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What's the Matter with Palm Beach County?

Eric M. Uslaner
University of Maryland–College Park

Abstract: American Jews voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama in 2012 despite strong Republican efforts to win their votes. Republicans charged that Obama was not sufficiently supportive of Israel and that Mitt Romney was closer to Jewish opinions on this salient issue. Republicans miscalculated. For most American Jews, Israel was not a key voting issue. American Jews were also closer to Obama on Middle East issues than they were to Republicans. There was also a cultural chasm between American Jews and the Tea Party, reflective of long-standing tensions between Jews and evangelicals. Using surveys of the Jewish vote and the full electorate, I show that this cultural divide was more salient for Jews than for other white voters — and that there is at least preliminary evidence that this cultural divide may be important for other minority groups.

INTRODUCTION

"What's the matter with Kansas?" the journalist Thomas Frank (2004) asked. Kansans have a median income below the national average. While less affluent voters are more likely to be Democrats, Kansas is the fifth most *Republican* state in the United States.[1] Kansas is Republican because it is socially and religiously conservative. More than a third of Kansans identify as evangelical Protestants compared

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Eric M. Uslaner, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland–College Park, College Park, MD 20742. E-mail: euslaner@umd.edu

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with a quarter of all Americans. Only one state outside the South — West Virginia — has a higher share of evangelicals.[2]

Evangelicals are committed to Republicans — 78% voted for Mitt Romney in 2012.[3] Weisberg (2012, 217) dates Jewish loyalty to the Democratic Party to 1916 (with 1920 as an exception). Since 1928, at least 60% of American Jews have voted for the Democratic candidate for President in every election except 1980.[4] Upper middle-class Jews stay with the Democrats even as wealthier voters strongly support Republicans.[5]

The Democrats' Kansas is Palm Beach County, Florida, which gave 58% of its votes to Barack Obama in 2012.[6] A quarter of its residents are Jewish, compared to 2% for the country as a whole. Almost two-thirds of Palm Beach Jews are 65 or older (Luxner 2006) and older voters nationally gave Romney 56% of their votes. Palm Beach's Jewish population is affluent, with almost half responding to an exit poll claiming incomes of $75,000 or more.

Republicans made a concerted effort to win Jewish votes in 2012. They believed that Jews were ready to desert Obama because he was on the "wrong side" of an issue central to Jewish identity: support for Israel. The party was engaged in "an unprecedented political campaign … to pick off Jewish American voters in traditional Democratic strongholds" in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida (Mundy 2012). Jews constituted 8% of the electorate in Florida, a state that Republicans believed they must carry (Alvarez 2012). Because of its wealth and its large older population — presumed to be more strongly connected to Israel — Republicans saw "… Palm Beach County [as] ground zero for the Republican Jewish movement," according to Sol Dinerstein, head of the county's Republican Party (Alvarez 2012; Rudoren 2012). While Obama carried slightly more than half of the national vote (51%),[7] he won 69% of the Jewish vote in 2012, down slightly from the 74% he won in 2012 (Mellman, Strauss, and Wald 2012, 5).[8] And he won 74% of the Palm Beach County Jewish vote.

The Republican efforts to woo the Jewish votes in 2012 failed for reasons that are both specific to Jewish voting behavior and reflective of partisan conflict in American politics.

I shall show below that:

1. The Republicans miscalculated both the salience of Israel as a voting issue for American Jews as well as the positions on Middle East issues favored by Jews. Only 10% of American Jews had Israel as an important issue in their

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vote choice. Most American Jews favored positions on the Middle East conflict closer to those of Obama than the Republicans. Overall, positions on the Middle East conflict had small effects on Jewish voting behavior in 2012, mostly favoring the President. Jewish voters who saw Republican television ads attacking the President on the Middle East were about as likely to vote for the President as for Romney.

