

Uses of Non-Jewish Respondent Data in Jewish Population Research: Los Angeles, 1997

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The 1997 Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey implemented the standard screening survey used to qualify Jewish households in many local surveys and the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. Inclusion of a panel of questions directed to non-qualified non-Jewish respondents eliciting data regarding their friendships and family relationships to Jewish persons provided valuable benefits and data at virtually no additional cost for data gathering. It was found that Jewish households constituted the third largest religious group in the Los Angeles Jewish Federation area which contains over 2 million households. Abundant non-Jewish to Jewish friendship patterns were reported, with 58% of non-Jewish households reporting Jewish friends. Family relationships of non-Jews to Jews are demonstrated for one in thirteen non-Jewish households. A surprisingly accurate indirect indicator of born-Jewish and not-born-Jewish married couples was developed by utilizing Jewish brother-in-law and sister-in-law relationships of non-Jewish respondents. The high correlative property of non-Jewish close friendship patterns with Jewish household density is suggested as a needed weighting methodology which should be explored to buttress the weighting procedures utilized in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. An index of Jewish assimilation was created for the Los Angeles Jewish Federation subregional areas to describe differential sociological absorption patterns into the non-Jewish environment of geographical aggregates of Jewish households.

Overview of the 1997 Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey

The computer-aided telephone interview (CATI) random digit dialing (RDD) sample size of the 1997 Los Angeles Jewish Population survey was 11,846 households from an area that contains an estimated 2,037,713 total non-Jewish and Jewish households. Through a stratified sampling design which over-sampled areas of lesser Jewish densities 1,080 Jewish households were located through RDD sampling and using a dual frame sampling methodology an additional strata of 1,560 Jewish household interviews were obtained by interviewing a randomized sample from the Jewish Federation roster of current, past and potential donors. In order to achieve this interview sample over 69,000 phone numbers were dialed.

A byproduct of a scientific Jewish community survey in the U.S. is that many more non-Jews than Jews are contacted in the screening phase of the survey during which the respondent is asked a series of questions for the purpose of qualifying or disqualifying him for application of a Jewish questionnaire. In previous Jewish

surveys the practice has been to immediately conclude the survey interview with the non-Jewish respondent about Jewish variables at the point where the last Jewish qualification question had been asked. This was not the procedure in the Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey (LAJPS). The 1997 LAJPS non-Jewish household respondents were asked additional questions about their friendship and family relations to Jewish persons. These additional questions to non-Jewish respondents yielded valuable sociological information.

In addition to being able to estimate, as had the 1990 NJPS, the number of non-Jewish households by religion, I was able to:

1. Learn about the relationships of non-Jews to Jews.
2. Create an indirect indicator of intermarried Jewish households.
3. Explore the creation of an index of Jewish assimilation.
4. Explore the creation of an improved statistical weighting scheme to improve the accuracy of Jewish estimates of Jewish population.

Relationship of Non-Jewish Respondents to Jewish Persons

In Jewish surveys undertaken in the past the focus of Jewish and non-Jewish relationships has always been the Jewish persons being surveyed. The Los Angeles Jewish population survey presented an opportunity, as do most random digit dialed Jewish community and national surveys, to poll non-Jews as to their relationships with Jews at minimal additional cost. The thousands of non-Jewish respondents have been an untapped and unutilized resource and their data potential has for the most part been discarded or diverted for the purposes of non-Jewish research. By administering a number of Jewishly relevant questions to non-Jewish respondents this study was able to gain not only very valuable data regarding the Jewish community, but also communal relationship advantages among the thousands of non-Jewish respondents and the tens of non-Jewish interviewers and survey administrators. The practice of abruptly ending an RDD survey contact when a household is ascertained to be non-Jewish may not be the best way to engender good feeling among the thousands of non-Jewish respondents who cooperate, sometimes reticently, only to be asked seven screening questions about being Jewish before being thanked and told goodbye.

The response to the screening survey question on religion is itself of interest, though when RDD sampling is done on a local basis it is typically not done within the framework of an omnibus survey, as was the 1990 National Jewish Population survey. An omnibus survey often contains questions regarding general variables such as political attitudes which are asked of all respondents, and therefore such a survey is often more useful for comparative research that is not especially unique or relevant to the Jewish community. A local survey often abandons non-Jewish respondents after the screening data has been collected and the household does not qualify as Jewish.

