# MARGINALITY AND LIBERALISM AMONG JEWISH ELITES

ROBERT LERNER
ALTHEA K. NAGAI AND
STANLEY ROTHMAN

**Abstract** Although much has been written about the Jewish proclivity toward liberalism, little has been written about elites who are Jewish. This article extensively compares American elites, both Jewish and non-Jewish, on a wide variety of social, economic, and political attitudes. Jewish elites are found to be consistently more liberal than their non-Jewish counterparts on four different measures of liberalism. We find small differences between religiously liberal and religiously conservative Jews. The differences between Jewish and non-Jewish elites persisted after controlling for a number of background variables including current occupation. These results are explained as a result of Jewish socialization into a tradition of marginality which has persisted despite changing conditions. This conclusion is supported by showing that parental ideology can partially predict respondents' ideological views.

High socioeconomic status remains one of the best predictors of Republican party support and conservative attitudes in the United States, although the relationship has weakened somewhat since the 1950s (e.g., Jensen, 1981; Ladd with Hadley, 1978; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976). Republicans are wealthier, more educated, and have higher-status jobs than Democrats and independents. Jewish liberalism has long confounded this general relationship. Jews are generally wealthier, better educated, and hold higher-status jobs than the average American (Cohen, 1983), but they remain the most liberal white ethnic

ROBERT LERNER is Assistant Director of the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change at Smith College. ALTHEA K. NAGAI is Senior Research Associate at the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change at Smith College. STANLEY ROTHMAN is Mary Huggins Gamble Professor of Government and Director of the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change at Smith College. This article is part of a larger study of Leadership and Social Change in the United States of which Stanley Rothman is the Director. It is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change at Smith College. 

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group in the United States (Fisher, 1979; Lipset, 1981; Cohen, 1983; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976).

While Jewish Americans as a whole have been extensively studied by sociologists and political scientists (e.g., Cohen, 1983; Fisher, 1979; Liebman, 1973), the social and political background and outlook of American Jews in leadership positions have not been studied in detail. It is possible that assimilation has occurred at the highest pinnacles of success, creating an elite of American Jews as conservative as their Gentile counterparts.

The emergence of a small cadre of Jewish neoconservative intellectuals raises questions about the stability of Jewish liberalism. It is at least possible that they may have weakened the heretofore solid Jewish intellectual consensus in favor of liberalism (e.g., Kristol, 1983; Steinfels, 1979). The visibility of this group lends weight to the view that Jews, especially Jews who are elite members of various American institutions, are not as hostile to conservatism as they once were and thus do not support liberalism as whole-heartedly as they once did.

The first part of this paper compares the political ideology of Jewish elites with their Gentile counterparts. We find that elite Jews are more liberal than non-Jewish elites, and that this difference persists despite the introduction of numerous control variables.

The second part of this paper tackles a more difficult task: an exploration of the reasons for continued Jewish liberalism at the elite level. Competing explanations abound (e.g., Liebman, 1973; Cohen, 1983). Religious heritage is often given as one explanation for Jewish liberalism (e.g., Fuchs, 1956). Another commonly proposed explanation is ethnic discrimintion (e.g., Lipset, 1981).

Based on our analysis we have formulated still another explanation. We propose that the contemporary ideology of Jewish elites is a product of political socialization. Jewish liberalism is part of a family tradition of liberalism that developed in response to European conditions. The tradition persists despite the changes that have taken place in American society in recent years.

## Data and Definitions

### THE CONCEPT OF ELITE AND DEFINITION OF THE SAMPLE

Political scientists and sociologists since the 1950s have debated, sometimes with great acrimony, the nature of the American power structure. Is America ruled by the few or the many, are they in conflict or consensus, and how significant are differences in attitudes, values, and worldviews in an analysis of American elites?

Since C. Wright Mills (1956), two "schools" of social theory—the power elite theorists and the pluralists—have argued about the structure of American power. Theorists of the "power elite" school follow upon the work of Mills and continue to contend that power is fundamentally divided between two groups, the elite and the masses. The elite are homogeneous, cohesive, and autonomous, and represent the most exclusive segments of society. They seek to maximize their own power as opposed to mass interests. "The power elite," says Domhoff (1967:144), "is rooted in the upper class and serves the interests of the members of the upper class."

In contrast to the assumption of the power elite theorists, the "pluralists" start from the premise of multiple and varying groups of elites, for they believe that power in modern society reflects the structural complexities of modern bureaucratic society (Dahl, 1961; Keller, 1963; Polsby, 1963; Rose, 1967; Dye, 1986). The complexity of the modern state and society has resulted in different groups with different interests (i.e., interest groups), frequently pitted against each other (e.g., labor versus business). For the pluralists, power is diffuse, specialized, and differentiated. Unlike the power elite model, elites in a pluralist paradigm are multiple, fragmented, and often in conflict.

We rely largely on an institutional approach in order to designate elites in America. Following Suzanne Keller (1963), Thomas Dye (1986), and others, we define elites as occupants of leadership roles in institutions responsible for the allocation and distribution of resources, and those who create and distribute influential perceptions of reality. The growing diversity and complexity of American society produces growing diversity, complexity, specialization, and differentiation among strategic elites.