2. There is an issue that makes Jews distinctive: Negative attitudes toward the Tea Party, which is a proxy for the evaluations of evangelicals, which Uslaner and Lichbach (2009) showed were strongly related to support for the Democratic Party. Negativity toward the Tea Party is much stronger for Jews than for other groups in American society, more consequential for vote choice, and less related to the social conservatism of Tea Party/evangelicals than to the social distance between Jews and these groups (see below). Jews are distinctive in demanding a high wall between church and state (Wald 2015). The strong negativity toward the Tea Party (and evangelicals) had large effects on Jewish voting behavior and made it more difficult for Republicans to win the Jewish vote.
3. The standard predictors of vote choice for all voters work well for Jews — notably party identification, ideology, and the direction of the country (Sigelman 1991). However, Jews are more likely to be Democrats and liberals and to see the country as moving in the right direction than other voters — thus reinforcing their likelihood of voting Democratic.
4. In the more polarized era, voters are more likely to stick with their party, making it less likely that "campaigns matter." In 2012, neither party succeeded in getting support from opposition partisans (Jacobson 2015). Much of this polarization in the electorate can be traced to the increased salience of social and cultural issues — as well as what Abramowitz and Webster (2015, 5) call "negative partisanship." Party identifiers now see the opposition in negative terms, more than they perceive commonalities with their own partisans. Negative views of Christian fundamentalists and the Tea Party strengthened the Jewish identification with the Democratic identity. In the past, Jewish support for Democrats was based upon the perception that many Republicans were hostile to Jews (Breitman and Lichtman, 2013, 63, 77). The contemporary alienation from the Republican Party stems more from the perception of a low wall between the Church and the State that threatens Jewish identity as evangelicals press for a more "Christian" America. The handful of vote switchers from 2008 to 2012 seems mostly motivated by this cultural alienation (and the direction of the country). And campaign contributors largely stayed put from one election to the next. Obama lost a few contributors upset with the United Nations fairness on Israel, but they sat out the election rather than contributing to Romney. Overall, Obama kept slightly more of his 2008 contributors than Romney kept donors to McCain.

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I provide support for these arguments by analyzing 2012 surveys of American Jews and the wider electorate that lets me test how non-Jews reacted differently to the Tea Party.

THE REPUBLICAN EFFORT TO WOO THE JEWS

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was a long-time friend — and supporter — of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, so party leaders hoped that they could make inroads with the Jewish vote. The Republican Jewish Coalition raised $6.5 million to support the party's nominees and other groups such as the Emergency Committee for Israel launched a series of television ads criticizing Obama (Lake 2012). It sponsored an ad with a Jewish voter who had cast his ballot for Obama but would support Romney in 2012 because of conflicts with Netanyahu (Kessler 2012). These ads were targeted at states and regions with large Jewish populations, especially where the election was likely to be close, especially Palm Beach County and Florida more generally. Boosting the Republican cause was Sheldon Adelson, a Jewish casino magnate who donated up to $150 million of his personal fortune to Republican candidates in 2012, mostly through outside groups that were not directly connected to candidates. Most of the funds for the Republican Jewish Coalition came from Adelson (Stone 2012).

Yet, Republicans had to cope with a cultural gap with Jewish voters. The Republican Party base is increasingly dominated by white Christians while the Democratic base is largely composed of minorities — including Jews. Evangelical Christians' support for the Republican Party increased from 50% in 1982, to two-thirds in 1992, and to almost 80% by 2010. By 2012 half of all Republican primary and caucus voters were evangelicals.[9] White evangelicals cast almost 40% of all the votes for Romney.[10]

The close association of Republicans with Christian fundamentalists and the Tea Party, which have strong overlapping memberships (Cox 2013), sustains the strong identification of Jews with the Democratic party (Uslaner and Lichbach 2009; Wald 2015). Evangelical Christians and Tea Party supporters (at least half of whom are also evangelicals), support policies that promote Christianity as a favored religion (Wald 2015, 28; cf. Uslaner and Lichbach 2009). Many Americans, especially white evangelical Christians, equate being a Christian and a good American. They also believe that America is a Christian nation (Theiss-Morse 2009, 86; Jones and Cox 2010, 31). Fifty-seven percent

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of Republicans favored establishing Christianity as the national religion in one survey.

THE LONG-STANDING LOYALTY OF AMERICAN JEWS TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Jews voted Democratic, mostly for the same reasons other Americans cast their ballots for Obama: There were more Democrats than Republicans in the electorate, they were more optimistic about the state of the economy. They cared more about healthcare and were more supportive of Obama's healthcare policy. While Jews are more liberal than other voters, ideology played a minor role in their 2012 vote choice.

What mattered more than ideology was the cultural gap as reflected in negativity toward the Tea Party. While Tea Party supporters and evangelicals are strong supporters of Israel, most Jews are uncomfortable with close ties to both groups. They disagree with them on social issues and on the separation of church and state. In 2004 (Uslaner and Lichbach 2009), 2008,[11] and 2012 (see below), Jews gave evangelicals, "right-wing Christian Zionists," and the Tea Party mean thermometer ratings barely above 20 (on a 0–100 scale). These groups largely overlap (Abramowitz 2011; Jacobson 2011). In the 2004 election, Jews who viewed evangelicals negatively were 25% less likely to vote for George W. Bush rather than for John Kerry. Only one other factor loomed as large in Jewish voting behavior in that Presidential election: party identification (see Uslaner and Lichbach 2009). Opposition to the Tea Party played a similar role in 2012 for Jews. I move to a discussion of how Jews voted in 2012.