In the 1997 Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey, the salience of sociologically defined Jewish households in the area served by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles was 13 percent. This is about four times greater than the overall density found nationally. It is logical that when Jewish households constitute at least one in 8 households in the Los Angeles area, there should be rich

and measurable social and other types of interaction between Jews and non-Jews that could shed light on areas of interest to the Jewish community. In the area served by the Los Angeles Federation the Jewish community at 13 percent is the third largest religiously identified grouping after Protestantism and its denominations at 35.5 percent and Catholics at 31.4 percent.

TABLE 1. LOS ANGELES JEWISH FEDERATION AREA'S TOTAL POPULATION, BY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION

Religious denomination	Percent
Protestant	6.4
Christian	15.1
Baptist	5.8
Lutheran	1.5
Methodist	1.5
Episcopalian	1.2
Presbyterian	1.0
Jehovah's Witness	0.9
Evangelical/Born Again	0.8
Seventh Day Adventist	0.5
Pentecostal	0.5
Christian Science	0.3
Catholic	31.4
Jewish	13.1
Buddhist	1.3
Mormon	1.0
Muslim	0.8
Greek Orthodox	0.4
Hindu	0.2
Russian Orthodox	0.1
Unitarian	0.1
No Religion	8.6
Agnostic	3.5
Other religion	2.8
Refused	0.7
Don't know	0.5

Friendship Relationships Between Jews and Non-Jews

There are an estimated 247,668 Jewish households containing an estimated 519,151 Jewish persons in the Los Angeles Federation area. The screener questionnaire section of the 1997 LAJPS asked all non-Jewish respondents whether they had any Jewish friends. If the respondent answered in the affirmative that he

or she had Jewish friends, a follow-up question was asked about whether they considered the Jewish friend to be among their closest friends. Of the 10,766 non-Jewish RDD respondents 58.3% or the equivalent of 1,045,262 household respondents in an area that contains an estimated 2,037,713 total households stated that they had Jewish friends.

While well over half of the non-Jewish household respondents had Jewish friends, 70 percent of these went on to say that they considered their Jewish friends among their closest friends. The 41 percent of total non-Jewish household respondents who responded that they considered their Jewish friends among their closest friends constitute an estimated group of 732,963 non-Jewish households which is almost three times the number of the area's Jewish households.

Are there enough Jewish households to maintain close friendships with an average of three non-Jewish households? The indications are that Jewish households surveyed by the LAJPS have many non-Jewish friendships. Less than one-sixth of Jewish respondents reported that all their close friends are Jewish, therefore a great majority of Jews in Los Angeles do have close non-Jewish friends. Jewish respondents reported acquiring their closest friends, in order of frequency, through work, school, neighborhood and club or organizational membership.

Jewish Family Relationships of Non-Jewish Respondents

Non-Jews not only have friendships with Jews, but are often related by marriage or biologically to Jewish persons. The LAJPS found that 7.6 percent of the non-Jewish respondents reported having Jewish relatives. In the Los Angeles area, this translates to an estimated 136,733 non-Jewish households. This non-Jewish group of households is a little more than half the number of the Jewish households in the Los Angeles Federation area.

TABLE 2. DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP, MEMBERS OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS — LOS ANGELES JEWISH POULATION STUDY

Relationship ^a	Percent	Relationship ^a	Percent
<i>Sister-in-law</i>	0.94%	Cousin's spouse	0.12%
<i>Brother-in-law</i>	0.89%	<i>Sister</i>	0.12%
Other male relative	0.83%	<i>Grandfather</i>	0.10%
Other specify	0.73%	<i>Daughter-in-law</i>	0.09%
Female cousin	0.66%	Ex-spouse	0.08%
Other male relative	0.63%	<i>Grandmother</i>	0.08%
<i>Aunt</i>	0.55%	<i>Stepparent</i>	0.08%
<i>Uncle</i>	0.52%	Uncle-in-law	0.05%
Male cousin	0.38%	<i>Brother</i>	0.05%
<i>Mother-in-law</i>	0.20%	<i>Daughter</i>	0.05%
<i>Son-in law</i>	0.15%	Aunt-in-law	0.04%
<i>Father-in-law</i>	0.14%	<i>Adopted daughter</i>	0.10%
<i>Son</i>	0.13%	<i>Stepson/Stepdaughter</i>	0.01%

a. Closer relationships appear in Italics.

