Jews in America

A Contemporary Reader

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Brandeis University Press
Published by University Press of New England
Hanover and London

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American Jewry

A Population Projection, 1990–2020

Introduction

Despite the absence of a question on religious identity both in the United States census and in vital statistics records, there exist today alternative adequate sources to estimate the size of the American Jewish population. The most reliable data derive from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), which was conducted under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Federations.[1] Based on a national random sample, the NJPS estimated the Jewish population at 5,515,000 persons in the summer of 1990. This "core" Jewish population[2] includes persons who defined themselves as Jews by religion or ethnic identity, as well as people born in another faith who joined the Jewish group either by formal conversion, or otherwise. The Jewish population figure based on this study is within a sampling error range of plus or minus 3.5 percent,[3] namely, a range between 5.3 and 5.7 million. The other source, with potentially larger error, is the ongoing yearly compilation project of local Jewish population estimates undertaken by a research team at the North American Jewish Data Bank (NAJDB). The NAJDB estimate of the U.S. Jewish population for 1990 was 5,981,000, 8.5 percent higher than that of the NJPS.[4] The gap between the national and aggregate-local figures is explained by differences in sampling methods and in the criteria used to define the target population. Likewise, the gathering of local estimates is liable to "a great many local biases and tend[s] to fall behind the actual pace of national trends. This is especially true in a context of vigorous internal migrations, as in the United States."[5] Nevertheless, the two sources coincide well with one another and provide updated information on the size of U.S. Jewry in 1990 as well as on some of its sociodemographic characteristics.

Much less agreement is found regarding the future size of U.S. Jewry. Several projections, which applied scientific methods with different assumptions about

the future courses of the salient demographic factors, arrived at different results. Based on corrected figures of the first NPS, of 1970/71, Schmelz and DellaPergola suggested for the year 2000 a range of Jewish population between 4.64 million if only natural movement and assimilation are considered and 5.57 million when a strong positive migration balance is added.[6] According to Bergman, if the American Jewish population size was reliant solely on natural causes, it most likely would maintain the number at which it leveled off in 1970 (i.e., about 5.4 million). But when assimilation, a principal parameter of demographic change among American Jewry, is taken into account, the number is expected to decline to a level of less than 1 million by the year the United States celebrates its tricentenial in 2076.[7] Under conditions of stable fertility and improvement in mortality, Lieberman and Wienfeld anticipated an increase in the number of American Jews from 5.37 million in 1970 to 5.7 million by the year 2000, after which, according to their estimate, it would decline to slightly less than 4 million by 2070.[8] Should Jewish fertility recover to replacement level, the number would rise to 5.8 million in the next twenty to thirty years and would stabilize at 5.7 million by the year 2070. A least likely alternative is a decline in fertility, which, according to Lieberman and Wienfeld, would diminish the size of American Jewry to 5 million by the year 2000, to 4 million by 2025, and to 1.6 million in 2070.

Another assessment, made recently by Goldstein, anticipated stability at around the 5.5 million figure found in the 1990 NJPS; and in the absence of a sizable upswing in fertility or large upsurge in immigration, the core Jewish population is more likely to decline toward 5.0 million or even below in the early decades of the next century.[9] These studies cautiously emphasize that unforeseen political, economic, or social changes, either national and global, may invalidate even a wide range of scenarios.

The 1990 NJPS is not only a good scientific source for estimating the size of the American Jewish population, the data set provides, inter alia, updated age-sex distribution and allows computation of the current size of major components of demographic change, including patterns of fertility and levels of assimilation. Likewise, the period since the late 1980s was one of unpredicted strategic trends in the general geopolitical system of a few countries with large Jewish concentrations. We refer, first and foremost, to the former Soviet Union but also to the peace process in the Middle East, the transition of power from the white rulers to the African majority in South Africa, and the continuation of unstable political and economic conditions in a few South America countries. These developments significantly changed the world Jewish migration system in which the United States is a major country of destination. Hence, it is important to reassess the demographic future of American Jews.

Based on moderate assumptions of the continuation of the recently prevailing levels of the components of internal evolution and taking into account the changing patterns of migration balance, this chapter presents the results of a population projection for the American Jewish population for the period 1990–2020. Size is

critical to any organized efforts to ensure the strength and vitality of the Jewish community. Further, population size and composition are basics for any policy and for communal planning such as day care centers, parochial schools, auxiliary groups, and institutional infrastructure for the elderly population; increase or decrease in the demand for different services due to changes in the absolute numbers of certain age groups may affect the allocation of a given budget or pose special efforts on the part of the Jewish community to search for additional financial resources.[10] There is also great relevance to the changing proportion of Jews within the general American population. If the direction or rhythm of Jews' demographic evolution differs from that of the total population or other minority groups, it may accordingly affect their social and economic power and thus also determine their self-confidence to operate as a strong and proud community.

