

The Mobilization of Elite Opinion: Rabbi Perceptions of and Responses to Anti-Semitism

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One of the persistent problems facing the Jewish community is anti-Semitism, which has a long, tragic history in the United States and abroad. At the same time, anti-Semitic acts are probably at their lowest ebb in American history. Using a sample of more than 400 rabbis drawn from the four great movements of American Judaism, we investigate rabbi perceptions of anti-Semitism in the United States, as well as their attitudinal and behavioral reactions to it. We test and find evidence for the notions that Orthodox rabbis, as well as those connected to and mobilized by Jewish advocacy organizations, perceive anti-Semitism as a greater problem and concern themselves with the issue more often in their public speech.

INTRODUCTION

Anti-Semitism continues to be a defining issue for the Jewish community, sparking concern, watchfulness, action, and proliferating organization. At the same time, prejudice against Jews has waned throughout this century, with notable exceptions, making experience with anti-Semitism far less likely to be commonplace in the United States (see, e.g., Blakeslee 2000). Progress in reducing societal anti-Semitism has allowed variance in opinion about the issue to develop and may eventually lead to what Medding (1995) calls a “new Jewish politics,” based on the varied interests of the Jewish community. For now, this diversity of opinion enables us to test the effect that Jewish interest groups and religious movements have in shaping rabbi opinions and actions on the issue of anti-Semitism. At a time when the Jewish community is making historic strides in public acceptability, marked for instance by Senator Joseph Lieberman’s vice-presidential nomination, how concerned with anti-Semitism are American rabbis? How much do they speak out about the evils of prejudice, and what motivates that discussion?

We wish to explore the internal mechanisms within a religious community that generate solidarity (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1990). That solidarity will depend on how the wider community treats that religious group, how the religious group perceives and interacts with the wider community, mechanisms inside the religious group to maintain commitment, and organizations within the religious community that can rally support. We place particular emphasis on the influences of religious movement and protective interest groups. In the Jewish community, as in most religious traditions, religious dictates provide an overarching structure through which adherents interact with society. In particular, Orthodox Jewry maintains significant barriers to the non-Orthodox world that translate into particular opinions and actions concerning anti-Semitism—Orthodox rabbis will view anti-Semitism as a greater threat than rabbis of the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative movements.

Jewish advocacy organizations (JAOs) seek to mobilize Jewish opinion against threats through their cultivated status as the only sources of information about the extent of anti-Semitism in the United States. By collecting and disseminating information on anti-Semitic incidents, these

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interest groups shape the dialogue for the greater Jewish community. If rabbis are listening to what these groups are saying, their concerns about anti-Semitism will rise to reflect these cues.

DATA: THE 2000 AMERICAN RABBI STUDY

The data result from a mail survey of rabbis conducted in the fall and winter of 2000 in the four major movements of American Judaism—Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Reform. After obtaining the membership directories of the rabbinical associations of each movement, we randomly selected and sent surveys to roughly half the rabbis (about 1,600 of the 3,200 rabbis in these movements). From that initial mailing and two follow-up waves, 517 surveys were returned, though not all were usable. The overall response rate, therefore, is right about one-third (32.3 percent) and the usable rate is just below one-quarter (23.6 percent). The rates, not surprisingly, vary by movement, and decline with the increasing orthodoxy of the movement—the overall response rate for Orthodox rabbis is 22 percent, 30 percent for the Conservatives, 32 percent for the Reform, and 29 percent for the Reconstructionists. Rabbis from the Reform movement dominate the data set, with a slim majority of the sample. When the combined sample is used in analysis (in Table 3), we weight the data so that each movement is represented in accordance with their proportion in the population of American rabbis.¹

Of the studies that assess how anti-Semitism is viewed within the Jewish community (American Jewish Committee 1998; Rabb 1995; Tobin and Sassler 1988; see Blakeslee 2000:54–58 for a review),² few study rabbis, most mark a distinctly greater concern among organizationally affiliated Jews, and all find significant concern about the possibility of prejudice toward Jews. Although the overall rates of concern are important to report, the influences on those opinions are seldom examined. We aim to test the often discussed issue of what role the JAOs play in sustaining the primacy of anti-Semitism as an issue (Blakeslee 2000; Chanes 1995; Goldberg 1996).