The data used in this study were collected as part of a larger study of American elites directed by Rothman (Rothman and Lichter, 1987; Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter, 1986; Rothman and Lichter, 1984; and Rothman, Lichter, and Lichter, forthcoming). The data analyzed in this article consist of responses to an extensive questionnaire administered by trained interviewers to random samples of elites. Our sample consists of 1,340 persons drawn from the following leadership groups: high-ranking military officers, corporate business leaders, corporate law partners in major law firms, upper-level federal civil servants, journalists working for leading news media, prime-time television producers, directors, and writers, major motion picture producers, writers, and directors, and leaders of public interest groups.[1]

1. The interviewing of the business and media samples took place in 1979, while interviewing for the other samples took place in 1982 and 1983. The companies responsible for the interviewing were Response Analysis Corporation of Princeton, NJ; Metro Research, Washington, DC; Depth Research, New York City; and Carol Davis Research, Los

The samples were selected as follows:

*The military elite.* The military are a random sample of field-grade officers from (a) the Pentagon phone book and (b) the class roster of the National Defense University. The Pentagon staff sample consists of general- and flag-grade officers, while the NDU sample consists of noncivilian students mostly at the rank of colonel or commander and above. The final sample size is 152. The response rate is 77%.

*The business elite.* The business sample consists of 242 upper- and middle-management personnel drawn from four Fortune 500 companies and one firm selected from *Fortune* lists of the 50 leading American retail outlets, banks, and public utilities. In each case, we developed a randomly based sample of top- and middle-management personnel from official company lists. The names of the corporations cannot be publicly disclosed since a requirement for cooperation in each case was a promise of anonymity. The response rate was 96%.

*The federal civil service.* The top-level federal bureaucrats constitute a random sample from the Office of Personnel Management's *List of Senior Executive Personnel.* Political appointees are excluded. Half the sample is drawn from "activist" agencies such as EPA, and half from "traditional" agencies such as Commerce or Agriculture. The final sample size is 200, with a response rate of 85%.

*The corporate lawyers.* The lawyers are a random sample of partners in New York and Washington law firms defined as "large" (more than 50 partners) in the *Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory.* The final sample size is 150, and the response rate is 66%.

*The media elite.* The media sample consists of a random sample of journalists and editors from the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report,* and the news organizations at NBC, ABC, CBS, and PBS. The sampling frame is derived from internal phone directories and, in the case of news magazines, the names of individuals listed on mastheads. Staff members with responsibility for news coverage were chosen in consultation with knowledgeable people. A computer-generated random sample was chosen from this pool of names. The final sample size is 238. The response rate is 74%.

*The makers of prime-time television.* The television sample is drawn from an initial list of 350 names of the most influential television writ-

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Angeles. All interviewers were employees of the firms conducting the research. They received special training for this study, attended an orientation seminar, and conducted preliminary practice inteviews. Response Analysis supervised the pretesting of the original questionnaire.

The questionnaires and a copy of the data tape for the media and business samples have been desposited with the Roper Center. We plan to send the other questionnaires and data there as well at some time in the future.

ers, producers, and executives. This is a reputational sampling frame derived from industry sources. In order to be included in the frame, persons had to be associated with the development of two or more successful prime-time television series. From this list, a random sample of 172 names was drawn. The final sample size is 104. The response rate is 60%.

*The movie elite*. The motion picture sample consists of a list of 149 writers, producers, and directors responsible for the fifty top-grossing films made between 1965 and 1982, according to listings in *Variety* magazine. The final sample size is 96, with a response rate of 64%.

*The public interest elite*. The public interest sample is drawn from lists of presidents and members of boards of directors of formal lobbying organizations, and attorneys in public interest law firms. For the lists of presidents and members of boards of directors of formal lobbying organizations, sources included *Public Interest Profiles, Washington Five,* and the *Encyclopedia of Associations*. For attorneys in public interest law firms, we drew upon the Ford Foundation's *Public Interest Law: Five Years Later* and the Council for Public Interest Law compendium *Balancing the Scales of Justice*. Knowledgeable individuals were also consulted. The sample is restricted to individuals affiliated with groups based in the Washington, DC, and New York metropolitan areas. We randomly sampled equal numbers from each sector. The final sample size is 158. The response rate is 84%.

## CLASSIFYING JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH ELITES

How does one define a Jew? Does one include only the religiously observant? What about converts to another religion? In order to better unravel the complexities of Jewish political beliefs, we opted for a broad definition of who is Jewish. We classified individuals as "Jewish" if they gave their current religious affiliation as Jewish, if they were raised in the Jewish religion, or if they identified themselves as "Jewish" when asked about their ethnic descent.

This procedure has two advantages. First, it enabled us to obtain a sufficient number of cases for detailed analysis. Twenty-eight percent of our total sample of American elites, 375 out of 1,340, are Jewish. Second, it allows us to examine in some detail differences in liberalism between the various Jewish subgroups.

