

6 Wet Numbers

The Language of Continuity Crisis and the Work of Care among the Organized American Jewish Community

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We know more than ever about ourselves. Coupled with continuing efforts to extend and enrich such knowledge, this augurs well for the future of American Jewry.

Sidney Goldstein, "Beyond the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey"

"WE KNOW," Sidney Goldstein, a professor of sociology at Brown University, assures his audience: we know ourselves. In his Marshall Sklare honorary address—an annual celebratory ritual of Jewish social scientific knowledge—Professor Goldstein publicly performs the sense of security that the American Jewish community places in social science. He uses the unmarked first-person plural "we" to refer to a wide range of leaders in the organized American Jewish world who care deeply about their community's future. The confidence Goldstein possesses in the potential of social science stems especially from the value of quantitative knowledge—the value of numbers. Indeed, much depends on the reality of numbers for Goldstein and his colleagues: the social scientists, public intellectuals, professionals, and lay leaders of the organized American Jewish community who have come to inhabit—and ultimately quantify—the Jewish communal sphere in the United States over the last three decades. They have filled it with rates, weights, and figures and adorned it with charts, tables, and graphs. In and through their discourse about numbers, the leaders of the American Jewish community have fashioned American Jewry as a numerically imagined community. When these communal leaders "speak of Jews"—to paraphrase Lila Corwin Berman's work—they speak of numbers.¹

This chapter focuses on the intimate link between social-scientific discourses entailed in the production of numerical, sociodemographic knowledge of the

American Jewish community and an affective economy that shapes the distribution of that knowledge in that communal sphere. I will argue that the “statistical system” of American Jews has flourished by occupying a space of discursive tension—where seemingly incongruent features of numbers and emotions converge.² In particular, I will illustrate how Jewish sociodemographic statistics in the context of what came to be called during the 1990s the “continuity crisis” has been framed by both a rigorous scientific discourse of enumeration and an emotional language about the prospects of American Jewry. Each with its own cultural authority, the dauntingly dry language of numerically based social science and the poignant language of sentiment converge within the field of American Jewish statistics to mutually constitute and synergistically generate a powerful discourse about the population of this community. In what follows, I call this discourse “wet numbers”—a term that bears both metaphorically and analytically on the discursive dynamics under discussion.

The notion that statistics is a “dry” modality of knowledge is common. It indicates a colloquial association of numbers with inherent rigorousness, but also “dullness,” of scientific data. As opposed to words that lend themselves easily to poetic playfulness, numbers are dry. They represent what is “out there” in an objective, straightforward, and factual manner, in a form well suited to tables and graphs. Because numbers provide hard data, their dryness is their strength; but it is also their point of weakness. The following quote conveys well this double-edged association of quantitative data with dryness: “You complain that your report would be dry. The drier the better. Statistics should be the driest of all reading.”³ In a similar vein, statistics can sometimes be described as “cold” (e.g., as in “cold data”)⁴ or “thin” (as in “thin description”),⁵ terms that transmit a sense of frustration with the remoteness and even reductionism that are perceived to characterize quantitative data.

If the power of numbers to accurately represent reality is linked with metaphors of dryness and coldness, what do we make of numbers that are framed within affect-laden discourses? Perhaps it makes sense to think of such numbers in terms of their “heat,” as if dry kindling sparks fires of emotionality. Indeed, in many contexts of enumeration, including the case under discussion here, statistics often create “heated debates” about the categories employed or about the resultant numbers and their interpretation. Certainly, the release of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS)—the statistical study that is the focus of my discussion of the continuity crisis—generated “heated” methodological debates related to the rate of intermarriage. Likewise, the release of the 2000–2001 NJPS a decade later animated “heated” public and scholarly arguments related to the estimated size of the American Jewish population.

But in framing my discussion in terms of wet, rather than hot, numbers, I wish to call attention to another discursive aspect of the continuity crisis. In

particular, the concept of “wet numbers” enables us to think metaphorically about American Jewry as a biopolitical system—that is, as a community that has turned its social body into an object of both scientific knowledge and political intervention. The idea of wetness points to the affective work invested by the leaders of the American Jewish community in the production and distribution of population statistics. Building on this metaphor of wetness, I would say that wet numbers foreground an understanding of how the numerical sociodemographic discourses about the American Jewish population are soaked in “blood, sweat, and tears.” By indexing body fluids, wetness highlights an embodied connotation of political intervention in the social body: the diluted blood of the social body, as well as the sweat and tears of those Jewish leaders who work hard, under bleak sociocultural conditions, to advance knowledge of a population about which they care deeply.

This chapter stands empirically and theoretically at this intersection of power/knowledge. By bringing the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics to bear on the study of American Jewry, I highlight the ways in which rigorous engagement of the organized Jewish community with sociodemographic knowledge of American Jews has reinforced the “Jewish population” as an object of knowledge and intervention. Put differently, biopolitics enables us to understand the strong institutional reliance on numerical, sociodemographic data as a means of transforming the loosely defined, multifaceted, and often obscure notion of “Jewish community” into a firmly knowable, measurable “Jewish population.” When Professor Goldstein confidently proclaims, “we know more than ever about ourselves,” he refers to this form of political knowledge.⁶

A productive starting point for studying such biopolitics might involve listening to how sociodemographic statistics are framed and narrated in communal domains. After all, the community claims to know itself to a great extent through population statistics; and, as we learn from Foucault, it is through discourse that different regimes of truth (e.g., about the population and its “facts”) are established and negotiated. Without undermining the importance of unpacking concrete methodological, and often politicized, processes of statistics making (e.g., the decisions made about what questions to include in a survey, how to define a Jew, and the means through which to collect and make sense of results), I seek to emphasize here discursive processes that constitute the generation and circulation of statistical data. Given the intimate link between biopolitics and statistics, this chapter explores how producers, consumers and mediators of sociodemographic statistics on American Jewry talk and write about this quantified form of “social knowledge and its making.”⁷ Such a point of entry into a biopolitical field helps to decipher the webs of meaning that are spun and communicated among social scientists, public intellectuals, policy makers, and the public in communal conversations that unfold around statistics. In arguing for this point of entry,

I refer not only to the strategic choice to speak the language of numbers in the first place, a debated strategy in itself;⁸ in addition, I seek to foreground modes of speaking through which statistics are delivered and the kind of communal values assigned to them. As the community both establishes and negotiates statistics as a central discursive domain through which it speaks to itself about itself, what types of rhetoric, tone, and metaphor partake in that domain's creation? On what moral, political, and institutional sources of authority do Jewish scholars, scientists, and communal leaders draw when they speak about Jewish statistics?

