

**Ethnicity and Political Behavior Among American Jews:
Findings from the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01***

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Abstract

Employing a theoretical and conceptual framework of ethnicity and using data from NJPS 2000-01, this article examines how structural, cultural, and psychological ethnicity among Jews are linked to partisanship, ideology, and political participation. Regression analyses show opposite effects for structural and cultural ethnicity on political behavior and no effects for psychological ethnicity.

Introduction

Ethnicity plays a prominent role in American political behavior. Examined in the aggregate, ethnic groups tend to give disproportionate support to one party over the other, to have either generally liberal or conservative political orientations, to support policies that are consistent with their partisanship and general ideologies, and to participate in politics at distinctive rates. Moving beyond the aggregate level, internal variations in the extent to which ethnic group members are connected to their group structurally, psychologically, and culturally may be associated with variations in political behavior (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001; de la Garza, 1995; Garcia, Falcon and de la Garza, 1996).

This article examines selective aspects of the political behavior of American Jews using a theoretical framework of ethnicity. Employing data from the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01, the article analyzes how variations in ethnicity are connected to partisanship, ideology, and political participation among American Jews. The article proceeds in four sections. The first section describes the three major dimensions of ethnicity and their application to Jews, offers a general theoretical explanation of how variations in ethnicity may produce variations in political preferences and participation, and then proposes alternative hypotheses about the specific ways ethnicity may be connected to political preferences among Jews. With the theoretical framework and hypotheses presented, the next two sections describe the data, measures, and weights, and then report empirical findings from logistic regression analyses. The concluding section synthesizes the findings and offers suggestions for further research based on NJPS 2000-01.

Ethnicity, Politics, and American Jews

Ethnicity in the modern West is best conceptualized as a multidimensional variable—transformable, situational, and emergent—not as a unitary constant (Heisler, 1991; Goldscheider and Zuckerman, 1984; Yinger, 1985; Yancey *et al.*, 1976). Ethnicity encompasses the structural, psychological, and cultural connections that ethnic group members have toward each other and the group as a whole, and the variations that group members display along these dimensions (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001). Structural ethnicity refers to the ethnic social contexts, or environments, in which group members are located and to the specific social networks that group members have with each other.¹ Psychological ethnicity concerns the attitudes and emotions that ethnic group members have toward each other and their group as a whole. Cultural ethnicity refers to the participation of ethnic group members in the group's distinctive cultural system.

Each of these dimensions can be applied usefully to Jews in the United States. From an ethnic perspective, Jews vary structurally in terms of how frequently they are located in Jewish social contexts and how often they interact with other Jews in specific social networks. Jews vary psychologically in terms of the strength of their attitudes toward other Jews and to the Jewish people as a collective. Lastly, the cultural dimensions of Jewish ethnicity revolve primarily around the group's religion.² Jews vary culturally with respect to their participation in Jewish religious activities, their adherence to the tradition's religious beliefs and to the Jewish denominations or movements with which they may identify or affiliate. Though often empirically related, these three elements of Jewish cultural ethnicity are conceptually distinct from one another.³

Elsewhere (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001) I have provided a detailed theoretical statement on why variations in each of the three dimensions of ethnicity—structural, psychological, and cultural—may lead to variations in political preferences, for example, partisanship, general ideological orientation, and government policies. Here, I briefly summarize the theoretical logic. From a structural perspective, shared social contexts and sustained interactions with other group members should produce common political positions as group members learn, adopt, and reinforce each other's preferences. Strong psychological attachments to other group members and to the group as a collective may stimulate common preferences that members perceive serve the group's interest and well being. Shared cultural understandings and participation may also produce similar political preferences that are consistent with and protect their "ways of life" (Wildavsky, 1987). By contrast, group members with weak structural and psychological ties to other group members and those who do not participate in the group's shared culture may

develop different political preferences. In addition, and very importantly, those who have modified or reformed a group's cultural understandings and practices may also have different political preferences from those who have maintained more traditional understandings and behaviors.

Each aspect of ethnicity may also promote political participation. Social contexts and networks of interaction provide environments and connections that facilitate the mobilization of people to political activity (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Leighly, 1995). Increasingly strong structural ethnicity therefore may promote political participation, as ethnic group members are structurally situated to be mobilized to political participation. Because attitudes are often linked to behavior, psychological ethnicity may stimulate group members to political activity, especially when group interests are perceived to be at stake. Lastly, shared cultural understandings and practices across ethnic group members may encourage political participation as a way to protect and sustain the ethnic group members' ability to practice their culture. By contrast, group members with weak structural and psychological connections to the ethnic group, lacking structural opportunities for mobilization and attitudinal stimulation, may be less likely to engage in political activity. Those who do not participate in the group's cultural system, or have modified cultural understandings and practices, also may have a reduced likelihood of political participation.

What specifically might be the direction of the relationship between structural, psychological, and cultural ethnicity on the one side and political preferences and participation on the other among American Jews? As a general proposition, increasingly strong structural, psychological, and cultural ties to any social group, ethnic or otherwise, should reinforce the group's political preferences. Because Jews traditionally have supported the Democratic Party and have identified themselves as politically liberal, and because these are still their modal preferences, one set of hypotheses links strong structural, psychological, and cultural ethnicity to increasingly strong Democratic partisanship and liberal orientations. A corollary set of hypotheses would posit that strong ethnicity among Jews, in each dimension, should be tied to elevated levels of political participation as Jews are mobilized structurally and motivated psychologically to engage in politics and seek to protect their culture by doing so.