We subdivided our Jewish sample into subgroups based on their current religious affiliation. The subgroups are orthodox, conservative, reform, "just Jewish," none, and other. The first three categories are self-explanatory. The "just Jewish" group consists of those respondents who, when asked to give their current religion, reply "Jewish"

or "just Jewish" without any specific denominational label. The "none" group consists of those respondents who were either raised Jewish or list "Jewish" as their ethnic identity, but who also list their current religion as "none." The group labeled "other" consists of those respondents who were raised Jewish but who have converted to another religion.[2]

## Liberalism Among Elite Jewish Americans

Elite Jews are considerably more liberal than elite non-Jews as reflected in their voting behavior, self-labeled ideological position, and their responses to a wide variety of social, economic, and political attitude questions.

### VOTING BEHAVIOR

Jewish elites are far more likely to vote for Democratic presidential candidates and far less likely to vote for Republican presidential candidates than non-Jewish elites (see Table 1). Elite Jews have consistently supported the Democratic candidate by margins of more than four to one. Support for the Republican candidate among Jewish elites has not increased since 1972.

Elite Jews are even stronger supporters of the Democrats than the Jewish public. Moreover, the gap between Jewish elites and the Jewish public has grown. The Jewish public until 1980 had been Democratic supporters, but in increasingly smaller percentages than Jewish elites. The gap was largest in 1980, when Carter won a majority of the elite Jewish vote, while Reagan won the plurality of the Jewish mass vote.[3]

In contrast to elite Jews, non-Jewish elites preferred the Democrats in 1968 and in 1976 by only a slight majority. They supported the

2. The numerical breakdown is as follows.

| *Religious Group* | *N* | *Percent* |
|---|---|---|
| Orthodox | 10 | 2.7% |
| Conservative | 57 | 15.2% |
| Reform | 91 | 24.3% |
| Just Jewish | 88 | 23.5% |
| None | 116 | 30.9% |
| Other | 13 | 3.5% |
| Total | 375 | 100.1% |

Because of rounding, the percentages sum to slightly more than 100%.

3. In 1984, a majority of Jewish voters supported Mondale (Schneider, 1984/1985). Unfortunately, we do not have comparable elite data.

**Table 1.** Voting Behavior, 1968–1980

| | Jewish Public | Jewish Elite | Non-Jewish Elite | American Public |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1968 | | | | |
| Humphrey | 83% | 89% | 50% | 43% |
| Nixon | | 8 | 48 | 43 |
| 1972 | | | | |
| McGovern | 65% | 85% | 45% | 38% |
| Nixon | | 15 | 54 | 61 |
| 1976 | | | | |
| Carter | 74% | 83% | 52% | 50% |
| Ford | | 15 | 47 | 48 |
| 1980 | | | | |
| Carter | 38% | 64% | 38% | 41% |
| Reagan | 39 | 14 | 51 | 51 |
| Anderson | 19 | 22 | 10 | 7 |

SOURCES: Data for Jewish public 1968–1976 from Fisher, 1979 (only Democratic vote available). Data for Jewish public 1980 from Cohen, 1983. Data for American public from the U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1981. $N$ = 1,333 for elites surveyed for 1968–1976 elections; $N$ = 853 for elites surveyed for 1980 election.

Republicans in 1972 and again in 1980. Additionally, the gap between Gentile elites and the Gentile public is much smaller than that between elite Jews and the Jewish public in 1972 and in 1980.

Somewhat surprisingly, Jewish elites of all religious denominations generally prefer Democrats to Republicans in roughly similar proportions (see Table 2). The only group that consistently deviates from this pattern are those members of elite groups who were raised Jewish but who have converted to another religion. While the small number of these persons makes generalization hazardous, they are more likely to support Republican candiates than are other Jewish elites, but they are still not as supportive as non-Jewish elites.

Democratic support, however, has declined among some Jewish subgroups. The orthodox, conservatives, and "nones" supported McGovern in smaller proportions than they did Humphrey—support which, incidentally, translated into Republican votes. The same was not true in 1980. While all Jewish subgroups except the "others" supported Carter in smaller proportions in 1980 than in 1976, this resulted in a substantial increase in Republican support only among Orthodox Jews.

**Table 2.** Elite Jewish Vote by Jewish Religious Affiliation, 1968–1980

| | Jewish Religious Affiliation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Orthodox | Conservative | Reform | Nondenominational | None | Other |
| 1968 ($N$ = 295) | | | | | | |
| Humphrey | 90% | 93% | 93% | 89% | 94% | 73% |
| Nixon | 10 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 27 |
| 1972 ($N$ = 319) | | | | | | |
| McGovern | 70% | 79% | 92% | 85% | 87% | 67% |
| Nixon | 30 | 21 | 8 | 15 | 13 | 33 |
| 1976 ($N$ = 338) | | | | | | |
| Carter | 90% | 76% | 89% | 84% | 89% | 40% |
| Ford | 10 | 24 | 11 | 16 | 11 | 60 |
| 1980 ($N$ = 255) | | | | | | |
| Carter | 60% | 47% | 73% | 71% | 66% | 50% |
| Reagan | 20 | 20 | 14 | 9 | 10 | 25 |
| Anderson | 20 | 32 | 14 | 20 | 24 | 25 |

SELF-IDENTIFIED IDEOLOGY

We asked our sample of American elites to place themselves on a seven-point scale of political ideology, ranging from extremely conservative ("a score of one") to extremely liberal ("a score of seven") (see Table 3).