Today, American Jews constitute the largest Jewish community in the world and have held this quantitative demographic status for most of the twentieth century. Will this still be true in the next century? The projection for American Jews will be discussed in a global Jewish context vis-à-vis the demographic future of world Jewry, Diaspora Jewry, and individual communities including Israel.[11]

Internal Population Dynamics

Assumptions of Internal Factors

The fertility patterns of American Jews have experienced sharp fluctuations over the past fifty years. The total fertility rate (TFR), a synthetic expression of the level of reproductivity in a given period, reached an all-time minimum of 1.3 children around 1935, climbed to 2.8 in the mid-1950s and declined again to 1.5 around 1970.[12] While these trends basically coincide with those among the total white population, Jewish fertility was consistently lower, reflecting a greater responsiveness to periodic societal changes that have stimulated the general upward and downward swings. More recently, the 1990 NJPS revealed the average number of children ever born to a Jewish woman 40–44 years old to be 1.6.[13] The subsequent group of ages 45–49, which is considered to be the end of the reproductive period, averaged 1.9 children; nevertheless, when the younger age group reaches ages 45–49, their fertility will presumably not have increased much from its current level, if at all, since they carry different fertility behavioral patterns. The average of 1.6 children observed among the women ages 40–44 can therefore be seen as complete or very nearly complete Jewish fertility.

Jewish fertility in 1990 was substantially lower than that of all white women in the United States. It continues to be similar to the general tendency toward smaller white American families; yet some unique factors among the Jewish population, such as their higher social and economic stratification, rapid increase in the proportion of women in the labor force, and preference for residing in

large metropolitan areas, operate to reduce both their complete fertility and that of each individual age group. According to Sidney Goldstein, Jewish women aged 25–29 in 1990 averaged only 0.5 children, whereas all white women of the same ages had already had one child; at ages 40–44, the respective figures were 1.6 and 2.1.[14] Even more significant, the level of American Jewish fertility stands below the replacement level of an average of 2.1 children.

Jewish fertility is further affected by the proportion of Jewish children among all children of intermarried couples. Only 28 percent of the children of mixed couples were being raised Jewish at the time of the 1990 NJPS. To avoid a loss to the Jewish population, at least half of those children must be raised Jewish; however, some 41 percent were raised in a non-Jewish religion and the remaining 31 percent with no religion.[15] The possibility does exist that some of the latter will opt to identify as Jews when they reach adulthood. But growing up in a society composed mainly of non-Jews diminishes this option and suggests that there will be a net loss to the core Jewish population in the next generation. Assuming that there are no significant differences between the fertility levels of Jewish inmarriages and Jewish intermarriages, the combination of the recent levels of intermarriage (52% among the marriage cohort of 1985–90)[16] and the low proportion of children who are identified as Jews among them results in a diminution of approximately 10 percent of overall Jewish fertility. Thus, the "effectively Jewish" fertility of American Jews in 1990 is estimated at 1.44. This level is kept constant throughout the projection period of 1990–2020.

The most updated information on patterns of mortality and survival are available for Rhode Island Jews.[17] Information obtained from Jewish funeral homes on deaths was combined with population data from a communal survey undertaken in 1987 to construct life tables and to enable insights into life expectancies at different ages for males and females separately. Although the data derive from a single Jewish community, which constitutes a very small proportion of the entire American Jewish population (approximately 0.3%), we see no reason to believe that mortality here differs significantly from that of Jews in other parts of the country. Life expectancy at birth, which is the average number of years a person has to live, was of 76.3 years for Jewish males and 79.3 years for Jewish females. These levels are used as the life expectancies of American Jews for the base year of the projection. Thereafter, we assume a linear growth to 79.0 years for males and 83.0 years for females at the end of the projection period.

Projected Size from Internal Evolution

If low effectively Jewish fertility continues at approximately its recent level, the outcome of natural increase will be negative despite high life expectancies at birth; this will result in a shrinkage of the American Jewish population from 5,515,000 in 1990 to 5,438,000 at the turn of the twenty-first century and down to 5,173,000 by the year 2020 (table 3.1). This change reflects an overall decrease of

TABLE 3.1
Medium Projection of U.S. Jewish Population, 1990–2020

	Internal Factors		*All Factors*	
Year	*Number (Thousands)*	*Index Number (1990=100)*	*Number (Thousands)*	*Index Number (1990=100)*
1990	5,515	—	5,515	—
1995	5,502	99.8	5,675	102.9
2000	5,438	98.6	5,702	103.4
2005	5,357	97.1	5,703	103.4
2010	5,286	95.8	5,675	102.9
2015	5,236	94.9	5,668	102.8
2020	5,173	93.8	5,648	102.4

slightly more than 6 percent relative to the size at the starting year of the projection. The shrinkage in the number of American Jews is not equally dispersed throughout the quinquenniums (table 3.2); after a modest decline in the first five years, the negative natural movement reaches a peak of −81,000 in the interval 2000–2005; the loss of Jewish population slightly diminishes in the next two quinquenniums, but beginning 2015, it is expected to accelerate again.