The importance of studying clergy has largely been based on their role as cue givers (Jelen 2001), yet relatively few studies have investigated clergy as targets of persuasion themselves (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Jelen 1993; Liebman 1983)—they are most often the independent rather than dependent variable. Partly, this may be due to an assumption that elites are insulated from routine influential forces. Yet, on an issue that is vital to the survival of the Jewish community, rabbis will look to relevant organizations (JAOs) and should be quite responsive to persuasive information they find addressing the magnitude of the problem. Therefore, the very fact that rabbis may be influenced by JAOs suggests why they are important to study—rabbis may then broadcast concern for anti-Semitism to their congregations, furthering the mission of the JAOs and generating Jewish solidarity against a sometimes hostile world.

RABBI PUBLIC CONCERN WITH ANTI-SEMITISM

Traditionally, the Jewish political presence has been organized around the need for unity in the face of discrimination. However, as the extent of anti-Semitism fades in the United States, organizational activity on the issue has not faded apace. Historically, the Jewish community has tended to put all of its eggs in one basket; up through the beginning of the 1950s, “the primary agenda of the Jewish community was combating anti-Semitism at home and abroad and the corollary of anti-Semitism, discrimination” (Chanes 2001:100). Although anti-Semitism maintained its importance within the Jewish community, the focus shifted to support of the civil rights movement in the 1960s (Dollinger 2000). In the 1980s, the right-shift in the American political landscape caused the Jewish community to reevaluate its concerns. With the Reagan Administration’s restrictive policies and the rise of the Christian Right, the Jewish community perceived a threat to constitutional protections. Now, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and “[I]vels of both behavioral and attitudinal anti-Semitism very low,” the Jewish agenda is again

TABLE 1
RABBI PUBLIC CONCERN WITH ANTI-SEMITISM BY MOVEMENT

	Reconstructionist	Reform	Conservative	Orthodox
<i>Opinions (mean scores)</i>				
More resources should be devoted to fight growing anti-Semitism ^A	2.70	2.69	2.44	3.37
Lieberman's candidacy increased anti-Semitism ^A	2.45	2.14	2.00	2.62
All Jews should have supported Lieberman ^A	2.15	2.14	2.30	2.52
<i>Actions</i>				
Held meeting in synagogue on anti-Semitism (%)	11.0	8.0	22.0	24.0
Mean of speaking out about anti-Semitism ^B	2.60	2.96	2.92	3.71

^ACoded 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral/DK, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

^BCoded 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = seldom, 4 = often, 5 = very often.

Source: 2000 American Rabbi Study.

in a state of flux (Chanes 2001:101). An emphasis remains on Jewish "security issues," the most prominent among these being anti-Semitism.

In our attempt to understand rabbinical engagement with the issue, we first present whether rabbis see anti-Semitism as a problem and what they do about it. In Table 1, we see a snapshot of concern with anti-Semitism by each movement's rabbis. Orthodox rabbis are more likely to agree that more resources should be devoted to fighting anti-Semitism, while every other movement, on balance, mirrors current trends and disagrees. Overall, the low rates of concern suggest anti-Semitism is not a major concern to most rabbis, save to the Orthodox.

It is quite common, however, to see a disjuncture between opinions on abstract principles and their specific application. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), for instance, was the first Jewish candidate to run on a major party presidential ticket. As such, one might expect some public trepidation about Lieberman, a devout Orthodox Jew, parallel to the Protestant electorate's lukewarm-to-hostile response to John F. Kennedy in 1960 (Prendergast 1999). At the very least, it would not be out of bounds for rabbis to suspect Lieberman's reception would not be a cordial one.

