

Keeping the Past Alive: Memories of Israeli Jews at the Turn of the Millennium

Howard Schuman,^{1,3} Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi,² and Amiram D. Vinokur¹

We asked in an open-ended way in 1999–2000 what national and world events Israeli Jews consider most important from the past 60 years. Ten events were identified as foremost, including three from the time of independence and one that was quite recent. All the major memories are associated with efforts of the state through commemorations and in other ways to create a unitary collective memory. Five social background variables help account for which events are mentioned as most important: birth cohort, education, gender, ethnic origin, and religiosity. Other specific factors such as personal Holocaust experience and voting preferences are also considered.

KEY WORDS: Collective Memory; Israel; Birth Cohorts; Commemoration; Holocaust.

“Collective memory,” a concept drawn from the writings of Halbwachs ([1950] 1980, [1925] 1992), can be studied both at the societal level and at the level of individual memories (Olick, 1999; Young, 1993). Although it is plausible to assume that the two levels were generally consistent in stable, traditional societies, especially prior to the emergence of historiography as a serious pursuit (Nora, 1996–98; Yerushalmi, 1982), in complex, rapidly changing modern societies there can be considerable divergence between the two (e.g., Schwartz and Schuman, 2000). Yet even in a modern nation, when it sees itself as under serious threat, there is usually great pressure for the two levels of memory of relevant events to coalesce. Israel’s short history as a modern state has been marked by a succession of events so crucial to

¹Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

²Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hebrew University, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.

³To whom correspondence should be addressed at 255 Popham Road, Phippsburg, Maine 04562; e-mail: hschuman@umich.edu.

survival that it has seen itself as under siege from its beginning until today. Thus the state has regarded the creation of a unified collective memory as an important goal. An additional reason for strong efforts in this direction arises because the nation comprises diverse streams of immigration having little in common initially except an identity as Jews, and in some cases even that identity has been imposed more by definitions of other people (e.g., Germans or Russians) than by personal choice.

Every nation attempts to shape the memories of its citizens to create not only a sense of common history, but out of it a common identity. Nations do this through the commemoration of crucial past events and symbols (Schwartz, 1982, 2001), teaching and textbooks (Nash *et al.*, 1997; Novick, 1988), and whatever other means of instruction and ritual can be brought to the task (Kertzer, 1988). Because the challenges for Israel are greater than for most nations, the state has devoted considerable energy to developing and maintaining common memories of events that are regarded as vital to its identity. Some of these are from the remote past (Ben-Yehuda, 1995; Zerubavel, 1995), but increasingly they are events important to Israel's creation and continued existence. Reflecting these latter emphases is the new national calendar that was added after the establishment of the state, which consists of official commemorations for the Holocaust, for soldiers killed in defense of the country, and for the establishment of the state itself (Independence Day; see Handelman and Katz, 1990, for an illuminating discussion). In an important sense, Holocaust Remembrance Day can be regarded as pointing to the past victimization of Jews, while Independence Day, together with the immediately preceding Remembrance Day for Fallen Soldiers, provide the response by recognizing the creation of a separate, strong nation to prevent the reoccurrence of anything like the Holocaust. There has now been added a Memorial Day for Yitzhak Rabin, recognizing both his importance in the life of the nation and the critical need to avoid violence within the society, though this most recent commemoration will not likely be entirely unifying because of the divisions over Rabin's negotiations with the PLO leadership (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 1998, 2001). The deliberate shaping of Israeli collective memory provides a backdrop and counterpoint to bear in mind as we consider differences in memory within the total Jewish population.⁴

⁴Israeli Arabs were not included in our investigation; thus when we use the term "Israelis," readers should interpret it to refer to Israeli Jews only. In a country where the "institutions, official holidays, symbols, and heroes are exclusively Jewish" (Smootha, 1993:325), it makes sense, especially with limited resources, to focus a theoretical inquiry into collective memory in this way, though for other purposes Israeli Arabs and Jews would be equally relevant. None of the commemorations noted above would have a similar meaning to Israeli Arabs and to Israeli Jews.

Differences there are, for the Israeli public is far from homogeneous, even apart from its Arab citizens. The lack of homogeneity stems not only from immigration from different parts of the world, but also from sharp differences in religious adherence in a state where civil and religious spheres are not distinct, and from variation along the lines of generation or cohort, education, and the linkages of these to social class. We look at Israeli Jewish memories as they are influenced by such differences at the turn of the millennium, while at the same time bearing in mind the deliberate efforts by the state and its institutions to encourage a single, shared collective memory. Our primary evidence will be the national and world events that a cross-sectional sample of Israeli Jewish adults remember as important from the past 60 years. After first discussing the events that are spontaneously remembered as most significant, we explore systematically the possible sources of these memories that can be studied using five individual attributes: cohort location, educational level, ethnic origin, gender, and religiosity. Although these attributes are measured at the individual level, each connects the individual to larger groupings within the society, though the groupings vary greatly in their degree of self-consciousness and cohesion. Other possible sources relevant to particular events are also considered.

One general source of memory is cohort or generational location and experience. More than half a century ago, Mannheim ([1928] 1952) theorized that each "generation" receives a distinctive imprint from the social and political events of its youth, and Schuman and Scott (1989) inferred from this that a succession of cohorts should have somewhat different collective memories. Empirical evidence in support of the proposition has been found in their own study of Americans and in several other national surveys (Rieger, 1995; Schuman *et al.*, 1994; Schuman *et al.*, 1998; Scott and Zac, 1998), as well as in a range of other research (Rubin *et al.*, 1998). One of our aims was to investigate the hypothesis further in a nation such as Israel where the entire history has been lived through by its oldest members and where, equally important, every few years have brought some new national trauma.

A second basic social factor, education, can be thought of as competing with cohort effects (Hyman *et al.*, 1975). Education allows individuals to transcend their own lives and experience vicariously events that they did not personally live through. Israelis of age 30 can learn a great deal about World War II, though they were born well after it ended, and the same Israelis may have seen televised pictures of the 1969 moon landing, though it had nothing directly to do with life in Israel. The educational system is also a major means by which the Israeli government communicates collective memories to new cohorts of children that pass through state schools, including the children of recent immigrants (Durkheim, 1956). Thus we were interested in comparing

what is attributable to number of years of schooling with what has been learned from cohort experience.⁵

More generally, “memories” can be based either on personal experience, as in the case of a 70-year-old individual who fought at the time of independence in 1948, or on what is learned in school or in other indirect ways about an earlier event, as would be true of 30-year-olds who mention the Independence of Israel as an important event from the past. (Even a 70-year-old who had immigrated to Israel from, say, North Africa as an adult may have “memories” of Israel’s independence or of the Holocaust based on indirect learning from commemorative occasions and in other ways, rather than as a result of personal experience.) Other things equal, we expect personal experience to be more likely than indirect learning to make an event seem important and more readily recalled. However, personal experience can be approximated to a meaningful degree where there is strong emotional as well as intellectual involvement in an earlier event: a compelling example is the visits by many Israeli high-school students to the sites of death camps in Poland (Feldman, 2000a,b).

A third factor, gender, appears important in relation to military events in particular. Most Israeli males train for military combat, and military service is more central to the society than in most countries. In a more general sense, what has been called “the new Hebrew man” evokes an emphasis on masculinity with regard to the origin and development of the society that might well involve differences in memories between men and women (Lentin, 2000: esp. 177–212). Beyond these factors specific to Israel, there is evidence from other countries of differences between men and women in political matters more generally. Verba *et al.* (1997) review carefully a broad array of evidence from the United States and conclude that, on average, women “are less politically interested and informed . . . than men” (1051).⁶ At the same time, studies by Davis (1999) indicate that females tended to recall more childhood autobiographical memories than males, especially those having strong emotional resonance. Whether similar phenomena occur

⁵Education can also serve as an indicator of social class, but in addition we had available a five-point self-report scale of income level (from much lower than average to much higher than average) and indicate in a later footnote the one additional result it yielded when included in our analysis.

⁶For a review of earlier research, see Randall, 1987:79: “The most solidly founded [assertion about women] is that they know less about politics, are less interested and less psychologically involved in it than men.” Here as elsewhere, the authors are not speaking of categorical differences; there are no doubt many exceptions, and it is only gender averages over the total population that differ, which may be the result of socialization practices. Furthermore, most of the gender differences occur at lower SES levels, as we report later and Evans (1980:219) also notes. At more elite levels, women have come to play an important part in Israeli protest movements (e.g., see Helman and Rapoport, 1997).

for collective memories of the past in Israel is a question we address, also bringing in evidence from several other countries where questions about memories have been asked.

