

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

**ScholarWorks@UARK**

---

Education Reform Faculty and Graduate  
Students Publications

Education Reform

---

11-1-2015

## The Effect of Public and Private Schooling on Anti-Semitism

Jay P. Greene

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, jpg@uark.edu*

Cari A. Bogulski

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Other Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

---

### Citation

Greene, J. P., & Bogulski, C. A. (2015). The Effect of Public and Private Schooling on Anti-Semitism. *Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications*. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub/40>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education Reform at ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

The Department of  
Education Reform

## WORKING PAPER SERIES

The Effect of Public and Private Schooling on Anti-Semitism

Jay P. Greene & Cari A. Bogulski

November 2015

EDRE Working Paper 2015-10

The University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform (EDRE) working paper series is intended to widely disseminate and make easily accessible the results of EDRE faculty and students' latest findings. The Working Papers in this series have not undergone peer review or been edited by the University of Arkansas. The working papers are widely available, to encourage discussion and input from the research community before publication in a formal, peer reviewed journal. Unless otherwise indicated, working papers can be cited without permission of the author so long as the source is clearly referred to as an EDRE working paper.

# The Effect of Public and Private Schooling on Anti-Semitism

**BY JAY P. GREENE  
AND CARI A. BOGULSKI**

November 2015



A M E R I C A N   E N T E R P R I S E   I N S T I T U T E

## Executive Summary

Most major American Jewish organizations oppose voucher and other school choice programs based in part on the fear that private, mostly religious, schools do not check the development of anti-Semitism as well as government-operated public schools do. To examine whether private and public schools differ in their effect on the emergence of anti-Semitic attitudes in adults later in life, we conducted a large survey of a nationally representative sample of adults in the United States. Subjects were asked to provide details on the type of school they attended each year between 1st and 12th grade, including whether the school was public or private, religious or secular, and whether it was affiliated with a particular religious institution. We also adapted a series of measures used by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to gauge people's anti-Semitism.

We find that the more people attended private school when they were younger, the more favorable their attitudes toward Jews. This finding holds even after controlling for a variety of background characteristics, including age, gender, race, childhood family religion, childhood economic circumstances, mother and father's education, being raised by two parents, and being born in the United States. The reduction in anti-Semitism associated with private schooling is roughly as large as that produced by having parents who are college educated rather than high school dropouts.

The benefit of attending private school on reducing anti-Semitism is concentrated among religiously affiliated private schools. Secular private schools are similar to secular public schools in the level of anti-Semitism among their former students. We therefore have some reason to believe that religious, mostly Christian, institutions are playing an important role in restraining anti-Semitism.

The overall picture on American anti-Semitism is more worrisome than earlier research by the ADL suggests. The ADL measure of anti-Semitism asks respondents to agree or disagree with a series of 11 anti-Semitic statements. But the ADL survey failed to offer subjects neutral response options, like don't know or no opinion. In our study, we added those options and discovered that between one-third and one-half of the subjects switched to a neutral answer. A large portion of people who the ADL would have coded as not anti-Semitic are in fact ignorant or indifferent when confronted with anti-Semitic stereotypes. Although the level of anti-Semitism uncovered in our survey remains relatively low, the situation is more concerning than earlier research would lead us to believe.

If we wish to reduce anti-Semitism, major Jewish organizations may wish to reconsider their historic opposition to vouchers and other private school choice programs. Rather than posing a threat, private, especially religious, schools appear to help restrict the development of anti-Semitism.

## The Effect of Public and Private Schooling on Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism has been on the rise in recent years. According to the Kantor Center at Tel Aviv University, anti-Semitic violent acts worldwide increased by 38 percent in 2014 compared to the previous year.<sup>1</sup> The Kantor Center report drew this gloomy conclusion:

The overall feeling among vast parts of the Jewish population is one of living in an intensifying anti-Jewish environment that has become not only insulting and threatening, but outright dangerous. Comparisons to the 1930s are rampant, because of the prevailing feeling among Jews, especially in Europe, that there are no more taboos and restrictions when it comes to antisemitic manifestations directed against Jews, and certainly no proportion between the unfolding events and the actual number of Jews in their respective communities and their real impact on the societies they live in; or between the intensive debate on Israel's role in the Middle East and the lack of such a debate when it comes to other Middle Eastern conflicts. Therefore Jews feel that they are facing an explosion of hatred towards them as individuals, their communities, and Israel, as a Jewish state.<sup>2</sup>

While the problem is especially severe in parts of Europe, even in the United States we are witnessing a growing threat from anti-Semitism. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), anti-Semitic incidents in the United States increased 21 percent in 2014 relative to 2013, reaching their highest level in nearly a decade.<sup>3</sup>

Efforts to counter anti-Semitism tend to focus on education. If people are taught to hate, then limiting or eliminating that hateful instruction should reduce anti-Semitism. Many Jewish organizations believe that government-operated public schools can be relied on not to promote anti-Semitism, while private schools are less motivated to restrain anti-Semitism. As a result,

organizations including the ADL, American Jewish Congress, Union for Reform Judaism, and the United Synagogues of Conservative Judaism have all taken public positions opposing vouchers and other programs that would provide financial support to students choosing private schools.<sup>4</sup> These organizations sometimes advance constitutional and other arguments for their position, but the fear that private schools are spreading hate is always in the background.

