

# Communal

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## The 1981-1982 National Survey of American Jews

**A**CCURATE INFORMATION ON American Jews has been both difficult and costly to obtain. Since Jews comprise a mere 2.7 per cent of the total American population, very few of them appear in most standard national surveys. Moreover, aside from one occasion in recent history (1957), the U.S. Census has not provided a breakdown of data along religious lines. Researchers have relied on several less than ideal sources for data on the social and demographic characteristics of American Jews, as well as their politics, religious practices, and communal affiliations. These sources include widely scattered Jewish community surveys conducted irregularly by local federations; post-election "exit polls"; nationwide social surveys amalgamated so as to obtain sufficient quantities of Jewish respondents for reliable statistics; and the highly costly and, by now, somewhat dated National Jewish Population Study (1970-1971).

To fill the need for current information on the country's Jewish population, the American Jewish Committee recently sponsored a study using an experimental, low-cost sampling technique to survey a representative group of American Jews. In the fall of 1981, a six-page questionnaire was mailed to approximately 1,700 people having about a dozen distinctive Jewish Names (such as Cohen, Kaplan, Levine, etc.) who were listed in the telephone directories of over 40 communities of all sizes throughout the continental United States.<sup>1</sup> The sample was constructed so as to

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<sup>1</sup>Roughly two-thirds of the sample resided in eight major metropolitan areas: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Miami, Boston, Washington, and Baltimore. In addition to these areas of 90,000 or more Jews (including their surrounding suburbs), questionnaires were sent to appropriate numbers of respondents living in 24 Jewish communities of at least 20,000: Providence, Hartford/New Britain, New Haven, Rochester, Buffalo, Rockland Co.

roughly approximate the geographic distribution of American Jews as reported in the 1980 *American Jewish Year Book*.

Of the 1,700 questionnaires that were initially mailed out, about 300 were returned as undeliverable. Out of a pool of 1,400 potential respondents, about half eventually completed and returned the questionnaires at the conclusion of four mailings (February, 1982).

### *Comparisons With Other Studies*

For several reasons, the procedure that was employed might be expected to yield results that were less than representative of American Jewry. People with Distinctive Jewish Names may be different from Jews without such names (although previous research<sup>2</sup> has shown this is not the case); those listed in telephone directories may differ from those who are unlisted; and those who return questionnaires may be different from those who do not. To assess the representativeness of the mail-back sample of Distinctive Jewish Names, Table 1 presents data from the National Survey of American Jews alongside comparable data from two other recent studies using more sophisticated and more costly sampling techniques—the 1975 Greater Boston Jewish population study and the 1981 Greater New York Jewish population study.<sup>3</sup>

Comparison of the results of the three studies demonstrates that the respondents in the National Survey hardly differ from those in the New York and Boston studies. Jews in the National Survey are somewhat older than Boston Jews, and slightly less Orthodox and observant than New York Jews. The other characteristics of the respondents in the three studies are virtually identical.

### *Findings*

The table reports several well-known features of American Jews. They are extraordinarily well-educated (four-fifths have been to college; one-third have a

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(N.Y.), Monmouth Co. (N.J.), Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City (Mo.), Fort Lauderdale, Palm Beach Co. (Fla.), Dallas, Houston, Denver, San Diego, Phoenix, San Francisco, Orange Co. (Cal.), and Alameda and Contra Costa Cos. (Cal.). Within each of the nine census regions, one community was chosen at random with a Jewish population size of 5,000 to 20,000 and another with fewer than 5,000 Jews; these 18 representative localities were: Bridgeport, Conn.; Meriden, Conn.; Union City, N.J.; Glen Falls, N.Y.; Indianapolis; Peoria; St. Paul; Sioux City; Orlando; Greensboro, N.C.; Memphis; Nashville; San Antonio; Tulsa; Las Vegas; Salt Lake City; Ventura, Cal.; and Eugene, Ore.

<sup>2</sup>See Harold S. Himmelfarb and R. Michael Loar, "How Distinctive Are Jews With 'Distinctive Jewish Names'?", unpublished manuscript.

<sup>3</sup>See Floyd J. Fowler, *1975 Community Survey: A Study of the Jewish Population of Greater Boston* (Boston, 1973). The New York study is now being conducted under the auspices of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York by Paul Ritterband and Steven M. Cohen of the City University of New York.

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND MEASURES OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION ACROSS THREE SURVEYS OF AMERICAN JEWS,<sup>a</sup> BY PER CENT

	1981 NSAJ	1981 New York	1975 Boston
<u>Median Age</u> (Adult Respondents)	49	49	37
<u>Current Marital Status</u>			
Never-Married	21	15	32
Married	62	65	56
Separated or Divorced	8	8	4
Widowed	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100
<u>Ever-Divorced</u>	14	11	12
<u>Educational Attainment</u>			
H.S. Grad., or less	20	28	25
Some College	21	19	16
B.A.	26	25	27
Graduate School	<u>33</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>33</u>
	100	100	100
<u>Median Income</u>	\$27,500	\$27,500	n.a.
<u>Denomination</u>			
Orthodox	6	13	5
Conservative	36	36	36
Reform	26	29	36
Other (not affiliated, secular)	<u>32</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>
	100	100	100
<u>Jewish Education As A Child</u>			
Yeshiva, Day School	4	11	7
Hebrew School	53	49	57
<u>Ritual Practices</u>			
Attend a Passover Seder	77	87	85
Light Hanukkah Candles	67	74	n.a.
Regularly Light Sabbath Candles	22	(39) <sup>b</sup>	(43) <sup>b</sup>
Fast on Yom Kippur	54	64	55

