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Minority nationalities in the Russian Baltic provinces: The 1881 Baltic census

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Abstract

The population of the Russian Baltic provinces during the second half of the nineteenth century experiences substantial growth and differentiation, though these dynamics are difficult to describe precisely because of the paucity of census data. The first Imperial census took place only in 1897; for earlier periods, provincial censuses have to be relied upon. The 1881 census of the Baltic provinces shows the difficulty of analyzing minority demography in an era when the concept of “minority” was seldom used and enumerators relied upon such classifications as language, religion, and social status. Though the Baltic provinces were leaders in the fertility transition in the Russian Empire, the picture at the level of “minorities” is mixed, underlining the need for additional longitudinal and cross-sectional research.

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1. Historicizing the concept of minorities

When used in reference to subpopulations, the term “minority” in English has two meanings. The first points simply to a subpopulation’s size, distinguishing it from the majority. The second meaning points to a subpopulation’s status in a hierarchy of power and carries with it implications of differential treatment and special protections. This second meaning entered English-language historical discourse in

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the 20th century, particularly after World War I. The documents emerging from the League of Nations and later from the United Nations are replete with references to “minority nationalities” and “national minorities,” reflecting the concern of these international bodies about subpopulations to which a country’s constitution and laws had to pay special attention lest the titular nationality—the national group whose name was the name of the country—mistreated them. Human rights doctrines in the second half of the 20th century expanded such concerns to include subpopulations defined by reference to criteria other than nationality, and the 21st century has inherited this mode of thinking about general populations and their constituent parts.

Since population enumerations and analyses of them began before the 20th century, bodies of data exist in which the second meaning of minority played no part, and the present article deals with one of these: population counts of the Baltic provinces of European Russia—Estland, Livland, and Kurland.¹ In the second half of the 19th century, the Baltic population was heterogeneous (“diverse” in modern parlance). Yet concern for minorities, however defined, was absent not only from the region’s prevailing socio-political doctrines but also from the practical rules created by officials for enumeration purposes. Indeed, the whole domain of personal identity was in the process of changing in the region with respect both to the markers individuals and groups used to identify themselves and to those used by officials to differentiate between individuals and groups. The traditional markers that distinguished people from each other by their “social estate” (Russ. *sosloviye*, Germ. *Stand*, Fr. *état*)—with terms such as “noble,” “burgher,” “peasant,” “foreigner”—still carried some meaning and were used in official documents. But new designators such as “nationality,” “religion,” “language,” and “occupation” were becoming increasingly more prominent. What is completely absent in these sources is the notion that some subpopulations needed to be designated or thought of as minorities; indeed, the term itself does not appear even in reference to subpopulations that were relatively small in number.

Though the Baltic population analysts of those decades could not have been aware of the irony, the use of the nationality variable in 19th-century enumerations yielded results that contradicted the intentions of the second (later) meaning of the term “minority” as a subpopulation in need of special protection. One such “national minority”—the Baltic Germans—had a virtual monopoly on provincial socio-political power, and another—the Russians—contained subgroups (administrative officials and the military) who represented the St. Petersburg imperial government in the area and could make decisions that overrode the Baltic Germans’ regional policies. The two “majority nationalities,” the Estonians and Latvians, were thus, in terms of power distribution, the subordinates of several “national minorities.” Other minority nationalities, however, such as the Jews and Poles, remained outsiders with respect both to numbers and influence. This 19th-century power distribution was completely scrambled by the outcome of World War I, when the Estonians and Latvians became the titular majorities in their newly independent republics while the Baltic Germans, Russians, Jews, Poles and others became the kind of minority nationalities that concerned the League of Nations.

¹ To simplify the geographical references, the German names of the three provinces have been used in the present study. In Russian sources, the three provinces are designated *Kurlyandskaya gubernia*, *Liflanskaya gubernia*, and *Estlandskaya gubernia*. The English designations most commonly used are Courland, Estonia, and Livonia. These, however, invite confusion with the modern-day republic of Estonia and the medieval state of Livonia. Moreover, the term “Courland,” comes from French. The languages of the “majority” populations had additional versions of these names: *Eestimaa* and *Liivimaa* for Estland and Livland in Estonian; and *Igaunija*, *Vidzeme*, and *Kurzeme* for Estland, Livland, and Kurland in Latvian.

