American Opinion Toward Jews During the Nazi Era: Results from Quota Sample Polling During the 1930s and 1940s*

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Objective. We investigate Americans' opinions about European and American Jews between 1938 and 1945, the period from the height of Nazi domestic power to the end of the war in Europe. *Methods.* Several surveys of U.S. public opinion between 1938 and 1945, reweighted to reflect national population parameters, were examined to uncover both aggregate patterns of responses and predictors of pro- and anti-Jewish sentiment. *Results.* We find that individuals' social status, gender, partisan learning, and, to some extent, region affected their views on Jewish Americans and on European Jews. *Conclusion.* Roosevelt's policies of speaking out against Hitler's atrocities, but yet doing nothing to facilitate more Jews to enter the United States as refugees, reflected the complexities of Americans' opinions about Jews here and abroad but led to failure to provide a safe haven for those thousands of Jewish refugees who might have fled before the war.

American Public Opinion About Jews During the Nazi Period

Passionate debate continues over whether the United States should or could have done more to save European Jews from the Nazi murderers in World War II (recent publications on the topic include Beir with Josepher, 2013; Breitman and Lichtman, 2013; Medoff, 2013; Plaud, 2007; Rosen, 2006; Leff, 2005). That debate largely focuses on the beliefs and actions of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, key members of Congress and the State Department, the press, and important lobby groups and other opinion leaders, from Father Coughlin and the America First Committee to the American Jewish Congress.

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Analysis of public attitudes of the time has been based on inference from the views of these elite groups and on diaries, letters, and newspaper articles. And yet, scientific survey research in the United States began in 1935, alongside the debate over how to deal with Nazi Germany and the Nazi victims.[1] Beginning in 1938, a few of these surveys asked Americans about the treatment of Jews in Germany and opinions about fellow Americans of Jewish descent.

These opinions have received very little systematic attention even though they are crucial to understanding the American public during the Nazi period.[2] Longitudinal studies of American public opinion usually start in the 1950s. Analysts rejected earlier surveys because of flaws in sampling design and question wording (for a review, see Berinsky, 2006: 500–, 508–09).

Using these surveys with new weights that allow a much more accurate reflection of population parameters (see Berinsky et al., 2011), this article investigates Americans' opinions about Jews asked in seven national surveys between 1938 and 1945, the period when the Nazis were at the height of their domestic power to their time of defeat. We will examine whether elite opinion about Jews, as measured by public debates, reflects the views of the public. And, we are interested in how sociodemographic patterns of tolerance and intolerance map to those that we have seen in the postwar era.

Americans' Attitudes Toward Jews

It was not until after the war, when the horrors of the Nazis were more fully revealed and digested, that research on anti-Semitism began in earnest. Indeed, the interest in the part that "average" people played in the Holocaust has stimulated decades of significant research on anti-Semitism and its relationship to other forms of intolerance. Questions raised in the postwar period still influence the work of social scientists who study intolerance and prejudice. Adorno et al.'s classic work, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), using the now famous F scale (Fascism scale) linked anti-Semitism to education, personality types, and a variety of intolerant attitudes toward other outgroups and nonconformists. A few years later, another classic, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties: A Cross Section of the Nation Speaks its Mind* (Stauffer, 1955), showed again that social and psychological factors helped explain intolerance for nonmainstream ideas. Generations of social scientists since then have examined and reexamined factors that these seminal works discovered. The link among anti-Semitism, education, and other forms of outgroup prejudice has held up well (see Raden, 1999).

Specialized studies of Americans' opinions about Jewish Americans are fewer. The author of an early compilation of survey results from dozens of

[1] For a critique of the "scientific" nature of some early polls, see Hogan (1997).

[2] Some univariate results on attitudes toward Jews were published many years later in Stembler (1966); Plaud (2007) reviews some questions in brief; see also Cantril (1948), who reviews prewar United States and wartime opinions about the war and America's role in it.

survey questions about attitudes toward Jews before 1966 predicted that anti-Semitism would disappear as a problem (Stember, 1966). Later studies were not so sanguine, noting the persistence of anti-Jewish stereotypes (Selznick and Steinberg, 1969; Rosenfield, 1982; Wilson, 1996). Where predictors of these attitudes were examined, analysts found that anti-Jewish attitudes were most prevalent among those who were less educated and older and had lower incomes (Rosenfield, 1982) and, in more recent findings, were male or African American (Sigelman, 1995).

Jews in the Nazi Era

World War II and the Holocaust are still much in the news as we honor the disappearing "Greatest Generation," including survivors of Holocaust horrors. A brief review of Nazi and U.S. policies will help situate our discussion of Americans' attitudes during this time (the literature on World War II is voluminous, and so is the subset on the Holocaust; for more details on the latter see, Dawidowicz, 1986; Gilbert, 1985; Yahil, 1990; Mazower, 2008; Synder, 2010).

Nazi persecution of the Jews, begun with the Nazi control of the state in 1933, was codified in the Nuremburg laws of 1935 defining what a Jew was and prohibiting intermarriage of Jews and others. Beginning in 1933, German laws gradually excluded Jews from every aspect of economic and community life in Germany and from any legal protections, what Kaplan (1998) calls a "social death" (see the remarkable diaries of Klemperer, 1995). In 1938, Germany imposed similar anti-Semitic policies and actions when it annexed Austria (the *Anschluss*) and the Sudetenland.