Cohort location, education, and gender are important in defining direct and indirect experience in all societies. In Israel there are at least two other fundamental ways in which the population is divided. One is ethnic origin: whether individuals or their parents were born in Israel or arrived from another part of the world, and, if the latter, whether from a European or American background or from one of the African or Asian countries. There is the direct effect of growing up in a quite different society, and even for those born in Israel, parental teaching, like education, can provide a vicarious picture of past events that may differ from what is experienced by individuals whose parents were socialized from early childhood in Israel.

The final factor is religiosity, seen in Israel as varying along a dimension from ultraorthodoxy to a totally secular orientation. This factor has become increasingly important both in itself and in relation to political issues, so we expected it to influence memories of past events that define the nature of the state (Horowitz and Lissak, 1989). In sum, cohort, education, gender, ethnic origin, and religiosity are ways in which we attempt to understand which events Israelis report to be most important from the past 6 decades. At the same time, we keep in mind the forces in Israeli society that work against differences in terms of individual attributes and background, in order to produce a shared memory of the past 6 decades. As James Young has written in *The Texture of Memory* (1993:211), "Having defined themselves as a people through commemorative recitations of their past, the Jews now depend on memory for their very existence as a nation."

METHOD

We asked the following open-ended question in Hebrew to probability samples of Israelis in 1999 and 2000:

From all the events and changes that occurred in the country and the world over the last 60 years, please mention two or three events that seem to you most important. [If a respondent named only one event, interviewers were instructed to ask the person to mention at least two events that seemed important.]

Our goal was to obtain what was most salient to individuals when prompted by a quite general question, with the word "important" included to filter out minor sports or entertainment events. We are also focusing on recent events that have a reality different from the more mythic objects that have been the subject of other important studies of Israeli collective memory (e.g., Ben-Yehuda, 1995; Zerubavel, 1995). We chose a time frame of

60 years to allow inclusion of the origin of Israel and related events; it also fits with most past studies, thus providing useful cross-national comparisons.⁷

Our sample consists of 1041 respondents interviewed in April of 1999 and 1002 respondents interviewed in February of 2000, for a total of 2043. (A small number of additional cases are lost on specific variables due to item nonresponse; effective numbers of cases are given below.) We looked for change between responses in 1999 and 2000 because of Ehud Barak's election in May 1999 and his emphasis on serious peace negotiations with both Palestinians and Syrians. However, little had actually happened between the two surveys, and only seven respondents in the 2000 survey mentioned the election as one of three important events. Because no large or significant differences exist between the two surveys in terms of age, education, origin, religion, or gender, we have combined them to maximize sample size, but as a safeguard we included "survey year" as a control variable in a number of analyses. (As the surveys were carried out in early 1999 and early 2000, they cannot address more recent events, such as the second Palestinian intifada beginning in 2000 and the 2001 election.)

Our question was included in omnibus surveys carried out by the firm of Gallup Israel. The surveys were administered by telephone in a short period of time (two days for each survey, between 3:30 P.M. and 10 P.M.), with three callbacks attempted when numbers were not answered. The cooperation rate (proportion of interviews from households actually contacted and containing an eligible respondent) was 33%.⁸ Such data would not be desirable for making a precise prediction about a close election, though Gallup Israel, using very similar methods, has been quite successful in predicting recent Israeli elections, including the election in 2001. For the broad sketching of long-term memories of the past, however, we consider the data adequate, especially because two recent careful studies have shown much less effect due to large variations in response rates than had been previously assumed (see Curtin *et al.*, 2000; Keeter *et al.*, 2000). The sample represents well the demographic structure of the Israeli population, as indicated below, and we

⁷As the questionnaire was administered in Hebrew, those unable to understand the language—mainly recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union—were not included. However, we are able to identify the substantial number of former Soviet immigrants (9.2% of our sample) who could respond to the questionnaire, and we note any differences they show from others from Europe or America.

⁸This is for the 2000 survey. Gallup Israel did not calculate exact rates for the 1999 survey but stated that it was carried out in exactly the same way and should have had essentially the same rates. Their contact rate is 50% (treating repeated answering machines as part of noncontact), yielding a total response rate of 16.5% though some of the nonresponse probably came from ineligible numbers (nonworking phones, non-Hebrew-speaking households, etc.). A common practice today for those using the guidelines of the American Association for Public Research is to assume noncontacts to be divided between completed interviews and refusals in the same proportions as contacts, which would raise the calculated response rate appreciably.

believe that the nonresponse is almost entirely unrelated to the dependent variables on which we focus.

Our five main social background variables match closely recent census information on the population structure. For example, census and survey data on grouped age categories, as reported by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999, are as follows:

Ages	Census (%)	Sample (%)
18–24	19	18
25–34	25	23
35–44	23	22
45–54	16	19
55–64	8	9
65+	9	8
Total	100	100

Similarly, our survey findings for education, gender, and ethnic origin are all within two or three percentage points of census results. The largest deviation is for religiosity, where the survey somewhat underrepresents the ultraorthodox (5% as against 8% in the census), presumably because they are less accessible and more reluctant respondents.⁹ Most of our results are also reasonably consistent with patterns discovered in other countries where meaningful comparisons can be made.

The five social background factors considered as primary explanatory variables show distributions as follows (numbers of cases are in parentheses, with the difference from the total of 2043 indicating missing data on particular variables):

Age, which we interpret as mainly an indicator of cohort experience, is broken into 12 ordinal categories. The categories are 5 years in width, with the exception of larger ranges at the two ends of the age continuum. See Fig. 1 for the categories used and the number of cases in each category.

Education was grouped by the survey into four categories:

- 1. Less than high school 11.7%
- 2. High school 41.6
- 3. Above high school but less than full college 18.5

⁹The 1991 survey that formed the basis for the Guttman Report gives 6% as the ultraorthodox component of the population (Katz, 1997). Gallup Israel also includes a weight variable to make the sample fit the overall population even more closely, but weighting the data does not change our results at any important point (e.g., the ordering of responses in Table I is essentially unchanged, with the largest alteration an increase of 4% in Holocaust mentions), and we have preferred to use unweighted data because it is simpler from a statistical standpoint. Repeating key analyses using weighted data did not alter any of our conclusions.

4. B.A. and higher.	28.2
	100 ($N = 1977$)

Ethnic origin, following a standard conceptualization in Israel (Smooha, 1993), is classified based on where the respondent and the respondent's father were born.¹⁰

1. Both respondent and father born in Israel	17.9%
2. Israeli born but father born in Africa or Asia	25.7
3. Israeli born but father born in Europe or America	21.5
4. Respondent born in Asia or Africa	14.0
5. Respondent born in Europe or America	20.8
	100 ($N = 1958$)

Religiosity:

1. Ultraorthodox (haredi)	5.0%
2. Orthodox (dati)	9.1
3. Traditional (masorti) ¹¹	30.7
4. Secular (hiloni).	55.2
	100 ($N = 1977$)

Gender:

1. Men	49.9
2. Women	50.1
	100 ($N = 2008$)

Except where explicitly noted, our analysis regularly includes all five of these variables in multiple logistic regressions; thus, reported results for each variable are controlled statistically for the others. Education is treated as a continuous variable, while gender, origin, and religiosity are usually treated as sets of dummy variables. The empirical ordering of the religiosity categories indicates that they are virtually always ordinal in relation to mentions of particular events, and they are sometimes treated in that way as well.¹² Age is treated both ways, with the dummy variable form employed when constructing figures, in which case it is also conceptualized as birth cohorts in terms

¹⁰We would have preferred to have mother's place of birth as well, but for categories 1, 4, and 5 there were probably few "mixed marriages" across continents, and in any case the focus for these categories is on where the respondent was born and socialized. Categories 2 and 3 are already intermediate in terms of socialization experience, so adding a relatively small proportion of mixed marriages would simply have made them more so, though we might have created "mixed" as a small sixth category to examine as well. (The proportion of marriages between Jews from Europe/America and Jews from Africa/Asia has been estimated to approach 25%; see volume 6 of the *Hebrew Encyclopedia* (Jerusalem: 1993)).

¹¹"Traditional" refers to some observance but considerably relaxed in terms of orthodox prescriptions and proscriptions. It is most characteristic of those from African/Asian backgrounds, which in turn ordinarily means North Africa, Iraq, Iran, and neighboring countries.

