

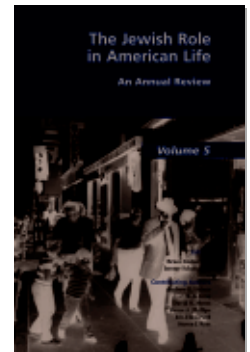


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## 5 Culture Faultlines: The Seven Socio-Ecologies of Jewish Los Angeles

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## *Culture*

### **Faultlines: The Seven Socio-Ecologies of Jewish Los Angeles**

*By Bruce A. Phillips*

**W**ithin the field of American Jewish sociology, local Jewish community population studies have been largely underutilized. Prior to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey local studies served as proxy for American Jewry as a whole. For example, Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider used the Providence Jewish population survey to study generational change among American Jews (Goldstein and Goldscheider). Both Steven M. Cohen and Calvin Goldscheider used the Boston Jewish population survey to study American Jewish assimilation (Cohen; Goldscheider). Peter Medding and Gary A. Tobin combined multiple local Jewish population surveys to create a composite of American Jewry to study the impact of intermarriage (Medding, Tobin et al.). However, once the data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey became available for analysis, social scientists largely abandoned local population studies in favor of true national data. The only exception is Ira Sheskin's study of how Jewish communities differ. Even here, however, the emphasis is on communal variations on a national scale as opposed to discussing any individual community (Sheskin).

Although no longer needed as a surrogate for national data, local Jewish population surveys provide the only way to understand American Jews in the context of their

local communities. As such, local studies of American Jews could potentially become part of the larger study of what scholars term “spatial assimilation.” A number of important books and articles have recently used U.S. census data to study ethnic, immigrant, and racial groups in the context of the cities and metropolitan areas in which they reside (see, for example: Waldinger; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr; Massey and Denton; Alba et al.). Their common focus is the relationship between community residence and assimilation. For example, in what ways do Hispanics who live in suburbs differ from those who live in barrios, and in what ways do Hispanics in predominantly Anglo suburbs differ from those in suburbs that are largely Hispanic? The same questions might well be asked about Jews. It was largely assumed in the 1960s that suburbanization was an expression of Jewish assimilation (Sklare and Greenblum; Kramer and Leventman), and the issue of Jewish spatial assimilation in the suburbs has gone unexamined ever since. Data from the decades that have followed, however, can provide for some new conclusions.

Los Angeles is a particularly apt community in which to examine this question of Jewish spatial assimilation because there has been a major Jewish population shift from the nation’s Northeast and Midwest to the South and West (Goldstein and Goldstein). In moving to the West and South, American Jews are relocating from industrial cities to post-industrial cities. As Michael Dear has argued, the West is characterized by postmodern cities for which Los Angeles is the paradigm (Dear and Flusty, “Los Angeles as Postmodern Urbanism”). Understanding how Jews fit into the Los Angeles landscape has substantive implications for other Jewish communities, and the analytical approach used here may well serve as a model for a comparison of different Jewish communities.

This paper has three goals. First, as discussed above, it revisits the assumption that suburbanization goes along with assimilation. Second, it re-conceptualizes Los Angeles Jewry in the context of the “Los Angeles School of Urbanism,” which seeks to understand Los Angeles in its own terms, rather than as an aberration from established models of urban theory. Third, it serves as a resource for the Los Angeles Jewish community in that this is the first published comparison of the 1979 and 1996 Los Angeles Jewish population surveys, the data upon which this analysis is based. Using these two studies together should help the organizations and institutions of Los Angeles Jewry see some of the changes that have taken place during the eighteen years that separate the 1979 and 1996 Jewish population surveys.<sup>1</sup> Charting all of Los Angeles’ demographic changes is beyond the scope of this paper, but a number of important findings will be highlighted below in the context of discussing specific geographic sub-areas.

## IN SEARCH OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles County is made up of multiple neighborhoods and communities. Many of them are well known beyond Southern California: “Beverly Hills 90210,” “Fresh Prince of Bel Air,” and even “Straight Outa’ Compton.” But we might well ask: Where do Jews

fit in within this vast array of neighborhoods and communities that make up Greater Los Angeles? The City of Los Angeles has signs designating such neighborhoods as “Koreatown” and “Little Ethiopia.” The “Crenshaw District” is typically used in the media to signify the largest African American concentration. Beyond the boundaries of the city of Los Angeles one can find “Little Saigon” and “Little India.” Glendale is widely known to be Armenian just as Monterey Park is known to be Asian. So where do we locate “Jewish Los Angeles,” if, indeed, such a locus (or loci) can be situated at all?

The best means to start such an inquiry will be to consider what we mean by Los Angeles in the first place. The “Los Angeles” that is the focus of this discussion consists of the areas for which data has been gathered by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles: Los Angeles County minus the San Gabriel and Pomona valleys and Long Beach,<sup>2</sup> but including eastern Ventura County, i.e., the Conejo Valley communities out to the Camarillo grade.

In order to place Jews in the larger context of Los Angeles one must have a both comprehensive and comprehensible sense of Los Angeles. But how does one make sense of a Los Angeles that has been proverbially described as a hundred communities in search of a city? The classic urban model developed at the University of Chicago consists of an urban core industrial area surrounded by concentric rings of settlements. In the inner ring are working class neighborhoods; beyond them are suburbs. Although the principal work of the “Chicago School”—Robert Park’s *The City* (Park, Burgess and McKenzie)—was published eight decades ago, it remains the preeminent model. As metropolitan areas developed beyond the first ring of suburbs, the terms introduced to describe them, such as “boomburbs” and “exurbs,” have simply expanded the Chicago School model (Dear).

Los Angeles, however, does not fit this model and has generally been treated as an anomaly both in architectural and urban-theory circles (Dear and Flusty, “The Resistible Rise of the L.A. School”). In the 1990s a diverse group of social scientists, planners, and architects associated primarily with the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles promulgated the “Los Angeles School of Urbanism.” This Los Angeles School argues that L.A. is not an aberration but rather the prototype of the post-industrial metropolis that has come to prominence particularly in the West and Southwest. Proponents of a Los Angeles School of Urbanism include not only their own work, but the earlier work of others that sought to understand Los Angeles in its own terms. One such scholar is the architectural historian Reyner Banham, whose seminal work *Los Angeles, the Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Banham) argued that the built environment of Los Angeles was not a random collection of the bizarre but rather a remarkably coherent response to the surrounding physical environment (Banham 5).

Banham interpreted the built-environment of Los Angeles as the product of four broad ecologies, each with its own distinctive architecture: Surfurbia, Foothills, Plains of Id, and Autopia. *Surfurbia* is the strip of beach communities stretching from Malibu

to Balboa (Banham 23–25). Originally resort towns accessible by the Pacific Electric “Red Cars,” they had become “surfurbs” in the 1960s. The *Foothill* ecology includes the many canyons such as Mandeville Canyon and Benedict Canyon. These are among the most expensive properties in Los Angeles, set far above what Banham refers to as the “madding crowd” (Banham 143–45). Banham’s *Plains of Id* refers to the great expanse of indistinguishable cities found in the San Gabriel Valley and south of downtown such as Norwalk, Bell Gardens, Artesia, Paramount, Cudahy, Downey, and Santa Fe Springs. The cities in the San Gabriel Valley were originally farming communities that became suburbs as land speculators created new subdivisions along the expanding Pacific Electric rail lines. The cities south of downtown, on the other hand, grew up around the industrial expansion between downtown and the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro (Banham 77–80). These cities, too, grew around the Pacific Electric rail lines. Writing in the late 1940s, the early and astute observer of Los Angeles Carey McWilliams observed that these communities were more like small towns than suburbs. He attributed this to the influence of Midwestern migration to Southern California (McWilliams).

Banham describes *Autopia* not as a specific region, but as a culture and architectural style built around the automobile (Banham 195–98). Historically, the San Fernando Valley personifies *Autopia* because, unlike older cities and communities, it was developed around the automobile. The Red Car lines were already being dismantled when the San Fernando Valley was being built up in the years after the Second World War (Bottles 220).

In this analysis, I have adapted Banham’s typological system of categorization to include two important social distinctions that he did not discuss: the Valley versus the City, and Westside versus Eastside. The recent movement for San Fernando Valley secession from Los Angeles in order to establish a politically independent urban center “over the hill,” attests to the extent to which the Valley considers itself a separate entity (Sonenshein). This movement began in the 1970s and culminated in a failed ballot measure in 2002.<sup>3</sup>

The “Westside” has always been an important distinction for all Angelinos, as exemplified by the strenuous objections to the possibility of introducing a new area code overlay to west Los Angeles in 1999. Objections were so strenuous that the decision to create a second area code for the Westside (“424”) was stopped when the State Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee voted eight to one to approve the Area Code Relief Act (AB 818) (Haynes). The “310” area code has come to symbolize living on the Westside in the same way that “212” symbolizes Manhattan.