These fluctuations largely result from the age composition of U.S. Jews, which in the late 1980s was characterized by large baby boom cohorts which were concentrated at ages 25–44. Despite relatively low levels of total fertility, the frequency of Jews in the most procreative ages had the potential for a temporary rise in the number of Jewish newborn. Shortly afterward, the peak childbearing ages were occupied by smaller cohorts, born since the beginning of the 1960s when fertility had declined drastically. A second echo effect of the baby boom will be seen around the years 2005 to 2015, when the large numbers of the children of the baby boomers will themselves reach reproductive ages, but these will be much smaller cohorts that can hardly mitigate the negative natural increase.

Table 3.2 shows the respective influences of natural increase and assimilation. The projected loss of 342,000 persons from 1990 to 2020 is equally divided between the two factors. The decline in the first quinquennium is entirely attributed to loss of children of intermarriages who are not identified as Jews; from 1995 onward both factors operate to diminish the size of American Jewry. The pattern of change of natural increase is somewhat inverse to that of assimilation: while the former has a U-shaped curve, the latter is more convex; beginning in 2015, the two factors will behave similarly toward intensification of the demographic decline of American Jews. Presumably, the increase in life expectancy will not compensate for the negative effect of low fertility and assimilation, indicating the inability of U.S. Jewry to ensure its own numerical stability.

TABLE 3.2
Factors of Change in the Size of U.S. Jewish Population, 1990–2020 (in Thousands)

Period	Total Change	Internal Factors			International Migration[a]
		Total	Natural Increase	Assimilation	
Total	+133	−342	−171	−171	+475
1990–1995	+160	−13	+17	−30	+173
1995–2000	+27	−64	−36	−28	+91
2000–2005	+1	−81	−56	−25	+82
2005–2010	−28	−71	−45	−26	+43
2010–2015	−7	−50	−21	−29	+43
2015–2020	−20	−63	−30	33	+43

a. Including natural increase and assimilation among the immigrants.

External Factors: The Effect of International Migration

The United States continues to play an important role in global Jewish international migration as a country of origin but more so as the one of major alternative destination. The most significant recent development is the renewal, in the late 1980s, of large-scale migration from the former Soviet Union. The first arrivals, from the beginning of 1989 and until mid-1990, are assumed to have been included in the NJPS enumeration. For the following five years, there are adequate records for estimating the ex-Soviet migrants in the United States as well as some of their major demographic characteristics. Accurate data for 1990–95 are also available on the number of Jews who emigrated from the United States to Israel. Hence, we shall update our figures on the size of U.S. Jewry for 1995 with a combination of hard retrospective evidences and pure educated guesses.

Update for 1990–1995

Referring to migrants assisted by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), between mid-1990 and mid-1995 some 175,500 Jews and non-Jewish members of their families migrated to the United States. This estimate, gathered from HIAS's yearly statistical reports, excludes a small number of people (possibly a few hundred each year) who did not need resettlement assistance or were assisted by non-Jewish agencies.[18] There is no documentary evidence on the ethnoreligious identification of the ex-Soviet migrants to the United States. Some rough range can be made according to the known experience of the two major competing areas of destination, namely Israel and Germany.[19] According to data processed by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of non-Jews

among ex-Soviet immigrants whose religion was ascertained increased from 3.8 percent in 1990 to 32 percent in 1995, or a weighted average of 12 percent for the entire period. As to the share of non-Jews among ex-Soviet migrants to Germany, data on the number of people who entered the country in the framework of the Jewish quota was combined with the number of members of the local Jewish community organization (whose admission criteria are based on the Jewish law [Halachah]), resulting in 41 percent of non-Jews for the years 1990–95.

It stands to reason that the number of non-Jews among migrants to the United States fell somewhere between the levels mentioned above, and we adopted an average rate of about one-fifth for 1990–1995. This should be considered a minimal boundary if we bear in mind that under circumstances of social and financial absorption by Jewish organizations, people in mixed families, including children, may tend to identify with the Jewish group. In the United States, religious identification is not anchored in any legal framework, and it is the self-definition given by respondents that provides the basis for the current analysis of Jewishness. Of the total 175,500 ex-Soviet immigrants to the United States who were assisted by HIAS, the number of "core" Jews is estimated at 140,500.