	1981 NSAJ	1981 New York	1975 Boston
Attend Services on Yom Kippur	59	n.a.	n.a.
Attend Services on Rosh Hashanah	54	59	61
Have different dishes for meat and dairy products	15	26	17
Refrain from shopping or working on the Sabbath	5	13	n.a.
Belong to a synagogue	51	41	38
Belong to another Jewish organization	38	n.a.	27
Give to the UJA/Federation every year	49	52	52
Have been to Israel	37	37	20
<u>Closest Friends Jewish</u>			
All	12	n.a.	n.a.
Almost All	27	n.a.	n.a.
Most	22	n.a.	n.a.
About Half	24	n.a.	n.a.
Fewer Than Half	8	n.a.	n.a.
Few or None	7	n.a.	n.a.
	100		
<u>Children's Jewish Education</u>			
Expect no Children	11	n.a.	n.a.
Children will be Non-Jews	2	n.a.	n.a.
None	12	n.a.	n.a.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Lessons	9	n.a.	n.a.
Sunday School	18	n.a.	n.a.
Hebrew School	40	n.a.	n.a.
Yeshiva, Day School	7	n.a.	n.a.

<sup>a</sup>The three surveys are: (1) The 1981 National Survey of American Jews; (2) The 1981 Greater New York Jewish Population Study (sponsored by the UJA/Federation of New York; Paul Ritterband, Steven M. Cohen, directors); (3) The 1975 Greater Boston Jewish Population Study (sponsored by the CJP of Boston; Floyd J. Fowler, director). Question wording for comparable items differ somewhat. The notation n.a. means not available.

<sup>b</sup>Parentheses denote question wordings which differ considerably from those used in the National Survey.

graduate degree). They are also fairly affluent (median income = \$27,500), although Jews have extremely heterogeneous incomes: almost a third earn under \$20,000, and almost a quarter earn over \$50,000 a year. Only a small number (six per cent) of the national sample identify as Orthodox, with the rest divided among

the Conservative and Reform denominations and the unaffiliated. Barely a majority attended Hebrew school, and only four per cent went to a yeshivah or day school.

Results for ritual practices mirror those reported time and again in previous studies. The Passover Seder and the lighting of Hanukkah candles are the most popular practices (77 and 67 per cent, respectively), followed by Yom Kippur fasting, and Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashana service attendance (between 54 and 59 per cent). Much less often practiced are regular Sabbath candle lighting (22 per cent as compared with noticeably higher rates in the two other studies where the word "regular" was omitted), having two sets of dishes for meat and dairy products (15 per cent), and eschewing shopping or working on the Sabbath (five per cent).

In the area of communal affiliation, we find that half of the national sample belong to a synagogue (as compared with 70 per cent of Americans who belong to a house of worship), and about the same number claim to contribute to the UJA-Federation every year. (Interestingly, in the New York data, only about 25 per cent of the total sample say that they contribute more than \$25 to the federation campaign.)

One of the most startling findings in the study concerns the large number of adult respondents (37 per cent) who report that they have been to Israel. The figure is the same as that reported in the New York study, lending credibility to the finding. The 1970 National Jewish Population Study reported that, at that time, only 16 per cent had been to Israel;<sup>4</sup> in 1975 only 20 per cent of Boston Jews had traveled there (a figure probably lower than that year's national average, owing to the youthfulness of Boston Jewry).

Table 1 reports the large extent to which Jews restrict their closest friends to fellow Jews. Nearly two out of five respondents (39 per cent) report that "all" or "almost all" of their closest friends are Jewish; 22 per cent say that "most" of their friends are Jewish; and 24 per cent indicate that "half" of their friends are Jewish. Only one in seven (15 per cent) report that fewer than half of their friends are Jews.

Annual censuses of Jewish school enrollment have reported growth in the number of full-time students and in the number of youngsters receiving little or no schooling (Sunday school and bar/bat mitzvah lessons fall into this category);<sup>5</sup> enrollment in Hebrew schools has been declining. The respondents were asked to identify the predominant form of Jewish education they had given, were giving, or would be giving their children. We may compare these answers with the educational background of the respondents themselves to ascertain trends in Jewish schooling. In so doing, we find a near doubling in the proportion of yeshivah or day school students (from four per cent among respondents to seven per cent among their children), a

<sup>4</sup>See Table 3, p. 662, in Bernard Lazerwitz and Michael Harrison, "American Jewish Denominations: A Social and Religious Profile," *American Sociological Review*, August 1979, pp. 656-666.

<sup>5</sup>See Walter Ackerman, "Jewish Education Today," *AJYB*, Vol. 80, 1980, pp. 130-148.

decline in Hebrew school students (from 53 to 40 per cent), and a commensurate increase in those with little or no Jewish schooling (from 43 to 53 per cent).