The “Westside” for both Jews and Angelinos has shifted over the course of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century “Westlake Park”<sup>4</sup> on Alvarado was the western edge of Los Angeles. Western Avenue was also once a demarcation, but it is now considered urban. Prior to World War II, Jews referred to Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles as the “Eastside,” while the “Westside” alluded to West Adams and Fairfax.

The Westside Jewish Community Center, built in the early 1950s, is near the corner of Fairfax and Olympic—in 1953 it was the “Westside.”

There are many indications that both Fairfax and Pico-Robertson are now considered urban. School Board, Board of Supervisors, and Congressional districts were redrawn following the 2000 Census to join parts of Pico-Robertson and Fairfax with West Adams and Baldwin Hills.<sup>5</sup> For example, during the 1990s, Pico-Robertson was part of the 29th Congressional District, represented by Henry Waxman. This district has been described as follows: “The affluent communities of Los Angeles’ Westside, including Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Westwood and Hancock Park, have been collected into this solidly Democratic district that has been dominated by liberal Jewish politicians” (“Summary Description”). Following the 2000 Census, Waxman’s 29th Congressional District became the 30th and traded some territory in order to remain affluent and democratic (and Jewish). The southern portion of the old 29th (stretching from parts of Fairfax and Pico-Robertson down to the African American enclaves of Ladera Heights, View Park, and Baldwin Hills) became part of Diane Watson’s new 33rd Congressional District. Zip Codes 90048 (Fairfax) and 90035 (Pico-Robertson) were split between the 29th and the 33rd. Replacing that acreage, Waxman’s new 30th District received parts of the West Valley (“California’s Redistricting Plan”). Since Diane Watson is African-American and Henry Waxman is Jewish, and since politicians want to preserve districts that are safe for re-election, it is clear that the experts in the Democratic Party had decided that most of Pico-Robertson and part of the Fairfax District no longer belonged to the “liberal Westside.”

Another indicator of the ambiguous status of Pico-Robertson is the School Board re-districting of the Pico-Robertson and Beverlywood neighborhoods surrounding Hamilton High School. In 2002 the district boundaries of Los Angeles Unified School District Board members were re-drawn so that these neighborhoods became part of District One instead of District Four (Ellenson). District Four includes Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, Woodland Hills, Encino and other affluent communities (“Board of Education District 4”). District One, on the other hand, consists of mid-Wilshire, West Adams, Palms, and the sections of South Central Los Angeles abutting Inglewood (“Board of Education District 1”). It includes two schools that recently lost their accreditation: Mount Vernon Middle School (Cary) and Crenshaw High School (Pleasant). In other words, Marlene Canter (the Board member representing District Four and who is Jewish) ceded these neighborhoods to predominantly minority District One in exchange for communities in the Valley perceived to be more solidly affluent (and Jewish).

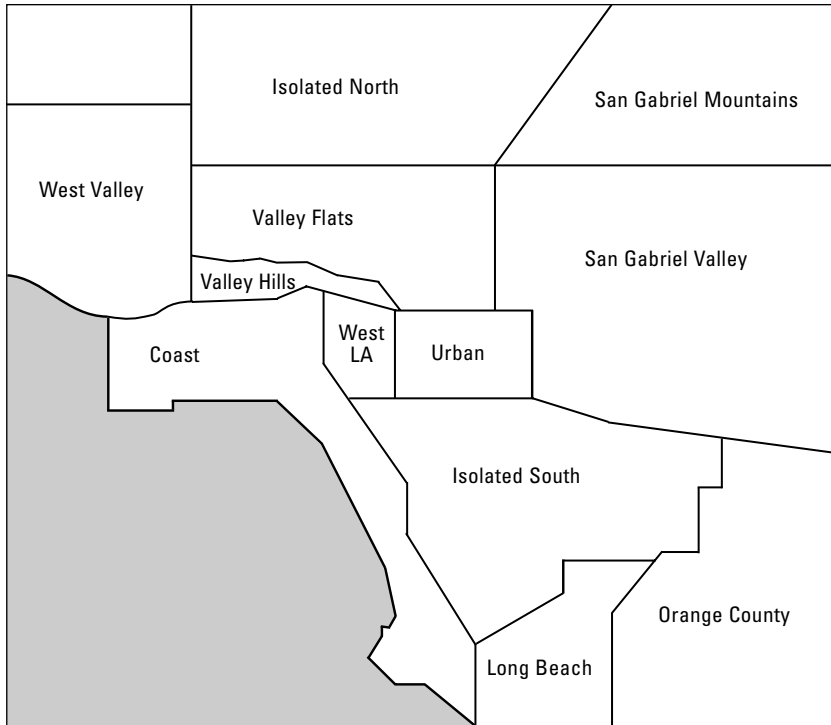
Perhaps most telling is how the *Los Angeles Times* has treated the Fairfax District. Before it introduced the California Section of the daily paper, the Fairfax District received the “Metro” section while adjoining Beverly Hills received the “Westside” section. Thus, the *Los Angeles Times*, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the California Democratic Party all agree that these neighborhoods are no longer part of the “Westside.”

In this paper I expand Banham's "ecologies" to include the social distinctions discussed above, and so I call them "socio-ecologies." As the School of Social Ecology at University of California, Irvine explains, "social ecology is concerned with the relationships between human populations and their environments" (School of Social Ecology). From a Jewish perspective, there are seven "socio-ecologies":

1. The *Coastline*: This is the same as "Surfurbia." It extends from Malibu at the north end to Palos Verdes at the south end and encompasses beach cities such as Santa Monica, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, and El Segundo. Unlike Banham's Surfurbia, the Coastline socio-ecology does not include Orange County because there is no documented social research on the Jews of Orange County.
2. *West Los Angeles*: West Los Angeles consists of Beverly Hills, Sawtelle, Westwood, Brentwood, Mar Vista, Cheviot Hills, and Culver City. Much of West Los Angeles is made up of canyon areas that Banham identified as the "foothill" ecology, but for Jews, these are integral to the "Westside."
3. The *Urban* socio-ecology is made up of Pico-Robertson, Fairfax and all L.A. communities to the east.
4. The *Valley Hills* socio-ecology also corresponds to the Banham's "foothill" ecology on the north face of the Santa Monica mountains. It includes zip codes for Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana, and Woodland Hills.
5. The *Valley Flats* are the rest of the communities in the San Fernando Valley located on the Valley floor.
6. The *West Valley* consists of the Conejo and Simi Valleys. About half of the West Valley is in Ventura County.
7. The socio-ecology *Jewishly Isolated Areas* refers to communities that are non-contiguous with other areas of Jewish settlement. All the other areas are contiguous with at least one other. For example, West Los Angeles abuts the Urban Area, and West Valley is next to the Valley Hills, which in turn is contiguous with the Valley Flats. The communities in these more isolated areas are relatively distant from the rest of Jewish Los Angeles. Most of the interviews in the Isolated Areas were conducted in the "Plains of Id," south of downtown.<sup>6</sup> In recent years a second Isolated Area has sprung up in the Santa Clarita Valley.<sup>7</sup> In the population surveys upon which this analysis is based, there were only twenty-five interviews conducted in the northern Isolated Area, so when the north and south Isolated Areas are broken out separately, the results must be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of the data.

The seven socio-ecologies used in this analysis diverge in some important ways





from the traditional conceptualization of Jewish Los Angeles used in population surveys and planning documents of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles for the past fifty years. In the San Fernando Valley, for example, communities were grouped on north-south axes so that population data were reported for Encino and Reseda together and Studio City was reported along with North Hollywood. In the socio-ecology framework used here, Encino and Studio City are part of the “Valley Hills” and North Hollywood and Reseda are in the Valley Flats.

#### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

As stated earlier, this paper is based on a re-analysis of the 1979 and 1996 Los Angeles Jewish Population Surveys. The 1979 Jewish Population used screened Jewish households from a random sample of all telephone numbers in Los Angeles County (minus Long Beach),<sup>8</sup> and it was the first to use Random Digit Dialing (RDD), a methodology that has become the basis for almost all local Jewish community surveys as well as both the 1990 and 2001 National Jewish Population Surveys. The 1996 study used a dual frame sample that combined an RDD sample of 1,080 interviews with 1,483 households sampled from a list of contributors to the Los Angeles Jewish Federation. It also included seventy-two interviews with 1,979 respondents re-contacted almost two decades later. The distribution of interviews by ecology in each survey is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Number of Completed Interviews by Jewish Ecology and Year of Study

Environment	1979	1996			
	RDD	RDD	Federation List	1979 Re-interview	All 1996
Urban	214	170	117	13	300
West LA	132	196	329	18	543
Coastline	180	360	663	18	1,041
Valley Flats	95	93	127	13	233
Valley Hills	64	75	110	6	191
West Valley	50	91	98	3	192
Isolated	35	95	39	1	135
San Gabriel Valley	53	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	823	1080	1483	72	2635

“Los Angeles” can include multiple levels of geography. At its broadest, Los Angeles refers to the metropolitan area. For this analysis, the Los Angeles Metro Area consists of Los Angeles County plus eastern Ventura County along Route 101 as far as the Camarillo grade. This is the area used for broad analyses. The more detailed analyses exclude Long Beach, the San Gabriel Valley, and the Pomona Valley. The Jewish Federation of Greater Long Beach & West Orange County chose not to participate in either the 1979 or the 1996 Los Angeles Jewish population survey, and the San Gabriel and Pomona valleys were included in the 1979 study but not the one of 1996. What used to be the “Eastern Region” of the Los Angeles Jewish Federation seceded and became The Jewish Federation of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys shortly before the 1996 Jewish population survey and declined to participate in the 1996 survey. Jewish population estimates for Long Beach, the Pomona Valley, and the San Gabriel Valley were taken from the *American Jewish Yearbook*<sup>9</sup> and are used where relevant.

**JEWISH MOVEMENT IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD**

The student of Los Angeles Jewish demography is fortunate that the Los Angeles Jewish Federation had commissioned a number of demographic surveys by Dr. Fred Massarik of the University of California, Los Angeles going back to 1953 (Massarik, 1953, 1959 and 1968). Table 2 and Chart A show the changing distribution of the Los Angeles Jewish population in the second half of the twentieth century. Unfortunately the communities that were examined in the 1953, 1958, and 1968 surveys could not be translated into the socio-ecologies described above because only the published reports are available, not the raw data.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless Chart A shows a singular pattern. Although the Jewish population in all areas consistently grew over the past half century, there was only one major change in the distribution: the Valley share<sup>11</sup> increased

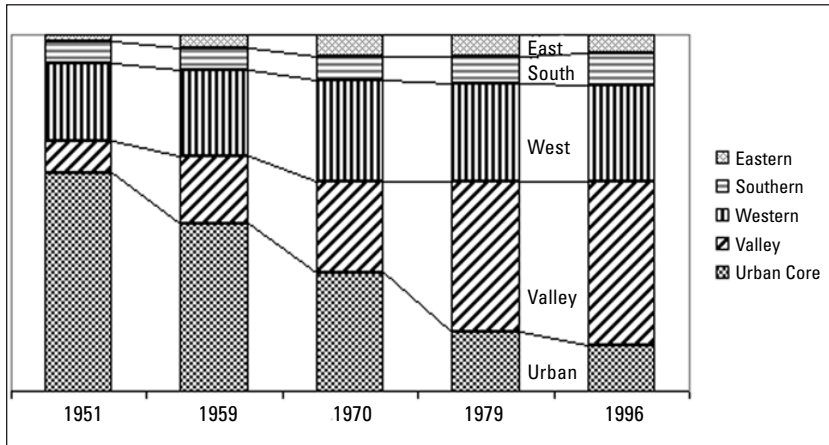
from 9% in 1951 to 46% in 1996, and the urban share decreased from 61% to 13% over the same time period. The greatest drop in urban share took place during the 1970s. The share of the population in the Eastern region has remained steady at 6% or less since 1970. The percentage in the Southern region grew gradually to 9% by 1996.

Table 2: Distribution of Jewish Population, 1953–1996

Region	1953	1958	1968	1979	1996
Urban Core	61%	47%	33%	17%	13%
Valley	9%	19%	26%	42%	46%
Western Area	22%	24%	28%	28%	27%
Southern	6%	6%	7%	8%	9%
Eastern	2%	4%	6%	6%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Phillips

Chart A: Distribution of Jewish Population, 1951–1996

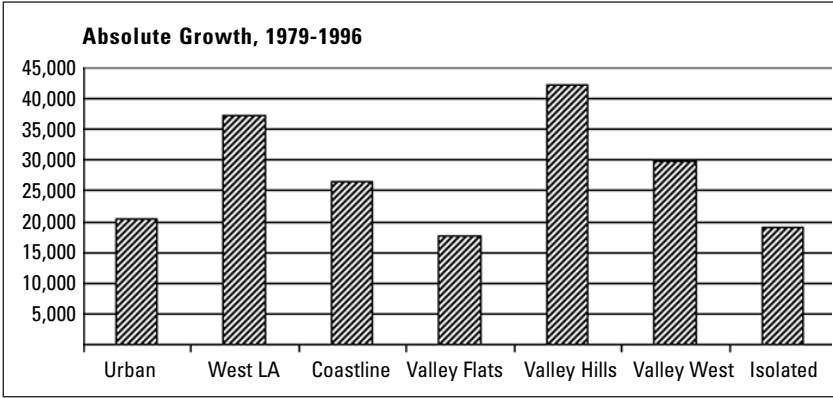


The overall distribution of the Jewish population by socio-ecology can be examined by comparing the 1979 and 1996 surveys. The Jewish population distribution remained stable between 1979 and 1996 with three exceptions: the “Urban” socio-ecology percentage decreased by 3% and the Valley Flats by 4%. Conversely, the percentage in the Valley Hills socio-ecology grew by 4%. The Isolated Areas percentage increased 2%, and most of the growth was north of the San Fernando Valley in Valencia, Santa Clarita, Palmdale, and Lancaster. There is evidence that the northern Isolated Area has become less isolated since 1996, as there are now four congregations in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys<sup>12</sup> in addition to Chabad of the Santa Clarita Valley. If the Jewish population in the northernmost part of Los Angeles County continues to grow, the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys might evolve into a socio-ecology of their own,

which we may call “North County.” Unfortunately, the 1979 and 1996 surveys did not contain sufficient interviews to break it out separately. As will be shown later, the Jewish population density in the North County was sparse in the 1996 survey, and thus it was combined with the southern isolated area in the “Isolated” socio-ecology.

While the Jewish population in all seven socio-ecologies grew between 1979 and 1996, not all of them grew to the same extent. The greatest absolute growth was in the Valley Hills, followed by West Los Angeles and the West Valley. The Valley Flats experienced the least Jewish population growth (Chart B). Another way to understand Jewish

**Chart B:** *Jewish Population Growth by Socio-Ecology, 1979–1996*



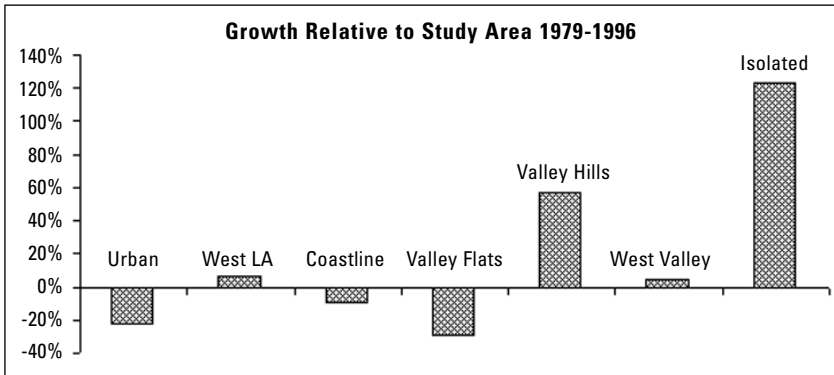
population growth is in relative terms by comparing the percentage of growth in each socio-ecology with the overall rate for all seven socio-ecologies combined (Chart C). Columns below the line indicate that the socio-ecology grew more slowly than all the socio-ecologies combined, and columns above indicate that the socio-ecology grew at a faster rate. Two socio-ecologies stand out with a substantially higher growth rate: the Valley Hills and the Isolated Areas (mostly in the northern Isolated Area). The Urban socio-ecology and the Valley Flats stand out with substantially lower rates of growth. Again, all areas grew in absolute numbers—the focus here is on relative growth rates. The Isolated Areas began with a small number of Jews, and the rapid growth only moved it from 3% to 5% of the total Jewish population. Nonetheless, both its relative and absolute growth make it a place to watch. In both absolute and relative terms, the population growth in the Valley Hills is especially dramatic and indicates the emergence of an important Jewish population center.