Sometimes the conviction that public education promotes tolerance while private schooling leads to divisiveness is more explicitly articulated. For example, the Union for Reform Judaism declared: "American public schools are a significant unifying factor among the diverse range of ethnic and religious communities in our society. Vouchers would undermine this vital function."<sup>5</sup> The ADL similarly opined: "The glory of the American system of public education is that it is for all children, regardless of their religion, their academic talents or their ability to pay a fee. This policy of inclusiveness has made public schools the backbone of American democracy."<sup>6</sup>

The belief that government-controlled public schools promote tolerance while private schools are less interested in this civic goal is an empirical claim that has received relatively little systematic examination. It is, to put it bluntly, simply a prejudice against private schools to believe without any evidence that they undermine democratic virtue. The limited research that does exist suggests that private schooling actually promotes tolerance and other civic values better than public schooling.<sup>7</sup> No previous research, however, has directly examined whether attending a public or private school as a child might alter people's attitudes toward Jews when they become adults.

This report sheds new light on this issue by using a large, nationally representative survey of adults in the United States to see how childhood schooling is

related to adult anti-Semitism. It finds that even after controlling for a variety of background characteristics, people who attended private schools developed more positive attitudes toward Jews than those who attended public schools. Government operation of public schools appears to provide no special protection against the spread of anti-Semitic attitudes. To the contrary, attending private, mostly Christian, schools is associated with higher levels of tolerance in general and for Jews in particular.

### Data and Research Design

The results presented in this report are drawn from the Understanding America Study (UAS), which is administered by the Center for Economic and Social Research at the University of Southern California.<sup>8</sup> The UAS is a new household panel recruited by the University of Southern California (USC), comprising a nationally representative sample of Americans 18 years and older. UAS respondents complete up to 30-minute surveys in waves that occur once or twice each month. Respondents receive compensation for their time spent answering questions at a rate of \$20 per 30 minutes of interview time.

In partnership with researchers at the University of Arkansas, the UAS surveyed a nationally representative sample of more than 1,300 adults in the United States. The survey collected information on the type and location of schools people had attended when they were younger. It also adapted measures from the ADL Global 100 survey of global anti-Semitism to gauge attitudes toward Jews in the United States.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the survey contained a variety of questions regarding people's childhood and other background characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

The primary mechanism by which the ADL Global 100 measures anti-Semitism is by asking people whether each of a series of 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes is probably true or probably false. For example, people are asked whether it is probably true or probably false that "Jews have too much control over the United States government" or "Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars." The UAS survey also asked people about these same 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes, but rather than forcing people to agree or disagree, the

UAS survey allowed five responses: completely agree, mostly agree, don't know, mostly disagree, and completely disagree. The ADL Global 100 survey also asked respondents whether they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Jews and variety of other groups. The UAS survey similarly asked about people's favorability toward Jews and other groups, but again provided five options for responses rather than the two options in the ADL Global 100.

---

*Government operation of public schools appears to provide no special protection against the spread of anti-Semitic attitudes.*

---

The small number of respondents in the UAS survey who identified as Jewish (about 1 percent of the sample) were not asked about the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes to avoid upsetting them, but all subjects were asked about their favorability toward Jews and other groups. In addition, all results presented in this report are limited to adults who received a significant portion of their K–12 education in the United States. Subjects who were not in US schools by seventh grade were excluded (about 5 percent of the sample). Last, to facilitate the comparison of public and private schools, subjects who were homeschooled were also not included in these analyses (about 3 percent of the sample).

This report provides unadjusted and adjusted results for the effect of public and private schooling. Unadjusted results simply provide the group averages for respondents who received all of their K–12 education in public schools versus those who received at least some of that education in private schools. The adjusted results control for a variety of background characteristics, including race, age, gender, childhood family religion, childhood economic circumstances, mother's education, father's education, being raised in a two-parent household, country of birth, and state in which education was received. The purpose of controlling for these factors is to strengthen our ability to draw causal connections between type of schooling and

adult attitudes. The adjusted results allow us to compare what attitudes people would hold toward Jews if they went to private instead of public school and yet were similar in their race, age, gender, religion, socioeconomic background, and location.

For ease of presentation, the different categories of responses have been collapsed so that we see the percent who disagree with the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes. Disagree consists of those who responded with completely or mostly disagree. Those who respond with don't know, mostly agree, or completely agree are combined into a different category of those who do not disagree. Similarly, for the presentation of favorability questions, the results have been dichotomized with very and mostly favorable responses in the favorable category and the other responses in a different category. All of the adjusted results and significance tests are derived from ordered probit regressions that use all five categories, so no information has been discarded.

### Anti-Semitic Stereotype Results

Adults who attended private schools are significantly more likely to disagree with anti-Semitic stereotypes than those who attended public schools. The unadjusted difference between people who attended public and private schools is statistically significant for all of the 11 stereotypes, and the adjusted difference is statistically significant for 9 of the 11 stereotypes. The magnitude of the superior outcomes for adults who attended private schools is relatively consistent across all 11 items. All of these results can be seen in table 1.

When presented with the anti-Semitic stereotype "Jews have too much control over the United States government," 67 percent of people who attended at least some private school disagree with this statement, compared to 54 percent of those who received all of their education from public school. Adjusting these results for background characteristics yields virtually the same results as the unadjusted analysis, and both are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ , meaning that the difference between the two groups is very unlikely to be the result of chance.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of adults who attended private school disagree with the statement "Jews have too much power in international financial markets," compared to 47 percent of those who attended public schools. Again, these results change little when adjusted for background characteristics.