Of course, 2000 was a different year than 1960, and rabbis' perceptions of Lieberman's reception by the public are revealing. All movements, on average, disagree that Lieberman's candidacy increased anti-Semitism. Orthodox and Reconstructionist rabbis, who both place considerable emphasis on the Jewish community (for the Orthodox as a religious community and for the Reconstructionists as a social community), show more concern than rabbis of the other movements (see Table 1). There is also surprisingly little demonstration of the need for group solidarity to back Lieberman. Only the Orthodox were not wholly against the idea that "All Jews should have supported Lieberman's candidacy." At the same time, almost all rabbis voted for the Gore-Lieberman ticket (though a lower percentage of Orthodox rabbis, 70 percent, voted for Gore), rabbis perceive that almost all of their congregations voted Democratic, and more than four-fifths of rabbis are proud of Lieberman and think that he helped the Democratic ticket (results not shown). Although the ideology of group solidarity appears weak, centripetal forces within the Jewish community are strong enough to maintain a unified partisan alignment.

The bottom half of Table 1 presents the extent of rabbinical actions concerning anti-Semitism. Relatively few rabbis report that their synagogues hold adult education sessions on anti-Semitism—a tenth of the more liberal Reconstructionist and Reform rabbis report hosting such a session, while a fifth of Conservative and Orthodox rabbis held such a session. Orthodox rabbis speak out in public about anti-Semitism "often," far and above the levels of the other rabbis, who

average just under “seldom.” Combined with their reported feelings about Lieberman’s candidacy, the results reveal the greater concern for anti-Semitism among Orthodox rabbis compared to other rabbis.

THE ROOTS OF RABBI CONCERN WITH ANTI-SEMITISM

In an era in which open hostility to American Jews is fading, it is increasingly unlikely that Jews think about anti-Semitism in individualized terms using personal information. Instead, it is more likely that American Jews evaluate the problem of anti-Semitism through impersonal influences. Rabbis are often highly networked in Jewish community organizations—movements, synagogue, schools, community associations, media, and, especially, interest groups—that might supply information about threats facing the Jewish community. By gathering and providing salient information, they speak for and to the Jewish public, making a case for what the concerns of the Jewish community should be.

In this way, the set of forces that work on concerns of anti-Semitism and spark any behavioral reaction that may occur resemble those described in the political participation literature. It is widely agreed that political activity is the result of asking skillful individuals who care about an issue to participate (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). There is no doubt that clergy should be considered elites, with an enviable skill set (Djupe and Gilbert 2003) that has made them targets of social movements throughout American history. The key issue, therefore, is toward what end those skills are devoted. In their comprehensive treatment of citizen political action, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) place a great deal of weight on the strategic mobilization of citizens. Mobilization efforts are more likely to be directed at those well placed in social networks and bear fruit when directed toward citizens who are directly affected by an issue, are resourceful, and are able to respond. As representatives of the Jewish community and Jewish faith, rabbis could not be better suited to receive the mobilization efforts of groups dedicated to their protection.

Citizens also respond to the environment in which they live and work. Living in areas with many anti-Semitic incidents would naturally seem to translate into greater concern with the issue regardless of any organizational activity promoting it. Therefore, we must also take a look at the information environment concerning anti-Semitism. In particular, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has been collecting data on anti-Semitic incidents by state since 1980. While keeping in mind the possible limitations of these data, such as a reporting bias and the varied meaning of an anti-Semitic incident, they do provide us a means to compare the reactions of rabbis to information about anti-Semitic incidents. Rabbis may respond to the threat of anti-Semitism differently if their communities face more or less of it.

The most incidents in 2000 were reported in the northeast (59 percent), concentrated primarily in New York (30 percent). About a fifth were reported in the west, a tenth in the midwest, and the remaining tenth in the south (ADL 2001). The distribution follows the concentration of the Jewish population nationwide, but each movement, of course, is not randomly distributed. The Orthodox, for instance, are heavily concentrated in the northeast, while the other movements have a greater geographic spread.

To get a better sense of how the geographic spread of anti-Semitic incidents confronts each movement’s rabbis differently, we averaged the number of anti-Semitic incidents for their states in 2000. It is clear that Orthodox rabbis live and work in states with much higher numbers of anti-Semitic incidents—an average of 229 incidents for Orthodox versus 143 for Reform, 137 for Conservative, and 179 for Reconstructionist rabbis (the Orthodox mean is significantly higher). At the same time, both Reform and Conservative rabbis live in states with significantly lower numbers of incidents. Therefore, simply based on the environment in which they live and work, Orthodox rabbis should have greater concern with anti-Semitism than other rabbis. However, rabbis of the Reform and Conservative movements may be more susceptible to opinion change due to smaller absolute shifts in the numbers of incidents. That is, a shift from no incidents in

one year to one incident in the next may have a larger impact than a one-incident increase from, for example, 322 to 323. When anti-Semitic incidents are fairly commonplace, one additional incident will likely have little effect upon a rabbi's reactions.