With a few exceptions, the U.S. media only infrequently covered escalating Nazi outrages against Jews (Seelye, 2006; Leff, 2005; Lipstadt, 1993).[3] Though the *New York Times* published more than 1,100 articles on some aspect of the Holocaust between 1939 and 1945, only six were on the front page, and many did not focus on the destruction of the Jews as a special target (Leff, 2005). *Kristallnacht*, the November 1938 Nazi destruction of thousands of Jewish businesses, homes, schools, and synagogues, murder of nearly 100 Jews, and arrest of 30,000, was the one instance of extensive media coverage of Nazi persecution of Jews (Friedlander, 1997:270). *Kristallnacht* was extensively covered by the press and brought condemnation in many parts of the world, including from President Roosevelt and many U.S. Christian as well as Jewish congregations. These and other acts led *Time* magazine to choose Hitler as 1938's "Man of the Year" because he was "the greatest threatening force that the

[3]For example, a March 16, 1938, *New York Times* story headlined "Jews Humiliated by Vienna Crowds," reporting that Jews were forced to wash anti-Hitler slogans off the sidewalks at the direction of the SS and with their protection from hostile crowds was found on page 8.

democratic, freedom-loving world faces today."[4] The story included only two sentences about torture, robbery, economic dispossession, and street violence against Jews, and these sentences were in the context of persecutions of other groups. Hollywood, too, downplayed Nazi terrorism in this period (Kafka, 2013; Doherty, 2013; Urwand, 2013).

Though Hitler was increasingly frightening to many Americans, anti-Semitism, in the State Department, Congress, and among elements of the vocal public, played an important role in prewar American foreign policy (see Wyman, 1984, and Rosen, 2004 for a taste of the anguished debate over why America did not do more for European Jews during this period; for a treatment of the issue in popular culture, see *America and the Holocaust*, 1994; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, undated). America had a number of prominent home-grown Nazis and anti-Semites, including the radio personality, Father Charles Coughlin, whose show reached millions of listeners (Stember, 1966:111; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, undated).[5]

Many members of Congress expressed strong isolationist views and wanted nothing to do with Europe's conflicts. Massive unemployment during the Depression and then later fear of spies and saboteurs partly shaped anti-immigrant views. Some elected officials and other public officials held anti-British or pro-German sentiments, but many expressed anti-Semitic views. Some prominent figures, like Charles Lindbergh and Joseph P. Kennedy, accused American Jews of pushing the United States toward war.[6] These views ensured that quotas for German immigrants, mostly used by Jews escaping from increased terrorism there, would not be raised. In 1939, Congress defeated a bill to allow 20,000 Jewish children into the country above the national quotas then in place, partly because of isolationist and anti-immigrant sentiment generally, but also anti-Jewish sentiment particularly (Stember, 1966:149). Indeed, observed one commentator: "Anti-Semitism was no stranger on Capitol Hill . . . it was, in fact, an important ingredient in the sharp hostility to refugee immigration that existed in Congress . . . ." (Wyman, 1985:14–15; see also Breitman and Kraut, 1987).

Anti-Semitic views were also rife in the higher levels of the State Department (see, e.g., Larson, 2011; Dodd and Dodd, 1941). The State Department constructed numerous roadblocks to potential immigrants fleeing from Nazi persecution (such as requiring a certificate of good conduct from the German police before processing visa applications from German Jews), and tightened requirements as time went on.

[4]The story noted prophetically that "he strode over a cringing Europe" (January 2, 1939; <www.time.com/magazine/article/0,9171,760539-2,00.html>).

[5]<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/peopleevents/pandeAMEX96.html>; even today, web versions of some of his speeches appear on a David Duke website, <http://www.davidduke.com/general/was-father-charles-e-coughlin-really-an-anti-semite_4243.html#more-4243>.

[6]See Charles Lindbergh's statement, for example, that Jews were one of three groups pressing us toward war through their control of the press, movies, and government. See <http://www.charleslindbergh.com/americanfirst/speech.asp>.

The minimal attention to the status of Europe's Jews continued after the war began and throughout the conflict (Leff, 2005; Seelye, 2006; Novick, 1999; Lipstadt, 1993). War conditions, especially in the East, gave Germany free rein to pursue its extermination policies and made it difficult to detect even mass murders. Following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, squads of troopers whose mission was to kill Communists, Polish nationalists, and Jews followed the army through the countryside (Browning, 1992). After the German invasion of Russia in 1941, this slaughter culminated in the establishment of death camps whose sole purpose was to murder as many Jews as possible in the quickest time possible. The "social death" of Germany's Jewish population turned into physical annihilation when Germany's remaining Jewish population was sent to the camps in late 1941 and early 1942 (see Kaplan, 1942), followed by the Jewish populations of Holland, France, and Poland and its neighbors in 1942 and 1943, and ending with the deportation of most Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Though the full horror of the death camps was not revealed until after the end of the war, throughout 1942 increasing numbers of accounts of murder and deportation found their way to the United States (see Wyman:chs 2,3; American Jewish Committee, 1942, 1943). In November 1942, a compelling account, finally accepted as true by the State Department and released to several major news outlets, confirmed that deportations were culminating in mass murder. Even the estimation that 2 million Jews had been killed already was reported only in small stories on the inside page (cf. *Washington Post*, November 25, 1942). In 1943, advocates for the potential victims still alive purchased advertisements in newspapers and gave pageants at several locations to publicize the murders and the need for action. Most Americans said that reports of mass killings of Jews did not cause any change in their own attitudes, but of the 15–20 percent who said they did, most were more sympathetic to the Jews (Stember, 1966: 143).

