

**Which Immigrant Occupational Skills?:
Explanations of Jewish Economic Mobility in the United States
and New Evidence, 1910-1920**

by

Joel Perlmann*

Working Paper No. 181

December 1996

*Senior Scholar, The Jerome Levy Economics Institute

This working paper directs attention to an historical puzzle, the rapid upward mobility of the east-European Jews who came to the United States between 1880 and 1920. Theoretically important issues are inherent in the explanations for Jewish upward mobility, and in any case, this particular historical puzzle has received so much attention in discussions of ethnicity and mobility that any refinement of the arguments about Jewish upward mobility cannot help but bear on the way we think about ethnicity and mobility generally. And more specifically, the case of the Jews has been prominent in American debates about structure and culture among the immigrants. The story line is familiar, indeed well-worn: the east-European Jews came to the United States at the same time as many other European immigrant groups (between 1880 and 1920). Yet the east-European Jewish immigrants and their offspring reached middle class status in fewer decades, or in fewer generations, than did other immigrant groups and their offspring. Explaining this phenomenon of rapid east-European Jewish upward mobility has been a staple product of American social science for at least two generations.¹

I was drawn to study the east-European Jewish immigration when I began to think about the variety of quantitative sources that may have been studied in earlier generations, but that could shed a good of new light on the east-European Jewish immigration if these sources were subjected to analysis with the aid of a computer. For the purposes of this paper, three are especially important and they are described in table 1.

Now I intend to focus on one seemingly modest issue, the extent to which the immigrant

¹For a review see Joel Perlmann, *Ethnic Differences*, ch. 4.

Jews were concentrated in manufacturing occupations -- especially in skilled trades such as tailoring, shoemaking or carpentry -- and the extent to which, by contrast, the immigrant Jews were concentrated in petty trade, and were moving into petty trade. This modest formulation will not resolve all aspects of our puzzle, but it nonetheless does go to the heart of current social science interpretations of American Jewish social mobility.

One prevalent line of explanation for Jewish upward mobility, and I think really the prevalent line of explanation among social scientists today, stresses above all a structural fit in economic terms -- that is, a fit between the immigrants occupational skills and the American economy. Or to put it another way, the distinctive Jewish economic mobility patterns in the United States, have had much to do with the premigration economic position that the Jews had earlier occupied in Europe, because that premigration economic position had provided them with certain skills useful in the American economy. For centuries, the Jews had been concentrated in commercial occupations (typically petty trade), and (in eastern Europe especially) they had also been concentrated in artisanal crafts, crafts that were in the process of being transformed to more modern industrial working arrangements. Of these crafts, the most important was tailoring, but it was by no means the only important artisanal craft among the Jews. Now, according to the prevalent social scientific argument that I am summarizing, it was the concentration in manufacturing handicrafts, in artisanal occupations, that was a special source of advantage to the Jews when they came to America -- compared to a background of so many other groups in agricultural labor. Experience in petty trade may have helped too, just as other factors, like experience in urban places (or at least in small towns) rather than rural locales may have helped too; but it was the transferable manufacturing skills that were crucial. Manufacturing skills were

transferrable skills and therefore, so the argument goes, former artisans were greatly over-represented among the Jewish immigrant arrivals. These artisanal skills gave the Jews a crucial advantage compared to other immigrants who lacked such skills.

I could point to many formulations of this argument; but let me just mention one example, the thoughtful book by Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews*. This is an especially sophisticated book, based on very wide reading and impressive thinking about theoretical issues and about Jewish social history. Goldscheider and Zuckerman write:

The migration [of east-European Jews to the United States] was selective on socioeconomic grounds.... There was a much higher proportion of skilled laborers... among the immigrants than among the Jewish force in the Tsarist Empire. In addition, merchants and dealers were much less likely to emigrate during the first decades of mass emigration. They accounted for one-third of the gainfully occupied Jews in Russia and 6 percent of the immigrants.... Emigration occurred especially among artisans whose skills could be easily transferred abroad.... Fully two-thirds of the Jews entering the United States had been engaged in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits in Europe, more than three fourths as skilled workers.... The selectivity of the Jewish migration fit into the particular labor and occupational opportunities in America and provided the Jews an enormous structural advantage over other immigrants in the pursuit of

occupational integration and social mobility.²

We have here a series of interlocking arguments: 1) east-European Jews had been concentrated in trade and handicrafts, 2) those in handicrafts were much more likely to emigrate, and 3) having emigrated, their artisanal skills gave them a leg up in the American industrial economy. I believe questions must be raised about the last two of these arguments. And in particular, I am going to stress that the prevailing interpretation does not pay close enough attention to the tendency of east-European Jews to concentrate in commercial occupations -- above all in petty trade.