THE UNCHANGING JEWISH VOTER

I examine Jewish voting in 2012 through an election night exit poll by the firm Gerstein Bocain Agne for J Street, which calls itself "pro-peace pro-Israel" (www.jstreet.org). The survey was conducted on the Internet through invitation to participants by the firm Mountain West Research Center.[12] The data are weighted to ensure representativeness. The internet survey of 800 self-identified American Jews data was administered on the evening of November 6 (Election Day) with a margin of error of 3.5 percent.[13] The data were made available by Jim Gerstein, head of the firm. Ansolabehere and Schaffner (2014) show that internet polls can be

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as reliable as standard telephone surveys, especially since response rates for traditional polls have fallen.

The Gerstein poll shows that Obama won 70% of the Jewish vote, almost identical to the 69% reported in the national exit polls (see Table 1 for the source). I compare Jewish attitudes (using the Gerstein survey) with those of other whites in a national post-election survey of 3,617 voters, conducted November 5–8 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps (with a margin of error of 1.63%).[14] Jews are more likely to say that they are Democrats by 55 to 30%, liberals or progressives by 42 to 21%, and to approve of Obama by 68 to 41%. The mean thermometer score for the Tea Party is 24 for Jews and 45 for other whites; 37% of Jews rate the Tea Party at zero, compared to 18% for other whites.

I estimate a model of vote choice for Jewish voters in 2012. My model includes variables that are standard in vote choice studies: party identification, ideology, the direction of the country, education, income, and age (gender was consistently insignificant). The survey did not have questions on preferences by issue, only which issues were most important and whether voters saw one candidate would do a better job on a series of issues. These questions are all highly correlated with each other (with simple correlations ranging from 0.76 to 0.87) and with the Presidential vote itself (ranging from 0.75 to 0.84 for fighting imports and healthcare). So I can't use any of these measures as simple surrogates for issue positions. I use the measure of health as the first or second most important problem as a predictor of vote choice since it was a defining issue in Obama's first term. I also tested for the impact of other important problems, but none were significant.[15]

Following Uslaner and Lichbach's (2009) argument that attitudes toward evangelicals had powerful effects on vote choice of American Jews in 2004, I use the closest available proxy–attitudes toward the Tea Party. American Jews see evangelicals and Tea Party supporters as strongly linked: the correlation between feeling thermometers for the two groups among Jews is 0.718.[16] For the larger electorate, attitudes toward the Tea Party are strongly linked to economic and social conservatism (Jacobson 2011, 29, 31). For Jews, attitudes toward the Tea Party were largely independent of ideology — and instead reflected a sense of cultural difference from the Republican Party.

I include a battery of questions on Israel and religiosity. If the Republicans were to make inroads in the Jewish vote, then they should gain support from voters who oppose a Palestinian state, want the

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Table 1. Probit of presidential vote choice 2012 Jewish voters

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	MLE/SE	Effect
Party identification	–0.496****	0.052	–9.49	–0.569
Tea party thermometer	–0.021****	0.004	–6.06	–0.320
Ideology	0.156*	0.100	1.56	0.046
US in right direction	1.299****	0.201	–6.45	0.165
Favor Palestinian state	0.217**	0.111	1.94	0.066
Did Netanyahu help Obama/Romney	–0.227*	0.158	1.44	–0.044
Support US role in Israeli-Palestinian talks	0.060	0.113	0.53	0.017
Saw TV ads criticizing Obama on Israel	0.107	0.190	0.56	0.010
UN fair to Israel	0.231**	0.113	2.06	0.062
Israel most important problem	–0.114	0.289	–0.39	–0.011
Health most important problem	0.290*	0.203	1.43	0.028
How often attend services	0.020	0.094	0.21	0.008
Member synagogue	–0.056	0.233	–0.28	–0.005
Orthodox	–0.382*	.286	–1.33	–0.039
Education	0.070	0.083	0.85	0.034
Income	–0.145**	0.071	–2.04	–0.071
Age	0.006	0.006	0.93	0.031
Constant	5.647***	0.813		

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$; ****$p < 0.0001$ Estimated $R^2 = 0.851$; –2*Log Likelihood Ratio = 253.126; $N = 720$.
Percent predicted correctly: 93.3 (model); 70.0 (null).

United States not to take a role in Israeli-Palestinian talks (which might involve pressuring Israel to make concessions), believe that the United States is unfair to Israel, and especially who see Israel as one of the nation's two most important problems.

More religious Jews are conservative (Mellman, Strauss, and Wald, 2012, 25) and more likely to vote Republican. Although only a tiny share of American Jews, ultra-Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, voted overwhelmingly (in a few cases more than 90% in a precinct) for Romney.[17] For religiosity, I include the frequency of attending services, whether someone is a member of a synagogue, and self-identification as an Orthodox Jew.