The murder of European Jews reached its peak in 1942 and early 1943 but continued to the last days of the war. Knowledgeable scholars believe that "[i]n mid-March 1942, some 75 or 80 percent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while 20 or 25 percent had perished. A mere eleven months later . . . , the percentages were exactly the reverse" (Webber, 2009:71).

Data and Methods

Were Americans outraged by what they knew of the acts of the Nazis, did they agree, or did they not care? Did views change once the war began? To help answer these questions, we examined the seven surveys tapping American's attitudes toward Jews, a small subset of the more than 400 surveys conducted between 1936 and 1945 by the Gallup Polls (American Institute of Public Opinion), the Roper polling firm, the Office of Public Opinion Research run

by Hadley Cantril, and the National Opinion Research Council (NORC).[7] These first surveys were conducted using quota-controlled sampling. Rather than drawing a random sample from a carefully delineated population, quota sample designers decided a priori how many interviews they would obtain from different groups of people (men or younger people, e.g.) and then the interviewers could choose whom to interview as long as they met their category quotas (see Berinsky, 2006 for a thorough analysis of this methodology). Quota sampling yielded an imperfect representation of the population from which the sample was drawn because it was impossible to adequately represent many groups and subgroups in this way (e.g., the sample would include men in proportions reflecting their population, but this technique could not ensure appropriate representation of old men, or black men, or married men, or any other categories not part of the defined quota).

In addition to errors introduced by quotas, the survey design introduced further errors by letting the pollsters choose whom to interview. Together, these methods led to a bias toward inclusion of more educated and better-off individuals who were more willing to be interviewed or with whom the pollsters felt more comfortable. Gallup's polls introduced a further bias because they sought to reflect not the adult population but the population of voters, thereby seriously underrepresenting women, southerners, and blacks, who voted at lower rates than others of that era.

Because of these sampling issues, most subsequent scholars have ignored these surveys despite their historical importance. But recently, analysts (Berinsky, 2006; Berinsky and Schickler, 2011) have demonstrated the utility of these surveys if properly weighted to achieve an accurate reflection of population parameters. The polls used in their survey employ the weights developed to reflect the national population (Berinsky, 2006; Berinsky and Schickler, 2011). The cell weighting factors vary from survey to survey, depending on what variables are available.[8]

These weights increased the proportion of women in the early samples from the low 30 percent to around 50 percent, decreased the representation of people owning phones from around 50 percent to 40 percent, and increased the proportion in the sample who were pro-Roosevelt by 3–5 percent. The reweighting also reduced anti-Jewish proportions by 3–5 percent. These changes were consistent in direction over all the samples examined here. Though the changes in distribution of the dependent variables were not large, in combination with the changes in the distribution of the independent variables, they did produce some differences in findings between the weighted

[7] For more information on these surveys, see Berinsky et al. (2011) and Berinsky (2006).

[8] Weights used in Tables 1, 2, and 3 include the following variables that are part of the data sets that Roper releases: phoneBlack (1938 Gallup 0121; 1938 Gallup 139) and profBlackGender (1939 March Gallup 1051; May USAIPO 0156). The Roper 1939 survey has no weights. Weights used in Tables 4 and 5 include eduBlackGender in the 1942 survey and eduNoRace in 1944 and 1945 surveys. The analyses are calculated on Stata 11.1.

and unweighted data. The greatest advantage in using these weights is that we can be confident that the findings better reflect population parameters.

The Survey Questions About Jews

In these early surveys, pollsters asked about opinions on Jews in America and in Europe only infrequently, and only two questions were repeated in more than one survey. We examine both prewar questions, the first asked in 1938 (Tables 1 and 2), and those during the war (Tables 3 and 4).

Though obviously we cannot go back to change the question wording in any secondary analysis, by contemporary standards these questions are flawed. For example, modern survey researchers who are trying to elicit rather than influence opinion balance both question stem options and answer options. So, for example, question C in Table 1 offers an unbalanced question stem: "Would you support a widespread campaign against Jews in this country?" Scientific polling would offer alternatives in the question, perhaps rephrasing as "Would you support or not support a widespread campaign against Jews in this country?

These questions also do not measure up to modern standards because there is little attempt to understand what the respondent knows before asking for an opinion about it. Questions A and B in Table 1 and question A in Table 3 illustrate this problem. Respondents are asked to evaluate policies of which most people probably know very little (persecution of Jews in Europe, Nazi treatment of Jews in Germany, and Hitler's taking away power from the Jews). News coverage of what was going on was sparse, so most individuals' knowledge was probably also very limited. Without attempts to measure knowledge, responses to questions like these probably measure overall sentiment toward Jews as well as opinions about policy.