I ground my efforts to address these questions in an ethnographic and sociohistorical study that includes various communal sites and textual materials in which NJPS sociodemographic statistics regarding the American Jewish population have been generated, circulated, and discussed during the 1990s and early 2000s. In particular, this study draws on fieldwork conducted in both academic and professional settings, on interviews (primarily with Jewish social scientists and senior managers working within the Jewish organizational world), and a range of textual materials (mainly press releases, newspapers, and popular journal articles featured in the Jewish press).

Before turning to the 1990s' continuity crisis, I want to describe briefly the broader historical context in which American Jews have come to engage with population numbers.

The American Jewish Statistical System

The engagement of American Jews with counting themselves rests upon the fact that Jews (like other religious groups in the United States) cannot be surveyed in the national decennial census—a prohibition associated with church-state constitutional restrictions.⁹ Therefore, and in contrast to a number of other diasporic Jewish communities,¹⁰ American Jews have developed their own statistical system.¹¹ This system should be contextualized in both American and Jewish traditions of impassioned counting.

The faith that Americans place in numbers, writes Ian Hacking, is fundamental. Tracing this faith to its established roots in the Constitution (article 1, section 2), he concludes, half-jokingly, that “you could say that the second most important feature of the American dream was that people should be counted.”¹² Similarly, Paul Starr describes statistics as a core component of the American cultural diet: “Every day, from the morning paper to the evening news, Americans are served a steady diet of statistics.”¹³ In her historical account of numeracy in the United States, Patricia Cline Cohen substantiates these strongly worded descriptions by demonstrating how statistics became, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, both normalized as a discourse and enthusiastically embraced as a mode of knowledge.¹⁴ In another study referring to more

contemporary American domains of numerical expertise, historian Sarah Igo describes how, throughout the twentieth century, polls and surveys have been intimately interwoven into the cultural fabric of the American mass public.¹⁵ The effects of surveying Americans have been multifaceted and far-reaching. Within the history of the aggregation and saturation of America's public spheres with "facts," lies the story, Igo argues, of intertwined developments of American public culture and American social sciences.¹⁶

Preoccupation with numerical inquiry among Jews within the American context should also be understood in relationship to a more general, global Jewish concern with demography. As Diana Tobin, president of a West Coast Jewish think tank, argues: "Counting Jews globally is an important lens through which we should be seeing the world."¹⁷ Jewish demography has become central to the political life of both Israel and the Jewish diaspora. In the first case, demography has been considered essential to buttress the paramount Zionist value placed on security and defense, a sacred discourse of the nation-state.¹⁸ In the second case, for Jews living outside of Israel, demography both articulates and frames a politics of diasporic identity. Although local sensibilities inevitably shape global Jewish engagements with statistics, these demographic entanglements with matters of Jewish collective life maintain a common discourse and agenda. International Jewish gatherings (such as the World Jewish Congress and the Conference on World Jewish Population) often bring together demographic studies within a comparative discussion.¹⁹ These internationally linked projects of social-scientific inquiry into Jewish demography have shared a relatively common perspective—one undergirded by narratives of decline. Across contexts, research engagements with Jewish demography tend to breed grave discourses of crisis and urgency, underlining a felt need for practical intervention.²⁰ No doubt, the American Jewish statistical system rests within this broader ideological and institutional formation. In fact, this interpretative framework of crisis has emerged as a hallmark of the American Jewish social-scientific voice.

In 1880, almost three hundred years after the first Jew set foot on Roanoke Island, and more than two hundred years after twenty-three Jewish settlers arrived in New Amsterdam, the first nationwide statistical survey on American Jews took place. Conducted and compiled jointly by the Board of Delegates of American Israelites and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *Statistics of the Jews of the United States* represents the first systematic effort to produce a quantified portrait of American Jews.²¹ Over the decades that followed, statistical forms of knowledge made further inroads into the American Jewish communal sphere, primarily through studies featured in the *American Jewish Year Book*. The American Jewish Committee (AJC), one of the leading Jewish organizations of the twentieth century, played a singular role in this process; it not only shared responsibility for this yearly publication but also partook in the

establishment and funding of the institutional infrastructure for social-scientific research. In 1914 the AJC founded the Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research, which would later become the Bureau of Jewish Social Research.²² The rich data generated by the bureau and its successors, together with essays published (from the 1930s onward) in the scholarly journal *Jewish Social Studies*, positioned discourse on Jewish demography as one of the prime categories of interest for both communal activists and social scientists.²³ In fact, these forums for Jewish statistical research formed crucial parts of an emerging intellectual trend that would fully come to fruition within the organized Jewish community during the post-World War II period. Those trends would eventually constitute what Berman describes as the social-scientific turn.

Berman's concept of "a social-scientific turn" might help explain both the reemergence since 1970 of national surveys and the growing investment of Jewish communal agencies in local statistical projects.²⁴ This expansion in Jewish social-scientific production has been remarkable in its scope. It has included three national population surveys (in 1970, 1990, and 2000–2001) and approximately 140 local community studies conducted since the 1980s.²⁵ Local communal studies have often been celebrated as a productive means of self-evaluation, producing policy-relevant data in a context that is, practically speaking, considered to matter the most. "Local studies turn out to be [more] important because planning is done at the local level," explains Ira Sheskin, an advocate and researcher of community studies; "being able to quantify things, even if you 'know' them, is so important for planning," argues Jennifer Rosenberg, the New York UJA-Federation's research director, with regard to the formidable 2011 New York City survey.²⁶ As widely embraced as this form of communal research has become, it has also sparked a fair amount of criticism. Widely variable in method, and considered by many social scientists to be lacking in rigor, communal studies served as the backdrop for the 1970, 1990, and 2000–2001 national population surveys. In each of these surveys, the Jewish Federation aimed to mobilize the instruments and authority of social science in order to capture the national community in its entirety, rather than its scattered localities.²⁷

These centralized statistical projects gained institutional footing through the establishment in 1986 of what later came to be called the Mandell Berman North American Jewish Data Bank (which serves as a repository of social-scientific studies of North American Jewry) and the founding in 1996 of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive (a central electronic library for matters of Jewish communal policy). Despite these community projects of centralization, the American Jewish statistical system has remained a rather fragmented and decentralized field. Without a clear coordinating institutional center, the social-scientific study of American Jewry occurs across a broad range of locations and through heterogeneous (and sometimes competing) frameworks. Some projects

and researchers are based in general research universities and some in religious Jewish universities; some researchers hold positions in departments and centers of Jewish studies,²⁸ while others are located in a range of extra-academic and professional sites such as think-tank institutions and research departments housed within Jewish organizations.²⁹ In various ways, the statistical projects in all of these research contexts are made possible as a result of close links between Jewish social scientists and the organized Jewish world. It is within this political economy, in which funding and science making circulate, that the 1990 NJPS was crafted.

