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A DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE OMAHA JEWISH COMMUNITY*

BY

MURRAY FROST

A DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE OMAHA JEWISH COMMUNITY*

Introduction

The 1970 Census asked no questions about religious identification and therefore a religious community must make its own studies to determine the characteristics of its population. A study conducted for the Omaha Jewish Federation by the Center for Applied Urban Research provided this data for the Omaha Jewish community.

This report presents data from a ten-page questionnaire mailed in Fall 1975 to all households on the “community list” maintained by the Omaha Jewish Federation. Responses were received from 1,165 of the 2,484 households, a 46.9 percent response rate. This report presents data drawn from that survey relating to (a) population estimates and characteristics, (b) nativity and mobility, and (c) projected 1980 Omaha Jewish population.

Population Estimates and Characteristics

The population of the Omaha Jewish community can be estimated by several different methods (with varying assumptions) resulting in several different estimates. But regardless of the method used, it is clear that the population is a disproportionately older one. Women outnumber men, especially among the elderly. Geographically, the population is concentrated in a handful of postal zip code areas.

Estimate of 1975 Total Population. The simplest procedure to estimate the actual number of people in the Omaha Jewish community at the time of the Demographic Survey (Fall 1975) was based on the total response rate. Since 46.9 percent of the households responded, each respondent in the sample represents 2.1322 in the community.1 The 3,265 people in the sample, therefore, represent 6,962 people in the population, assuming that households which did not respond were like those which did.2 This assumption, however, is incorrect. For example, at a minimum, we know that households in different zip code areas responded at different rates.

A second set of estimates, therefore, was developed by weighting responses from each zip code area by the response rate in that zone. For example, zip code area 68134 had a 37.7 percent response rate and therefore each respondent represents 2.6525, while in 68144 the response rate was 61.0 percent and each respondent represents 1.6393. Using these varying weights for respondents for whom we had age data resulted in an estimate of 6,482.3 But this estimate implicitly assumed that all respondents in a zip code area who did not respond were like those who did. An analysis of the community list indicated this was not true, as smaller households were less likely to respond.

Finally, the count of individuals on the community list could be assumed to be the population of the Omaha Jewish community, especially if it was defined as those known to the organized Jewish community. The community list of October 1975 contained only 6,101 individual names.

Given the range of estimates from 6,101 to 6,962, it is not unreasonable to continue to use the 6,500 estimate reported by the Jewish Federation in the most recent American Jewish Year Book.4

Age and Sex. The data presented in Table 1, based on responses weighted by each zip code area’s response rate, confirm the pattern observable from the questionnaires: the Omaha Jewish community is a disproportionately older one. Approximately one-fifth (21 percent) of the population is 60 or older and 14 percent of the total population is 65 and over. Approximately 14 percent of the household heads are retired from the work force. The median age for heads of households is 53, and for wives it is 46.

The table also indicates an inverted age pyramid—there are fewer 0-4 year olds than 5-9 year olds who in turn are fewer than the 10-14 age group which in turn is smaller than the 15-19 age group. This suggests that a decreasing number of births has occurred for several time periods. This can also be seen in the data suggesting there are more college students than high school students, who outnumber junior high school students, who outnumber those in the 4th - 6th grades.

The age-structure in the Omaha Jewish community differs only slightly from that projected for the national Jewish population. Table 2 indicates the Omaha community has a larger

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*This article is a summary of a study prepared for the Omaha Jewish Federation. Dr. Frost is a Senior Research Associate for CAUR.

1 All estimates and analyses exclude those living in the Sher Home for the Aged.

2 The estimated population, of course, would vary with the degree of accuracy in the response rate; if we round off to 2.1 the population estimate is 6,857, if 2.13 it is 6,954, and if 2.132 it is 6,961.

3 If all responses in a zip code area—rather than limiting it to those with age data—are weighted by the response rate in that zip code area, the estimate is 6,867.


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- Size and Variation in Growth of Public Employment-Midcontinent Metropolitan Areas, 1970-1975
proportion over 65, 14 percent compared to 12 percent projected for
the 1976 national community. The Omaha community also
differs slightly in having a smaller proportion in the 15-29 age
group, 28 percent compared to the national Jewish
population of 32 percent. The proportion of the Omaha Jewish
community, in the 0-9 year old category, five percent compared
to six percent. The smaller proportion in the 15-29 year old
category than for the national Jewish community is not likely
to occur in the near future. This is accelerated by the high proportion in that
age group indicating an intention to leave the Omaha area.