It is important to recall that without JAOs, data on anti-Semitic acts (beyond crimes) would not be gathered in the first place and there would be no organization devoted to inform the Jewish community about these threats. The JAOs have been called the first line of defense for the Jewish community—they search diligently for issues, especially those involving anti-Semitism, that might concern Jewish security. Formed in the early part of the 20th century around domestic and Soviet oppression of Jews, the American Jewish Committee (AJC; formed in 1906), American Jewish Congress (AJCg; 1918), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL; 1913) (among others) work on a variety of issues central to the interests and experiences of the American Jewish community—the separation of church and state, civil rights, Israel, treatment of Jews abroad and concerns about their migrations, and anti-Semitism (see Blakeslee 2000 and Chanes 2001 for reviews). Jewish media and the JAOs are symbiotic, as the media both inform JAOs about anti-Semitic acts and publicize the reports the JAOs produce (Tobin and Sassler 1988).

Overall, about one-sixth of sample rabbis belong to each the AJC and the ADL; the AJCg trails behind just slightly at about 11 percent of the sample reporting membership. Closeness ratings toward the groups are tepid at best—each group averages just slightly more positive than a “neutral” rating.

Table 2 lists the membership patterns of sample rabbis as well as their feelings of closeness toward these three JAOs; there are interesting variations in group membership across movements. Reconstructionists are twice as likely and Reform rabbis just slightly more likely to belong to the AJC than to the other two JAOs (AJCg and ADL), while more Conservative and Orthodox rabbis are members of the ADL than of the AJCs. Conservative and Reform rabbis are members of the JAOs at higher rates than rabbis of the other two movements. Since groups are driven by market share, we might assume that the groups appeal, and it appears successfully, to the two largest movements.

The closeness rating pattern is symmetric across the non-Orthodox rabbis. Non-Orthodox rabbis feel closest to the ADL and then to the AJC. Paralleling their comparatively high membership rates, Conservative rabbis feel closer to the JAOs than do other movement rabbis. The Orthodox feel closer to the ADL than to the other two, but overall tend to feel distant from the three organizations *despite their greater concerns about anti-Semitism*.

For comparison, Table 2 also presents membership and closeness ratings of the ubiquitous United Jewish Communities (UJC; formerly United Jewish Appeal—a confederation of community Jewish groups and a heavy fundraiser for the Jewish community), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (which provides assistance to Jewish communities overseas), and Agudath Israel (mobilizes Orthodox Jews to confront and deal with social problems). Two-fifths of rabbis claim to be members of UJC, while a third have attended a UJC meeting and give UJC a “close” rating, on average. The other two groups have small memberships, though their closeness ratings (especially for the UJC) rival those of the JAOs.

Overall, these figures suggest the plight of the JAOs—few rabbis are members and many are not receptive to information from them, at least based on the tepid closeness ratings. Rabbis are not the only or even the primary constituency for the JAOs, but gaining their attention can have important spill-over consequences as they can spread messages propagated by the JAOs. Rabbis are also indicators of where Jewish concerns lie, since they are attuned to the needs and threats facing the Jewish community. Overall, the aggregate patterns of membership in and feeling toward the JAOs suggest a tension between the concerns of the Jewish community and the mission of the JAOs.

If mobilization does indeed drive opinions and behavioral expressions toward anti-Semitism, then the JAOs may serve as the crucial referent for rabbis, though perhaps not in the expected ways. The relations of rabbis to the larger Jewish and non-Jewish communities differ considerably by