I present the results in Table 1. Since vote choice is a dichotomous variable, I use probit to estimate the model. Probit coefficients have no ready interpretation (unlike regression coefficients). So I calculate the "effects," the changes in the probability of vote choice as one move from the minimum to the maximum values of each predictor (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). For age, I restrict the range of the effects to ages 18 to 75 so that values that apply to only a few individuals don't drive the

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estimates. The estimation in Table 1 is a conventional model of vote choice except for the measures of religiosity and attitudes toward the Middle East. Using multiple questions on Middle East policy does not lead to multi-collinearity: The strongest bivariate correlation between any of the measures is 0.2 and most are below 0.1. Nor is there evidence that attitudes on the Middle East shape voting behavior through party identification: collectively the six Middle East policy positions are a poor predictor of (instrument for) party identification.[18]

Party identification and the direction of the country are the first and third most important factors driving vote choice among Jews in 2012 (by the size of the "effects"). Strong Democrats are 57% more likely to back Obama than are strong Republicans: 92% of Democratic identifiers (and 98.4% of strong Democrats) voted for Obama and just 7% of Republicans (4% of strong Republicans) backed the President. People who thought the country was heading in the right direction were 17% more likely to support the President. Liberals and progressives were just 5% more likely to vote for Obama (and the coefficient is significant at $p < 0.10$ for a one-tailed test). This does not mean that liberalism is unimportant for Jews, but that ideology is dwarfed by other factors, notably party identification and Tea Party attitudes. Voters who thought that healthcare was the most important issue were 3% more likely to vote for the President. On these measures, Jewish voters don't seem distinctive, as Sigleman (1991) argued two decades ago.

Jews who had the most negative opinions about the Tea Party were 32% more likely to back Obama. Only 11% of Jewish Tea Party supporters and 5% of non-Jewish white supporters backed the President. Jews who backed Obama were *very strongly* opposed to the Tea Party, rating them on average just 14 on a 100 point thermometer. A third of all respondents rated the Tea Party at zero and 69% below the neutral point of 50. Republican Jews who voted for Romney only rated the Tea Party at an average of 54, and they constituted just 19% of the sample. The strong effects of the Tea Party thermometer, even controlling for ideology, suggest that this thermometer reflected an issue of cultural identity for Jews, and this made Jewish voting distinctive, as it was in 2004 (Uslaner and Lichbach 2009).

The more religious Jews were more comfortable with Romney. How often one attends services is not significant, nor is synagogue membership. However, the Orthodox Jews are more likely to vote for Romney, but the impact is only 4%. Neither education nor age is significant, but the wealthiest respondents were 7% more likely to vote for Romney

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than those with the least income (under $20,000 a year). Yet, even the wealthiest respondents — with income over $200,000 a year — voted more often for Obama than Romney (by 59 to 41%).

On the foreign policy questions, there is no evidence that sentiments on Israel or the Middle East more generally helped Romney. Voters who thought that Israel was the most important issue were no more likely to vote for Romney than the 90% of Jewish voters who did not put priority on Israel. Supporting an American role in peace talks didn't matter either. However, two measures of Middle East policy did reach statistical significance. Voters who opposed a Palestinian state and, who saw the United Nations as unfair to Israel were more likely to vote Republican. The effects were modest at 7 and 6%, respectively. Yet *Jewish voters favored the more dovish position on both questions.* Most Jewish voters (80.8%) favor a Palestinian state; even more (81.8%) want the United States to take an active role in peace talks, and over half said that the United Nations was fair to Israel (50.2%). See Table 2 for a summary.

The large sums spent on television ads had no effect. Forty-four percent of Jewish voters saw the ads and were no more likely to vote for one candidate over the other. Most respondents didn't see Netanyahu as favoring either candidate, but a small plurality thought the Israeli Prime Minister backed the Republican nominee (17.6% compared to 14.8%). The ads backfired precisely where Republicans hoped that they would do the most good, in Palm Beach County. Sixty three percent of Palm Beach residents saw the ads, but 63% also said that they made no difference. And by 27% to 11%, the ads made them more likely to vote for Obama rather than Romney.[19]

I used the sample from the probit model to estimate the likelihood that different ideological groups on Middle East issues would vote for the President. I report these percentages in Table 3. These are not effects. They represent the percent voting for Obama for various combinations of positions on the Middle East based upon the samples used in the probit in Table 1. The first entry in the table represents the most hawkish respondents: saying that Israel is the first or second most important problem, seeing the United Nations as unfair to Israel, opposing both a Palestinian state and an American role in negotiations. Only a quarter of voters with this ideological profile cast ballots for the President. Over three-quarters of voters with the opposite, dovish profile voted for Obama. But this group of voters comprised a tiny share of the sample, barely more than one percent (eight voters in total). Three-quarters of

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Table 2. Jewish voters' attitudes on key variables

Variable			
Did Netanyahu help Obama/Romney	14.8 Obama		17.6 Romney
Support US role in Israeli-Palestinian talks	81.7		
Support Palestinian State	80.8		
Saw TV ads criticizing Obama on Israel	43.9		
UN fair to Israel	50.2		
Israel most important problem	10.0		
Health most important problem	32.5		
How often attend services	33.5	Weekly/ Monthly	51.0 Hardly ever / Never
Member synagogue	41.5		
Orthodox	9.3		

the voters with the opposite profile (most dovish) reported voting for the President.