### *Trends in Jewish Identification*

More detailed information on trends in Jewish identification can be gleaned from Table 2 which presents various measures of Jewish identity broken down by age,

TABLE 2. SELECTED MEASURES OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION BY RESPONDENTS' AGE AND AMONG RESPONDENTS' PARENTS, BY PER CENT

	Age			Parental Observance
	18-39	40-59	60+	
Orthodox or Conservative	30	44	52	n.a.
Passover Seder	79	81	71	67
Hanukkah Candles	68	70	61	65
Fast Yom Kippur	55	59	47	60
Regularly Light Sabbath Candles	12	26	29	52
Yom Kippur Services	56	64	58	62
Rosh Hashanah Services	52	59	52	61
Kosher Dishes	8	17	20	40
No Sabbath Shopping/Working	3	5	8	22
Synagogue Member	38	60	57	n.a.
Jewish Organization Member	20	47	48	40
UJA/Federation Donor	31	56	62	37
Been to Israel	31	37	47	n.a.
Most Friends Jewish	45	56	76	n.a.

alongside figures for parental observance as reported by the respondents. Generally, measures which decline by age (as we move from older to younger respondents) also decline by generation (i.e., when we compare the previous generation of parents with the current generation of respondents). The table demonstrates a significant decline in the proportion who identify as Orthodox or Conservative, as well as in the proportion who light Sabbath candles, have Kosher dishes, and refrain from shopping or working on the Sabbath. Moreover, on all measures of communal activity—synagogue or other organization membership, UJA giving, traveling to Israel—younger respondents (ages 18-39) score considerably lower than their elders. To some extent these associations of lower Jewish activity with youth reflect the effects of early family life cycle stage; these effects will inevitably subside as the young

adults marry and bear children.<sup>6</sup> But, to some degree, the differences between old and young signify more enduring declines in Jewish identification, and reflect growing assimilation among later-generation, younger Jews. The decline in the proportion with mostly Jewish friends—from 76 per cent among those 60 and over, to under half (45 per cent) among those under 40—suggests that a significant and enduring trend toward lower levels of Jewish identification is indeed underway. At the same time, all is not unequivocally gloomy for Jewish survivalists as some practices are indeed holding steady with age. These include the Passover Seder, Hanukkah candle lighting, and high holy day observance.

### *Israel and Zionism*

Historically, American Jews have distinguished between support for Israel (and, before 1948, the Jewish settlement in Palestine) and endorsement of classical Zionist ideology. According to the latter, the very existence of Israel—the Jewish national home—implies that Jews everywhere should “return” from Galut—the Exile—and come “home” to Israel. This view contrasts sharply with one of the cardinal tenets of American Jewish belief, i.e., that the United States is “home” to American Jews.

In the 1981 National Survey, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (81 per cent) *disagree* with the statement that “each American Jew should give serious thought to settling in Israel” (Table 3). Only a tiny minority (12 per cent) agree with this classical Zionist position. (See also the data in Table 4 on the sample’s rejection of the Zionist contention that Jewish life in the Diaspora is precarious or untenable.) However, reservations about classical Zionism do not inhibit deep, passionate, and widespread concern for Israel. Fully 83 per cent agree that “if Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies in my life.” The deep caring for Israel emerges in other findings as well. Over three-quarters of the respondents (76 per cent) concur that “Jews should not vote for candidates who are unfriendly to Israel.” Over two-thirds (71 per cent) say they do not believe “Israel’s future is secure,” and almost as many (67 per cent) say they “often talk about Israel with friends and relatives.” Moreover, consistent with other studies, more than nine Jews out of ten (94 per cent) regard themselves as “very pro-Israel” (44 per cent) or “pro-Israel” (50 per cent); almost all the rest are “neutral.”

Clearly, American Jews continue to distinguish support for Israel from endorsement of classical Zionist thinking. They may be developing yet another distinction between concern for Israel and support for Israeli government policy. The vast majority of the respondents are convinced that the Palestinians and the PLO seek to destroy Israel. They line up with the majority of Israeli political leaders in rejecting (by 74 to 18 per cent) negotiations with the PLO. By a smaller, though

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<sup>6</sup>See Steven M. Cohen, “The American Jewish Family Today,” *AJYB*, Vol. 82, 1982, pp. 136–154.

TABLE 3. ATTITUDES TOWARD ISRAEL AND ZIONISM, BY PER CENT

Agree—Disagree Questions	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<u>Classical Zionism</u>			
Each American Jew should give serious thought to settling in Israel.	12	7	81
<u>Concern For Israel</u>			
If Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies in my life.	83	5	13
Jews should not vote for candidates who are unfriendly to Israel.	76	5	20
Israel's future is secure.	12	17	71
I often talk about Israel with friends and relatives.	67	2	31
<u>Support for Israel's Policies</u>			
Israel is right not to agree to sit down with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), because the PLO is a terrorist organization that wants to destroy Israel.	74	9	18
If the West Bank became an independent Palestinian state, it would probably be used as a launching pad to endanger Israel.	64	25	11
If the alternatives are permanent Israeli annexation of the West Bank or an independent Palestinian state, then an independent Palestinian state is preferable.	28	30	42
If Israel could be assured of peace and secure borders, she should be willing to return to Arab control most of the territories she has occupied since 1967.	41	18	41



