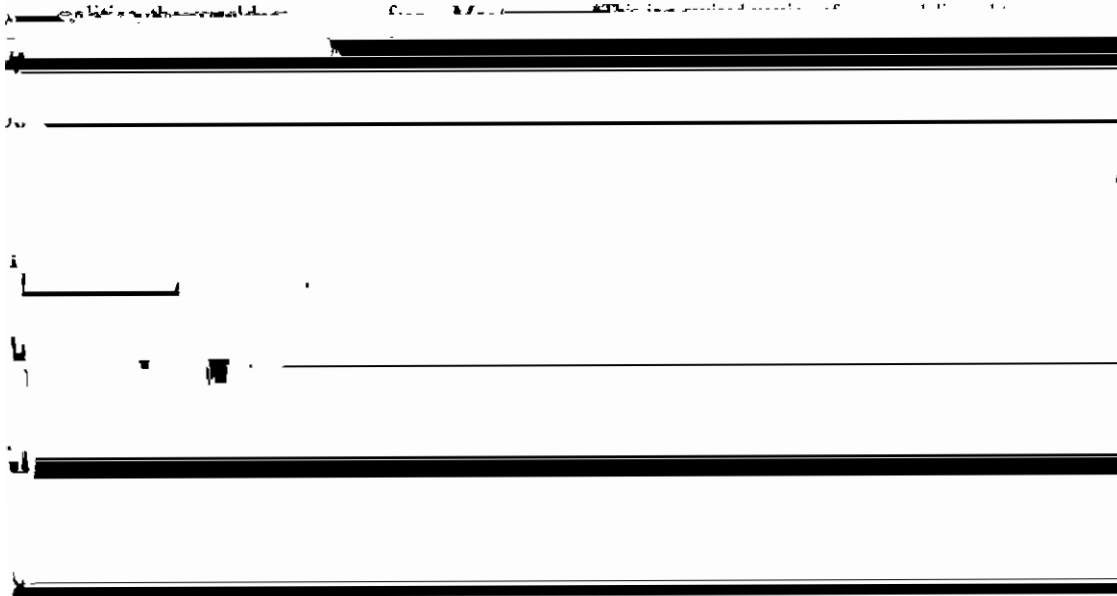


# Arabs in Israel: Political Tolerance and Ethnic Conflict\*

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*It has been argued frequently that democracies can survive if their citizens are committed to constitutional procedures and remain willing to grant civil liberties to minority groups. In ethnically and/or racially diverse democracies, maintenance of minority rights frequently has been problematical. This paper examines the commitment of Israeli Jews to the political rights of the Israeli Arab minority. The study is based upon a survey of 490 adult, urban Jewish citizens. It is found that younger, better educated, more affluent, and less religious Jews in Israel express higher levels of general tolerance and are more tolerant toward the political rights of Israeli Arabs.*

Sharply defined ethnic cleavages create some of the most intractable problems that



[REDACTED]

systems is majority rule and minority rights (Dahl, 1971).<sup>1</sup> Hence, on issues involving ethnic conflict, the numerically superior ethnic group often has its way while the numerically inferior group often loses

in the context of intensely held ethnic preferences, polity-wide consensus is virtually unattainable, and civil strife will emerge.

Surprisingly, however, the prediction to be made from the "law of contradic-

[REDACTED]

focused on the conflict between the two

accompanied by opposing interests and desires.

major subgroups of the Jewish population, namely Western and Oriental Jews.<sup>4</sup> The research that has directly examined Jewish-Arab relations generally has not focused

nationalistic desires. Israel was established as a modern, Western, and democratic state (Etzioni-Halevy, 1977); the cultural and national orientations of the Jewish major-

tolerance, tending instead to concern

building. The state's central objectives and

Some seven Arabs regularly sit in the Israeli parliament, mostly representatives of the anti-Zionist Communist Party. Several Zionist parties are active in the Arab sector and have included Arab candidates on their electoral lists.

However, *de jure* and *de facto* political

guarantees in democratic regime of the right to vote, the right to public assembly, freedom of speech, and the right to hold public office.

As the survey instrument was being pretested, leaders of the Arab student committee of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem sent a telegram of support for

Table 1

Comparison of the Jewish and Arab Population Distribution by Sex and Age

Age	Sex	
	Male	Female
20-24	16%	16%
25-29	13	11
30-34	10	8
35-39	7	8

$\chi^2 = 1.82$ ; DF = 1; sig. = ns.