More people disagree with the anti-Semitic stereotype "Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars," but the difference in agreement between those who attended public and private schools persists and is statistically significant. Among adults who attended private school, 77 percent disagree with this statement, compared to 61 percent of those who attended public school. Controlling for background characteristics changes the result slightly, reducing the gap to 13 percentage points.

The claim "Jews think they are better than other people" elicits disagreement from 68 percent of adults who attended private school, compared to 54 percent of those who attended public school. These results are statistically significant and largely unchanged by controlling for background characteristics.

Of private school adults, 68 percent disagree with the anti-Semitic stereotype "Jews have too much control over global affairs," compared to 51 percent of those who attended public schools. These results remain statistically significant, but the difference shrinks to 15 percentage points when adjusted for background characteristics.

The advantage for adults who attended private schools holds true for the items "Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind," "Jews have too much control over the global media," and "Jews have too much power in the business world." For all three of these stereotypes, the gap between public and private school (18, 14, and 13 percentage points, respectively) is statistically significant and becomes 11 percentage points in all three cases when adjusted for background characteristics.

Significantly more people who attended private school disagree with the statement "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust." The gap between adults who attended all public and those who attended at least some private school is 14 percentage points in the unadjusted comparison and 9 percentage points after controlling for background factors.

**Table 1. Percentage Who Disagree with Anti-Semitic Stereotypes**

	Unadjusted			Adjusted		
	All Public School	Any Private School	<i>p</i>	All Public School	Any Private School	<i>p</i>
Jews have too much control over the United States government.	54%	67%	***	54%	66%	***
Jews have too much power in international financial markets.	47%	65%	***	48%	64%	***
Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars.	61%	77%	***	62%	75%	***
Jews think they are better than other people.	54%	68%	***	54%	67%	***
Jews have too much control over global affairs.	51%	68%	***	51%	66%	***
Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind.	57%	75%	***	58%	69%	**
Jews have too much control over the global media.	52%	66%	***	53%	64%	**
Jews have too much power in the business world.	49%	62%	***	49%	60%	***
Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.	57%	71%	***	58%	67%	**
Jews in the United States are more loyal to Israel than to this country.	43%	52%	*	43%	49%	n.s.
People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave.	52%	61%	*	52%	58%	n.s.
<b>Mean Anti-Semitism Scale of 11 ADL Stereotypes on 1 to 5 Scale</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>***</b>
<b>Effect Size (in % of a Standard Deviation)</b>	<b>37%</b>			<b>31%</b>		

Note: \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , n.s. = nonsignificant.  
Source: Understanding America Study

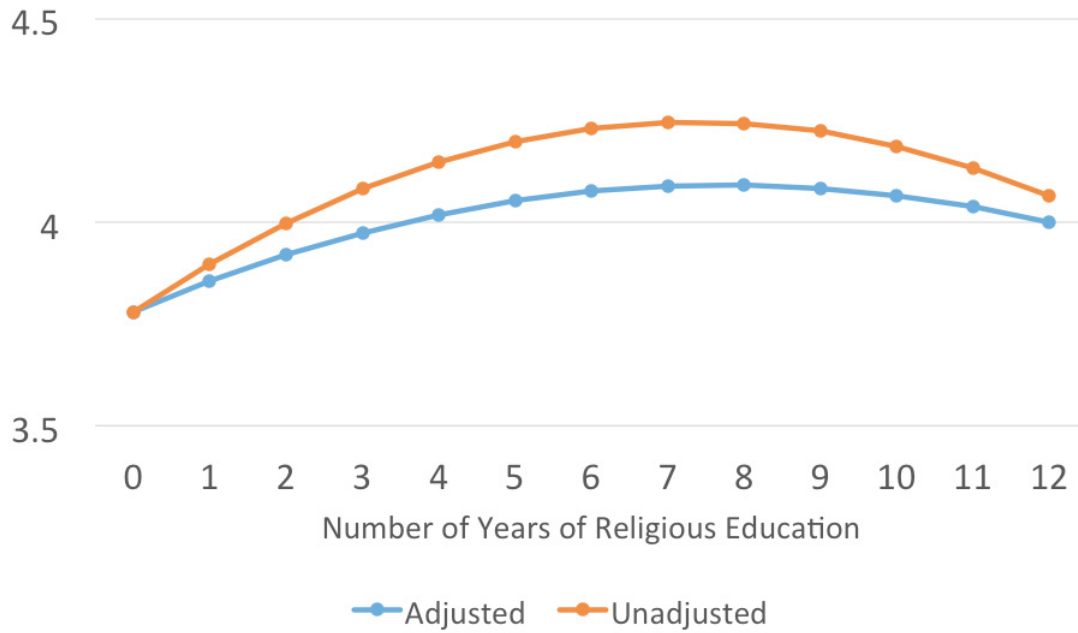
For two of the stereotypes (“Jews in the United States are more loyal to Israel than to this country” and “People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave”), the differences between adults who attended public and private school fall short of being statistically significant when adjusted for background characteristics. In both cases, private school adults are more likely to disagree with the anti-Semitic statement, but the gap is not large enough to overcome potential error in measurement.

The overall pattern is quite clear. All 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes elicit greater disagreement from adults who attended private school than those who attended public school. The stronger opposition to anti-Semitism from private school adults holds true after adjusting for a variety of background characteristics. The adjusted difference is statistically significant for 9 of the 11 stereotypes.

