



**Working Paper No. 526**

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**American Jewish Opinion About the Future  
of the West Bank: A Reanalysis of American  
Jewish Committee Surveys**

by

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December 2007

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The author is grateful to Steven M. Cohen, Yuval Elmelech, Alice Goldstein, Sidney Goldstein, Barry Kosmin, and Ted Sasson, for comments on an earlier draft.

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## **ABSTRACT**

American Jewish opinion about the Arab-Israel conflict matters for both American and Israeli politics as well as for American Jewish life. This paper undertakes an analysis of that opinion based on American Jewish Committee (AJC) annual polls. Recently, the AJC made the individual-level datasets for the 2000–05 period available to researchers. The paper focuses on opinion about the future of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), because survey questions on that topic are relatively straightforward. Standard background variables (religious, cultural, political, and demographic) are all seen to be modestly related to opinion about the West Bank (in simple crosstabulations and multivariate analysis). However, with the exception of Orthodoxy, no factor is dramatically connected to particular opinions. Also, despite evidence of a positive association between age and emotional attachment to Israel, age is also positively associated with willingness to accept proposed West Bank changes. Finally, a generalized concern about security seems to account for some of the diversity of opinion about the West Bank unexplained by the standard background variables.

## INTRODUCTION

American Jewish opinions about the Arab-Israel conflict matter for both American and Israeli politics, as well as for American Jewish life. Yet for all the discussion about Israeli policy options in Jewish circles, and about the appropriate role for American Jews and their organizations, there is relatively little systematic research on American Jewish public opinion about the conflict.<sup>1</sup> This paper offers such research, through an analysis of annual surveys of American Jewish opinion during 2000–2005. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) has carried out these surveys for more than two decades (AJC 1983–1997, 1998–2007).<sup>2</sup> During the past year, the AJC greatly enhanced the value of the survey data for the years 2000–2001 and 2003–2005 by making the individual-level datasets available to researchers (North American Jewish Databank 2007). Consequently, we can now explore in detail which Jews hold which opinions; for example, we might have noticed in AJC survey reports that the more traditionally observant and the older Jews held a given opinion, but we could not determine how much each characteristic mattered alone. Now we can answer such questions. I used those individual-level datasets in order to probe further what we can say about American Jewish opinion about the conflict. I found that the most straightforward questions about policy options and, hence, the most illuminating responses concern the issue of the future of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These are the most politically important of the territories captured by Israel in the Six Day War of 1967.

The Arab-Israel conflict has persisted for six decades and the Arab-Zionist conflict had persisted for nearly as long before the creation of the Jewish state. The focus of the conflict has

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<sup>1</sup> There have been a very few national surveys of the American Jewish population—notably the NJPS (National Jewish Population Survey 1970, 1990, 2000–01) and the AJIS (American Jewish Identity Survey 2001), but these have not asked questions about specific Middle East policies of the Israeli or American government (Perlmann 2007a). The many national polls of American opinion, such as the General Social Survey, often ask respondent’s religion, but the number of Jews in a typical national survey will be small (roughly 30 in a 1,500-person sample) and the number of questions relevant to the Israeli and American policy will be few. Americans for Peace Now (APN), together with the Arab-American Institute, has produced several recent political polls, but relatively little evidence on how those polls are conducted is publicized, there is no breakdown by American Jewish subgroups (how Orthodox and Reform Jews might differ, for example), and the polling data has not been placed in the public domain. On the APN polls, see also below.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee’s own analyses of the survey data has varied over the years; the reports were much more fulsome and rather more pointed in drawing conclusions in the early years when they appeared over the names of researchers (most were authored by Steven M. Cohen). However, for more than a decade now, they have been issued simply over the name of the Committee; and, in the most recent report (AJC 2006), the discussion amounts to a two and half page introduction to the tables. In the extensive published tables, respondent choices are presented both for the Jewish population as a whole and for subgroups of Jews (by age, gender, education, religious orientation, and so on). The tables are useful, but one is left with the impression that “the facts” are supposed to “speak for themselves.” As I will explain later, there are also other problems with the AJC surveys, especially regarding the choice of survey questions.

changed several times during this long period. Indeed, during the past three or four years alone, the conflict seems to have evolved again: Israel is physically out of the Gaza Strip, an Islamic revival looms large, and tensions with Iran have moved closer to center stage. Despite such lurches, however, the West Bank issues remain critical to any solution.

The evidence available is of course imperfect, but it is more imperfect than it need have been. The American Jewish Committee deserves great credit for making these datasets available. On the other hand, the AJC's description of its survey methods is far too brief, unchanging from year to year (Perlmann 2007d). Any sample has strengths and limitations; we need to know more about the particular characteristics of these surveys.<sup>3</sup> The AJC surveys are also limited because they select only people who identify as Jewish by religion. The point is not that there may be proud Jewish secularists out there—the last of the Yiddish socialists, for example. In fact, many Jews who call themselves secularists answer that they are Jewish when asked their religion. Rather, the real issue today is that the offspring of the intermarried make up two-thirds of people with recent Jewish origins who reply “none.” How these people should be treated in surveys of American Jews is a question that will not go away. All we can do for the moment is to note three points: 1) the number of such people is likely to increase greatly in the coming years; 2) including such people in the survey samples would noticeably increase the proportion of people who are especially distant from a traditional religious outlook; but 3) such a modification probably would not drastically shift most other results presented here (Perlmann 2007b, 2007c).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the questions that are included in the survey are frustrating and imperfect. True, the rapid upheavals in the nature of the conflict can make questions asked in one year irrelevant even a year later; and even questions that are asked regularly seem to carry different meanings as the conflict changes. For this reason and others, it is not easy to define what to ask American

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<sup>3</sup> In the early years, AJC survey reports occasionally included rather more useful description of samples (AJC 1995). The Committee should return to that style of reporting.

<sup>4</sup> I am not familiar with extensive scholarly studies of the AJC surveys; the individual-level public-use datasets have only been available for a few months. However, even studies based on the AJC reports of the annual data are rare. An important one is Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe (2002), which includes some 30 pages reviewing AJC survey data on attitudes about Israel and Israel-Arab conflict (in the course of a much longer report covering other subjects as well). I have learned from their work, and refer to it below. My own purposes differ in several respects from those of the Brandeis report. That report focused primarily on historical trends in responses and primarily on the responses of all American Jews taken as a whole, rather than on differences among subgroups of American Jews (young/old, New Yorkers, others, Orthodox/Reform, etc). Also, of course, their report ends with the 2001 survey, whereas I deal the surveys of 2000 through 2005, and especially with 2003–5. Critically, too, I deal with the raw data of the surveys—not merely the published tables of the reports. A related strand of work by Steven M. Cohen concerns the American Jewish “distancing” from Israel, some of which Cohen suggests may be related to political estrangement. Cohen and Kelman (2007) is the most recent to date and provides a list of many others. See also discussion of age in Part II of this paper.

Jews about the conflict. And of course, there is also a limit to the number of questions that can be asked of even the most patient respondent.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the AJC questions on political attitudes relevant to the Arab-Israel conflict could be more probing—more specific, less ambiguous, and formulated with an eye to uncovering the extent and sources of disagreement (as well as agreement) between American Jews and Israeli government policy. I do not mean to say that the AJC has not asked such questions in the past, or even that it never does so today, but more pointed and wider ranging questions in this regard would help (see Appendix B for a review of some pointed AJC questions from earlier years and the responses to them).

A glaring case in point is the absence of questions about the fact of occupation itself. The core of peace-camp criticism, after all, is the occupation; and the responses are clear as well: peace-camp criticism lacks context and holds Israel to an impossible standard. Is it not reasonable to wonder how American-Jewish opinion shapes up on this most central matter?<sup>6</sup>

Of course, the wording of questions is notoriously important, too. Consider the contrast between results in the AJC surveys and recent surveys conducted jointly by Americans for Peace Now and the Arab-American Institute (APN-AAI, carried out for them by the Zogby polling organization). Both sets of surveys ask about support for a Palestinian state. The wording of the AJC survey question is: “In the current situation, do you favor or oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state?”<sup>7</sup> Roughly 55% of respondents favored and 40% opposed establishment during 2000–2005 (Appendix Table A1). By contrast, the APN-AAI poll has been conducted three times since 2002; between 82% and 90% of American Jews supported a Palestinian state each time.<sup>8</sup> The APN-AAI poll question asks about a future context created by a “negotiated peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians that included the establishment of an independent,

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<sup>5</sup> Also, I know nothing about how these particular questions were chosen, refined, and perhaps pretested. But then, the reason for my ignorance is the silence in AJC publications about such issues.

<sup>6</sup> Obvious subtopics include: 1) the degree of force used by the Israel military occupation; 2) the issues involved in maintaining checkpoints within the West Bank (rather than between it and Israel); 3) the tradeoffs in either case between hardships on Palestinians and security for Israeli citizens; 4) the tradeoff in Israeli economic policy between funding West Bank settlements and helping Israeli citizens (and towns) in poverty; 5) Israeli government control over anti-Arab actions by civilian settlers. In general, the fact that American governments (at least those prior to the present one) have routinely defined the West Bank settlements as illegal could be used to construct questions dealing with the wisdom of settlement for its own sake or for greater Israeli security. Finally, a question actually asked about the “separation fence” could distinguish between building it on the green line and building it on confiscated land within the West Bank so as to protect Jewish settlements that have been placed there.

<sup>7</sup> In some years, the first word of the question is changed to “given” from “in.”

<sup>8</sup> The following report of the Zogby poll comes from Zogby (2007) and APN (2007). Differences between the AJC and Zogby polls are numerous, although it is difficult to say much that is precise because the details of sample selection are even sketchier for the APN than for the AJC poll.

secure Palestinian state alongside an independent, secure Israeli state, and resolved final status issues of Jerusalem, refugees, and borders.” While both surveys are used to discuss the proportion of American Jews who “support a Palestinian state,” they are really dealing with two quite different scenarios: one is the present with all its tensions; the other is a future in which everything (including the unspecified boundaries of that state) has been worked out. Surely this difference accounts for a hefty part of the huge percentage point difference in opinion favoring a Palestinian state (amounting to 35 points for the late 2006 AJC vs. the mid-2007 APN polls).