When the types of non-Jewish respondent family relationships are classified into closer relations (italicized categories in Table 2) and more distant relations with Jewish persons, 4.2 percent had closer relations and 3.5 percent are more distant relations of Jewish persons.

Non-Jewish Respondents as an Indirect Measure of Jewish Mixed and Conversionary Marriage

The most contemporaneous family relationship of non-Jewish respondents with regard to the Jewish population of the Los Angeles Federation are brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Aside from being the most numerically significant family relationship among Jews and non-Jewish persons that was found in the survey, 1.83 percent, it may reasonably be assumed that non-Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law are roughly equal in age and therefore roughly equal in chronological survival to their Jewish brothers- and sisters-in-law. In this calculation whether the non-Jewish respondent's Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law are born Jews or Jews-by-choice is immaterial; both are included in the number to be used for the indirect measure. It is assumed that non-Jewish respondents describe both born Jews and Jews-by-choice as being Jewish relatives.

Data from the non-Jewish respondents of the 1997 LAJPS showed that 1.83 percent of non-Jewish respondents have Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. When the total number of both Jewish and non-Jewish households in the Jewish Federation area (2,037,713 households) are multiplied by the percent of non-Jewish respondents having Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, the total of 37,198 households which may contain a non-Jewish respondent's Jewish brother-in-law or sister-in-law as well as their non-Jewish or Jew-by-choice sibling.

The data from the Jewish respondents of the 1997 LAJPS found 37,005 mixed-married and converted spouse households out of a total of 247,668 estimated Jewish households in the Jewish Federation area.

These amazingly close and comparable estimates of Jewish born and non-Jewish born couple households derived from essentially two independent sets of respondents, one Jewish and the other non-Jewish, and mask complicated sets of sociological and demographic interactions such as marriage choice, stratification, migration, differential age structure and differential fertility. Repeated measures of this indicator will have to be performed in future surveys in order to truly validate this as an indirect measure of mixed Jewish- and non-Jewish-born couple households. For example, in a national study where migration could be controlled, one would expect that the slightly larger family size of non-Jewish households would create a situation that the non-Jewish spouse of a Jewish person would have a greater number of siblings than the Jewish partner in a mixed marriage. It would be expected in a population being surveyed that the non-Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law of Jewish persons would have a slightly greater chance of being sampled. Therefore the use of non-Jewish brothers- and sisters-in-law as an indirect indicator of a Jewish population characteristic should return a slightly inflated estimate of the phenomenon being indirectly examined.

TABLE 3. TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS — LOS ANGELES JEWISH POPULATION STUDY

Household type	N.
Total households	247,668
Inmarried households	89,231
Total non-Jewish related households	37,005
Conversionary marriage	7,482
Mixed marriage	28,437
Jew by choice couple and JBC/Gentile adult	1,086
Other household types	121,432

In future studies this technique could be used not only to create an indirect measure of mixed-married Jewish households, but to gather additional samples of mixed-married households to buttress the intermarriage measures that are currently relatively ambiguous because of very modest sample sizes. In the Los Angeles study if the non-Jewish respondents would have been asked to provide contact information about their Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and an unlikely 100 percent cooperation rate of non-Jewish and Jewish brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law had been obtained, an additional 197 mixed-married households might have been found to be used as a possible survey stratum (if they fell into the relevant geography and qualified as Jewish households). In the 1997 LAJPS 179 comparable households were found among the 1,080 RDD sample and 197 comparable households were found among the 1,483 random sampling of the Jewish Federation list. Interesting avenues of analysis could utilize methods of analysis which might be used to triangulate and improve the accuracy of mixed marriage data for the Jewish population.

Creating Alternative Weighting Methods Aided by Non-Jewish Response

When the estimated percent of Jewish households (out of total households) in the subregional geographic area is correlated with the percent of non-Jewish respondents who cited a Jewish person among their closest friends, a Pearson of .84 correlation ($R^2=.70$) is obtained. This high correlation of non-Jewish close friendship patterns with Jewish population density on a relatively small geographic level should be explored as a possible alternative weighting method to be used in future national or regional demographic studies.