We can combine all 11 items into a single measure by taking an average of the responses on a five-point scale, with 5 representing completely disagree and 1 representing completely agree. As table 1 shows, adults who attended private school have an average of 4.10 in response to the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes, meaning that on average they either mostly or completely disagree with those statements. Adults who attended public school have a lower average score of 3.78, meaning that their response tends to be between “mostly disagree” and “don't know” in response to the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes. When adjusting for background characteristics, the average score for private school adults is 4.04, and the score for public school adults remains unchanged. The unadjusted difference between private and public school adults represents 37 percent of a standard deviation, while the adjusted

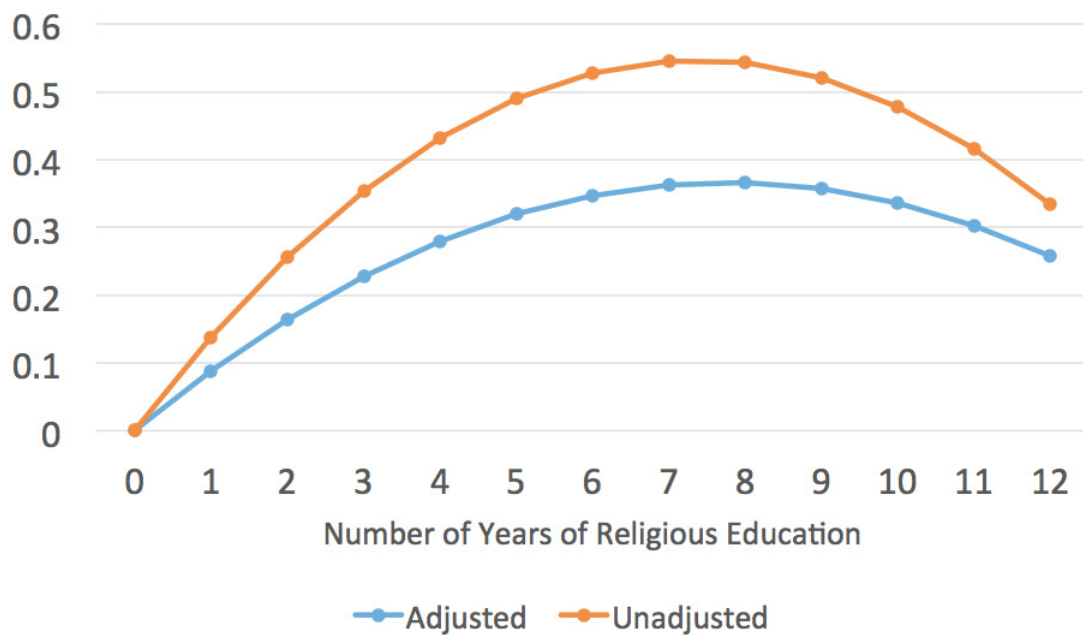


Figure 1. Average Opposition to 11 ADL Stereotypes on 1 to 5 Scale



Source: Understanding America Study

Figure 2. Average Opposition to 11 ADL Stereotypes, Standard Deviation Effect Size



Source: Understanding America Study

difference is 31 percent of a standard deviation. Both adjusted and unadjusted differences are statistically significant.

It is important to note that these positive results are not a function of dichotomizing disagree/not disagree or any private/all public. Using ordered probit regressions, we see that private schooling shifts responses across all five response options to the anti-Semitism measures. In addition, if we measure exposure to private schooling as the percentage of schooling spent in private school, we get the same basic results as when we split the sample into those who attended any private school versus those who attended only public school. Adults are less anti-Semitic with each additional year of private schooling (although the benefit appears to level off after about seven years). See figures 1 and 2 for a graphic representation of the effect of each additional year of religious schooling on responses to the 11 ADL anti-Semitic stereotypes. The figures show the results from models adjusting for background characteristics as well as not adjusting for those characteristics. Results are represented on a five-point scale, with 5 representing strongest disagreement with the anti-Semitic stereotypes, as well as in standard deviation effect sizes.

In addition, it is important to note that religiously affiliated schools are primarily responsible for the lower level of anti-Semitism observed among those who attended private schools. About four-fifths of private schools attended in our sample are religiously affiliated. If we separate the effect of attending those religiously affiliated schools from secular private schools, we find that secular private schools are not significantly different from secular public schools in their effect on anti-Semitism. Religious schools account for the reduction in anti-Semitism we observe in our analyses. We can further disaggregate Catholic from non-Catholic religious schools, but we do not generally observe significant differences between those two school types. The private school benefit we observe for lowering anti-Semitism is really a religious school benefit.

### Effect of Demographic Characteristics

It may be difficult to grasp how large the private school effect is. An average difference of 0.32 or 0.26 on a

five-point scale does not easily convey the magnitude of the difference. Reporting standard deviation effect sizes does little to help for nontechnical audiences. To put the benefit of private schooling for reducing anti-Semitism in perspective, we can consider how large the effects of other demographic characteristics are. These descriptive results can be found in table 2.

To illustrate the effect of various background characteristics on anti-Semitism, we can see how they affect responses to the statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government.” The effects on other anti-Semitic stereotypes are very similar to this one, and it is simpler to present 1 set of results rather than all 11. Recall that in response to the statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government,” 67 percent of adults who attended private schools disagree—13 percentage points higher than those who attended public schools. The demographic results presented here are simply cross-tabs, the effect of each factor without controlling for any other background characteristic or school type.