## **ANALYSIS**

Within its own terms of reference, the AJC question on the Palestinian state is straightforward enough. Two other questions on West Bank territory (including East Jerusalem) are also useful: “In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?” and “As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle all, some, or none of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank?” We can make some headway with these, relating them to a variety of background characteristics of the respondents.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, one caveat must be added when these questions are described as relatively straightforward. The questions call for positions, not for the reasoning behind the positions. Particularly in the case of the West Bank, the reasoning behind the positions cannot be assumed. For example, is a position to support Israeli settlements on the West Bank based on an argument that the land: 1) was conquered in a defensive war; 2) is historically Jewish; 3) was divinely promised; 4) is a buffer keeping the border farther from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; or just 5) a bargaining chip for future negotiations. Israeli Jews have had a hard time sifting these arguments; so much the more so American Jews. After all, how much knowledge about political choices lies behind the American Jewish opinions? Generally Americans are notoriously ignorant of world affairs, and we reviewed some evidence earlier that showed large fractions of American Jews unable to answer basic questions about Israel. We would need much better data,

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<sup>9</sup> In the light of the preceding discussion about the present vs. future time context for the Palestinian state question, notice that these two additional questions about the West Bank are posed in connection with a final peace settlement, not “in the current situation.” Nevertheless, I don’t think it is necessary that all three pertain to the same time context to be of use.

then, to understand exactly *why* American Jews support the positions they do concerning the West Bank; but of course, we can gain some insight from which Jews support which positions.

While the three questions about proposed West Bank changes remain relevant in 2007, our respondents answered them between 2000 and 2005. That the political judgments have not changed appreciably since the time they were asked is shown by comparing across those individual years, and in 2006 as well, the most recent survey (see Appendix Table A1). Nevertheless, it is worth remembering the political context of the years 2000-2005, for which we have the datasets. The Olmert leadership, the war with Hezbollah, the role of Iran's Ahmadinejad, the Hamas victory in local Palestinian elections, and the Hamas seizure of Gaza all occurred after the last of our surveys. A brief chronology of major events during the period follows.

July 2000	Camp David II fails
September 2000	Sharon visits Temple Mount; Al Aksa Intifada begins
<i>September 14–8</i>	<i>AJC 2000 survey</i>
January 2001	Taba negotiations halted; Sharon sweeps election
June 2001	Series of deadly terrorist attacks begins
September 2001	The 9/11 attacks in the United States
<i>November 19– December 4</i>	<i>AJC 2001 survey</i>
March 2002	In wake of further terror attacks, IDF reoccupies West Bank areas; Arafat restricted to his compound
January 2003	Sharon roundly defeats Mitzna's challenge in election
<i>November 25– December 11</i>	<i>AJC 2003 survey</i>
April 2004	Sharon announces plan to withdraw from Gaza Strip
November 2004	Arafat dies

<i>August 18– September 1</i>	<i>AJC 2004 survey</i>
January 2005	Labor Party joins Sharon’s shifting coalition
August– September 2005	Settlers and IDF leave Gaza Strip
November 2005	Sharon dissolves coalition, leaves Likud, establishes Kadima Party (Nov. 21)
<i>November 14–27</i>	<i>AJC 2005 survey</i>
January 2006	Sharon incapacitated; Olmert succeeds to head of Kadima and election victory

Even before the first of our surveys, the great peace effort of Camp David II and its aftermaths had largely played out. Sharon was about to come to power during the earliest of these surveys and was still in power at the time of the last. The 9/11 attacks occurred before the second survey. Finally, Sharon’s decision to withdraw from Gaza hovered over the last two years of the survey period.

### **Some Considerations about Respondents Background Characteristics**

I focus especially on Jewish attachment and traditional Jewish religious orientation as two features of Jewishness. Another nondemographic measure is general political orientation. Two demographic characteristics expected to be important as well are age and place of residence. Finally, information on several other cultural orientations (such as emotional attachment to Israel) and background characteristics (gender and household income) will also be useful.

#### *Jewish Attachment vs. Traditional Religious Orientation*

One critical trend in contemporary American Jewish life is the attenuation of Jewish attachments among many with Jewish origins, so it is reasonable to ask whether criticism of, or distance from, Israel is coming principally from those with severely attenuated Jewish attachments. We have a direct measure of Jewish attachment in the question “How important would you say being Jewish is to your daily life?” Fifty-three percent of all respondents chose “very important,” 35% “somewhat important,” and 11% “not important” (Appendix Table A1). It will be useful, on



occasion, to restrict attention to respondents who report that being Jewish is “very important” to their daily lives. With this restriction, we cut the sample down to 55% of its entire size. Thus, the restriction is severe; recall, too, that respondents did not have to choose “not important” as an alternative to “very important.” They could also choose “somewhat important,” which might be regarded as the safer, middling response and, in fact, most respondents who did not chose “very important” opted for it. So when we examine separately the group who chose “very important,” we will be setting the bar high, not merely excluding those with the most severely attenuated affiliations. True, the judgment about attachment is subjective to the respondent, but I think that is in fact what we are after—a criterion that ensures we are left with individuals who care about the group identity that landed them in the sample in the first place.

For traditional religious orientation, I combined the answers to an AJC question about synagogue (or temple) membership with the question about religious orientation itself, subdividing Conservative and Reform orientations into affiliated and unaffiliated.

Now we should expect a strong association between Jewish attachment generally and traditional religious orientation in particular. And that expectation is confirmed. Those who reported that being Jewish is very important to them comprise 95% of the Orthodox, 78% of affiliated Conservatives, 52–61% of unaffiliated Conservatives and affiliated Reform Jews, and 30–34% of the unaffiliated Reform and those who say that they are “just Jewish” (rather than identifying with a religious denomination; Table 1). However, at the same time, only some 15% of all respondents who say that being Jewish is very important to their daily lives are Orthodox and only another third are affiliated Conservatives.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Put another way, half of those who report that being Jewish is very important to them come from the two-thirds of respondents who are neither Orthodox nor affiliated Reform Jews.

**Table 1. Jewish Attachment by Traditional Religious Orientation**

**1a. All Respondents**

Question	Response	% by traditional religious orientation						All respondents
		Orthodox	Conservative		Reform		Just Jew	
			affiliated	unaffiliated	affiliated	unaffiliated		
How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?	Very important	95	78	52	61	34	30	55
	Somewhat important	4	22	40	37	55	42	35
	Not very important	1	2	7	2	12	28	11
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Religious attachment	All respondents	9	24	10	17	13	27	100

**1b. Selected Subgroups of Respondents**

Question	Response	% by subgroups of traditional religious orientation		
		All respondents included	Orthodox excluded	Orthodox + affiliated Conservat. excluded
How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?	Very important	55	51	42
	Somewhat important	35	37	43
	Not very important	11	12	15
	Total	100	100	100
Percent of all respondents		100	91	67

**Notes:** Based on AJC survey years 2000, 2003-2005.

**Source:** the individual-level datasets from the AJC surveys for 2000-2001 and 2003-2005, available through the North American Jewish Databank.

The distinction between the two dimensions is critical because there will be a natural tendency to wonder whether hesitancy about, or criticism of, Israel comes from respondents whose Jewishness is, in fact, severely attenuated. The measure of Jewish attachment allows us to anticipate that question without having to use traditional religious orientation as the criterion for eliminating the severely attenuated.

*The Impact of Demographic Factors on Respondents' Jewish Attachment and Traditional Religious Orientation*

In half a dozen large Jewish communities and in a score or more others of at least moderate size, we can expect a more developed Jewish institutional life and a greater likelihood that Jews there will interact often with other Jews than elsewhere (Goldscheider 2004). Of these communities, New York stands out as by far the largest. Also, quite apart from any density of resources there, the New York region is distinctive because the Orthodox are much more concentrated there—comprising 18% of its Jewish respondents, compared to 5% in the rest of the country. And so, for example, 57% of New Yorkers and 52% of others reported that being Jewish is very important to

their daily lives; yet when the Orthodox are omitted, the geographic difference disappears (50% to 49%). For such reasons, outcomes related to traditional religious orientation or to Jewish attachment may well be related to place of residence.

Our expectations in relationship to age are similarly tied to Jewish attachment and religious orientation: insofar as Jewish attachment is generally lower among younger as compared to older birth cohorts, age will again be related (inversely here) to whatever is associated with attachment. Various observers, notably Steven M. Cohen and his associates, have referred to this pattern as “distancing” across historical time from Israel or from both Israel and Jewishness (Cohen and Kelman 2007).<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it is possible that the difference in emotional attachment to Israel between older and younger cohorts observed at a given moment in time reflects life-cycle differences, not historical change. In this interpretation, younger adult Jews tend to be less emotionally attached to the Jewish state, but as they grow older they feel more attached. We cannot choose one interpretation over the other without access to datasets collected over a long period of time, in which respondents of the same age can be observed in surveys from different years: for example, people 35–44 years of age in 1980 and 2005.<sup>12</sup> But for our present purposes we need not resolve this interpretive puzzle; it is enough to digest the empirical point that age and emotional attachment to Israel are positively correlated, other things being equal.

As it happens, other things are not equal, and this expectation must be modified to take into account the finding that the Orthodox (with very high attachments to things Jewish and to Israel in particular) are also more prevalent among the younger compared to older adult respondents—15% in the 24–39 age group as compared with 7% in each of the older groups (40–59 years of age and over 60). The Orthodox prevalence among the young adult respondents may be somewhat related to fertility rates and is probably related also to problems of sampling.<sup>13</sup> Here

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<sup>11</sup> The Cohen and Kelman report reached me too late to be more fully compared with my paper. The age trends are actually somewhat weaker in the AJC data than in the recent Cohen and Kelman report (and there is little difference between the two younger cohorts, 24–39 and 40–59). Some of the difference across the studies may be due to two technical issues: in the AJC samples no respondents are under 24 and all those 30–39 must be classified in one age category (here classified in the youngest cohort).

<sup>12</sup> An evaluation of the AJC survey data on emotional attachment to Israel, available across more than two decades, should provide some evidence for sorting among these interpretations. Are the changes in strong and weak attachments shifting for the total group consistently over time, and especially for people of the same age in each survey year? Ted Sasson and Charles Kadushin are currently studying these trends.

<sup>13</sup> This prevalence of the Orthodox among young adults is found in the AJC, NJPS, and AJIS samples from the 2000–2005 period. For the argument that sampling issues are at the root of the phenomenon, see Saxe et al. (2007)— which, however, implies that virtually all of the rise in Orthodox numbers in the young adult birth cohort can be attributed to the sampling issues. It should be appreciated that the paper merely offers the plausible hypothesis that sampling factors are connected to the finding; it

again, for our purposes what matters is the effect of this reality (that the Orthodox are more prevalent among the younger than older adults), even if we cannot be certain of its source. The effect is that patterns of lower attachment in the younger cohorts will be partially masked by the Orthodox responses. Thus, among respondents 24–39, 40–59, and 60+, 50%, 49%, and 60%, respectively, report that being Jewish is very important to their daily lives. When the Orthodox are excluded, the corresponding figures hew more closely to the expected age pattern: 41%, 46%, and 57%.