The proportion of the Omaha population living in the three
sectors. Zip code area 68104, east of 72nd Street, has a
median age of 49 with 35 percent of its population 60 years or
older. Moving west, zip code 68114 has a median age of 38
with 19 percent of its population 60 or over. The zip code area
still further west, 68114, has a median age of 28 and only three
percent of its population 60 or over.

There are age differences too; 68104 has 37 percent of its
households earning less than $10,000 and 17 percent
earning more than $20,000. The central zip (68114) has 18
percent of its households earning less than $10,000 and the upper. Zip
code area 68144 has a similar percentage at the high end, but
only two percent of the households earn less than $10,000.

Religious identification also varies in the three areas.
In 68104, 44 percent consider themselves Orthodox, 42 percent
Conservative, and only 12 percent Reform. In the central area
(68114) the Orthodox are sharply to 10 percent, the Conser-
vatives decline slightly to 36 percent while the Reform increase to
48 percent. Still further west (68144) only 4 percent are
Orthodox, the Conservative remain at 26 percent, while the
proportion of Reform increases to 55 percent.

One last observation about the geographical distribution of
the population of Omaha Jews: as of the survey in 1975, 47 percent
of the sample population was in the Millard School District; another 5
percent were in the Omaha Public School District; and the
remainder was distributed among the other six school districts.

Moving intentions and patterns of those who left their house-
holds.

Birthplace. More than half (57 percent) of the population
for whom data are available in the survey were born in Omaha.
The proportion of native-born Omahas among responding heads of
households is 60 percent in the selected area and 55 percent
therein in the greater Omaha area. An additional eight percent
of the total sample population and nine percent of house-
hold heads were born in Nebraska or one of the six bordering
states. This distribution is shown in Table 4. An additional
four percent indicate they are planning a move within the Omaha
area in that period. Only eight percent of household heads
indicated they had left Omaha within the study area in the last
five years. Another 15 percent of the heads say they are unsure whether they
will move.

This pattern of stability is only slightly weaker when data
for the entire sample population are examined. Sixty percent
(60 percent) indicate no move of any kind, 11 percent indicate a
move within the Omaha area within the next five years, and 12 percent say they
will move out of Omaha in the next five years.

But an examination of the age of these "movers" suggests
some serious problems for the Omaha Jewish community. While
the proportion under age 20 is only 11 percent of the total
population, at least three-fourths of the ten-year age groups over 30
indicate they do not plan to move out of Omaha, only 45 percent of those aged
21-29 say this. In this age category, 36 percent say they
will leave Omaha and the other 20 percent are unsure.

The loss of Omaha Jewish youth of prime child-bearing age
is even clearer when the data are analyzed by each age
rather than broader decade groupings. Only 20 percent of the 20 year-
olds (who will be 25 in 1980) do not intend to move or will
move only within Omaha. The 25-29 year olds, the prime child-
bearing age group, intend to leave before 1980 is 42 percent.
More than half of the 20, 21, and 23 year olds say they will
leave Omaha. Nearly 20 percent more in each age group answered "perhaps," not sure
whether they will move. But the "perhaps" responses are replaced by
migration, there is a net migration loss.

Left Household Moving Patterns. An attempt to learn more about
migration among Omaha Jews was limited by the necessity of
using some information which was not presented in the
questionnaire. Therefore, 4.2 percent of the population indicated
intention to leave Omaha, 11 percent indicate no move of any
kind, 64 percent indicate a move within the Omaha
area, and the other 20 percent are unsure. This pattern of
migration, there is a net migration loss.

Projection of 1980 Population

The population of the Omaha Jewish community in 1980
will decline compared to 1975. Using several conservative assump-
tions, the Jewish population of the Omaha community is
likely to be 60,000. The data indicate a "net loss" of approximately
1,000 Jewish households from the current population. The
projection assumes an average rate of 60 households moving
out of the Omaha area while approximately 90 households
will move in. An additional 1,000 households were
projected to move into the area, representing an increase of
approximately 12 percent of the current population. This pattern
of migration, there is a net migration loss.
although the increases are proportionally smaller than in Omaha. Similarly, the estimates for the national Jewish population for 1981 show a reduction in the 5-14 and 15-29 age groups. The decline in the 5-14 age group is more noticeable in Omaha—reflecting the effect of migration—but it is less in the 5-14 age group. Omaha shows a slightly higher proportion of the population for younger age groups (under 15) in 1981 than in 1975, but the proportion and the increase is greater at the national level.