TABLE 2
RABBI MEMBERSHIP IN AND CLOSENESS TO JEWISH ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS BY MOVEMENT

	Reconstructionist		Reform		Conservative		Orthodox	
	% Member	Closeness	Member	Closeness	Member	Closeness	Member	Closeness
<i>Jewish Advocacy Organizations</i>								
American Jewish Committee	10.6	3.18	18.7	3.33	18.5	3.72	4.5	2.74
Anti-Defamation League	4.3	3.29	14.4	3.28	20.4	3.74	10.6	2.98
American Jewish Congress	4.3	3.03	15.3	3.16	11.1	3.37	3.0	2.77
<i>Other Jewish Groups</i>								
United Jewish Communities	34.0	3.05	51.2	3.63	51.9	3.93	30.3	3.44
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	0.0	3.06	3.8	3.26	13.0	3.62	1.5	3.12
Agudath Israel	0.0	1.39	0.0	1.56	3.7	2.53	10.6	3.62

Note: "Closeness" is coded 1 = very far, 2 = far, 3 = neutral, 4 = close, 5 = very close.

Source: 2000 American Rabbi Study

movement, so group cues may not have the same efficacy for all rabbis. An application of reference group theory can help sort out the differences. Reference group theory posits that groups can serve both normative and comparative functions (Kelley 1952). The normative function encourages individuals to take on the norms and behaviors of the group, while the comparative function suggests that groups define one's norms and behaviors in opposition to those of a particular group.

The central concern for whether the religious group generates reference group comparisons is, as Welch and Legee (1991:32) argue, not simply how religious a group is, but rather how a group is religious. In particular, Orthodox Judaism is kept distinct from the other movements and modern American society by a refusal to update the faith, which serves to highlight comparative references. Since the JAOs are thought to represent the secular Jewish community (Blakeslee 2000), relying heavily on these secular organizations would be inappropriate for the Orthodox. Though the Orthodox perceive and are confronted with more anti-Semitic incidents, they feel more distant from the JAOs that work on anti-Semitism. The insulation of Orthodox rabbis from these group sources of mobilization blunts the potential impact of the JAOs.

The non-Jewish world does not serve as a comparative referent for the more liberal movements to the extent that it does for the Orthodox. The more liberal movements do not set up such firm boundaries with the world or within Judaism. As a result, they are not as concerned with anti-Semitism as are the Orthodox. However, they are targeted strategically by the JAOs and may therefore look toward a variety of Jewish organizations as normative referents. Accordingly, those who look to JAOs for the latest and most credible information about threats to the Jewish community in the United States and abroad should respond to group mobilization with increased concern about anti-Semitism. Of course, it is possible that those with elevated concern with anti-Semitism seek out information from the JAOs; this is not troubling to this formulation, since such information would serve to cement that concern.

This discussion suggests that rabbis will be concerned with anti-Semitism if they are in high-incident areas, in areas with visible changes in incidents, if they are sensitive to issues affecting the larger Jewish community, and if this concern is generated by cues given by appropriate media and reference groups.

Multivariate Regression Results

We test for the effects of issue mobilization, Jewish community relations, and group mobilization in multivariate regression models, the results of which are presented in Table 3. First, we model the opinion of whether more resources are needed to combat anti-Semitism (Column 1) and then the frequency of rabbis speaking out on anti-Semitism during 2000 (Column 2 in Table 3) to assess opinion and behavior on the issue, respectively.³

There are stark differences between the model estimates—opinions about the resources needed to fight anti-Semitism are driven by more stable attributes, whereas rabbi public speech on anti-Semitism is sensitive to the mobilization efforts of Jewish media and organizations, a pattern witnessed elsewhere (Djupe and Gilbert 2002).

Opinion: Desired Resource Allocation to Fight Anti-Semitism

The absolute number of anti-Semitic incidents in the rabbi's state in 2000 has a slight effect on the desire for further resource allocation. More interestingly, those rabbis living in states with a higher percentage increase in anti-Semitic incidents from 1999 to 2000 want to allocate more resources to combat prejudice, suggesting a homeostatic basis for mobilization on the issue (mobilization through reaction to outside threats—Salisbury 1984; Truman 1951). The Jewish community is highly sensitive to anti-Semitic acts and rabbis react rationally to an obviously increased threat, confirming an observation of de Tocqueville's ([1945/1835] 1990:138): "When