Crisis Numbers and the National Jewish Population Survey

In the wake of the 1991 publication of the NJPS *Highlights Report*, numerical forms of knowledge came to permeate the American Jewish communal sphere at an unprecedented level.³⁰ Statistical data—featured in a range of venues of Jewish and general media, communal sermons, organizational statements, and academic publications—have grown so pervasive that several Jewish journals have since devoted special issues to the engagement of Jews with counting themselves.³¹ This deep-seated communal preoccupation with numbers precipitated the suggestion by Bernard Reisman, a Jewish communal studies professor at Brandeis, that “perhaps one should undertake a sociological study of the response to the survey.”³²

The 1990 NJPS provided a synoptic and detailed profile of American Jewry, formulating a wide array of sociodemographic parameters: age, sex, household structure, marriage, fertility, geography, philanthropy, education, labor, social stratification, and Jewish identity. As extensive as the survey was, its public reception seemed to focus on a single number: 52 percent. This number referred to the percentage of Jews who intermarried between 1985 and 1990. In fact, the survey suggested that there was much to celebrate about Jewish life, with regard, for example, to levels of education, professional achievement, and wealth. However, a clear tone of alarm and pessimism overshadowed such positive trends due to the reception of the data.

That the intermarriage rate of 52 percent became iconic of the survey as a whole and provoked such a grave sense of collective crisis in the communal imagination should come as no surprise. As Mitchell Hart demonstrates, already in early twentieth-century Europe, Jewish social scientists drew attention to intermarriage, treating it as a social pathology that, both quantitatively and qualitatively, afflicted the Jewish community.³³ The perceived danger of intermarriage to Jewish survival positioned this social phenomenon as “of particular interest and significance for Jewish social scientists”³⁴—one that bore on weighty issues of Jewish demography and assimilation.

In a separate though not unrelated context, Lila Corwin Berman describes how Jewish social researchers in twentieth-century America have sought to

understand the American Jewish experience by applying sociological tools to study intermarriage.³⁵ By attempting to discover social patterns of endogamy and drawing a connection between intermarriage and assimilation, this scholarship has constituted intermarriage as a sociological problem and prescribed in-group marriage as its scientifically validated solution.³⁶ Along these lines, the 1990 NJPS intermarriage rate of 52 percent engendered an unprecedented communal panic that soon came to be ubiquitously referred to as the continuity crisis. Controversy over matters of scientific accuracy aside, this number took on a life of its own: it informed public statements and debates, it gave birth to numerous policy commissions, and it fostered both local and national initiatives regarding Jewish identity and continuity.³⁷

Clearly, narratives of Jewish decline are not new; nor are they unique to the communal dynamics responding to the 1990 NJPS and, to a lesser extent, to the 2000–2001 NJPS. A preoccupation with the concept of survival, and with quantification of this existential anxiety, forms an enduring, though not uncontested, feature of Jewish communal discourse. The “ever-dying people,” as Simon Ravidowicz’s oft-cited article argues, have consistently understood themselves as the “last Jews,” or the “last survivors”; they have often similarly felt “as if they were standing at the grave of their people, its history and language.”³⁸ This “crisis mentality”³⁹ was thus not invented with the 1990 NJPS. Rather, this study, as Jonathan Woocher, a senior federation professional, described to me, “gave it [the crisis mentality] a number.” A decade later, the 2000–2001 NJPS introduced another number that would soon become infamously associated with the public discussion about demographic decline: the estimated number of 5.2 million Jews, a reported decline from 5.5 million Jews over a ten-year period. In the words of Michael Steinhart, a mega-philanthropist of American Jewry: “the news should have set off a code orange for Jewish organizations . . . all would agree that the Jews in America . . . are demographically endangered . . . the NJPS, after all, revealed palpable evidence of a crisis.”⁴⁰

“Numbers,” as the saying goes, “speak for themselves,” which means that they are assumed self-evidently to encapsulate and convey instantly recognizable and incontestable messages. The following quote, taken from internal correspondence between a prominent social scientist involved in the 2000–2001 NJPS and federation professionals articulates this notion with clarity.⁴¹ As he writes: “numbers have certain connotations attached to them. The gap between 48% and 52% is more significant than that between 42% and 48% . . . yes, I can count . . . but thresholds matter.” The message is clear: even if numbers do speak for themselves for politically attuned ears, they must still be spoken. It is through the ways in which they are spoken, and the discursive formats in which they are embedded, that numbers convey their meanings.

The overarching meaning of a continuity crisis represents a clear case in point. By and large, this framework invokes a historically loaded association of Jewish vulnerability. Most notably, when American Jews are depicted as an “endangered species,” descriptions of Jewish demographic decline reinforce themes of “loss” and “catastrophe” so characteristic of post-Holocaust consciousness. For example, intermarriage is often portrayed metaphorically as “a silent Holocaust.” In a similar vein, population decrease is often dramatically represented in light of the moral burden laid upon generations of Jews to replenish Jewish numbers after Auschwitz. Like Jewish statistics in early twentieth-century Europe,⁴² both academic and communal discourses on matters of Jewish population are informed by medical perceptions of sickness and degeneracy, thereby heightening the sense of crisis by placing it within a morally loaded biological discourse of life and death. Within this framework, intermarriage becomes a “syndrome” or a “symptom,” and any disengagement with the organized Jewish community is “contagious, approaching epidemic proportions.”⁴³ This medical language metaphorically associates the ills of the social body with the physical body, a compelling connection with respect to its biopolitical framework.

The continuity crisis, as a rhetorical construct, has not only mobilized such emotionally laden medical language but also foregrounded emotionality itself by relying on a pessimistic language of affect. To paraphrase Ochs’s idea (chapter 8 in this volume) about how numerical discourses are implicated in a “hyperbole of optimism,” one could say that the continuity crisis was significantly augmented by a “hyperbole of pessimism.” To be sure, practices of counting and numerical representations do bring to the fore volatile social issues—sometimes deemed existential—related to group membership, communal boundaries, and political power. Decisions about how to count Jews, for example, imply the loaded question of who is a Jew and highlight sensitivities about minority experience within a non-Jewish sociopolitical order. However, the emotional discourse of the continuity crisis is far from being an inherent tenet of numerical knowledge or an inevitable consequence of emotionally arousing issues; it is, rather, a language actively mobilized to frame and inflame passion.