Methodological Considerations

This study of the Jewish community—and virtually every demographic study of Jewish communities—starts with the "community list" of all "known" Jews in the area. This is typically an alternative to a survey of the population. The sex distribution of the new in-migrants is too small to determine their characteristics from a survey of the general population. Any such list is incomplete—only those who make contact with the Jewish community are likely to appear on it.

The community list, therefore, probably over-represents (a) the native Omaha, (b) religious affiliation and who therefore seek synagogue membership, (c) those with school-aged children whose desire to provide a Jewish education for their children results in them seeking synagogue membership, and (d) those financially secure enough not to be deterred from active participation by financial considerations. The community list is also used in the national and local surveys to determine their characteristics from a survey of the general population. The list therefore under-represents the most recent arrivals to town. For this reason, efforts were made to include Jewish households by including a question asking for the names and addresses of any families who should have received the questionnaire but who may not have been on the few weeks prior to the survey, as a result. Further evidence of the accuracy of the list may be inferred from the fact that not all respondents were affiliated with a synagogue or believed in Jewish organization (approximately five percent did not belong).

The analysis of the community list compared to the sample of respondents indicated some general characteristics. Generally, those with children were more likely to respond than couples, who were more likely than single-member households. For example, 64 percent of households with children aged 4-12 years were represented in the survey compared to 60 percent of three-person households, 40 percent of two-person households, and 29 percent of one-person households.

Although it has weaknesses, the sample shows much about the Omaha Jewish community. Our data, after all, were based on 1,168 households almost all of whom were native Omaha. In addition, one may assume that many—but not all—community needs can be planned for realistically only if estimated population size and support are based upon the "interested" community as opposed to the total community.

Summary

The population of the Omaha Jewish community can be estimated using varying assumptions; these estimates ranged from 8,600 to 11,000. But regardless of which assumption is used, the estimate that the population is disproportionately older; the inverted pyramid (fewer young persons) resembles both the United States population and the general population of the lower Midwest. The estimate of the total population of out-migrant men, especially among the elderly, Geographically, the Omaha Jewish population is concentrated in a handful of population centers. The list of telephone numbers is complete for all who were included in the survey, but the general population there. The typical member of the Omaha Jewish community is either a native Omaha with close relatives residing in the community, or a non-Jew who has moved here for a long period of time. Although the typical member does not intend to leave the area, many young persons indicate an intention to move away. Future surveys may be able to determine more accurately what has been suggested to decline, largely due to a net migration loss especially among young adults.

Introduction

The proper size of government has been a subject of controversy throughout the 200-year history of this nation. This article will not establish a clear-cut formula for government. It will instead consider whether the growth of government increases control over our daily lives or improves the quality of life. This study will first define "good" or "proper" and then what is "proper" or "improper". The purposes instead are to present two measures of the size of government and the growth of public sector employment and government employment per 1,000 population—and to analyze the relationship between public sector employment and government employment per 1,000 population. An understanding of how we stand in relation to where we were a few years ago will surely contribute to a more realistic approach to the growth of government and its taxing power.

Like government spending and taxing, public employment is a measure of the size of government and of its relative importance in the American economy. In 1975, 18 percent of the population in the public sector for the nation and for metropolitan areas of the Midcontinent Region, with atomic energy activities included in the local government sector. Second, change in per capita income, population and intergovernmental revenue will be analyzed to determine if such effects can explain the growth of government employment among the 25 metropolitan areas of the Region.

Public Employment, 1970 and 1975

* National Totals. Public employment in the United States increased 15 percent between October 1970 and October 1975, while private nonagricultural wage and salary employment increased 9 percent for the same period. At the same time, Midcontinent employment in the public sector will be presented for the nation and for metropolitan areas of the Midcontinent Region, with atomic energy activities included in the local government sector. Second, change in per capita income, population and intergovernmental revenue will be analyzed to determine if such effects can explain the growth of government employment among the 25 metropolitan areas of the Region.