Agree—Disagree Questions	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
<u>Other Questions</u>			
In general, how would you characterize your feelings about Israel?			
Very Pro-Israel	44		
Pro-Israel	50		
Neutral	6		
Anti-Israel	<u>1</u>		
	100		
In general, do you think Israel's policies in its dispute with the Arabs have been:			
Too "Hawkish"	23		
About Right	74		
Too "Dovish"	<u>4</u>		
	100		

still lopsided majority (64 to 11, with 25 per cent undecided), they fear that an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan "would probably be used as a launching pad to endanger Israel." At the same time, the respondents divide over whether Israel should permanently annex territories occupied in the Six Day War. By a small majority (42 to 28, with fully 30 per cent undecided), the sample prefer annexation to an independent Palestinian state; the many "undecideds" reveal considerable difficulty with this question. Even more telling, the respondents split evenly (41 to 41, with 18 per cent undecided) over whether Israel should trade occupied territory for assurances of peace. Clearly, annexationist policies are less popular among American Jews than are actions taken to defend Israel against perceived Palestinian threats.

A summary question asked the respondents to characterize "Israel's policies in its disputes with the Arabs." Almost a quarter (23 per cent) emerge as "doves"; they believe Israel's policies are "too hawkish." Almost all the other respondents (74 per cent) think Israel's policies are "about right."

More detailed analyses (see Table 6, below) reveal the types of Jews most likely to express concern for Israel, or to support its policies. In broad terms, there is less concern for Israel among young people, the better educated, and the more assimilated. Support for specific Israeli policies is also weakest among the young and most assimilated, and declines particularly among those with a post-graduate education. Moreover, although political liberals are as concerned about Israel as are conservatives, the liberals are more likely to take issue with Israeli government policies (see Table 9).

These results suggest a refinement of some observers' perception of growing American Jewish alienation from Israel.<sup>7</sup> Alienation, at least at this point, is limited to disagreement with Israeli policy; there is no general disillusionment with Israel. Significantly, the greatest disenchantment is found among Jews who are far removed from organized Jewish life. The more committed Jews find far less to fault in Israeli policies. As of now, hard-core critics of Israeli policy form only a small but noticeable minority of American Jews.

### *The American Jewish Situation*

At the heart of American Jewish faith in the United States has been a sense that Jewish survival and interests are fully compatible with integration into America and the advancement of American interests.<sup>8</sup> Consistent with these sentiments, the sample is virtually unanimous (94 per cent) in declaring that "U.S. support for Israel is in America's interest." A sizeable majority (61 to 13 per cent) believe (in line with their rejection of classical Zionism) that "there is a bright future for Jewish life in America." An equally lopsided majority (72 to 25 per cent) reject the thought that "there are times when my devotion to Israel comes into conflict with my devotion to America." Thus, on an abstract level, Jews see America as basically hospitable to Jewish life and to the exercise of Jewish group interests.

However, more pointed questions uncover substantial anxieties about America's benevolence toward its Jewish community. Even though most Jews are optimistic about "Jewish life in America" (at a time when there are more Jewish senators, corporate directors, and Ivy League law school presidents than ever before,<sup>9</sup> and when public opinion polls show non-Jewish stereotyping of Jews at an all-time low<sup>10</sup>), a substantial majority (62 versus 34 per cent) reject the proposition that

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Arthur Hertzberg, "Begin and the Jews," *New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1982, pp. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup>This point is argued at length in Charles Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew: Politics, Religion, and Family in American Jewish Life* (Philadelphia, 1973).

<sup>9</sup>See Charles Silberman, "The Jewish Community in Change: Challenge to Professional Practice," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Fall 1981, pp. 4-11.

<sup>10</sup>See Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, "Anti-Semitism in the United States," prepared for the American Jewish Committee, mimeograph, 1981.

TABLE 4. ATTITUDES TOWARD JEWS AND JEWISH LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES, BY PER CENT

	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
There is a bright future for Jewish life in America.	61	17	13
There are times when my devotion to Israel comes into conflict with my devotion to America.	25	3	72
U.S. support for Israel is in America's interest.	94	5	2
Most Americans think that U.S. support for Israel is in America's interest.	46	15	39
American Jews should not criticize Israel's policies publicly.	38	5	57
<i>Virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews.</i>	34	5	62

"virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews." Moreover, the respondents are evenly divided (46 per cent agree; 39 per cent disagree) as to whether most Americans share their rosy view of Israeli-American compatibility.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of five "issues or problems confronting American Jews": assimilation, antisemitism in America, the security of Israel, the quality of Jewish education, and Soviet Jewry. Two of these—Israeli security and American antisemitism—are endorsed by at least two-thirds of the sample as "very important." The other issues garner considerably less support.

While concern for Israel's security is certainly consistent with previously reported findings and the very obvious support rendered Israel by organized Jewry, the concern with American antisemitism is, at first glance, more anomalous. As noted above, popular prejudice toward Jews and discrimination against individuals have fallen considerably. The growth since 1965 in Jewish-gentile intermarriage (which itself causes survival-conscious Jews much consternation) indicates the increasing interpersonal acceptance afforded Jews. However, it must be borne in mind that popular prejudice—the kind of antisemitism measured in standard social surveys—constitutes only one component of America's overall receptivity to Jews and their interests. American Jews have become increasingly aware that opposition to Israel and Zionism may mask outright antisemitism. Moreover, acts of vandalism against

TABLE 5. JEWISH CONCERNS,<sup>a</sup> BY PER CENT

	Very Important	In Between	Somewhat Important	In Between	Not Important
Assimilation	39	19	22	9	11
Antisemitism in America	66	17	13	3	1
Security of Israel	69	19	9	2	1
Quality of Jewish Education	38	23	26	8	5
Soviet Jewry	33	27	26	11	4

<sup>a</sup>"How important is each of the following issues or problems confronting American Jews?"

synagogues and other Jewish communal property have become more frequent of late,<sup>11</sup> stirring fears among many Jews.