The advantage of using non-Jewish respondent data on their experience of close friendship with Jewish persons as a weight over the present method is that it is a direct measurement of a direct close experience of Jews by non-Jews. An examination of the weights developed for the weighted phase I stage of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey reveals that the weights used were primarily

designed for use in the EXCEL omnibus survey to weight the survey sample to equal the 1990 U.S. census results. The variables that were used to adjust the survey sample to the census were census region, race/ethnicity, education, age and sex. None of these variables are necessarily direct or indirect measures of Jews. It might be argued that the census categories that the typical Jewish household respondent falls into with regard to census region, race/ethnicity, education, age and sex may be atypical of the vast majority of other persons in some or all of those census categories. It may be that an "outlier" Jewish respondent might be given disproportionate adjusted-to-census weight because of his being both atypical to the general and the Jewish populations.

Use of census data item weights for the Phase I Jewish household estimates is predicated on the assumption that the Jewish households are highly correlated to a certain census region, race/ethnicity, education, age and sex profile which unfortunately was not cited in the methodological documentation.

Creating a Jewish/non-Jewish Respondent Based Index of Assimilation

While assimilation is a much talked about issue in the Jewish community, it would be useful if an objective index of assimilation could be developed in order to place the discussion on a rational basis rather than the emotional and passionate debate that is currently taking place. The meaning of assimilation for the purpose of this discussion is the sociological absorption of Jewish persons into non-Jewish surroundings to an extent that they cannot be differentiated as Jews either by themselves or by the non-Jewish persons who are in their geographic proximity. Based on the high geographical correlation between non-Jewish respondents and Jewish household density a reasonable assumption can be made that many of the non-Jewish respondents who report close friendships with Jewish persons live in relatively close geographical proximity to them. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that an index of assimilation can be created on a small geographical level.

Absorption or assimilation into the non-Jewish surroundings is not indicated only by non-Jewish respondents' experience of Jewish persons, but it is also the experience of Jewish persons of other Jews. In order to include the experience of Jewish persons in the index of assimilation the friendship patterns of Jewish respondents is included in the index.

A low index of Jewish assimilation does not necessarily mean a high level of Jewish religious observance, but rather that both Jewish and non-Jewish respondents are highly cognizant of the fact that they or their friends are Jewish. In geographic areas with low values of the index of Jewish assimilation Jewish self definition and recognition of other Jews as well as recognition of Jewish persons by non-Jewish others is a salient factor of social interaction, as occurs in areas of higher Jewish population density. Conversely in areas having higher indices of Jewish assimilation, Jewish persons may not represent themselves as Jews to others and may not have or know they have Jewish friends and therefore Jewishness may not be a recognizable factor in social interaction, as usually occurs in areas of low Jewish population density.

TABLE 4. PERCENT OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS AND PERCENT NON-JEWISH RESPONDENTS WITH CLOSE JEWISH FRIENDS — LOS ANGELES JEWISH POPULATION STUDY

Sub-region N.	Region	Subregion	% Jewish households	% non-Jewish respondents with close Jewish friends	% Jewish respondents having almost none or no close Jewish friends
11	Western Region	Malibu/Palisades	38.7	68.3	3.1
12	Western Region	S.M./Venice	26.5	63.9	2.2
13	Western Region	Airport Marina	17.9	51.6	10.9
21	Metro Region	Fairfax	25.6	52.6	6.4
22	Metro Region	Beverly Hills	38.7	78.3	1.3
23	Metro Region	Cheviot/Beverlywood	31.2	55.0	6.9
24	Metro Region	Westwood	25.6	58.5	7.6
25	Metro Region	Central City	1.2	26.3	24.5
26	Metro Region	Hollywood	5.5	36.3	19.9
27	Metro Region	Culver City	35.6	55.6	16.9
31	Valley Alliance	Central Valley	9.7	36.8	12.7
32	Valley Alliance	Valley Vlg./ Burbank Glendale	6.8	44.4	18.8
33	Valley Alliance	Encino/Tarzana	24.0	47.0	1.5
34	Valley Alliance	Southeast Valley	35.9	61.9	2.0
35	Valley Alliance	Simi/Conejo	14.1	62.2	10.1
36	Valley Alliance	High Desert	3.0	46.4	44.6
37	Valley Alliance	North Valley	10.6	37.1	21.7
38	Valley Alliance	West Valley	24.3	57.6	8.9
41	South Bay Council	Beach Cities	13.5	52.7	20.3
42	South Bay Council	Central	5.1	36.1	39.3
43	South Bay Council	Palos Verdes Peninsula	17.6	56.7	7.1
44	South Bay Council	San Pedro	5.7	39.2	32.1
45	South Bay Council	Eastern Belt	1.7	19.0	51.0