I have stressed metro status and age because these are variables one might have expected to operate on the sense of Jewish cohesion and, indirectly through that cohesion, on political opinion about the West Bank future. Whatever the case that can be made for household income operating in the same way, or even gender, I have included these two variables mostly to stabilize the models and anticipate any suggestion that ignoring them would sharply affect the analysis. Unfortunately, information on educational attainment does not appear in the public-use datasets for most survey years (although it was collected). One might think that the income variable could therefore act partially as a crude proxy for education (with which income is correlated); I will use the 2003 dataset (which includes all the relevant variables) to test this idea below.

### *Emotional Attachment to Israel vs. Opinions about West Bank Choices*

Each year, the AJC survey asks “How close do you feel towards Israel (very close, somewhat close, somewhat distant, or very distant)?” Most American Jews report on the “close” side of the continuum. Not surprisingly, more traditional religious orientations and stronger Jewish attachments are positively associated with the reported emotional ties to Israel. More striking, about half (51%) the respondents who report a strong Jewish attachment do *not* report feeling “very close” to Israel. If we exclude the Orthodox and the affiliated Conservatives, the figure climbs to 62% who report a strong Jewish attachment, but not a “very close” attachment to Israel (not shown). American Jews appear to be able to distinguish their feelings about being Jewish from their feeling towards the Jewish state, and so we also have an interesting range of emotional

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offers no direct evidence that all, some, or any of the magnitude of the findings are, in fact, explained by that plausible hypothesis.

attachment to Israel among even that half of the respondents who claim that being Jewish is “very important” to them.

**Table 2. Feeling Close to Israel and the Importance of Being Jewish**

Question	Response	% by importance of being Jewish		
		very important	somewhat important	not very important
How close do you feel to Israel?	Very close	49	12	5
	Somewhat close	40	54	27
	Somewhat distant	9	28	38
	Very distant	2	6	30
	Total	100	100	100

**Notes:** Based on AJC survey years 2000-01 and 2003-5.

**Source:** See Table 1

However, a general emotional attachment to Israel is not the same as a political opinion about the foreign-policy choices facing the state. The questions that concern proposed West Bank changes are therefore more directly relevant to us. Moreover, we cannot view emotional attachment to Israel as a direct cause of political opinion about the conflict; for some, surely, the causal arrow may point the other way. That is, their uncertainties about Israeli policies leads to some cooling of their emotional attachment. The same, of course, may be said about some other measures—for example, Jewish attachment may be affected by Israeli policies, too, or (working in a different direction) respondents may have become more conservative in general political orientation because of condemnation of Israel by the left. But those are more indirect connections; the closeness of emotional attachment to Israel and views of the West Bank options are especially likely to be mixed together. Consequently, I concentrate on the explaining the political opinions in the rest of the analysis. Towards the end of that analysis, I will return to the association between emotional attachment and views of proposed West Bank changes, even if we cannot be sure about the causal priority of the associated variables.

### **Responses to Proposed Changes on the West Bank: A Composite Measure**

Respondent opinions about West Bank options do not change in any systematic way across the time period covered by the datasets. So we do best to ignore temporal shifts, treat the five annual

samples as one large sample, and exploit the advantages of the large resulting sample size. In multivariate analysis, it will also be possible to control for sample year. That control will generally prove inconsequential, confirming the impression from Appendix Table A1 that annual fluctuations over these few years are much less interesting than the diversity of opinion across subgroups of American Jews in each year.<sup>14</sup>

I created a composite measure for acceptance of West Bank changes from the questions about a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, and the dismantling of settlements. I grouped the responses to these three questions into four basic categories along a continuum from acceptance to rejection of proposals for West Bank change, each category including roughly a quarter of all respondents (22%–30%; see Table 3).

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<sup>14</sup> I have treated the sample as though it were a true random sample. Actual sampling variance is no doubt larger, but we have no way to know how to calculate it from the information on data collection provided by the AJC. The standard for a true random sample at least gives us some basis for not generalizing wildly from small Ns. In a true random sample, when 25% of the Orthodox and 40% of others express a particular opinion (N=270 and 2730 respectively for three survey years), the true *difference in proportions* is estimated at + or – 6 percentage points at the .95 confidence level by the formula:  $1.96 * (\text{sqrt of } (p(1-p)/n + p'(1-p')/n'))$ .

**Table 3. Creating the Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: The Three Component Questions and Responses to Them**

Combined Responses to the 3 Component Questions			Composite Measure	Percent of All Respondents	
Palestinian State	Jerusalem	Settlements	Three Changes	Components	Summary
yes	yes	all	accept all	6	
yes	yes	some		19	
			<i>subtotal</i>		25
yes	no	all	all but Jerusalem	4	
yes	no	some		18	
			<i>subtotal</i>		22
yes	yes	none	mixed	5	
yes	no	none		6	
no	yes	all		1	
no	yes	some		6	
no	yes	none		5	
no	no	all		1	
			<i>subtotal</i>		24
no	no	some	reject	12	
no	no	none		16	
			<i>subtotal</i>		28
			<i>Total</i>	100	100
			<i>Total: N</i>	3597	3597

Separate Responses to Each of the Component Questions (including other responses)		
Support creation of a Palestinian state	yes	55
	no	39
	other	6
	<i>total</i>	100
Accept changes in Jerusalem's status	yes	41
	no	54
	other	5
	<i>total</i>	100
Dismantle settlements	all	12
	some	53
	none	32
	other	3
	<i>total</i>	100

**Notes:** The composite measure is available for 2001 and 2003-5. Between 9% and 13% of respondents in each year failed to respond to at least one of the three component questions; they do not appear in the top panel above (N=420). For regression analysis, only responses from 2003-2005 can be used because two background variables are unavailable for 2001; 2712 cases used, 290 others deleted for missing dependent variable data (10%); responses for the three years are within one percentage point of those shown that are based on four years of survey data.

**Source:** See Table 1

In general, 65% of respondents would accept dismantling some or all settlements, 55% support a Palestinian state, and 41% would accept a change in the status of Jerusalem. However, there is an important complexity here. The questions dealing with the Palestinian state and Jerusalem call for yes or no answers. The question about willingness to dismantle settlements as part of a peace agreement asks the respondent to specify all, some, or none. Not surprisingly, about half the respondents (53%) said they would accept dismantling *some* settlements for peace. A third (32%) oppose dismantling *any* settlements, and only an eighth (12%) supported dismantling *all* in exchange for peace. Now, *some* is a very elastic term; it could refer to almost none or to almost all settlements. I assigned those who gave this middle-of-the-road reply to a given category of the composite measure on the basis of their responses to the other two questions that make up the that measure.

Accordingly, the group most willing to accept compromise includes those who will accept a Palestinian state, changes in the status of Jerusalem, and dismantling of *all or some* of the settlements. The group least willing to accept compromise include those who oppose a Palestinian state, changes in the status of Jerusalem, and dismantling of *some or none* of the settlements.<sup>15</sup> There are also two intermediate categories, the first of these is a coherent position, the second less so. The first includes the 22% of respondents who accept a Palestinian state and the dismantling of some or all settlements, but reject changes in the status of Jerusalem (only this last item distinguishes them from the category most accepting of proposed changes). The second intermediate position includes respondents who gave mixed answers, not easily consistent or classifiable (Table 3).

### *So Where do American Jews Stand?*

The simplest summary of American Jewish response to the proposed West Bank changes is this. First, about a quarter of respondents provided responses that are too mixed to comprehend, so we should focus on the other three-quarters. Second, among these, about two out of three support a Palestinian state “in the current situation” and dismantling at least some of the Jewish settlements

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<sup>15</sup> Note that had I imposed more stringent criteria, the most and least compromising groups would have been very much smaller. Those accepting a Palestinian state, changes in the status of Jerusalem, and willing to dismantle *all* (rather than *all or some*) settlements comprise only 6% (rather than 25%) of respondents. Those rejecting a Palestinian state, changes in the status of Jerusalem, and willing to dismantle *none* (rather than *some or none*) of the settlements comprise 12% (rather than 28%) of all respondents. Thus, the group unwilling to accept *any* compromise is about twice as large of the group prepared to accept *every* compromise—an eighth compared to a sixteenth of the respondents.



on the West Bank in the context of a peace. However, third, only one of those two is prepared to accept a change in the status of Jerusalem, even in the context of a peace (Table 3). Put differently, those who reject all three proposals amount to about a third of the respondents with interpretable views and about a quarter of all respondents.

### **Which Jews Hold Which Opinions?**

#### *The Uniqueness of Orthodox Opinion*

The clearest concentration of rejectionist sentiments is found among the Orthodox. Only 7% of the group are in the most and 64% in the least supportive categories of the composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change (Table 4). Thus, Orthodox rejection is by no means limited to the Jerusalem question. Indeed, only 13% of the Orthodox are found in the second category (accepting other changes, but rejecting division of Jerusalem). These figures represent the strongest association between opinion about the West Bank and *any* subgroup of respondents—religious, political, or demographic.

**Table 4. The Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: Non-Orthodox Respondents Only (after the first panel)**

Respondent Group	Proportion Giving Each Response to Summary Measure				
	accept 3	reject Jer.	mixed	reject	total
<b>Religious Attachment</b>					
Orthodox	7	13	16	64	100
Conservative--synagogue member	18	33	20	29	100
Conservative--other	26	18	31	25	100
Reform--temple member	28	27	24	21	100
Reform--other	27	20	29	23	100
Just Jew	31	20	27	22	100
<b>All NON-Orthodox Respondents</b>					
	27	23	26	25	100
<b>Importance of Being Jewish</b>					
Very important	21	26	25	28	100
Somewhat important	30	21	26	23	100
Not important	38	17	29	17	100
<b>Metro Area of Residence</b>					
NYC metro	21	25	24	30	100
Other major Jewish concentrations	28	24	26	22	100
Other U.S. (Northeast + North central)	27	26	22	25	100
Other U.S.	25	25	26	24	100
<b>Age Group</b>					
24 - 39	21	23	30	26	100
40 - 59	27	20	26	27	100
60 and older	29	26	24	21	100
<b>Education</b>					
High school or less	24	14	39	23	100
Some college	21	15	34	30	100
Four years of college	29	22	22	27	100
Five or more years higher education	28	25	18	29	100
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	30	27	20	22	100
Female	23	19	31	27	100
<b>Feel Close to Israel</b>					
Very close	17	29	23	31	100
Somewhat close	28	24	24	25	100
Somewhat or very distant	34	16	32	17	100
<b>General Political Orientation</b>					
Extremely liberal, liberal	34	24	24	18	100
Slightly liberal, middle of the road	27	24	26	24	100
Slightly-extremely conservative	19	20	27	34	100

**Notes:** Non-Orthodox respondents comprise 91% of all respondents.

For comparable data including the Orthodox, see Appendix Table A5.