¹²The ordinality is consistent with the Guttman Institute data reported by Levy *et al.* (1997) and with their final sentence, "There is a continuum from the strictly observant to the nonobservant rather than a great divide between a religious minority and a secular majority."

of labeling; it is used as a continuous variable when calculating regression statistics.¹³

RESULTS

We begin by considering the events of the past 60 years that came to mind as important to Israelis in response to our open-ended question at the turn of the millennium. The main results are presented in two forms in Table I: the percentage giving a particular event as their first response, and the percentage giving the event (as against all other events combined) as one of up to three responses recorded. The former method of percentaging produces mutually exclusive categories that add to 100%, but does not include second or third responses. The latter method provides dichotomous percentages that make use of all responses and is more amenable to analysis; it does not yield mutually exclusive categories, as the same respondent can be included under up to three different events.

The 10 most frequently mentioned events are listed in Table I, using as a cutoff point for inclusion the requirement that an event be mentioned by at least 5% of those able to mention any event (column 5), though we add one recent war that just misses 5%. The establishment of the nation in 1948 was mentioned most often, followed by the recent assassination of Prime

¹³The relations among the five variables, though conventionally significant ($p < .05$) in most cases, are too small to have much effect even in simple cross-tabulations. (In addition, whatever tiny effect they could have is ruled out by our regular inclusion of them in multiple logistic regression.) Treating education, age/cohort (young coded higher), gender (women coded higher), and religiosity (secular coded higher) as continuous, the correlation matrix is as follows:

	Age	Education	Religiosity	Gender
Age	—	.09, $p = .01$	-.04, $p < .05$.05, $p = .02$
Education		—	.08, $p = .01$.04, $p = .08$
Religiosity			—	-.03, n.s.

Ethnic origin is nominal and cannot be treated correlationally. Using simple analysis of variance, its strongest relation is to age, with second-generation Israelis youngest in age, those born outside of Israel oldest, and those born in Israel of immigrant parents in between but toward the younger end ($\eta^2 = .27, p < .001$). Origin is also related to education, with second-generation Israelis and those of American or European background highest ($\eta^2 = .06, p < .001$), and to religiosity, with second-generation and American or European backgrounds most often secular ($\eta^2 = .03, p < .001$). When the relation of origin and religiosity is studied by cross-tabulation, those who are themselves or whose fathers are from Africa/Asia tend to be traditional (42% and 51%, respectively), as against 22% of those with another origin, but though the relation is strong, it is far from implying that ethnicity and religiosity overlap completely. Origin is unrelated to gender. We also examined three-variable interactions, but none emerged that substantially changed interpretations, assuming no interaction among predictor variables.

Minister Rabin, the Holocaust, and World War II. The ranking is the same for these four events whether we focus on first mentions or on any mentions; for later entries such as the Six-Day War, there are only minor differences between the two methods of ranking. Most of our analysis uses the “any mentions” last column to provide dependent variables.

The row labeled “All other events” at the bottom of the list includes a variety of smaller categories and single responses: for example, “bringing immigrants from Ethiopia” (32 mentions), “Entebbe Operation” (22 mentions), “Clinton and Monica” (21 mentions), the (first) intifada (mentioned by just 7 Israelis). Our focus here, however, is on the more commonly given events, as shown in Table I. We note that three of the four most frequently mentioned events go back to the beginning of Israel as a state and could have been experienced directly only by Israelis who are now in their 60s or older. The fourth, Rabin’s assassination in 1995, would have been experienced by almost all Israeli adults except very recent immigrants. Three of these four dominating events are emphasized collectively through state-sponsored memorials during the year.¹⁴

¹⁴Those not able to mention any event at all ($N = 183$) are not included in Table I. These people were significantly less educated, more often women, and more often ultraorthodox—the first

Table I. Most Frequently Mentioned Events by Israelis, 1999–2000^a

Event	Date	First mention (%)	Combined number ^b	Respondents mentioning an event (%) ^c
Establishment of Israel	1948	21.2	693	38.5
Rabin’s assassination	1995	14.0	484	26.9
Holocaust	^a	11.6	369	20.5
World War II	1939–45	11.5	311	17.3
Peace with Egypt	1977–79	4.2	191	10.6
Six-Day War	1967	1.8	156	8.7
Yom Kippur War	1973	1.8	128	7.1
Peace treaty with Jordan	1994	2.6	116	6.5
First man on the moon	1969	2.0	99	5.5
Gulf War	1991	1.6	86	4.8
All other events		28.6	460	—
Total		100	—	—
<i>N</i>		(1,798)	—	—

^aThis table includes all respondents, from the 1999 and 2000 surveys, who were able to name at least one event or change that seemed to them important. Omitted are 183 respondents who said “don’t know,” plus 62 who were labeled “missing data” (incomplete interviews).

^bFirst, second, or third mention.

^cEach percentage represents the number of respondents who mentioned the event at all, whether as their first, second, or third mention, divided by the total N of 1,798 respondents who mentioned any event. For example, 38.5% of the 1,798 respondents who mentioned any event included the establishment of Israel as a mentioned event.

^dThe mass killing of Jews occurred during the World War II years, 1941–1945, but in a larger sense the Holocaust can be seen as dating from Hitler’s ascension to power in 1933.

Answers to the same open-ended question are available from studies in six other countries, with dates of interviewing as shown in parentheses: England (1990), Germany (1991), Japan (1991), Lithuania (1989), Russia (1990), and the United States (1985).¹⁵ Only one event, World War II, appears near the top of all seven lists. It is first for Americans, English, Japanese, and Russians; second for Germans after Reunification, which had occurred the previous year; third for Lithuanians (after their then recent rebirth as a nation and their earlier occupation by the USSR); and fourth among Israelis. Other than World War II, most nominations have to do with issues local to each nation (e.g., the then recent death of the Emperor in Japan). Of course, World War II was also a “local” event for all of these countries, and it might well not have been much mentioned in nations largely uninvolved in the war, such as several in South America.

The Establishment of Israel and the Assassination of Rabin

We begin our analysis with the two events most frequently mentioned by Israelis in this 1999 and early 2000 period: Israel’s beginning as a state (1948), and the recent assassination of Prime Minister Rabin (1995), both plotted against birth cohorts in Fig. 1.¹⁶ As predicted by the hypothesis derived from Mannheim’s ([1928] 1952) generational theory, we find that the peak mentions of Israel’s establishment are given by the 1926–1930 birth cohort—that is, Israelis who were between 18 and 22 in 1948. A broader peaking stretches over all birth years in our sample prior to 1940, including those aged 8 through the late 20s when Israel was established. Thus, controlling for other relevant variables, the findings for this early event—the birth of Israel as a state—fit quite well predictions made on the basis of theory.

two of these results are in keeping with findings from research in other countries. An additional 62 respondents refused to answer the question, broke off the interview before reaching it, or were omitted for other reasons. Of the 1798 respondents who named at least one event, 1570 named a second event as well, and a total of 844 respondents named three events.

¹⁵See Rieger, 1995; Schuman *et al.*, 1994; Schuman *et al.*, 1998; Schuman and Scott, 1989; Scott and Zac, 1993.

¹⁶The *b* coefficients and *p* values shown in this and later figures are from logistic regressions using age as a 12-category continuous variable, with education, gender, religiosity, and origin included also as predictors of the dichotomous mention or nonmention of each event. (Quadratic terms for age are included where curvilinearity appears likely.) However, when age is plotted in the figures, it is treated as a set of 12 dummy variables to allow for nonlinearity. (The oldest respondent in our sample was born in 1912, but most of those in the oldest category were born between 1920 and 1925.) The percentages in this and other figures assume that the control variables other than education register as omitted or zero categories, that is, the last category in each of the variables listed earlier; if a different omitted category were used, the absolute predicted probabilities could change, but the shape of the curve would remain the same. Because education is treated as continuous, its coefficient is multiplied by its mean and added to the intercept in each regression.