Question C in Table 1 poses a similar problem. Each person interviewed probably has a different view of what a "widespread campaign against Jews in this country" means. Would the ends be further discrimination, segregation, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, exile, or murder? Would supporting such a campaign, however defined, mean being sympathetic to it, giving money to a group organizing it, participating in rallies, burning down synagogues, or participating in violence and murder? Question D also reflects this problem in that there is no attempt to ask whether the respondent has any idea of how many Jewish exiles were currently entering the United States.

A third limitation is that the questions lack baselines against which to measure opinions about Jews. For example, in question B in Table 3, what does it mean that 45 percent of the sample think that Jews have too much power? Would views of other religious groups be similar? Other nationalities? Other races? We can only guess. Modern survey research would ask about a few other religious groups, mainstream and minority, perhaps about immigrants, and about racial groups, all to provide a context for views on any one group.

TABLE 1

Americans' Opinions in the Prewar Years, 1938 and 1939[a]

A. Do you think the persecution of the Jews in Europe has been their own fault? (April–May 1938)	
Entirely	9%
Partly	46%
Not at all	33%
No opinion or do not know	12%
B. Do you approve or disapprove of the Nazi treatment of Jews in Germany? (November 1938)	
Approve	5%
Disapprove	88%
No opinion or do not know	7%

C. Would you support a widespread campaign against Jews in this country?

	Yes	No	No opinion or do not know
April–May 1938	10%	82%	8%
March 1939	12%	88%	Missing[b]
May 1939	11%	79%	10%

D. Should we allow a larger number of Jewish exiles from Germany to come to the United States to live? (November, 1938)	
Yes	23%
No	69%
No opinion or do not know	9%
E. Which of the following statements most nearly represents your general opinion on the Jewish question (July 1939):	
1. In the United States the Jews have the same standing as any other people, and they should be treated in all ways exactly as any other Americans	39%
2. Jews are in some ways distinct from other Americans, but they make respected and useful citizens so long as they do not try to mingle socially where they are not wanted	10%
3. Jews have somewhat different business methods and therefore some measures should be taken to prevent Jews from getting too much power in the business world	31%
4. We should make it a policy to deport Jews from this country to some new homeland as fast as it can be done without inhumanity	10%
5. No opinion, do not know	10%

[a]The questions are from Gallup Poll, April–May 1938 (0121); Gallup Poll November 24–29, 1938 (0139); Roper Fortune Survey, July 1939 (7); Gallup Poll March 10–15, 1939 (151); and Gallup Poll May 4–9, 1939 (156). Weights were not available for the July 1939 Roper study. All are available (with weights) from the Roper Center.
[b]The percentages for March 1939 are based on those with an opinion.

TABLE 2

Predictors of Attitudes Toward Jews in 1938

A. 1938–1939
Variables with a Significant Relationship with Negative Attitudes Toward Jews

	Jews Persecution Their Own Fault	Approve Nazi Treatment of Jews	Do Not Allow More German Jews in United States
Being a man	Yes	Yes	–
Not in a professional occupation	—	–	Yes
No home phone	Yes	–	–
Not supporting Roosevelt	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northerner, not from Pacific Coast	Yes	–	Yes
From Pacific Coast	Yes	–	–

	Supporting Campaigns Against U.S. Jews		
	April–May 1938	March 1939	May 1939
Being a man	Yes	Yes	Yes
Older than 40	–	–	Yes
Not in a professional occupation	–	Yes	–
No home phone	Yes	–	Yes
Not supporting Roosevelt	Yes	–	–
From Pacific Coast	Yes	–	–

Only those variables with significant relationships in any category are listed.
– indicates no relationship. See the full equations in the Appendix. Significance defined at the 0.05 level with a one-tailed test.

Despite these limitations, these questions are worthy of study because they tap important historical attitudes not accessible any other way. For the first time, researchers used scientific methods to learn what average Americans thought. Moreover, President Roosevelt himself followed the findings of the Gallup and Roper polls as one of the ways to learn what Americans were thinking, and, an advisor reports, used them to develop his own persuasive arguments (Gelderman, 1997).

Predicting Opinions About Jews

In addition to examining overall responses to the questions about Jews, we want to see who is likely to be more and less sympathetic. Are those individuals who are part of the Democratic coalition (urbanites, southerners, working people) more or less sympathetic? How do findings about attitudes

TABLE 3

Wartime Attitudes Toward Jews[a]

A. Do you think it was a good idea for him [Hitler] to take away the power of the Jews in Germany? (July 1942)[b]

Yes	15%
Unsure	5%
No	59%
No opinion	20%

B. Do you think the Jews have too much power and influence in this country?

Date	Yes	No	No Opinion
July 1942	45%	39%	16%
October 1944	50%	33%	17%
March 1945	56%	29%	14%

[a]Data from OPOR surveys 819 (July 1942), 033 (October 1944), and 041 (March 1945).
[b]We have combined the responses to two similar questions asked on different versions of the survey but with similar response patterns. One refers to Hitler doing "the right thing. When he took away the power of the Jews in Germany?" The other asked whether it was "a good idea for Hitler to do this." The "this" referent was the previous question asking why Hitler took away the power of the Jews in Germany, a question that raised issues about Hitler's own psychology as well as the alleged misdeeds of the Jews. The proportion answering that it was not a good idea was identical, but slightly more people opted for the qualified answer when the list of reasons was present.