That the West Valley did not grow much faster than all seven socio-ecologies combined will come as a surprise to some. The conventional wisdom in the Los Angeles Jewish community is that this is the new Jewish hot-spot. For example, a recent article in the *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles* noted that “Many Jewish organizations are now focusing their efforts on the West Valley and Conejo Valley” (Fehler). The author further observes that:

My family and I moved to the Conejo Valley for the typical reasons: safer neighborhoods, better schools and, yes, to be around other Jews like us. I consider that move to be the best thing I have done for my family. I have never met anyone who has made the move who regrets it. Yes, for those who work in downtown Los Angeles, it's a bit of a shlep, but the rewards outweigh any of the downsides, by far.

The West Valley has also seen significant institutional growth. The offices of the Valley Alliance sub-division of the Los Angeles Jewish Federation are in the West Valley, sharing the site with the New Jewish Community Center (JCC) at Milken. The JCC also houses the New Jewish High School of the Conejo Valley. In addition, the Heschel West Day School opened recently in Agoura Hills. The operative word in the West Valley is “new.” However, even though the emergence of a Jewish population center and important new Jewish institutions in the West Valley give this socio-ecology significant visibility, their greater growth has been documented in the more established Valley Hills socio-ecology. The growth of the Valley Hills thus begs the question of how it is different from the West Valley, the area presumed to have grown the most.

**Chart C:** Jewish Population Growth by Socio-Ecology, 1979–1996



**UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIO-ECOLOGIES WHERE JEWS LIVE**

Over the half-century spanning the 1953 and 1996 Los Angeles population surveys, the Jewish population has steadily increased in all parts of the Los Angeles and Ventura counties. One trend nonetheless stands out: the proportion of Jews living in the Southern Area, the Western Area, and the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys has remained remarkably stable, while the Valley replaced the Urban Core in terms of Jewish population share.

It is important to note that Jews and Anglos are not dispersed in the same areas in equal proportions (Table 3). Anglos (that is, the non-Jewish non-Hispanic whites) are five times as likely as Jews to live in the Eastern Valley<sup>13</sup> and the Isolated Areas

(37% vs. 7%). Conversely, Jews are two and a half times as likely as Anglos to live in West Los Angeles, the West Valley, and the Valley Hills. Jews are also more urban than Anglos, as they are 1.6 times as likely to live in the Urban socio-ecology. Jews and Anglos, however, are equally likely to live in Long Beach, the Coastline communities, and the Valley Flats.

**Table 3: Distribution of Jewish and Anglo Population by Ecology, Los Angeles + Eastern Ventura County**

<b>Ecology</b>	<b>Jews</b>	<b>Anglo</b>
Isolated	4%	25%
Eastern Valleys	3%	13%
Long Beach	5%	5%
Coastline	14%	13%
Valley Flats	15%	18%
West Valley	14%	10%
Urban	14%	9%
West LA	17%	6%
Valley Hills	14%	2%
Total	100%	100%

**JEWISH DENSITY**

Given that Jews are more likely than Anglo non-Jews to live in particular socio-ecologies, their presence should be statistically evident in areas of Jewish preference. This is indeed the case. Table 4 combines the Jewish population estimate for each socio-ecology (based on the 1996 Jewish population survey) with the population estimates calculated from the 2000 Census,<sup>14</sup> using four categories: Jews as a percent of the entire population of the socio-ecology, non-Jewish Anglos as a percent of the entire population,<sup>15</sup> non-Jewish non-Anglos (e.g. Hispanics, African-Americans, Asians) as a percent of the entire population, and Jews as a percent of the Anglo population. It is evident from this table that ethno-racial composition and Jewish density vary dramatically by socio-ecology, and the most visible “Jewish areas,” such as Fairfax and Pico-Robertson, are not all that Jewish. The Jewish character of Fairfax, for example, is widely recognized by the local media, which tends to report Jewish stories “live from the Fairfax district” in the same way that Asian stories are reported from Koreatown, Hispanic stories from East Los Angeles, and African American stories from “South Central” and the “Crenshaw district.” Fairfax and Pico-Robertson are unquestionably the most *visibly* Jewish sections of Los Angeles, since they contain much Hebrew signage for bakeries, delis, Israeli and kosher restaurants, book stores and Judaica shops. There are many orthodox synagogues on both Pico Boulevard and La Brea (in the Fairfax area). West Hollywood, just to the north of the Fairfax District (often considered part of it) has a visible Russian émigré presence with much signage in Russian along its streets. As Table 4 shows, even the most widely recognized Jewish Urban neighborhoods are only 22% Jewish (although Jews make up almost half of the white, non-Hispanic population). Overall the Urban socio-ecology is only 4% Jewish, and, if just the zip codes where Jews are known to live are considered,<sup>16</sup> Jewish density increases only to 7%, about the same as the Los Angeles area<sup>17</sup> overall. Finally, it is notable in Table 4 that Jews are over-represented among Anglos in the Urban socio-ecology at 30%, compared to 21% overall.

The Urban socio-ecology is heavily non-white (87%), and even the most visible Jewish neighborhoods are more than half non-Anglo (54%).

The Valley Flats socio-ecology resembles the Urban socio-ecology in that the majority of its residents are non-Anglo (63%) and it has a low Jewish population density (7%). Jews were interviewed in twenty-six out of the thirty-two zip codes that constitute the Valley Flats, and the picture changes little if only these twenty-six zip codes are considered (data not shown). In other words, Jewish density is low in the Valley Flats because (1) there are six zip codes with virtually no Jews at all<sup>18</sup> and (2) there are not many Jews relative to the general population in the twenty-six zip codes where Jews reside. Still, the Valley Flats covers many square miles, and one might assume that the most visibly Jewish areas of the Valley Flats (North Hollywood, and “Valley Village”) are predominantly Jewish. But even though a vibrant orthodox community can be found in this part of the Valley Flats along with the very active Valley Cities Jewish Community Center, Jewish visibility does not translate into Jewish numbers. Indeed, this visibly orthodox section of the Valley Flats is only 7% Jewish.

Table 4: Jewish Density and Racial Composition by Ecology

	% Jewish	% Anglo Non-Jews	% Non-Jewish Non-Anglo	Total	Jews as % of Anglo
Urban—all	4	9	87	100%	30%
Urban-Jewish zips*	7	13	81	100%	34%
Urban-Visible Jewish**	22	24	54	100%	47%
West LA	26	31	43	100%	45%
Coastline	12	44	44	100%	21%
Valley Flats	7	31	63	100%	17%
Valley Hills	48	30	22	100%	61%
West Valley	16	51	33	100%	24%
South Isolated—all zips	1	15	85	100%	4%
South Isolated—Jewish zips**	1	11	88	100%	12%
North Isolated	3	55	42	100%	4%
Long Beach***	15	36	49	100%	30%
Eastern***	1	11	88	100%	6%
ALL	6	22	72	100%	21%

\* Zip codes in which Jews were interviewed in the 1996 Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey

\*\* Fairfax, West Hollywood, and Pico Robertson zip codes

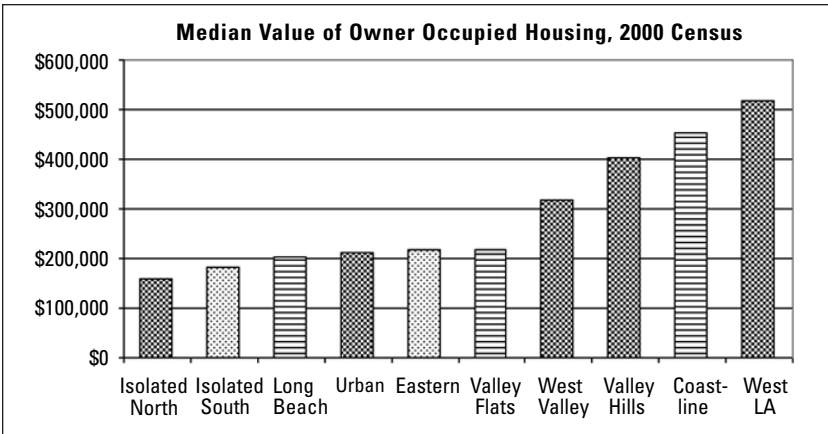
\*\*\* These are based on estimates taken from the American Jewish Year Book and not from actual research.