Appendix Table A1 presents the percentage of *all* respondents (including Orthodox) who chose each response in a survey year.

Data on changes in sovereignty and settlements are available for 2001, 2003-5; data on subgroups also available for these years, except: religious attachment (2003-5), metro area (2003-5), education (2001, 2003). Missing data were trivial except for the summary measure (10%, including not sure/don't know) and education (7%).

**Source:** See Table 1

Moreover, multivariate analysis confirms that no matter what other available variables are controlled, the coefficient on Orthodoxy remains much the largest (Appendix Table A3). It is, for example, at least five times as large as the coefficient for the affiliated Conservatives, and, in most regressions, three to six times as large as that for “very important” Jewish attachment. Moreover, no more than a third of the magnitude of the coefficient on Orthodoxy appears to be shared with other background factors—and virtually none of its strength is lost when our four demographic measures (age, place, gender, income) are included in the regression models. On the other hand, the coefficient on New York residence loses about 40% of its power when Orthodoxy is included in the model. Finally, only because of the Orthodox does religious orientation explain a hefty proportion of all the explained variation in opinion about the proposals for West Bank change: 2.19%. To appreciate the figure, note that the total variation that all our measures taken together can explain is 5.63% (Models 2 and 17 in Appendix Table A3).

Because the Orthodox political opinions are so distinctive, and the Orthodox are so concentrated in specific categories of other background variables as well (residence, Jewish attachment, and even age), it is best to limit the remainder of the analysis to the *non-Orthodox*. Otherwise, we will forever be wondering how much of each result is due to the Orthodox effect. For the reader who wishes I had chosen otherwise, Appendix Tables A3 and A4 include versions of all multivariate models, as well as critical tabulations with the Orthodox added back in.<sup>16</sup>

### *Other Traditional Religious Orientations*

With the Orthodox omitted, religious differences are strikingly less important for explaining the diversity of political opinion about proposed West Bank changes. The greatest concentration of rejectionist opinion is now among the affiliated conservatives. However, that concentration is a far cry from the opinions we just observed: 18% are found in the most and 29% in the least supportive categories of the composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change. Moreover, for this group the Jerusalem question is driving the figures: another 33% of its members are

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<sup>16</sup> In fact, a close comparison of regression analyses run both ways (Appendix Tables A2 and A3) shows that for the most part it would be adequate simply to include the control that isolates the Orthodox rather than omit them—three-way interactions do not appear to play much of a role and including the control for the Orthodox does not make the interpretation of other variables difficult. To the contrary, it is generally striking how similar the coefficients on the other variables are in both sets of regressions. This is not really surprising since the Orthodox are, after all, only 9% of sample members. Nevertheless, focusing on the non-Orthodox in regressions is still cleaner and it does affect some of the discussion (for example, in connection with the amount of dependent variable variation that the background variables can explain).

found in the second category, which differs from the first only on the Jerusalem issue. Thus, 51% of the affiliated Conservatives are found in the first two categories taken together compared to 29% in the fourth category; for the Orthodox, the comparable figures were 20% in the first two vs. 64% in the fourth.

Two-thirds of the American Jewish respondents are less traditionally oriented in terms of religion than either the Orthodox or the affiliated conservatives (as are half of all respondents who report that being Jewish is “very important” to their daily lives). Among this large majority, the fraction in the category most accepting of the proposed West Bank changes is somewhat larger than among the affiliated Conservatives—27–31% of all Reform Jews and those who report that they are “just Jewish” are found there. But the difference reduces to the Jerusalem question. We just saw that 51% of the affiliated Conservatives are found in the two more supportive categories of the composite measure; so, too, 47%–55% of the Reform and “just Jewish” groups.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, more than nine-tenths of American Jews are not Orthodox and among them, opinion about West Bank changes varies relatively little *across* compared to *within* traditional categories of religious orientation.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, within *every category* of the non-Orthodox religious orientations we find this startlingly similar split of great consequence, namely roughly a quarter accept all three changes, another quarter accept all but Jerusalem, and about a quarter reject changes. The regression analyses establish the same point: with the Orthodox removed, religious orientation explains only about a seventh as much of the variation in proposed West Bank changes—0.27%, down from 2.19% (Model #2 in Appendix Tables A3 and A4). Indeed, most differences of religious orientation do not rise to the level of statistical significance; only the affiliated Conservatives are, on occasion, significantly different from the reference group (“just Jewish”).

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<sup>17</sup> The Reform movement’s leadership has voiced concern about the direction of Israeli policy, and urged compromise, more often than that of the other large denominations. This stand may find a very modest reflection in the fact that among the affiliated Reform Jews, the odds of being in the two most accepting categories compared to the most rejecting is 55:21. But note that for all non-Orthodox Jews it is 50:25. See Table 4.

<sup>18</sup> The major exception, to repeat, is the smaller proportion of affiliated conservatives in the first category and the larger proportion of them in the second.

### *Jewish Attachment*

Among the non-Orthodox, half say that being Jewish is very important to their daily lives (Table 1). They are moderately more rejectionist—a few percentage points more—on the proposed West Bank changes than are others, especially in accepting changes over Jerusalem. Thus, among the non-Orthodox, 27%, 23%, 26%, and 25%, respectively, are found in the first through fourth categories of the composite measure. Among the non-Orthodox who report that being Jewish is very important to their daily lives, the comparable figures are 21%, 26%, 25%, and 28%, respectively.<sup>19</sup> When the affiliated conservatives (35% of this group) are removed along with the Orthodox, the division of opinion of course shifts, but it still remains very stark across the four categories of our composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change: 27%, 23%, 26%, and 24%, respectively.

In the multivariate analysis, I control for Jewish attachment as a way of ensuring that the results are not greatly affected by those with severely attenuated attachments. One might object that the control is not enough, that the structure of the models would differ if I had included only those who report that being Jewish is very important to them. However, notice that the power of Jewish attachment to explain the variation in political opinion about the West Bank is, in fact, stunningly low (0.18%); so it can hardly be supposed that the regressions would look very different if we excluded respondents in some categories of that variable. In any case, I did rerun some regressions with the sample limited to respondents with strong Jewish attachment and there is no consequential change in results (Appendix Table A4).

### *General Political Orientation*

Jewish response to West Bank territorial compromise might well be associated with how strongly one identifies as a liberal or conservative in politics generally. Of course, as I have already mentioned, the process of political opinion formation that lies behind such an association is anything but simple: it may be that many people shifted increasingly to the right as they came to feel that the left was pushing Israel too hard, but it is still worth exploring the strength of the association even if we cannot resolve questions about how the opinions have come to be what they are.

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<sup>19</sup> For comparable figures that include the Orthodox, see Table 4.

There are two useful measures of political outlook in the AJC surveys. One is party affiliation (Republican, Democrat, Independent) and the other is general orientation (from very liberal through very conservative). Not surprisingly, those who report themselves liberal or very liberal are also far more likely to report themselves as Democrats rather than Republicans (61% to 30%) and conversely, the conservatives align the other way (30% Democrat to 51% Republican; Table 5a).<sup>20</sup> The liberals are notably more likely to accept West Bank territorial compromise than the conservatives (Table 4). Thus, among the liberals, 34% and 19%, respectively, were in the categories most and least accepting of compromise, whereas among the conservatives, the corresponding figures were 17% and 40%.

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<sup>20</sup> The survey includes seven categories of political orientation; I have collapsed these to three larger categories for simpler analysis: liberal (including very liberal and liberal), comprising 27% of respondents; middle-of-the-road (including somewhat liberal and middle-of-the-road), 48%; and conservative (including somewhat conservative, conservative, and very conservative), 25%. In logistic analysis, about 12% of the independent explanatory power of political orientation (measured by  $-2LL$ ) is lost by this reduction of the variable from 7 categories to 3.

**Table 5. Political Orientation and Party**

**a. Percent Affiliated with Each Party by General Political Orientation**

Party	Orientation			Any
	Liberal	Middle	Conservative	
Republican	27	34	51	36
Democrat	61	42	30	44
Independent	12	24	20	20
Total	100	100	100	100
Any party	27	47	25	100

**b. Position on West Bank Changes by Party**

Composite Measure	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Accept 3	25	25	24
Reject Jerusalem	22	24	25
Mixed	26	23	25
Reject	27	28	27
Total	100	100	100

**c. Percent who Feel Close to Israel by General Political Orientation**

Feel towards Israel	Liberal	Middle	Conservative
Very close	30	26	31
Somewhat close	43	46	44
Distant	26	28	25
Total	100	100	100

**Notes:** For responses to the composite measure for acceptance of West Bank changes by general political orientation, see Table 4.

**Source:** AJC surveys, 2003-5

For composite measure, see Table 4. For source see, Table 1.

In the light of all this, it is puzzling to find that party affiliation had no impact whatsoever on the acceptance of West Bank territorial compromise (Table 5b): among Democrats, 25% were in the most and 28% in the least accepting category, whereas among Republicans the figures were 25% and 27%. Multivariate analyses (not shown) show the same result: party affiliation explains nothing about the willingness to accept our composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change. This puzzle may be worth further study, but for our purposes, the operative

conclusion is that we should focus further attention on the explanatory force of general political orientation rather than party affiliation.

Notice in passing also that general political orientation predicts nothing about how close respondents feel towards Israel (Table 5c). Among liberals, 30% feel very close and 26% distant; among conservatives, the comparable figures are 31% and 25%. If Jews are made increasingly uncomfortable by Israel's policies and/or those who feel very close to Israel are made to feel uncomfortable in the liberal camp, than those still liberal should be less likely than conservatives to feel very close to Israel. Perhaps the hypothesis that support for Israel has driven Jews to the right could be reconciled with the findings here (that emotional attachment is as strong among right and left) by introducing the dimension of time. We might speculate that over time the *proportion* in the liberal column who feel close to Israel may have changed little, but the *number* of all Jews who could balance their liberalism and the left's criticism of Israel declined; those who no longer could balance these views moved to the more conservative columns. Perhaps, but the simplest form of the hypothesis that support for Israel drives Jews to the right would have led one to predict what we do not find here: that even today there would be an association between general political orientation and emotional attachment to Israel.