TABLE 3
OLS REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF RABBI OPINIONS AND ACTIONS
CONCERNING ANTI-SEMITISM

Variable	More Resources Needed to Combat Anti-Semitism		Speaking Out on Anti-Semitism	
	Coeff	(SE)	Coeff	(SE)
<i>Group Mobilization</i>				
Info. from Jewish magazines	0.235	(0.127)*	0.384	(0.135)***
Info. from Jewish interest groups	-0.057	(0.119)	0.181	(0.126)
Closeness to JAOs	0.002	(0.079)	0.220	(0.082)***
<i>Issue Mobilization</i>				
Anti-Semitic incidents (ASI), 2000	0.001	(0.001)*	-0.001	(0.001)
% change in ASI, 1999-2000	0.188	(0.095)**	0.000	(0.001)
More resources needed to combat anti-Semitism	—		0.236	(0.070)***
<i>Jewish Community Cues</i>				
Orthodox rabbi	0.406	(0.182)**	0.577	(0.197)***
Jewish unity is important	0.204	(0.054)***	0.042	(0.059)
% Jewish in county (1990)	-0.019	(0.016)	0.005	(0.017)
<i>Personal Resources</i>				
Political interest	0.110	(0.155)	-0.104	(0.171)
Political efficacy	0.144	(0.073)**	-0.018	(0.080)
Years in rabbinate	0.011	(0.005)**	-0.009	(0.005)*
Male	-0.340	(0.192)*	0.169	(0.199)
Age in years	-0.004	(0.004)	-0.007	(0.004)*
Constant	1.344	(0.710)	0.563	(0.768)
Number of cases	255		235	
Adjusted R ²	0.154		0.230	
SEE	0.968		0.985	

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: 2000 American Rabbi Study, weighted data.

inequality of condition is the common law of society, the most marked inequalities do not strike the eye; when everything is nearly on the same level, the slightest are marked enough to hurt it.”

For a variety of reasons, Orthodox rabbis want to allocate more resources to combat anti-Semitism than do other rabbis. Orthodox rabbis live in states with higher numbers of incidents, have higher barriers between themselves and the world, are more sensitive to threats to the Jewish community, and see Jewish unity as more important than pluralism. At the same time, female rabbis are also more likely to desire increased resource allocation against anti-Semitism, though, of course, no Orthodox rabbis are women. The most likely explanation is that female clergy have a stronger civil rights agenda (Crawford, Deckman, and Braun 2001) and anti-Semitism is flexible enough to support various framings.

Action: Speaking Out on Anti-Semitism

It is clear that public speech on anti-Semitism is driven mostly by short-term forces and especially by group mobilization. Use of both Jewish media and interest groups (almost significant

at $p = 0.15$) for information increases speech, as do closer feelings toward the JAOs. This should not be a surprise since Jewish interest groups and media exist to bring to light issues of concern and interest to the Jewish community. If, indeed, most news about anti-Semitism is impersonal rather than firsthand, then concern is by necessity a mediated phenomenon. This conclusion is reinforced when we note that the number of incidents itself does not affect speech, but receiving the information from a Jewish group or media source does. In essence, the JAOs and the Jewish media, the watchdogs of the Jewish community, can be successful in promoting and preserving anti-Semitism as a salient issue.

Desires for an increased resource allocation to combat anti-Semitism, the dependent variable in the previous model, encourages more public speech on the issue. Recalling the meager concern with anti-Semitism shown in Table 1, the effect here should be understood to be a significant barrier to action. Few rabbis are concerned with anti-Semitism and, in any event, the opinion is driven by long-term, stable forces. Unless anti-Semitic incidents rise dramatically, the JAOs will have a difficult time arousing rabbis to expend their energies fighting anti-Semitism.

Orthodox rabbis publicly address anti-Semitism more than other rabbis, the result of personal and community concern with the issue. Those rabbis who find Jewish unity important also speak out more on anti-Semitism. Higher community walls, which these effects symbolize, drive up the perceived importance of threats to the community.

Group mobilization does not affect wanting more resources to combat anti-Semitism, but clearly drives up public speech. Why don't JAOs mobilize opinion as well as action? Perhaps rabbis believe that the JAOs are doing a credible job of monitoring the problem and representing their interests to the relevant authorities. In the absence of a dramatic rise in anti-Semitism, rabbis may wish to maintain at least some concern for the issue in their congregations, though see no need for expending more resources when the problem is static or declining.