The effect of a respondent’s age is considerably larger than the type of school attended. Without adjusting for any other background characteristics or schooling type, 45 percent of 25-year-olds would be expected to disagree with this statement, compared to 65 percent of 65-year-olds. Older Americans are stronger in their opposition to anti-Semitism than are younger people.

The difference between African-American and non-African-American respondents is even bigger. Only 29 percent of African-American adults disagree with the statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government,” compared to 60 percent of non-African-Americans. There do not appear to be significant differences for people from Hispanic or Asian backgrounds relative to whites, nor does gender appear to be a significant predictor of anti-Semitic attitudes. The religion of one’s childhood family is also not significantly related to anti-Semitism once other background factors are controlled.

Childhood economic circumstances, however, do have an effect, although one that appears smaller than the type of schooling attended as a child. The statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government” elicits disagreement from 53 percent of those who describe their childhood family as

**Table 2. Percentage Who Disagree with the Statement “Jews Have Too Much Control over the United States Government” by Other Factors**

Age	25 years old 45%	65 years old 65%
Race/Ethnicity	African-American 29%	Non-African-American 60%
Childhood Family Income	Didn't have enough money during childhood to pay for basic food, clothing, and housing 53%	Had enough money during childhood to buy what was needed and other things, such as toys and entertainment 59%
Mother's Education	Mother didn't graduate from high school 51%	Mother attended some college 67%
Father's Education	Father didn't graduate from high school 55%	Father attended some college 67%
Two-Parent Household	Did not live with two parents growing up 49%	Lived with two parents growing up 59%
Born in the US	Not born in the US 28%	Born In the US 58%

Source: Understanding America Study

sometimes lacking “enough money to pay for basic food, clothing, and housing.” Among people who describe their family as having “enough money to buy what we needed and other things we enjoyed, such as toys and entertainment,” 59 percent disagree with this anti-Semitic stereotype.

The highest level of education achieved by one's parents has an effect that is roughly comparable to whether one attended public or private school. Of respondents whose mothers finished at least some college, 67 percent disagreed with the statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government,” compared to 51 percent of those whose mothers did not complete high school. Father's education is similarly important, with 67 percent of those whose fathers attended at least some college disagreeing with this anti-Semitic stereotype, compared to 55 percent of those whose fathers did not complete high school.

Growing up in a two-parent household also has roughly the same magnitude of effect as attending at least some private school. Among those who lived with

two parents, 59 percent disagree with the statement “Jews have too much control over the United States government,” compared to 49 percent for those who did not grow up with two parents.

Being born in the United States has a particularly large effect on whether people disagree with the stereotype “Jews have too much control over the United States government.” Of those born in the United States, 58 percent disagree, compared to 28 percent of those who were foreign-born. Remember that we excluded people who did not receive a substantial portion of their education in the United States, so the foreign-born people in this comparison had to arrive in US schools by seventh grade.

It is interesting to see what background factors are associated with stronger and weaker opposition to anti-Semitism. It is also useful to see how large the effect of having gone to private or public schools is relative to these other factors. The effect of private schooling is smaller than being older, being native-born, and not being African-American, but it is roughly comparable

**Table 3. Percentage with Favorable View of Different Groups**

	Unadjusted			Adjusted		
	All Public School	Any Private School	<i>p</i>	All Public School	Any Private School	<i>p</i>
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Jews	49%	63%	***	50%	60%	***
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Muslims	24%	35%	***	25%	28%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Buddhists	37%	50%	***	38%	47%	***
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Mormons	36%	43%	n.s.	36%	44%	**
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Hindus	34%	43%	**	35%	38%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Atheists	28%	36%	**	29%	31%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Catholics	54%	65%	**	56%	58%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Christians	65%	67%	n.s.	65%	66%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Israel	43%	55%	***	45%	48%	n.s.
Percent Who Report a Favorable Opinion of Palestine	16%	29%	***	18%	22%	n.s.
Percent Who Agree with the Statement “Jews are just like everyone else”	65%	81%	***	65%	80%	***

Note: \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , n.s. = nonsignificant  
Source: Understanding America Study

to the effect of having more educated parents, being raised in a more prosperous childhood home, and growing up with two parents.

### Favorability Toward Jews and Others

In addition to asking people to react to anti-Semitic stereotypes, the ADL Global 100 asked whether people felt favorably or unfavorably toward Jews and other groups. Similar questions were asked in the UAS survey except that the response options were expanded to provide five answers. People could say that they felt very favorable, mostly favorable, no opinion, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable. For ease of presentation, the very and mostly favorable answers have been consolidated into a single “favorable” category with the other three responses combined into another category. For the adjusted results, all five categories are analyzed in an ordered probit regression controlling for the same set of background characteristics as for the stereotype analyses. These results can be seen in table 3.

Adults who attended at least some private school are significantly more favorable in their attitudes about Jews than those who received all of their education from public schools. As table 3 shows, 63 percent of private school adults view Jews favorably, compared to 49 percent of those who attended public schools. Adjusting for background characteristics shrinks that difference to 10 percentage points, but it remains statistically significant.

Attending private school also seems to be associated with more favorable views toward Muslims. Among US adults who attended private school, 35 percent had favorable attitudes about Muslims, compared to 24 percent for those who attended public schools. Adjusting for demographic characteristics, however, seems to account for most of the difference between public and private school adults.

Attending private school is associated with more favorable views toward Buddhists and Mormons after adjusting for background characteristics. The advantage for private schooling is 8 or 9 percentage points. Without controlling for background factors, however,

public and private school adults are not significantly different in their favorability toward Mormons.