The United States is likewise a principal destination for Israeli Jews and attracts both native-born and foreign-born Israelis. Based on data on migration and remigration by period of arrival for the late 1980s,[20] we estimate the yearly number of Israeli emigrants in the United States to be approximately 6,200, or 31,000 for the period mid-1990–mid-1995. During this same period, some 9,500 American Jews moved to Israel.[21] For this group we applied a retention rate of 62 percent[22] which is equivalent to an absolute number of approximately 6,000 migrants. Hence, the net migration between the United states and Israel for the 1990–95 period is estimated at 25,000. Further, based on many different sources of data and estimates, we suggest a yearly surplus of 1,500 immigrants over emigrants to the United States from other Jewish communities, or 7,500 for the entire quinquennium.

Since the completion of the recent NJPS, the United States gained some 173,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union, Israel, and other Jewish communities. With the projected figure of 5,502,000 Jews resulting from internal changes of fertility, mortality, and assimilation, we suggest an American Jewish population of 5,675,000 in mid-1995 (table 3.1). Net migration not only compensated for the internal negative evolution, but it brought about an increase of 2.9 percent above the 1990 level.

Projected Size, 1995–2020

Unless unexpected political or economic events are evolving in the former Soviet Union, it is likely that Jewish emigration will continue, though at a much slower pace. In 1996 American policy regarding refugees changed, reducing the yearly quota for Soviet Jewish immigrants to a level of 20,000. By extrapolating further

from the Israeli experience of the ongoing increase in the proportion of non-Jews among the new immigrants, we arrived at a total number of 50,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants to the United States for the period 1995–2000 and 40,000 during 2000–2005. Most of the Jews who wish to leave the ex-Soviet Union will probably do so within the next decade, after which emigration will sharply decline to marginal numbers each year.

We assume the continuation of Jewish migration from other Diaspora communities to the United States at an average level of 7,500 persons in each quinquennium of the projection period. For all the emigrants from Diaspora communities, fertility, assimilation, and mortality levels similar to those of their veteran American Jewish counterparts were assumed. For Israelis, we maintained a net gain of 24,000 per quinquennium. Fertility is expected to decline linearly from a TFR of 2.7 (which was the level for Israeli Jews in 1990) to 2.0 at the end of the projection period, reflecting a tendency for convergence to the fertility patterns of the local Jewish population. No assimilation is assumed among the first generation of Israeli emigrants. Mortality levels are expected to parallel those of total American Jews.

Given all the demographic parameters of change, the American Jewish population is expected to peak at 5,702 million in the year 2000; it will maintain this level for a quinquennium, after which a gradual decline is projected to 5,648 million by the year 2020 (table 3.1).[23] At the end of the projection period, the number of Jews will be 2.4 percent higher than it was in 1990. Net migration to the United States will account for an increment of almost half a million Jews over the thirty-year interval, totally offsetting the internal loss caused by low levels of fertility and assimilation (table 3.2). However, with the anticipated termination of the large wave of emigration from the former Soviet Union, migrations may not be sufficient to affect the intensified internal negative evolution, and shortly after the turn of this century the size of U.S. Jewry is expected to begin to decline.

The Aging of American Jews

Understanding the 1990 Age Composition

The recent age composition of U.S. Jews derives, first and foremost, from past fertility levels. The decline in natality during the Great Depression and World War II, from 1930 to 1945, is reflected in the relatively small number of people who in 1990 were 45 to 64 years old (table 3.3). Thereafter came the large cohorts of the baby boom, which in the United States extended from 1946 to 1964; this generation is now aged 30–44 and constitutes the largest cohort, slightly more than one-quarter of the total American Jewish population. Beginning in the 1960s, Jewish fertility declined significantly, a drop that was exacerbated by increasing losses of newborns as a result of mixed marriages. The recent increase in the size of the youngest cohort

TABLE 3.3
Medium Projection of U.S. Jewish Population, by Age, 1990–2020 (in Absolute Numbers and Percentages)

		Internal Factors			*All Factors*		
Age	*1990*	*2000*	*2010*	*2020*	*2000*	*2010*	*2020*
Absolute Number							
Total	5,515	5,438	5,286	5,173	5,702	5,675	5,648
0–14	1,048	915	676	686	970	759	780
15–29	1,036	908	1,045	726	966	1,126	827
30–44	1,413	1,211	863	1,033	1,273	955	1,144
45–64	1,072	1,493	1,762	1,410	1,545	1,840	1,517
65+	946	911	940	1,318	48	995	1,380
Median Age	37.3	41.5	45.7	47.4	41.2	45.0	46.3
Percentage							
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0–14	19.0	16.8	12.8	13.3	17.0	13.5	13.8
15–29	18.8	16.7	19.8	14.0	16.9	19.8	14.6
30–44	25.6	22.3	16.3	20.0	22.3	16.8	20.3
45–64	19.4	27.5	33.3	27.2	27.2	32.4	26.9
65+	17.2	16.7	17.8	25.5	16.6	17.5	24.4

(aged 0–14) is attributed to an echo effect of the baby boom, that is, to the arrival since the mid-1970s of large numbers of people into the most procreative ages.