Unsurprisingly, somber associations mark the forms of affect that frame the continuity crisis. Expressions of depression, anxiety, and concern recur throughout the description and interpretation of the data. These emotions are voiced not only by professionals and educated observers but also by social scientists and other scholars who position themselves as concerned members of the community. This is clearly reflected, for example, in Professor Bernard Reisman’s depiction of the mood in two forums dedicated in the early 1990s to the published results of the NJPS:

In both cases, I and most of the other participants, initially emerged depressed and confused . . . the first day was not so much the demographers' findings but the depressive affect and concomitant sense of helplessness among the participants. And then I reasoned if we, who were mainly academics, were so demoralized and immobilized, would it not be likely that the professional and lay leaders would have even a more severe reaction?⁴⁴

The debate between scholars and other advocates of decline, versus those who endorse a narrative of transformation about American Jewry, has indeed come to be framed in emotional terms as a debate between pessimists and optimists or between those who are in a panic and those who are euphoric. Sidney Goldstein reflects:

The tone of the debate has gone well beyond neutral and objective academic and scientific discussion, to embrace such value distinctions as “pessimists” and “optimists” . . . unfortunately, an increasingly emotional tenor has come to affect the debate on Jewish population and, to say the least, this has contributed little to the quality of the debate.⁴⁵

On the other end of the spectrum, and almost twenty years later, we can find Professor Steven M. Cohen who construes bleak emotional language as both a logical response to the concerning population-related effects among American Jews and a rhetorical achievement.⁴⁶ And yet, during a panel on demographic narratives held in the course of the 2011 Association for Jewish Studies conference, he seems to be unsure about how to mobilize this rhetoric: “I’m still wishing, or my dream is, can we rhetorically express anxiety, dread, *harada* [anxiety in Hebrew] about intermarriage without pushing away all those intermarried?”⁴⁷ The potential benefits and risks of the emotional language of crisis appear in Jack Wertheimer’s answer to my question about his own emotional style of public address. A prominent historian of American Jewry, who collaborates extensively with social scientists and Jewish professional leaders, he replied:

I am shocked at the passivity and the seeming lack of concern when what I see is something that is worthy of concern, and so this emotional language is designed to grab people by the throat and get their attention . . . but I’m also an engaged scholar. [He explains:] I have children and I worry about what kind of Jewish community my grandchildren will live in . . . but I feel that I need to limit the amount of crankiness because otherwise people are just going to tune me out completely.⁴⁸

Professor Wertheimer’s statement exemplifies another critical point: the conflation of personal and communal voices, and the “personalization” of social-scientific data. Grounded in a sacred Jewish institution—that is, the family—this kind of discourse animates experiences and sentiments that lie beyond and beneath the faceless and often alienating effect of “sheer numbers.”

Statistics, as a culturally authorized way of “seeing” the community in the aggregate, become also an important lens through which individuals learn about their scientifically represented selves and “see” their situated family dynamics. Take, for example, Dr. Rabbi Hayim Herring’s memories of the days directly following the release of the 1990 NJPS in the conservative congregation he then led in Minnesota: “There’s a lot of emotion that is so intrinsic to the NJPS story because we are not talking solely about numbers, but about people’s lives. At that point, everybody suddenly knew somebody who is either intermarried or has an intermarried family member . . . rabbis,” and he included himself, “do not just speak data to make a point, our job is to move people emotionally, to change ways of thinking, and numbers may become beneficial in that way.”⁴⁹ This statement reveals that the emotional language of crisis is not the fabrication of a media hungry for dramatic headlines. Rather, it is located in an intricate web of actors and public speakers—from social scientists and national leaders to congregational rabbis—that report numbers and make emotion-laden arguments.

To better understand these discursive frameworks that govern how numbers are layered with affect, I will turn now to the idea (and ideal) of the “engaged Jewish social scientist.” This idea helped Wertheimer explain his affective tone of public address. This notion also plays a formative role in allowing and augmenting the affective discourses among social scientists. In particular, I argue that within the close intersection of Jewish social science and the organized Jewish community, the work of Jewish social scientists is construed in terms of care and commitment to the American Jewish community. These terms underwrite the political and moral legitimacy which allows Jewish scholars of American Jewry to speak passionately and dramatically, rather than in a detached manner, about scientifically based population numbers. The operation of the model of “engaged scholarship” uncovers an intimate link between counting American Jewry and caring for it.

The Engaged Jewish Social Scientist

While the American Jewish statistical system has taken many forms across its multiple incarnations and locations, it ultimately rests upon an underlying feature: an intimate and symbiotic relationship between the Jewish institutional world, composed of an intricate network of institutions of communal government and collective operation, and social science as a rule-governed social system of epistemic norms, standards, and authorities. This relationship rests not only on the political economy of scholarly production, meaning the actual process through which funding and research circulate between those who produce data and those who use or commission it, but also on ideas and ideals regarding the role of scholars and social-scientific scholarship in American Jewish communal life. This set of ideas and ideals is captured in the phrase of engaged scholar.

Because this chapter focuses on the discursive practices of wet numbers rather than on the practices of Jewish social science making, I cannot fully explore here the various terms of engagement that underwrite the model of the engaged scholar. Nor can I situate these terms in relation to other scholarly fields in which public engagement and political activism have been formative in how academics position themselves (e.g., feminist or black scholars). These matters deserve their own separate exposition. Yet, I want to point out some general features that characterize this model especially as they shed light on the dynamic of wet numbers.

Following Hart's work on Jewish social science and Berman's exploration of the Jewish social-scientific turn, I also came to think of the mutually constituting concepts of "engaged scholar" and "Jewish social scientist." In particular, I came to think of the social scientists who took part in the continuity crisis as Jewish social scientists.⁵⁰ After all, most if not all of the scholars I met identified themselves as Jewish. What Sam Heilman once wrote about the sociological scholarship of Jews still holds today: "Jews have been more interested in studying Jews than has anyone else."⁵¹ Moreover, the scholars I met during my fieldwork often brought their Jewishness to the forefront when presenting their work. For example, in their writings in the Jewish press (such as in *Sh'ma* or *The Forward*)—in contrast to how they write in general academic venues—social scientists tend to use what Sarah Benor describes as Jewish English,⁵² sprinkling their arguments with Jewish and Israeli expressions in Hebrew or Yiddish. During a two-day Brandeis University conference on the sociodemography of American Jewry held in October 2011, it wasn't uncommon for scholars to embellish their presentations with biblical verses (in either Hebrew or English), thereby performing their Jewish competencies and credentials. An Israeli colleague of mine, in a tellingly cynical response to this pattern, whispered to me on one of these occasions: "Do you think they compete to see 'who is more Jewish'?"

