THE PARADOXICAL EFFECTS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY SIZE ON JEWISH COMMUNAL BEHAVIOR: Intermarriage, Synagogue Membership and Giving to Local Jewish Federations

Jonathan Rabinowitz*
Lecturer, Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel Aviv University

This research note will report on insights gained into Jewish communal behavior by measuring the effects of community size on three aspects of Jewish communal life: rates of 1) intermarriage, 2) synagogue membership, and 3) giving to the Jewish federation. All Jewish communities that have this data available within the past 10 years have been included (See Table 1 for a list of studies included). Size is believed to be an important structural variable affecting communal behavior. This study is an attempt to apply a macrostructural theory of intergroup relations as developed by Blau and Schwartz (1984).

Contemporary studies of Jewish intermarriage have shied away from social structure as a possible explanation of current Jewish intermarriage. Mayer (1985), for example, after noting that individual behavior can be affected by population composition and concomitant opportunities for mate selection, discounts this "familiar demographic explanation" of contemporary intermarriage. He notes intermarriage since the 1960s has not only existed in small towns, but also in cities with large Jewish populations, where Jews could more easily find a mate (p. 102).

The few studies of Jewish philanthropic behavior have tended to focus on the reasons that individual Jews gave money to Jewish

*The author wishes to thank the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for a grant supporting this research.

Table 1
Jewish Population Studies Included in Study

City	Field Work Conducted In	Published In	Primary Consultant(s)
Chicago	1983	1985	Peter Friedman & Eve Weinberg
Cleveland	1981	1982	Ann Schorr
Denver	1981	1982	Bruce Phillips & Eleanor Judd
Hartford	1982	1983	Mark Abrahamson
Kansas City	1976	1977	Albert J. Mayer
Las Vegas	1982	1983	Bruce Phillips
Los Angeles	1980	1982	Bruce Phillips
Miami	1982	1983	Ira M. Sheskin
Minneapolis	1981	1982	Lois Geer
New York	1981	1984	Steven M. Cohen & Paul Ritterband
Omaha	1975	1977	Murray Frost
Philadelphia	1983	1985	William Yancey
Pittsburgh	1984	1985	Ann Schorr
Richmond	1983	1984	Ann Schorr
St. Louis	1981	1982	Gary A. Tobin
St. Paul	1981	1982	Lois Geer
Seattle	1978	1979	James McCann
Washington, D.C.	1983	1985	Gary A. Tobin

causes. Studies have found a positive relationship between giving and: religious observance, attitudes (Ritterband & Cohen, 1979; Phillips & Aron, 1984), geographic stability (Jaret, 1978; Phillips & Aron, 1984), increased age (Phillips & Judd, 1982; Silberstein et al., 1987) and income, membership in synagogues and Jewish organizations (Phillips & Judd, 1982; Phillips & Aron, 1984).

One recent study has focused on communal, (rather than individual) philanthropic behavior and on other types of formal social participation in the Jewish community (such as communal rates of membership in Jewish organizations). This study has found an inverse relationship between communal rates of giving and Jewish community size, both relative and absolute, and change in absolute size of the Jewish community (findings on giving are reported in Silberstein et al., 1987 and the complete study in Rabinowitz, 1988). The current study expands on that work.

The work of Blau and Schwartz, as well as this study, are based on an assumption made by Gouldner (1970) that "structural constraints and opportunities resulting from population distributions in a place exert a dominant influence on social relations that partly counteracts, and may suppress, the influences of cultural values and psychological preferences" (Blau & Schwartz, 1984, p. 14). Drawing from this assumption, this study considers structure as a potentially salient force on rates of Jewish intermarriage and formal group participation, (operationalized) as rates of synagogue membership and giving to the local Jewish federation.

It is because people have individual preferences that the effects of structure are so interesting. They appear to exert a profound influence, often contrary to these preferences. Blau and Schwartz (1984), for example, empirically tested the power of macrostructural theory in predicting rates of intermarriage between people of differing cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in the 125 largest cities in the United States.

