

**Gays, Lesbians, and the Conservative Movement:  
The JTS Survey of Conservative Clergy, Students, Professionals, and Lay  
Leaders**

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January 28, 2007

## **The Context: The CJLS Teshuvot**

On December 6, 2006, the Commission on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of the Rabbinical Assembly announced it had accepted as valid three *teshuvot* pertaining to gays and lesbians serving as clergy and related matters. They may be described succinctly in simplified form as follows:

- One *teshuvah* reaffirmed the prior position of the CJLS, which denied ordination as clergy to active homosexuals and also prohibited same-sex commitment ceremonies or marriage.
- One *teshuvah*, while retaining the Torah's explicit prohibition as understood by the rabbis banning male homosexual intercourse, argued for the full normalization of the status of gay and lesbian Jews. Under this ruling, gay and lesbian Jews may be ordained as clergy and their committed relationships may be recognized, although not as sanctified marriage.
- A third *teshuvah* upheld the traditional prohibitions, argued that homosexuality is not a unitary condition, and urged the development of educational programs within the community to achieve understanding, compassion, and dignity for gays and lesbians.

Each of these positions is now valid within Conservative Judaism, and individual rabbis and Conservative institutions will choose which position to follow. In the wake of these *teshuvot* affirming a variety of views as consistent with Jewish law, The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) may now decide whether to accept gay and lesbian students in its rabbinical and cantorial degree programs. So as to inform its decision-making process, JTS, with the collaboration of the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), undertook a survey of leaders and activists in Conservative Judaism.

Professor Steven M. Cohen, of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Florence G. Heller / JCCA Research Center, volunteered to conduct the study, and he engaged Research Success, Inc. of Jerusalem to field the survey via the web, using lists of leaders and activists supplied or transmitted by JTS, the RA, and the USCJ.

## **The Data: A Web-based Survey of Conservative Leaders and Activists**

On December 20, 2006, we sent e-mail invitations to 18,676 email addresses of Conservative leaders and activists. The lists encompassed much of the top clerical, professional, and lay leadership of the Conservative Movement. These include: rabbis, cantors (furnished to JTS by the Cantors Assembly), educators (furnished to JTS by the Educators Assembly and the National Ramah Commission), USY advisers, executive directors, USCJ board members, presidents, and some congregational officers. It also included activists, such as nearly 8,000 who appear on the Koach list of college students who are or were connected with Conservative institutions.

The total number of individuals at these addresses is smaller by an unknown number than the 18,676 addresses. Several invitees maintain two or more email addresses on these lists, making it impossible to know the exact number of individuals contacted.

The web-administered survey elicited responses from 5,583 respondents. Of these, 4,861 derived from those explicitly invited. An additional 722 responded to a “public access” website, established in response to the strong interest on the part of leaders whose names did not appear on the list as well as members of the Conservative public who wished to register their views. The analysis treats the various constituencies separately, listing clergy, JTS students, professional, and lay leaders distinctly, and places much of the public access respondents and college and high-school students in a category labeled “other,”

Among the respondents are:

- 919 rabbis (or 63% of those on the Rabbinical Assembly email list),
- 211 cantors (or 47% of those on the Cantors Assembly email list),
- 255 JTS students (40% of all JTS students),
- 320 congregational presidents (or 41% of all Conservative presidents and co-presidents) and
- 135 executive directors (or 36% of all congregational executives).

Also responding were

- 648 educators (heads of school, teachers, Ramah directors, others),
- 155 USY advisers, and
- 1,732 lay leaders in Conservative Judaism (including the 320 presidents).

We mailed three follow-up reminders to the initial invitation that read as follows:

### **JTS Survey on Ordaining Gay Rabbis & Related Matters**

December 20, 2006

Dear Conservative Movement leaders and interested parties:

As you no doubt know, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards recently voted to accept three *teshuvot* on homosexuality in Judaism.