Perhaps this is too stringent, since only 10% of all respondents cited Israel as the most important or second most important problem. So I re-estimated the hawkish and dovish groups without the Israel important question. Almost 30% of the hawkish group voted for Obama, but they are still a small share of all respondents (4%). The dovish group cast

Table 3. Probabilities of voting for Obama/Romney by attitudes toward Israel

Attitudes	Obama vote share	Number of cases*
Israel first or second most important problem, oppose Palestinian state, see the UN as unfair to Israel, oppose US role in Israeli-Palestinian peace process	25.0	8
Israel not most important problem, favor Palestinian state, see the UN as fair to Israel, favor US role in Israeli-Palestinian peace process	75.9	249
Oppose Palestinian state, see the UN as unfair to Israel, oppose US role in Israeli-Palestinian peace process	29.1	32
Favor Palestinian state, see the UN as fair to Israel, favor US role in Israeli-Palestinian peace process	73.9	268
Believe that Netanyahu favored Obama	80.4	112
Believe that Netanyahu favored Romney	53.0	132
Saw ads attacking Obama on Israel	63.6	330
Didn't see ads attacking Obama on Israel	64.6	390

* Base is 720, from the probit in Table 2. The cell entries are frequencies from the data, not estimated probabilities from the probit.

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74% of their ballots for Obama and they are 37% of the sample used in the probit. *The Republicans' problem was that there weren't enough Jewish hawks to provide Romney with much support.*

While 80% of respondents who believed that Netanyahu favored Obama voted for the President, only 53% who thought that the Israeli Prime Minister backed Romney supported Obama. This may seem like a substantial gap, but there is no evidence that such views were shaped by the television ads. Romney didn't do much better among voters who saw the ads attacking Obama on Israel than he did from the slightly larger group that didn't see the ads. His advantage was just a single percentage point. As Lazarsfeld and his colleagues anticipated, perceptions of whom Romney favored reflected pre-existing biases. By 22% to 10%, Democratic identifiers believed that Netanyahu favored Obama; by 26% to 10%, Republicans were convinced that the Israeli Prime Minister backed Romney. Republicans who saw the ads believed that Netanyahu favored Romney by 29–16%, but Republican identifiers who did *not* see the ads believed that Netanyahu supported their nominee by 22 to 4%. Even more counter-intuitive are the results for Democrats, who thought their candidate was favored by 14–11% if they did not see the ads, but by 30–18% if they *did see the commercials.*

The estimation of the model only includes respondents for whom there is no missing data on any of the variables. This sample *underestimates* support for the President; only 64% of respondents in this estimation voted for Obama. So whatever positive effects there are for Romney on these measures may be too large.

Overall the model performs very well. The estimated McKelvey-Zavoina R^2 is 0.852 and the model correctly predicts 93% of vote choices.[20] There is considerable support for my claim that the 2012 election for Jews did not represent a reaction against Obama's Middle East policies. Instead, it was a reaffirmation of the traditional ties to the Democratic Party and a rejection of the economic and especially cultural conservatism of the Republican Party. Jews voted like other Americans, but more so.

The Republican failure to make inroads in the Jewish vote is part of the larger story of how cultural issues and identity have become more important determinants of vote choice (Highton 2013). Sides and Vavreck (2013, 191) show that 35 demographic groups, including Jews, gave Obama virtually the same percentage of their vote in 2012 as they did in 2008. The statewide Presidential vote shares in 2012 were also almost exact replicas of what they were four years earlier ($r^2 = 0.967$).[21]

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When voters are so polarized and their electoral habits so stable, they are unlikely to respond to issue appeals made by candidates of the "outgroup" party. Partisan consistency becomes the norm, and the campaign itself seems to matter little. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944, 74) wrote almost 70 years ago of the "minimal effects" of campaigns: "What the political campaign did … was not to form new opinions but to raise old opinions over the thresholds of awareness and decision." Seven decades later Sides and Vavreck (2013, 224) argued that the 2012 campaign (both on issues and resources) made "a fundamentals-based prediction come true." The 2012 election was one of stable coalitions and continued Jewish loyalty to the Democratic Party.