2. The “minorities” of the Russian Baltic provinces: numerical distribution

On December 29, 1881, statistical committees attached to the administrating officials of the three Baltic provinces carried out the first full and purportedly “modern” census of the Baltic area (Plakans, 1995). This was the first systematic enumeration of the entire population of the Baltic lands. The 1881 Baltic census foreshadowed by 16 years the first full imperial census, which would be carried out in 1897. Before these various dates in the second half of the 19th century, precise knowledge about the Baltic populations had remained murky, and estimates then had been based on the so-called “revisions of souls,” fiscal censuses initiated in the 18th century by Peter I (the Great; Wörster & Hoheisel, 1998), or the even earlier land cadasters (Dunsdorfs, 1950, 1974).

As far as the Baltic provinces were concerned, it was only after 1881 that imperial and provincial administrators could have had any precise ideas of the composition of the populations in their charge. The statistical committees that carried out the 1882 census were groups of experts created by the provincial corporations of nobility (Ritterschaften), who were the principal organs of provincial government. The three statistical committees took their task seriously and coordinated their efforts to some extent (Stieda, 1881; Wittschewsky, 1881). This cooperation, however, did not extend to the post-census period when the census results were published. Each committee published the results for its province separately, and each decided individually how to tabulate the raw data. The result was four sets of publications—one set for each province, and a separate set for the city of Riga, which was an important imperial center as well as the informal capital of the Baltic area (Baltic Census, 1881, Nos. 1–16). Although the tabulation methodologies of the four published sets of books overlapped somewhat, each group of statisticians felt free to innovate according to its own interests; as a consequence, subsequent analyses of these sources have had to wrestle with a host of inconsistencies and much fragmentary information when the goal is to describe subpopulations. The 1881 census publications did not at any point seek to bring the three provinces and the city of Riga into a single comparative framework.

It is clear from the array of tables in the published census volumes that the compilers were not guided by any definitions of minority or majority populations or any instructions about which subpopulations should have primacy in the tabulations. Table 1 portrays the proportional breakdown of the three provinces and Riga in terms of three of the principal grouping variables used by the statisticians: nationality, confession (religion), and language. Publications about the 1881 census make it abundantly clear that the statisticians felt uneasy about departing from the principal traditional grouping variable used in the older soul revisions, the “social estate” (*Stand, soslovie*), consisting of the nobility, burghers, peasants, and others (Jordan, 1886; Stieda, 1881; Wittschewsky, 1881). They thought, however, that “social estate” no longer adequately described Baltic social structure, even though certain rights and privileges were still attached to social estate membership. The social estate variable, in fact, did not appear in the 1881 tabulations at all. Instead, in 1881, the Baltic statisticians gathered information on nationality, confession, and language in the first instance; and then on occupation, age, sex, physical condition, and, for cities and towns, type of residence. The original census schedules reprinted in the publications show that information was gathered on a variety of other variables that were not used in the published tabulations; unfortunately, the original schedules no longer exist. Just as the 1881 census itself was a kind of experiment for the provincial governments, so also was the use of new grouping concepts to provide a new structural view of the population.