In unadjusted comparisons, adults who attended private school report significantly greater favorability toward Hindus, atheists, and Catholics, by between 8 and 11 percentage points. After adjusting for background characteristics, however, that gap shrinks and becomes statistically insignificant in all three cases.

The only group toward which private school adults are not significantly more favorable in either unadjusted or adjusted comparisons is Christians. Adults who attended private, mostly Christian schools are not significantly more favorable in their views about Christians. For all other groups, private schooling is associated with higher favorability in either unadjusted or adjusted comparisons. For Jews and Buddhists, private schooling is associated with higher favorability in both unadjusted and adjusted comparisons.

When asked about their views toward Israel and Palestine, private school adults are more favorably inclined toward both. With respect to Israel, 55 percent of adults who attended private schools have a favorable view, compared to 43 percent among those who attended public schools. Once background characteristics are controlled, however, this difference shrinks and becomes statistically insignificant. With respect to Palestine, 29 percent of private school adults hold a favorable view, compared to 16 percent of public school adults. That difference also shrinks and becomes statistically insignificant after adjusting for background factors.

In one more measure of attitudes toward Jews, the ADL Global 100 asked people to agree or disagree with the statement “Jews are just like everyone else.” Among adults who attended private school, 81 percent agree, compared to 65 percent of those who attended public school. Adjusting for background characteristics does little to change these results. Both adjusted and unadjusted differences are statistically significant.

People who went to private school more strongly oppose anti-Semitic stereotypes, have more favorable opinions of Jews and Israel, and more firmly embrace the idea of Jewish equality by agreeing that Jews are “just like everyone else.”

## Reconciling the UAS and ADL Global 100 Results

At first blush, the results presented in this report from the UAS survey appear very different from those reported for the United States as part of the ADL Global 100. Most of that difference, however, can be attributed to the fact that the ADL survey did not offer respondents neutral options, like don't know or no opinion, while the UAS survey explicitly provided those options.

Table 4 contains the ADL and UAS responses to the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes. For all 11 items, fewer respondents agree with these stereotypes in the UAS survey than said they were probably true in the ADL Global 100 survey, although the differences between the two surveys is fewer than 10 percentage points in all but two cases. Many fewer respondents disagree with the anti-Semitic statements in the UAS survey than said they were probably false in ADL Global 100, with the difference between UAS and ADL equaling at least 20 percentage points in all cases. The lower rate of people agreeing or disagreeing in UAS is explained by a large portion choosing don't know, which was the answer of between 33 and 46 percent of respondents for the 11 items. The don't know option took away some respondents from saying that they agree with the anti-Semitic stereotypes, but it took a far larger number from saying that they disagree. The lack of a neutral category in ADL Global 100 overstates the strength of opposition to anti-Semitism. The UAS results reveal that a large portion of Americans are indifferent or unknowledgeable when faced with glaringly anti-Semitic claims.

The main result emphasized in the ADL Global 100 is the percentage of people who agree with 6 or more of the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes. For the United States, the ADL Global 100 finds that 9 percent of Americans agree with a majority of these 11 statements, which feels like a very low number and is considerably lower than the number reported for many other countries. Despite the differences in response options, the UAS survey similarly finds that 9 percent of respondents agree with 6 or more of the 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes. So we are able to successfully replicate the ADL's headline result. But when we unpack the results by item and allow for a broader range of response options, we discover that American opposition to anti-Semitism is more tepid than the ADL Global 100 results suggest.

**Table 4. Reconciling ADL and UAS Anti-Semitism Results**

	—ADL Global 100—		—UAS—		
	Probably True	Probably False	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Jews have too much control over the United States government	11%	89%	6%	38%	56%
Jews have too much power in international financial markets.	15%	85%	9%	42%	49%
Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars.	6%	94%	3%	34%	64%
Jews think they are better than other people.	13%	87%	8%	36%	56%
Jews have too much control over global affairs.	11%	89%	7%	40%	53%
Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind.	13%	87%	8%	33%	59%
Jews have too much control over the global media.	12%	88%	5%	41%	54%
Jews have too much power in the business world.	18%	82%	10%	39%	51%
Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.	22%	78%	8%	33%	58%
Jews in the United States are more loyal to Israel than to this country.	31%	69%	10%	46%	44%
People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave.	15%	85%	7%	40%	52%

Source: Understanding America Study

The pattern of results for favorability toward Jews and other groups is very similar (table 5). The ADL Global 100 survey did not offer a neutral option, but it did allow respondents to volunteer that they could not rate the groups as favorable or unfavorable. Relatively few, however, volunteered that they could not rate the groups, so there were only two practical options for most respondents in the ADL Global 100 survey. The UAS survey explicitly offered people a neutral option, which a large portion of respondents chose to take. Interestingly, the percentage of people holding unfavorable views of Jews and other groups is very similar in the ADL Global 100 and UAS surveys. The addition of the “no opinion” option mostly drew respondents away from saying that they had favorable opinions. Again, the ADL Global 100 overstates the level of support for Jews and other groups by not offering a neutral answer option.

For both the anti-Semitic stereotype and favorability items, the addition of a neutral category attracted many more people from the “good” answer than from the “bad” one. That is, allowing people to say that they don't know in response to an anti-Semitic

statement dramatically reduced the percentage who would disagree with the statement rather than agree. Similarly, allowing people to say that they had no opinion reduced the proportion who would say they had a favorable view of Jews and other groups, but typically did not alter how many would say they had an unfavorable view. Clearly, if people lack a neutral option, they are inclined to give what they perceive to be the socially desirable answer—that they disagree with anti-Semitic statements and view Jews and other groups favorably. The rate at which people provide the socially undesirable answer does not change nearly as much when neutral options are offered.