We need to think about the concentration in trade in two ways. First, the phenomenon of occupational concentration is itself a topic that deserves our attention -- because it amounts to a distinctive ethnic pattern of behavior that needs to be explained. And vaguely pointing to 'industrial skills' is going to adequately explain that move into trade, as I'll show later. Second, the move into trade is not merely interesting because it is a distinct ethnic pattern; rather it is a crucially important pattern, since that move was a crucial basis for the phenomenon of Jewish upward mobility. So to say that a vague appeal to industrial skills won't explain the move into trade is to say that the appeal to industrial skills will not explain a crucial feature of Jewish upward mobility.

However, the dominant trends in the social scientific and historical literature have tended to produce a curious and largely unconscious convergence of intellectual interests that led scholars to focus rather on the industrial skills than on the commercial orientation of the Jewish

² Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, The Transformation of the Jew (Chicago, 1984) 162-7; see also, e.g., Stephan Sternberg, The Ethnic Myth (New York, 1980).

immigrants. First, when in 1907, Isaac Rubinow first wrote authoritative summaries of the Russian Jewish economic situation, and about the Jewish immigration to the United States, he was at great pains to contradict, and referred repeatedly to, "the argument that the entire Jewish race is a race of traders and therefore exploiters...", or "the theory generally accepted both in Russia and in the United States that the European Jew is in the majority of cases a merchant, and only in America is transformed into a productive worker." He argued both that the percentage of Jews in industrial occupations' was greater than popular conception would have it, and that the immigration had been dramatically selective, in that whereas a third of the Russian Jews were in commerce only a twentieth of the immigrants were. Rubinow's work was later central to several influential papers by the economist and economic historian, Simon Kuznets. Kuznets extended Rubinow's analysis in several essays on these issues, most notably a magisterial book-length monograph, "The Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States, Background and Structure," published in 1975. And I think through Kuznets's work in particular, the argument reached into the work of social scientists interested in stressing the extent to which concrete material advantages (for example knowing how to use a needle and thread in a market in which that skill was a great asset); they could oppose this advantage to the vague, self-congratulatory, and nostalgic mentions of cultural characteristics' (traditions of learning, Jewish psychological traits, etc. etc.), that formed a competing explanation of the east-European Jewish mobility patterns in the west.³

³Isaac M. Rubinow, Economic Condition of the Jews in Russia (Bulletin #15, United States Bureau of Labor), Washington, 1907 [reprint: New York, 1975] 498, 500, 506; Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," Perspectives in American History, 9 (1975), 35-126.

Added to this early defensiveness about the commercial characteristics of the Jews, and to the later emphasis on the explanatory power of the concrete material advantages of the Jews, was the interest of labor historians and of social historians generally who had been strongly influenced by the concerns of the new labor history -- historians as different as Herbert Gutman, Irving Howe and Susan Glenn, for example. These influential historians have written perceptively about both the strong working-class character of the east-European Jewish immigrants, the Jewish socialist movements of Russia that were brought to the United States and the long-standing political position of the Jews on the left at least partly related to this legacy.⁴

All three of these intellectual orientations -- concern to correctly state the proportions of Jews not working in commerce, interest in the material rather than the cultural origins of Jewish social patterns, and the concern with Jewish immigrant labor history -- have much more than a grain of truth and justification to them. I argue that more was at work; I do not deny that these intellectual orientations have produced a great deal of important understanding. I do believe, however, that in the process they have tended to lead us away from the considerable concentration of the Jews in commerce --that is, petty trade in this case -- and therefore they led us to ignore part of a complex pattern, and make it difficult to adequately explain the puzzle of rapid Jewish mobility.