Table 1
The Baltic populations by nationality, confession, and language, 1881

	Estland	Livland	Kurland	Riga
<i>Nationality</i>				
German	4.8%	6.4%	4.6%	39.5%
Russian	4.9	2.6	0.2	18.8
Estonian	88.9	47.1	0.02	0.9
Latvian	0.2	42.2	90.4	29.5
Jewish	0.5	0.8	3.2	8.4
Other	0.6	0.8	1.5	2.8
%	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9
<i>Confession</i>				
Protestant	94.2%	86.0%	85.6%	63.6%
Orthodox	4.9	12.9	0.9	17.0
Roman Catholic	0.3	0.1	4.5	6.1
Jewish	0.4	0.8	8.8	12.7
Other	–	–	–	0.5
%	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.9
<i>Language</i>				
German	5.8%	5.7%	6.1%	39.6%
Russian	4.6	2.2	0.2	18.8
Estonian	87.6	46.5	0.7	0.9
Latvian	–	44.6	86.7	29.5
Yiddish	0.3	0.7	4.2	8.4
Swedish	1.3	–	–	–
Livonian	–	–	0.4	–
Roma	–	–	0.2	–
Polish/Lithuanian	–	–	0.8	–
Other/None	0.2	0.04	0.14	2.7
%	99.8	99.8	[99.8?]	99.9
<i>N</i>	375,037	992,382	471,929	169,270

Source: [Baltic Census, 1881](#), Nos. 1–16.

Who then were the “minorities” in the Baltic provinces in 1881? A ranking in terms of political, social and economic power, as we have said, would place the Latvians and Estonians into that category. The quantitative ranking in [Table 1](#) shows the Germans, Russians, Jews, and “others” as the “minorities.” The “others” category in the “nationality” and “language” sections of [Table 1](#), hides several “invisible” minorities. Thus, for example, Gypsies (*Roma*) appeared as a distinct subpopulation only by reference to language and then only in the province of Kurland. They were likely to have been present in the other provinces, but, if so, they were merged with other small populations. It is not clear from the census instructions whether Gypsies were considered a nationality. Another example, again in Kurland, is the small population of Livonians, the surviving remnant of one of the indigenous Baltic peoples who had inhabited these lands before the arrival of the Germans crusaders in the 13th century. Protestant by religion and Latvian by nationality, the Livonians appear in the tabulations only under the rubric of language, since their primary language was not one of the Baltic languages but a Finno-Ugric tongue closely related to Finnish and Estonian.

The preparers of the 1881 census results had the choice of cross-tabulating important demographic variables such as age and marital status with religion, language, or nationality, since the latter three were available on the original census schedules. In fact, they chose for their elaborate multi-page cross-tabulations only the variable of “confession” (religion), and this procedure effectively bars later analysts from examining the behavioral differentials between, say, Baltic Germans and Latvians, since both were primarily Lutheran Protestants. The only subpopulation that stands out distinctly in all three categories is the Jews—a people apart in terms of nationality, religion, and language. Even so, not all Jews listed Yiddish as their family language; many had been Germanized or Russified to the extent of abandoning Yiddish. At the same time, many of the linguistically assimilated Jews remained members of urban or small-town congregations where Hebrew would have been used (Buchholtz, 1899).

3. The findings of the Princeton European Fertility Project

The instability of the category “nationality” for analyzing the population of Imperial Russia was noted a long time ago in the most thorough study of the decline of fertility in Russia (Coale, Anderson, & Härm, 1979), which was carried out as part of the European Fertility Project at Princeton University. Even though the data for the Russian study came primarily from the 1897 imperial census and subsequent Soviet censuses (to 1970) and therefore concerned primarily the 20th century, several of its findings are useful for our purposes. First, the Princeton study noted the apparently “advanced” status of the Baltic provinces in the decline of fertility in the empire, the start of the decline there having begun in the 1870s and 1880s, some 20–30 years earlier than in other provinces.

Second, even though the study used the variable “nationality” because it was present in the 1897 census, it did not differentiate between minority and majority nationality groups. The main findings of the 1979 study with respect to nationality and nuptiality were that (a) different nationalities within the same area might differ in social position, education, and religion, but each nationality group almost always exhibited a wide range of nuptiality patterns across all provinces in which the nationality was found, and (b) the range of these differences is consistent with the differences found among the residents of the provinces who were not members of that nationality (Coale et al., 1979, p. 178). In other words, Russians in the Baltic provinces were likely to exhibit demographic patterns that were closer to the patterns of other nationality groups in the Baltic than to Russians elsewhere in the Empire. The Fertility Project surmised:

The best interpretation we can offer of these relations is that variation from province to province in the independent variables are the result of longstanding social and cultural differences that also led to the differences among the provinces in the age at marriage (p. 178).