However, apparently straightforward connections between strong Jewish ethnicity, Democratic partisanship and liberal ideology are complicated by several inter-related factors, leading to alternative hypotheses about the connections of ethnicity to political preferences and participation among Jews.

First, though the Democratic Party continues to make electoral appeals to Jews, the Republican Party and conservative activists have increased their efforts to attract Jews to the Republican electoral coalition, based primarily on conservative religious values (which the party uses to attract more religious Americans generally, not just Jews) and the security of Israel. As a result, Jews with strong Jewish ethnicity may reformulate their partisan preferences away from the group's conventional Democratic support. This may be especially true of those with strong cultural ethnicity. As among Americans generally, Jews with strong religious beliefs and elevated levels of religious observance may be more likely to support the Republican Party.

Second, even if Republican appeals have not modified the partisan preferences of Jews with strong ethnicity, there has been evidence for at least two decades that more religiously traditional Jews are more politically conservative (Cohen, 1983; Cohen and Liebman, 1997). In addition, changes in liberal ideology may have modified the general political orientation of some Jews. Fearing that elements of a more extreme version of liberalism—such as ethnic and racial quotas and anti-Israel attitudes—are harmful to Jewish group interests, some Jews have rejected liberalism. As a result, the tight bundling of Democratic partisanship and liberal ideology among Jews may be unraveling, as Jews with strong ethnicity move toward more moderate and conservative ideologies while not necessarily abandoning the Democratic Party. These simultaneous preferences—moderate and conservative orientations with Democratic partisanship—may be sustainable for some Jews because the Democratic Party is broad enough to include centrists who reject more extreme forms of liberal ideology.

Third, denominational divisions within American Judaism provide another twist in the relationship between cultural ethnicity and political preferences. Religious denominations may serve as “repositories of predispositions and information about politics” (Layman and Green, 1998), so that belonging or identifying with one inclines members toward distinctive political preferences. Jews in different Jewish denominations and those with no denominational affiliations have significantly dissimilar cultural understandings, which in turn may have important implications for political preferences. For example, Jews in more religiously traditional denominations may be more likely to support the Republican Party and hold conservative ideologies than other Jews (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2002; Wald and Martinez, 2001; Zuckerman, 1990; Cohen, 1989), even after controlling for cultural ethnicity as religious behavior and beliefs.

Fourth, increased political participation among Jews may not be related to strong cultural ethnicity as embodied in religious behavior and beliefs. Despite the standard expectation that those with strong cultural

ethnicity may have the most to gain from participating in politics precisely to protect their culture, it may be the case that the traditional religious observances and beliefs that comprise Jewish cultural ethnicity discourage engagement with the mundane and non-Jewish worlds where politics operate.

Finally, American Jewish denominationalism may result in variations in political participation. Denominations differently interpret and emphasize elements in the Jewish tradition that stress activity in the larger society. Traditional denominations, for example, are more likely than liberal denominations to apply the Jewish concern with social justice and *tikkun olam* to other Jews rather than to secular causes (Legge, 1999). Applied to political activity, especially as that activity relates to the politics of the general non-Jewish society in which Jews live, this suggests that Jews who identify with liberal denominations will display higher rates of political participation than those who identify with more traditional denominations.

The sum consequence of these factors is that the connection between ethnicity and political behavior among Jews may not follow the standard propositions linking strong ethnicity to the group's overall political preferences and to greater political activity. Instead, political dynamics specific to the United States—Republican Party appeals to Jews and developments in liberal ideology to which Jews traditionally adhered, as well as the complementary fact that Jewish cultural ethnicity is based in religion—may lead to significant variations in how the elements of ethnicity are connected to political behavior among American Jews.

Data, Measures, and Weights

Data from NJPS 2000-01 are used for the analyses presented here. In total, NJPS interviewed 5,148 respondents who were defined either as currently Jewish or as having a Jewish background but not currently Jewish, according to a series of screening questions that preceded the main interview. The electronic data file allows analysts flexibility in defining a Jewish sample that may differ from that defined as currently Jewish by the screening questions. For these analyses, I define a Jewish sample that consists of 4,208 respondents who meet the following criteria:

1. their religion is Jewish; *or*
2. their religion is Jewish and another religion; *or*
3. they have no religion, but they have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing) and they consider themselves Jewish; *or*

4. they practice a non-monotheistic religion,⁴ they have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing) and they consider themselves Jewish; *and, having met one of criteria 1-4,*
5. in answering a question on which Jewish denomination or movement they identify with, they did not indicate a Christian denomination or Islam.

In sum, the criteria include respondents who practice Judaism, as well as those who have no religion or practice a non-monotheistic religion as long as they have a Jewish background and consider themselves Jewish. However, the criteria remove respondents who currently identify as Christians or, in rare cases, Muslims, even if they have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing) and/or consider themselves Jewish. The criteria also remove respondents who do not consider themselves Jewish even if they have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing).

Three dependent variables—corresponding to three of the four political questions on the survey instrument—are employed: partisanship, ideology, and political participation.⁵ Partisanship is a nominal variable with three categories: Democratic, Republican and independent.⁶ Ideology is also a nominal variable with three categories: liberal, conservative, and moderate.⁷ Political participation is a dichotomous variable that measures whether respondents did any of the following in the year prior to being interviewed: attended a political meeting or rally, contributed money to a political party or candidate, or contacted or wrote to a government official.⁸

The independent variables of primary theoretical interest are ordinal scales of structural, psychological, and cultural Jewish ethnicity and a nominal measure of Jewish denominational identification.