While one-third of the Jewish public calls itself liberal, almost three out of four elite Jews identify themselves as such. A similar gap occurs between elite Jews and elite non-Jews. Only 37% of the non-Jewish elite call themselves liberal.

Consistent with the voting data, we found little relationship between Jewish religious affiliation and self-identified liberalism (see Table 4). Members of the Jewish elite call themselves liberal, regardless of whether they are orthodox, conservative, reform, "just Jewish," or atheists.

Converts to other religions are again the only exception. Those Jewish elites who converted to other religions resemble non-Jewish elites more closely than they resemble other Jewish elites. Compared to other subgroups of Jewish elites, a larger proportion identify themselves as conservatives, and a smaller percentage see themselves as liberals.

**Table 3.** Self-Labeled Ideology, Jewish Versus Non-Jewish

| Self-Identified Ideology | Jewish Public[a] | Jewish Elite[b] | Non-Jewish Elite[b] | American Public[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liberal | 33% | 74% | 37% | 21% |
| Moderate | 48 | 14 | 21 | 36 |
| Conservative | 19 | 12 | 42 | 43 |
| *N* | | 375 | 958 | |

[a] Data from Cohen, 1983:145. Liberal = liberal + radical; moderate = moderate; conservative = conservative + very conservative.
[b] On our 7-point scale, conservative = 1–3; moderate = 4; liberal = 5–7.

**Table 4.** Self-Labeled Ideology and Jewish Religious Affiliation

| | Jewish Religious Affiliation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Identified Ideology | Orthodox | Conserative | Reform | Nondenominational | None | Other |
| Liberal | 70% | 77% | 75% | 70% | 76% | 46% |
| Moderate | 20 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Conservative | 10 | 9 | 10 | 15 | 9 | 38 |
| *N* | 10 | 57 | 91 | 88 | 116 | 13 |

NOTE: On our 7-point scale, conservative = 1–3; moderate = 4; liberal = 5–7.

## POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Jewish elites also offered more liberal responses than non-Jewish elites to the overwhelming majority of attitude questions we asked (see Table 5).

*Economic issues.* Jewish elites are generally less favorable toward laissez-faire capitalism. A minority of Jewish elites but a majority of the non-Jewish elites think that less regulation of business is a good thing. Fewer members of the Jewish elite believe that private enterprise is fair to workers, and fewer also believe that government should not guarantee jobs. Likewise, more than two-thirds of the Jewish elite but less than half of the non-Jewish elite agree that the government should reduce the income gap between rich and poor.

Perhaps most indicative of their economic liberalism is the fact that 21% of Jewish elites believe that big corporations should be publicly

owned—2.5 times that of the non-Jews. Even more strikingly, 31% of elite Jews think that the United States should move toward socialism, more than twice the proportion of non-Jewish elites.

Despite these differences in attitudes toward the economy, both groups agree on rewarding ability. Eighty-seven percent of elite Jews and 88% of elite non-Jews believe that the more able should earn more.

*Alienation from the American system.* Elite Jews are also more alienated than their Gentile counterparts. A larger proportion of elite Jews compared to elite non-Jews believe that the American legal system favors the wealthy; a larger proportion also believe that U.S. institutions need overhauling; and a majority of Jewish elites compared to roughly one in three non-Jewish elites think that the American social structure causes alienation.

*Social issues.* Jewish leaders are also considerably more liberal than their non-Jewish counterparts on social issues. More elite Jews than elite non-Jews believe that a woman has a right to choose whether to have an abortion, although a large majority of both groups support this idea. A much larger proportion of the Jewish elite also supports a homosexual's right to teach in public school. Similarly, only one in five elite Jews condemn homosexuality as wrong, compared to 49% of the non-Jewish elite. Less than a majority of Jewish elites also frown upon adultery, but two in three members of non-Jewish elite groups believe adultery is wrong.

The pattern is the same for other issues. There is a large gap between attitudes of elite Jews and non-Jews toward concern in our courts for criminals, while a larger percentage of Jewish elites believe that special preference should be given in hiring blacks.

*Foreign policy issues.* Jewish elites are also more liberal than non-Jewish elites on foreign policy questions. A larger percentage of elite Jews agree that the goal of American foreign policy is to protect big business. Less than half of the Jewish elites support the necessity of the CIA sometimes overthrowing foreign governments, compared to a majority of non-Jewish elites.

Responses to the Israel question, however, deviate from the general pattern. Most elite Jews and non-Jews believe in American support of Israel, but in this case a larger proportion of elite Jews compared to non-Jews believe that the United States has a moral obligation to defend the Jewish state.