TABLE 4

Predictors of Wartime Attitudes Toward Jews

	Hitler Had Good Idea to Take Power from Jews in Germany	Jews Too Much Power in United States		
	1942	1942	1944	1945
Men	Yes	–	Yes	–
More than 40	–	–	Yes	–
Less education	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has a phone	–	–	Yes	Yes
Not in large city, large state	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northerner, not from Pacific Coast	Yes	Yes	–	–
From Pacific Coast	–	–	–	Yes

Only those variables with significant relationships in any category are listed.
– indicates no relationship. See the full equations in the Appendix. Significance defined at the 0.05 level with a one-tailed test.

during the Nazi years comport with postwar findings about anti-Semitism that showed that education is associated with tolerance?

We have relegated details of our methods to the Appendix, but here provide the outlines of our approach. We use probit, a technique allowing us to look at the simultaneous impact of a number of factors on an attitude.

In terms of the factors we could examine, we ran into limitations in these early surveys just as there are limitations in the items used to tap views about Jews. By contemporary standards, these were very short survey instruments, omitting much of what we now consider standard background information.

For example, although "party identification" questions are a staple of modern polling, in the 1930s this was not a meaningful concept to survey researchers. Surveys did ask about past presidential votes and in some cases projected presidential choice. However, these voting items resulted in many missing cases from those who did not vote, could not remember their vote, or were ineligible. In the prewar years, a measure of support for Roosevelt was included, and we used that in our analyses. Unfortunately, the question was not asked in the wartime surveys we used.

And, in reverse, education was not asked about in any of the prewar surveys used here, though it was assessed in the wartime surveys. Time and again, education has been found to be the key to more tolerant attitudes (cf. Smith, 1993; Schuman, Bobo, and Krysan, 1992; Sullivan et al., 1981; Stouffer, [1955]), and we expect it to be related to sympathetic attitudes toward Jews here.

More professional occupations and higher income also are related to tolerance. Income was not included in any survey, but we were able to assess whether the head of household was in a professional or semiprofessional occupation (the latter was used but not well defined). We also used the presence of a telephone in the home as another measure of economic status. The rate of phone ownership increased during this period, but even in 1945 fewer than half of households owned a phone (Fischer, 1992:93, 107, 112). Phone ownership was, then, an indicator of economic status and nonfarm residence and perhaps is also a measure of social integration.

We expected that men would be more anti-Semitic than women. Though Stouffer showed that women are more intolerant of Communists and atheists, later research has found women to be more tolerant of other kinds of groups, including minorities, homosexuals, and those in need (Herek, 2002; Welch et al., 2001; Wilson, 1996; Sigelman, 1995).

We also expected younger people to be less anti-Semitic than older ones. Younger adults are more open to change on most social issues and are more tolerant than older people (see longitudinal research on changing attitudes on race, e.g., Hyman and Sheatsley, 1956, 1964; Welch and Sigelman, 2011; or contemporary polls on attitudes toward gays and gay rights such as <http://www.gallup.com/poll/163730/back-law-legalize-gay-marriage-states.aspx>).

We also created a measure designed to tap possible familiarity with Jews and Jewish issues. In the absence of questions focusing on that knowledge, our measure distinguished those individuals who lived in a community of 500,000

in one of the six states with a significant proportion of Jews (Linfield, 1941).[9] The size of community variable, along with that of telephone ownership, might also be thought of as crude indicators of exposure to news.

Regional differences are endemic to understanding many political and cultural attitudes. We examined differences among three regions, broadly defined: the south, the non-Pacific north, and the Pacific Coast. We were interested in the latter because of special hostility to Japanese Americans there that culminated with the internment of Japanese Americans during the war. We expected southerners and Pacific Coast residents to be less supportive of Jewish immigrants and southerners to be less sympathetic to Jews in general.

Findings

Opinion Before World War II

Table 1 displays several questions that reveal Americans' opinions about Jews in 1938 and 1939. Two of these questions focused on opinions about Jews in Europe.

In late April and early May 1938 (before *Kristallnacht*), over half of Americans blamed European Jews wholly or in part for their own persecution (item A). As we noted above, this question has limits. There is no context in the survey for this question, so we do not know for sure what kinds of persecution the respondents had in mind, whom they thought were doing the persecuting, or where it was happening. Yet, the survey question clearly asked about "persecution," an evocative word even if not described.

Later in 1938, just two weeks after *Kristallnacht*, public opinion was solidly against the Nazi's treatment of the Jews, with only 5 percent approving. Given that we have no parallel before and after questions, it is impossible to say definitively whether this reflected a change in opinion brought about by *Kristallnacht*. However, given the widespread publicity given *Kristallnacht* compared to earlier acts of discrimination and terrorism, it is likely that increased knowledge made a difference. Most of the public did not approve of the violent persecutions characterizing this event.