Interestingly, when, at the beginning of my interviews with social scientists, I invited them to share with me their intellectual and personal narratives that constitute their scholarly trajectories, the designation "Jewish social scientist" on my part went unnoticed and was sometimes even incorporated into their narrative. Only once, in an exceptional incident that proves the rule, did my definition provoke a response: "I'm not a Jewish social scientist!" Professor Calvin Goldscheider protested before providing his narrative, "I'm a social scientist of the Jews. There's a big difference."

The possible difference between a Jewish social scientist and a social scientist of the Jews clearly foregrounds the relationship between my own positionality and that of the social scientists I have studied. The fact that the term "Jewish social scientist" can be seemingly applied to them (Jewish social scientists who have by and large chosen to work *for* and in collaboration with Jewish organizations

and centers of power) and myself (a Jewish social scientist who has chosen to work *on* Jewish organizations in an attempt to unpack the mechanisms of their power) demonstrates the inclusive breadth of the term. Goldscheider's comment in particular reveals the double-edged nature and endemic tension captured in the notion of the Jewish social scientist. Does the adjective "Jewish" qualify the scholar's background and identity or his research focus?⁵³ If it refers to both, what kinds of professional discourses are permitted within this coalescence of commitments and positions?

The model of the engaged scholar, which is often invoked and idealized in the context of the American Jewish statistical system, only deepens this ambiguity: with what, exactly, is the engaged scholar engaged? Is it with his scholarship or with something else, outside of and prior to it? Is the Jewish social scientist engaged with Jewish scholarship, Jewish life, or the connection between them? Do I—a scholar engaged with what matters to me and disturbs me as an Israeli Jew (e.g., the central role of anxious demographic discourses in public Israeli life) fall within the contours of the category of the engaged scholar or am I excluded from it? As these questions demonstrate, ambiguity and instability are endemic to the model of engaged scholarship, an aspect of Jewish social science in North America that both enables and complicates the field. Precisely the lack of precision encapsulated in this model fuels the American Jewish statistical system and defines the permissible wet nature of the voice that animates that data.

Within a variety of academic and communal forums, the persona of the Jewish scholar described by journalists, scholars, and communal leaders is of an individual who "cares" deeply. What he cares about is often defined through an open, indefinite set of tropes, such as "the Jewish people," "Jewish life," or "the Jewish future." These vague, often interchangeable, objects of care reference the Jewish community writ large or the American Jewish community in particular. In this framework, Jewish social-scientific scholarship—in the here and now—is constituted as a "service," a token of commitment. Steven M. Cohen, in his Marshall Sklare Award lecture in 2012, articulated the interconnections he envisions between Jewish service and scholarship: "our ever-growing conversation among several generations of scholars committed to studying, serving, and sustaining the Jewish People."⁵⁴ And in the appreciative words of Barry Kosmin, a senior demographer, for his late colleague, sociologist Egon Mayer, Jewish "care" marks Mayer's career and life story. Although the trajectory of Mayer's life is obviously distinct, Kosmin expands the notion of care to characterize the whole scholarly community. He writes:

We return to what I believe inspired all of Egon's lifework: his concern for the Jewish people and its future. Jewish social science is not an uncontested field of study. The passions arising from differences in ideology, theology, and

discipline run deeply in our community of scholars. People care, believe and argue at a decibel level that is above that in most areas of the academy.⁵⁵

Whether or not Kosmin is right in his relational diagnosis, he captures in this description the prescriptive, normative feature of care. In an address that can be understood as another example of the romanticized status of care for the Jewish community in social-scientific scholarship, Frederick M. Lawrence, president of Brandeis University, greeted over lunch the participants of the sociodemography of American Jewry conference (October 2011), which I attended. While praising the accomplishments of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Professor Lawrence preached to his audience about the centrality of care as the essential Jewish ethic of social-scientific labor:

There are some people out there who work only with their heads but here, at Brandeis, we work with both our heads and our hearts. If there is something we care about deeply we should have the people do a good job . . . let's continue to work on the things that are important to our heads. God knows that they are also important to our hearts.

Professor Lawrence's message echoes the sentiments of Professor Goldstein, nearly two decades earlier, that Jewish scholarship ideally "comes from both the head and heart." Both professional and communal Jewish engagements are harmoniously integrated in Goldstein's descriptions of the field, representing what might be understood as a caring expertise. Referencing both a Jewish data bank and advisory committee, he noted, that they "have, I believe, been most fortunate in enlisting the assistance of a strong array of social scientists who are dedicated both to the highest standards of research and to the maintenance of a strong Jewish community." Given the growing scarcity he identifies in the availability of adept personnel, Goldstein goes further to recommend that

early and high priority [should] be given to training in research methods of more social scientists who can be counted on to devote all or part of their career to work *in and for* the Jewish community . . . such an expansion of our personnel resources should be done [among other methods] by appeals to the Jewish conscience of qualified students.⁵⁶

To be sure, the ways in which intellectual vigor should be utilized for Jewish causes, and the politics of those causes, are hardly points of agreement. Jewish social scientists obviously vary in the degree and nature of their subjective investment in Jewish communal life, and differ in how they understand and negotiate the repercussions of that investment for science making. Some take upon themselves the social role of the public intellectual, while others confine themselves to more academically and institutionally bounded domains. Whereas one scholar is

fascinated by methodological innovations, a second publicly articulates his passionate commitment to *yidishkeyt* as what “keeps him in the business.” Despite these differences, and even occasional discord, an ideology of Jewish communal care permeates the overlapping spaces of scholarship making and community building. The purpose of gathering knowledge itself becomes a modality of community building. Through the lens of Jewish biopolitics, the logic of Jewish social science envisions data as a tool for population service, planning, and intervention. It is thus not unusual to find such justifications for statistical projects in the genre of Jewish social-scientific writing. As Professor Goldstein, director of the academic advisory committee for the 1990 NJPS, unequivocally writes: “to have Judaism, we have to have Jews, and the right kind in the right kinds of places.”⁵⁷