Needless to say, there have been other emphases over the course of the decades that tried

⁴Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York, 1977); Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 1976; Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 1990. There is, of course, also an older genre of labor union histories of the 'Jewish Unions' -- see, among many others, Elias Tcherikower, ed., *The Early Jewish Labor Movement*, trans. and rev. Aaron Antonovsky (New York, 1961) and Will Herbert, "The American Jewish Labor Movement," *American Jewish Yearbook* (1952), 3-74.

for a different balance on these issues. Arcadius Kahan, for example, doubted the formulation of Rubinow (and by extension Kuznets) on the degree of selectivity in the Jewish immigration.⁵ And Kuznets himself, while presenting the most detailed evidence for that selectivity and for the demographic distinctiveness of the Russian Jewish immigration generally, nevertheless closed his remarkable survey with a reminder that other kinds of 'human capital' than the kinds he could measure were important.⁶ I don't think Kuznets was referring to the involvement of Jews with commercial pursuits; but his reminder is an invitation to consider explanations other than those such as the industrial skills advantages of immigrant artisans. By contrast, Nathan Glazer, in an

⁵ In a footnote to his "Opportunities and some Pilgrims' Progress: Jewish Immigrants from Eastern Europe in the United States, 1890-1914," Arcadius Kahan wrote "The various inquiries conducted not at the time of entry into the United States but years later, reveal that the share of those gainfully employed in commerce prior to their arrival varied between 20-30% of the total employed" (reprinted in the posthumous *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History*, ed. Roger Weiss, (Chicago, 1986). I assume that the "various inquiries" Kahan had in mind were in fact the reports of the United States Immigration Commission which I exploit in Joel Perlmann, "Selective Migration as a Basis for Upward Mobility?: the Occupations of the Jewish Immigrants to the United States, ca 1900," Levy Institute Working Paper, Oct. 1996.

⁶"Our account dealt mainly with the measurable ... These records do not reflect directly the major features of the historical heritage of Russian Jewry that shaped the human capital transferred to the United States by immigration. It is this transfer of human capital that constitutes the essential content of migration...[,] the more fundamental characteristics of capacity for social organization and for adjustment to the challenges of a new environment. Nor do they describe the long-standing scale of priorities inherited from the past and likely to shape the goals of immigrants and their descendants for several generations after their arrival in the country of destination. One may assume that after centuries of coexistence with hostile majorities, after migrations from one country to another in Europe and the Middle East, and after self-selection over time by the loss of some of its members, the Jewish people in Europe, and especially in its largest subgroup in Tsarist Russia must have acquired a distinctive equipment in human capital." Kuznets "Immigration of Russian Jews," 123-4. Kuznets focuses on the experience of minority status, it appears, as the primary engine in the creation of this 'distinctive equipment in human capital,' and he does not claim to say in what specific respects the distinctiveness mattered. Nevertheless, I see no reason to think his choice to close his essay in this deliberate way can be dismissed as a throw-away comment that he took lightly.

earlier survey of Jewish upward mobility, did stress the significance of Jewish commercial involvement in particular, although not in the way I do in this essay. Rather, reflecting the social psychology of the early fifties, Glazer was eager to show that psychological propensities that propelled the Jews into middle class life, and that these propensities had been reenforced over centuries of experience in Europe.

The modern student of social phenomena cannot stop at psychological explanations.... Ultimately social explanations must resort to history and explain a present peculiarity by discovering an earlier one. We think the explanation for Jewish success in America is that the Jews, far more than any other immigrant group, were engaged for generations in the middle-class occupations, in the professions and in buying and selling.... The special occupations of the middle class -- trade and the professions -- are associated with a whole complex of habits. Primarily these are the habits of care and foresight. The middle class person has been taught the world is open to him, and with proper intelligence and ability, and with resources well used, he may advance himself.⁷

I cite this passage in order to forestall the misunderstanding of my own argument. It is not necessary to draw such strong implications from the fact that “the Jews, far more than any other immigrant group, were engaged for generations in the middle-class occupations;” it is enough for my purposes to suggest simply that the Jews derived a propensity to enter commerce from that experience.

⁷Nathan Glazer, “Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654-1954,” in Louis Finkelstein, *The Jews* (3rd ed., New York, 1960) 1722-4. The article had appeared in briefer form in *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1955 3-41.