Blau and Schwartz hypothesized that "as group size increases, the probable rate of outgroup relations decreases" (p. 31). They explain that this is due to a person's natural propinquity to form relationships with those whom they have the greatest chance of meeting. Accordingly, a smaller group will have more outgroup relations than a larger group. "As group size decreases," they write "there is a linear increase in the probability of intergroup relations but an exponential increase in the probability of dense networks of ingroup relations. (Density refers to the proportion of all possible social ties in a group that actually occur. . . .)" (p. 39).

Therefore it is to be expected that: 1) participation in Jewish communities, measured by rates of synagogue membership and rates of giving to federation (both dependent on "dense networks of ingroup relations"), will have an inverse relationship to community size and 2) intermarriage rates will also be inversely related to community size, as one is more likely to marry a coreligionist if the group constitutes a larger proportion of the population. New York, for example, where the Jews constitute a large segment of the population, would be expected to have a low rate of intermarriage, due to its lesser extent of out-group relations. It is also expected to have low rates of participation, as it also does, due to the negative effect of large community size on group cohesiveness.

This study uses data from the most recent Jewish demo-

graphic studies completed. There are differences in how these studies were conducted, which requires consideration before comparing their findings. For example, in many cities population counts of Jews are done based on "list merging." This entails merging the membership lists of all local Jewish organizations and drawing samples from the list (See Tobin & Chenkin, 1985 for a discussion). This procedure excludes many intermarrieds as they are generally assimilated and thus not involved in the Jewish community (See Tobin & Chenkin, 1985 who touch on this problem). However in other studies list merging has been supplemented with random phone-dialing and other procedures employed to compensate for the limitations of list merging. Random digit dialing is a procedure where random calls are placed in phone exchanges known to have a high concentration of Jews. This too is not flawless, as some who intermarry may choose to live a distance from the community. Most of the studies either used random-digit dialing as a primary method or supplemented their sampling procedure with it.

Method

The thirty-five Jewish demographic studies completed since 1975 were reviewed for possible inclusion in this study. Several of the studies did not report rates of intermarriage, while others reported only rates of intermarriage for various age cohorts or for the principal wage earner. Yet others utilized samples too small to render meaningful data. Eighteen cities were included in this study, five of which are the largest Jewish communities and several of which are medium-sized and smaller communities. (See Table 1 for a list of cities included). This sample represents approximately 3,430,000 Jews or approximately 60 percent of the Jewish population in the United States. These communities, while not a random sample, are believed to be representative of the cities that have not completed population studies since 1975.

Rates of synagogue membership were more widely reported than rates of intermarriage. However, only cities with known rates of synagogue membership, federation giving, and intermarriage were included in this study. Rates of giving to Federations were obtained through the Council of Jewish Federations and reflect the 1985 campaigns. The relative size of each Jewish community was determined by calculating the percentage of Jews in its Metropolitan Standard Area. The data set is presented in

Table 2. Several linear regressions were employed to test the relationship between variables.

Results

The results of this study are summarized in Table 3. They support the first hypothesis that the larger the relative size of the Jewish community the lower the rates of intermarriage ($R = -.51$, $P = .05$, $N = 18$). The absolute size of the Jewish community was also related to lower rates of intermarriage, however it did not reach statistical significance ($R = .40$, $P = .097$).

The second hypothesis, that rates of participation in the Jewish community are inversely related to community size is also supported. Rates of synagogue membership and rates of giving to

Table 2
Data Set (from most intermarriage to least)