In terms of population, the most Jewish socio-ecology is the Valley Hills (48% Jewish), followed by West Los Angeles (26%). Even more dramatic, Jews account for

61% of the Anglo population in the Valley Hills, and 45% in West Los Angeles. The Coastline communities are less Jewish: Jews make up only 12% of the overall population and only 21% of the Anglo population. This is a socio-ecology where Jews and Anglo non-Jews are equally likely to live. Consistent with their designation as “isolated,” Jews are under-represented in the Isolated Areas. Even in the newly developed and rapidly growing Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys at the north end of Los Angeles County, Jews make up only 3% of the population. In other words, this newly emerging destination of “white flight”<sup>19</sup> is no more Jewish than the Urban socio-ecology.

Jews are more likely than Anglos to live in three out of the four most expensive socio-ecologies shown in Chart D: West Los Angeles, West Valley, and Valley Hills. These were the first, third, and fourth most expensive socio-ecologies according to the 2000 U.S. Census.<sup>20</sup> Jews and Anglos were equally likely to reside in Coastline communities, the second most expensive socio-ecology. The median home values in the Valley Flats, Eastern Valleys, Urban neighborhoods, Isolated Areas and Long Beach were similar to each other and considerably less than the four most expensive socio-ecologies. Of the five less expensive areas, Jews were over-represented only in the Urban socio-ecology, relative to Anglos. Thus, Jews are over-represented in the most affluent neighborhoods with the exception of the Coastline, where they are equally represented, and in the traditionally Jewish Urban socio-ecologies. Unfortunately, the San Gabriel Valley was not included in the 1996 survey, and thus such affluent areas as San Marino and La Canada could not be included in this analysis.

Chart D: *Housing Value by Socio-Ecology, 2000*

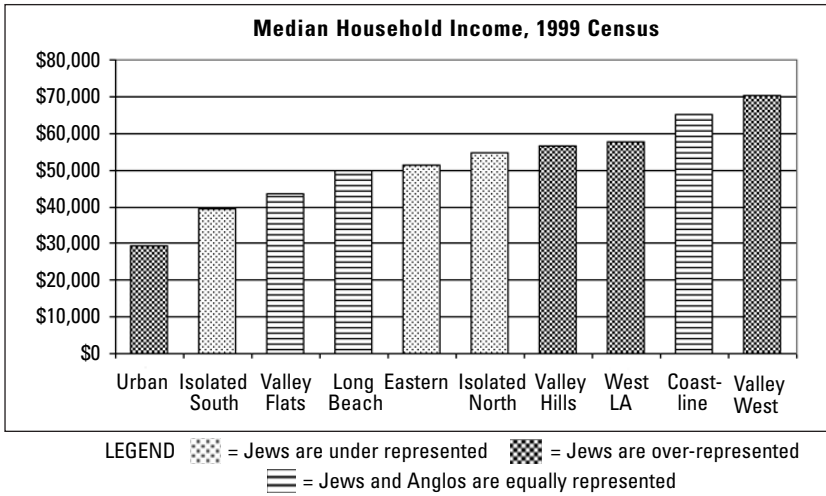


As one would expect, the four most expensive socio-ecologies also have the highest household incomes (Chart E). From most affluent to least, they are: West Valley, Coastline, West Los Angeles, and Valley Hills. Chart E shows that the greatest difference is between the four most affluent areas and all the rest. The pattern of Jewish income

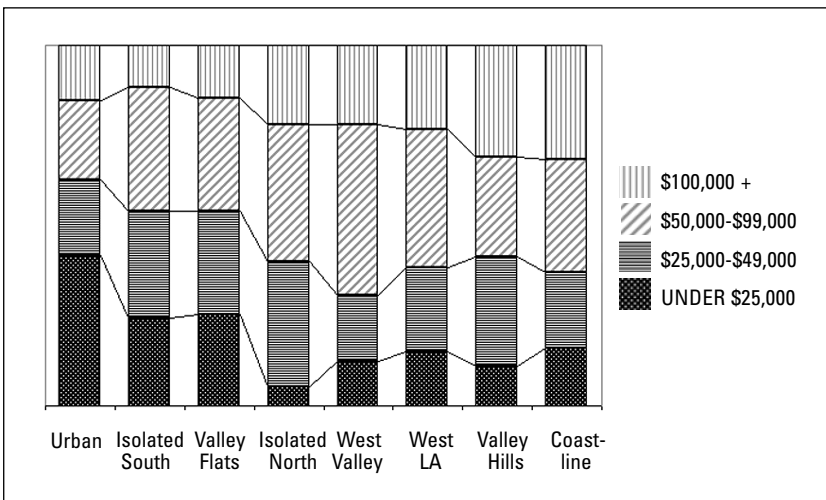


in 1996 resembles the overall pattern of income from the 2000 Census (Chart F), and hence the four most affluent socio-ecologies in general are also the four most affluent socio-ecologies for Jews. The Urban zip codes are similarly the least affluent both for Jews and the general population. Although the sample size for the Northern Isolated Area is small, it is broken out separately in Chart F because it is an area of potential Jewish growth. Jewish as well as all households in this newer Northern Isolated Area are more affluent than those in the older Southern Isolated Area.

**Chart E:** *Median Income, 1999, by Socio-Ecology*



**Chart F:** *Jewish Household Income, 1996, by Socio-Ecology*



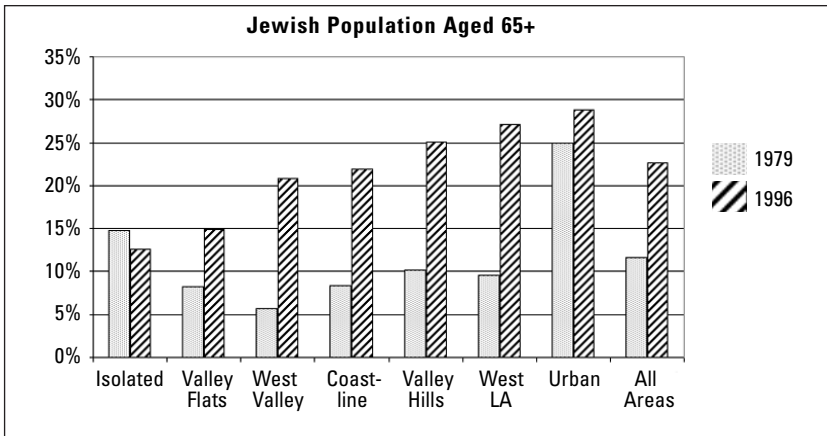
### THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE SEVEN SOCIO-ECOLOGIES

#### AGE

Like persons, given local areas with stable populations can each go through a life cycle of its own. Absent extensive “in-and-out” migration, young couples will have children and couples with children will become “empty-nesters” over time. As spouses die and couples divorce, older couples become older singles. Migration out of an area can accelerate these trends if, for example, young families leave established areas and move to outer suburbs in search of affordable housing. Such life cycle changes are evident in Los Angeles, but not always in the expected direction.

Los Angeles Jewry has aged since 1979 (Chart G), with the percentage of the Jewish population age sixty-five and older doubling from 12% to 23%. Similarly, the proportion of elderly has grown in all the socio-ecologies, save for the Isolated Areas. Just as in 1979, the Urban neighborhoods remain the oldest in 1996, but there is an important difference. In 1979, as can be seen in Chart G, the Urban neighborhoods were the only socio-ecology with a significant proportion of Jews, aged sixty-five and older. The proportion of Jewish seniors in Urban neighborhoods was between 1.7 and 4.4 times greater than in any other socio-ecology. However, by 1996 the proportion of Jewish seniors in Urban neighborhoods (29%) was only slightly higher than in West Los Angeles (27%). The most remarkable growth in the percentage of Jewish seniors was in the West Valley, where the proportion of seniors increased from 6% in 1979 to 21% in 1996.