Blood, Sweat, and Tears: The Wet Language of Population Crisis

Statistics, as Theodore Porter teaches us, is a language or a strategy of communication imbued with an aura of objectivity and uniformity.⁵⁸ The language of numbers carries with it an array of cultural assumptions about truth, precision, and representation; it also implicates a range of historically situated understandings of objectivity. Indeed, the 1990 NJPS statistics appeared on the American Jewish scene packaged in the language of hard science and dry methodology. Employed strategically, this dry language claimed institutional authority and garnered public trust. It was implicated in the “boundary work” that established the social researchers involved with the 1990 NJPS as a reliable professional community, impervious to political pressures and united in adherence to rule-governed standards.⁵⁹ In so doing, this language created conditions for staging the expertise of both the Council of Jewish Federations (the institutional patron of the NJPS study) and the academics involved.⁶⁰ In anticipation of any potential critique, the 1990 NJPS was, from the outset, presented to the public as a rigorously scientific survey.⁶¹

The dryness of biopolitics, however, can be misleading. As Ian Hacking writes: “biopolitics is, of course, less fun to study than the anatamo-political. The numerical manipulations of the body politic are and always were dusty, replete with dried-up old books.”⁶² This dryness is misleading because, as Porter argues in the context of administration, this very “grayness helps to maintain [statistics’] authority.”⁶³ But this kind of misleading grayness, or dryness, is only one source of authority for the publicly distributed biopolitical language of American Jewish statistics; the other is the economy of affect that enfolds the language of dry science.

Historically, the realm of emotion, as opposed to that of science, has been marginalized as a modality of knowledge in western cultures. Emotions have been adversely associated with the embodied, the irrational, the intuitive, and,

therefore, the feminine.⁶⁴ However, as a modality of speech, emotions have achieved hegemony in popular domains of public rhetoric. Frank Furedi argues that a culture of emotionalism has fostered a climate in which a display of feelings has acquired a formidable cultural status, informing how individuals are expected to speak about and conduct themselves in public.⁶⁵ Lay people, celebrities, politicians, and even academics draw on emotionalism when they speak publicly. Richard Posner writes in regard to public intellectuals: “the emotionality of the public intellectual . . . stands in particularly striking contrast to the official image of the academic.”⁶⁶

Following Don Handelman’s work on the synergetic relationship between bureaucratic logic and national sentiments, a relationship that helps him explain the power of the modern machinery of the nation-state,⁶⁷ I argue for a synergetic relationship between the dry language of numbers and the wet language of emotions in the biopolitical apparatus of American Jewry. The synergy, literally the “working together,” of the numerical social data and the emotional qualities attached to that data helps to explain the pervasive presence and nature of social-scientific knowledge in the American Jewish communal sphere. Each discourse enhances the cultural grip of the other. Because numerical depictions of reality represent “social facts” and are considered to be the very means of truth making, numbers may “rationalize” and legitimate the emotions that they arouse. As Sherry Israel, a Brandeis professor who participated in the advisory committee of the 2000–2001 NJPS is quoted as saying, “if you design a study that’s methodologically sound, you get what’s out there. The community and its facts will speak for themselves.”⁶⁸ When supported by numbers, emotions appear seemingly well-grounded in reality. Simultaneously, because emotionality pervades everyday life in profound ways, it lends meaning to an abstract reality captured by numbers, as if indicating what “really counts” about that reality. Secured in their position as “knowers”—as those who speak in the language of science and truth—and anchored in their political, moral authority as engaged scholars, these actors allow themselves to be immersed in the seductive power of emotional language without being “contaminated” by its supposed inferiority as a mode of knowledge.

Obviously, the synergetic relationship between statistics and emotions has its own limits and vulnerabilities—particularly with regard to the degrees of suspicion often leveled at both constructs. Because the production of numbers is at best complicated and often inaccessible to a large public or, at worst, subject to manipulation, statistics is often highly susceptible to critique and skepticism; moreover, as both Sheila Jasanoff and Sarah Igo show, historically, the popular reception of the “cult of experts” in twentieth-century America has been ambivalent.⁶⁹ Though sometimes treated with expressions of admiration and confidence, experts often endure distrust and even ridicule. Indeed, a great degree of public skepticism has sometimes greeted the emotional tone attached to numerical

discourses of the continuity crisis. In particular, emotional overtones of referring to Jews as an endangered species and calls for a prompt and effective response have been dismissed as a mere “panic”⁷⁰ or portrayed as a traditional, conservative reaction on the part of a leadership that thrives on crisis heroism.⁷¹ Alternatively, the emotional tone of crisis is sometimes taken as a calculated tactic of communication in the service of fund raising.⁷² Others reject the crisis-laden notion of “Jewish continuity” altogether, choosing instead to celebrate notions such as “Jewish engagement” and “Jewish revival.” Indeed, the heyday of Jewish continuity as an institutional catchphrase appears to have passed. This affective discourse seems to have its own disaffecting implications—alienating and numbing listeners.

Both the strengths and limitations of this synergy teach us about the fairly restricted modes of biopolitical operation available to American Jewish leaders in the nonstate voluntary-based American context in which they operate. Without fetishizing the state as an omnipotent actor, this study points to the particular and perhaps greater array of challenges that the nonstate context presents to those who strive to count, produce, and act upon the population. When Israel, as the Jewish nation-state, aims to reproduce its Jewish population, a wide array of legal frameworks, policy procedures, and bureaucratic institutions buttress its efforts. It attempts, as a matter of course, to import and reproduce Jews through a state-run conversion apparatus, and both immigration (*aliyah*; ascendance) and fertility policies. The state also possesses at its disposal various means of both direct and indirect mechanisms of governmentality (e.g., throughout the state-run education and army systems) that are more complicated for operation in a voluntary-based context such as that of the American Jewish community.

By contrast, when the organized American Jewish community strives to manage its Jewish population, it is handicapped by both the fragmented nature of its institutions, and, most significantly, by the voluntary-based and liberal-oriented forms of belonging that constitute that community. True, the organized American Jewish community is the biggest and most institutionally developed among Jewish diasporic communities. It relies on impressive established networks of funding, agencies, and organizations that serve as instrumentalities through which the polity can actually act to intervene in the social body. Perhaps “Birthright Israel” represents the most notable example of the impressive operational governmental capabilities of the community at the time of, and in fact as a response to, the continuity crisis.⁷³

And yet, this working infrastructure is far more limited than a state in the range of interventionist options available. For example, despite continuing concerns over the Jewish family, the liberal-oriented organized community has never embraced fertility and other family-related policies. Furthermore, because matters of personal investment, engagement, and agency exist in the gap between

Jewish bodies and Jewish souls—between a measurable, but possibly empty, Jewishness and a meaningful one—Jewish voluntarism further complicates the loaded engagement with Jewish demography. It confuses the question of who is a Jew by casting doubts even on the value of counting Jews in the first place.