	Rates of Inter-marriage (%)	Abso-lute Number of Jews (thou-sands)	Relative Number of Jews % of Total Popula-tion	Rates of giving to feder-ation (per thousand Jews) ($)	Rates of syna-gogue mem-bership (%)
Denver	37	45.0	1.9	121.0	N/A
Kansas City	31	9.0	1.3	297.1	52
Washington	30	157.3	4.6	161.1	39
Seattle	28	19.5	1.2	192.2	75
Minneapolis	25	22.0	.99	265.0	79
St. Paul	21	9.2	.42	303.0	84
Richmond	20	8.0	1.0	398.8	67
Hartford	20	26.0	3.6	263.0	60
Cleveland	18	70.0	3.7	313.0	61
Las Vegas	18	17.0	3.3	83.1	N/A
Chicago	17	253.0	4.1	151.0	44
St. Louis	16	53.0	2.2	180.0	66
Philadelphia	15	240.0	5.0	179.9	41
Pittsburg	13	45.0	2.0	269.3	70
Los Angeles	12	500.9	6.4	91.1	26
New York	10	1700.0	20.5	60.0	41
Omaha	10	6.5	1.1	N/A	89
Miami	08	253.0	14.7	115.4	38

All data from most recent Jewish population study in each city.

Table 3
Regression of dependent variables on number of Jews

Intermarriage N=18		Synagogue membership N=16		Giving to Federation N=17	
absolute	relative	absolute	relative	absolute	relative
R=-.40	R=-.51	R=-.50	R=-.6174	R=-.53	R=-.60
R^2=.1626	R^2=.26	R^2=.25	R^2=.38	R^2=.28	R^2=.36
P=.097	P<.05	P<.05	P<.01	P<.05	P<.01

federation were negatively correlated with the absolute number of Jews (respectively $R = -.50$, $P < .03$, $N = 16$; $R = -.53$, $P < .025$, $N = 17$). The relative size of the Jewish community exerted a slightly stronger influence on rates of synagogue membership ($R = -.62$, $P < .01$, $N = 16$) and also rates of giving to Federation ($R = -.60$, $P < .01$, $N = 17$). It was not possible to test the independent effects of relative and absolute size due to multicolinearity (absolute number of Jews and relative number of Jews have an $r = .87$).

As expected, there was no significant relationship between rates of intermarriage and either rates of participation (synagogue membership ($r = .19$, $P > .3$) or giving to federation ($R = .23$, $P > .3$). However synagogue membership and giving to federation, as would be expected, were highly correlated ($r = .70$, $P < .01$).

Despite the limited sample size, these results suggest that size exerts a profound influence on Jewish communal behavior. It also helps explain the apparent paradox that Jewish communities with relatively high levels of participation can also have relatively high rates of intermarriage while Jewish communities with relatively low rates of communal involvement have low rates of intermarriage. As this study concludes, these two realms of communal behavior are not related to each other, but are both related to another exogenous variable: community size.

REFERENCES

BLAU, P. M. & SCHWARTZ, J. E. 1984. Crosscutting Social Circles: Testing a Macrostructural Theory of Intergroup Relations. Orlando: Academic Press.

GOULDNER, A. W. 1970. The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology. New York: Basic Books.

JARET, C. 1978. The Impact of Geographic Mobility on Jewish Community Participation: Disruptive or Supportive? *Contemporary Jewry*, 4 (2).

MAYER, E. 1985. *Love & Tradition Marriage between Jews and Christians.* New York: Schocken Books.

PHILLIPS, B. & ARON, W. 1984. *The Greater Phoenix Jewish Population Study: Jewish Philanthropy*, Report 6.

PHILLIPS, B. and JUDD, E. 1982. *Supplement to Denver Population Study: Fund Raising*, Denver: Allied Jewish Federation of Denver.

RABINOWITZ, J. 1988. *Correlates of Social Participation in Jewish Communities in The United States: A Macro Environmental Approach.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yeshiva University, New York.

RITTERBAND, P. & COHEN, S. 1979. Will The Well Run Dry? The Future of Jewish Giving in America. *Policy Studies '79.* National Jewish Conference Center.

SILBERSTEIN, R. et al. 1987. Giving to Jewish Philanthropic Causes: A Preliminary Reconnaissance. *Spring Research Forum: Working Papers.* Co-Published, Independent Sector & United Way Institute.

TOBIN, G. A. and CHENKIN, A. 1985. Recent Jewish Community Population Studies: A Roundup. In The American Jewish Year Book, 154–190.