In any case, unlike emotional attachment to Israel, our dependent variable on the political choices (namely, views of the proposed West Bank changes) is indeed strongly associated with general political orientation—and more strongly associated than are either religious orientation or Jewish attachment. Differences between liberals vs. centrists and centrists vs. conservatives together explain about twice as much variation in opinion about proposed West Bank changes as do those other two variables together (Models 3 and 4 in Appendix Table A2).

### *Demographic Factors*

New York metro-area residents are moderately less likely than other non-Orthodox Jews to support the proposed West Bank changes (Table 4). Moreover, the multivariate analysis shows that this New York distinctiveness is strikingly resistant to explanation in terms of any of our other background variables—it is not reducible to New York concentrations of religious or political outlooks, or age or income groupings, for example.

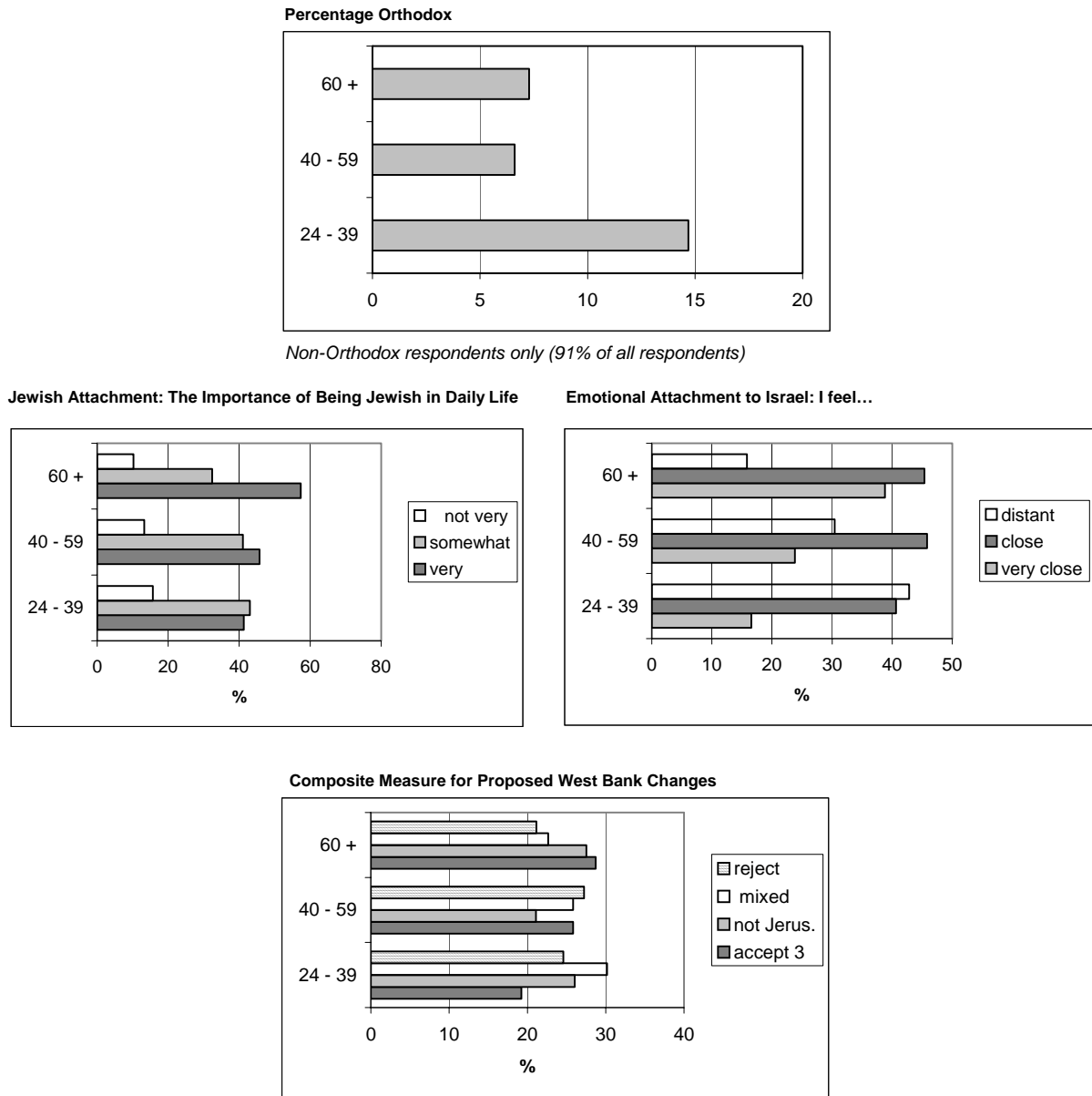
The age differences, as I mentioned earlier, are more subtle. Younger compared to older adults are less attached to Israel—either as a result of historical processes of distancing across



generations, or as a result of life-cycle changes by which adults come to feel more attached to Israel as they age. Thus, other things being equal, we expect a positive relationship between age and emotional attachment to Israel. Working in the opposite direction, however, is the fact that the Orthodox are disproportionately young and strongly attached to Israel. We have eliminated the Orthodox from this stage of the analysis precisely in order to avoid such complexities. So we expect, and find, a positive association between age and emotional attachment to Israel among the non-Orthodox. Finally, we also expect that those who are most emotionally attached will, on average, be least willing to compromise about the West Bank. With apologies to members of the peace camp who are highly attached to Israel emotionally, we hold this expectation on the assumption that, in general, greater emotional attachment leads, on average, to a greater interest in the historic homeland and/or to a greater anxiety that security is being traded for peace efforts. Our expectation, then, is that among the non-Orthodox, we will find a *negative* association between age and acceptance of West Bank change.

In fact, however, the association is positive both in the bivariate association (Table 4) and in multivariate analysis (Appendix Table A2). Indeed, when other factors are taken into account the positive association between age and acceptance of proposed West Bank changes is notably stronger than the bivariate association observed in a two-way table. After all, some of the variables connected to our expectation of a positive association between age and emotional attachment—such as Jewish attachment and emotional attachment to Israel—are positively correlated with age and negatively correlated with acceptance of the proposed West Bank changes (Figure 1). This positive association between age and acceptance of proposed West Bank changes is not a function of any one year's survey: it is observable in each year's data for the non-Orthodox (not shown).

**Figure 1. Selected Measures by Age Group—NON-Orthodox Only (except Figure 1a)**



**Notes:** For responses to the three component questions of the composite measure, see Appendix Figure 1A. For source, see Table 1.

The striking point is not so much the strength of the positive association, gross and net, between age and acceptance of proposed West Bank changes—although the positive associations are statistically significant, and when other variables are controlled, they are stronger rather than weaker. But even so, the positive age effects are not huge. Rather, the important point is that these statistically significant associations run in the opposite direction from that we would have predicted from measures associated with age and emotional attachment to Israel.

We can only speculate about an explanation; the data were not collected to test anything of this kind. The finding underscores the importance of the difference between emotional attachment to Israel (or Jewish attachment) and political judgments about the future of the West Bank. That the former is negatively correlated with age does not mean that the latter is. Also, any age-related connections with general political orientation seem to have little impact on this relationship (Models 7 and 12 in Appendix Table A2). If there is something intrinsic about age or birth cohort itself, then perhaps the outlook of those who have followed the conflict for a much longer period is somehow relevant—their weariness of the struggle or their wariness that Israel might again become more vulnerable to its enemies (as vulnerable as it was perceived to be during the 1948–67 period). Also, the finding calls out for more work on two assumptions stated above: is it really the case that a greater emotional attachment to Israel among American Jews leads, on average, to either greater concern with losing the historical homeland of the West Bank or to a higher anxiety that West Bank compromises involve risking security for peace efforts.

The effect of gender is also largely independent of any other controls: men are more likely to support the proposed West Bank changes. Finally, support is also positively associated with household income; nevertheless, income explains less of the variation than any other characteristic (.06%; Model 9 in Appendix Table A2).

I mentioned earlier the possibility that income may be operating partly as a crude proxy for educational attainment, with which it is no doubt correlated. We have educational attainment data only for one relevant year, 2003. The crosstabulation of educational attainment and opinion about proposed West Bank changes (in Table 4) should dampen any hopes that educational differences determine political opinion on our subject. Direct regression analyses of 2003 data confirms the same point (Models 3–5 in Appendix Table A4). Indeed, while the association with income is statistically significant, the association with education is not, and the association with income is virtually unchanged when educational attainment is also controlled. The only interesting effect of greater schooling in Table 4 is that the more educated are decidedly less likely to be found in the “mixed” category, which includes responses that seem internally contradictory. Less schooling may thus be positively correlated with less knowledge of the territorial and status issues in the occupied territories. Therefore, the need to ignore educational

attainment in most of our regression work (because the variable is not available in the datasets for 2004–5) does not appear to be of much consequence.

When the four demographic and the three cultural-political characteristics are entered together in a regression model, the coefficients remain virtually unchanged (or rise slightly) from the magnitude they showed when each type of variable was entered separately (Models 5, 11, and 12 in Table A4). Moreover, there is no dramatic case of any one of the seven variables explaining away most of the effect of another. A moderate amount of masking is noticeable, particularly as mentioned earlier in connection with age. However, most noteworthy is that so many coefficients remain largely unchanged when the other variables are added to the model and also how little of the variation—less than 2.5%—is explained by all seven explanatory variables acting together.

#### *How Much Did We Explain?*

The fact that we cannot explain a substantially larger percentage of the diversity in non-Orthodox acceptance of proposed West Bank change is perhaps not in itself so very damning, since high proportions of variation are rarely explained by individual-level regression models operating on large samples. On the other hand, recall that about a quarter of respondents fell into each of the four categories of the composite measure, and we observed that this diversity of opinion tended to vary only by modest to moderate amounts across the non-Orthodox religious orientations and still less when opinions about changes in the status of Jerusalem were ignored. Thus, in Table 4, no subgroup difference among the non-Orthodox remotely approaches the difference between Orthodox views and those with other religious orientations. A simple way to appreciate the point is to note how many of the “accept 3” and “reject” cells of that table (the two extreme choices) list percentages in or just beyond the twenties.<sup>21</sup> Since about a quarter of all non-Orthodox groups are found in each category of the composite measure, the subgroup cells are fairly close to what we would predict from the entire group. Of course, Table 4 alone is not enough for certainty: there could be extreme masking of one variable’s effect by another; yet after our multivariate analysis we know that such dramatic masking is not to be found. The point here is not that there is little diversity in thinking about the West Bank future, but that the considerable

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<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the most divergent non-Orthodox cell in Table 4 (those for whom being Jewish is not important) covers barely a tenth of the respondents (Appendix Table A1).

diversity is only moderately related to our explanatory categories. Yet these are standard explanatory categories of social analysis and we know that they are important for countless questions about American-Jewish life. They all matter for our questions, too, but they do not matter as much as we might have expected. Still, as the great divisions related to class, culture, and education that were associated with the process of upward mobility in the generations following mass immigration have declined, perhaps we must expect less of the social divisions usually studied (Goldscheider 2004). We cannot, however, be sure without more probing data on political opinions about the conflict.

