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Has the West Been Won or Lost? Cohesion among Western Jews in Comparison to Jews Elsewhere

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Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference
San Diego, CA
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Today's presentation

- Research questions
- Data and sample
- Definitions of cohesion
- Data analysis
- Conclusions

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Research questions

- Are Jews in the Western United States less cohesive than Jews in other regions of the country?
- If yes, how can we account for their lower levels of cohesion?
- What do the findings suggest for future research?

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Data and sample

- National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01
- Respondents in this analysis meet one of these criteria:
  - their religion is Jewish; *or*
  - their religion is Jewish and another religion
  - they have no religion, have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing) and consider themselves Jewish
  - they practice a non-monotheistic religion, have a Jewish background (i.e., a Jewish parent or Jewish upbringing) and they consider themselves Jewish
  - in answer to question of Jewish denomination, they do not answer another monotheistic tradition
- Weight is applied that accounts for design and post-stratification factors
- Unweighted N = 4200; weighted N = 3493

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Defining cohesion

- Cohesion denotes the level of interaction among members of a social group.
- Cohesion is a variable: the higher the level of interaction among members of a social group, the higher the level of cohesion.
- Bases of interactions:
  - Social networks
  - Social contexts
  - Social structure

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Defining cohesion

- Operational definition – one point on scale for:
  - Married to another Jew
  - 1+ other adult Jews in household
  - Most/all of closest friends are Jewish
  - 1+ Jewish organizational memberships
  - Child(ren) in Jewish education program
- Original 5-point scale transformed to a 4-point scale by collapsing 5th (highest) point on scale into 4th point

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Distribution of cohesion in sample

Level of cohesion	Frequency (weighted N)	Percent
0	635	18.2
1	647	18.5
2	673	19.3
3	684	19.6
4	854	24.5
Total	3,493	100.0

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Factor analysis of components of cohesion scale

Factors	Loading
In-marriage/intermarriage	.76
Other adult Jew(s) in house	.67
Jewish organizational memberships	.68
Close friends who are Jewish	.69
Child(ren) in Jewish education program	.47