In sum, the demands placed on a rabbi by the community, movement, and self structure perceptions of and responses to anti-Semitism. Rabbis who view themselves as trustees (Djupe and Gilbert 2003) may feel the need to emphasize threats to the Jewish community. Much in the same way as the JAOs, trustee rabbis consider it their duty to keep themselves informed and to inform others in their community. Orthodox rabbis take on this role without much encouragement from outside pressures. Across the other movements, pressures from interest groups and the community are the dominant forces driving the expression of concern.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Anti-Semitism is in many senses a community issue and helps to showcase how organized communities view and respond to external threats. Although there is virtually no dissent in the Jewish community about anti-Semitism as a threat, there clearly are variable perceptions of the proximity and extent of that threat. It is clear that the geographic environment in which rabbis live and work structures the problems to which they will have to respond (Crawford and Olson 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2002, 2003; Olson 2000). Anti-Semitic acts are spread unevenly across the United States as is, consequently, concern on the issue. But concern is also a function of the lens through which information about the Jewish community is seen. Some rabbis prioritize the unity of Judaism as they seek to maintain barriers with the non-Orthodox, non-Jewish, and/or secular worlds, and therefore see anti-Semitism as a more significant problem. We also witness the importance of religious tradition in shaping the worldview of rabbis. Because of their beliefs and practices, Orthodox rabbis see the world differently and behave distinctly from other rabbis. These differences mean, in part, that Orthodox rabbis will perceive anti-Semitism as a greater threat without the prodding of protective interest groups, to which they belong and feel close at lower rates.

It is difficult, of course, to distinguish between information about anti-Semitic events and the organizations that collect and disseminate it. Rabbis in states with more anti-Semitic acts do not

want to allocate more resources to the problem; instead, rabbis respond to a changing information environment, wishing to allocate more resources when incidents show a percentage increase from the previous year. Therefore, concern with anti-Semitism will change as conditions change.

Speaking out on anti-Semitism is also likely to fluctuate, but moves in rhythm with the tenor of Jewish interest groups and media. We suggest, however, that the efficacy of the JAOs will continue to be limited by the gradually accommodating American context. As American society becomes more affirming of Jewish people, there are fewer incidents and misinformed opinions about which to be concerned. The JAOs and Jewish media do have decided effects on the engagement of rabbis with anti-Semitism, but the effects are circumscribed by the relative health of Jewish-society relations.

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NOTES

1. When the full data set is used (Table 3), the data are weighted in accordance to the proportion of rabbis in America in each movement determined from the membership lists obtained from the four movements. In 2000, there were 1,620 (50.5 percent of the total number of 3,209) rabbis in the Reform movement, 781 (24.3 percent) Orthodox rabbis, 630 (19.6 percent) Conservative rabbis, and 178 (5.5 percent) Reconstructionist rabbis.
2. Some of these studies cannot be generalized to the relevant Jewish population. For instance, the Tobin and Sassler (1988) study employed data on elites sampled from six cities on the eastern seaboard along with Kansas City. However, approximately three-fifths of anti-Semitic incidents each year occur in the northeast, with nearly one-third in New York alone. Therefore, the high concern for anti-Semitism in that study may be due to the particular information environment and not organizational affiliation. Rabb's (1995) data on Jewish citizens come solely from San Francisco.
3. Coding for variables in Table 3: information from Jewish magazines: 1 = none, 2 = some, 3 = a lot; information from Jewish interest groups: 1 = none, 2 = some, 3 = a lot; closeness to JAOs: an average of the closeness ratings given to the ADL, AJC, AJCg, coded 1 = very far, 2 = far, 3 = neutral, 4 = close, and 5 = very close; anti-Semitic incidents, 2000: per state, obtained from ADL (2001); percent change in anti-Semitic incidents, 1999–2000: the percentage change from incidents in 1999 to 2000 per state reported by the ADL (2000, 2001); Jewish unity important: "Jewish unity is not as important as pluralism"—1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral/DK, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree; percent Jewish in county (1990): estimates of the Jewish population in each county as published in Bradley et al. (1992); years in the rabbinate: in years; male: 0 = female, 1 = male; age: in years.

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