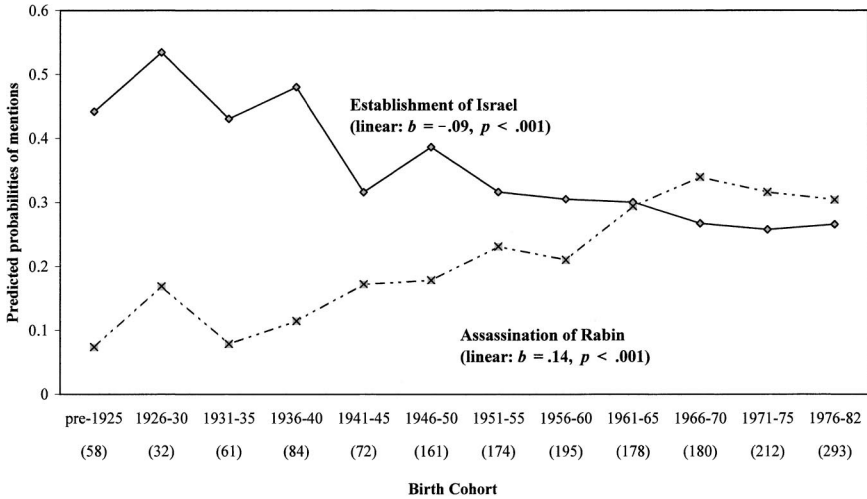


Fig. 1. Mentions of the establishment of Israel (1948) and the assassination of Rabin (1995), by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

Israelis who are more highly educated are also significantly more likely to mention the establishment of Israel ($p < .001$), so schooling (or its correlates) provides another way of learning about and remembering the past. Indeed, the relation to our education variable is appreciably stronger than the relation to the cohort variable (odds ratios 1.43 and 1.10, respectively). We might expect education to have an even greater impact on younger Israelis who cannot draw on direct experience of 1948, but there is only a small and insignificant sign of such an interaction when the effect of education is considered separately for the six youngest and six oldest cohorts. Men are more apt to mention the establishment of the nation than are women ($p < .001$), which may reflect a difference in political interests, as suggested by Verba *et al.* (1997), though we are reluctant to draw such a conclusion without further evidence. We do find that mentioning the establishment increases with education among both men and women (highly reliable and roughly similar relations). Disproportionate mentions by men may also turn partly on the military nature of the struggle for independence, and it is also possible that women tend to define “important political events” differently than men.

Orthodox Israelis mention the establishment of Israel more than any other religiosity category, with the difference largest as against those describing themselves as either traditional or secular ($p < .02$). This is consistent with their seeing the establishment of the state as having profound religious significance, beyond the political, social, and cultural meaning it had for many

Zionists, though this may be due at least in part to a redefinition by orthodox Jews after the Six-Day War in 1967 (Kimmerling, 1999). With regard to ethnic origin, Israelis who have immigrated from African or Asian areas are less likely to mention the establishment than are others ($p < .02$), presumably because in most cases neither they nor their parents nor grandparents were in Israel in 1948, having arrived in the 1950s or later.¹⁷ Among those born in Europe or America, immigrants from the former Soviet Union are less likely to mention the establishment of Israel ($p < .05$), doubtless because many arrived long after 1948, and it is not so large an event in their minds.

For mentions of Rabin's assassination in 1995, the peak occurs for the three youngest cohorts (1966–1982), Israelis who were ages 13–29 at the time of the assassination, though one might wish to include those born in 1961–1965 also, so that the peak would include those as old as 34 in 1995. These results also fit the generational model quite well: Almost everyone in our sample must have been aware of the assassination when it occurred, but young people are more than twice as likely as the old to give it as one of their three possible responses, with those intermediate in age also intermediate in mentions.

We have available a question on self-reported vote in the 1996 election in which Benjamin Netanyahu defeated Shimon Peres, Rabin's immediate successor as prime minister. As would be expected, Peres voters are more likely to mention the Rabin assassination—which had occurred just 6 months earlier—than are Netanyahu voters ($p < .001$ in the multiple regression), but the difference is not as large as might have been anticipated: 32–22% in a simple cross-tabulation. Moreover, mentions of the assassination by Peres voters and Netanyahu voters show similar relations to cohort. In fact, the concentration of mentions among youth is stronger for Netanyahu voters (odds ratio = 1.28) than for Peres voters (odds ratio = 1.08). Examination of the simple cross-tabulations indicates that this is because almost no older Netanyahu voters mention the assassination, whereas some older Peres voters do mention it, thus reducing the association with cohort.¹⁸

¹⁷However, when income is included in regressions, this relation of origin to mentions of the establishment is less certain, and a positive relation of mentions to above-average income is highly reliable ($p < .001$)—the only event where income has this kind of impact. Although immigrants from Africa/Asia average lower incomes than other Israelis, about a quarter do report higher than average incomes; if these people arrived early (before, during, or soon after 1948) and have the establishment of the state salient in memory, this could have produced the reported finding when both income and origin are included in the regression, but unfortunately we do not have data on their date of arrival.

¹⁸Among the 10 events, *only* for Rabin's assassination is there a significant relation to 1996 vote preference. Here especially we would benefit from a "why" follow-up question in order to interpret the content of mentions (as done by Schuman and Scott, 1989), but limited resources prevented this further exploration. In the case of Israeli youth, valuable qualitative evidence on divided views of the assassination is provided by Rapoport (2000).

Education and gender reveal relations to the assassination that are opposite to those shown for the establishment of Israel: The less-educated and women are significantly more likely to mention this event ($p < .001$ in both cases), the former probably because less education is needed to be struck by a recent, highly publicized event than one that occurred many years earlier. The interpretation of the relation to gender is less certain, but the U.S. study reported that the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy was also remembered significantly more often by women than by men (Schuman and Scott, 1989). This suggests that the tragic death of a leader may have a greater impact on women than on men, consistent with Davis's (1999) finding on recall of emotionally meaningful events, especially because in the case of the Kennedy assassination there was no relation to education. For the Rabin assassination, the gender difference is visible at all four educational levels, but it is much stronger at the two lowest levels. (Evans [1980:21] reports a similar finding: the gender difference in political interest in one study was "largely accounted for by the responses of working class women.")

Those born outside of Israel, in particular those born in Europe or America, were less likely to mention the assassination than those of any other origin ($p < .001$). That native-born Israelis are more likely to mention the assassination is probably because of their greater knowledge of Rabin's many years as a major military and political leader, long before his final term as Prime Minister. He represented and symbolized the "state generation" of Sabra, those born in Israel who participated in the war for independence and the development of the country from its beginning (Almog, 2000).¹⁹ Secular Jews were more likely to mention the assassination than were the other three religious groupings ($p < .01$), which is consistent with the reliance of the peace movement on the secular part of the population. Rabin was assassinated as he left a huge gathering in support of his efforts at negotiations with Arafat and the PLO.

The Holocaust

The third most frequently mentioned event in Table I is the Holocaust, and in this case we have additional information about its direct impact on our sample. All respondents were asked later in the interview the following question: "Did you or any of your relatives suffer in the Holocaust?" Those answering yes were asked to specify who suffered, yielding the following

¹⁹Why those from European/American backgrounds are less likely to mention the assassination than those from Africa/Asia is not so evident, but it is not because they "use up" their three mentions, for the same result occurs for respondents who mention only a single event.

distribution:

Myself	2%
A close relative	20%
A distant relative	21%
Nobody suffered	57%
100% (<i>N</i> = 2008)	

As would be expected, most of those who said they themselves had suffered (84% of the 44 people who reported having suffered personally) were of European or American origin—we assume originally European, although our questionnaire did not make that distinction. And most of those who said a close relative had suffered were also of European or American origin or had fathers of that origin.

Mention of the Holocaust as an important event of the past 60 years is, understandably, related to its personal impact. Of Israelis who said they were themselves affected, 30% mentioned the Holocaust as important (which may seem surprisingly small for those claiming a personal effect); of those with a close relative affected, the percentage is 27%; a distant relative, 24%; and nobody affected, 17%. Thus, even many Israelis who did not claim any personal impact from the Holocaust nevertheless mentioned it as one of the three most important national or world events of the past 60 years. Mention of the Holocaust is at best marginally related to education ($p = .10$); hence, we can assume that it does not depend much on knowledge of history. Nor is there any sign of a relation to gender, for reasons that will be clear when we consider the extent to which knowledge about the Holocaust is continually transmitted to the entire population through the schools and in other ways.