### *Generalized Security Concerns?*

The characteristics explored so far have not tapped explicitly into the general concern that Israel is vulnerable in special ways. Such a concern might be stated thus: Israel is the small country of a small people who have been abused throughout history and the Israeli government is repeatedly pressured to take life and death risks for an elusive peace treaty that may prove worthless through no fault of its own. A related strand of opinion is that the Arab antagonists really do not want to return to the 1967 lines, but rather to eventually destroy the Jewish state. The diversity of feeling about Israel's basic vulnerability might well be associated with the diversity of acceptance of proposed West Bank changes. Obviously, it might also be associated with other factors, like emotional attachment to Israel, as I mentioned earlier.

We do not have a question that taps directly into the concern over Israel's vulnerability. However, we do have a question that taps directly into our respondents' understanding of Arab intentions. Each year the AJC asks, "The goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories but rather the destruction of Israel (agree or disagree?)." A case can be made that this question is also somewhat related to the generalized concern over vulnerability. After all, Arab intentions are vastly more important if Israel is seriously threatened by those intentions. To put it differently, it would be consistent with the first concern (vulnerability) and at least suggestive to find that positive responses to this question are associated with negative views about the proposed West Bank changes described in the composite measure. This is, in any case, as close as we can come to testing for the generalized concern about Israel's vulnerability with the AJC questions.

The responses to this question have varied considerably in recent years, from strong agreement (66%) in the year before Camp David II (AJC 2004) through stronger agreement still in recent years (78%–84% in 2002–2006; Appendix Table A1). Thus, during the years for which we have the datasets, agreement vs. disagreement was running at four to one. Nevertheless, the question is how much more likely the minority in disagreement were to accept West Bank changes.

The answer is that they were very much more likely to do so. No other coefficient in any regression is more strongly related to acceptance of proposed West Bank changes for the non-Orthodox population and only the coefficient on “liberal” (in general political orientation) is similar in magnitude (Appendix Table A2, Models 13, 14, and 17).

**Table 6. The Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: By Views of Arab Intentions--Non-Orthodox Respondents Only**

Respondent Group	Proportion Giving each Response to Summary Measure				
	accept 3	reject Jer.	mixed	reject	total
All Respondents	27	23	26	25	100
<i>Arab intention to destroy Israel</i>					
yes	22	24	26	28	100
no	42	20	24	13	100

**Notes:** Among all non-Orthodox respondents, 77% agreed, 19% disagreed, and 5% were unsure. For details, see Table 4.

**Source:** See Table 1

The coefficient on Arab intentions loses *none* of its force when all the other variables we’ve tested are taken into account. And, indeed, adding this variable to the model after the other seven variables have explained all they could increases the variation explained by 50% (from 2.36% to 3.54%).<sup>22</sup>

The finding underscores the possibility that the diversity of views is partly related then not to the specifics of the proposals, but to the relation of any Israeli retrenchment to a generalized concern for the country’s vulnerability. Such a connection would hardly be a surprise; the point is the relative strength of this factor compared to others.

<sup>22</sup> Since close to four-fifths of respondents give one reply to this question, the division of responses can only be associated with a moderate amount of variation in the dependent variable (as we saw also in the more extreme case of Orthodox opinion).

### *Emotional Attachment to Israel*

Finally, we can now return to the matter of feeling emotionally attached to Israel. This feeling, as I have already had occasion to mention in passing, is not so very strongly associated with our composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change. The multivariate analysis confirms the point. The coefficient for very strong emotional attachment, for example, is half the size of that for distrust of Arab intentions and explains less than a third as much of the variation in the dependent variable. When added to the model after the other variables have explained all they can, emotional attachment to Israel explains relatively little additional variation (Models 12 and 16 and Models 14 and 17 in Appendix Table A2). Again, political opinions about proposed West Bank changes are decidedly different from the general feeling of emotional attachment to Israel.<sup>23</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

There are many dimensions to American Jewish opinion about the Middle East conflict; I have concentrated on opinion about the important policy choices that Israel faces. I argue that in the recent AJC surveys, these policy choices are clearest in connection with opinion about proposed West Bank changes—support for a Palestinian state, changes in the status of Jerusalem, and dismantling of Jewish settlements there.

If the status of Jerusalem is ignored, American Jews tilt heavily towards compromise; with Jerusalem in the mix, opinion divides quite evenly across the four categories of the composite measure.

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<sup>23</sup> Notice, too, that agreement with the statement that Arab intentions are to destroy Israel and emotional attachment to Israel are positively associated with age and negatively associated with the composite measure, but age is positively associated with the composite measure. Consequently, when Arab intentions and emotional attachment are controlled, the coefficient on age rises to almost double its observed value (over Model 7, with no controls).

The availability of the recent AJC datasets makes it possible for us to transform the responses to the West Bank questions into single composite measure. Far more important, the datasets allow us to explore the connections between respondent characteristics and our new measure, and to do so with multiple characteristics simultaneously, not simply with one at a time. We can therefore anticipate the question that must arise for any reader of tables considering the impact of characteristics one at a time: are some of the observed associations reducible to others, or, alternatively, are some characteristics found to have a stronger impact on views of the West Bank future when other characteristics are controlled?

We have examined associations between opinions of West Bank change and seven basic characteristics—Jewish attachment, traditional religious orientation, general political orientation, age, place of residence, gender, and household income. In addition, we explored the associations with emotional attachment to Israel and concerns about Israel’s vulnerability (however poorly the latter is measured by the available questions). All of these background factors are indeed connected to views of proposed West Bank changes. The negative association for the Orthodox is so strong that it seemed best to consider the rest of the population without them.

The basic issue is not whether the background characteristics we consider are related to opinion about West Bank changes, but how and how strongly they are related. Religious orientation explains stunningly less after the Orthodox have been excluded. There is a modest negative association with traditional religious orientation, but it is quite weak. The same is true for Jewish attachment. General political orientation explains about twice as much as both of these Jewish characteristics together. All the demographic factors matter to a moderate extent as well. All but one of the nine variables we explored matter in the expected way except age. From the well-established positive association between age and emotional attachment to Israel, I hypothesized that age would be negatively associated with acceptance of West Bank compromise. But the association is statistically significant in a positive direction, with and without controls for other background characteristics. At present, I have little to offer but idle speculation as to why this should be so.

While all our explanatory variables do matter, their combined impact appears to explain a modest proportion of the diversity of views on proposed West Bank changes. But the political opinion we can effectively study is restricted; we need more refined and systematic work on American Jewish opinion about the Arab-Israel conflict. Until we get that work, the working



conclusion must be that a substantially large fraction of diversity of opinion that we can measure exists among Jews who are similar to each other in many ways.

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## APPENDIX A. SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES

Appendix Table A1. 2000-2005 AJC Survey Questions Used in this Analysis

Question	Responses	Percent Giving each Response by Year						sum: all available years, 2000-05	2006*
		2000	2001	2003	2004	2005			
<i>1) In the current situation, do you favor or oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state?</i>									
	Favor	na	53	54	57	56	55	54	
	Oppose		39	41	37	38	39	38	
	Not sure		8	5	6	6	6	9	
<i>2) In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?</i>									
	Yes	36	44	42	42	36	40	40	
	No	57	50	54	53	60	55	52	
	Not sure	7	6	4	5	4	5	7	
<i>3) As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle all, some, or none of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank?</i>									
	All	na	9	12	12	15	12	na	
	Some		53	57	57	46	53		
	None		34	29	29	36	33		
	Not sure		4	2	2	3	3		
<i>4) Do you support or oppose the Israeli government's decision to build a security fence separating Israelis and Palestinians?</i>									
	Agree	na	na	na	69	73	71	na	
	Disagree				28	24	26		
	Not sure				3	3	3		
<i>5) Do you agree with the following statement? "The goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories, but rather the destruction of Israel."</i>									
	Agree	69	73	81	84	78	77	81	
	Disagree	23	23	16	13	18	19	13	
	Not sure	8	4	3	3	5	5	6	

**Appendix Table A1 (continued). 2000-2005 AJC survey questions used in this analysis**

6) *How close do you feel to Israel?*

Very close	28	28	31	31	36	31	37
Fairly close	46	43	43	44	41	43	39
Fairly distant	18	21	18	19	18	19	16
Very distant	7	6	8	6	5	7	6
Not sure	0	0	1	0	1		2

7) *How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?*

Very important	59	48	54	50	55	53	61
Fairly important	33	38	34	38	33	35	28
Not very important	8	14	12	11	12	11	10

8) *Do you think of yourself as.... // [combined with:] Do you belong to a synagogue or temple?\**

Orthodox	10	7	8	7	10	9	8
Conservative [+ yes: member]	25	31****	23	23	25	24	35****
Conservative [+ no: nonmember]	8		11	11	9	10	
Reform [+yes: member]	19	29****	15	16	17	17	31****
Reform [+no: nonmember]	12		15	13	13	13	
Just Jewish	25	33	28	30	26	27	24

9) *I'm going to read you a list of political views that people might hold. They are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?\*\*\**

Extremely liberal, liberal	27	25	23	28	29	27	30
Slightly liberal, middle of the road	53	50	49	47	44	49	44
Slightly - extremely conservative	18	24	26	23	26	23	25
Not sure	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

**Appendix Table A1 (concluded). 2000-2005 AJC survey questions used in this analysis**

<i>10) Place of residence****</i>								<i>na</i>
New York metropolitan area	22	na	20	23	25	22		
Other major Jewish pop.centers	50		51	47	39	47		
Other: Northeast and North central	12		11	11	9	11		
Other	15		18	20	27	20		
<i>11) Age group</i>								<i>na</i>
24 - 39	19	19	17	15	22	18		
40 - 59	43	40	43	38	45	42		
60 and over	37	41	41	46	33	40		
<i>12) Sex</i>								<i>na</i>
Male	44	48	50	50	49	48		
Female	56	52	50	50	51	52		
<i>13) Household income (mean of logged income: estimated from 23 income categories)</i>								<i>na</i>
Mean	10.875	10.849	10.792	10.891	10.932	10.868		
Standard deviation	0.726	0.790	0.823	0.795	0.838	0.796		

**Notes:** \* Individual-level datasets cover for 2000-2001 and for 2003-5. The most recent summary frequencies are for the following year and are included here for comparison (from the published report, AJC 2006).