Table 6 examines how age, education, and ritual observance influence concern for Israel (a composite of items discussed earlier—see Table 3), support for Israeli policies (an index made up of items found in Table 3 as well), and the importance attached to American antisemitism/Israel's security.

Findings contained in the columns regarding concern for Israel and support for its policies have already been noted. (To repeat, both measures decline with young age, increased education, and diminished ritual observance.) The last panel tries to discern whether particular population groups are more prone to evince concern about antisemitism, about Israel, or both. We find that those who are concerned about one issue are also concerned about the other; moreover, the types of Jews who are most pro-Israel (however measured) are also apt to regard American antisemitism as a very important issue.

The number of those who regard both antisemitism and Israel's security as very important rises with age, from 42 per cent among those under 40 years old to 60 per cent among those 60 or over. Consistent with the findings for Israel support, the better educated are much less apt to be concerned with either issue; only 39 per cent of those with a post-graduate degree regard both antisemitism and Israel's security as very important issues, compared with 67 per cent of those with no more than a high school education. As one would expect, the least observant ("secular") Jews are much less concerned with the two issues than are those with "minimal," "moderate," or "observant" levels of ritual practice (see below for explanations of

<sup>11</sup>See Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, "The 1981 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents," mimeograph, 1981.

TABLE 6. CONCERN FOR ISRAEL,<sup>a</sup> SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI POLICIES,<sup>b</sup> AND IMPORTANCE OF ANTISEMITISM IN AMERICA AND THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL,<sup>c</sup> BY AGE, EDUCATION, AND RITUAL OBSERVANCE

	Concern for Israel	Support For Israeli Policies	Antisemitism or Israel "Very Important?"			
			Neither	Antisemitism	Israel	Both
<u>Age</u>						
18-39	33	53	28	16	14	42
40-59	46	65	21	11	17	51
60+	55	73	16	10	15	60
<u>Education</u>						
H.S. Grad.	61	75	14	8	11	67
Some College	50	70	21	13	12	54
B.A.	38	65	21	13	19	48
Grad. School	35	50	27	16	18	39
<u>Ritual Observance</u>						
Secular	17	45	41	16	18	25
Minimal	48	61	19	15	14	52
Moderate	51	68	16	10	15	59
Observant	60	75	18	7	17	58

<sup>a</sup>Per cent expressing concern for Israel on at least three out of five questions: (1) Being very pro-Israel; (2) Security of Israel ("very important"); (3) Talking about Israel ("Agree strongly"); (4) Not voting for anti-Israel candidates ("Agree strongly"); (5) Tragedy if Israel destroyed ("Agree strongly"). See Table 3 for wording of questions.

<sup>b</sup>Per cent supporting Israeli policies or analyses on at least three out of five questions: (1) Not talking with the PLO ("Agree"); (2) A Palestinian state's threat to Israel ("Agree"); (3) Desirability of a Palestinian state ("Disagree"); (4) Return of Arab territories ("Disagree"); and (5) View on Israeli policies ("About Right" or "Too Dovish"). See Table 3 for wording.

<sup>c</sup>See Table 5 for wording.

these categories). Among the latter three groups, the extent of concern is about the same.

### *Social and Political Views*

Table 7 presents the distribution of responses to several questions dealing with social and political issues. The table also presents reasonably comparable data from recent national studies of the American population, where such data are available.

With full appreciation of the hazards involved in making comparisons across surveys of different populations, carried out at different times, and using different methods, we can nevertheless make some tentative inferences from the broad patterns emergent in the findings. Jews, apparently, remain more liberal than the rest of society, but their marked liberalism is of a selective nature. They are much more liberal than others in their support for the equal rights amendment (73 versus 45 per cent among all Americans) and in permitting homosexuals to teach in the public schools (67 versus 45 per cent). They are also somewhat more liberal than others in supporting government expenditures for abortions (52 versus 40 per cent). These three issues involve, in varying degrees, civil liberties that have historically been dear to American Jews. None of these issues can be said to entail salient current Jewish group interests; thus there is little restraint on Jewish liberalism.

In the area of affirmative action, Jews (56 per cent) are somewhat less inclined than others (66 per cent) to adopt a liberal stance. Here some combination of historically induced sensitivity to quotas and current anxieties about the probable impact of affirmative action on Jewish access to jobs and universities probably helps to diminish Jewish enthusiasm. However, despite their relatively weak support for affirmative action, Jews—in comparison with non-Jews—are relatively more supportive of such extreme measures for alleviating racial inequality as outright quotas in jobs and universities, and school busing.

Further evidence of Jewish sympathy for the political agenda of minority groups is found in reactions to proposed changes in government spending. Despite their relative affluence, a majority of the sample (58 versus 35 per cent) reject substantial cuts in social spending. At the same time, most of those with definite opinions (49 versus 33 per cent) also rejected the Reagan administration's call for substantial increases in defense spending.

