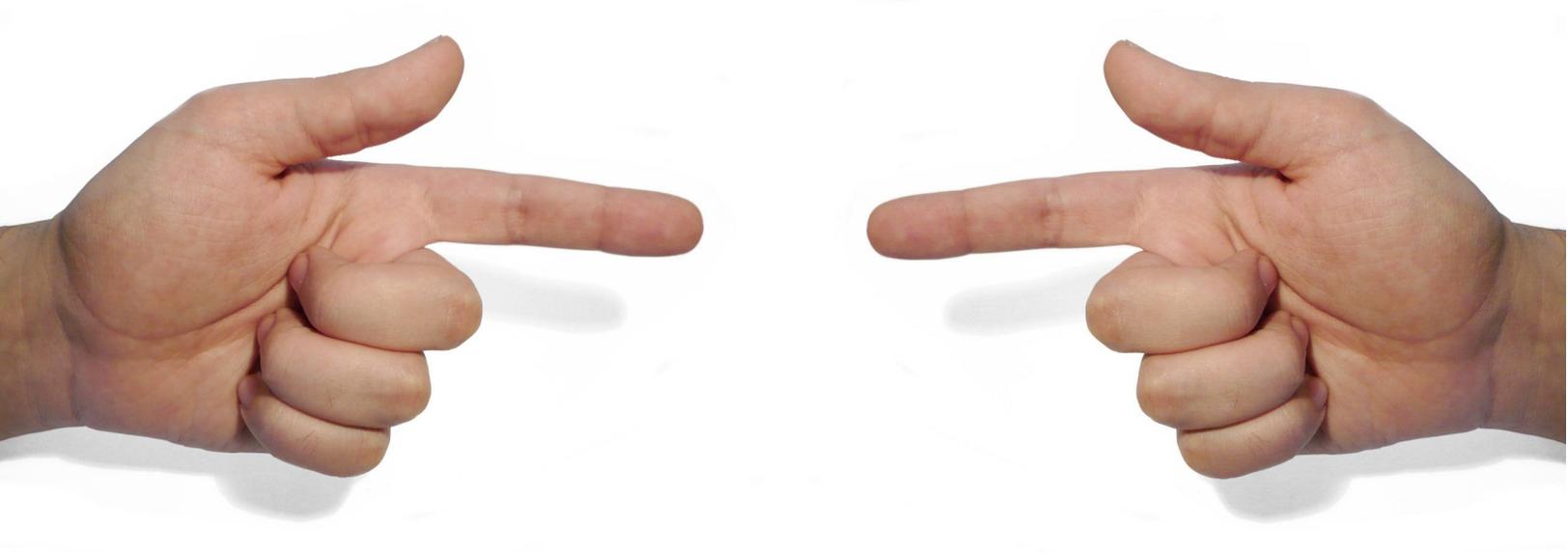
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