I now want to leave this discussion of the mobility literature and return to the main line of my argument. As I mentioned, I am skeptical about two of the three interlocking arguments about Jewish economic mobility that I noted earlier. First, in another working paper I have shown just how problematic it is to claim that a high degree of occupational selectivity existed in the east-European Jewish immigration -- that is, the degree to which those in trade were under-represented among the immigrants. I showed that a modest amount of the selectivity could be accounted for by the demographic features of the emigration (age, sex, region and country of origin). And more compelling, the supposed selectivity does not appear at all in a later source, no less valuable than the source that led Rubinow to stress the selectivity. I do not claim that this evidence is conclusive; I only claim that the evidence for selectivity is far more problematic than has been appreciated.⁸

Moreover, there is also another consideration relevant to evaluating the significance of the occupational selectivity in favor of industrial workers.' Recall that the great majority of the European Jews in "industrial occupations" were in fact artisans -- artisans working in a more or less traditional setting, a setting of small shops with high proportions of self-employed individuals. Even those who were not themselves self-employed observed self-employment in the context of the small shop, that is to say observed it at close range. Therefore, many of those classified as "manufacturing workers" in their employment prior to emigration would also have had some considerable background with the world of buying and selling, the world of running a kind of small business. And of course, from a social point of view, these east-European Jewish artisans lived in close proximity with the rest of the Jews in the same town or city, and a third of that

⁸Joel Perlmann, "Selective Migration."

community of Jews were in trade. So for numerous reasons, the lines between those who had been 'skilled industrial workers' and those who had worked as 'merchants and dealers' was far less clear cut than some of the social scientific discussion would lead one to think. In order to appreciate the size of this trade sector, consider Table 2, in which we see not only the proportions of Jews engaged in trade, in the Russian Jewish Pale of Settlement but also the proportions of all those in the Pale engaged in trade who were Jews. Given that fraction, it is difficult to see how many more Jews could possibly have been engaged in trade in the pale. All this relates directly to my larger argument -- namely that more attention must be paid to the issue of Jewish trade and not to expect too much explanatory power to flow from the Jewish advantage in 'skilled industrial work.' And these considerations about the blurred line between artisanry and trade in Europe also bear on the issue of occupational selectivity in the migration. Thus, if I can show that the trade sector sent many more immigrants than has been believed, it is easier for me to stress the role of trade among the immigrants. However, it is possible for me to stress the role of trade among the immigrants even if I cannot establish that occupational selectivity was notably weaker than has been supposed.

It is in connection with the third of the interlocking arguments that this paper brings new evidence -- namely on the sort of occupations the Jews took up once they had reached the United States. Here I draw on the 1910 and 1920 Censuses, in particular, on huge national samples of individuals that have been selected from the manuscript schedules of these censuses; these datasets are known as the public use microdata samples and each sample includes data on many hundreds of thousands of individuals -- in fact if the two samples (from 1910 and 1920) are combined the sample size exceeds one million. With such large national samples, we can draw

out all sorts of substantively interesting subgroups. There is another huge advantage to these datasets. In both 1920 and 1920 the United States Census asked for information on mother tongue. By focussing on the Russian-born, who gave Yiddish as their mother tongue, we identify with dispatch the Russian Jews. At the same time, the Yiddish mother tongue criterion also eliminates virtually no Jewish immigrant from Russia, although I'll have to ask you to take my word for that this evening.

I have limited the analysis to male immigrants who had arrived in the United States during a period of about a dozen years --between 1897 and 1910. And I've limited the analysis also to those who were old enough to have held an adult occupation before they left Europe. That is, I limited the analysis to those who were at least 17 years of age when they arrived in the United States. The two samples were selected independently from the census manuscripts of two different enumerations, 1910 and 1920. Thus they do not include the same individuals; these samples include different people, but people selected to be the same on numerous characteristics -- namely nativity, date of arrival, age at arrival, mother tongue and sex.

I have classified my subsamples of immigrants into three groups. The first is the Russian-born, Yiddish mother tongue group, on whom I've been focussing. By the time of the 1910 and 1920 censuses, the Russian-born were about four-fifths of all the relevant Yiddish mother tongue immigrant arrivals, so the patterns we will observe would have been about the same if I had included all Yiddish mother tongue immigrants.

Now, what other groups of immigrants should be distinguished? Recall that the theory I am challenging stresses the importance of artisanal skills, "the industrial skills," of the Russian Jewish immigrants. I therefore classify the rest of the immigrants in the 1910 and 1920 samples

according to the prevalence of skilled workers among them (see Table 3A). Upon arrival, the east-European Jewish immigrants were indeed much more likely than the rest of the immigrants to tell the immigration authorities that they had had a prior occupation in skilled manual work -- in fact, whereas 70% of the Jews claimed a background in skilled work, only 22% of immigrants generally indicated such a background.