Birth cohort does seem to be a factor in memories of the Holocaust, but closer consideration shows the relation to have a different meaning than was the case for the establishment of Israel or the assassination of Rabin. As the top line in Fig. 2 indicates, the relation is nonlinear, with substantial mentions among the three oldest cohorts, and then a leveling off across all other cohorts. The oldest cohorts are, of course, those that include Israelis most likely to have been affected personally or in terms of close relatives. Once beyond the pre-World War II birth years, mentions are no longer clearly related to cohort ($p = n.s.$). Therefore, we constructed the bottom curve in Fig. 2 in order to exclude those respondents who said they themselves or a close relative had suffered during the Holocaust. Thus, the bottom curve is unrelated to age, despite the apparent rise for the small number of people ($n = 38$) born between 1931 and 1935; that is, neither a linear nor a quadratic term for age approaches significance ($p > .10$ in both regressions). Note also that the two points adjacent to the deviant 1931–1935

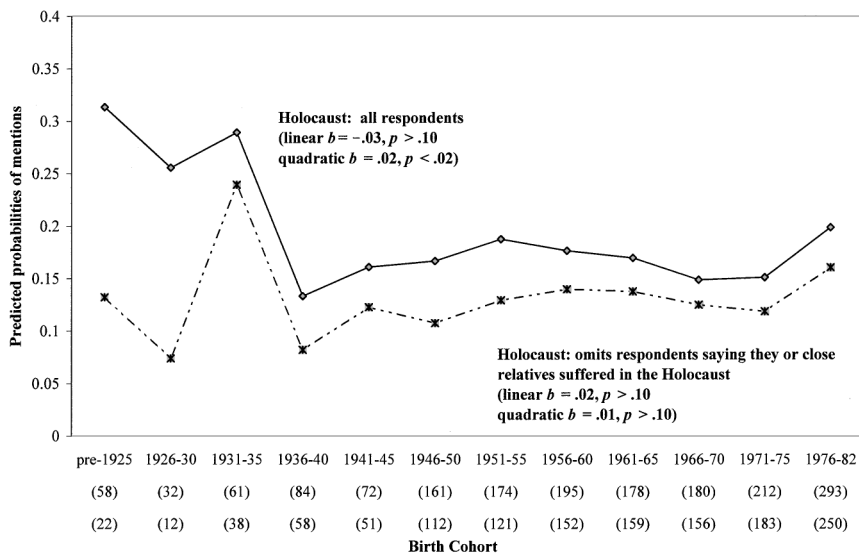


Fig. 2. Mentions of the Holocaust, with and without the effect of personal suffering, by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

cohort show the lowest mentions of the entire 12 cohorts, further suggesting that the apparent exception is due to sampling error or is idiosyncratic in some way. The conclusion of this analysis by cohort is that once we exclude those most directly affected by the Holocaust, young Israelis are as likely to mention it as are those who were alive when it occurred. In fact, the youngest Israelis in our sample—those born in 1976 or thereafter—tend to mention the Holocaust more frequently than those a decade or more older and more often also than many of those in their sixties. These findings provide a striking exception to the generational theory that we saw supported so clearly for memories of the establishment of Israel and the assassination of Rabin, and they therefore call for careful interpretation.

The Holocaust was not a focus in Israel during the early post-World War II years, as indeed was also true for the United States. But since the 1980s, according to Segev (1993), “not a day has gone by without the Holocaust being mentioned in some context or other in one of the daily newspapers; it is a central subject of literature and poetry, of theater, cinema, and television” (516). According to Feldman (2000a), it also became an increasing part of the school curriculum: “The first curriculum in Holocaust education was introduced into the school system in 1963 . . . restricted to a single six-hour unit. . . . Through the late 60s and early 70s the number of hours devoted to teaching the Holocaust gradually increased. . . . In

1970 . . . 30 hours of Shoah education [were mandated]” (90–93). (According to the *Statistical Abstract of Israel* [Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Israel, 1995], 87% of Israeli Jewish children attend the state educational system.)

In addition to this regular school instruction, youth pilgrimages to death-camp sites in Europe, supported by the Ministry of Education, began at the end of the 1980s, and since then thousands of high-school students (about 10% of the high-school population, according to Feldman, 2000a) have had such experiences themselves and are encouraged to share them with their schoolmates. Furthermore, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is also visited by large numbers of Israelis, including both school-age students and young military trainees. Finally, each year on Memorial Day for the Holocaust, a “siren begins, low and deep and rises until it reaches scream pitch” (Young, 1993:277), while the entire Jewish population stops for 2 min in remembrance of Jewish victims of the Nazi period, and there are also fresh reminders by radio and television and in schools. Given all of this emphasis, much of it directly carried out by agencies of the state, it is little wonder that the events of the 1940s are still vividly alive for young Israelis and that the Holocaust has become in important respects “the founding event of the state” (Feldman, 2000a:29).

As mentions of the Holocaust show little or no relation to cohort, gender, or education—variables that affect most other memories—one wonders what does distinguish Israelis who give this response from those who do not. With regard to ethnic origin, Segev (1993) claims that “the Holocaust now occupies the same place in the Israeli self-image for those of European ancestry and those whose origins lie in the Arab world” (516). This seemed unlikely to be true for respondents who had themselves immigrated to Israel from North Africa or Asia in the years after World War II, and indeed less than half as many of these mention the Holocaust as do others, though when the relation is controlled for other variables, the difference reaches only borderline significance ($p < .08$). Likewise, once we exclude those who had suffered in the Holocaust themselves or in connection with a close relative, Israeli immigrants from America or Europe are also somewhat less likely than native-born Israelis to mention the Holocaust. However, Segev is correct when it comes to the children of immigrants from Africa and Asia, as well as from America or Europe, for they do not differ at all in mentions of the Holocaust from those whose parents were born in Israel. This provides further evidence of the effectiveness of the state educational system and other societal institutions in transmitting knowledge and beliefs about this singular event from the past.

Religion also plays an unusual role in reported memories of the Holocaust. The relation is curvilinear ($p < .01$): the Holocaust is mentioned

most often by the ultraorthodox, next by the orthodox, third by the secular, and least by the traditional category. Thus both culture and beliefs play more of a role here, rather than the demographic factors that tend to divide the population with regard to mentions of the establishment of Israel, Rabin's assassination, and some other events still to be considered.

World War II

In previous studies in the United States, Europe, and Japan, memories of World War II have shown strong cohort effects, with many more memories coming from those who were in their youth at the time of the war. However, all of these countries were directly involved in the war, in most cases by being bombed or occupied. Moreover, the years of World War II and the years of the Holocaust were essentially the same, and the two events may have become bound together in many Israeli minds. Thus, our initial question was whether mentions of World War II by Israelis would show similar patterns to those found for the Holocaust, rather than the patterns found in other countries.

First, as with the Holocaust, Fig. 3 does not show a simple linear relation of mentions of World War II to birth cohort, as has been found in other countries. Yet it is evident that a greater percentage of Israelis born before the end of World War II mention the war as important than is the case

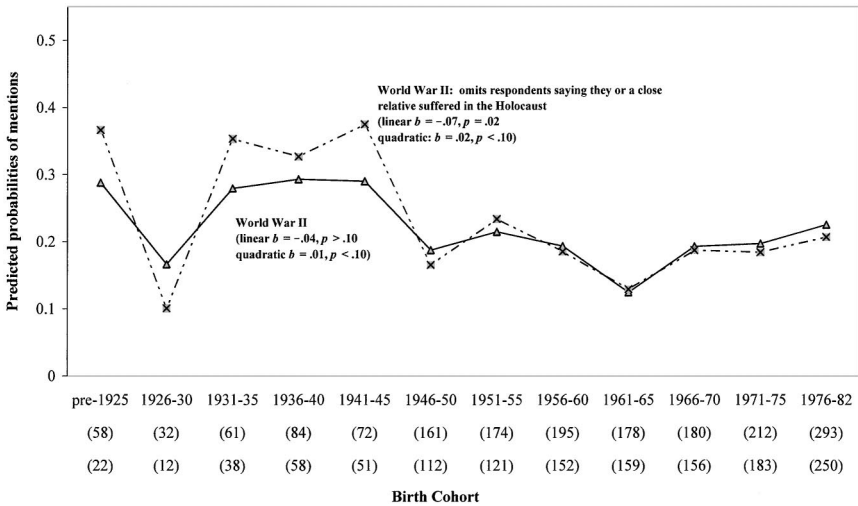


Fig. 3. Mentions of World war II, with and without the effect of personal suffering, by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

for those born after 1945: if the 12 cohorts are dichotomized between the 1941–1945 and 1946–1950 cohort points, the difference is clearly significant ($p < .01$). Indeed, this is also reflected in the borderline significance of the quadratic effect ($p = .08$) in Fig. 2. Our next step was to determine whether the pattern is basically similar to that for the Holocaust, and therefore we constructed a second curve that omits Holocaust sufferers, just as was done in Fig. 2. The omission does *not* produce a similar change in this case, but rather a clearer linear effect (again with an exception for the 1926–1930 cohort, which is based on a tiny number of cases), with a sharp drop after the 1945 cohort. Thus the patterning by cohort is different from that for the Holocaust and shows more frequent mentions of World War II by those born before, during, or just after the war, as is true in other countries.