The faculty of The Jewish Theological Seminary is now thinking through its policy reactions to these decisions, in particular the question of whether to admit openly gay students for rabbinical and cantorial study. The effects of the CJLS decisions and JTS policy will be felt not only at JTS but also among our Conservative congregations and our rabbinate — indeed, across the entire movement.

We have asked Professor Steven M. Cohen to survey the views of various leadership constituencies within Conservative Judaism, and he has written the attached survey. We urge you to complete it at your earliest convenience.

Professor Cohen will publicly report the results to inform the movement and, of course, the JTS faculty. These results will be useful not only in terms of helping to make decisions about JTS policy, but also for congregations and rabbis to have as points of reference and for use in community discussions. The impact of this survey has the potential to reach across the entire Conservative Movement.

The survey is being co-sponsored by The Jewish Theological Seminary, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and the Rabbinical Assembly.

Arnold M. Eisen  
Chancellor-elect  
The Jewish Theological Seminary

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein  
Executive Vice President, USCJ

Rabbi Joel H. Meyers  
Executive Vice President, Rabbinical Assembly

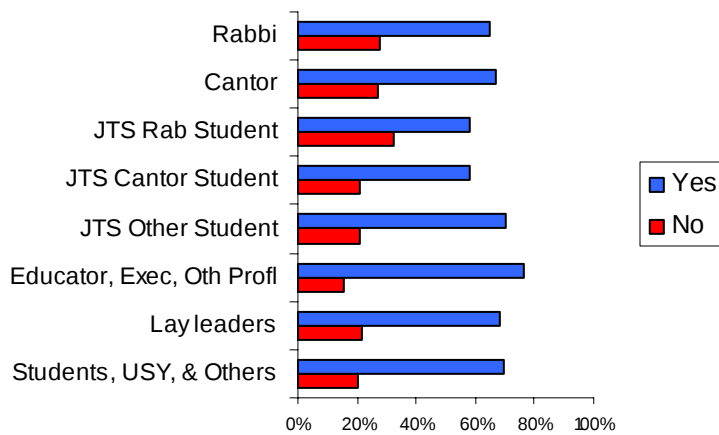
## The Findings

**Large majority favors gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors.** With respect to the key question on whether JTS ought to accept “openly gay and lesbian students,” rabbis are largely in favor (65% in favor to 28% opposed, with others unsure), as are the cantors by a similar margin (67% to 27%). JTS students also favor admitting gay and lesbian rabbinical students, but do so by smaller margins (58% to 32% for the rabbinical students; 58% to 21% for the cantorial students, and 70% to 21% for all other JTS students). Among Conservative educators, executive directors, and other professionals, the support for admittance is even more pronounced (76% to 16%), while lay leaders split 68% to 22%, and students, USY and others (largely public access respondents) divide 70% to 20%.

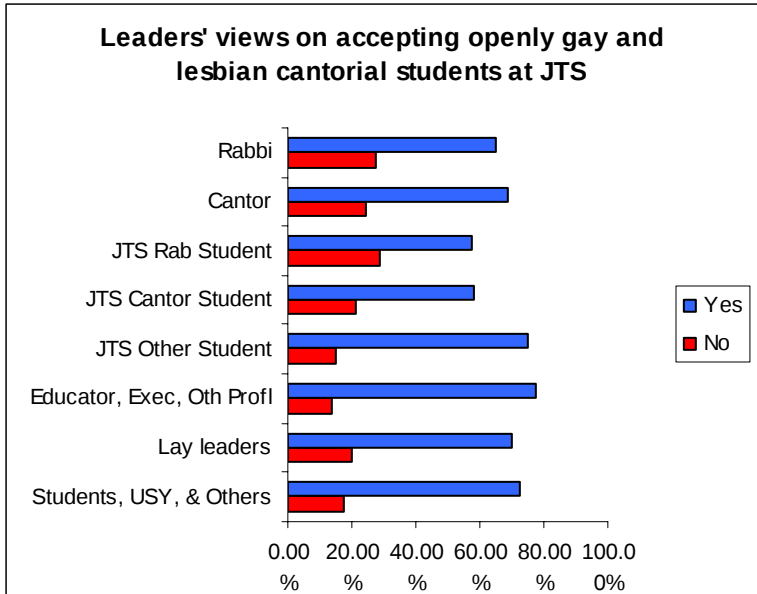
Among the rabbis, those who serve as the Mara d'Atra of their congregations are the least supportive of acceptance of gay clergy, dividing 62% in favor and 32% opposed. In contrast, their junior colleagues in congregational positions (such as associate or assistant rabbis) divide 76% to 15%. The difference results in part from age and gender differences: the more senior rabbis are more often older and male.