JEWS AND DEMOCRATS: THE ENDURING TIES

Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between vote choices for President and for the House of Representatives: 91% of Jewish voters were consistent in their party choice for the two offices, mostly for Democratic candidates (60%). Ninety two percent of Jews and non-Jewish whites voted for the same Presidential party in 2012 as in 2008, as reflected in self-reports (in the J Street and ANES surveys, respectively). Even as Republicans swept the country in 2010, picking up 63 House seats, Jews stood loyal to the Democratic Party, giving it 66% of their vote (Gerstein 2012, 2). The full electorate gave Democratic House candidates only 48% of the vote.[22]

We see a similar story analyzing vote change from 2008 to 2012. With just 59 (self-identified) switchers, analyzing vote change among Jews is imprecise. Recognizing the hazards involved, I present some data on the roots of switching in Table 4. The story is straight forward: Only two of the measures I used in the model in Table 1 reach statistical significance: Jewish voters who shifted to Romney were more negative on the direction of the country and more positively disposed to the Tea Party. None of the issues relating to Israel or the Middle East even approached significance, nor did the importance of the healthcare issue. Obama lost some support among Jewish voters who saw the country on the wrong track. This is consistent with the cross-sectional results of the exit polls (see note 3 for the source) showing that 84% of respondents who saw the country moving in the wrong direction voted for Romney and that 93% believing that the country was going in the right direction supported the President.

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Table 4. Vote change from 2012 by attitudes

Variable	Romney Shifters	Obama Shifters	*N*
Direction of US	22.0	56.3	59*
Tea Party thermometer	40.2	16.0	52*
Favor Palestinian state	70.5	86.4	52
Favor US role in talks	82.8	85.0	59
UN treats Israel fairly	56.7	51.7	59
Saw anti-Obama Israel ads	51.3	50.3	52
Health 1st or 2nd most important	20.0	30.2	59
Israel 1st or 2nd most important	11.5	19.9	59

$p < 0.01$.

Neither party's candidates lost many supporters: 52% of the switchers were Independents, compared to 27% of the full sample. Two-thirds of Jewish voters defecting to Romney were either Independents or Republicans. Despite all of the efforts of Republicans and outside groups to persuade Jewish voters that Obama was not a supporter of Israel, there is little evidence that even the small number of switchers were motivated by Middle East policy. Voters who said that Israel was one of the two most important problems were *more likely to shift to Obama*.

If the Republicans did not succeed in converting many Jewish voters, they seemed — from initial reports — to do better in raising money. The Gerstein/J Street survey asked respondents if they had contributed to either candidate in 2012. I present a simple ordered probit model of contributions in 2012 in Table 5. I use ordered probit since the dependent variable is a trichotomy (contributed to Obama, not at all, or to Romney). For an ordered probit (contributed to Obama / neither candidate / Romney), effects are not so readily estimated. Most respondents (89%) were consistent in their contributions, with 70.6% not giving in either year. Only five of Obama's 2008 contributors (0.6% of the full sample) gave to Romney in 2012; only four of McCain's givers (0.5%) gave to the President in 2012.

The best predictor of donations in 2012 is donations in 2008. Party identification also shapes contributions. Almost no one identifying with a party gave money to the other party's candidate. Independents were almost equally divided, with a slight edge to giving to Romney. Most issues had slight effects on contributions. Respondents who felt that the economy was the most important problem in the campaign were more likely to give to Romney, as were voters who said that the United

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Table 5. Contributions to presidential campaigns in 2012: ordered probit

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	MLE/SE
Contribution 2008	1.686****	0.118	14.32
Party identification	0.251****	0.036	6.97
Ideology	0.031	0.061	0.51
Favor Palestinian state	0.034	0.068	0.50
Did Netanyahu help Obama/Romney	0.098	0.093	1.06
UN fair to Israel	0.144**	0.059	2.43
Israel most important problem	0.105	0.182	0.58
Economy most important problem	0.221**	0.110	2.02
Income	–0.057*	0.039	–1.49
Sheldon Adelson thermometer†	–0.0001	0.003	–0.06
Cut point 1	2.945****	0.504	
Cut point 2	6.015****	0.579	

*$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$ ****$p < 0.0001$.
Estimated $R^2 = 0.398$; –2*Log Likelihood Ratio = 668.788; $N = 783$.
† Only asked of half the sample ($N = 353$). All other coefficients for the full sample.

Nations is unfair to Israel. But in each case, Romney did not gain many new donors. For each measure, the likelihood of contributing to Romney increased by 2 to 3%. Wealthy donors were more likely to give to Obama (by 5%), not Romney.[23] Most issues, especially on the Middle East, did not shape political giving among American Jews in 2012.

Romney did not gain a lot of contributors from his attacks on Obama's position on the Middle East. Jewish voters who believe that the United Nations is unfair to Israel are significantly less likely to contribute to Obama, but not to give to Romney (see Table 6). Jewish voters who are upset with the United Nations treatment of Israel seem to have stood on the sidelines in terms of contributions in 2012.[24] Nor was there a rush to emulate Sheldon Adelson. The survey included a feeling thermometer measure for Adelson asked of half the sample. I re-estimated the model in Table 5 including the Adelson thermometer and it was far from significant. Despite the widely publicized big money donations from Adelson, the contributions of pro-Israel political action committees that give directly to candidates still favored Democrats in 2012, and by similar percentages compared to previous years. Most Jewish money (64%) continued to flow to Democrats.[25]

Cultural identity (the Tea Party thermometer) did not shape contributions directly because party identification matters more for giving money than for simple vote choice and there is a strong relationship between partisanship and Tea Party evaluations.