At the same time, in the same survey, only a minority of Americans, 23 percent, supported allowing more Jewish immigrants to come to the United States. U.S. government policy reflected this anti-Jewish immigrant sentiment, as well as a more generalized anti-immigrant feeling, in refusing to raise quotas for refugee immigrants from Europe. Note that the correlation between

[9]In our earlier analyses, we also just looked at individuals living in large cities (in these surveys, the largest city size category was 500,000 and over) with no different results. As reported in Linfield, according to the 1937 Census of Religion, done in conjunction with the U.S. Census but funded and organized privately, 46 percent of the U.S. Jewish population lived in New York. Five other states also had more than 3 percent of the Jewish population, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, and California.

support for Nazi treatment of Jews and opposition to letting more Jewish exiles into the United States in November 1938 was near zero (0.04). Most Americans who disapproved of Nazi treatment of Jews also opposed allowing them to immigrate to the United States.

At three instances in 1938 and 1939, pollsters asked respondents whether they would support a widespread campaign against Jews in this country. Only around 10 percent said they would, with a similar proportion having no opinion. Again, there was no survey context for these questions about a campaign against the Jews; in some people's minds it could have meant further segregation and discrimination, in other people's minds it could have been violence and deportation. This survey cannot tell us. But since the level of support remained constant throughout the pre- and post-*Kristallnacht* media coverage, it appears that the attitudes were less shaped by events than they were by more basic attitudes toward Jews. In the April–May 1938 survey, we find that this sentiment was moderately positively correlated with opinions on persecution of Jews in Europe (0.40), again suggesting the underlying link.

A July 1939 Roper survey (question D) sheds more light on the question of what people might be thinking of in terms of a campaign against Jews. It did not ask about a campaign, but rather elicited general opinion about the "Jewish question." The survey offered alternatives melding opinions and policy preferences. A plurality, about 40 percent, agreed that Jews were just like other Americans and should be treated as such. The next largest group (31 percent) agreed that "some measures should be taken to prevent Jews from getting too much power in the business world," while a further 10 percent said they were distinct, but "respected and useful" as long as "they don't try to mingle socially where they are not wanted." Ten percent of Americans thought Jews should be deported, though "humanely." A final 10 percent had no opinion. A majority, then, evidenced anti-Semitic attitudes at some level of intensity, though only a small minority favored the extreme position of deportation.

Were the people expressing anti-Semitic beliefs a distinctive subset or a random group of Americans? Table 2 describes the significant relationships (the full analysis is in the Appendix). There were a few consistent patterns. Women were clearly less anti-Semitic than men, less likely to blame the Jews for their persecution, and more likely to disapprove Nazi actions toward them. Differences between men and women were about 7 percent.[10] And supporters of Roosevelt were also significantly more likely to express pro-Jewish attitudes than were others after taking into account other characteristics of those interviewed. Roosevelt supporters were less likely to blame Jews for their own persecution, less likely to support Nazi action against Jews, and more likely

[10]Though probit coefficients cannot be directly translated into proportional differences like standard regression coefficients, we can estimate differences among salient groups assuming particular values on all other variables in the model (for a simple explanation, see Welch and Comer, 2001, and sources cited there). Almost no women say they approve of Nazi treatment of Jews compared to 7 percent of men.

to approve allowing Jewish refugees to enter the United States. Differences between Roosevelt's supporters and others were about 10 percent. Though U.S. immigration policy was not sympathetic to the plight of European Jews, Roosevelt himself had spoken out against their persecution. These differences among population groups were not large but are unlikely to be due to random chance.

Except for phone ownership, measures of socioeconomic status do not predict these attitudes. Those who owned phones were less likely to blame Jews for their own persecution and less likely to approve of Nazi treatment, though the latter was not significant. It is likely that, in the absence of a measure of education and income, the phone ownership variable is partly a surrogate for both. The third measure of social status used here, a professional occupation, had no relationship with either of the attitudes. Nor was age related to the attitudes.[11]

Regional differences did not meet our expectations. In three of the six items examined, northerners, not southerners, were less supportive of Jews. They were more likely to think that Jews brought on their own persecution, less likely to support bringing Jewish exiles into the United States, and in early 1938, more likely to support a campaign against Jews. In the other three items, northerners and southerners did not differ. In interpreting this finding, it is important to note that we have also controlled for those living in large cities in the states with the most Jews (California, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania). Thus, the northern and Pacific Coast samples are also disproportionately rural samples. Pacific Coast residents were more likely to say that Jewish persecution is their own fault and that they would support a campaign against Jews in early 1938. But, there were no differences from others on the question of Jewish immigration and the other items.

Table 2 also suggests that patterns of opinions about supporting a campaign against Jews in the United States are no more robust than attitudes about European Jews. Again, women, Roosevelt supporters, and those with phones were less anti-Semitic than others, though the relationships were not always statistically significant. By 1939, younger people were also less anti-Semitic. Just as in predicting attitudes toward European Jews, however, these relationships were small and overall the models did a poor job of predicting the attitudes.[12]

In sum, before the war, American public opinion toward the status of European Jews and toward Jewish Americans was tapped infrequently, was very inconsistent, and was weakly related to gender, support for Roosevelt, and some indicators of socioeconomic status. These contours of public opinion illustrate the opinion context within which Roosevelt, Congress, and the administration were working in the prewar years. Most Americans held some

[11]Though a dichotomous age variable was used in this equation, other formulations also showed null findings.