Pearson Correlation = 0.837823

The index of Jewish assimilation (see Figure 1) is calculated as the percent of all non-Jewish respondents in a subregion with close Jewish friends, multiplied by the percent of all Jewish respondents in a subregion having almost none or no Jewish friends; this value is divided by the percent of Jewish households of the total households. The value obtained is multiplied by 100 and then rounded to the nearest integer. The index of Jewish assimilation has a low value when there is low Jewish assimilation and a high value when there is high Jewish assimilation of Jewish households into the surrounding non-Jewish milieu.

FIGURE 1. INDEX OF JEWISH ASSIMILATION

$$\text{Index of Jewish Assimilation} = \left(\frac{\% \text{ Non-Jewish Respondents with Close Jewish Friends} \times \% \text{ Jewish Respondents with Almost None or No Jewish Friends}}{\% \text{ Jewish Households}} \right) \times 100$$

Table 5 presents indices of Jewish assimilation for the 23 sub-areas of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles areas:

TABLE 5. INDICES OF JEWISH ASSIMILATION, BY SUBREGION — LOS ANGELES JEWISH POPULATION STUDY

Subregion N.	Region	Subregion	Index of Jewish Assimilation
11	Western Region	Malibu/Palisades	5
12	Western Region	S.M./Venice	5
13	Western Region	Airport Marina	31
21	Metro Region	Fairfax	13
22	Metro Region	Beverly Hills	3
23	Metro Region	Cheviot/Beverlywood	12
24	Metro Region	Westwood	17
25	Metro Region	Central City	537
26	Metro Region	Hollywood	131
27	Metro Region	Culver City	26
31	Valley Alliance	Central Valley	48
32	Valley Alliance	Valley Vlg./Burbank Glendale	123
33	Valley Alliance	Encino/Tarzana	3
34	Valley Alliance	Southeast Valley	3
35	Valley Alliance	Simi/Conejo	45
36	Valley Alliance	High Desert	690
37	Valley Alliance	North Valley	76
38	Valley Alliance	West Valley	21
41	South Bay Council	Beach Cities	79
42	South Bay Council	Central	278
43	South Bay Council	Palos Verdes Peninsula	23
44	South Bay Council	San Pedro	221
45	South Bay Council	Eastern Belt	570

Community Relations Benefits

Most large scale Jewish population surveys involve a number of non-Jewish interviewers, supervisors and other research personnel as well as a great number of non-Jewish respondents. When the qualified Jewish sample is being gathered from a dedicated Jewish survey, rather than an omnibus survey as was the case for the 1990 NJPS, non-Jewish respondents are traditionally asked only the qualifying questions in the screening. One can conjecture that there is some community relations effect when thousands of non-Jews in a community are contacted randomly by a Jewish Federation, asked in seven different ways whether they or members of their household are Jewish and then abruptly thanked for their cooperation when they answer in the negative to all these somewhat strange Jewishly related questions. Non-Jewish interviewer feedback during the pretest phase of the LAJPS elicited comments that interviewers understood that there was value in capturing information from non-Jews about their relationships to Jews. The additional questions gave the feeling to all involved in the interviewing process that non-Jews were an integral part of the Jewish survey process and therefore had obvious value to the interviewers engaged in the difficult process of administering the screening survey.

Conclusion

For little or no additional data-gathering expense, the previously underutilized random digit dialled non-Jewish respondents of a Jewish population survey can provide valuable information that can be utilized to triangulate towards the true values of variables about the Jewish community such as intermarried households and more accurate weighting procedures for the Jewish sample in the general population. More objective measures of concepts such as assimilation and Jewish continuity can be explored and developed by incorporating data not only on Jewish informants, but also on non-Jewish informants. Information from non-Jewish respondents might be utilized to bolster small samples of special populations such as mixed-married households which could improve the accuracy of measures such as the 5-year intermarriage rate, which was the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey's most cited and most examined statistic.