## DIMENSIONS OF LIBERALISM

How do these responses to individual attitude questions hang together? We created composite indicators of liberalism using factor analytic techniques (see Table 6). Three stable dimensions of liberalism

**Table 5.** Political Attitudes of Elites (Percentage Agreeing)

| | Jewish | Non-Jewish |
|---|---|---|
| **Economic Issues** | | |
| Less regulation of business is good for the country | 44 | 73 |
| The American private enterprise system is generally fair to working people | 63 | 79 |
| It is not the proper role of government to insure that everyone has a job | 46 | 54 |
| The government should work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor | 67 | 50 |
| Big corporations should be taken out of private ownership and run in the public interest | 21 | 8 |
| The U.S. would be better off if it moved toward socialism[a] | 31 | 14 |
| Under a fair economic system, people with more ability should earn higher salaries | 87 | 88 |
| **Alienation** | | |
| The American legal system mainly favors the wealthy | 85 | 72 |
| The United States needs a complete restructuring of its basic institutions | 36 | 27 |
| The structure of our society causes most people to feel alienated | 52 | 34 |
| **Social Issues** | | |
| It is a woman's right to decide whether or not to have an abortion | 96 | 83 |
| Lesbians and homosexuals should not be allowed to teach in public schools | 12 | 36 |
| It is wrong for adults of the same sex to have sexual relations | 20 | 49 |
| Our environmental problems are not as serious as people have been led to believe | 14 | 32 |
| It is wrong for a married person to have sexual relations with someone other than his or her spouse | 48 | 67 |

**Table 5.** (*Continued*)

| | Jewish | Non-Jewish |
|---|---|---|
| There is too much concern in court for the rights of criminals[a] | 15 | 64 |
| Special preference in hiring should be given to blacks[a] | 58 | 44 |
| **Foreign Policy Issues** | | |
| The main goal of foreign policy has been to protect U.S. business interests | 61 | 40 |
| It is sometimes necessary for the CIA to protect U.S. interests by undermining hostile governments | 45 | 63 |
| The United States has a moral obligation to prevent the destruction of Israel | 88 | 60 |

NOTE: *N*s range from 1,312 to 1,330.
[a] Asked only of bureaucrats, the military, public interest leaders, and corporate lawyers.

**Table 6.** Mean Factor Scores of Elites

| | Expressive Individualism | System Alienation | Collectivist Liberalism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Jewish ($N$ = 898) | 97.96 | 99.05 | 99.00 |
| Jewish ($N$ = 348) | 105.26 | 102.45 | 102.58 |
| Orthodox | 100.21 | 98.36 | 101.60 |
| Conservative | 103.08 | 99.42 | 103.82 |
| Reform | 103.95 | 104.39 | 104.60 |
| Nondenominational | 105.34 | 102.74 | 100.61 |
| None | 106.72 | 102.90 | 102.76 |
| Other | 100.66 | 106.50 | 93.50 |

NOTES: Expressive individualism = woman has right to abortion, gays should not teach, environmental problems not serious, adultery is wrong, homosexual relations wrong. System alienation = legal system favors wealthy, private enterprise fair to worker, U.S. institutions need overhaul, big corporations should be publicly owned, social structure causes alienation, goal of foreign policy is to protect business. Collectivist liberalism = less regulation of business is good, government should not guarantee jobs, U.S. private enterprise fair to workers, more able should earn more, government should reduce income gap, big corporations should be publicly owned, CIA overthrows sometimes necessary.

emerge.[4] Questions relating to such issues as abortion, gays teaching in school, the seriousness of environmental problems, adultery, and homosexual relations are highly correlated and form one dimension of liberalism, which, following Bellah, we call "expressive individualism" (Bellah et al., 1985).[5]

We call the second dimension of liberalism "system alienation." Questions concerning such issues as whether the legal system favors the wealthy, the fairness of private enterprise, the need to overhaul American institutions, the public ownership of corporations, social structure causing alienation, and the relationship between foreign policy and business make up this dimension of liberalism.

The third dimension of liberalism is "collectivist liberalism" following Shils (1980). Questions loading onto this dimension include: regulation of business, government guaranteeing jobs, the fairness of private enterprise, the relationship between ability and earnings, government's role in reducing the income gap, the public ownership of big corporations, and the necessity of the CIA overthrowing foreign governments.[6]

When comparing their factor scores, we find a significant ideological gap between Jewish elites and non-Jewish elites on these three dimensions of liberalism, consistent with our voting, self-identification, and attitudinal data. The ideological distance is greatest on questions of expressive individualism. The mean factor score for Jewish elites on expressive individualism is 105.26, while the mean factor score for non-Jewish elites on this dimension is 97.96. Jewish mean factor scores average about three points higher than non-Jewish factor scores on the alienation and collectivist liberalism dimensions.

When examining factor scores for each Jewish subgroup, we find that the more observant are the more conservative on issues of expressive individualism. The mean factor scores of orthodox Jewish elites (100.21) are more than six points lower than the mean factor score of atheistic elite Jews.

On the dimension of alienation, the trend is less clear. Here again reform Jews are more liberal than are the conservatives and orthodox,

4. The factor analyses reported here are preliminary in nature. They do not use all the questions reported in the text. In particular, the questions on socialism, affirmative action, and crime were not included because they were not asked of all groups in our sample.

5. Bellah et al. (1985) first coined the phrase "expressive individualism" in reference to one strand of American culture, best represented by poems of Walt Whitman, focusing on the self and the primacy of self-expression in all aspects of life.