The structural ethnicity scale measures the extent to which respondents are located in Jewish social contexts or have networks of interaction with other Jews. Respondents received one point for each of the following: belonging to a synagogue, belonging to a Jewish community center, belonging to another Jewish organization, volunteering for a Jewish organization in the year before the survey interview, participating in a Jewish adult-education program in the year before the survey interview, living in the same household with at least one other adult Jew, and claiming that half or more of their closest friends are Jewish. The scale varies from 0 to 7, and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.73.

The psychological ethnicity scale measures how attached respondents are to other Jews and the Jewish people collectively, and how important being Jewish is to them. Respondents received one point on the psychological ethnicity scale for meeting each of these criteria:

claiming they feel very or somewhat positive about being Jewish; saying they are very or somewhat emotionally attached to Israel; and stating that being Jewish is very or somewhat important in their life. They also received one point on the scale for reporting they strongly or somewhat agree with the following statements: Jews in the United States and Jews in Israel share a common destiny; Jews in the United States and Jews elsewhere around the world (outside Israel) share a common destiny; when people are in distress, American Jews have a greater responsibility to rescue Jews than non-Jews; I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people; and I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world. The scale varies from 0 to 8, and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75.

The cultural ethnicity scale combines elements of religious behavior and belief. Respondents received a point on the scale for each of the following: attending Jewish religious services monthly or more in the year prior to the survey; attending or holding a Passover Seder the year before the survey; fasting all or part of Yom Kippur the year before the survey; lighting Chanukah candles all or most nights of the holiday the year before the survey; always or usually lighting Shabbat candles; refraining from handling money on Shabbat; and keeping kosher at home. They also received a point on the scale for answering they believe in God; the Torah was written by God or by humans inspired by God; and they are very or somewhat religious. The scale varies from 0 to 10 and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80.

The fourth independent variable, also an indicator of cultural ethnicity, is a nominal measure of Jewish denominations with the following six categories: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, other Jewish, just Jewish, and secular.⁹ In the regression analyses, Reform is the omitted reference category against which the other categories are compared.

A series of control variables frequently associated with political behavior was constructed for use in the multivariate regression analyses. The control variables are age,¹⁰ education,¹¹ household income,¹² occupation,¹³ gender,¹⁴ and region.¹⁵

The NJPS data are weighted to account for two main factors: unequal probability of being selected for an interview (due to numerous factors, including stratified random sampling procedures, number of qualified adults in the household, and number of telephone lines in the household) and differential non-response (which is adjusted through the use of post-stratification weights to bring total screening data to known U.S. Census totals on selective demographic variables).

The final respondent weight available on the file produces population estimates of the adult Jewish population, an effective sample size in the millions that is inappropriate for statistical testing. In order to conduct statistical tests, this "population" respondent weight was divided

by its mean to create an “analytic” respondent weight that produces an effective sample size equal to the unweighted sample size when all interviewed respondents are selected ($N=5,148$).

As noted above, the five criteria used for defining Jews for these analyses produce an unweighted sample size of 4,208. When the “analytic” respondent weight is applied to them, the effective sample size is reduced to 3,499. The reduction is due to the fact that Jews defined by the five criteria were oversampled in the stratified sampling procedures and were more likely to respond to the survey. Applying the “analytic” respondent weight that adjusts for oversampling and non-response reduces their share of the total sample by weighting them down from 4,208 to 3,499. Due to item-specific missing data, weighted N s in the empirical analyses are further reduced (weighted N s are reported in the tables).

Findings

The empirical analysis is divided into three parts. The first part presents the distribution of each dependent variable. The second part consists of a series of logistic regression models, specified because the dependent variables are categorical rather than linear. More specifically, multinomial logistic regression is used in analyzing partisanship and ideology. Democrat and liberal are the reference categories, so the partisanship models predict the likelihood of being Republican and independent, and the ideology models predict the likelihood of being conservative and moderate. Binary logistic regression is used in modeling the likelihood of political participation. In all models, the conventional significance level of 0.05 is used in assessing whether the coefficients are significantly different than 0. The third part of the empirical analysis consists of using the logistic regression coefficients to produce probabilities for categories of the dependent variables with varying values of the independent variables.

To begin, Table 1 shows the weighted distribution of partisanship, ideology, and political participation among American Jews. Consistent with Jewish political preferences over time, a majority of Jews reported that they support the Democratic Party and are liberal in their ideological orientation to politics. Independents slightly outnumber Republican Party backers, while approximately equal proportions say they are moderate and conservative.¹⁶ Just under one-third of respondents reported that they engaged in at least one of the non-voting political activities noted above in the year before being interviewed.

Table 2 displays the results of regressing partisanship on the ethnicity variables and the control variables. The models predict, respectively, the likelihood of supporting the Republican Party rather than the Democratic Party and the likelihood of being independent rather than Demo-

Table 1
Distributions of Partisanship, Ideology, and Political Participation

Variables	Percent
Partisanship	
Democratic	64
Republican	15
Independent	21
Total	100
Weighted N = 3103	
Ideology	
Liberal	56
Conservative	22
Moderate	21
Total	99
Weighted N = 3220	
Political participation	
Yes	32
No	68
Total	100
Weighted N = 3476	

cratic. Increasingly strong structural ethnicity raises the probability of being Democratic in both models (the negative coefficients for structural ethnicity are in reference to being Republican and independent, respectively, so they can be alternatively interpreted as indicating an increased likelihood of supporting the Democratic Party). Psychological ethnicity has no bearing on partisanship. In contrast, increasingly strong cultural ethnicity, as measured by religious behavior and belief, boosts the likelihood of being Republican and independent rather than Democratic. Cultural ethnicity as measured by denominational identification has more limited effects on partisanship: relative to Reform Jews, only Orthodox Jews are more likely to be Republican, and no distinction emerges among the denominations in terms of being independent.