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## Determinants of Government Employment in the Midcontinent Region

What portion of the variation in changes in public employment can be explained by changes in selected socioeconomic variables? Four variables from the list of independent variables used to explain variations in public employment in public expenditures may also explain the short-run variation in public employment in the Midcontinent Region.2 These factors are the rate of change in per capita income, population density, degree of urbanization and variations in per capita Federal and state grants to local governments.

A stepwise multiple regression program was used to analyze the relationship between variation in changes in public employment and the selected independent variables. In this investigation the dependent variable was the percentage change in public employment between 1970 and 1975. The independent variables explained the change in per capita income 1969-1974, the change in population density 1970-1975, the level of public employment per 1,000 population in 1976 and the dummy variable used to distinguish areas with school mill levy restrictions from those with none (Table 4). The results are given in the following equation:

\[
E = 44.72 + 0.88 \times \text{Income} + 0.38 \times \text{Density} - 0.056 \times \text{School Levy} + 6.936 \times D_1 + 2.7 \times D_2 + 2.9 \times D_3
\]

Where:
- \( E \) = change in local public employment (1970-1975)
- \( \text{Income} \) = capital income (1969-1974)
- \( \text{Density} \) = change in population density (1970-1975)
- \( \text{School Levy} \) = level of public employment per 1,000 population
- \( D_1 \) = dummy variable indicating with or without school mill levy restrictions (1 = with school mill levy; 0 = without school mill levy)
- \( D_2 \) = school mill levy area
- \( D_3 \) = percentage of total population

The results of the comparison of variations in the change in Federal and state aid to local governments do not indicate that variation in intergovernmental revenue is associated with variation in public employment in seven of the major metropolitan areas of the Region. This finding along with the failure of the variables indicating changes in income and population to explain a significant portion of the variations in changes in public employment in the 25 SMSA's suggests the traditional determinants of variation in change in public expenditures are inappropriate in the short-run in an analysis of public employment in the 25 Midcontinent metropolitan areas.

It would appear that part of the differences in change in public employment can be attributed to variations in social and economic preferences among the areas. Equally important may be the effect of differences in state government organization, efficiency and entrepreneurial spirit. Some of these factors may be measured but data are not available; others are beyond quantitative measurement. Further research in this area should be fruitful in future attempts to determine social, political or economic reasons for varying growth rates of public employment in metropolitan areas.

### Table 2: Population and Employment in the Midcontinent Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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</table>

Notes:

### Table 3: Employment in the Midcontinent Region

<table>
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### Table 4: Employment in the Midcontinent Region

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1. Notes to Table 2:


### TABLE 4
SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES USED IN MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMSA</th>
<th>Public Employment (Percent Change 1970-1975)</th>
<th>Per Capita Income 1974 (Dollars)</th>
<th>Population as Percent of Metropolitan Area Population</th>
<th>Local Municipal Bond Rating&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Central City Revenue from Federal and State Aid (Million Dollars)</th>
<th>School Levy Limiting and Restriction&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Change in Per Capita Income Per Local Government Unit</th>
<th>Change in Population Density/Percent Change 1969-1974</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denver-Boulder</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>1,230,477</td>
<td>314,267</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>1,063,717</td>
<td>247.5</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>119.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>1,905,006</td>
<td>242,595</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>116,646</td>
<td>404.9</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>139.1</td>
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<td>Omaha</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>542,946</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>497,094</td>
<td>485.9</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>123.1</td>
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<sup>a</sup>Dollar designated no mill limit restriction; 1 designates some restriction.

<sup>b</sup>1 designates AAA bond rating; 2 - AA rating; 3 - A rating; 4 - A rating.

### TABLE 5
GROWTH IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND REVENUE IN SEVEN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMSA</th>
<th>Public Employment Per 1,000 Population Change 1969-1974</th>
<th>Per Capita Income 1974 (%)</th>
<th>Change in Percentage Population Change 1969-1974</th>
<th>Revenue Sources</th>
<th>Total ($000)</th>
<th>Other Local Revenue</th>
<th>Per Capita</th>
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<td>308,486</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>1,697,400</td>
<td>304.9</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>308,486</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>1,697,400</td>
<td>304.9</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>1,905,006</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>427,923</td>
<td>427.3</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Growth Areas</td>
<td>4,300,000</td>
<td>1,052,000</td>
<td>252,000</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>1,063,717</td>
<td>247.5</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Revenue from Federal and State aid to local governments.

### REVIEW OF APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

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