[12]The equations explain between 1 and 2 percent of the sample variance.

anti-Semitic views, largely focused on the beliefs that Jews should not have so much power in business and should not expect to mingle socially. Relatively few supported the Nazi campaign against Jews and even fewer approved of starting a campaign against Jews here. But most did not want to bring Jewish refugees to the United States.

Opinions Toward Jews During the War

By mid-1942, the United States was at war with Germany and Hitler was portrayed as the arch-villain in American propaganda (Rhodes, 1976). Nonetheless, nearly 15 percent of survey respondents thought it was a good idea for Hitler to take away the power of Jews in Germany, and another quarter were not sure or had no opinion, striking figures given the wartime context (Table 3). The context of "take away the power of Jews in Germany" is unclear. The wording of that item played on anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews having too much power. But the item did not mention that, in practice, taking away power meant removing all legal rights from Jews and deporting and murdering them. But by mid-1942, many reports of large-scale murders and violence against Jews in Germany, Poland, and Russia had appeared, even though news of the mass murders in death camps in Poland that began a few months earlier would not reach the United States more formally until later that year.[13]

In that same survey, pollsters asked whether Jews in the United States have too much power. Over one-half of those with opinions responded that they did. The moderately strong relationship (0.39) between support for Hitler's policies and the belief that American Jews have too much power supports the conclusion that basic attitudes about Jews were an important determinant of both attitudes. This correlation was similar to that that existed before the war between support for a campaign against Jews and a belief that Jews brought about their own persecution.

The "too much power" question was repeated in 1944 and 1945, with growing proportions answering in the affirmative, by March 1945 reaching two-thirds of all those with opinions, and over half of the entire sample

[13]The Nazis began shipping Jews to the death camp in Chelmno in December 1941; Belzac in March 1942; Sobibor in May 1942; and Treblinka in July 1942; Auschwitz was established in 1940 as a concentration camp and execution site but it became a death camp in February 1942. In August 1942, news began to reach the United States of these mass murders; in November 1942, the news was confirmed and published (cf. Snyder, 2011; Gilbert, 1985). The *American Jewish Yearbook*, published in 1942, documents murders of "tens of thousands" of Jews in Poland, for example, and reports deportations and terrorism. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1942_1943_5_YRForeign.pdf>. By 1943, its Polish section leads with a reference to the "most horrible campaign of mass extermination known to modern history," though it does not try to estimate numbers of deaths. <http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1943_1944_7_Europe.pdf>. It references several underground reports in 1942.

(Table 3).[14] A December 1944 question asking whether American Jews had too much power in the business world yielded similar results, with nearly two-thirds of those with opinions responding yes (NORC, December 1944).

Why would increasing proportions of Americans think that Jews had too much power in the United States? Roosevelt did appoint many Jewish Americans to high-level positions, and some of them gained increasing visibility as the war went on. Approximately 15 percent of FDR's appointments were Jewish at the time when Jews were about 3 percent of the population (Goodwin, 1994).[15] Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, himself Jewish, was quite active in developing proposals to try to save some of Europe's Jewish population, including creating a War Refuge Board in 1944, after most of Europe's Jewish population was dead.[16] The debate over refugees brought the issue of Jews to the public agenda and may have, in some people's minds, led to a belief that Jews were powerful, when, in fact, this issue illustrated just the reverse.

We examined patterns of wartime support and hostility to Jews, using most of the same predictors as in Table 2. Education, which had not been assessed in the prewar surveys examined here, began to appear in the surveys of the 1940s and became a key predictor of postwar studies of tolerance. Differences among the more and less educated were about 12 percent in 1942 and increased to 16 percent in 1945, foreshadowing postwar patterns in tolerance. The question about Roosevelt was not asked in these wartime surveys.[17]

Gender was the only other significant predictor of support for Hitler's policy. Women, as before the war, were more positive to Jews and less favorable to Hitler's policies. Living in a large city in a state with more Jews had no effect on attitudes about Hitler's policies, nor did education.

Women were more likely than men to say "no," that Jews do not have too much power, but only in 1944 were the differences significant. More education corresponded with a significantly higher likelihood of saying no in each of the surveys. Phone owners were more likely than those without

[14]By 1962, when this question was next asked, less than 20 percent said yes (Stember, 1966:121).

[15]Anti-Semites (including Hitler) called Roosevelt Rosenfeld and anti-Semite Americans referred to the "Jew Deal" (Gellman, 1995).

[16]Though the Board had limited powers, it is credited with saving 200,000 Jews during 1944 and 1945 by helping smuggle them out of occupied countries, buying visas, and providing other aid where possible.