The regression models for ideology are presented in Table 3, with the models predicting the likelihood of being conservative and moderate rather than liberal. Structural ethnicity increases the likelihood of being

Table 2.
Multinomial Logistic Regression: Partisanship on
Ethnicity and Control Variables

Explanatory variables	Republican	Independent
	B (Std. Error)	B (Std. Error)
Ethnicity variables		
Structural ethnicity	-.114 (.037) **	-.095 (.033) **
Psychological ethnicity	-.032 (.034)	-.021 (.028)
Cultural ethnicity	.129 (.032) ***	.099 (.027) ***
Denominations		
Orthodox	.506 (.207) *	-.047 (.206)
Conservative	-.138 (.145)	-.230 (.130)
Other Jewish	-.061 (.296)	.215 (.238)
Just Jewish	-.132 (.163)	.175 (.135)
Secular/no religion	-.279 (.277)	.372 (.204)
Control variables		
Age	-.066 (.036)	.024 (.032)
Education	-.026 (.059)	.082 (.052)
Income	.066 (.041)	-.052 (.037)
Management/executive/ business/finance	-.258 (.194)	-.007 (.170)
Professional/technical	-.442 (.162) **	-.068 (.138)
Service/sales/office or administrative support/formen/skilled or unskilled workers	.379 (.151) *	.201 (.143)
All other employed	.209 (.251)	.090 (.242)
Female	-.890 (.112) ***	-.789 (.097) ***
Midwest	.255 (.180)	.182 (.150)
South	.204 (.138)	-.134 (.122)
West	-.113 (.147)	-.490 (.132) ***
Constant	-1.079 (.247) ***	-.797 (.216) ***
Model Pseudo R ² = .10		
Weighted N = 3022		

*** p = .000 ** .000 < p ≤ .01 * .01 < p ≤ .05

liberal rather than conservative but has no effect on the trade-off between moderate and liberal. As with partisanship, psychological ethnicity has no effect on ideology. Strengthening cultural ethnicity, as measured by religious behavior and beliefs, again demonstrates consistent effects, raising the probability of being both conservative and moderate rather than liberal. Moreover, relative to Reform Jews, both Orthodox and Conservative Jews are more likely to be conservative and moderate.

Table 3
**Multinomial Logistic Regression: Ideology on Ethnicity
 and Control Variables**

Explanatory variables	Conservative	Moderate
	B (Std. Error)	B (Std. Error)
Ethnicity variables		
Structural ethnicity	-.071 (.033) *	-.027 (.032)
Psychological ethnicity	-.026 (.030)	.000 (.030)
Cultural ethnicity	.169 (.028) ***	.137 (.027) ***
Denominations		
Orthodox	1.433 (.199) ***	.899 (.212) ***
Conservative	.431 (.125) **	.342 (.124) **
Other Jewish	-.243 (.277)	-.266 (.274)
Just Jewish	-.015 (.146)	.238 (.137)
Secular/no religion	-.046 (.231)	.132 (.223)
Control variables		
Age	.055 (.032)	.074 (.032) *
Education	-.307 (.052) ***	-.168 (.052) **
Income	-.027 (.037)	.052 (.036)
Management/executive/ business/finance	.138 (.168)	-.176 (.170)
Professional/technical	-.107 (.142)	-.385 (.139) **
Service/sales/office or administrative support/formen/skilled or unskilled workers	.362 (.138) **	.031 (.141)
All other employed	.428 (.242)	.340 (.232)
Female	-.715 (.098) ***	-.361 (.097) ***
Midwest	-.044 (.155)	-.181 (.162)
South	-.072 (.124)	.087 (.120)
West	-.345 (.132) **	-.123 (.127)
Constant	-1.471 (.224) ***	-1.520 (.223) ***
Model Pseudo R ² = .15		
Weighted N = 3142		

*** p = .000 ** .000 < p ≤ .01 * .01 < p ≤ .05

Table 4 presents the binary logistic regression model that predicts political participation. Here, structural ethnicity increases the likelihood of participating in politics, psychological ethnicity has no effect, and cultural ethnicity reduces the probability of engaging in political activity. Looking at the other aspect of cultural ethnicity, the model shows that relative to Reform Jews, Orthodox Jews and those who say they are just Jewish are less likely to undertake political activities, while those

who identify with another Jewish denomination or movement (e.g., traditional or Sephardic) are more likely to participate in politics.¹⁷

Table 4

Binary Logistic Regression: Political Participation on Ethnicity and Control Variables

Explanatory variables	Political participation B (Std. Error)
Ethnicity variables	
Structural ethnicity	.190 (.026) ***
Psychological ethnicity	-.005 (.023)
Cultural ethnicity	-.047 (.022) *
Denominations	
Orthodox	-.614 (.177) **
Conservative	-.136 (.103)
Other Jewish	.496 (.191) **
Just Jewish	-.247 (.115) *
Secular/no religion	.250 (.170)
Control variables	
Age	.052 (.027)
Education	.334 (.043) ***
Income	.078 (.030) **
Management/executive/ business/finance	.081 (.139)
Professional/technical	-.029 (.111)
Service/sales/office or administrative support/formen/skilled or unskilled workers	-.277 (.123) *
All other employed	-.329 (.204)
Female	-.107 (.079)
Midwest	.447 (.126) ***
South	.307 (.102) **
West	.479 (.103) ***
Constant	-.893 (.180) ***
Model Pseudo R ² = .12	
Weighted N = 3380	