Views on admitting openly gay students for JTS cantorial studies follow similar patterns. Rabbis divide 65% to 27%, cantors 69% to 24%, and current JTS cantorial students 58% to 21%. In general reactions to any of these sorts of questions on rabbis and cantors were nearly identical. In addition, those who favored gay people serving as rabbis and cantors, not surprisingly, invariably supported admitting them for rabbinical and cantorial study at JTS and other Conservative training institutions. However, slightly more favored admitting such students at UJ than at JTS, and slightly fewer favored admitting them at Machon Schechter than JTS.

### Leaders' views on accepting openly gay and lesbian students at JTS



| Should JTS accept openly gay & lesbian students for rabbinical study? |                                    | Yes | No  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Leadership Group                                                      | Rabbi                              | 65% | 28% |
|                                                                       | Cantor                             | 67% | 27% |
|                                                                       | JTS Rabbinical Student             | 58% | 32% |
|                                                                       | JTS Cantor Student                 | 58% | 21% |
|                                                                       | JTS Other Student                  | 70% | 21% |
|                                                                       | Educator, Exec, Other Professional | 76% | 16% |
|                                                                       | Lay leaders                        | 68% | 22% |
|                                                                       | Students, USY, & Others            | 70% | 20% |



| Should JTS accept openly gay & lesbian students for cantorial study? |                                    | Yes | No  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Leadership Group                                                     | Rabbi                              | 65% | 27% |
|                                                                      | Cantor                             | 69% | 24% |
|                                                                      | JTS Rabbinical Student             | 58% | 29% |
|                                                                      | JTS Cantor Student                 | 58% | 21% |
|                                                                      | JTS Other Student                  | 75% | 15% |
|                                                                      | Educator, Exec, Other Professional | 78% | 14% |
|                                                                      | Lay leaders                        | 70% | 20% |
|                                                                      | Students, USY, & Others            | 72% | 18% |

**Professional leaders most accepting of gays; clergy the least.** As can be seen from the results above, the leadership constituencies within Conservative Jewry differ in the extent to which they favor the acceptance of gays and lesbians as rabbis, cantors, or other leaders within Conservative Judaism. Professional leaders (educators, executives, etc.) are the most favorably inclined. They in turn are followed by lay leaders (presidents of congregations, USCJ board members, congregational board members, etc.). Of all leadership constituencies, the least favorably inclined to accept gays and lesbians as religious or communal leaders are the clerical leaders, a group consisting of rabbis, cantors, and JTS students — all of whom have relatively similar views on the relevant issues.