Variance explained = 43.5%

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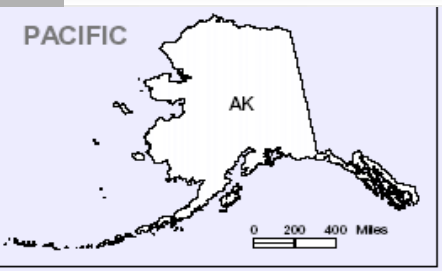
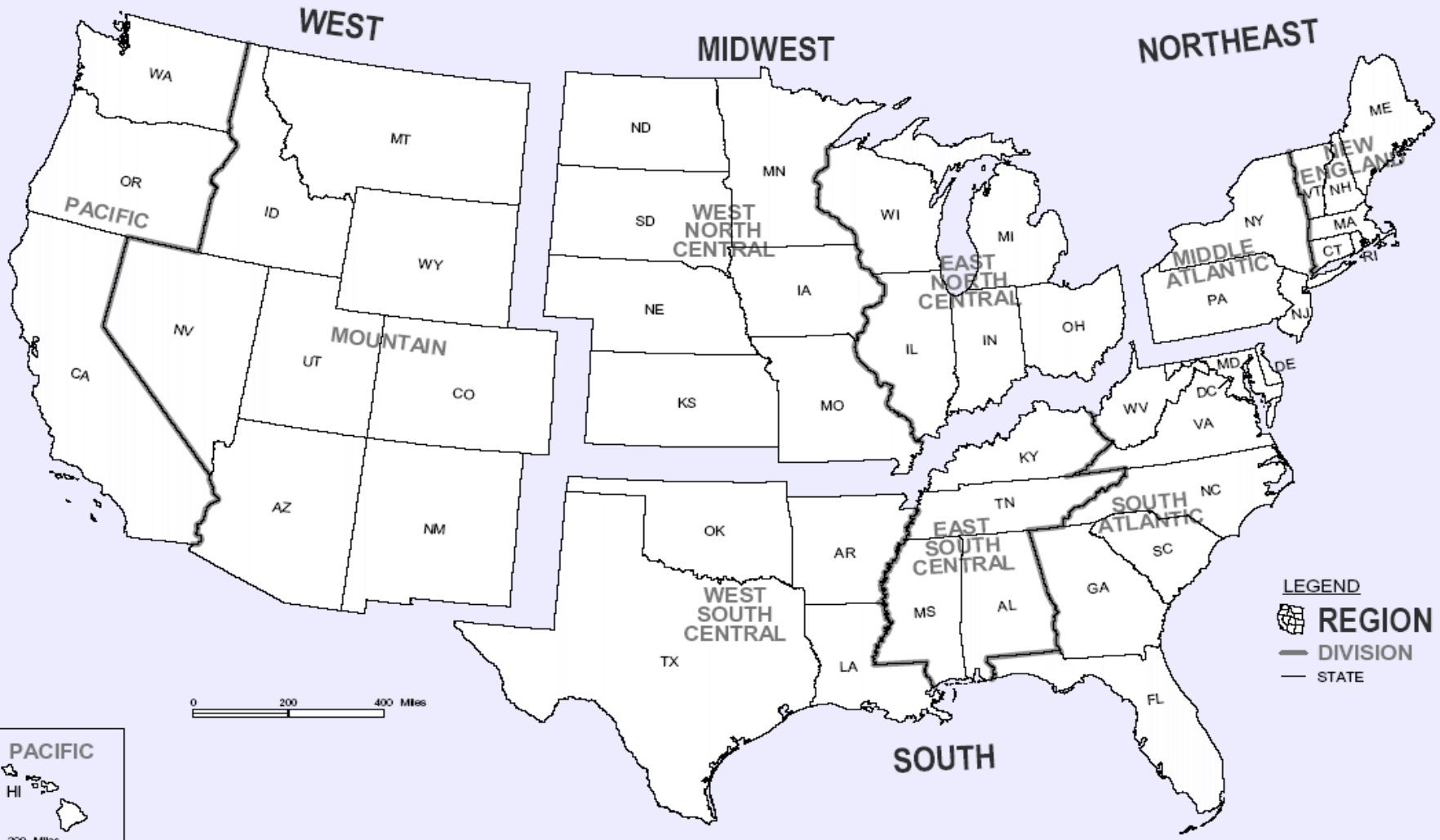
Census Regions and Divisions of the United States





U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration U.S. Census Bureau

Prepared by the Geography Division

Regional distribution of American Jews

Region	%
Northeast	43.7
Midwest	11.6
South	22.9
West	21.8
Total	100.0

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Crosstabulation: Cohesion by Region

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Total
Cohesion	%	%	%	%	%
0	14.1	18.1	19.4	25.1	18.2
1	17.5	17.6	16.4	23.4	18.5
2	19.8	19.6	18.9	18.6	19.3
3	22.6	17.8	17.9	16.2	19.6
4	26.1	27.0	27.4	16.2	24.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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Difference of means test

Region	Mean score on cohesion scale
Northeast	2.29 *
Midwest	2.18 *
South	2.17 *
West	1.76

* significantly different than West, p = .000

Northeast, Midwest and South are NOT significantly different from each other

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SUMMARY

Are Jews in the West less cohesive than Jews in other regions of the country?

- Yes – evidence clearly supports this claim
- The next question is: How can we account for lower levels of cohesion in the West?

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Regression Model 1 (baseline model)

Dependent variable: cohesion scale

Predictors	B		Beta
Northeast	.58	***	.20
Midwest	.38	***	.08
South	.53	***	.15
(Constant)	1.62	***	
R^2	.03		

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Regression Model 2

Predictors	B		Beta
Northeast	.46	***	.16
Midwest	.39	***	.09
South	.45	***	.13
Born Jewish parents	.67	***	.19
Raised Jewish	.78	***	.14
(Constant)	-2.52		
R^2	.09		

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Regression Model 3

Predictors	B		Beta
Northeast	.42	***	.14
Midwest	.36	***	.08
South	.45	***	.13
Born Jewish parents	.60	***	.17
Raised Jewish	.54	***	.10
Formal Jewish education	.10	***	.11
Informal Jewish education	.11	**	.06
(Constant)	-1.72		
R^2	.11		