Somewhat more exact comparisons of Jews and other Americans can be drawn from the results of the questions dealing with political identification, party identification, and presidential preference in the last election. Over one-third of the sample identify themselves as liberal (or radical) as compared with only 21 per cent of those in a recent national study. Similarly, many fewer Jews (17 per cent) than non-Jews (43 per cent) say that they are conservative. The shading of Jewish politics toward the liberal end of the spectrum is further documented by the respondents' relatively disproportionate identification as Democrats (66 as compared with 47 per cent for

TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF JEWS' POLITICAL VIEWS WITH ANALAGOUS NATIONAL DATA, BY PER CENT

Public Opinion Items (Liberal Responses)	1981 NSAJ	National Data
Should the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) be passed? (Yes)	73	45 <sup>a</sup>
Should declared homosexuals be allowed to teach in the public schools? (Yes)	67	45 <sup>b</sup>
Should the government pay for abortions? (Yes)	52	40 <sup>c</sup>
Should the death penalty be abolished? (Yes)	19	20 <sup>b</sup>
Should affirmative action be used to help disadvantaged groups? (Yes)	56	66 <sup>d</sup>
Should quotas be used to help disadvantaged groups? (Yes)	20	10 <sup>e</sup>
Should school children be bused when other means of integrating schools have failed? (Yes)	23	12 <sup>f</sup>
Should the U.S. substantially cut spending on social welfare? (No)	58	n.a.
Should the U.S. substantially increase defense spending? (No)	49	n.a.
<u>Political Identification</u>		
Liberal (and Radical)	34	21 <sup>g</sup>
Moderate	49	36
Conservative (and Very Conservative)	<u>17</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100
<u>Party Identification</u>		
Democratic	66	47 <sup>h</sup>
Republican	11	27
Independent, None, Other	<u>24</u>	<u>26</u>
	100	100
<u>Presidential Preference</u>		
Reagan	37 (34) <sup>i</sup>	55 <sup>j</sup>
Carter	40 (47)	36

Public Opinion Items (Liberal Responses)	1981 NSAJ	National Data
Anderson	20 (17)	8
Others	<u>4</u> (2)	<u>2</u>
	100	100

<sup>a</sup>NBC News/Associated Press National Survey, Fall 1980; reported in Milton Himmel-farb, "Are Jews Becoming Republican?," *Commentary*, August 1981, pp. 27-31.

<sup>b</sup>ABC News/Washington Post survey, May 18-20, 1981.

<sup>c</sup>Gallup Organization survey, July 11-14, 1980.

<sup>d</sup>ABC News/Louis Harris survey, November 11-13, 1980.

<sup>e</sup>Gallup Organization survey, December 5-8, 1980.

<sup>f</sup>CBS News/New York Times survey, June 22-27, 1980.

<sup>g</sup>Computed from Yankelovich *et al.*, "Anti-Semitism in the United States," New York, July 1981, p. 81.

<sup>h</sup>Time/Yankelovich survey, September 15-17, 1981.

<sup>i</sup>Jewish voters as reported on p. 333 of Alan Fisher, "Jewish Political Shift?"; computed from an adjusted New York Times/CBS News Election Day Poll, 1980.

<sup>j</sup>Whites only, *ibid.*

the country as a whole), and their commensurate under-identification as Republicans (11 versus 27 per cent). Similarly, Jews are roughly ten per cent more likely than other Americans to claim they favored Jimmy Carter and/or John Anderson for president in 1980; they are about 20 per cent less likely to claim they supported Ronald Reagan for president.<sup>12</sup>

### Sources of Jewish Liberalism

Some understanding of the sources of Jewish liberalism can be gleaned from examining political variation among major population sub-groups. Table 8 reports how four measures of political orientation vary by age, education, and ritual observance. The four measures are: an index of liberalism constructed out of nine public opinion items and the question on self-identification; political self-identification (as liberal or radical, moderate, conservative or very conservative); party identification; and 1980 presidential preference.

Age, education, and ritual observance bear fairly consistent relationships with the various measures of liberalism. Thus, in three out of four instances, the young (ages 18-39) are between five and 15 per cent more liberal than the middle-aged or elderly.

<sup>12</sup>Exit polls are reported in Alan Fisher, "Jewish Political Shift? Erosion, Yes; Conversion, No," in Seymour Lipset, (ed.), *Party Coalitions in the 1980's* (New Brunswick, 1981), pp. 327-340. Fisher indicates that 34 per cent of Jews voted for Reagan, whereas the National Survey reports a figure of 37 per cent. Sampling error, the distinction between actual voting and mere "favoring," as well as over-reporting of support for a winner are partial explanations for this small discrepancy.



TABLE 8. LIBERAL PUBLIC OPINION INDEX,<sup>a</sup> POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION, PARTY IDENTIFICATION, AND PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE, BY AGE, EDUCATION, AND RITUAL OBSERVANCE, BY PER CENT

	Liberal Index	Political Identification			Party Identification			Presidential Preference		
		Lib./Rad.	Mod.	Cons.	Dem.	Rep.	Other	Reagan	Carter	And.
<u>Age</u>										
18-39	55	44	42	15	61	9	30	32	39	25
40-59	41	28	52	19	60	16	24	42	36	19
60+	38	29	53	18	76	7	17	37	46	15
<u>Education</u>										
H.S. Grad.	35	31	47	22	76	9	15	40	42	14
Some College	35	26	57	18	61	13	26	47	33	18
B.A.	51	31	48	18	64	12	24	35	41	20
Grad. School	57	37	48	12	63	10	27	29	42	24
<u>Ritual Obs.</u>										
Secular	45	42	39	20	49	21	30	37	47	12
Minimal	52	39	49	11	68	7	25	29	47	20
Moderate	41	26	56	19	68	12	20	42	34	22
Observant	41	27	48	25	72	10	18	46	28	23

<sup>a</sup>Per cent giving Liberal (or Radical) answers to at least five out of ten questions on Public Opinions and Political Identification.