*** p = .000 ** .000 < p ≤ .01 * .01 < p ≤ .05

How much do the various statistically significant ethnicity variables affect partisanship, ideology and political participation? Logistic regression coefficients can be used to compute changes in the probabilities of each category of a nominal dependent variable, as the values of a specific independent variable are varied and all other variables are held

constant.¹⁸ In Table 5, levels of structural ethnicity, cultural ethnicity, and denominations are alternately varied, while holding the other two constant at either their means (the scales) or at Reform Jews, the reference category for denomination. The control variables are held constant at the following specifications: male, age 40-49, with a college degree, currently employed with a household income between \$75,000 and \$100,000, and living in the Northeast.

In looking first at partisanship, movement from the lowest level of structural ethnicity to the mean level—while all other variables are held constant as described above—increases the probability of being Democratic by 7% (42% to 49%). Further movement to the highest level of structural ethnicity raises the probability of supporting the Democratic Party another 11%, for a full 18% increase in the likelihood of Democratic partisanship across the structural ethnicity scale. Simultaneously, movement across the scale reduces the probability of being Republican by 10% and independent by 8%.

The effects of structural ethnicity on ideology are somewhat muted compared to partisanship. Movement across the structural ethnicity scale increases the probability of being liberal by 6%, while reducing the probability of being conservative by 9%. Increasing structural ethnicity raises the likelihood of being moderate by 3%, rather than diminishing it as structural ethnicity does with independent partisanship.

Structural ethnicity has a very strong effect on the probability of engaging in political activity, with those at the high end of the scale more than twice as likely as those at the low end to participate in politics. Indeed, at the highest levels of structural ethnicity, rates of political participation are over 50%.

The scale of cultural ethnicity exhibits important effects across all three dependent variables. When keeping all other independent variables constant, moving from the minimum to maximum values on the scale reduces the probability of being Democratic 27% and the probability of being liberal 36%. At the same time, movement across the cultural ethnicity scale increases the likelihood of being Republican 16%, independent 11%, conservative 22%, and moderate 14%. Looking at political participation, the likelihood of engaging in political activities falls 10% as cultural ethnicity strengthens.

In examining Jewish denominations, the reference group is Reform Jews. Compared to them, the probabilities of being Democratic and independent decline among Orthodox Jews 7% and 4%, respectively, while the probability of being Republican rises 10%. Also compared to Reform Jews, the likelihood of Orthodox Jews being liberal declines sharply, by 28%; the likelihood of being conservative rises almost as steeply, by 24%; and the likelihood of being moderate rises just margin-

Table 5
Probabilities of Partisanship, Ideology, and Political Participation, by Varying Values of Structural Ethnicity, Cultural Ethnicity, and Jewish Denominational Identification

Explanatory variables	Partisanship			Ideology			Political Participation %
	Democratic %	Republican %	Independent %	Liberal %	Conservative %	Moderate %	
Structural ethnicity							
Minimum	42	27	31	51	27	22	25
Mean	49	23	28	54	23	23	35
Maximum	60	17	23	57	18	25	55
Cultural ethnicity							
Minimum	62	16	22	71	14	16	40
Mean	49	23	28	54	23	23	35
Maximum	35	32	33	35	36	30	30
Denomination							
Reform	49	23	28	54	23	23	35
Orthodox	42	33	24	26	47	27	22
Conservative	-	-	-	44	30	27	-
Other Jewish	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Just Jewish	-	-	-	-	-	-	29

- Indicates no difference from Reform, the reference group.

ally, by 4%. Finally, political participation among Orthodox Jews declines 13% compared to Reform Jews.

In three other circumstances, denominations have an effect on political behavior. Conservative Jews differ from Reform Jews with respect to ideology, exhibiting a 10% decline in the likelihood of being liberal and concomitant 7% and 4% increases in the probability of being conservative and moderate, respectively. Lastly, those who identify with other Jewish denominations are more likely than Reform Jews to engage in political activity, showing a 12% rise, while those who are "just Jewish" are less likely than Reform Jews to engage in political activity, exhibiting a 6% decline.

Discussion

Among American Jews, variations in ethnicity are frequently tied to variations in political behavior. Jews with varying levels of structural connections to other group members, with varying levels of participation in the group's cultural practices and adherence to its traditional beliefs, and in some cases with varying cultural understandings as embodied in their denominational identifications, have different political preferences and different levels of engagement in political activities.

However, the direction of the relationship between ethnicity and political behavior is far from straightforward or consistent across the various dimensions of ethnicity. Measuring the multiple dimensions of ethnicity and including them together in multivariate regression models clearly show that the structural and cultural dimensions of Jewish ethnicity work in contrasting ways with respect to political behavior.

Contrary to standard propositions linking group connections to group norms, increasingly strong Jewish ethnicity does not consistently result in greater likelihood of holding the Jews' most common political preferences: Democratic Party support and liberal ideology. Among the ethnicity scales, only structural ethnicity works this way. All else being equal, increasing frequency of being in Jewish social contexts and increasing interactions with other Jews reinforce the group's modal political preferences. The effect of structural ethnicity on Democratic support is especially strong; indeed, it is three times as strong as the effect on having a liberal ideology.