Nevertheless, even if the Jews were the most likely to claim such experience, there were some other groups that were almost as likely as the Jews to claim experience with skilled manual work -- most notably the English and Scottish immigrants. There were many English and Scots, so we can study them effectively enough, and the percentage of English and Scottish immigrant arrivals who claimed skilled work as their occupation was 58%. Well, 58% is not as high as the 70% figure among the Jews. But compared to the group of all other immigrants, the English and Scottish percentage skilled seems very close to percentage skilled among the Jews. In the group of all other immigrant arrivals -- that is, all immigrant arrivals except Hebrews, English, Scots -- only 15% claimed to have had a prior occupation in skilled manual work. This huge residual group includes great numbers of Italians and Slavs.

Now, if what characterizes the distinctiveness of the east-European Jews is that they came with industrial skills, what about the English and Scottish immigrants? That is, do we find, that the Jews had patterns of occupational concentration like those of the English and the Scots -- or at least that the Jewish pattern of occupational concentration was far more similar to the pattern among the English and Scots than to the pattern of occupational concentration found among the group of all other immigrants?

I am aware, of course, that the precise sort of skilled occupation in which a group is

concentrated makes a big difference; the Jewish immigrant arrivals had a very high concentration in garment manufacturing, the English and Scots did not. I return to that point shortly.

But at a minimum requiring that our explanation of Jewish advantage stress that the Jews were concentrated in an industry with special advantages -- that refinement would sharpen our explanation. For example, it would lead us to speculate that it was not merely the experience in skilled work that mattered; rather, the garment trade was especially conducive to moving into self-employment and trade, probably because it did not require a large capital outlay to get started (it's cheaper to buy a sewing machine than build an automobile plant). However, I also want to stress that we should not make too much of this point; the garment industry may have been distinctive but it was not unique in allowing for entry with relatively little investment.

Table 3B shows us the percentage of each group of immigrants in trade, as shown in the 1910 and 1920 Censuses. In 1910 and in 1920, we find that there is no difference whatever between the percentages in trade among English and Scots on the one hand and among the group of all other immigrants on the other. The premigration skill advantage did not lead the English and Scots into trade. On the other hand, the Jews show a much greater concentration in trade already in 1910 and sustained in 1920. The same exercise can be performed, with the same results, by substituting self-employment for trade in the comparisons: the percentage self-employed was not higher among the English and Scottish than among the group of all other immigrants (if anything, the reverse was the case); but the percentage self-employment was remarkably higher among the Jews than among either of these groups. These are not the outcomes that a theory appealing strictly to the premigration advantage in industrial skills would predict.

Now let me return to the question of the garment industry. One reason not to try to explain too much by the Jewish concentration in the garment industry was already noted: this industry was not the only one requiring low capital to start. Another reason not to try to explain too much by the Jewish concentration in the garment industry is that the gravitation to trade was *not* by and large, simply a shift from making garments to selling garments. Table 3B shows that 42% of the Jews in 1920 worked in trade. But the footnote to the 1920 figure shows that only 6% worked in the retail or wholesale apparel trade. To put it differently, even if wholesale and retail apparel were excluded, the Jewish concentration in trade would still be 36% in 1920, three times that of either of the other groups. I am sure that this 6% figure for retail and wholesale apparel understates the truth; a close look would turn up others in trade who were connected to clothing in one way or another. Nevertheless, since retail and wholesale apparel is the most obvious way for traders in garments to be listed, (outside the manufacturing sector) and since only 6% of the Jews were found in retail and wholesale apparel, there is plenty of room for a margin of error.

Two other comparisons from the same datasets appear in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 restricts attention to recent arrivals only -- that is, it limits attention to the 1910 Census and it shows those who had arrived only during the years since 1905 -- so these were men who had been in the United States for a maximum of 5 years. Among this group we should be able to observe an early stage in the process of economic adaptation. Was the reliance on artisanal skills (especially in apparel) clearer here? Both the English and Scots and the Jews exhibit similar proportions in skilled manual work -- and higher proportions than among the other immigrants. Nevertheless, more Jewish skilled manual workers were already self-employed, and the percentage of

proprietors in trade is already much higher among the Jews. Once again, the premigration skill advantage would not predict the distinctive Jewish pattern.

Finally, Table 5 gives us, as it were, the other end of the process; it focusses on those who had been in the United States for a long time (10-23 years). The major change is the Jewish shift into self-employment in trade, apparently drawing from all other categories. And while this group includes those in apparel trade, only 4% of the Jews are self-employed traders in apparel; 29% are self-employed traders in other lines.