Party preference constitutes the single exception to this generalization, in that fewer young Jews identify as Democrats. They—like young Americans generally—are less likely than their elders to identify as either Republicans or Democrats (30 per cent of the under-40 respondents fail, in fact, to do so).

One reason for the greater liberalism among younger Jews is their lead over their elders in educational attainment. Better educated people in the general population are more liberal, and such is the case with Jews also. Respondents with a graduate degree score high on the liberal index 20 per cent more often than do those without a B.A. Similar but less dramatic differences obtain for political self-identification and presidential preference. Interestingly, the party preference question is out of line with the three ideological indicators. In fact, the least well-educated—those with no more than a high school education—are the most Democratic group, even as they are the least liberal. Overall, though, the association between education and liberalism is direct, much as one would expect.

More significant is the relationship between liberalism and ritual observance. Respondents were classified into four ritual observance groups based on their answers to six questions about ritual and one on synagogue membership. These groups are: (1) the “observant”—almost all of whom have Passover Seders, light Hanukkah candles, fast on Yom Kippur, attend Rosh Hashanah services, and belong to a synagogue, while the overwhelming majority also light Sabbath candles, and have meat and dairy dishes; (2) the “moderately observant”—who differ from the “observant” in that only a small minority light Sabbath candles or keep Kosher at home; (3) the “minimally observant”—who perform only one or two of the activities mentioned above, usually attending a Passover Seder or lighting Hanukkah candles; and (4) the “secular”—who perform none of the six rituals mentioned.

According to conventional wisdom, liberalism should increase uniformly as observance declines. Table 8's lowest panel shows that this is largely, but not totally, true. Liberalism does increase with diminishing ritual observance, but only up to a point, that demarked by the “minimally observant.” Thus, the “observant” are generally less liberal than the “moderately observant,” and both are clearly less liberal than the “minimally observant.” But then, continuing to move down the observance continuum, the increase in liberalism ceases: “secular” respondents are considerably *less* liberal than the “minimally observant.” They score seven per cent lower than the “minimally observant” on the liberalism index, are three times as likely to identify as Republicans (21 versus 7 per cent), are 12 per cent more likely to have voted for (or favored) Ronald Reagan for president (37 versus 29 per cent), and are nine per cent more likely to call themselves conservative (20 versus 11 per cent).

The liberalism-observance relationship, then, can be characterized as a lopsided, inverted U-shaped contour. Liberalism reaches a peak among Jews who are only somewhat less observant than the “average” Jew. Both the more observant (“observant” and “moderately observant” respondents) and the least observant (“secular” Jews) are less liberal than the “minimally observant.”

Several theories that have been advanced to explain why modern Jews generally identify with the political left have been subjected to criticism by Charles Liebman.<sup>13</sup> My own view—drawn in part from Liebman's thinking on the matter—is that Jewish liberal tendencies are bound up with the process of assimilation and integration into the larger society. Liberalism is both a strategy for, and a reflection of, the successful entry of Jews into the social mainstream. For years, liberal politics signified successful integration; more assimilated Jews viewed their universalist politics as a sign of sophistication, while they saw the particularism of their parents and other less well-educated Jews as an indication of incomplete adjustment to American modernity. Beyond that, Jews have entered—and have probably significantly influenced—the highly-educated free professions, becoming part of what some have called the “new class,” those who work in the world of ideas and communication. Public opinion analysts have portrayed this “class” as especially liberal. Finally, and not least relevant to the integration argument, Jews remain a minority group with considerable insecurities. Many Jews continue to believe that there is a definite Jewish stake in supporting the civil rights and civil liberties of all Americans.

While these considerations impel the bulk of American Jews to lean leftward in their overall political stance, still other factors restrain Jewish liberalism. Significantly, these restraints operate most effectively among Jews at either end of the assimilation-identification continuum, that is, among the most observant and least observant Jews.

The more observant are less liberal (or more conservative) for at least two sorts of reasons. In the first place, traditional Jewish teaching in many areas is, in fact, quite conservative. Secondly, more observant Jews—Orthodox or not—are more likely to think politically in terms of the particularist group interests of American and world Jewry. As such, they are less committed to unqualified universalism; they are more prepared to make alliances with powerful conservative elites if, in their view, it is “good for the Jews.”