6. The question concerning the necessity of CIA overthrows clearly doesn't fit the label we have given this factor. Fortunately, the factor score coefficient for this question that we used to compute the scale of collectivist liberalism is sufficiently small so as to make it unlikely to affect our overall results.

**Table 7.** Social Background of Jewish Elites (Percentages)

| | Jewish | Non-Jewish |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 90 | 89 |
| College graduate | 90 | 92 |
| Personal income 100,000+ | 43 | 20 |
| Parents' income above average | 47 | 37 |
| Father college graduate | 38 | 38 |
| Occupation | | |
| Bureaucrats | 11 | 16 |
| Business | 5 | 23 |
| Law | 16 | 9 |
| News media | 17 | 18 |
| Military | 0 | 16 |
| Movies | 14 | 4 |
| Public interest | 20 | 9 |
| Television | 16 | 5 |

NOTE: *N*s range from 1,293 to 1,340.

who are again the most conservative. Yet nondenominational and atheist Jews have lower average scores than reform Jews and, most puzzling of all, the converts have the highest score of all the Jewish subgroups on this dimension.

A similar pattern can be found on the dimension of collectivist liberalism, except that the orthodox actually score above the non-denomination subgroup, and the converts have the lowest score of the Jewish subgroups on this dimension.

To summarize: Only on the dimension of expressive individualism does decreasing religiosity of the subgroups correlate with increasing liberalism; on alienation the orthodox and the conservatives are more conservative than the rest, but the overall trend is less clear; on the collectivist liberalism dimension there is no trend. The converts are especially puzzling. They are the most conservative of the subgroups on the dimensions of expressive individualism and collectivist liberalism, yet on system alienation they are the most liberal.

## Why Liberalism Among Jewish Elites?

Is the greater liberalism among elite Jews due to other factors besides being Jewish? Table 7 presents data on the socioeconomic back-

grounds of Jewish elites. Elite Jews do not substantially differ from elite non-Jews. Some of the background characteristics such as personal income and original family income should predispose Jewish elites to be more conservative.

As one would expect, almost all Jewish and non-Jewish elites are male. An equally large majority in both groups graduated from college, but elite Jews are currently more prosperous than their non-Jewish counterparts.

Roughly the same percentage in each group had fathers who were college graduates, but a larger proportion of Jewish elites grew up in families with above-average incomes. None of these characteristics accounts for the findings that Jewish elites are more liberal than non-Jewish elites.

An obvious source of difference between Jewish and non-Jewish elites is their distribution across occupations; Jewish elites are not evenly divided among all the occupational groups. The military elite and the business elite, two of the most conservative groups, contain a very small proportion of Jews, while the movies, television, and the public interest elite, three of the most liberal groups, have a large proportion of Jews.

This suggests that the differential occupational distribution of Jewish elites might account for their relative liberalism. However, it is possible that the development of political views closely attached to ethnic identity plays a role in career choice, in which case controlling for occupation is unnecessary. This is certainly the case with those choosing to join the public interest groups, although the literature supports the hypothesis for a much wider choice of fields (Ladd and Lipset, 1976; Mazur, 1986). We deal with the more difficult case for our hypothesis.

The hypothesis is tested using the four different measures of liberalism previously discussed: expressive individualism, alienation, collectivist liberalism, and self-identified liberalism. Separate multiple classification analyses were performed using all measures.[7]

7. Prior to doing the multiple classification analyses, we ran two-way analyses of variance on each measure in order to test for the possibility of interaction effects between occupational membership and Jewishness. We found no statistically significant interaction effects for expressive individualism and system alienation. However, we did find statistically significant interaction effects for self-identified liberalism and for collectivist liberalism at the $p < .05$ level of significance. We then examined specific differences between pairs of means (e.g., Jewish and non-Jewish bureaucrats) for each dimension. We found that on the expressive individualism dimension, Jewish military leaders (there are only two such persons in our sample) are slightly more conservative than non-Jewish military leaders. On the system alienation dimension we found that Jewish bureaucrats are slightly more conservative than non-Jewish bureaucrats. On the collectivist liberalism dimension we found that Jewish businessmen and Jewish journalists are slightly

**Table 8.** Liberalism by Jewishness, Controlling for Occupation (Multiple Classification Analysis)

| | Unadjusted | | Adjusted | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jewish | Non-Jewish | Jewish | Non-Jewish | Grand Mean | $R^2$ |
| Expressive individualism | 105.26 | 97.96* | 102.52 | 99.02* | 100 | .26# |
| System alienation | 102.45 | 99.05** | 100.88 | 99.66** | 100 | .19# |
| Collectivist liberalism | 102.58 | 99.00** | 100.92 | 99.64** | 100 | .23# |
| Self-identified liberalism | 5.25 | 3.93* | 4.77 | 4.12* | 4.30 | .41# |

* Jewish/non-Jewish difference significant at less than .0001 level.
** Jewish/non-Jewish difference significant at less than .05 level.
# Significant at less than .0001 level.

The results are presented in Table 8. Controlling for occupational membership reduces the average difference between Jews and non-Jews on all four measures. However, Jewish elites remain consistently more liberal than non-Jewish elites. The relationships are statistically significant at the $p < .0001$ level of significance for expressive individualism and self-identified liberalism, while the relationships are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level of significance for system alienation and collectivist liberalism.