For a community in which, as some argue, every Jew can be deemed “a Jew by choice”—a community in which even the willingness to fill out a forty-five-minute NJPS questionnaire is understood as an indication of voluntary Jewish commitment—Jewish leaders must ultimately appeal to the realm of heightened emotional speech to motivate voluntary participation. In a tacit acknowledgment that numbers cannot, in themselves, be heard—that they do not, in fact, speak for themselves—or, alternatively, that they unintentionally normalize acculturation, these leaders speak not only in the name of science and its “facts” but also in the language of affect. The affective economy distributed through their reporting of numbers demonstrates how biopolitical logic in such a voluntary communal context depends upon language and its ability to influence personal decisions made by Jews. After all, the accumulated effect of individual life choices (from the question of whom to marry to whether to raise Jewish children and encourage Jewish habits) reflects back on the size (“quantity”) and composition (“quality”) of the social body. In this sense, the discourse of wet numbers assumes a potentially greater significance as a rhetorical tool for what Nikolas Rose calls “technologies of the soul”: technologies aimed at the production of certain subjectivities.⁷⁴

The concept of wet numbers enables us to think metaphorically about the affective, wet nature of such voluntary communities or less strongly equipped biopolitical systems. American Jewish leaders face a delicate task. These leaders speak the language of wet numbers—a language that attempts not just to count Jewish bodies but also to take account of, and indeed to touch, Jewish souls. Because their work inevitably draws on post-Holocaust schemes of Jewish biopolitics, reproduction of the population depends upon the constant production of a sense of collective crisis. As opposed to other situations framed in terms of collective crises that bear directly on the lives of individuals (e.g., natural disaster, war, or economic recession), the continuity debate does not necessarily imply a crisis for individual Jews in America. They simply may not care. The affective economy of wet numbers that shapes the ideological and institutional apparatus of continuity operates to replenish the care and responsiveness of the community in relationship to what might otherwise simply be taken as dry statistics. Working against the grain of indifference and apathy, Jewish leaders and researchers strive to prescribe care: care about Judaism, the Jewish people, and crises that potentially endanger Jewish survival. So essential is care to Jewish social science that, ironically enough, some of the social scientists who have played such important roles in establishing numerical regimes of knowledge have themselves come to distrust those very regimes; they worry that the numbers they count are not

sufficiently “full” with care. As Professors Saxe and Kadushin put it: “the community needs Jews who count more than it needs to count Jews.”⁷⁵ As this quote illustrates, even if the “population” is a prime object of study and intervention, it is eventually the “community” that must be targeted—and redeemed.

Given the intimate relationships between statistically based social sciences and policies of population intervention, this chapter invites future research examining discourses of biopolitical communal policies. Investigating the public communication (or, alternatively, the public silence) about fertility and conversion policy, or the politics of out-reach and in-reach, for example, all stand to teach us about “the limits and the forms of the sayable”⁷⁶ in the relationship between a community or a polity and its subjects. After all, just like numbers, biopolitical policies do not speak for themselves.

Notes

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1. Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

2. See Paul Starr, “The Sociology of Official Statistics,” in *The Politics of Numbers*, ed. William Alonso and Paul Starr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987), 7–57.

3. The quote is taken from the letter of a nineteenth-century British officer to Florence Nightingale, cited by the historian Theodore M. Porter in his *Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 34.

4. Julia Paley, “Making Democracy Count: Opinion Polls and Market Surveys in the Chilean Political Transition,” *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 137.

5. See chapter 7 of this volume.

6. For more on the Foucauldian understanding of biopolitics, see Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 131–143; and Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

7. Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, “Introduction: The Study of Social Knowledge Making,” in *Social Knowledge in the Making*, ed. Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1–40.

8. A small number of scholarly works have unpacked the strategic choice of minority groups to mobilize the language of statistics. See Paley, “Making Democracy Count”; and Jacqueline Urla, “Cultural Politics in an Age of Statistics: Numbers, Nations, and the Making of Basque Identity,” *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 4 (1993): 818–843.

9. The only serious attempt by the American Bureau of the Census to include a question about religion (in the context of the Current Population Survey [CPS] in 1957) proved a failure. As Kevin Schultz recounts regarding the debates surrounding this attempt, the failure is attributable to the fervent opposition of Jewish organizations. See Kevin Schultz, "Religion as Identity in Postwar America: The Story of the Last Serious Attempt to Put a Question on Religion in the U.S. Census," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 2 (2006), 359–384.

10. It should be noted that some Jewish communities (e.g., in Canada and Australia) work with data extracted from national censuses, while other communities, such as in the United States, work with their own, self-produced data.

11. Paul Ritterband, Barry Kosmin, and Jeffrey Scheckner, "Counting Jewish Populations: Methods and Problems," *American Jewish Year Book* (1988): 204–221.

12. Ian Hacking, "Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers," *Humanities in Society* 5, no. 3–4 (1982): 290.

13. Starr, "Sociology of Official Statistics," 1.

14. Patricia Cline Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

15. Sarah Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

16. Berman, *Speaking of Jews*.

17. Diana Tobin, in *Sh'ma* 41, no. 673 (2010): 5.

18. Anat Leibler and Daniel Breslau, "The Uncounted: Citizenship and Exclusion in the Israeli Census of 1948," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 5 (2005): 880–902; and Justyna Stypinska, "Jewish Majority and Arab Minority in Israel's Demographic Struggle," *Polish Sociological Review* 1, no. 157 (2007): 105–120.

19. Sergio Della Pergola, *World Jewry beyond 2000: The Demographic Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1999).

20. See Edward Norden, "Counting the Jews," *Commentary* 92, no. 4 (1991): 36–43; and Robert Wistrich, "Do the Jews Have a Future?," *Commentary* 98, no. 1 (1994): 23–26.

21. Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data 1585–1984* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1990).

22. Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972).

23. For example, see Uriah Zvi Engelman, "Jewish Statistics in the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies (1850–1936)," *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no. 2 (1947): 127–174; and A. J. Jaffe, "The Use of Death Records to Determine Jewish Population Characteristics," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (1939): 143–168.

24. Ira Sheskin, "Local Jewish Population Studies: Still Necessary after All These Years," *Contemporary Jewry* 15, no. 1 (1994): 26–38; and Ira Sheskin, "Comparisons between Local Jewish Community Studies and the 2000–01 National Jewish Population Survey," *Contemporary Jewry* 25, no. 1 (2005): 158–192.

25. Information delivered by Professor Ira Sheskin during the Brandeis Socio-Demographic Conference (October 2011).

26. Sue Fishkoff, "With Flurry of New Local Studies, Jewish Communities Seeing Trends and Making Changes," *JTA*, July 10, 2011, <http://www.jta.org/2011/07/10/life-religion/with-flurry-of-new-local-studies-jewish-communities-seeing-trends-and-making-changes>.