100%

100%

Age

20-24

16%

16%

25-29

13

11

30-34

10

8

35-39

7

8

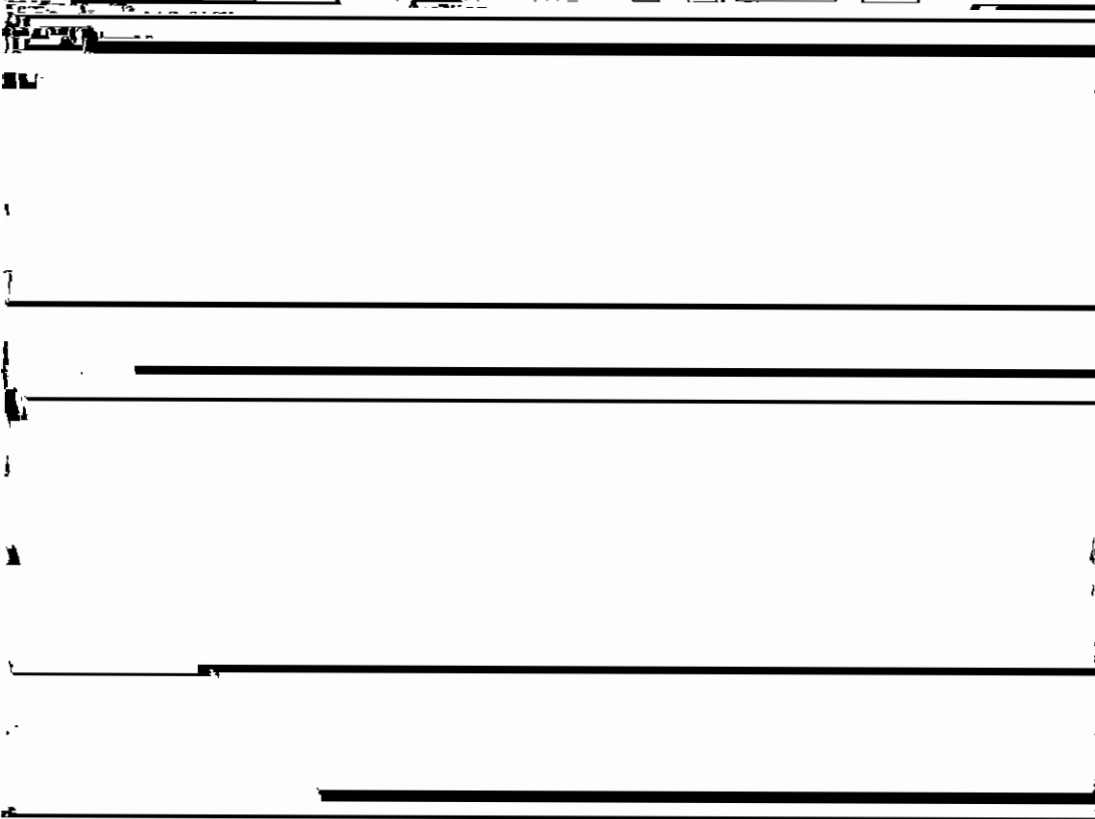
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and two-thirds of the respondents selected

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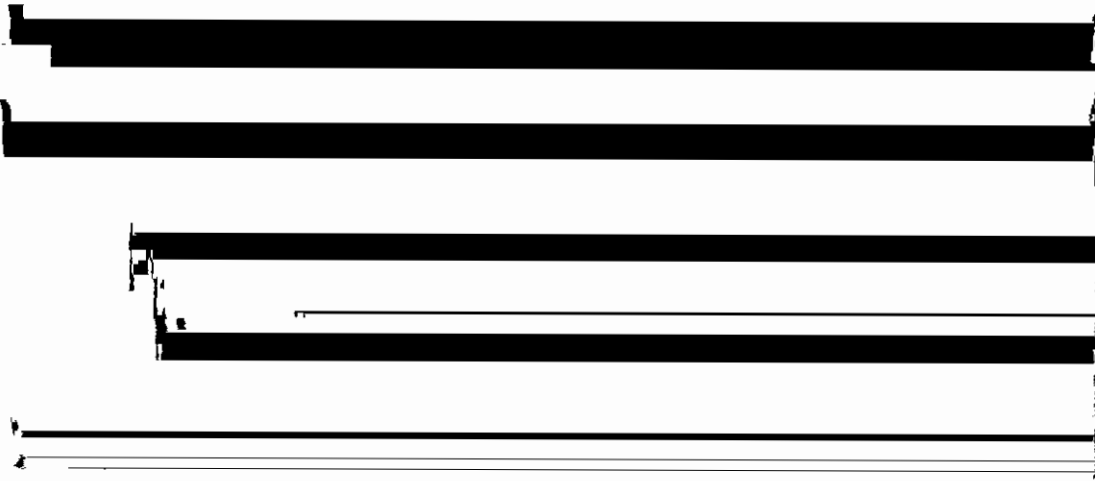
sets of variables are the primary determinants of tolerance: social, psychological, and political. The principal social determinants (which are viewed as exogenous variables in their path analysis), are age,