\*\* Conservative and Reform responses to the first question were subdivided by responses to the second question (second question not available for 2001).

\*\*\* Seven categories collapsed here to three.

\*\*\*\* Based on census division and MSA size information. The second category, major Jewish centers other than the NYC metro area include Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, centers in Connecticut, four centers in Florida, and two in California.

\*\*\*\*\* In 2001, data relevant to Question 8 do not cover membership.

**Source:** All 2006 data from AJC 2006, 1-10. *All other data:* From the AJC survey public-use samples (see note to Table 1). Frequencies for questions 1-9 are also available in the AJC 2005, 2005, and 2006.

**Appendix Table A2. The Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: A Regression Analysis--NON-ORTHODOX Respondents**

Parameters	Models (parameter estimates are shown in log-point units: 100 * natural logs)																
	regression on cultural, religious, and political indep. variables					regression on demographic variables						fuller regression models					
	# 1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	#13	#14	#15	#16	#17
Intercept: most accepting	-85 **	-101 **	-82 **	-158 **	-124 **	-110 **	-93 **	-135 **	-219 **	-244 **	-231 **	-261 **	-43 **	-207 **	-91 **	-252 **	-202 **
Intercept: accept 2 (not Jerusalem)	23 a	7	26 *	-49 **	-15	-3	15 a	-26 **	-112 *	-136 **	-121 *	-149 **	66 **	-92 b	17 b	-139 *	-87
Intercept: mixed responses	134 **	118 **	138 **	64 **	99 **	109 **	127 **	86 **	0	-23	-7	-32	180 **	27	128 **	-21	33
2005 survey year	6	6	6	9	9	6	4	7	8	6	6	7	9	10	4	5	7
2004 survey year	10	10	10	12	10	11	7	11	12	8	8	6	17 a	11	9	4	8
Being Jewish very important	-39 **		-35 **		-39 **							-41 **		-30 *		-18	-12
Being Jewish somewhat important [no Orthodox included]	-22 a		-21		-20							-21 b		-14		-12	-8
Affiliated Conservatives		-33 **	-20 a		-16							-23 *		-25 *		-18	-21 a
Unaffiliated Conservatives		-21 b	-14		-14							-14		-13		-15	-14
Affiliated Reform		7	18		18							10		4		10	3
Unaffiliated Reform		-17	-13		-18							-17		-21 b		-19	-23 a
Extremely liberal, liberal				77 **	78 **							83 **		74 **		83 **	74 **
Middle of the road				41 **	40 **							46 **		42 **		44 **	41 **
NYC metro						-29 *					-31 **	-28 *		-27 *		-27 *	-26 *
Other major Jewish metros						3					1	-2		-5		0	-3
Other Northeast + North central						3					4	4		1		2	1
Age 24-39							-37 **			-41 **	-39 **	-43 **		-62 **		-54 **	-70 **
Age 40-59							-31 **			-35 **	-33 **	-35 **		-42 **		-41 **	-47 **
Male								39 **			36 **	43 **		43 **		44 **	44 **
Log of household income									10 *	14 **	11 *	13 *		15 **		14 **	16 **
Arab intention is to destroy Israel													-90 **	-91 **			-89 **
Feel very close to Israel															-47 **	-55 **	-46 **
Feel somewhat close to Israel															-17 a	-21 *	-12
Measure of variation explained by model (-2LogL; for intercept and survey year only -2LogL= 6561 )																	
intercept (+ survey yr.) + covariates	6548	6543	6535	6505	6479	6550	6542	6532	6556	6533	6498	6405	6478	6328	6537	6383	6311
% explained by covariates	0.19	0.27	0.39	0.85	1.24	0.17	0.29	0.43	0.06	0.42	0.95	2.36	1.25	3.54	0.37	2.71	3.81
Levels of statistical significance (Wald chi square): ** p. < .01 * .01 < p. < .05 a .05 < p. < .075 b .075 < p. < .10																	

**Notes:** 1) The dependent variable is the composite measure for acceptance of West Bank change. For detail, see Table 4.  
 2) The analysis is limited to the AJC datasets for 2003-5 (as only these include all questions). All regressions are based on 2,592 cases, less Orthodox= 2367 cases. An additional 410 cases (14%) were omitted for missing data. Most missing data involved a respondent failing to answer one of the three political questions that comprise the composite measure (the dependent variable).  
 3) All models are based on a cumulative logit model (reference cell parameterization).  
 4) Omitted categories of the categorical prior variables are: just Jew (for *religious attachment*), other (for *metro area*), over 60 (for age group), female (for gender), feel somewhat distant of very distant from Israel (for emotional attachment), disagree (for Arab intention to destroy Israel), Log of household income, with 27 categories,

**Appendix Table A3. The Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: A Regression Analysis--ALL Respondents**

Parameters	Models (parameter estimates are shown in log-point units: 100 * natural logs)															
	regression on cultural, religious, and political indep. variables					regression on demographic variables						fuller regression models				
	# 1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	#13	#14	#15	#16
Intercept: most accepting	-86 **	-102 **	-83 **	-179 **	-127 **	-116 **	-103 **	-144 **	-230 **	-251 **	-238 **	-238 **	-47 **	-183 **	-93 **	-230 **
Intercept: accept 2 (not Jerusalem)	19	6	25 *	-72 **	-18	-10	2	-38 **	-125 **	-145 **	-130 **	-126 *	61 **	-67	14	-117 *
Intercept: mixed responses	125 **	115 **	134 **	35 **	94 **	95 **	108 **	67 **	-21	-40	-23	-11	168 **	49	119 **	-2
2005 survey year	10	8	8	13	10	10	8	11	13	10	9	8	13	10	8	6
2004 survey year	14	13	12	17 *	13	17 a	13	17 *	17 *	13	13	9	22 *	13	13	6
Being Jewish very important	-58 **		-37 **		-41 **							-42 **		-31 *		-19
Being Jewish somewhat important	-20 b		-19		-19							-19		-11		-10
Orthodox		-173 **	-156 **		-140 **							-137 **		-134 **		-123 **
Affiliated Conservatives		-33 **	-19 b		-15							-21 a		-23 *		-16
Unaffiliated Conservatives		-21	-13		-13							-14		-13		-14
Affiliated Reform		7	19		18							12		6		12
Unaffiliated Reform		-17	-13		-18							-17		-21 b		-19
Extremely liberal, liberal				94 **	81 **							85 **		75 **		85 **
Middle of the road				53 **	41 **							46 **		42 **		45 **
NYC metro						-48 **					-49 **	-27 *		-26 *		-26 *
Other major Jewish metros						2					-1	-1		-3		0
Other Northeast +North central						0					2	2		-1		0
Age 24-39							-42 **			-45 **	-42 **	-38 **		-56 **		-48 **
Age 40-59							-30 **			-35 **	-33 **	-35 **		-43 **		-42 **
Male								35 **			31 **	42 **		42 **		43 **
Log of household income									10 *	14 **	12 **	11 *		13 **		11 *
Arab intention is to destroy Israel													-100 **	-91 **		
Feel very close to Israel															-70 **	-55 **
Feel somewhat close to Israel															-20 *	-21 *
Measure of variation explained by model (-2LogL; for intercept and survey year only -2LogL= 7168 )																
intercept (+ survey yr.) + covariates	7129	7011	7002	7076	6936	7135	7144	7143	7163	7135	7083	6862	7063	6783	7105	6838
% explained by covariates	0.54	2.19	2.32	1.28	3.23	0.46	0.33	0.34	0.07	0.45	1.18	4.26	1.46	5.36	0.88	4.60
Levels of statistical significance (Wald chi square): ** p. < .01 * .01 < p. < .05) a .05 < p. < .075 b .075 < p. < .10																

**Notes:** See notes to Appendix Table A2. For source, see Table 1.



**Appendix Table A4. The Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes: A Regression Analysis--NON-ORTHODOX Respondents**

\*\*supplemental regression analyses

Parameters	Models				
	(parameter estimates are shown in log-point units: 100 * natural logs)				
	Dataset includes only respondents who reported that being Jewish was "very important" in their daily lives--compare to Models 12 and 17 in Table A2			Dataset limited to 2003 survey year which includes information on respondents' educational attainments	
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Intercept: most accepting	-267 **	-205	-293 **	-96 **	-284 **
Intercept: accept 2 (not Jerusalem)	-137 b	-71	-187 a	5	-178 b
Intercept: mixed responses	-28	41	-62	124 **	-53
2005 survey year	11	9			
2004 survey year	25 a	26 *			
Being Jewish very important			-35		-38
Being Jewish somewhat important [no Orthodox included]			-11		-11
Affiliated Conservatives	-28 b	-24	-19		-19
Unaffiliated Conservatives	-5	-4	-37 b		-37 b
Affiliated Reform	24	18	-27		-26
Unaffiliated Reform	-25	-30	-12		-11
Extremely liberal, liberal	70 **	68 **	77 **		78 **
Middle of the road	40 **	38 **	38 *		38 *
NYC metro	-34 *	-32 *	-21		-21
Other major Jewish metros	-8	-6	-4		-4
Other Northeast +North central	29	27	15		16
Age 24-39	-50 **	-70 **	-43 *		-42 *
Age 40-59	-39 **	-52 **	-40 **		-38 **
Male	41 **	43 **	42 **		46 **
Log of household income	9	13 b	18 *		17 a
Arab intention is to destroy Israel		-95 **			
Feel very close to Israel		-30			
Feel somewhat close to Israel		5			
Missing education data				-28	-31
High school or less				-9	16
Some college				-23	-10
Four years of college				-3	2
Measure of variation explained by model (-2LogL; for intercept and survey year only = 3281 )				(-2LogL for intercept only = 2195.8)	
intercept (+ survey yr.) + covariates	3198	3152	2149	2193	2147
% explained by covariates	2.53	3.94	2.14	0.11	2.24
Levels of statistical significance (Wald chi square):	** p. < .01	* .01 < p. < .05)	a .05 < p. < .075	b .075 < p. < .10	

**Notes:** See notes to Appendix Table A2. For source, see Table 1.

For models 1 and 2, there were 1189 respondents included in regressions. For models 3-5, there were 793 respondents included in regressions.