27. Sidney Goldstein, "A National Jewish Population Study: Why and How," in *A Handle on the Future: The Potential of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study*, ed. Barry A. Kosmin (1988), 1–9, <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/details.cfm?StudyID=626>.

28. Currently, the most prominent centers of Jewish statistical research are the Cohen Center and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute, both at Brandeis University.

29. Such professional sites include the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Committee, the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, and the Jewish People Policy Institute.

30. Barry Kosmin et al., *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1991).

31. See *Contact: The Journal of Jewish Life Network / Steinhardt Foundation* 5, no. 3 (Spring 2003) and 8, no. 4 (Summer 2006); and *Sh'ma* 41, no. 673 (2010).

32. Bernard Reisman, "Reflections on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *Contemporary Jewry* 14, no. 1 (1993): 166.

33. Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

34. *Ibid.*, 75.

35. Berman, *Speaking of Jews*.

36. The connection between intermarriage and assimilation is not unique to American Jews. It is widely accepted theoretically and supported empirically in relation to other religious groups. See, for example, Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

37. The long list of popular publications includes Alan Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (New York: Touchstone, 1997); J. J. Goldberg, "America's Vanishing Jews," *Jerusalem Report*, November 5, 1992; Anthony Gordon and Richard Horowitz, "Will Your Grandchildren Be Jews?," *Jewish Spectator* (Fall 1996): 36–38; Egon Mayer, *A Demographic Revolution in American Jewry*, vol. 1, *David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs* (Ann Arbor: Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, 1992); Jonathan Sarna, "The Secret of Jewish Continuity," *Commentary* 98, no. 4 (1994): 55–58; Jack Wertheimer, "Family Values and the Jews," *Commentary* 97, no. 1 (1994): 30–34; and Jack Wertheimer, Charles Liebman, and Steven Cohen, "How to Save American Jews," *Commentary* 101, no. 1 (1996): 47–51. For a policy-oriented study of the implementation of the 1990 NJPS, see Hayim Herring, "How the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey Was Used by Federation Professionals for Jewish Continuity Purposes," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 76, no. 3 (2000): 216–227.

38. See Simon Ravidowicz, *Israel: The Ever-Dying People and Other Essays* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 217.

39. Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 144.

40. Michael Steinhardt, "On the Question of Crisis," *Contact: The Journal of Jewish Life Network* 5, no. 3 (2003): 9.

41. As opposed to my use of public sources (such as research and popular articles), or interviews, with regard to Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) archival material, I decided, in agreement with JFNA professionals, to conceal the identities of those involved in the 2000–2001 NJPS.

42. Hart, *Social Science*, 76–80.

43. Elihu Bergman, "The American Jewish Population Erosion," *Midstream* 23 (October 1977): 9–19. For other examples, see Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

44. Reisman, "Reflections," 351.

45. Sidney Goldstein, "What of the Future? The New National Jewish Population Study for American Jewry," in *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, ed. Rabbi Jules Harlow (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1992), 3.

46. Steven M. Cohen, "The Demise of the 'Good Jew': Marshall Sklare Award Lecture," *Contemporary Jewry* 32, no. 1 (2012): 85–93.
47. Ibid.
48. Interview, October 2011.
49. Interview, January 2012.
50. See Berman, *Speaking of Jews*; and Hart, *Social Science*.
51. Samuel Heilman, "The Sociology of American Jewry: The Last Ten Years," *Annual Review of Sociology* 8 (1982): 155.
52. Sarah Benor, "Do American Jews Speak a 'Jewish Language'? A Model of Jewish Linguistic Distinctiveness," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 230–269.
53. My usage of gendered pronouns here reflects the gender bias within the field of Jewish social science in which men are more highly represented than women.
54. Cohen, "Demise of the 'Good Jew,'" 92.
55. Barry Kosmin, "An Appreciation of the Contribution of Egon Mayer to Jewish Population, Community, and Family Studies," *Contemporary Jewry* 26, no. 1 (2006): 168.
56. Sidney Goldstein, "Beyond the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey: A Research Agenda," *Contemporary Jewry* 14, no. 1 (1993): 159–160.
57. Goldstein, "What of the Future?," 4.
58. Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
59. For more on boundary work, see Sheila Jasanoff, *The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 14.
60. For the staging of science, see Stephen Hilgartner, *Science on Stage: Expert Advice as Public Drama* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
61. In a dramatically different set of circumstances, one deserving of its own separate discussion, the 2000–2001 NJPS precipitated a vicious public debate in which both opponents and supporters of the survey mobilized a dauntingly technical language of statistics. Filled, as it was, with the procedural details about statistical sampling, screening, and stratification methods, it seemed as if the dryness of the discourse of and about American Jewry was the survey's most definitive feature. For examples of such dry discourse, see Leonard Saxe and Charles Kadushin, "The Arithmetic of U.S. Jewry," *Jerusalem Post*, November 17, 2003, 135; Uriel Heilman, "NJPS 2000–01: A Lost Cause?," *Jerusalem Post*, December 17, 2003; and J. J. Goldberg, "A Jewish Recount," *New York Times*, September 17, 2003, 27.
62. Hacking, "Biopower," 279.
63. Porter, *Trust in Numbers*, 51.
64. See Allison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Allison Jaggar and Susan Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 145–171; and Catherine Lutz, "Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category," *Cultural Anthropology* 1, no. 3 (1986): 287–309.
65. Frank Furedi, *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age* (London: Routledge, 2004).
66. Richard Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 127.
67. Don Handelman, *Nationalism and the Israeli State: Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
68. Heilman, "NJPS 2000–01."
69. See Jasanoff, *Fifth Branch*; and Sarah Igo, "Subjects of Persuasion: Survey Research as a Solicitous Science, or, The Public Relations of the Polls," in *Social Knowledge in the Making*, ed.

Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 285–306.

70. Calvin Goldscheider, “Are American Jews Vanishing Again?,” *Contexts* 2, no. 1 (2003): 18–24; Calvin Goldscheider, *Studying the Jewish Future* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); and Bethamie Horowitz, “Stop Worrying: Details Follow,” *The Forward*, December 22, 2006.

71. MacDonald Moore, “The Neodox: Prophets of Spreadsheet Tribalism” (unpublished manuscript).

72. Goldberg, “Jewish Recount.”

73. Shaul Kelner, *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

74. Nikolas Rose, *Numbers, Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 197–232.

75. Saxe and Kadushin, “Arithmetic of U.S. Jewry.”

76. Michel Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 59.