Other important differences exist between the correlates of World War II and Holocaust responses, which should not occur if they have essentially the same meaning to respondents. Mentions of World War II are clearly related to both greater education ($p < .001$) and to being male ($p < .01$), whereas mentions of the Holocaust are not related at all to gender and show at most a borderline relation to education ($p = .10$). These results suggest that World War II responses call on academic knowledge of or interest in history to a greater extent than do Holocaust responses. (In the United States also, mentions of World War II were given significantly more often by men than by women, and likewise were strongly related to education; see Schuman and Scott, 1989.) The interpretation of the education effect—less-educated respondents reporting fewer memories of World War II—seems straightforward in terms of less historical interest or knowledge at lower levels of education. The interpretation of the gender difference may not seem as clear, but it is difficult to dispute the pattern of results. First, among women, as among men, the more education a respondent has, the more likely she is to mention World War II. But, second, with education held constant, at each educational level men are more likely than women to mention World War II—significantly so ($p < .05$) at the level of college graduates. Although we analyzed the differences by gender with controls for cohort, ethnic origin, and religiosity, the pattern is also clear from a simple cross-tabulation of the percentage of each gender at each educational level who mention World War II:

	Men (%)	Women (%)
B.A. level & above	32	23
Above high school	25	16
High school graduates	13	10
Less than high school	12	0

Differences also occur in terms of religiosity and origin. Mentions of World War II show a highly significant relation to the secular end of the religiosity continuum ($p < .001$), whereas mentions of the Holocaust tended to be located in the opposite direction: more mentions by those more orthodox ($p = .11$). The pattern for ethnic origin is more complex, but World War II is mentioned most by those from European and American backgrounds (and especially recent immigrants from the former USSR)—the countries most involved in the war—and least by those from Asian/African backgrounds, whether born in Israel or not, which seems to reflect physical and psychological distance from the war. Interestingly, while those born in Israel from African/Asian fathers are less likely to mention World War II than others born in Israel, they are *not* less likely to mention the Holocaust than others born in Israel—which fits our evidence above of the many ways in which all Israeli children learn about the Holocaust.

Thus we have a good deal of evidence that when Israelis refer to World War II, many are thinking of the war generally, and are not using the term only as a reference to the Holocaust, though of course they no doubt recognize the connection between the two events. Yet we should note one significant piece of contrary evidence. Given the importance of both World War II and the Holocaust in Table I, if they are seen as quite distinct, we might have expected many Israelis to mention both events among their three responses. For example, of those who mention either the Holocaust or the establishment of Israel, 22% do mention both, and of those who mention either World War II or the establishment, 18% mention both. But of those who mention either the Holocaust or World War II, only 5.6% mention both. It is plausible that this last percentage is small because at least some Israelis think that World War II and the Holocaust are so closely related that mention of the former also includes the latter. Thus, although in many cases World War II responses seem to stand on their own and are similar to such responses in other countries, in other cases the responses may imply mention of the Holocaust as well. In sum, we are undecided on the extent to which World War II and the Holocaust represent the same or different events in Israeli memories. Future investigations can clarify this important point by repeating our open question and then asking respondents what they had in mind in mentioning World War II.

Two Major Wars

Both in 1967 and 1973 Israel fought major wars with neighboring countries. The 1967 Six-Day War was seen in Israel and elsewhere as a remarkable victory, with the occupation of East Jerusalem and the Old City, the

West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights. The 1973 Yom Kippur War, however, was a near-disaster, with the sacrifice of many lives in order to prevent defeat. In 1967, 803 Israelis were killed during the Six-Day War, but more than three times as many (2,569) were lost during the Yom Kippur War (Shiff and Haber, 1976:15). Both wars called for mobilization of the Israeli population, thus bringing the impact of the war home to virtually everyone.

Although the two wars were only 6 years apart, few respondents (2.3%) mentioned both, as against 6.4% who mentioned only the Six-Day war and 4.8% who mentioned only the Yom Kippur war. However, the two wars are similar in that men mention each war more than do women, though more clearly so for the Six-Day War ($p < .001$) than the Yom Kippur war ($p < .10$). This is consistent with the fact that combat is, for all but the ultra-orthodox, an important component in defining manhood in Israeli society. For neither war is there an association of education to mentions, which indicates their familiarity to all Israelis. There is also no relation for either war to ethnic origin.

There is also one interesting difference. There is no relation of religiosity to mentions of the 1973 Yom Kippur war, but there is a small but significant ($p < .05$) trend for the 1967 Six-Day War to be mentioned more by all three religious categories than by secular Israelis. On closer examination, frequent mentions are located especially among the ultraorthodox and orthodox. This seems likely to be due to the recovery of sites of religious importance, as well as to the resulting Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the increased weight of orthodoxy in the political system more generally. Indeed, some Israelis gave the Six-Day War a Messianic interpretation and regarded it as more important than the establishment of the state in 1948 (Aran, 1988).

On the basis of the theory of generational experience discussed earlier, we expected the relation of cohort to mentions to show signs of curvilinearity, with greatest mentions by those in their youth at the time of each war. The curve for the 1973 Yom Kippur war in Fig. 4 fits this model well, despite an anomalous drop for the 1946–1950 cohort. The overall quadratic effect pointing to curvilinearity is highly significant, and even the anomalous 1946–1950 data point is well above the data points for the youngest and oldest cohorts. (Moreover, the conspicuous deviant point would have been averaged out if slightly different boundaries had been used to construct the cohorts.) Overall, the cohorts that were in their youth at the time of the 1973 war are clearly those most likely to mention that war in the 1999–2000 period.

The 1967 Six-Day War presents more of a puzzle. Here again the younger cohorts (those born after 1960 and therefore either not born or very young

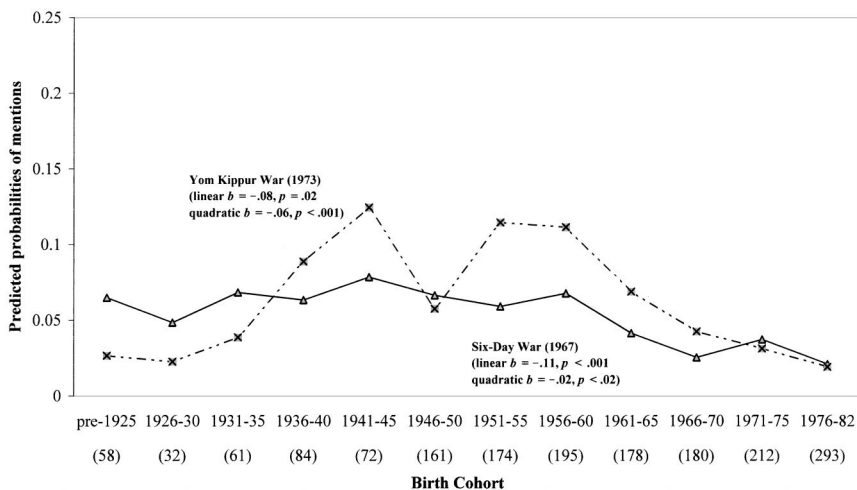


Fig. 4. Mentions of the Sixth-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

at the time of the war) seldom mention it. But the oldest cohorts mention the Six-Day War in almost the same proportions as those who were in their youth in 1967. Given the general success of the cohort hypothesis derived from Mannheim, we should take exceptions as pointing to something special about the event. We can speculate that this was the deep and lasting impact of fear among older Israelis of a disaster (another Holocaust?) in the weeks leading up to the war—this at a point when Israel was still seen as militarily quite vulnerable—making it more memorable than it would otherwise be. In any case, considering both curves together, the one definite conclusion that can be drawn is that Israelis who came of age after the two wars had ended are not likely to think of them in response to a question about important past events. Indeed, considering the very youngest cohort (1976–1982), the proportions mentioning the Holocaust, which happened some 30 years before they were born, is as high or higher than mentions of either of the more recent wars.

Two Peace Treaties

In addition to the wars that Israel has fought over the last half-century, two important steps toward peace are among the ten most frequently mentioned events. The peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, following Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977, represented a major detente with Israel's largest neighbor,

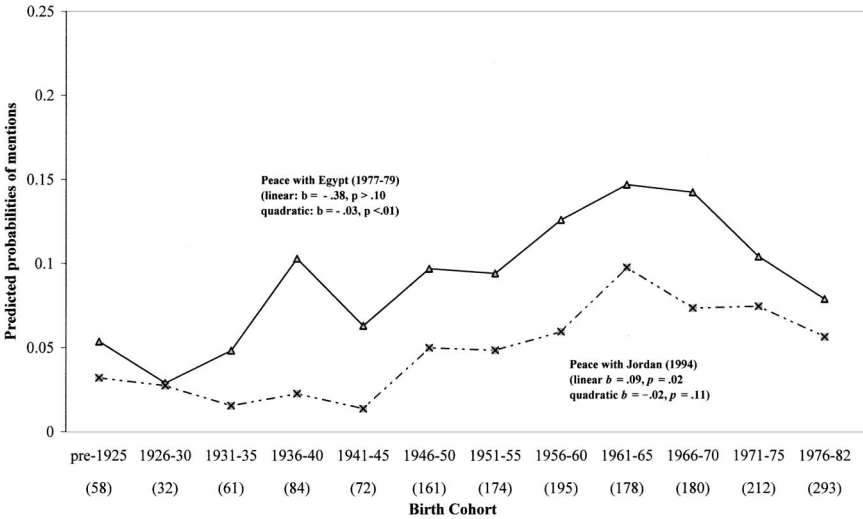


Fig. 5. Mentions of peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

and in 1994 a peace treaty with Jordan was also signed. The associations of the two peace initiatives with cohort are shown in Fig. 5.²⁰ In both cases curvilinearity is evident, though only for Egypt does it reach a clear level of significance. Although the dates of the treaties are separated by some 16 years, the two curves are fairly similar, with peaks most noticeable for the 1961–1965 cohort, which would have been in its early teens at the time of the Sadat visit and early 30s at the time of the treaty with Jordan. Only the former (and more reliable) location fits generational theory precisely, though the continued height of the 1966–1975 cohorts can do much the same for the treaty with Jordan. Also noticeable in both cases is the drop for the youngest cohort, 1976–1982, especially in the case of the Egyptian treaty, which was then long past.