As an additional check on the nonspuriousness of the Jewish effect, we ran regressions on our four measures of liberalism, including not only the Jewish and the occupation variables but also the sex of the respondent (female = 0, male = 1), age, the socioeconomic status of the father's job (using the Duncan scoring system), and region of origin (South = 1, other = 0).

In each regression, Jewish elites are more liberal than their non-Jewish counterparts, controlling for occupational membership, age, sex, father's socioeconomic status, and region of origin (see Table 9). The relationships are statistically significant at the $p < .0001$ level of

more conservative than their non-Jewish counterparts. There were no unusual differences on the self-identified liberalism dimension except that Jewish bureaucrats are considerably more liberal than non-Jewish bureaucrats. All of the differences appear to be idiosyncratic, possibly due to sampling error.

**Table 9.** Liberalism by Jewishness, Controlling for Occupation and Other Background Variables (Unstandardized Regression Coefficients)

| Independent Variable | Expressive Individualism | System Alienation | Self-Identified Liberalism | Collectivist Liberalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jewish | 2.75** | 1.63* | .65** | 1.69* |
| South | −0.07 | −0.46 | −.08 | .11 |
| Age | −0.45 | −0.11* | .00 | −.46 |
| Sex | −4.04** | −3.51* | −.36* | −3.45* |
| Father's SES | .30* | −0.02* | .00 | −0.16 |
| Occupation | | | | |
| Media | −0.76 | −1.73* | −.11 | 1.69 |
| Lawyers | −1.37* | −5.23* | −.24* | .35 |
| Movies | 0.11 | 1.29 | .12 | −0.16 |
| Bureaucrats | −2.90** | 2.89** | −.13 | 1.16 |
| Military | −6.50** | −3.87** | −.76** | −1.66 |
| Public interest | −0.96 | .85 | .62** | 11.75** |
| Business | −3.58** | −2.89** | −.69** | −3.32* |
| Constant | 91.81** | 98.92** | 3.65** | 104.72* |
| $R^2$ | .27** | .23** | .42** | .50** |

NOTE: $N$ = 1,150.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .0001$.

significance for expressive individualism and self-identified liberalism, while the relationships are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level of significance for alienation and collectivist liberalism.

## Why the Persistence of Elite Jewish Liberalism?

Several explanations for the persistence of Jewish liberalism have been proposed and criticized (e.g., Cohen, 1983; Glazer 1972; Liebman, 1973; and Fisher, 1979). One popular explanation, for example, is religious heritage. Adherents of this theory such as Fuchs (1956) contend that Jewish liberalism stems from a traditional religion based on universalism, cosmopolitanism, and concern for social justice. According to this theory, liberalism is a function of religion, and therefore the more religious should be more liberal. This is clearly not the case. Liebman (1973), Rothman and Lichter (1982), and Cohen (1983) show that more

religious Jews are somewhat less, not more, liberal. Our data showing that the orthodox and the conservative are somewhat more politically conservative than the others also supports this position.

Lipset (1981:308) advances another common explanation for Jewish liberalism: "their sensitivity to ethnic discrimination and their lack of effective intercourse with the upper status groups in America."

This is sometimes described to be the strain resulting from status inconsistency. According to this theory, Jews are subjected by the larger society to contradictory expectations: the prejudice applied to minority group members and the prestige of high socioeconomic status. They support liberalism and its accompanying social changes to bring these two attributes into greater harmony by eliminating the prejudice.

The major stumbling block for this theory is that subsequent research has shown that "indicators of anti-Semitism have diminished steadily since the forties and are at an all-time low today" (Lipset, 1987:57). If levels of prejudice and discrimination decline, Jewish elites should not remain disproportionately liberal; their opinions should be distributed in a manner similar to that of non-Jewish elites. Our data show that Jewish elites continue to be a distinctively liberal group. Clearly prejudice alone cannot be the explanation for the persistence of Jewish liberalism.

We propose a third explanation, that of political socialization. It is generally accepted that party identification and political values are to some extent passed down from generation to generation among the general public, even though the relationship is much weaker now than in the past (e.g., Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976; Jennings and Niemi, 1981).

The same passing-down of party loyalty and political values should be true of elites and thus of Jewish elites. This is a less obvious hypothesis than it might appear. The conventional wisdom among those who study elites is the opposite. After extensive review of the literature, Putnam (1976:93) concluded that "such characteristics as region of birth, size of hometown, ethnicity, and parent's occupation or education have little consistent relationship to current political opinions or behavior."

Despite his generalization, we speculate that Jewish elites have inherited a tradition of responding in particular ways to felt marginality. This response has remained strong, even though the conditions that initially gave rise to it have changed. Rothman and Lichter (1982) argue that the Jewish reaction to centuries of marginality in Christian society was the creation of a defensive subsystem—cultural, social, and familial—that reduced the sense of marginality. Emancipation and the end-

ing of the ghetto, however, removed the protective cocoon and subjected Jews to what Cudhiddy (1974) called "the ordeal of civility"—coping alone with the coldness and hostility of nineteenth-century society.