## Discussion

It is clear that government-operated public schools hold no advantage over private schools for reducing anti-Semitism in the United States. In fact, adults who attended at least some private school more strongly oppose anti-Semitic stereotypes and view Jews more favorably. This advantage for adults who attended

**Table 5. Reconciling ADL and UAS Favorability Results**

	ADL Global 100			UAS		
	Favorable	Can't Rate <sup>1</sup>	Unfavorable	Favorable	No Opinion	Unfavorable
Favorability toward Jews	77%	17%	6%	51%	42%	7%
Favorability toward Muslims	51%	25%	24%	25%	40%	35%
Favorability toward Christians	85%	9%	6%	65%	28%	7%
Favorability toward Hindus	56%	31%	12%	35%	52%	12%
Favorability toward Buddhists	59%	29%	12%	40%	50%	11%
Favorability toward Israel	73%	13%	13%	46%	41%	13%
Favorability toward Palestine	45%	25%	31%	19%	48%	33%

Note: <sup>1</sup>Could be volunteered by respondents but was not presented as an option by the survey.

Source: Understanding America Study

private school holds even after controlling for a variety of background characteristics.

Why might private schools be associated with lower levels of anti-Semitism than public schools? It is always possible that this is not a causal relationship. We have not conducted an experiment in which subjects were assigned by lottery to public and private schools to see how their schooling would affect attitudes toward Jews. Instead, we have observed the attitudes expressed by adults whose families chose to send them to public or private schools when they were younger. We have tried to control statistically for some of the factors that may have influenced which type of school they attended, but it is possible that private school adults appear more supportive of Jews because of the traits that are associated with choosing a private school and not as a result of the private education itself. For that to be true, however, we would have to believe that the kinds of people who choose private schools are particularly philo-Semitic in ways that have not been observed and controlled in our regression. We would have to believe that families drawn to private schools do so because of their commitment to diversity and tolerance, not because of their opposition to these civic goals. Given that this is contrary to what is commonly suspected of private school families, it is unlikely that the advantage of private schools for opposing anti-Semitism can entirely be explained as a spurious correlation.

Perhaps attending at least some private school is associated with socioeconomic advantages that cause tolerance and are not fully controlled in our model.

That is, perhaps the most wealthy, well-educated, and cosmopolitan families produce more tolerant children and are also more likely to send those children to private schools. When we unpack the private school effect, however, we do not find that secular private schools, which include many of the elite schools serving the most advantaged families, are producing the greatest tolerance-related benefit. In fact, attending a secular private school yields results that are generally no different from attending a public school. The gain in tolerance toward Jews comes primarily from religiously affiliated schools, which constitute almost four-fifths of all private schools in our sample. Again, unobserved and uncontrolled socioeconomic advantages are unlikely to account for the benefit of private schooling if that benefit is coming from generally less expensive and elite religious schools rather than from more selective and costly secular private schools.

If private, particularly religious, schools actually cause a reduction in anti-Semitism, why might that be the case? The UAS survey does not allow us to answer this question with confidence, but it does suggest some hypotheses that could be explored in future research. Perhaps the answer can be found in how organizations responded to the horrors of the Holocaust. Many Christian institutions engaged in critical self-examination following the Holocaust to explore how they may have been culpable and to consider ways of preventing anything similar from happening again. The Catholic Church notably adopted a more positive stance toward Jews as part of the Second Vatican Council, and

other Christian denominations made similar conscious efforts to be more favorable toward Jews.<sup>11</sup> As a result, these philo-Semitic institutional changes may have taken root in private religious schools, making these schools more focused on actively opposing anti-Semitism. Public and secular institutions may not have felt as culpable and may not have engaged in the same type of critical self-examination, resulting in less of a focus on fighting anti-Semitism.

It is worth noting that Catholic schools do not produce effects that are significantly different from other religiously affiliated schools. About three-fifths of all private schools our sample attended were Catholic schools, another one-fifth were non-Catholic religious schools, and another one-fifth were secular. The secular private schools had effects on opposing anti-Semitic stereotypes that are similar to public schools, so the benefit to philo-Semitic views comes from religiously affiliated schools. However, no significant differences between the Catholic and non-Catholic religious schools were observed.

Perhaps government control of public schools is not as benevolent toward Jews as is sometimes imagined. Most government oversight of education occurs at the local level in predominantly Christian communities. Without the benefit of self-criticism and conscious philo-Semitism found in many Christian institutions, these local Christian-controlled public schools may be less concerned with the welfare of Jews.

We have further reason to believe that school institutions are important to the development of philo-Semitic views in an examination of outcomes for home-schoolers. While adults who were home-schooled are excluded from our results, analyses that include them show significantly worse results for that group. Even though they constitute only about 2 percent of the sample, their higher average levels of anti-Semitism can be clearly seen and are quite large. Religious-schooled adults are, on average, significantly less anti-Semitic

than public- and secular private-schooled adults who, in turn, are less anti-Semitic, on average, than home-schooled adults.

Perhaps private schools promote favorable attitudes toward Jews for the same reasons that private schools are associated with higher levels of tolerance more generally. This UAS survey finds at least some evidence of an advantage of private schooling for developing favorable attitudes toward other groups, which is consistent with earlier research that private education is associated with greater tolerance and civic values.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps religious values of human dignity and equality as God's children are important for effectively teaching tolerance. And perhaps this effective teaching of tolerance applies to Jews as well as others.