An even clearer parallel between the two events is that both are mentioned significantly more frequently by Israelis at the secular end of the religiosity dimension and least by both the ultraorthodox and the orthodox ($p < .002$ for both events). Assuming that most mentions of the treaties

²⁰This figure departs in one way from previous figures: gender was coded so that men become the omitted category. This has been done because the strong correlation of gender with the Jordan peace treaty produces intercepts that are out of line with the overall univariate percentages for the two treaties. As indicated earlier, the shape of the curves remains the same regardless of which gender provides the omitted category.

indicate support for them, this finding is a reflection of where the greatest emphasis on moves toward peace with Arab neighbors is located within the religious spectrum, consistent with Arian's analysis of Israeli values (Arian, 1995). It is interesting that education shows no relation to mentions of either treaty, suggesting that retrospective acceptance of the importance of these treaties is not simply a matter of elite parts of the society. Likewise, ethnic origin is generally unrelated to mentions of either treaty. The one other clearly reliable finding is that women are more apt to mention the Jordan treaty ($p < .001$), though a similar trend for the treaty with Egypt does not approach significance ($p > .10$). Because women were also more likely to mention the Rabin assassination, the several findings would be consistent with somewhat greater emphasis on moves toward peace by women than men, though we have no direct evidence for this and there is some evidence from another study indicating no gender difference in this regard (Herman and Yuchtman-Yaar, 1997).

The Gulf War

The final two events in Table I are the Gulf War in 1991 and the moon landing in 1969. The first, although originally not connected directly to Israel, soon involved missiles fired at the country from Iraq and the possibility of more direct involvement. Figure 6 presents a reduced curve for the Gulf War—reduced because so few older Israelis mentioned the Gulf War that it is necessary to combine all respondents born before 1921 into a single category in order to obtain valid statistical estimates. With this adjustment, the relation of mentions to cohort is clearly linear, with a substantial step up for those under the age of 40 in 1991 when the Gulf war took place, and a second sharp increase for the youngest cohort (1976–1982) that was in early adolescence at the time of the war. These results fit generational theory well, with the maximum impact of the war on memory for the youngest Israelis, a lesser but still substantial impact for those under age 40 (a high proportion of whom were parents and had to cope with fear of missile and gas attacks on their children), and little evidence of any impact on older Israelis.

There is no sign of a relation between either education or gender and mentions of the Gulf War, but religiosity does present a clear association: ultraorthodox and orthodox respondents mention the Gulf War more often than those reporting themselves traditional or secular ($p < .01$). (Mentions, using odds ratios, decrease ordinally from the highest for the ultraorthodox to the lowest for the secular.) The missile attack by Iraq differed from previous military attacks on Israel in where the threat was felt most immediately: not in the front lines by soldiers in combat or their families, but in the cities where civilians lived, including areas inhabited by more orthodox

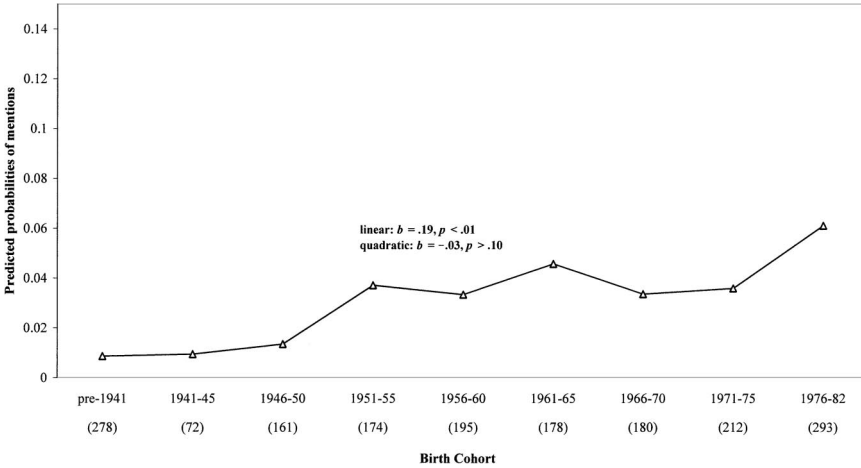


Fig. 6. Mentions of the Gulf War (1991), by cohort based on logistic regression, with controls for education, gender, origin, and religiosity.

Israelis—thus providing an explanation for this distinctive relation to religiosity. There is no general relation of the Gulf War to ethnic origin, though among Israelis whose fathers were born in Europe or America, the Gulf War is mentioned somewhat more by immigrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whom were experiencing an attack for the first time.

The Moon Landing and Other External Events

Unlike all the events discussed so far, mentions of the moon landing show virtually no patterning at all by age in our regressions. This may seem peculiar, given its precise date and unique content, but exactly the same thing happened in 1985 with a national sample of Americans (Schuman and Scott, 1989). Apparently the moon landing captures a specialized interest over the entire age range, from those already old when it occurred to those too young to have been born at that point in time. Here is a cross-tabulation of mentions of the moon landing by age (without controls):

Age	75+	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	45-49	40-45	35-39	30-34	25-29	10-24
Moon	3.3%	9.1%	6.3%	6.8%	2.7%	6.7%	4.8%	6.9%	5.5%	4.3%	4.1%	5.9%
N	60	33	63	88	74	163	166	202	183	187	217	305

The percentage of mentions by those 18-24, a cohort not even born in 1969, is slightly larger than the average percentage (5.5%) for the sample as a whole.

Evidently the interest in this extraordinary event continues with some young Israelis into the present. This is not a matter of educational level, which shows only a small and insignificant trend ($p > .10$) for greater education to be associated with mentions of the moon landing.

However, men are more likely than women to mention the landing ($p < .01$), and religiosity also shows a clear relation, with mentions increasing from lowest among the ultraorthodox to highest among the secular ($p < .01$). The percentages (without controls) are as follow:

Ultraorthodox	0.0%
Orthodox	2.5%
Traditional	4.6%
Secular	6.7%

The variation by religiosity seems interpretable as a function of turning toward or away from science. (Here we should distinguish space exploration, which is a matter of purely scientific interest, from technological advances such as computing that offer practical uses to business and even religious communications and therefore may not show the same association to religiosity.) It is more difficult to interpret the gender relation except possibly as a function of stereotypic greater male interest in technology and exploration, especially as it occurs at all educational levels. Finally, second-generation Israelis and those from America or Europe tend to mention the moon landing more frequently than do those born in Africa or Asia ($p < .10$).

In addition to the moon landing, several other events mentioned by Israelis refer to happenings outside of and not directly connected to Israel. The most frequent of these “external events” are the fall of the Berlin Wall and the recent war in Kosovo, but a few others are mentioned as well, scattered over time and around the world, such as the Great Depression, the assassination of John Kennedy, and the Clinton/Lewinsky affair. We created a single new variable that combined all such external events except the moon landing and analyzed it as we had other particular events. It seemed possible that this new “external events” variable would be related to higher education, regarded as an indicator of interest in the larger world, but no relation appears in a standard multiple logistic regression. Only two variables show an association, and these are both just barely significant ($p < .05$). First, more secular Israelis are likely to mention external events generally, just as occurred with the specific moon landing event. Second, women are more likely to mention external events than men, the opposite of what occurred with the moon landing. When we look at specific events within the variable,

however, the largest percentage difference involves disproportionate mention by women of the death of Princess Diane (one mention by a man, eight by women). There is no sign of a gender difference in either direction with regard to Kosovo or the fall of the Berlin Wall.