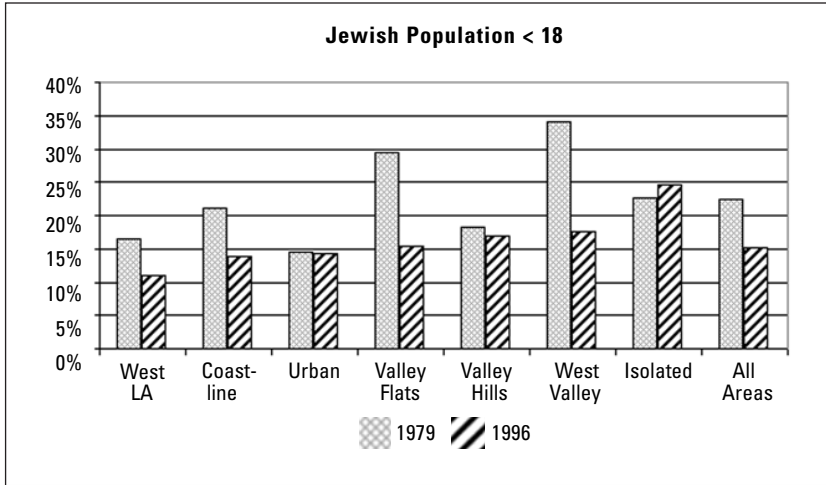
**Chart G:** Jewish Population 65+by Ecology, 1979 & 1996



Turning to the other end of the age spectrum, the proportion of children in the Jewish population of Los Angeles declined significantly between 1979 and 1996 from 22% to 15%. Among the socio-ecologies, the most precipitous declines were in the West Valley and Valley Flats, where the proportion of children declined almost by half. The proportion of children also declined in the Coastline communities and West Los

Angeles. As expected, the proportion of children increased slightly in the Isolated Areas, in part because of Jewish growth in the family-friendly Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys. Not expected, however, was that the proportion of children in the Urban neighborhoods remained stable—an indication of sustained vitality.

**Chart H:** *Jewish Population < 18 by Socio-Ecology, 1979 & 1996*

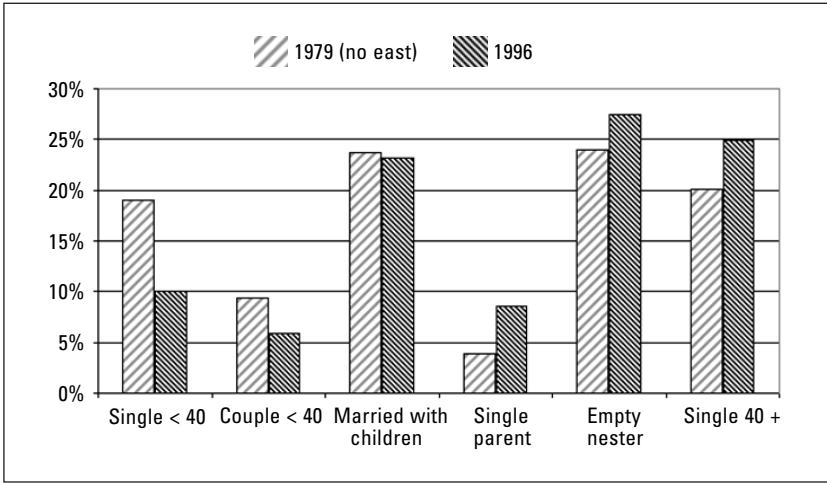


**HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION**

The aging of the Los Angeles Jewish population is also evident in the changing household composition. As can be seen in Chart I, since 1979 the proportion of younger households (both couples and singles) declined from 28% to 16%, with the steepest decline in the proportion of young couples without children. Conversely, the proportion of “empty-nesters” and older (forty plus) singles increased. The proportion of married couples with children declined only slightly from 24% to 23%, which is effectively no change at all. This is significant because nationally the proportion of Jewish married couples with children declined from 26% to 20%.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the proportion of married couples in the San Francisco Area declined sharply from 34% to 22% between 1986 and 2004.<sup>22</sup> As one would expect, the proportion of single parent families more than doubled from 4% in 1979 to 9% in 1996. Taken together, the proportion of households with children increased slightly from 28% to 32% between 1979 and 1996. This increase in the proportion of households with children would initially seem at odds with the observation made earlier that the proportion of the population under eighteen declined between 1979 and 1996. The apparent inconsistency is resolved by taking family size into consideration. In 1979 households with children had an average of 1.7 children per family. In 1996 this ratio had declined to 0.9 children per family.

The distribution of Jewish household composition is not expected to be uniform throughout Los Angeles. To the contrary, Jewish neighborhoods in urban areas are

**Chart I: Jewish Household Composition, 1979 & 1996**



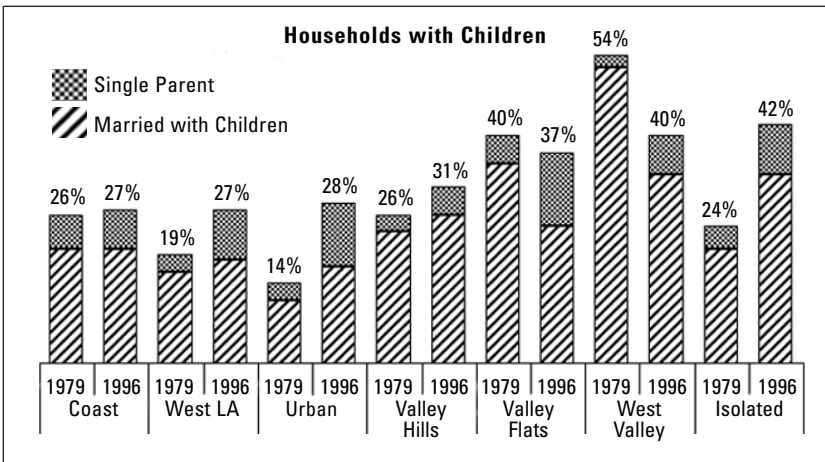
generally thought of as elderly and poor, while newer suburbs and exurbs are expected to have more families with children that moved there in search of affordable housing and better schools. Older suburbs, typically settled during the postwar Baby Boom, are usually thought of as aging in place fifty years later. The young couples, who moved there and raised their children there, have remained in their homes and become older “empty nesters.” Los Angeles Jewry somewhat conforms to this pattern, but with some unexpected surprises. As mentioned, the Isolated Areas in 1996 included the Santa Clarita Valley in the northernmost section of Los Angeles County, which has many new housing developments designed for young families in search of affordable housing. As expected, these exurbs, which include the West Valley and the Isolated Areas, had the highest proportion of families with children: 42% in the Isolated Areas and 40% in the West Valley. The proportion of households with children increased in the Isolated Areas, in part because of the growth of the Santa Clarita Valley. The proportion of households with children in the West Valley remained high relative to other areas, although it actually declined from 54% to 40%. This decline is explained at least in part by the pattern of aging taking place there. As Chart L shows, the proportion of “empty-nesters” (couples forty and older with no children remaining at home) in the West Valley increased from 21% in 1979 to 32% in 1996. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion of young couples without children in the West Valley from 12% down to 5%. Yet another indication of the aging of the West Valley is the decline in the percentage of Jews under ten years of age from 17% in 1979 to 11% in 1996 (data not shown).

The proportion of households with children in the Valley Flats declined slightly, but single parent families became more prominent in that same socio-ecology. The proportion of households with children increased in the Valley Hills from 26% to 31%,

with the ratio of single-parent families to couples with children remaining essentially constant. The proportion of households with children also increased in West Los Angeles, due primarily to an increase in the percentage of single-parent families. The proportion of households with children in Coastline communities did not change, and the relative proportion of single-parent families among them also remained constant.

The most dramatic and least expected change in household age occurred in the Urban neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are historically the oldest and were expected to die out as the Jewish residents aged. It was this expectation that led the Jewish Centers Association to recommend closing the Westside Jewish Community Center a half century after it opened (Ballon, “Krayzelburg”; “Members Rally”; “Westside JCC Bash”). However, instead of simply getting older, the Urban neighborhoods have experienced a familial regeneration. The proportion of households with children in the Urban socio-ecology doubled, fueled by an increase in the percentage of both couples with children and single-parent families.

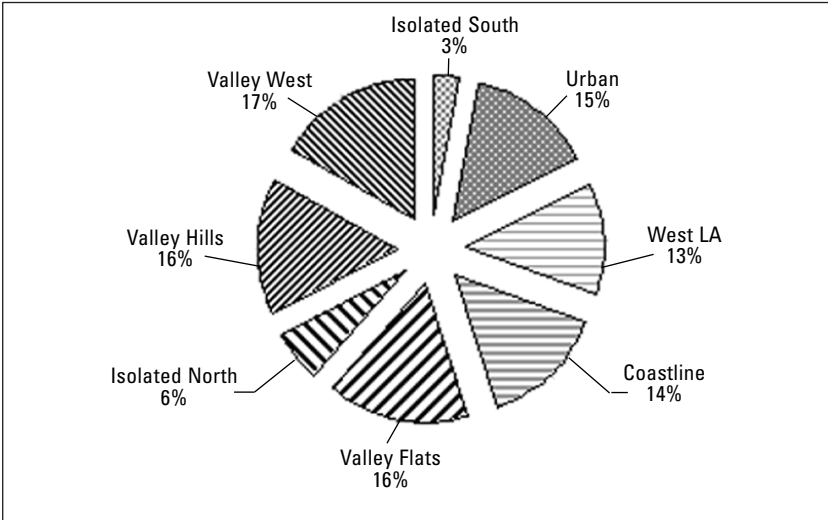
**Chart J:** *Households with Children by Socio-Ecology, 1979 & 1996*



With the exception of the two Isolated Areas, Jewish children are almost equally distributed among all the socio-ecologies (Chart K). In terms of Jewish “urban renewal,” this is significant because there are almost as many children in the Urban neighborhoods as there are in the exurban family oriented West Valley. Overall, the balance of children tips toward the north: 55% of all Jewish children live in the San Fernando, Conejo, Antelope, Santa Clarita, and Simi Valleys. Although fewer Jewish children are found in the four non-Valley socio-ecologies, these neighborhoods are also more concentrated into a smaller geographic area, as can be seen in Map A. This represents an important difference between the Valleys and the rest of Jewish Los Angeles.