Third, the one nationality group in the 1979 Princeton study that differed substantially from this pattern was the rural Jews, whose nuptiality tended toward uniformity throughout all provinces and was not generally related to the nuptiality patterns of the other nationality groups in the same province. This was not the case, however, with urban Jews, whose patterns were strongly correlated with other urban populations defined by nationality (pp. 163–164).

Since these conclusions pertain to the census of 1897, we cannot project them backward in time with any degree of confidence. Nor are they particularly helpful in sorting out patterns with respect

to majority or minority nationalities. They do, however, suggest several hypotheses to be tested on the earlier data however fragmentary: (a) that patterns of non-Jewish nationality groups tended to resemble each other, (b) that the patterns for Jews were dissimilar from those other nationality groups, and (c) that patterns for rural and urban Jews differed from each other. Even though these propositions were developed on the basis of comparisons of all 50 provinces of Tsarist Russia, they can be used to organize the disparate data for the Baltic available before 1897.

4. Marriage patterns

The authors of the 1881 Baltic census volumes did not cross-tabulate marital data with nationality, and therefore we are forced to use the variable that they did employ, confession (religion). Even so, identical tables are not possible for each religion category because of the differences between the ways data were cross-tabulated for each provincial volume. [Table 2](#) looks at the proportions of married people in two important age groups (21–25 and 46–50), by confession group and by province, distinguishing further between males and females, and rural and urban patterns.

The information in [Table 2](#) can be evaluated by reference to the well-known Hajnal hypothesis. A generation ago, the English statistical demographers John Hajnal proposed that the European continent before the 20th century contained two dominant marriage patterns separated from each other by an imaginary line drawn roughly north to south from the Baltic to the Adriatic Seas ([Hajnal, 1965](#)). West of this line, marriage tended to be relatively late (late 20s for both sexes), and substantial numbers of the population remained unmarried throughout their lives. East of the line, the pattern was reversed: both sexes married early, and few people were never married.

Table 2

	Livland				Estland				Kurland				Riga				
	21–25		46–50		21–25		46–50		21–25		46–50		21–25		46–50		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<i>(a) Proportions married: Protestants, 1881</i>																	
Rural	13.2	37.3	93.8	88.5	n.a.					13.4	30.4	92.8	71.3				
Urban	10.2	32.0	89.6	83.0	10.1	19.1	39.0	64.2	8.5	31.6	90.1	86.3	9.9	36.4	82.3	86.7	
<i>(b) Proportions married: Orthodox, 1881</i>																	
Rural	19.1	40.6	94.9	91.2	n.a.					n.a.							
Urban					14.8	47.4	81.0	73.6	7.0	45.1	87.0	90.0	21.5	41.1	78.4	82.2	
<i>(c) Proportions married: Roman Catholic, 1881</i>																	
Rural	n.a.				n.a.					10.5	22.7	91.1	67.3				
Urban	2.2	58.8	81.2	85.7	15.3	42.1	85.2	53.5	7.0	30.6	85.3	80.7	9.9	39.6	83.2	86.3	
<i>(d) Proportions married: Jews, 1881</i>																	
Rural	12.5	89.6	100.0	100.0	n.a.					7.9	46.6	95.3	87.2				
Urban	17.1	82.9	97.9	100.0	25.9	64.8	95.4	90.0	12.4	40.5	97.8	98.2	22.7	64.9	98.8	97.0	

Source: [Baltic Census 1881](#), Nos. 1–16.