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Table 6. Campaign Contributions and Attitudes toward the UN and Israel

	Attitudes toward the UN and Israel				
Contribute to	**Very fair**	**Somewhat Fair**	**Somewhat Unfair**	**Not at all fair**	***N***
Obama	45.92	16.50	15.25	7.95	143
No contributions	45.92	75.58	80.27	82.39	598
Romney	8.16	7.92	4.48	9.66	59
N	98	303	223	176	800

Correlation = 0.166.

Jewish voters did not defect to the Republicans on the issue of Israel because it was not the most salient voting issue and because most Jews stood closer to Obama's position than to Romney on this issue. Even when Jews did switch parties — in 1980 where only 44% backed Jimmy Carter for re-election — it was a short-term defection. But the persistent loyalty to the Democrats, even in 2010, suggests that the cultural divide is real.

One way of testing this is to compare the partial correlation of vote choice with both ideology and the Tea Party thermometer. If Tea Party support has a powerful effect on vote choice controlling for ideology, then the negative attitudes toward this new group are not simple reflections of its conservative issue positions. If attitudes toward the Tea Party mostly reflected the group's positions on economic and social issues, the correlation between the Tea Party thermometer and vote choice should be sharply reduced if we control for ideology.

In the J Street survey, the partial correlations of vote choice with the Tea Party thermometer and ideology are −0.519 and 0.285 ($N = 733$). Evaluations of the Tea Party matter more for Jewish voters than does ideology. *For non-Jewish whites, the partial correlations are closer to being equal* at −0.374 and 0.212 ($N = 609$) in the Democracy Corps survey. For Jews, attitudes toward the Tea Party are not reducible to ideology: the simple correlation between ideology and Tea Party favorability is −0.34 for Jews, but it is −0.62 for non-Jewish whites.

I estimated a model of vote change among non-Jewish whites, using party identification, ideology, the Tea Party thermometer, education, and identification as an evangelical as predictors for the 94 vote switchers (as they reported) using the Democracy Corps survey. By far the strongest predictor is ideology, with an effect of 0.49, compared to 0.29 for the Tea

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Party thermometer, and 0.25 for party identification. The partial correlations with vote change are −0.252 for the Tea Party thermometer and 0.391 for ideology; and the simple correlations are −0.290 and 0.414 ($N = 94$). For non-Jewish whites, vote change was driven by ideology. For Jews, it was driven by attitudes to the Tea Party, which seems to reflect something more than just issue positions.

The cultural conflict between Republicans and other groups in the Democratic coalition are not as clearly defined, at least in terms of Tea Party evaluations. The Democracy Corps survey shows that a similar, if weaker, pattern holds for Hispanics and African-Americans. For Hispanics, the partial correlations with vote choice are −0.464 (Tea Party thermometer) and 0.207 (ideology, $N = 107$); for African-Americans the partials are −0.359 and 0.041, respectively. There seems to be a culture gap for blacks, who have a mean Tea Party thermometer of 23, about the same as for Jews. Hispanics are more positive to the Tea Party: the mean thermometer score is 39 (which doesn't change if I exclude evangelicals). The alienation of Hispanics from the Republican Party may not be based upon cultural gaps as it is for Jews, and seemingly for African-Americans. These higher partial correlations between Tea Party evaluations and vote choice controlling for ideology indicate that feelings toward the Tea Party are more than simple conservatism for Jews and African-Americans–and to a lesser extent for Hispanics.

The mean Tea Party thermometer score among Jewish conservatives voting for Romney was 55.8, compared to 69.4 for non-Jewish whites and 71.7 for Hispanics. Jewish conservatives voting for Obama had a mean Tea Party score of 18.2, compared to 31.0 for non-Jewish whites and 41.1 for Hispanics. The correlations between Tea Party sympathy and Presidential vote *among conservatives* are −0.569 for Jews and −0.583 for Hispanics, but just −0.382 for non-Jewish whites. For these minorities, there is something beyond simple ideology that is shaping vote choice. Cultural differences seem to be the most plausible explanation. These are weak tests for a cultural gap, but together with other results for Jews (Uslaner and Lichbach 2009; Wald 2010), it may be persuasive at least for Jews, and the results are suggestive for at least one other minority.

The attempt to frame the election as a referendum on Israel for American Jews failed because there are deeper conflicts between Jews and Republicans than the Middle East conflict. A clash of cultures goes beyond any particular issue, so even if Republicans were closer to Jews on Middle East issues, it would likely be difficult to switch many votes.