Cudhiddy (1974) and Rothman and Lichter (1982) argue that the large majority of Jews rejected religious "orthodoxy," yet required some form of self-justification as a replacement. Ideological synthesis fulfilled that function. Redefining "the Jewish problem" as a specific instance of a universal problem with a corresponding universal solution reduced a sense of Jewish distinctiveness and inferiority.

Liberalism and radicalism (especially socialism) are primary instances of this kind of universalistic value system. Once the initial response was fixed, the strength of ideological conviction persisted—even after the initial condition that helped bring it about vanished and despite shifts in the content of liberalism

If ideological views are partially due to the persistence of a cultural tradition, then the most obvious means by which the tradition is passed down from generation to generation is through the family. Thus knowledge of parents' political beliefs should be a good predictor of our respondents' political beliefs.

The tradition of a Jewish response to marginality means that we should find a distinctive *political* tradition that Jewish parents pass down to their offspring. The political tradition handed down by Jewish parents of our elites is more likely to be a tradition of political liberalism. In contrast, many of the parents of non-Jewish elites would be expected to hand down a moderate or conservative political tradition.

Our data provide some evidence for this. Forty-five percent of the Jewish elite remember their fathers as liberal, 26% remember them as political moderates, and 19% describe their fathers as conservatives. Only 23% of the non-Jewish elite remember their fathers as liberal, and 20% remember them as moderates. The majority of non-Jewish elites remember their fathers as politically conservative.

The same is true of mothers' political ideology. Fifty-six percent of the Jewish elite describe their mothers as liberal, and 27% describe them as moderates, but only 17% remember them as conservatives. In contrast, 25% of the non-Jewish elite recall their mothers as liberal, 29% as moderates, and 46% as conservatives.

There are statistically significant positive correlations between parental political ideology and our respondents' political beliefs ($p < .001$). This applies to both Jews and non-Jews for our four measures of liberalism (expressive individualism, alienation, collectivist liberalism, and self-identified liberalism; see Table 10).

The relationship between parental and respondents' beliefs is further affected by the frequency with which respondents and parents talked

**Table 10.** Liberalism by Parental Views (Pearson Correlation)

| Independent Variable | Expressive Individualism | System Alienation | Self-Identified Liberalism | Collectivist Liberalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Father's liberalism | .148* | .122* | .379* | .218* |
| Mother's liberalism | .160* | .132* | .368* | .225* |
| *N* | 1,199 | 1,199 | 1,233 | 1,199 |

*$p < .001$.

about politics (see Table 11).[8] We tested the relationship using our four measures of liberalism as dependent variables and the following as independent variables: parental political ideology (the sum of mothers' and fathers' liberalism score), the frequency with which respondents remember talking about politics when growing up (never, seldom, frequently, and often), and the product (statistical interaction term) of parental ideology and frequency of political discussion. A test of our hypothesis is a test of the statistical significance of this interaction. The interaction term is statistically significant for alienation, collectivist liberalism, and self-identified liberalism at the $p < .05$ level.

However, the interaction term is nonsignificant for the case of expressive individualism and parents' ideology. We speculate that this may be because the issues that make up this factor were not political issues at the time our respondents were growing up and hence were simply not discussed within their families.

## Conclusion

Despite their rise to the pinnacles of power in the United States, Jewish strategic elites have not become totally assimilated. Elite American Jews are more liberal than other American elites as measured by their voting records, self-labeled ideology, and political attitudes. This holds true even for the most traditional and ritualistically observant Jews.

Our data furthermore support the notion that the liberalism of elite Jews is rooted in patterns of early family socialization. It appears that response to a sense of marginality, like other political traditions, can

8. Thirty-eight percent of Jewish elites and 37% of non-Jewish elites recall talking about politics frequently with their parents.

**Table 11.** Liberalism by Parental Ideology, Discussion of Politics with Parents, and the Interaction of Parental Ideology and Discussion of Politics with Parents (Unstandardized Regression Coefficients)

| Independent Variable | Expressive Individualism | System Alienation | Self-Identified Liberalism | Collectivist Liberalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parental ideology | .67 | −.55 | .07 | .02 |
| Discussed politics with parents | −.02 | −2.72** | −.28** | −1.57 |
| Interaction | −.07 | .32** | .05** | .25** |

NOTE: $N = 1{,}152$.
** $p < .05$

persist over long periods of time. Parental ideology is highly correlated with respondents' political beliefs for elite Jews and non-Jews alike. The more the family talked about politics, the stronger the relationship became, with the exception of expressive individualism.

There has been frequent talk and perhaps some wishful thinking regarding the prospect of a shift in the ideology of American Jews. Among elite Jews, our data show that support for the liberal agenda remains strong, stable, and cohesive as of the early 1980s. Our findings on political socialization raise the question of whether a realignment can occur before this cohort of Ameican Jews loses its prominence and is replaced by a cohort with different patterns of socialization.[9]

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9. Whether recent events in the Middle East and the emergence in the Democratic party of an increasingly powerful black presence less supportive of Israel will transform the liberalism of American Jews is, at this point, an open question.

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