As noted earlier, the general demographic patterns of the Baltic provinces led the fertility transition in the Russian Empire. [Table 2](#) suggests, however, that the contribution of the various nationalities to the transition differed (as gauged by marital patterns), but not hugely. Protestant males (mainly Germans, Latvians, and Estonians, depending on the province) tended to delay marriage more than Protestant females, but the delay for males was reflected also in the marriage statistics for the Orthodox (mainly Russians), Roman Catholic (mixed nationalities), and Jew. Protestant and Orthodox females delayed marriages also, but not as much as the males. In the older age category (46–50), there were differences by province and sex that are difficult to explain. Among Protestants, the proportion of ever-married women was higher than men in Riga and Estland but lower in Livland and Kurland. Among Orthodox, the proportion of ever-married women was higher than men in Kurland and Riga but lower in Estland and Livland. Among Roman Catholics, the proportion of ever-married women was higher than men in Livland and Riga but lower in Estland and Kurland. Among the Jews, the proportion of ever-married women was higher than men in Livland and Kurland but lower in Estland and Riga. It is possible to detect in these figures substantial differences between non-Jews and Jews, even though these differences are sex dependent and not absolute. Although the proportion of Jewish men married in the age group 21–25 does not differ greatly from the proportion of non-Jewish men, the proportion of Jewish women is substantially higher in that age group in Livland, Estland, and Riga. The low proportion in Kurland, however, needs an explanation: in the older age group (46–50), only Jewish women reached a point substantially above 90%, and no one else in this age group reached the 100% of both rural and urban Jewish women in Livland.

5. A digression on Jewish exceptionalism

Marriage patterns that differentiated Baltic non-Jews from Jews may have reached further back in time than the 1881 census. For exploring this question, however, we have only fragmentary evidence. A doctoral dissertation by Ewald Kaspar at the University of Dorpat in 1883 analyzed population patterns in the Kurland port city of Libau and its rural parishes for the years 1834–1882 and included in the analysis a mixed comparison (by language, nationality, and location) between the ages of spouses of newly married couples (here reproduced as [Table 3](#)).

The distinctions in [Table 3](#) are only partially based on the principle of nationality, because there may have been Latvians among the Orthodox and Catholic marriages. Nonetheless, it is suggestive that the Jewish marriages over the period had the highest proportion of grooms older than brides and

Table 3
Marriage in Libau, 1834–1881

	Rural Latvian	Urban Latvian	Jewish	Orthodox and Catholic
% of spouses in same age group	29.1	32.8	25.0	21.1
% of marriages with wives younger than husbands	52.5	50.5	68.0	64.9
% of marriages with wives older than husbands	18.4	16.7	7.0	14.0
<i>N</i> of marriages	1541	1569	652	822

Source: Kaspar (1883, pp. 69–70).

by far the lowest proportion of brides older than grooms. Though the proportion of Jewish marriages in which both bride and groom were in the same age group is lower than that for either rural or urban Latvians, it is still higher than the same proportion for the Orthodox and Catholics. At least in Libau, the tradition of Jewish men predominantly marrying women younger than themselves appears to have been well established by the middle decades of the 19th century.

Another cluster of evidence comes from the Kurland city of Mitau in 1834. The population of that city, which was the old ducal capital of the province and its administrative center in the post-1795 Russian period, grew during the 19th century, but relatively slowly. The town's population stood at 9400 in 1802 and at 35,131 in 1897; and the interim figures show continuous growth—10,130 in 1823, 19,500 in 1836, 21,479 in 1857, 22,735 in 1863, and 28,531 in 1881. An urban census of 1863 contained a breakdown of the town's population by religion and nationality and showed that in that year (a generation after our date of 1834) the plurality (40.9%) of the town's population were Baltic Germans, the second largest group were Jews (24.1%), the third largest Latvians (21.9%), and the fourth Russians (11.4%). In absolute numbers, the Jewish population of Mitau in 1863 was about 5400; a generation earlier (1834), it was 4806, which was 24.6% of the 1836 total population. Assuming that two years earlier (1832) the total population of Mitau was somewhat smaller, we can estimate just below one-fourth of the city's inhabitants were Jewish. A database consisting of the entire Jewish population in Mitau in 1834 permits examination of the question of marriage ages and proportions married (Plakans & Wetherell, 1992).