[17]When we examined responses to the question about Hitler's policy of taking away power from the Jews, we constructed an index of knowledge, the only survey in which there were any knowledge items. The questions focused on knowledge of Nazi leaders. We anticipated that respondents with more knowledge would be more tolerant. The score on the scale had a moderately strong relationship ($r = 0.39$) with education. Counter to expectations, increasing knowledge in this particular domain led to more support for Hitler's policies against the Jews. It may be that those who had learned about the Gestapo were more likely to be sympathetic in general with Nazis. Addition of this variable did not affect the overall findings and is not included here.

phones to say "yes," and these differences were also significant every year. This was a change from prewar years where phone owners appeared somewhat more tolerant; however, in these analyses education is taken into account, so phone ownership does not reflect that. It may be that phone owners, probably those of higher incomes, felt more real or potential competition from Jewish businessmen. In both 1944 and 1945, those living in a large city in a state with more Jews were much less likely to say that Jews have too much power. Perhaps they were more likely to be able to assess first-hand the power that Jews did and did not have in 1940s America.

The influence of region again proved erratic. Northerners were more likely to say that Jews had too much power in 1942 but not in 1944 and 1945. Pacific Coast residents were less likely to say that Jews had too much power in 1945.

Conclusion

The 1930s and 1940s were crucial years in American history and modern world history. Popular attitudes during this time are of immense interest and value to history and social science. Yet until recently, social scientists have shied away from examining surveys done in this era because of the quota-controlled sampling done then. We have examined Americans' attitudes toward Jewish Americans and European Jews using seven newly weighted surveys (Berinsky and Schickler, 2011) from that era. Because of these improved methodologies, we can be reasonably confident that our findings reflect the attitudes of the overall population of the time.

Americans were divided in their opinions about both European and fellow American Jews from 1938, when the first questions were asked, through 1945. Most Americans were not inclined to support prewar U.S. campaigns against the Jews and large majorities were opposed to German actions against the Jews taken in 1938 after the widely publicized *Kristallnacht*. On the other hand, majorities opposed admitting more Jewish refugees to the United States in these prewar years. Media treatment of Nazi actions was not plentiful after *Kristallnacht*, but some news of deportations and brutality leaked out in 1941 and 1942. About 60 percent of Americans said they opposed Hitler's treatment of the Jews in 1942 and another 25 percent were unsure or had no opinion. During the war years, however, an increasing majority believed that Jews had too much power.

The late 1930s were the first era in the United States when survey data were available to assess public opinion. Though the unscientific reputation of the polls minimized their usage and serious exploration, a few historians have taken note, writing that public opinion confirmed widespread anti-Semitism (cf. Wyman, 1985:15) Our more thorough assessment of these data, reweighted to better reflect the population, do suggest that the balancing act of the Roosevelt administration reflected the main currents of public opinion.

There was a virulent strain of extreme anti-Semitism among a minority, and a belief that Jews were not like other Americans among many more, but in general the polls do not show a unified or constant view.[18]

Roosevelt's policies of speaking out against Hitler's atrocities, but yet doing nothing to facilitate more Jews to enter the United States as refugees, while responsive to public opinion led to failure to provide a safe haven for those thousands of Jewish refugees who might have fled before the war. We know that the American political system, with its checks and balances, makes it more difficult to initiate new policies than to maintain the status quo. Even strong majorities cannot always and immediately overcome the drag of the status quo, and in the prewar years, public opinion was not in favor of changing the status quo for refugees. Though Roosevelt supporters were more favorable to Jews and open to immigration than others, even among those, only a minority supported letting more Jewish exiles into the United States.

A few other differences in opinion among significant population groups were consistent, with women and the more educated displaying fewer anti-Semitic attitudes. There is also some evidence that during the war, wealthier Americans were more anti-Semitic, though the measure of wealth, phone ownership, is far from perfect. Regional differences were inconsistently related to opinions on Jews.

Both the virulent anti-Semitism and the more genteel variety call to mind American's attitudes toward black Americans at the time. Racial and ethnic stereotypes were prevalent; in some parts of the country, and at some times in many parts of the country, casual violence and even murder were considered legitimate. Most people seemed to take for granted that a person's intelligence, moral worth, and diligence could be assessed by such stereotypes. And while one might think that reports of mass murders of Jews in Europe might prompt serious reflection about those stereotypes, it was not until the postwar and, later, America's civil rights revolution that public opinion moved away from both anti-Semitic and anti-black intolerance. Our own war propaganda rallying Americans against the anti-Semitism and violations of basic human rights of the Nazi regime strengthened arguments for civil rights, which gained increased traction in the 1950s and culminated in the civil rights movement's legislative successes in the 1960s. In turn, Jewish leaders active in the fight against anti-Semitism played important roles in the national civil rights movement. Just as opinions toward black Americans shifted dramatically in the 1940s and 1950s (Hyman and Sheatsley, 1956, 1964), so too did opinions toward Jewish Americans. The belief that Jews had too much power, held by two-thirds in 1945, plummeted to only about a tenth by 1964 and, with some modest variations, continued to be a small minority opinion (Rosenfield, 1985). It was not the Holocaust that changed American's minds about Jews, but rather the events of the next two decades.

[18]The movie, *Gentleman's Agreement*, released in 1947, is a popular cultural portrayal of American anti-Semitism in the immediate postwar era.

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