The current age composition of U.S. Jewry is also affected by the large numbers of Jews who arrived in the United States during the mass immigration at the turn of the century. These Jews are concentrated in the oldest cohort, 65 years and over, and make up 17.2 percent of the total Jewish population. In 1990 the median age of American Jews was 37.3. This is approximately four years older than the median of 33.5 years in 1970, demonstrating a significant trend toward an aging population. These developments in age composition parallel similar ones among the general white population of the United States; yet at least as far back as the late 1950s, Jews have been consistently older than the average for the white population.[24]

The Continuation of Aging

If only internal factors are taken into account, by the year 2000 the number of elderly Jews will have declined slightly because the weak cohorts born since 1930,

which occupied the late-middle-age range in 1990, will be penetrating the old-age range, and this trend will continue into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, low levels of fertility and the progressing of the baby boomers into a later stage on the age ladder are anticipated to increase the median age of American Jews to 41.5 years in 2000 and 45.7 in 2010 (table 3.3).

The aging process will peak at the end of the projection period, when a substantial proportion of the baby boomers will constitute the oldest age cohort. The second echo effect of the baby boom, when the grandchildren of the original boomers reach the reproductive ages (beginning in 2010), will be much smaller than the first one; it is likely that they will fail to bring about a rise in the number of Jewish children and may only delay the trend of further decline. By the year 2020 the late-middle-age cohort (45–64 years old) and the elderly (65+) will each constitute approximately one-quarter of the entire American Jewish population, while the proportion of the two youngest cohorts (aged 0–14 and 15–29) are expected to approximate 13 percent and 14 percent, respectively. This anticipated age distribution will result in a median age of 47.4 years. The combined effect of low levels of fertility and declining mortality will inevitably produce an abnormal population pyramid with a narrow base and a relatively broad top.

The age profiles of Jewish immigrants to the United States differ according to their country of origin. The ex-Soviet migrants are an older population, whereas many of the Israeli immigrants are concentrated in the 20–35-year age brackets; the rest of the new arrivals are assumed to have an age composition that falls somewhere in between. The net gain of U.S. Jewry from international migration will increase the number of Jews in each age cohort but have only a minor effect on their overall age distribution and on their median age.

From the point of view of communal services, the most critical groups are children of school age and the elderly population. The data on children in table 3.4 are broken down into age groups that correspond, respectively, to preschool (including kindergarten), elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school. The different sizes of the various cohorts in 1990 once again show the effect of the past fluctuations in Jewish fertility behavior. Children aged 3–5 and 6–11 correspond to the birth cohort of 1979–87, when a substantial number of the baby boomers reached their most reproductive period. This is anticipated to increase the size of the cohorts of children aged 12 years and above at the turn of the century and to ensure an overall stability in the number of Jewish children at slightly less than 1 million. However, the transitory nature of this phenomenon is obvious: by 2010 the ages 20–44 will be occupied by weak cohorts, born since the mid-1960s, and the number of children is expected to decline markedly by more than quarter of a million from the starting point of our projection. The relatively large number of children among the new immigrants as well as their offspring who are expected to be born in America, will not change this trend but only slow it somewhat.

In the next twenty years, the number of Jews aged 65 and over will remain fairly stable at a level of slightly less than 950,000 (table 3.4). Between 2010 and 2020

TABLE 3.4
Medium Projection of Jewish School-age Children and of the Aged Population, 1990–2020 (in Thousands)

	Internal Factors			
Age	*1990*	*2000*	*2110*	*2020*
Total 3–17	966	998	691	682
3–5	247	132	129	141
6–11	408	383	264	280
12–14	156	250	145	132
15–17	155	233	153	129
Total 65+	946	911	940	1,318
75+	415	477	444	504
Change from 1990				
Total 3–17	—	+32	−275	−284
Total 65+	—	−35	−6	+372
Total 75+	—	+62	+29	+89

many of the Jews who were born during the baby boom will enter the elderly cohort and are expected to bring about a sharp increase in the number of those who are 65 and older to about 1.32 million by the end of the projection period, slightly more if immigrants are included. More important perhaps is the future number of persons aged 75 and over, as they will constitute the segment most likely to need the health and social services offered by the organized Jewish community. Furthermore, given the extraordinarily high rates of geographic mobility among American Jews, the need for assistance on the part of these people might exceed what is anticipated, because many of them will be left with no close relatives nearby. In 1990 the number of Jews aged 75 and over was estimated at 415,000; although not linearly, this number will increase to approximately half a million by the year 2020, or to 534,000 if migration develops according to the projection assumptions.