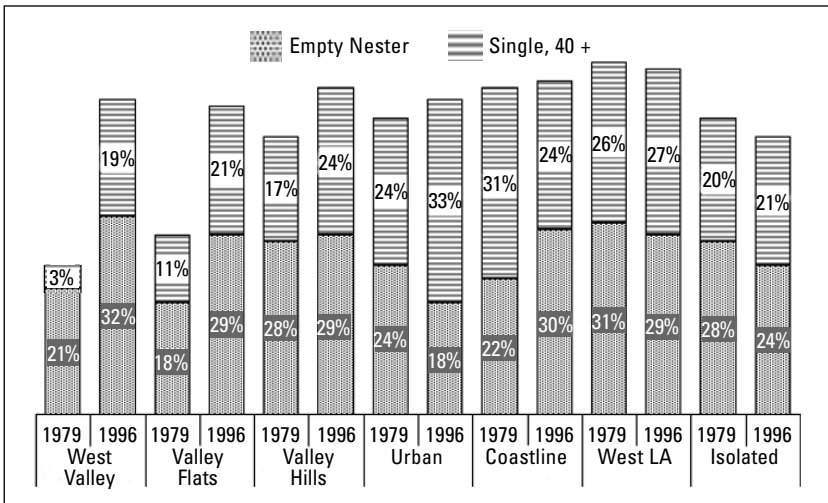
Another way to look at the life-cycle of communities is the proportion of older singles and empty-nesters.<sup>23</sup> As neighborhoods and communities age, this will be

Chart K: Distribution of Jewish Children by Socio-Ecology, 1996



reflected in the relative proportion of households at the older end of the life cycle. Such aging is most evident in the Valley Flats and West Valley, where the proportions of empty nesters increased dramatically (Chart L). The proportion of empty nesters remained steady in the Valley Hills, but the proportion of older singles increased. In the Urban neighborhoods, there was a drop in the proportion of empty-nesters and an increase in the proportion of older singles. Thus the Urban socio-ecology of Jewish Los Angeles is experiencing both an end-of-the-life cycle as well as a renewal.

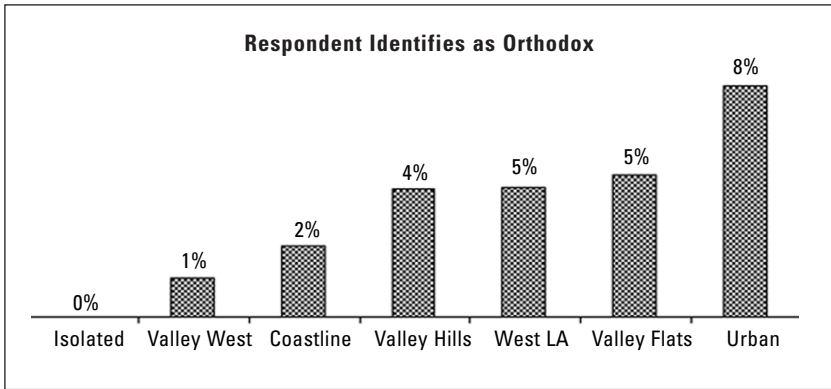
Chart L: Empty-Nesters and Older Singles by Socio-Ecology, 1979 & 1996



**JEWISH DIMENSIONS**

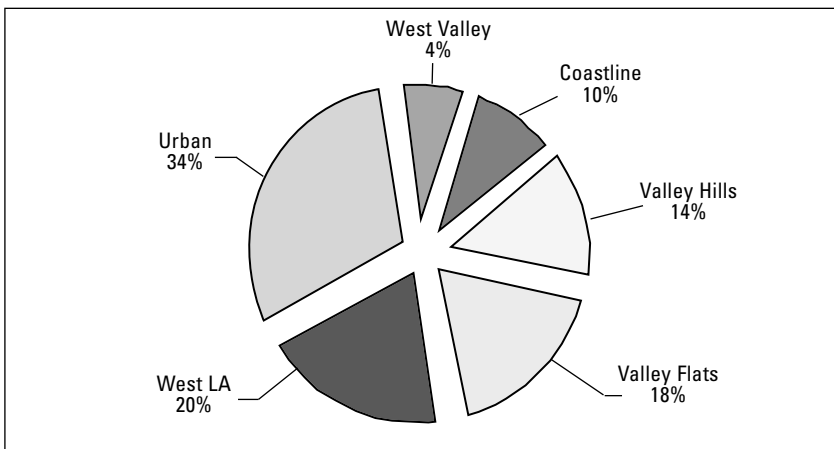
The literature on ethnic assimilation understands suburbanization as spatial assimilation. Moving into the suburbs represents moving in with the Anglo (white, non-Jewish) population. As discussed above, Jews have not dispersed equally and randomly throughout suburban Los Angeles. Rather, they have concentrated in particular areas such as West Los Angeles, the Valley Hills, and the West Valley. Are their Jewish behaviors in keeping with this relative lack of dispersion?

**Chart M:** *Orthodox Identification by Socio-Ecology, 1996*



One would expect Orthodox Jews to be concentrated in Urban neighborhoods which are older, well-established, and within walking distance of synagogues. This is only partially the case. While Urban respondents in the 1996 Jewish Population Survey are more likely to identify as Orthodox than respondents in the other socio-ecologies (Chart M); still, only a minority identify themselves in this way (8%). Moreover, there

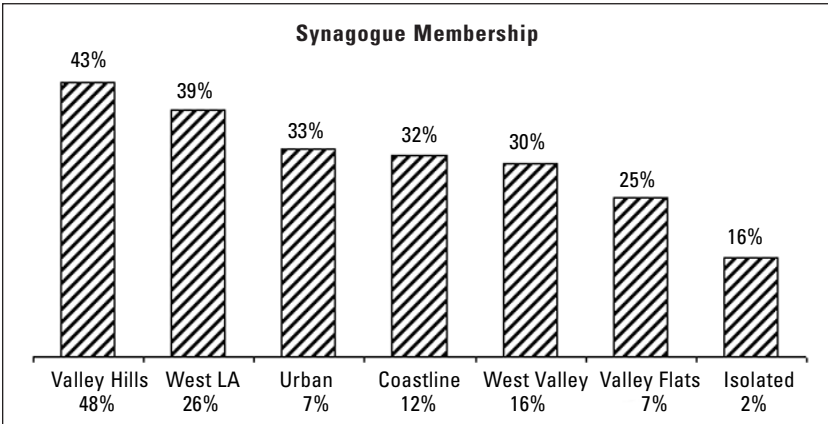
**Chart N:** *Distribution of Orthodox Identification by Socio-Ecology, 1996*



are many more Orthodox house holds found outside of the Urban socio-ecology than within it (Chart N).

Synagogue membership is highest in the “most Jewish” areas, which suggests that Jews with a religious orientation concentrate in “Jewish” areas. Chart O shows synagogue membership to be highest in the Valley Hills, which is 48% Jewish, and in West Los Angeles, which is 26% Jewish. With the exception of the Urban socio-ecology, the lower the Jewish density in a given area, the lower the rate of synagogue membership. The Urban socio-ecology, which is only 7% Jewish in the zip codes where Jews reside, nonetheless has the third highest rate of synagogue membership. There could also be a factor of self-selection here, as some Jews seek out the ambience of the old Jewish neighborhoods.

Chart O: *Synagogue Membership by Socio-Ecology, 1996*



Income also plays a role in synagogue membership, and as mentioned previously, some socio-ecologies are more affluent than others. To what extent are the socio-ecological differences in affiliation simply income differences? Table 5 shows that synagogue membership increases with income from only 19% among the least affluent households to 49% among the most affluent. Within the four income categories, the association between socio-ecology and synagogue membership persists, although not consistently. However, if only the highest income category is considered, for whom the cost of synagogue membership would not be an important barrier to joining, the pattern remains: with the exception of the Urban neighborhoods, the communities with the highest Jewish densities also had the highest rates of synagogue membership (Chart P).