However, cultural ethnicity has the opposite effects from structural ethnicity on political preferences. Increasingly strong cultural ethnicity, as measured by religious behavior and beliefs, moves Jews away from the group's modal partisan and ideological positions. In addition, Jews who identify with more traditional denominations, especially Orthodox but sometimes also Conservative Judaism, display lower levels of adherence to the group's conventional political preferences.

Measured in terms of the percentage difference they produce in partisanship and ideology, both indicators of variation in cultural ethnicity—the cultural ethnicity scale and Jewish denominations—have stronger effects in moving Jews to Republican and conservative positions than to independent and moderate positions when dislodging them from Democratic and liberal orientations. All of this suggests that the appeals of Republican and conservative activists on the basis of religious values and possibly on protecting Israel's security have undermined conventional Democratic and liberal preferences among Jews with high levels of cultural ethnicity and more traditional modes of denominational affiliation. It also suggests that Jews with high levels of cultural ethnicity have rejected what they perceive as secular changes in liberal ideology to more extreme versions than was previously the case, and have in turn embraced conservative and, somewhat less often, moderate ideological orientations.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the two dimensions of cultural ethnicity have variable effects on the two indicators of political preferences. Measured as religious behavior and beliefs, cultural ethnicity at its maximal level has similar effects on partisanship and ideology, producing nearly equal probabilities (approximately 0.33) across the three categories of each political variable. Measured in terms of denomination, however, cultural effects are significantly larger for ideology than partisanship. Orthodox Jews have moved decisively away from the Jews' conventional ideological position, liberal, and now display a modal preference for being politically conservative, but they are still more likely to be Democratic than either Republican or independent. Similarly, Conservative Jews are less likely than Reform Jews to be ideologically liberal, but they are no different from Reform Jews in terms of Democratic partisanship. Interestingly, these findings on American Jews testify to the ideologically broad-based nature of American political parties, that is, the parties' ability to keep ideologically divergent groups within the same coalition.

Structural and cultural ethnicity also demonstrate opposite effects with respect to political participation. Structural ethnicity sharply increases the probability of political activity, a finding consistent with research in political science showing that social contexts and networks of interaction serve as mobilizing mechanisms to draw people into political activity from non-political areas of life (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Leighly, 1995). In contrast, cultural ethnicity as measured by religious behavior and beliefs diminishes political participation. While far from being definitive, the findings suggest that traditional religious observances and understandings discourage engagement with politics in the larger non-Jewish society or

effectively demote it to a less important priority in the lives of more religiously traditional Jews.

In addition, the results from the political participation model allow several speculations about Jewish denominations as an element of Jewish cultural ethnicity. First, Reform Jews may be more likely than Orthodox Jews to transform the Jewish emphasis on social justice to active engagement in secular politics and with the larger, non-Jewish society in which Jews live. Second, the fact that Jews who identify with Jewish denominations or movements outside the main three (e.g., Reconstructionist, Jewish Renewal, Traditional, Humanistic) are more likely to participate in politics may reflect an underlying tendency on their part to undertake behaviors that require greater-than-average levels of commitment, whether political or otherwise.

Third, the fact that Orthodox Jews have lower levels of participation may indicate that denominational traditionalism acts similarly to religious belief and behavior in reducing political engagement among those who live the most religiously orthodox Jewish lives. Fourth, the reduced levels of participation among Jews who claim to be "just Jewish" may be a function, in part, of their lacking identificational ties with organizations that serve to mobilize people into politics. Notice, however, that Orthodox Jews are even less likely than "just Jewish" Jews to participate in politics, all else being equal, suggesting the religious traditionalism of Orthodoxy has an even greater effect on diminishing political activity than an absence of organizational mobilization.¹⁹

In contrast with the statistically significant effects of structural and cultural ethnicity, psychological ethnicity has no empirical bearing on political behavior among American Jews. Psychological ethnicity does not reinforce or undermine Jews' conventional political preferences; neither does it stimulate or depress their political activity. At least with respect to political behavior, psychological attachments to other Jews, to the Jewish people as a collective, and to being Jewish have little predictive empirical value and little if any theoretical import. When it comes to ethnicity, structural and cultural dimensions are doing the main political work among American Jews.

Lastly, while the NJPS questionnaire includes limited political data, this initial examination of ethnicity and political behavior far from exhausts the possibilities of using NJPS data to analyze the political behavior of American Jews. Several areas seem particularly promising for further exploration.

Interaction effects between the ethnicity scales on the one hand and Jewish denominations on the other should be tested. While structural ethnicity reinforces conventional Jewish political preferences among all Jews, and cultural ethnicity undermines those conventional preferences, their effects may vary by Jewish denomination. For example, structural

interactions may reinforce Democratic partisanship among Reform Jews and Republican support among Orthodox Jews. Similarly, though psychological ethnicity appears to have no bearing on political behavior among all Jews, effects may emerge among Jews with specific denominational identities and affiliations. A second possibility is to examine whether political participation is related to political preferences: After controlling for other predictors, are Jewish Democrats and liberals more likely to participate in politics than Jewish Republicans and conservatives? Moreover, though not discussed in the findings section above, several of the control variables, including age, education, income, occupation, gender and region, have statistically significant effects on selected aspects of political behavior. Further analyses of these relationships, including interactions with ethnicity, certainly are warranted.²⁰

Comparative research also should be encouraged. Change over time and continuity in ethnic and other determinants of Jewish political behavior can be analyzed by using the 1990 and 2000-01 National Jewish Population Surveys, as well as other surveys of American Jews conducted recently and over the past decade or so.²¹ Comparative analysis of Jews and non-Jews also can be conducted by using NJPS 2000-01 in conjunction with its companion study of non-Jews, the National Survey of Religion and Ethnicity (NSRE) 2000-01. NSRE is a small survey that has only one political item, a question on partisanship that is exactly the same as the question in NJPS. However, analysts using the two surveys together can explore whether the effects of selective social determinants of partisanship vary between Jews and others.