Comparative Perspectives

Jews among All Americans

Shortly after the termination of the mass migration from Eastern Europe, American Jews constituted 4 percent of all whites in the United States (or 3.6 percent of the total population). The relative share remained fairly stable in the next decade, after which it began declining gradually to 3.7 percent in 1950, 3.1 percent

TABLE 3.5
Percentage of Jews among All Americans, 1930–2020

	Estimates[a]				*Medium Projection*	
	1927	*1950*	*1970*	*1990*	*2000*	*2010*
Jews among total population	3.6	3.3	2.7	2.2	2.1	1.9
Jews among total whites	4.0	3.7	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.4

a. For calculation of these figures, the number of U.S. Jews for 1927 and 1950 were taken from the American Jewish Year Book, and for 1970 and 1990 from the NJPS of the same years. Data for the total American population derive from census publications of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

in 1970, and to 2.8 percent in 1990 (table 3.5). For most of these years the absolute number of Jews increased, but it was at a much slower pace than that of the non-Jewish American population.

It is this trend that is expected to continue in the next three decades. Results of the medium projection for all whites in the United States are available from the Bureau of the Census, which generally assumes the continuation of current fertility and migration levels and an increase in life expectancy. The data suggest an overall increase of 22 percent in the number of white Americans between 1990 and 2020 (6 and 8 percent each decade).[25] This is a far higher level than that of the Jews when all demographic factors are considered. Hence, by the year 2020 the percentage of Jews will decline to 2.2 percent of all whites. It should be emphasized that these differences in the respective demographic evolution of the two populations are explained by the much greater aging of the Jews, their lower levels of fertility, and the assimilatory losses that have no parallel in the general population. On the other hand, the positive external migration balance, when translated to annual rates per 1,000 of population, was higher for the Jews.[26]

A Worldwide Jewish Perspective

In table 3.6 we evaluate the demographic future of U.S. Jews compared with the Jewries of the Diaspora, Israel, and the world as a whole (according to a medium version that generally assumes the continuation of recent levels of the demographic factors).[27] Because of a younger age composition, U.S. Jews are expected to experience a more moderated change than the rest of Diaspora Jewry: based on internal dynamics, by the year 2020 they will decline to 94 percent of their size at the starting point of the projection, while the rest of the Diaspora will decline by nearly one quarter. This differential becomes more salient if migration is introduced into the projection equation because the aggregate geographic unit of the rest of the Diaspora will lose large numbers both to the United States and to Israel.

In 1990, American Jews constituted 43 percent of world Jewry, making them the world's largest Jewish community. By the year 2020 this proportion will decline

TABLE 3.6
Medium Projection of Jews in the U.S., the Diaspora, and the World, 1990–2020 (Percentage)

	Index Number 2020[a]		*Internal Factors*			
	Internal Factors	*All Factors*	*1990*	*2000*	*2010*	*2020*
World	106	107	100	100	100	100
Diaspora	87	77	69	64	61	57
U.S.	94	102	43	42	40	38
Other countries	76	35	26	22	21	19
Israel	148	173	31	36	39	43
U.S. and Israel	116	132	74	78	79	81

a. 1990 = 100.

to between 38 and 41 percent, depending on migration. At the same time, Israel's relative share will increase, and around 2010 the numbers of Israeli and American Jews are anticipated to converge. This process of increase in the proportion of Israeli Jews and the decline in the proportion of U.S. Jewry will turn Israel into the largest Jewish community, and at a later stage, given continual large waves of migration, will allow it to constitute the absolute majority of world Jewry. The paramount factors responsible for the rapid growth in the Israeli Jewish population are the high levels of fertility and the absence of net assimilatory losses; the positive migration balance is only secondary.[28]

From the viewpoint of the geographic distribution of the world Jewish population, the combined effect of the differences in age composition of the base populations and the size of the demographic factors emphasize the Jewish spatial configuration of two centers of gravity: the United States and Israel. The joint share of these two communities is expected to increase from slightly less than three-quarters in 1990 to 81 percent in 2020 with no migration or to 91 percent if we assume migration. The latter percentage is largely based on a drastic diminution in the size of the ex-Soviet Jewish community due to outmigration. The fact that, at the time of this writing, more than half of Soviet Jews have already emigrated to other countries, mostly to Israel and the United States, strengthens our bipolar scenario.

Summary and Conclusions

The future demographic dynamic of American Jews, like that of any other population, depends on the interplay between its structural profile in terms of the distribution by age and sex and the anticipated course of the events responsible for quantitative change. In 1990, the starting date of our projection, many of the Jews

born during the baby boom were in their thirties and forties; despite low fertility (below the replacement level and further reduced by a loss of children through interfaith marriages), the fact that they occupied the most reproductive ages is likely to assure large cohorts of children for the next several years. A longer life span will somewhat moderate the diminution of the size of U.S. Jewry.