In the same way that the seven socio-ecologies differ from each other, Los Angeles is different from the rest of Southern California. Using synagogue membership as an indicator of “Jewishness,” the data from the 2000–2001 National Jewish Population Survey<sup>24</sup> were used to compare Los Angeles County with the six surround-

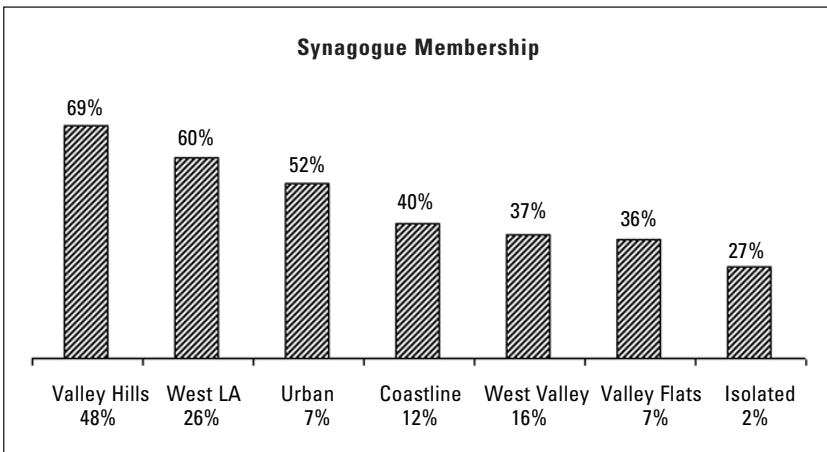


ing counties: Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Diego. The synagogue membership rate for Los Angeles County in the National Jewish Population Survey is 26%, compared with 15% for rest of Southern California. Thus, in the larger context of Southern California, Los Angeles is itself a kind of Jewish neighborhood. Given the continuous growth of Southern California Jewry from migration into the region, the different rates of synagogue membership computed from the National Jewish Population Survey suggest that Los Angeles is attracting Jews with a stronger religious orientation than the surrounding areas. This makes sense given the earlier observation that the Anglo population of Los Angeles has decreased while the Jewish population has increased.

**Table 5: Synagogue Membership by Socio-Ecology and Income**  
(% reporting synagogue membership)

Socio-Ecology	Household Income			
	UNDER \$25,000	\$25,000–\$49,999	\$50,000–\$99,999	\$100,000 and over
Valley Hills	41%	38%	32%	69%
West LA	9%	27%	34%	60%
Urban	20%	32%	37%	52%
Coastline	16%	21%	34%	40%
West Valley	11%	42%	25%	37%
Valley Flats	20%	17%	28%	36%
Isolated	16%	4%	25%	27%
All Areas	19%	26%	31%	49%

**Chart P: Synagogue Membership Among Households Earning \$100,000 or more by Socio-Ecology, 1996**



## CONCLUSION

At the most general methodological level, this paper has shown that local Jewish population surveys should not be undertaken and analyzed in an intellectual vacuum. The geographic re-conceptualization of Los Angeles in terms of the “Los Angeles School of Urbanism” undertaken here has revealed trends not evident using the traditional geographic divisions shared by most Jewish institutions. The traditional geographic divisions are useful for administrative purposes,<sup>25</sup> but they hide more than they reveal about the actual make-up of Jewish Los Angeles. For example, differentiating between the Valley Hills and Valley Flats reveals two very different socio-ecologies.

In substantive terms, this analysis of Los Angeles has shown that suburbanization and assimilation are not the same process. Affluent Jewish suburbs such as West Los Angeles and the Valley Hills are arguably the “most Jewish” sections of Los Angeles. In fact, it could well be argued that suburban communities such as the Valley Hills are in the process of replacing (and have surely joined) the classic urban Jewish neighborhoods such as Fairfax and Pico-Robertson as the “heart of Jewish Los Angeles.” Much of Los Angeles contains numerous ethnic, racial, and immigrant concentrations (Allen and Turner; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr), and the residential patterns of Jews are consistent with this patchwork of concentrations. This raises a question for future and comparative research: to what extent is the Los Angeles pattern unique to Los Angeles? Is the emergence of densely Jewish and highly synagogue-affiliated suburbs the result of the ethnic and racial balkanization of Los Angeles, or is it part of a larger trend in other American cities?

All the published studies of spatial assimilation and residential concentration in Los Angeles are based on census data.<sup>26</sup> As such they have little or no information about Jews.<sup>27</sup> The analysis of the 1979 and 1996 Jewish population surveys presented here demonstrates that a consideration of statistics on Jews enriches the overall understanding of Los Angeles.

Finally, from a Jewish communal perspective there are important questions left hanging that only a new study can address. Among these are: What has happened in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys where the Jewish population was just beginning to grow? Has the urban regeneration continued? Has the development of downtown and Hollywood attracted Jews back into the city? Like the ending of an old-time radio serial, we can only hope that there will be a next study sometime in the future for us to “tune in to next time.”

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> The 1979 survey was conducted by the author. The 1996 Jewish Population Survey was conducted by Dr. Lester “Pini” Herman. The methodology of the 1979 survey is described in Phillips, “Los Angeles Jewry.” The methodology of the 1996 survey can be found in Herman 16–19. Appendix A compares the samples of the two studies.
- <sup>2</sup> These are separate Federations and they declined to participate in the Jewish population survey.
- <sup>3</sup> It was defeated in a city-wide vote.
- <sup>4</sup> Renamed MacArthur Park.
- <sup>5</sup> These are largely African American communities.
- <sup>6</sup> Vernon, Bell, Compton, Gardena, Huntington Park, Lynwood, South Gate, Harbor City, Lomita, San Pedro, and Carson.
- <sup>7</sup> Newhall, Santa Clarita, Canyon Country, Valencia, Stevenson Ranch, Acton, Lancaster, and Palmdale.
- <sup>8</sup> For a complete description see Phillips.
- <sup>9</sup> The *American Jewish Yearbook* is published annually by the American Jewish Committee. It includes a section on local Jewish population estimates submitted to and compiled by the Research Department of the Council of Jewish Federations (now the United Jewish Communities).
- <sup>10</sup> For example, Encino which is in the Valley Hills ecology is reported together with Reseda which is in the Valley Flats ecology.
- <sup>11</sup> The “Valley” here refers to the San Fernando, Conejo, Simi, and Santa Clarita valleys combined.
- <sup>12</sup> Or Emet—Independent; Temple Beth Ami—Reform; Congregation Beth Shalom—Conservative; Beth Knesset *Bamidbar*—Reform.
- <sup>13</sup> That is, the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys.
- <sup>14</sup> Census data are available on-line at the zip code level. Population totals by race and Hispanic status were aggregated for each socio-ecology.
- <sup>15</sup> The percentage of non-Jewish Anglos = (% white non-Hispanic)-( % Jewish).
- <sup>16</sup> I.e., at least one Jewish household was interviewed in that zip code.
- <sup>17</sup> I.e., Los Angeles County + Eastern Ventura County.
- <sup>18</sup> There are so few that none were interviewed within the sample of the 1996 Jewish population survey.
- <sup>19</sup> These are the areas where “racial” incidents and “hate crimes” against African-Americans are most likely to occur.
- <sup>20</sup> Census data by zip code are available online from the Census. Census data were aggregated by zip code to calculate median home value for all owner-occupied households in each socio-ecology.
- <sup>21</sup> Computed from the 1990 and 2000 National Jewish Population Surveys.
- <sup>22</sup> Computed from the raw data in both surveys cited in the previous note.
- <sup>23</sup> An empty nest household is a couple without children in which the wife is forty years old or older.

- <sup>24</sup> The raw data for the National Jewish Population Survey, 2000–2001 are available from the North American Jewish Databank ([www.jewishdatabank.org](http://www.jewishdatabank.org)). Reports from the National Jewish Population Survey, 2000–2001 are available at [www.ujc.org/njps](http://www.ujc.org/njps).
- <sup>25</sup> The Los Angeles Jewish Federation-Council has divided fundraising into the West (Santa Monica), Metro (Westwood, Beverly Hills, and urban Los Angeles), Southern (Everything south of the airport), and the “Valley Alliance.”
- <sup>26</sup> These studies have been cited throughout this paper.
- <sup>27</sup> “Russian ancestry” is sometimes used as a proxy for Jews, but it has limited applicability.

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