Judging by Table 4, marital patterns among Mitau Jews in 1834 differed insofar as the 1834 male Jewish population began to marry earlier than the Jewish males in 1881. In 1834, the proportion of married men in the youngest age groups was about twice as high as in 1881. Women in 1834, however, exhibited the same pattern of early marriage as in 1881. Marriage for both sexes started in the age group 15–19 and became nearly universal beginning with the age group 30–34 for men and

Table 4
Proportion of married Mitau Jews by age and sex (1834)

Age group	Males		Females	
	% Married	<i>N</i>	% Married	<i>N</i>
0–14	0.0	1098	0.0	1065
15–19	5.0	335	13.7	299
20–24	42.9	149	66.8	184
25–29	69.3	140	93.8	145
30–34	85.8	156	98.1	155
35–39	93.0	173	97.9	146
40–44	96.7	125	99.1	113
45–49	94.7	76	97.3	75
50–54	91.9	62	98.4	64
55–59	97.9	49	100.0	33
60–64	97.2	36	100.0	29
65+	86.4	59	97.4	39
Totals		3194		2347

SMAM: males 24.3 years, females 21.0 years.

Source: Mitau database.

Note: Widows and widowers are included in the proportion married.

25–29 for women, a fact we also recognize from 1881. The higher proportions of married women in all age groups also suggest that women began to marry earlier than men, which is confirmed by the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) figures: ages 21.0 for females and 24.3 for males. Since we have counted widows and widowers as married in this calculation (as is customary), the small proportions of non-marrieds in the oldest age groups are either widows or widowers. At least in this Jewish population, virtually no one in the older age groups was not married or had not been married.

The near absence of micro-analytical studies of the Baltic Jewish population in earlier periods makes movement backward in time difficult. Two fragmentary comparisons, however, may be of interest. Almost two decades ago, a limited study of Jews in the first Kurland revision of 1797 yielded a small database of the Jewish families living in 26 landed estates in the southeastern most Kurland districts of Dünaburg, Nerft, Überlantz, and Selburg (Plakans & Halpern, 1981). In these rural districts, altogether 150 Jewish households contained a total of 1148 individuals; these households—about six or seven in each estate—were located amidst a sea of Latvian-speaking peasants. Although the 1797 database was collected at the household rather than the individual level, it was possible to extract the proportion of the population married for the crucial age groups (see Table 5).

The sizes of the 1797 Jewish cohorts are uncomfortably small, but the youngest cohorts suggest that rural Jewish women in 1797 began to marry earlier than urban Mitau women in 1834: the unmarried proportions in the youngest groups were considerably lower in 1797 than in 1834. The negligible proportions not married in the older age groups suggest that the pattern of near universal marriage existed in both populations. On both counts and for all age groups, the female Jews of 1797 and 1834 differed substantially from the female Latvian peasant 1797, who appear either to have married somewhat later and to have had larger proportions not marrying at all later in life.

Another set of comparisons available for the SMAM measure are presented in Table 6. They are drawn from microstudies of two Baltic populations: (a) the 1816–1850 Latvian peasantry of the landed estate of Pinkenhof, 6 km west of the city of Riga, the main urban center of the Baltic provinces; and (b) the population of Riga itself in the period 1867–1881. SMAM figures from both are presented in the table in comparison with SMAM figures for the 1834 Mitau Jewish population.

These are disparate populations to be drawn into a comparative framework, and the meaning of the different measures of their marriage ages may not be immediately evident. The population closest to the 1834 Mitau Jews was the 1816 Latvian peasants in Pinkenhof. The 1816 revision caught these Pinkenhofers just before serf emancipation, which occurred in Livland in the period

Table 5
Proportion of unmarried women: comparisons

Age groups	Jews 1797	Latvians 1797	Jews 1834
15–19	56.9	91.1	86.3
<i>N</i>	49	903	299
20–24	4.3	53.9	33.2
<i>N</i>	46	878	184
40–44	0	6.8	0.9
<i>N</i>	3	500	113
45–49	0	7.4	2.7
<i>N</i>	14	229	75

Source: Mitau database (Plakans & Halpern, 1981).