Finally, the empirical findings revealed by quantitative analysis of NJPS 2000-01 and other surveys can serve as a guide and catalyst to qualitative research. In-depth interviews, for example, can be used to explore more fully the significance and meaning of politics, both preferences and participation, in the lives of American Jews, and how politics is connected to Jewish behaviors, identities, beliefs and ideologies. Clearly, the fruits of political analysis with NJPS 2000-01 are only just beginning to materialize.

NOTES

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and interpretation.

¹ On the distinction and relationship between social contexts and social networks of interaction, see Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1993.

² Culture is used here in Geertz's (1973) sense as "systems of meaning" or "webs of significance." Colloquially, Jewish "cultural activities" may extend beyond the group's religious practices and tenets, for example, utilizing media sources with Jewish content. These informal types of cultural activities are not examined in this article.

³ The cultural dimensions of Jewish ethnicity parallel the three distinct dimensions of religion—belonging, behaving and believing—that scholars of religion have identified (see, for example, Leege and Kellstedt, 1993; Layman, 1997). However, in analyzing Jews, ethnicity is a more useful concept than religion, encompassing important structural and psychological dimensions of the Jewish group, in addition to the cultural dimensions that overlap with defining Jews more narrowly as a religious group.

⁴ The requirement of a non-monotheistic religion specifically excludes Christianity and Islam.

⁵ The fourth political question asked respondents if they are registered to vote. Nearly 90% claim they are, providing little variation to examine in an empirical analysis.

⁶ The survey question on partisanship asked, "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, independent or something else?" The first three response options were randomly rotated among respondents. Eighty-nine percent of respondents (weighted) answered Republican, Democrat or independent. Respondents with alternative answers (something else, not interested in politics, not a U.S. citizen, don't know, refused) were removed from the partisanship variable and from the empirical analyses in which partisanship is the dependent variable.

⁷ The survey question on ideology asked, "In terms of your political views, do you consider yourself extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative?" The set of three liberal and three conservative responses were randomly flipped among respondents. Ninety-two percent of respondents (weighted) selected one of the response categories above. In constructing the variable, the three conservative responses were re-grouped into one category, as were the three liberal responses, and responses of moderate were left in their own category. Respondents with alternative answers (depends on the issue, don't know, refused) were removed from the ideology variable and from empirical analyses in which ideology is the dependent variable.

⁸ The survey question on political participation asked, "During the past year did you attend any political meetings or rallies, contribute money

to a political party or candidate, or contact or write a government official?" Ninety-nine percent of respondents (weighted) provided a valid answer of either yes or no. Respondents with alternative answers (don't know or refused) were removed from the variable and from empirical analysis in which political participation is the dependent variable. Note that the survey question did not include voting, the most common form of political activity.

⁹ The survey question asked, "Thinking about Jewish religious denominations, do you consider yourself to be Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, Reconstructionist, just Jewish or something else?" Coding for the nominal variable is as follows: Orthodox = Orthodox, Hasidic, Lubavitch, Satmar and Haredi; Conservative=Conservative; Reform=Reform; other Jewish = Reconstructionist, Conservadox, Traditional, Sephardic, post-denominational, Jewish Renewal, combination of Reform and Conservative, Liberal, Humanistic, spiritually connected to Judaism, other Jewish, Jewish and other religion; just Jewish = just Jewish; secular = no Jewish denomination, secular, ethnically/nationally Jewish, culturally Jewish, non-practicing Jew, Jewish by background/birth/heritage, agnostic, atheist, no religion/none, don't know, refused. Ninety-nine percent of respondents were coded into one of the six categories in the constructed nominal variable. Respondents offering alternative answers (other non-Christian religion, other) were removed from the variable and from all empirical analyses.

¹⁰ An ordinal variable in which -2 = 18-29 years old, -1 = 30-39, 0 = 40-49, 1 = 50-59, 2 = 60-69, and 3 = 70 and older.

¹¹ An ordinal variable in which -2 = high school or below, -1 = some college (including associate's degree), 0 = bachelor's degree or some graduate school, 1 = graduate degree.

¹² An ordinal variable in which -3 = less than \$25,000, -2 = \$35-50,000, -1 = \$50-75,000, 0 = \$75-100,000, 1 = \$100-150,000 and 2 = \$150,000 or more. Twenty-nine percent of respondents (weighted) did not provide valid income data. Income is often an important predictor of political behavior, and it frequently has different effects than education, even though the two are correlated. Rather than removing income from the analysis or reducing the analysis by over 1,000 cases, missing income data were imputed by regressing known income (from respondents who gave valid income data) on age, education, employment status (0=employed, 1 = not employed) and gender and then using the resulting equation to predict the missing cases of income. The method is common in imputing missing data but is limited by the inability to model the equation's error term. The regression equation for imputing missing income was: $\text{income} = -.359 -.089(\text{age}) + .504(\text{education}) - .580(\text{employment status}) - .252(\text{female})$.