Oriental background, therefore, are hypothesized as being more intolerant than are those of Western background. For the purposes of this paper, we define Oriental Jews as those whose origin is in the "Near



...ance detachment. The principal psycho

...dents of Jews from Spain" (Smolha, 1978)



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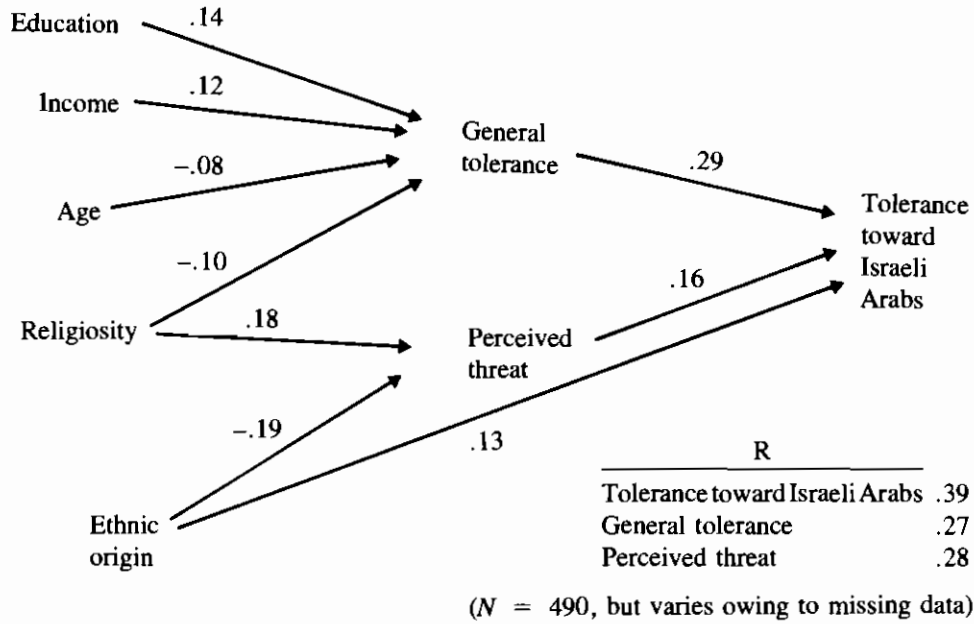


Figure 1 Path analysis of tolerance toward Israeli Arabs

Note. Arrows indicate paths. All coefficients are beta weights and are significant at .05 or better. Unanalyzed correlations between exogenous variables are not shown.

suggests that high levels of political tolerance help explain the survival of democratic rule in the presence of ethnic minorities

ties of the Arab minority, over half would support the suppression of the civil liberties

Table 4  
Correlation Coefficients  
(simple rs)

	<i>Education</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Religiosity</i>	<i>Ethnic Origin (Oriental-Western)</i>	<i>Perceived threat</i>	<i>Tolerance Toward Israeli Arabs</i>	<i>General Tolerance</i>
<i>Education</i>	1.00							
<i>Income</i>	.24	1.00						
<i>Age</i>	-.18	.03	1.00					
<i>Religiosity</i>	.12	.26	.04	1.00				
<i>Ethnic Origin (Oriental-Western)</i>	.26	.10	.35	-.17	1.00			
<i>Perceived threat</i>	-.12	-.10	-.06	.21	-.22	1.00		
<i>Tolerance Toward Israeli Arabs</i>	.16	.03	.01	-.08	.20	-.21	1.00	
<i>General Tolerance</i>	.20	.18	-.10	-.14	.11	-.08	.31	1.00