---

*It is clear that there is little reason to fear that expanding access to private education will increase anti-Semitism.*

---

Whatever the cause, it is clear that there is little reason to fear that expanding access to private education will increase anti-Semitism. Given the evidence in this report, Jewish organizations may wish to reconsider their opposition to vouchers and other private school programs. There is some indication that at least some Jewish organizations are rethinking their positions on this issue.<sup>13</sup> Of course, Jewish organizations do not take positions on public issues simply because of how they may affect Jews, but to the extent that concerns about private schools promoting anti-Semitism motivates opposition to school choice, the facts suggest that these fears have been misplaced. Public schools offer no advantage for restraining anti-Semitism, and private, particularly religious, schools actually appear to encourage more positive attitudes toward Jews.



## Notes

1. Dina Porta (ed.), *Antisemitism Worldwide*, Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2014, [www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Doch2014-2.pdf](http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Doch2014-2.pdf).
2. *Ibid.*, 9.
3. Anti-Defamation League, “Audit: In 2014 Anti-Semitic Incidents Rose 21 Percent across the U.S. in a ‘Particularly Violent Year for Jews,’” press release, March 30, 2015, [www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/anti-semitism-usa/adl-audit-in-2014-anti-semitic-incidents.html](http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/anti-semitism-usa/adl-audit-in-2014-anti-semitic-incidents.html).
4. Anti-Defamation League, “School Vouchers: The Wrong Choice for Public Education,” 2012, [www.adl.org/assets/pdf/civil-rights/religiousfreedom/religfreeres/School-Vouchers-docx.pdf](http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/civil-rights/religiousfreedom/religfreeres/School-Vouchers-docx.pdf); American Jewish Congress, “AJCongress Welcomes Florida Supreme Court Ruling on School Vouchers,” 2006; and Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, “Jewish Values and School Vouchers,” n.d., [www.rac.org/jewish-values-and-school-vouchers](http://www.rac.org/jewish-values-and-school-vouchers). It is worth noting that some Jewish organizations, including Agudath Israel and Orthodox Union, have taken positions in support of school choice. See Agudath Israel of America, “National Public Policy Position Paper,” June 29, 1999, [www.jlaw.com/LawPolicy/OU3.html](http://www.jlaw.com/LawPolicy/OU3.html); and Jason Bedrick, “Public Schooling’s Pluralism Problem and the School Choice Solution,” Orthodox Union Advocacy Center, January 9, 2015, <http://advocacy.ou.org/news/in-the-news/public-schoolings-pluralism-problem-school-choice-solution/>.
5. Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, “Jewish Values and School Vouchers.”
6. Anti-Defamation League, “School Vouchers.”
7. P. J. Wolf, “Civics Exam: Schools of Choice Boost Civic Values,” *Education Next*, 7, no. 3 (2012): 66–72.
8. Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California, *Understanding America Survey*. 2015, [http://static.usc.edu/data\\_toolbox/understanding\\_america\\_study](http://static.usc.edu/data_toolbox/understanding_america_study).
9. Anti-Defamation League, “ADL Global 100: Survey Questionnaire,” 2014, [http://global100.adl.org/public/ADL\\_GLOBAL\\_100\\_SURVEY\\_QUESTIONNAIRE.pdf](http://global100.adl.org/public/ADL_GLOBAL_100_SURVEY_QUESTIONNAIRE.pdf).
10. Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California, “UAS 15,” 2015, <https://uasdata.usc.edu/UAS-15>.
11. E. Greenberg and P. Cunningham, “The Vatican’s Strong Defense of Jews,” Anti-Defamation League, January 28, 2013, [www.adl.org/press-center/c/the-vaticans-strong-defense-of-Jews.html](http://www.adl.org/press-center/c/the-vaticans-strong-defense-of-Jews.html).
12. Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, “Jewish Values and School Vouchers.”
13. S. Schoenberg, “Jewish Groups Rethinking Vouchers, Tax Credits to Religious Schools,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 18, 2012, [www.jta.org/2012/04/18/news-opinion/united-states/jewish-groups-rethinking-vouchers-tax-credits-to-religious-schools](http://www.jta.org/2012/04/18/news-opinion/united-states/jewish-groups-rethinking-vouchers-tax-credits-to-religious-schools).

## About the Authors

**Jay P. Greene** is distinguished professor and head of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. His current areas of research interest include school choice, culturally enriching field trips, and the effect of schools on noncognitive and civic values. He is also known for his work to improve the accurate reporting of high school graduation rates, address financial incentives in special education, and the use of standardized tests to curb social promotion. His research was cited four times in the Supreme Court's opinions in the landmark *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* case on school vouchers. His articles have appeared in a variety of academic journals, including *Education Finance and Policy*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Educational Researcher*, and *Sociology of Education*. Dr. Greene has been a professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Houston. He received his BA in history from Tufts University and his PhD from the Department of Government at Harvard University.

**Cari A. Bogulski** is a research associate in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. She currently works with Dr. Greene studying the effects of culturally enriching field trips. As a trained psychologist, her research interests include the cognitive consequences of bilingualism and second-language learning. She received her BA in psychology and Spanish from the University of Arkansas and her PhD in language science and psychology from the Pennsylvania State University.

© 2015 by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. All rights reserved.

The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed here are those of the author(s).