How then should we explain these patterns of Jewish immigrant occupational concentration? I want to distinguish between three lines of explanation for the patterns we've just seen in the 1910 and 1920 censuses. These are not the only possible explanations, but these three lines of explanation all share a common feature: they all stress the pre-migration economic position of the Jews. The first line of interpretation, is the one I described at the outset as the belief prevailing among many social scientists. In this view, the Jews started in skilled work in small shops, especially in the garment industry, and from that basis they were poised for work in trade when they did well through skilled industrial work; the Jews knew (for example) how to use a needle and thread, and that knowledge gave economic advantage that in turn led them into trade. This is the line of argument that I have tried to argue cannot stand alone. If this argument were adequate, the English and Scottish immigrants should *not* have provided such contrasting patterns to those of the Jews. And as explained repeatedly now, I also do not think that the way out of that perplexity is to say that the Jews were concentrated in the garment industry; there were other low capital industries, and in any case very impressive percentages of the Jews appear to have been in trade but not in the garment industry.

A second line of explanation could be regarded as a friendly amendment to the structural fit approach. It would urge that the transferability of specific skills was more complex than has been thought, and that skills of buying and selling were also relevant. These buying and selling skills were relevant in the same way that the prior experience in industrial skills was relevant. Jews knew about petty capitalist ventures, about how to buy and sell, just as they knew how to use a needle and thread. Thus they came with two sorts of skills useful in an industrial economy.

Finally, in the third line of argument the Jews' familiarity with trade also involves another dimension, a dimension, that we might say is closer to an argument about premigration cultural values. The Jews may have been, to paraphrase the anti-Semites of that day, drawn to trade, predisposed to it -- or more precisely, that they accorded trade a higher status, found it more pleasant, or (quite apart from skills) found it more familiar. Or, to put it more generally: an ethnic preference for certain kinds of work may create patterns that cannot be easily explained without such preference, and by definition these preferences are not shared by all immigrant groups who might share an occupational niche at a particular moment.

I want to tentatively suggest that this is a case in which the cultural variant of the explanation is so close to the structural that it is difficult to imagine a way to test between them, at least not with any data of the sort I have been showing you.

A classical economist might protest, saying, that if the cultural variant of the argument means anything, it means that we should expect a behavioral difference in outcome predicted by the second and third lines of explanation I've laid out -- between the structural argument about skills in trade and the cultural argument about a preference or taste for trade. We could ask then whether the Jews entering trade did so to an extent that was economically irrational; that other

ethnic groups facing the same economic choices did not enter trade. If the Jews did engage in such irrational economic behavior, we might have clear evidence of the operation of the cultural dynamic. However, if the Jews engaged in irrational economic choices (defined by what would have happened to other ethnic groups in the same circumstances), and nevertheless turned their supposedly irrational entry into trade to advantage, what then? After all, it is not irrelevant to speculate that those who are especially drawn to a line of work may also be especially likely to succeed in that line of work. How the test of irrational economic behavior would take into account that possibility I am not sure.

We can conceive of an abstract, subtle distinction between skills and values but we may have to recognize that they become remarkably intertwined even at the conceptual level, and they are surely unlikely to be differentiated at the empirical level -- at least with the sort of methods and data I've tried to use. In any case, this is where I stop. We need, I think, one or both variants of the commercial emendation to the manual skills argument -- that the Jews exploited experience in trade as well as in industrial work, or that in addition to all this the Jews also had a preference for trade -- we need at least one of those arguments if we are going to make sense of the Russian Jewish economic patterns in the new world.

TABLE 1. NEWLY MACHINE-READABLE SOURCES USED FOR THIS STUDY

1. *From the published volumes of the 1897 Russian Census:* virtually all the data relevant to Jews published for each of approx. 230 local administrative areas (uezds) and for approx. 250 cities and towns in the Pale of Settlement; and parallel provincial-level data on all peoples of the Empire.

2. *From U. S. Lists of arriving immigrants (the manuscript Passenger Lists):* A sample of 5,300 Jewish immigrants reaching the Port of New York in 1899-1900, and a second sample of 3,600 Jewish immigrants reaching the Port of New York in 1907-8. The passenger lists include information on religion, mother tongue, age, country, province, last residence, occupation, prior stay in U.S., amount of money brought, etc.