At the other extreme of the identification-assimilation continuum are the largely assimilated Jews. They are represented in this study by the 15 per cent or so who qualify as “secular” Jews on the ritual observance scale. Not only are these people ritually uninvolved and much less likely to belong to a synagogue (only ten per cent of the “secular” respondents do belong, as opposed to over half of the rest), but they are considerably less likely to have mostly Jewish friends (only about a quarter do, as opposed to roughly three-quarters of the others). As such, they are highly integrated into non-Jewish society, are distant from the semi-segregated Jewish subsociety, and are relatively untouched by the liberal Jewish political subculture fostered by Jewish social networks. When Jews assimilate, they move toward the politics of the mainstream to which they assimilate. Thus, while the “minimally

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<sup>13</sup>See Liebman, *op. cit.*

observant" are the most liberal group, the "secular" Jews manifest more moderate and sometimes even conservative political views. (In analyses whose results are not shown here, I further subdivided the "secular" group into two roughly equal segments, consisting of those with mostly non-Jewish friends and those with at least half Jewish friends. The former are considerably more conservative than the latter, and they are about as conservative as the "observant.")

In sum, as with many other aspects of social behavior, Jews act politically in line with the rest of society and yet in a distinctly Jewish fashion as well. Like other Americans, Jews who are younger and better educated are more liberal. No doubt part of the Jews' preponderance in liberalism can be traced to their extraordinary educational achievements and their concentration in the "new class" professions. But Jews also act distinctively; their Jewishness still operates in a special fashion to alternately induce or restrain their left-of-center proclivities. The most liberal are those who identify as Jews, but participate minimally in Jewish life. They are not so assimilated as to have left the essentially liberal Jewish subculture or to no longer feel the group identification and insecurity which impels many Jews to the liberal side of the political spectrum. Nor are they so thoroughly identified as Jews that they feel comfortable either with unabashed particularism or with the social conservatism of the more religiously observant.

### *Liberalism and Pro-Israelism*

During the last decade, several commentators have suggested that the tradition of dual American-Jewish support for Israel and liberalism has come under increasing strain. Some liberals have claimed that many Jews are leaving the liberal coalition because of their commitment to Israel. At the same time, conservative and neo-conservative supporters of Israel charge Jewish liberals with failing to rally to Israel's cause with sufficient fervor because of their universalist commitments. If, in fact, there has been either erosion of support for Israel among liberals or a disproportionate retreat from liberalism among supporters of Israel, then we would expect to find greater support for Israel among conservatives than among liberals. Table 9 examines the extent to which liberalism and pro-Israelism are actually incompatible among our nationwide sample of American Jews. Respondents are divided into three political groups—low, medium, and high liberals—based on their answers to nine issue questions and the question on political self-identification. The left panel of the table reports differences among these groups in three measures of pro-Israelism: concern for Israel, support for Israel's policies (see Table 6 for details on these two indices), and having traveled to Israel.

While travel to Israel is level across all three political groupings, both concern for Israel and support for its policies decline (and the latter more so) as liberalism increases. Since both political views and the Israel measures are subject to influences which causally precede them, it would be erroneous to infer a causal association between liberalism and any of the pro-Israel measures simply on the basis of the

TABLE 9. PRO-ISRAEL MEASURES BY LIBERALISM, UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED FOR AGE, EDUCATION, INCOME, AND RITUAL OBSERVANCE, BY PER CENT

Liberalism	Unadjusted			Adjusted		
	Low	Med.	High	Low	Med.	High
Concern for Israel	47	44	39	45	42	45
Support for Israel's Policies	70	66	46	69	65	51
Have Been to Israel	37	38	39	37	37	41

unadjusted figures on the left. The right panel in Table 9 adjusts for such antecedent factors as age, education, income, and ritual observance. Since both supporters of Israel and the less liberal tend to be older and less well-educated, controlling for these factors in particular should help to explain the association between liberalism and pro-Israelism. After controls are introduced, we find absolutely no relationship between liberalism and either concern for Israel or travel to Israel. However, as before, significantly fewer "high" liberals are supportive of Israeli policies than are "medium" or "low" liberals.

The distinction between support for Israeli policies and other forms of pro-Israeli thinking and action proves to be quite crucial in this analysis of the putative incompatibility between liberalism and pro-Israelism. Liberal political views do not in any way inhibit concern for Israel, or travel there, which is a very concrete manifestation of concern. Liberals, though, are more ready than moderates and conservatives (i.e., "low" liberals) to part company with hard-line Israeli government policies. Insofar as liberals are more prone to adopt conciliatory rather than confrontational approaches to settling international disputes in general, they apply the same perspective to Israeli-Arab differences. As a result, they more readily criticize Israel for being too hawkish, more easily contemplate negotiations with the PLO, and more frequently consider territorial concessions as a way of bringing peace and security to Israel. These political positions do not necessarily imply weaker commitment to Israel in the abstract, although those most supportive of Israeli policies are more likely to evince strong concern for Israel as well (data not shown). In sum, American Jewish liberalism is not incompatible with pro-Israeli feelings or certain expressions of support (such as travel). It does, however, restrain concurrence with certain hard-line policies of the Israeli government.

### *Conclusion*

The 1981/1982 National Survey of American Jews replicates many previously reported findings pertaining to American Jews (especially in the demographic area), documents characteristics and trends noted earlier by astute observers of American Jewry, and clarifies some issues by sharpening our understanding of the thinking and practices of American Jews. The experience of this first survey has shown that it is possible to collect reasonably representative survey data on American Jews at relatively low cost. This successful experiment with the mail-back Distinctive Jewish Name technique may ultimately spur other researchers to collect additional data on these and other matters, thereby contributing to improved and expanded quantitative research on American Jewry.

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