Table 6
SMAM comparisons: Pinkenhof, Mitau, and Riga

Population	Males	Females
Pinkenhof		
Latvians 1816	24.9	21.9
Latvians 1833	29.9	28.0
Latvians 1850	29.0	27.2
Riga		
Jews 1867	25.1	21.5
Jews 1881	26.4	22.7
Mitau		
Jews 1834	24.3	21.0

Sources: Mitau database (Jung-Stilling, 1867; Plakans & Wetherell, 1992; Wetherell & Plakans, 1997).

1819–1826. Thereafter, the Pinkenhof marriage ages rose quickly, leveling to 29 for men and 27–28 for women in the period 1833–1850. Emancipation brought to Latvian peasants far more leeway in marriage decisions, and the short-term result appears to have been postponement of marriage for six or seven years. Conceivably, the passage of time (though not involving massive reforms of their situation) might have brought the same patterns to the Mitau Jews, were we to have comparable figures for Mitau in the 1867–1881 period. We do not, but we do have SMAM figures for the Riga Jews in those years ($N=1867$: males 2769, females 2465; 1881: males 9885; females 10,119). The 14 years between those two Baltic censuses (no longer revisions) brought an increase of nearly a year in the first age of marriage for both men and women in the Riga Jewish population. The 1834 Mitau and 1867 Riga figures were roughly comparable with male age being slightly higher in Riga than in Mitau. Clearly, however, ages at marriage were not static for any of the Baltic populations.

6. Age structure in 1881

The marital patterns discussed so far inevitably led to differentials in the average age of each subpopulation and in the distribution of each subpopulation by age group. These differences for the

Table 7
Proportion of the population less than 15 years old (1881)

	Protestants	Orthodox	Jews	Catholics	Others
Livland					
Rural	36.3%	32.5%	35.3%		21.7%
Urban	29.8	24.9	47.8	21.5	
Kurland					
Rural	31.1	27.0	34.8	30.3	
Urban	27.6	16.2	40.8	20.2	
Estland					
Rural	36.3	29.2			
Urban	31.2	32.3	45.2		
Riga	29.5	21.6	41.2		28.7

Source: Baltic Census, 1881, Nos. 1–16.

younger-than-15 age group are shown in [Table 7](#). As before, we have to make inferences about nationality from the confessional categories, and for some of them no information is available.

The early age of marriage of Jewish women and the high proportion who married before age 25 contributed to the youthfulness of the Jewish population generally. In all rural and urban subpopulations except one (rural Livland), the proportion of a given confessionally/nationally defined subpopulation under 15 years of age was lower than in the subpopulation of Jews. The proportions range from 27–36% among the Protestants (primarily Germans, Latvians, and Estonians), to 16–32% among the Orthodox (primarily Russians), to 34–47% among the Jews. Or, in other words, the maximum proportion among non-Jews was approximately the same as the minimum proportion of Jews. The differences on the rural–urban axis were also notable. In the Protestant and Orthodox cases, the proportion of rural young people was always lower than the proportion of urban young people, and in Riga, the proportion of the young was lower than in other locales (except rural Kurland). The relationships in the Jewish population, however, were reversed. In rural Livland, rural Kurland, and Riga, the proportion of the Jewish population under 15 was lower than in the urban districts of that province, and lower also than the under-15 proportion in Riga. (The proportion of the under-15 population in Mitau in 1834 was 45.3%, which is comparable to the proportions for all urban sites in 1881 and Riga, as seen in [Table 7](#)).

7. Conclusion

The Baltic provinces of Russia provide a good example of the difficulties of extracting usable information about “minority” nationalities from social statistics gathered before the concept of minority was widely used, and before the concept of nationality became a significant variable in the minds of contemporary statisticians. For the statisticians who prepared and analyzed the 1881 Baltic census, “confession” trumped “nationality”: they had information about the latter, but in preparing the gathered information for themselves and their presumably learned audience, they preferred to cross-tabulate demographic facts with confessional identity.