¹³ A categorical variable in which 1 = management, executive, business or finance; 2 = professional or technical; 3 = service, sales, office or administrative support, foremen, or skilled or unskilled workers; 4 = all other employed; 5 = not employed. In the regression analyses, "not employed" is the omitted reference category against which the other categories are compared.

¹⁴ A dichotomous variable in which 0 = male, 1 = female.

¹⁵ A nominal variable in which 1 = Midwest, 2 = South, 3 = West, 4 = Northeast. In the regression analyses, Northeast is the omitted reference category against which the other categories are compared.

¹⁶ When partisanship and ideology are treated as ordinal variables, the correlation between them as measured by Kendall's tau-b coefficient is a strong .41, significant at the .01 level. In bivariate crosstabulations, the rate of political participation is 11% higher among Democratic supporters than among Republicans and independents (chi-square is significant at .00), and it is 15% and 17% higher among liberals than among conservatives and moderates, respectively (chi-square significant at .00).

¹⁷ In specifying regression models, analysts need to be concerned with multicollinearity among the independent variables. Correlation analyses revealed only one potentially problematic variable, the cultural ethnicity scale, which is correlated at .47 with structural ethnicity and .45 with denomination using Kendall's tau-b measure. The regression models were re-specified without the cultural ethnicity scale to determine if removing it heightens the effect of the other ethnicity variables on the dependent variables.

In the partisanship and ideology models, removing the cultural ethnicity scale actually *eliminates* the effect of structural ethnicity. This indicates that including the cultural ethnicity scale allows the independent effects of structural ethnicity, which are in the opposite direction as cultural ethnicity, to be isolated and highlighted. In the participation model, the statistically significant effect of structural ethnicity remains, though the coefficient is slightly reduced in size when the cultural ethnicity scale is removed.

No changes emerge in the psychological ethnicity scale. Even without the cultural ethnicity scale in the model, psychological ethnicity remains unrelated to partisanship, ideology and political participation.

With respect to Jewish denomination, there are no changes in overall significance at the .05 level for any of the coefficients in the three models when the cultural ethnicity scale is removed. However, across all models where coefficients for Orthodox, Conservative and just Jewish are significant, the sizes of the coefficients are larger when the cultural ethnicity scale is absent, indicating that the cultural ethnicity scale explains part of the effect on political behavior of denominational identification. In contrast, in the political participation model, excluding the

cultural ethnicity scale slightly reduces the size of the coefficient for those identifying with another Jewish denomination.

In sum, the evidence shows that including the cultural ethnicity scale with the other ethnicity variables, despite marginal evidence of multicollinearity, is the correct model specification, allowing the independent effects of structural ethnicity to emerge and accounting for part of the effects of denominational identification.

¹⁸ For a dichotomous variable, the probability of the category coded 1 occurring is equal to $1/[1 + \exp(-Z)]$, where \exp is the exponential function and $Z = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_nX_n$ (i.e., the combination of regression coefficients and explanatory values).

In a three-category nominal dependent variable like partisanship and ideology, the probability of the non-reference category coded 1 occurring equals $\exp(Z_a)/[1 + \exp(Z_a) + \exp(Z_b)]$, where \exp is the exponential function, $Z_a = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_nX_n$ for the explanatory variables predicting category 1 and $Z_b = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_nX_n$ for the explanatory variables predicting category 2. The probability of the non-reference category coded 2 is equal to $\exp(Z_b)/[1 + \exp(Z_a) + \exp(Z_b)]$, and the probability of the reference category is $1/[1 + \exp(Z_a) + \exp(Z_b)]$. Additional response categories can be accounted for by extending the formula to include linear combinations of explanatory variables predicting the additional categories.

¹⁹ It is important to keep in mind that the findings related to political participation do not include voting, the most common form of political activity. It is unclear how the inclusion of voting, either as a separate dependent measure of participation or as one component of a broader measure, would affect the empirical results.

²⁰ See Wald and Jelen (2004) for a recent analysis, using NJPS 2000-01, that compares the partisanship and ideology of Southern Jews to Jews in other regions.

²¹ The results on structural interactions presented here appear to run counter to analyses based on NJPS 1990 that linked interactions with other Jews to a reduced likelihood of being liberal (Fisher, 1997; Kotler-Berkowitz, 1997; Legge, 1995). However, each of the analyses based on NJPS 1990 differ in important conceptual, operational, and analytic ways from the analysis here, and tests of cross-time changes in the effect of structural ethnicity on liberalism will require explicit similarity in conceptualization, measurement and analysis across the two data sets. If cross-time change in the relationship between structural ethnicity and liberalism is confirmed, then one possible explanation revolves around the timing of each survey's fieldwork in relation to national political events. Interviewing for NJPS 2000-01 was conducted from August 2000 through August 2001, during the time of the 2000 presidential election, when a Jewish candidate was on the Democratic ticket and the

post-election events in Florida played out. Because campaigns are known to reinforce traditional party support among social group members (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954), and partisanship and ideology are strongly correlated, the extraordinary nature of the 2000 election may have activated the connection between structural ethnicity and liberalism among Jews, while leaving cultural ethnicity to work among Jews as religion generally does among other Americans. By contrast, NJPS 1990 was conducted during an off-presidential election year, a time when politics is more distant from most people's lives. At that time, the traditional relationship between Jews, Democratic Party support, and liberalism may have dissipated among Jews with strong structural ethnicity, later to be reactivated by the unusual events associated with the 2000 election. Unfortunately, this and other macro-level explanations will likely remain speculative; testing them empirically will be difficult, given that there are only two data points (1990 and 2000-01) and numerous variables to consider.

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