The evolution of the American Jewish population is also affected by the external factors of world Jewry. As a response to general political, social, or economic alterations in the host societies, the global Jewish international migration system has recently been very active, with the United States being one of the preferable countries of destination. This is expected to remain the case in the foreseeable future though at a somewhat lower pace. The overall estimate of excess of immigrants over emigrants for the next three decades is likely to compensate for the negative internal evolution and perhaps even bring about a slight increase relative to 1990 NJPS figures. Nevertheless, from a worldwide Jewish perspective, the number of Jews would be larger should American Jewry be able to guarantee its own demographic continuity.

What is expected to undergo a significant change is the age composition of American Jews. While our base population revealed a similarity in size of the two extreme cohorts on the age spectrum, different trends among them will presumably result in an elderly population of almost twice as large as the youngest cohort. The establishment of institutions and the planning of communal services are long-range processes that cannot always be adapted to temporary swings in number of potential constituencies. But the findings that emerge from this study suggest a clear structural change, which, in turn, should challenge the organized Jewish community to search for additional financial resources or, alternatively, to face painful choices in allocating money between educational program needs and health and social services. On a different level, the number of young adults is projected to decline, and this segment of the Jewish population is the major reservoir from which communal and organizational leadership can be drawn.

The analysis presented in this chapter focused on the national American Jewish scene. The results are an average of many communities of different size, age composition, religious identification, and other characteristics that determine demographic behavior. The demographic profile of individual communities will most likely be affected by residential mobility, be it intercity, interstate, or interregional move. It is apparent that internal migration is today "the major dynamic responsible for the growth or decline of many local Jewish communities and for the changing distribution of the Jewish population among regions of the country and among metropolitan areas."[29] Migration is associated with certain stages in the life cycle—going away to college, entering the job market, getting married, retirement; therefore, it is selective in age: disproportional numbers of young adults and to a lesser extent elderly people. Likewise, large metropolitan areas with dense Jewish populations are preferable to small and isolated towns as destinations for new arrivals from abroad. Services at the local level will further benefit from identifying the future trends of their specific communities; the imbalance between

future needs and resources (including currently available fixed investments) may turn out to be even greater at the local community level than is apparent from watching the expected trends at the national level.

This projection is one of many alternative directions in which the American Jewish population can develop. We attach reserved caution to our results. American Jews are affected, first and foremost, by trends on the macro-level of the general social and political system and only in the second place as individuals who are sensitive to the Jewish communal subsystem. Jews today are successfully integrated into the societal American mainstream; they are concentrated in the upper strata of the social and economic ladder and hence are exposed to many social and normative changes. Judging by past experiences, they might react to them quickly and through large-scale and quite synchronic changes. Not less fluid and volatile is the world system under the impact of globalization processes that can alternately prompt or weaken the levels of Jewish international migration. Within these obvious constraints, we believe that a demographic projection of modest assumptions, which uses scientific tools, is a necessary quantitative framework for any serious attempt to evaluate current social and demographic changes among American Jewry and to assess their implications for the future.

Notes

Materials presented in this chapter are part of an ongoing research at the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics, the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The project of new population projections for each of the major Jewish communities worldwide was initiated by the late Professor Uziel O. Schmelz, who actively participated in establishing the project's conceptual and technical framework. The project is currently supported by the Israel Humanitarian Fund. We gratefully acknowledge the encouragement of Marvin Sirota and Stanley J. Abrams. Thanks are due to the North American Jewish Data Bank in New York for providing the original database of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey directed by Barry A. Kosmin and Sidney Goldstein. Judith Even helped in editing the text.

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3. Kosmin et al., *Highlights*, p. 39.
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7. E. Bergman, "The American Jewish Population Erosion," *Midstream* 23, no. 8 (1977), pp. 9–10.
8. S. S. Lieberman, and M. Weinfeld "Demographic Trends and Jewish Survival," *Midstream* 24, no. 9 (1977), p. 11.
9. S. Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," in *American Jewish Year Book 1992* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1992), p. 124.
10. S. Goldstein, "The Demographics of American Jewry," in S. DellaPergola, and L. Cohen, eds.,*World Jewish Population: Trends and Policies*, Jewish Population Studies No. 23 (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1992), p. 61.
11. It should be emphasized already at this stage that a scientific demographic projection is not a prophecy. Rather, it is a computation of changes that are expected to occur in a population if it develops according to certain assumptions made in regard to the magnitude of the demographic factors. The projection presented here uses what we view today as "realistic" assumptions; they coincide with recent internal trends among American Jews as well as with external processes among world Jewry. Nevertheless, political, social, economic, or other processes in the global system are fluid and may suddenly change population behaviors in different parts of the world including that of Jews. This is especially true because our projection covers a relatively long span of thirty years into the future; the results are likely to be "reasonable for a few years ahead but then become progressively worse—margin of error increases." (C. Newell, *Methods and Models in Demography* [London: Belhaven Press, 1988], p. 181). We do believe, however, that the certitude of some trends and conclusions emerging from this study outweighs the uncertainty.