### NOTES

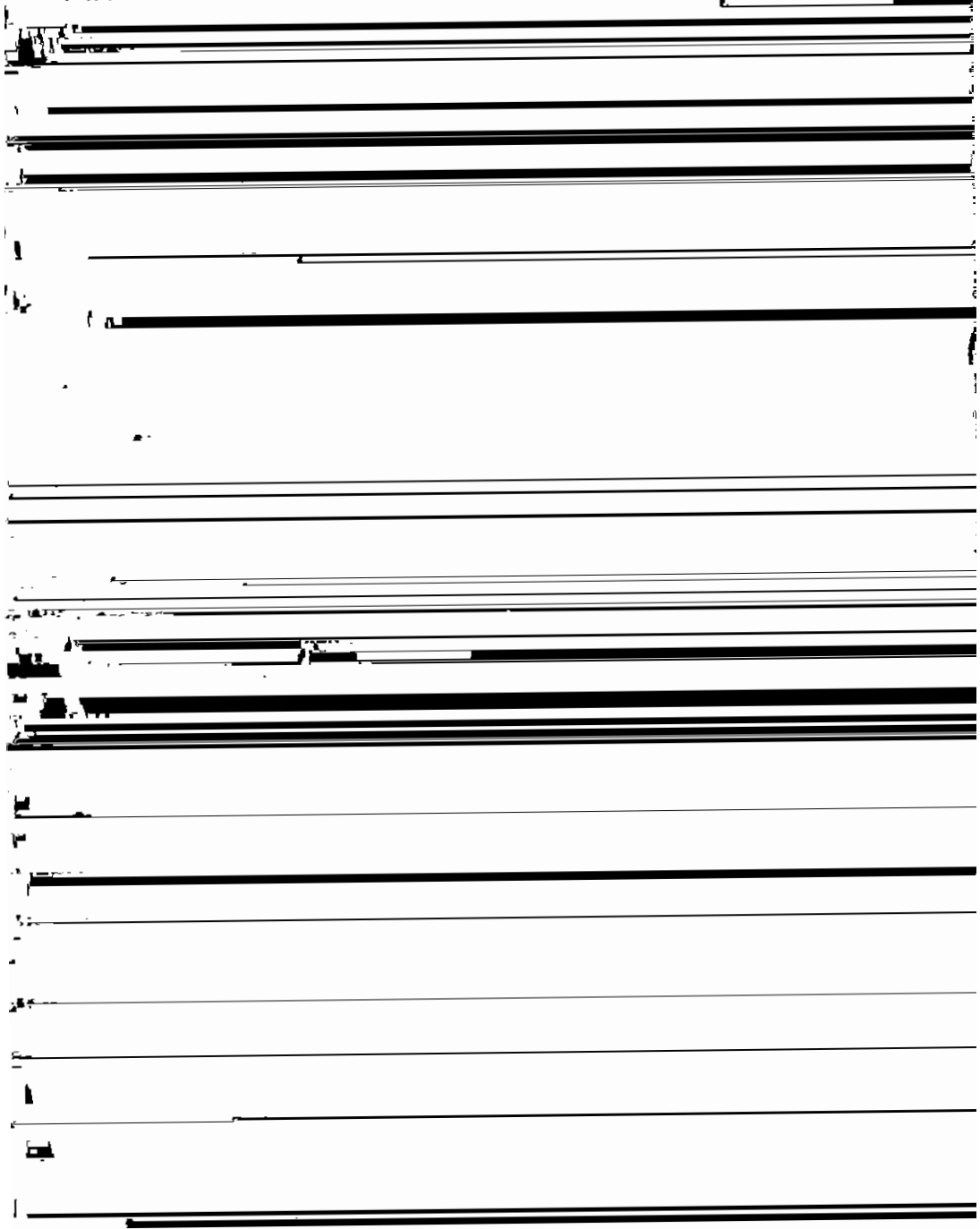
1. There are many diverse definitions of democracy, and we wish to avoid the debate on that issue in this paper. For our purposes, we follow Dahl's (1971) definition of polyarchy.

2. Earlier studies tended to minimize the nature of these tensions (Eisenstadt, 1967).

Both items were measured on a 9-point scale, the results being summed to form the threat index.

### REFERENCE NOTE

1. Caspi, D., & Seligson, M. A. *Political tolerance in Israel*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.



[REDACTED]

Feldman, S. The development of political toler-