CONCLUSIONS

Asked to recall the national or world events of the past 60 years that seemed to them most important, Israeli Jews remembered first and foremost events that are commemorated in connection with the founding of Israel itself. If we sum the most frequently given *first* responses—the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel—they come to a third of all first mentions. To this we can add many of the World War II responses, some of which probably refer to the Holocaust and others to the emergence of Israel out of the war. Had Americans been asked the same question in the first half of the nineteenth century, they too might well have given priority to events from the American Revolution and the creation of the Republic.

Table II summarizes the main relationships discovered in our research, though the table cannot include some subtle features apparent in the figures and discussed in preceding pages. Each of the five social background factors that we drew on plays a distinctive role in explaining why one or more of the ten most frequently given events is recalled. Here we review and discuss the results that seem most interesting and important.

Cohort effects are the most easily interpreted results, as the relation usually appears because of the respondents who disproportionately remember an event they had personally experienced during their adolescence or early adulthood, as both generational theory and previously reported research would lead one to expect. This is true for the oldest cohorts in terms of remembering two early events, World War II and the establishment of the state in 1948; for the youngest cohorts in remembering two recent events, the assassination of Rabin and the Gulf War; and for cohorts middling in terms of birth year who tended to recall two events from the middle years of Israel's history, the Yom Kippur War and the peace with Egypt.

Of course, not every past event shows the exact cohort effect predicted, but as Lieberman (1992:7) urges, "If theories are posed in probabilistic terms, i.e., specifying that a given set of conditions will alter the likelihood of a given outcome, . . . [we will] be freed from assuming that negative evidence automatically means that a theory is wrong." Such negative evidence should, however, point to complicating factors that deserve to be pursued (Kendall and Wolf, 1955). The most important negative cohort result in our study is that for the Holocaust, where there is no evidence for the kind of generational

Table II. Summary of Statistically Significant Findings Between 10 Events and Cohort, Education, Gender, Ethnicity, and Religiosity*

	Cohort	Education	Gender	Ethnicity	Religiosity	Other
Establishment	Oldest	Higher	Men	Native-born	More orthodox	
Rabin	Youngest	Lower	Women	Second generation	More secular	Peres voters
Holocaust	No relation	No relation	No relation	First or second generation	Orthodox ^a	Personally affected
World War II	Oldest	Higher	Men	Europe/American origin	Secular	
Peace with Egypt	Middle	No relation	Women(?)	No relation	Secular	
Six-Day War	Middle and older	No relation	Men	No relation	More orthodox	
Yom Kippur War	Middle	No relation	Men	No relation	No relation	
Peace with Jordan	Middle(?)	No relation	Women	No relation	Secular	
First man on the moon	No relation	No relation	Men	Not Africa/Asia	Secular	
Gulf War	Youngest	No relation	No relation	Russians	Orthodox	

* $p < .05$. Question marks indicate nonsignificant trends.

^aCurvilinear: Those who are traditional are less likely to mention than the ultraorthodox, orthodox, or secular.

effect predicted for a very early event, once those who suffered personally are excluded. In this case the explanation seems clear: the success of the continuing efforts by the state and its institutions in keeping the meaning of the Holocaust alive for Israelis of all ages has nullified the effect due to cohort experience.

Education provides an alternative and competing way of learning about the distant past, and therefore years of schooling should be positively associated with memories of early events. This is indeed true for World War II and for the establishment of the state. On the other hand, the Rabin assassination was both recent and filled the news channels, so it is not surprising that mentioning it does not require educational achievement, and indeed it is associated with less than average schooling. The reason why some other events show no relation to educational level is less clear, but the absence of a relation for the Holocaust points again to the actions of the state: these start as early as kindergarten and involve annual public commemorations, so that higher education is not needed for the Holocaust to be brought readily to mind.

Gender relations are more difficult to interpret. Originally we thought in terms of socially sanctioned gender roles, as indeed may well be the case with men mentioning the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars more than do women. But in addition, it is difficult to avoid seeing certain results as fitting some patterned differences in terms of political interests, especially since much the same findings have appeared in other countries. Men are more likely than women to recall the same two early events that are associated with greater education, World War II and the establishment of the state, while women recall the Rabin assassination more than do men. The latter finding, along with the disproportionate mention by women of the peace treaty with Jordan and a similar trend for the treaty with Egypt suggests a more pacific attitude among women, though evidence from another study cited does not bear this out. We stress that these empirical findings do not identify underlying explanations for differences, which may have to do with socialization forces open to change.

Men and women also differ in their ranking of the events themselves, especially when considered separately by educational levels (high school or less versus some college or more). Women with more education and both more- and less-educated men mention the establishment most often and are similar in other ways, but less-educated women clearly give Rabin's assassination most often. Thus less-educated women especially gravitate to a recent tragic event that involved the peace process. Both Evans (1980) and Randall (1987) suggest that gender differences in apparent interest in politics may reflect a somewhat different conceptualization of what is important politically by men and women.

Religiosity also appears to have more than one meaning. In the case of the Gulf War, the higher mentions by the orthodox suggest their remembered fear of direct attack from Iraqi missiles. On most other events, the more orthodox are low relative to secular Israelis: they are less interested in the secular past (World War II); less concerned about Rabin's fate (the assassination); less apt to mention peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; less likely mention scientific exploration (the moon landing). However, they are more likely to see as important both the establishment of Israel and the Six-Day War, because we believe, the events have received a larger religious interpretation.

Ethnicity is the most difficult of the five social factors to summarize, largely because it does not provide a simple, ordinal scale of more and less, as do education and cohort, nor is it dichotomous, as is gender. But again personal experience seems important, because it is Israelis who were born in Israel of Israeli parents who are most apt to mention Rabin, a person who had become known over the years in a variety of leadership roles, not only as the recent prime minister. Likewise, World War II is recalled more

by those from American or European backgrounds, the areas of the world most directly involved in the war.

Although the use of these five social background factors provides considerable insight into why particular events are remembered as important by Israelis of different backgrounds, we recognize that people can have different reasons for choosing the same event. For most of the events, and especially for those like World War II, the Holocaust, and Rabin's assassination, it would be helpful in future research to explore with further open-ended questions the reasons people offer for their choices. In the one case where this was done for Americans (Schuman and Scott, 1989), it did not contradict the analysis by cohort and other variables, but it did throw additional light on the connections people made between an objective event and their own personal experiences.

An Illuminating Exception

In many ways our negative results for memories of the Holocaust are especially important for what they tell about Israeli memories now and in the future. First, of course, the Holocaust appears among the three most frequently offered events: third after the establishment of the state itself, and the assassination of Rabin, the latter a unique and traumatic recent event that symbolized major divisions within the country. But it is not the percentage of Israelis who mention the Holocaust that is most important, because, after all, well over half the sample did not offer it as one of the three most important events from the past. Rather, it is the pattern of relationships and nonrelationships that it shows that emphasizes its continuing significance today. For one thing, the fact that remembering the Holocaust does not depend on cohort experience means that it is not likely to fade from living memory as will most past events, including even World War II, which in Israel as elsewhere shows a clear dependence on age. Nor are memories of the Holocaust a function of advanced education, as is true of most events from the distant past in all countries that have been studied. Likewise, the Holocaust is equally remembered by men and women, unlike the establishment of the state and the assassination of Rabin, so it is not "gendered," and it has been learned as well by those who are children of immigrants as by those whose parents grew up in Israel. Finally, and especially important in a society increasingly divided along religious lines, the Holocaust shows an unusual relation to religiosity: it is mentioned most by those at the orthodox pole but then next most by those at the secular pole, so it is an event that provides some possibility of unity in memory rather than division.

All these findings suggest that the Holocaust—partly because of the powerful ways in which it continues to be commemorated for, and commu-

nicated to, both children and adults—remains a fundamental constituent of Israeli memory and therefore of Israeli identity. A 1993 study by Yair Auran found that 80% of the students in one college for training teachers—who in turn of course teach children—agreed with the statement that “we are all Holocaust survivors.” To an important degree, this sense of a historic victimization from six decades ago draws on both individual and collective memory to provide a common perspective for Israelis.²¹ In that sense the Holocaust becomes for many Israelis a question that history posed about the fate of the Jews, a question to which the establishment of the state and its continued strength is thought to provide an answer. Thus, remembering the Holocaust as one of the most important events from the past sixty years shows the effectiveness of state and related institutional actions in “keeping the past alive.”

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²¹Hirsch (1997) uses the term “postmemory” to refer to “the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth” (p. 22). For Hirsch this has to do with second-generation survivors of the Holocaust and similar traumas, but in Israel it now goes beyond second generation survivors to later generations and to “survivors” in a more vicarious sense.

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