Population changes in the Baltic provinces during the second half of the 19th century were substantial, some of which are summarized in the appendix to this article. The aggregate population of the three provinces increased substantially, more prominently in the third than in the fourth quarter of the century (see [Tables A1 and A2](#) of the Appendix). Perhaps this slowdown reflected the onset of the fertility decline, which the European Fertility Project dated in the 1860s–1870s for the Baltic area. Riga’s remarkable continued growth was more the result of the upswing of rural-to-urban migration than to the increased fertility of its urban population. The mortality rate per 1000 of the population declined during the last four decades of the century, as did the infant mortality rate ([Tables A4 and A5](#) of the Appendix).

How precisely these changes played out among the nationality groups and to what extent each nationality group contributed to them remains a challenge. Numerically speaking, the Protestants (Germans and Latvians in Kurland; Germans, Latvians, and Estonians in Livland; and Germans and Estonians in Estland) dominated the larger picture, and their patterns would have been defining at the provincial level. The Orthodox (mainly Russians) were an important minority statistically, but their numbers included the Russian officials whose position of power belied their smaller numbers. The specification of Jews as an important minority population in these statistics was due in part to their

numerical importance, but also because nationality coincided with religion and language, thus raising their profile in the 1881 tabulations. Other minority nationalities were either lost in the “other” category or were too small to be of significance.

Appendix A. Select demographic indicators: Baltic provinces (*Pribaltika*) in the 19th century (Source: [Rashin, 1956](#))

Table A1
Total population (thousands)

Livland		
1863=925.3		Growth-
1885=1207.9		1863–1885= +30.5%
1897=1299.4		1887–1897= +7.5%
Estland		
1863=313.1		Growth-
1885=387.1		1863–1885= +23.6%
1897=412.7		1885–1897= +6.8%
Kurland		
1863=573.9		Growth-
1885=667.8		1863–1885= +16.3%
1897=674.0		1885–1897= +1.8%
Riga		
1811=32.0		1897=282.2
1840=60.0		1914=558.0
1863=77.5		

Annual growth rate=1811–1863=2.4%; 1897–1914=7.2%.

Table A2
Growth rates of total population

	1811–1863	1863–1914	1811–1914
<i>Pribaltika</i>	1.22%	1.68%	2.05%
Livland	1.29	1.88	2.58
Estland	1.19	1.62	1.93
Kurland	1.12	1.39	1.56

Table A3
Population density and proportion urban

Persons per square verst			
Livland	1811=15.6	1863=23.1	1897=31.4
Estland	1811=13.3	1863=18.0	1897=20.5
Kurland	1811=13.3	1863=24.1	1897=28.4

Proportion urban in *Pribaltika* 1863=11.5% 1897=25.7% 1914=33.1%.

Table A4
Births and deaths per 1000 of population

	Livland		Estland		Kurland	
	Births	Deaths	Births	Deaths	Births	Deaths
1861–65	40.6	26.3	39.1	25.3	36.2	22.0
1866–70	33.2	27.3	31.8	32.5	31.0	24.5
1871–75	34.7	23.1	33.7	22.3	31.0	19.1
1876–80	33.8	23.2	31.6	21.2	29.0	18.5
1881–85	31.5	22.5	30.3	23.0	28.8	19.2
1886–90	29.6	21.0	29.4	21.0	27.8	17.7
1891–95	27.7	19.8	28.1	20.1	26.5	17.5
1896–1900	29.4	20.4	29.2	10.1	28.6	19.3

Table A5
Infant and child mortality

	Livland		Estland		Kurland	
	1867–81	1886–97	1867–81	1886–97	1867–81	1886–97
Deaths per 1000 births to 1 year	210	190	181	156	166	156
Deaths per 1000 births to 5 years	330	291	288	255	289	265

Table A6
Literacy

Livland			Estland			Kurland		
1874–83	1897	1904	1874–83	1897	1904	1864	1897	1904
95.0%	97.0%	99.0%	95.0%	96.0%	97.0%	60.0%	87.0%	87.0%

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