We project the American Jewish population by using the demographic cohort-component method. The projection starts with the age-sex distribution of U.S. Jews by five-year age groups (base population) according to data from the 1990 NJPS. The assumptions regarding the course of the components of change—fertility, mortality, and migration—are then applied to the base population. In a case of a minority group, such as American Jews, an additional factor comes to play a role in determining population size, namely, the quantitative consequences of intermarriage. The 1990 NJPS found roughly equal numbers of people not born Jewish who had converted to Judaism and people who were born or raised Jewish but were currently following another religion; most of these accessions to and secessions from Judaism are likely to be by-products of interreligious marriage. Intermarriage also has a long-term effect on the number of newborns who are identified or raised Jewish. The gain or loss arising from the religious identification of children of intermarriage is introduced into the projection equation here via the component of fertility.

While in practice the procedure of a population projection may become quite complex, the basic idea is simple and can be illustrated as follows:

Population in $t+1$	=	Population in t	+	Natural increase (births – deaths)	+	Identificational change (accessions – secessions)	+	Net migration (immigration – emigration)

In the context of our projection, the Jewish population at a time, $t+1$ is the Jewish population at an earlier point of time t, plus the numbers of Jewish newborns between t and $t+1$ less the number of Jewish deaths, plus the number of accessions to Judaism less the number of secessions from Judaism, plus the number of Jewish immigrants to the United States less the number of Jewish emigrants from the country. While the duration of the projection is thirty years, the software package that was used here provides the results of the projection in five-year intervals (*PEOPLE: A User Friendly Package for Making National and Sub-National Population Projections* Versions 2.0, 1990).

We begin with the first part of the equation, which considers only internal evolution as determined by fertility, mortality, and assimilation. This will provide insights into the ability of the American Jewish community to ensure its own demographic continuity. External factors are then added, showing the effect of net international migration with other Diaspora communities and with Israel.

12. S. DellaPergola, "Patterns of American Jewish Fertility," *Demography* 17, no. 3 (1980), p. 263.
13. Golden, "Profile of American Jewry," p. 169.
14. Ibid.
15. Kosmin et al., *Highlights*, p. 16.
16. Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry," p. 126.
17. S. Goldstein, "Changes in Jewish Mortality and Survival, 1963–1987," *Social Biology*, 43 no. 1–2 (1996), pp. 72–97.
18. HIAS, *Statistical Reports* (New York: The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (annual publications).
19. DellaPergola, S. "The Global Context of Migration to Israel," in: E. Leshem, and J. Shuval, eds., *Studies in Israel Society*, vol. 8 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, (forthcoming).
20. Y. Cohen and Y. Haberfeld, "The Number of Israeli Immigrants in the United States in 1990," *Demography* 34 (2) (1997), pp. 206–7.
21. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Immigration to Israel* (Jerusalem, annual publications).
22. A. Dashefsky and B. Lazerwitz, "The Role of Religious Identification in North American Migration to Israel," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (3), p. 265; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, Supplement D, January 1986, as cited in C. I. Waxman, *American Aliya: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), p. 231.
23. If the U.S. government reduces significantly or abolishes, the quota for Eastern European refugees, a lower amount of immigration from the former Soviet Union would produce a result intermediate between this scenario and the one that considers only internal factors.
24. S. Goldstein, "Jews in the United States: Perspective from Demography," *American Jewish Year Book, 1981* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981) p. 44; Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry," p. 105.
25. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1993-2050*, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, no. 1104, 1993.

26. The older Jewish population is reflected in their median age as well as in the smaller proportion of children and higher proportion of elderly relative to the age profile of whites. As far as fertlity is concerned, the Bureau of the Census assumed a TFR of 2.1 for the middle series projection (holding constant age-specific fertility rates at the 1990 level). The average annual rates of migration per 1,000 population are as follows: 1990–95, 6.3 for Jews and 2.2 for total whites; 1995–2000, 3.2 versus 2.2; 2000–2005, 2.9 versus 2.1; 2005–10, 1.5 versus 2.0; 2010–15, 1.5 versus 2.0; and for 2015–20, 1.5 versus 1.9. This results in an overall difference for the entire projection period of 2.8 versus 2.1, respectively (for total whites); adapted from *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1993–2050*).
27. S. DellaPergola, "The Jewish People towards the Year 2020: Sociodemographic Scenarios," in E. Gonen, and S. Fogel, eds., *A Blueprint for Israel in the 2000s* (Report No. 21). Haifa: The Technion: Israel Institute of Technology, April 1996, pp. 186–99 (in Hebrew).
28. DellaPergola, "The Jewish People towards the Year 2020, p. 192.
29. Goldstein, "Profile of American Jews," p. 95.