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Regression Model 4

Predictors	B		Beta
Northeast	.37	***	.13
Midwest	.35	***	.08
South	.45	***	.13
Born Jewish parents	.56	***	.16
Raised Jewish	.45	***	.08
Formal Jewish ed.	.01		.02
Informal Jewish ed.	.04		.03
Orthodox	1.41	***	.28
Conservative	.82	***	.24
Reform	.48	***	.15
Reconstructionist	.64	**	.06
Other Jewish	.99	***	.09
(Constant)	-.29		
R^2	.18		

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Regression Model 5 (full model)

Predictors	B		Beta
Northeast	.32	***	.11
Midwest	.35	***	.08
South	.37	***	.11
Born Jewish parents	.35	***	.10
Raised Jewish	.40	***	.07
Formal Jewish ed.	.02		.03
Informal Jewish ed.	.09	*	.05
Orthodox	1.45	***	.29
Conservative	.68	***	.20
Reform	.38	***	.12
Reconstructionist	.58	***	.06
Other Jewish	1.03	***	.09
Age	.22	***	.20
Female	.13	*	.04
Education	-.02		-.02
Income	.27	***	.23
Top 40 metro	.08		.02
(Constant)	-1.19	***	
R^2	.25		

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Regression coefficients for regions
Models 1-5

Model	Northeast	Midwest	South
1	.58 ***	.38 ***	.53 ***
2	.46 ***	.39 ***	.46 ***
3	.42 ***	.36 ***	.45 ***
4	.37 ***	.35 ***	.45 ***
5	.32 ***	.35 ***	.37 ***

*** p = .00

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SUMMARY

Compositional effects partially account for lower levels of cohesion in the West. While there is some variation in region by region comparisons, generally Jews in West are less likely than Jews elsewhere:

- to have two born Jewish parents
- to have been raised Jewish
- to have received intensive Jewish education (2+/wk, day school)
- to have multiple informal Jewish educational experiences
- to identify with one of the religious movements

In addition, Jews in West tend to:

- have lower income
- be a little younger (especially compared to South)

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Interaction Effects

- Substituted West as dummy variable into regression models and made Northeast the reference category
- Ran interaction models between West, South and Midwest and all other predictors
- Two interaction effects emerged for the West that help explain lower levels of cohesion:
  - Born Jewish parents
  - Formal Jewish education

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Interaction model: born Jewish parents by region

Predictors [A]	B		Beta
West	.29		.09
Midwest	-.10		-.02
South	-.53		-.15
Born Jewish parents	.36	**	.10
x West	-.35	*	-.19
x Midwest	.07		.03
x South	.32		.17
(Constant)	-.90		
R^2	.25		

[A] Control variables: raised Jewish, formal Jewish education, informal Jewish education, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, other Jewish, age, female, education, income, top 40 metro.

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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Interaction model: formal Jewish education by region

Predictors [A]	B		Beta
West	-.65	***	-.19
Midwest	-.12		-.03
South	.19		.06
Formal Jewish education	.04		.04
x West	.11	*	.11
x Midwest	.05		.04
x South	-.05		-.05
(Constant)	-.96	***	
R^2	.25		

[A] Control variables: raised Jewish, formal Jewish education, informal Jewish education, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, other Jewish, age, female, education, income, top 40 metro.

*** p = .00 ** .00 < p ≤ .01 *** .01 < p _ .05

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SUMMARY

Interaction effects also help explain lower levels of cohesion in the West.

- Western Jews receive no boost in cohesion from having two born Jewish parents
- While the effect of formal Jewish education is stronger in West than elsewhere, it has the paradoxical effect of reducing overall cohesion levels in the West because Western Jews are more likely to have lower levels of formal Jewish education

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Conclusions

- Compositional and interaction effects partially explain why Jews in West are less cohesive than other Jews.
- Future research:
  - A residual effect of Western residence remains unaccounted for in statistical models.
  - Need to place these findings from NJPS 2000-01 in the context of change and continuity over time (past and future).
  - Are there important variations in cohesion across Western communities?

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