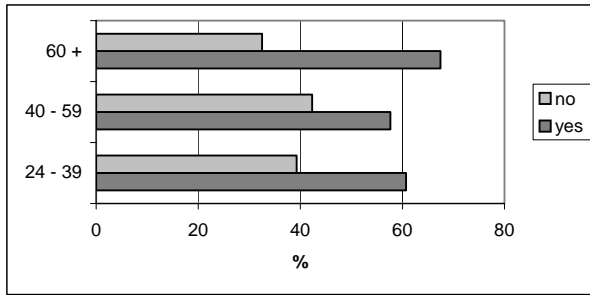
**Appendix Table A5. Responses to the Composite Measure for Acceptance of West Bank Changes--Orthodox Jews Included**

Respondent group	Proportion giving each response to composite measure				
	accept 3	reject Jer.	mixed	reject	total
<b>All Respondents</b>	25	23	24	28	100
<b>Importance of Being Jewish</b>					
Very important	20	25	23	32	100
Somewhat important	29	22	25	24	100
not important	34	19	30	17	100
<b>Metro Area of Residence</b>					
NYC metro	19	22	23	36	100
Other major Jewish concentrations	28	23	25	24	100
Other U.S. (Northeast + North central)	25	25	23	28	100
Other US	25	25	25	25	100
<b>Age Group</b>					
24 - 39	19	21	27	32	100
40 - 59	25	20	25	30	100
60 and older	28	25	24	24	100
<b>Education</b>					
high school or less	24	14	39	23	100
some college	21	15	34	30	100
four years of college	29	22	22	27	100
five or more years higher education	28	25	18	29	100
<b>Gender</b>					
male	28	26	20	26	100
female	22	18	30	30	100
<b>Feel close to Israel</b>					
very close	15	25	21	38	100
somewhat close	28	23	23	26	100
somewhat or very distant	34	16	32	18	100
<b>General Political Orientation</b>					
Extremely liberal, liberal	34	24	24	19	100
slightly liberal, middle of the road	25	24	25	26	100
Slightly - extremely conservative	17	18	25	40	100
<b>Arab Intention to Destroy Israel</b>					
yes	21	23	25	32	100
no	42	20	24	13	100

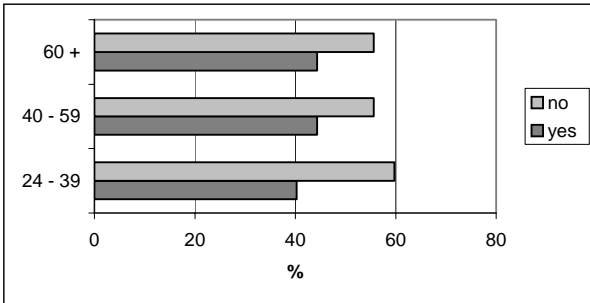
**Notes:** For comparable figures on the non-Orthodox respondents (91% of all respondents) and on survey years used for each question, see Table 4. For sources, see Table 1.

**Appendix Figure A1. Responses to the components of the composite measure for West Bank Change, by Age Group--NON-Orthodox Only**

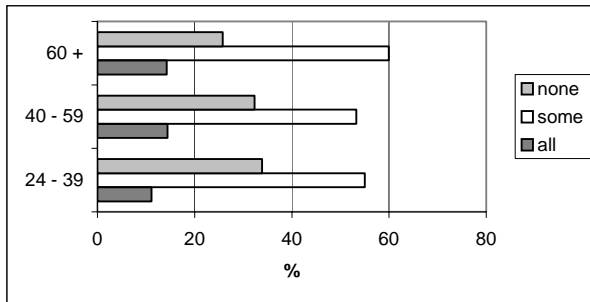
**Favor Palestinian State "In Current Situation"?**



**Change Jerusalem Status for Peace?**



**Dismantle West Bank Settlements for Peace?**



**Notes:** For responses to the composite measure by age group, see Figure 1. For source, see Table 1.

## **APPENDIX B. AN HISTORICAL CRITIQUE OF AJC'S ISRAEL-ORIENTED QUESTIONS AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESPONSES**

Consider the following questions—admittedly imperfect—that could test for knowledge about Israel, attitudes towards Israelis, and political options facing Israel.

### **A. Knowledge about Israel**

- A1. In what year did Israel become a state?
- A2. In what year did it take control of the West Bank?
- A3. Do Arab Israeli and Jewish Israeli children go to the same schools?

### **B. Attitudes about Israelis**

B1. To what extent do you think each of the following descriptions apply to Israelis:

- peaceloving
- racist
- industrious
- militaristic
- democratic
- excessively nationalistic
- religiously extremist

B2. What is your impression of the following groups in Israel? (very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable, not sure):

- West Bank settlers
- secular or nonreligious Israelis
- modern Orthodox Israelis
- ultra-Orthodox Israelis
- Israeli Arabs

### **C. Political Choices**

C1. Is the Israeli government doing enough or not doing enough to carry out peace agreements it has signed with the Palestinian Authority (PLO)?

C2. Should the United States apply pressure on the Israeli prime minister to advance the peace process, even if this creates a strain in U.S.-Israel relations, or should the United States not apply pressure?

C3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Public criticism of Israel by established American Jewish organizations is useful for prodding the Israeli government in the peace process.”

C4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “American Jews should not publicly criticize the policies of the duly elected government of Israel.”

Before the reader concludes not merely that I do not know how to construct a decent question, but that I am hopelessly biased, he or she should consider that all of these questions have appeared in the American-Jewish Committee surveys at one time or another during the 1980s or 1990s. They all have their limitations, but they do show that probing questions are possible and would surely help, especially when examined together so that general attitudes and knowledge about Israel could be used to illuminate political positions.

A review of the responses will be useful. In 1989, 64% of American Jews could correctly give the year Israel declared her independence (A1, above). In that context, it is less surprising to learn that only 40% knew the year Israel took control of the West Bank (A2); only a third knew that Israeli Jews and Arabs generally attend separate schools (half said they were unsure; A3). Roughly three-fifths had never

been to Israel. And while the overwhelming majority in the early nineties claimed to follow news about Israel “closely,” only 40% claimed to follow “very closely” (Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe 2002).

The questions dealing with images of Israelis (questions B1–2, above) may seem to grasp at no more than stereotypes, but the AJC regularly asks respondents which American ethnic groups seem more or less anti-Semitic. Why not ask for the respondent’s impressions of various types of Israelis as well? However, the question was asked only in 1991 (Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe 2002). The results were intriguing. I report here only the surprisingly high negative images. Only 5% found Israelis racist “to a great extent” (B1, above); however, another 36% found them racist “to some extent” for a total of two-fifths of American Jews agreeing that Israelis were at least racist to some extent. Moreover, the proportion who believed that Israelis were “hardly at all” racist was an identical 41% (the last fifth saying they were not sure). Likewise, 34% thought the Israelis excessively nationalistic to a great extent and another 40% to some extent; the comparable proportions on the religiously extremist question are 9% and 41% (Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe 2002). A much higher proportion agreed that Israelis were militaristic, either to a great extent (32%) or to some extent (48%). Perhaps, then, militaristic may have been interpreted by many to mean “involved with military concerns,” but the answers would be consistent with negative images on the part of a surprisingly large minority of American Jews.

The question about specific subgroups of Israelis (B2) was also asked only once, in 1997. Eleven percent reported a very favorable view of West Bank settlers, 36% a somewhat favorable view, 29% somewhat unfavorable, 12% very unfavorable, and 13% unsure. Thus, the opinion of the settlers was split right down the middle, with most respondents avoiding the very strong options. Opinion of secular Israelis was less divided, with a fifth responding “very favorable” and another half “favorable.” The modern Orthodox were seen favorably by moderately fewer in each category (8–10 percentage points less) and the ultra-Orthodox were unfavorably viewed by two out of three. Forty-five percent viewed the Israeli Arabs favorably (nearly all in the weaker category) and 38% unfavorably (AJC 1998).

The AJC only asked once (in 1999) whether the Israeli government is doing enough to carry out its pledges to the PA (question C1 above). Again, why a variant of this question is not used more regularly is hard to grasp; 49% of respondents answered yes, 43% answered no—surely a striking division deserving follow-up. The tables at the back of that year’s AJC report offer some additional insight. Those with higher educational attainments were notably more likely to disagree (high school or less: 59% yes; five or more years of higher education: 44% yes); and the Orthodox were more likely to agree. By contrast, there was no difference by age.

Another side of the same question was whether the Palestinian Authority was doing enough to meet its obligations to Israel. Nearly all (88%) thought not, with no consistent differences by education or denomination. Responses also varied remarkably little by whether the respondent reported feeling “very close to Israel” (92%) or distant from Israel (83%). Thus, the question on whether Israel was doing enough produced fascinating differences, while the question on whether the PA was doing enough produced virtually none. Yet the AJC chose to ask the latter in multiple years while ignoring the former.

The question about American pressure on the Israeli prime minister (question C2, above) was also asked only once (in 1998). Forty-five percent replied yes, 52% replied no. Interestingly, the parallel question was asked about pressuring Arafat; 69% replied yes and 28% no. That more Jews favor pressing Arafat than pressuring the Israeli prime minister is hardly news, but that 45% of them favored pressuring the Israeli leader is more surprising (American Jewish Committee 1999).

The last two questions (C3–C4) dealt with the appropriateness of public criticism of Israel, the first by “established American Jewish organizations,” the second by “American Jews.” In reply to question C3 (about organizations), 27% agreed, 41% disagreed, and 32% were not sure. Thus, a clear majority of those with an opinion did not think it helpful that the organizations prod the peace process by criticizing Israel in public. Since a third had no opinion, the division of opinion was really quite extensive (put differently, only two-fifths of respondents held the most common opinion). This is a relatively clear cut question and it would have been interesting to observe whether responses have varied over the years, but the AJC asked the question only in 1991.

By contrast, the AJC asked question C4 (the appropriateness of criticism by American Jews) between 1981 and 1998. The proportion of respondents who *disagreed* with the statement that “American Jews should not publicly criticize...Israel” fell below 55% only once (49% in the year of the first Lebanon War, 1982) and reached a high of 71% in 1995. The question had the disadvantage, perhaps unavoidable, of putting the matter in a way that seemed to invite a defense of free speech: of course, if someone felt strongly enough, he or she had the *right* to criticize (Phillips, Lengyel, and Saxe 2002). The AJC eventually replaced the question by another, used continuously through 2004: “Regardless of their individual views on the peace negotiations with the Arabs, American Jews should support the policies of the duly elected government of Israel.” This formulation generated greater agreement: 60–63% now *agreed* with the statement, 32–36% disagreed. The new formulation may have been an attempt to bypass the issue of free speech and to tap more directly into the question of the appropriateness (rather than the constitutional right) of criticism, but the change came at the expense of clarity. When and how should “individual views” be expressed? When and how should American Jews “support the policies?” American Jewish feelings about dissent from Israeli government positions is critical, but in this paper I do not analyze the responses to this AJC survey question, not least because these ambiguities make it difficult to interpret the answers.