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Yet, support for Israel has traditionally been bipartisan. Prominent Jewish politicians and rabbis joined to fight the attacks on the President. Netanyahu himself realized that his closeness with Romney could be seen as interference in American politics, especially as some Israeli politicians argued that Obama had been a strong friend of the Jewish state (Alvarez 2012). The larger cultural gap between Republicans and Jews, which long predates the rise of the Tea Party, may have reduced any credibility the party had on Israel. Many Jews seemed to see the attacks as emanating from a party dominated by supporters who had world views opposed to their own.

In places such as Palm Beach, older Jews have voted Democratic for more than 40 years: Kennedy (1960) and Humphrey (1968) each won about 80% of Jewish vote (see note 4). Old habits die hard, especially when the opposition seems threatening. Ironically, the strong support for Israel from evangelicals and Tea Party supporters matters less than the perceived cultural threat. Identity politics is no less critical to Palm Beach County Democrats than it is to Kansas Republicans. The Republicans spent a lot of money in losing the election in 2012, among all voters and Jews.[26] As John Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote in another context, "money can't buy me love."[27]

NOTES

1. See http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/statemedian, and http://www.gallup.com/poll/156437/heavily-democratic-states-concentrated-east.aspx.
2. See http://www.beliefnet.com/politics/religiousaffiliation.html.
3. http://www.foxnews.com/politics/elections/2012-exit-poll/US/President.
4. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/jewvote.html. In 1920, a strong majority (67%) voted Republican. In 1924, 44% of Jewish voters cast ballots for the Republican, but a strong majority (56%) voted either Democratic or Socialist (Weisberg 2012).
5. Fifty eight percent of all voters with incomes above $100,000 and 56% with incomes between $50,000 and $100,000 voted Republican in 2014 compared to 48% with incomes between $30,000 and 40% with incomes less than $30,000. See http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/04/us/politics/2014-exit-polls.html.
6. http://www.results.enr.clarityelections.com/FL/Palm_Beach/43850/112842/en/summary.html. The comparisons of voting behavior in 2012 come from national exit polls (see note 3) and national and Florida surveys of the Jewish vote by Gerstein, Bocian, and Agne and data for Palm Beach County provided by Jim Gerstein.
7. http://www.uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=2012&f=0&off=0&elect=0.
8. Their analysis is based upon national and state data (weighted and merged) so it is more comprehensive than the national exit poll that reported 78% of Jews voting for Obama (see http://www.njdc.org/site/page/jewish_vote_for_obama_exceeds_all_expectations.
9. http://www.cbsnews.com/news/white-evangelicals-are-half-of-gop-primary-voters.
10. Seventy-nine percent of evangelicals voted for Romney, according to the Pew Center for The People and the Press, and they constitute 23% of the electorate. Romney, according to Pew, received 48% of the national vote, so white evangelicals contributed 38% of the Romney vote. See http://www.pewforum.org/2012/11/07/how-the-faithful-voted-2012-preliminary-exit-poll-analysis.

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11. See http://www.jstreet.org/blog/post/july-2008-survey-results_1.
12. http://www.s3.amazonaws.com/s3.jstreet.org/images/Election-Night-Press-Release.pdf.
13. For details, see http://www.s3.amazonaws.com/s3.jstreet.org, http://www.images/2012_election_survey_findings.pdf. The surveys of 800 pre-screened respondents (and 600 each in extra surveys of Ohio and Florida, upon which the Palm Beach County estimates are based) were asked "at the beginning of the survey for their religion and then, if they did not identify themselves as Jewish by religion, they were asked again if they considered themselves Jewish." See the link for more details of the methodology.
14. The data are weighted to reflect the National Exit Survey.
15. The other issues were education, the economy, health, Social Security and Medicare, taxes, abortion, the deficit, and terrorism.
16. This result comes from the Jewish Values Survey of the Public Religion Research Institute and were, provided by Daniel Cox of PRRI.
17. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/11/24/nyregion/the-city-vote-precinct-by-precinct.html.
18. The R^3 is 0.08.
19. The data on Palm Beach County were graciously provided by Jim Gerstein.
20. I estimated another model that excluded all insignificant variables and found no appreciable change in the effects reported in Table 2. I used sample weights in the estimation.
21. See calculations by Alan Abramowitz at http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/12-from-12-some-takeaways-from-a-wild-election.
22. The 2010 Time Series American National Election Study (pre-election) and wave two of the American National Election Study Evaluation of Government Survey both give this figure.
23. These estimates were derived using Stata's margins command (in Stata 12).
24. The same pattern holds for seeing the economy as the most important problem.
25. See http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/totals.php?cycle=2012&ind=Q05.
26. And, of course, the Democrats spent a lot as well, but they won.
27. http://www.lyrics007.com/The%20Beatles%20Lyrics/Can't%20Buy%20Me%20Love%20Lyrics.html.

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