3. *From the public use microdata samples of the U. S. Census of 1910 and 1920:*
A sample of Yiddish-mother-tongue immigrants.

TABLE 2. JEWISH OCCUPATIONS IN THE PALE OF SETTLEMENT, 1897

Industrial sector	Pale: men and women		7 core provinces: men and women	
	% of all Jews with occupations	% that Jews comprise of all in this sector	% of all Jews with occupations	% that Jews comprise of all in this sector
trade - in agric	15	78	12	92
trade - other	19	69	14	85
mfg - clothing	18	51	19	68
mfg - other	20	25	24	46
labor/per. ser.	13	13	12	16
transport*	3	21	4	33
Agriculture	3	1	4	1
Military	3	6	3	6
all other**	7	19	8	27
Total (000s): non-agric, civ. workforce***	100 [1,264]	30 [4,196]	100 [323]	41 [778]

NOTE: From Source 1, Table 1. Nearly all Jews in the Russian Empire were confined to the 25 western provinces of the Pale of Settlement, including principally Russian Poland, and parts of Lithuania, White Russia and western Ukraine. The 7 core provinces refer to provinces in the Northeast of the Pale from which most Russian Jewish immigrants originated.

* Nearly all carters and draymen

** Includes (in about equal proportions) a) "clergy, non-Christian," "persons serving about churches, etc.," "teachers and educators" and b) miscellaneous groups of other workers (included among whom were all other professionals).

*** For the sake of meaningful comparisons with the non-Jewish population, the total row is limited to the non-agricultural civilian workforce.

TABLE 3. OCCUPATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES, 1899-1920

A. Occupations of the immigrant groups at time of entry, 1899-1914

Percentage of the immigrant group whose occupations at time of entry to U.S. were classified as "skilled"	Hebrew	English and Scottish	All other
	70%	58%	15%

*Skilled here includes also 'professional,' 1% of the Hebrew, 8% of the English and Scottish and 1% of all other.

B. Occupations of male immigrants in the 1910 and 1920 United States Censuses
-- men who had arrived 1897-1910, at adult-work age (17 or older)

1) Occupations by industrial sector	Immigrants by origin					
	Russian-born, YMT		English and Scottish		All other	
	in 1910 Census	in 1920 Census	in 1910 Census	in 1920 Census	in 1910 Census	in 1920 Census
	%					
Trade	28	42*	6	12	8	13
Garment mfg.	29	21	1	0	2	2
Other mfg.	29	29	54	53	45	46
all other	15	8	39	35	45	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
% self-employed	36	48	8	13	10	19
N=	463	655	409	499	7,453	7,456

*Includes 6% in wholesale or retail apparel trade.

SOURCE: Panel A taken from Liebmann Hersch, "International Migration of the Jews," in Walter F. Wilcox, ed., *International Migrations*, (v. 2, "Interpretations"), New York, 1931, 491. Panel B from Source 4, Table 1. The Russian-born comprised 79% of all male Yiddish-Mother-Tongue immigrants with an occupation. Since sampling ratios differ for the two census years, the absolute numbers should not be compared across sample years.

TABLE 4. RECENT IMMIGRANTS IN 1910:
Those 1910 sample members from Table 3B who had arrived 1905-1910

Occupation, industry and self-employment	Immigrants by origin		
	Russian-born, YMT	English and Scottish	All other
	%		
employees -- skilled manual in mfg. or construc.	24	30	9
self-employed -- skilled manual in mfg. or construc.	5	1	1
self-employed -- in trade	15	0	2
self-employed -- nec	7	4	3
employees -- nec	49	65	85
total	100	100	100
N =	241	253	4,493

SOURCE: Source 4, Table 1.

TABLE 5. IMMIGRANTS BY SECTOR IN 1920:
 -- the 1920 sample members shown in Table 3B

Occupation, industry and self-employment	Immigrants by origin		
	Russian-born, YMT	English and Scottish	All other
	%		
employees -- skilled manual in mfg. or construc.	17	29	15
self-employed -- skilled manual in mfg. or construc.	6	1	2
self-employed -- in trade	33*	3	7
self-employed -- nec	9	8	10
employees -- nec	35	59	66
total	100	100	100
% employers	10	4	5
N =	655	499	7,456

*Includes 4% in wholesale or retail apparel trade.

SOURCE: Source 4, Table 1.