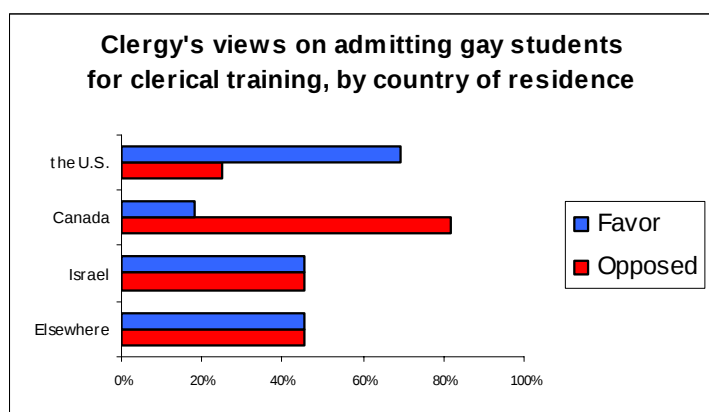
**Substantial variation by country, gender, age, and observance.** Variations in views on the acceptability gay clergy by region, gender, age, observance, and other key dimensions are consistent across the various leadership constituencies. That is, whether we are speaking of clergy (rabbis and cantors), JTS students, educators, executive directors, lay leaders, or active members of the Conservative public, we find that support for accepting gay and lesbian students for clerical study at JTS is:

- higher in the US than Canada, Israel, or elsewhere in the world;
- higher among women than among men;
- higher among younger people than among older people (among those 25 and over);
- higher among the less observant than among the more observant.

**A note on presentation.** For clarity of presentation, going forward, this narrative focuses on the responses of the 1,130 clergy respondents (919 rabbis and 211 cantors). Rabbis and cantors hold very similar views regarding the central questions this study addresses. This combined group holds views that are slightly less supportive of accepting gays as clergy than other leaders such as congregational presidents, educators, and executive directors. While much of the analysis focuses on the views of the clergy, the more detailed tables below report on all constituencies.

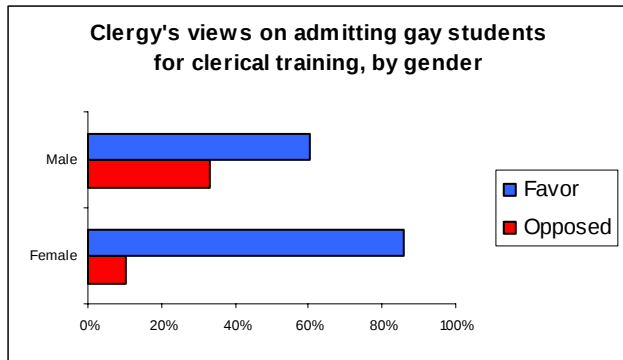
Central to the analysis is a scale that measures support for, or opposition to, accepting gays and lesbians as rabbis and cantors. This scale combines answers to four parallel questions on accepting gay people as rabbis and cantors, the results of which are highly correlated.

**American exceptionalism.** The U.S. and Canadian clergy stand at opposite poles on the issue. The American rabbis and cantors heavily favor accepting gay and lesbian students for clerical study at JTS, and the Canadians even more heavily oppose this step, with a 69% to 25% margin in the United States and an 18% to 82% divide in Canada. Meanwhile, their counterparts in Israel and elsewhere are evenly divided on the question.



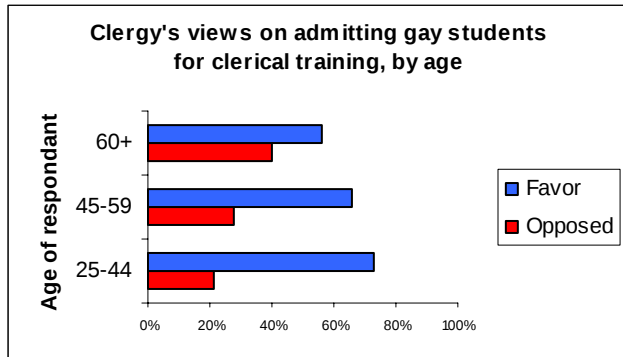
| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |           |           | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Residence | U.S.      | 70%   | 25%     |
|                                                                  |           | Canada    | 18%   | 82%     |
|                                                                  |           | Israel    | 45%   | 45%     |
|                                                                  |           | Elsewhere | 45%   | 45%     |

The **gender gap** is large as well: Men divide on the issue of gay rabbis and cantors 60% in favor to 33% opposed. Women are more heavily pro-acceptance, by a margin of 86% to 10%.



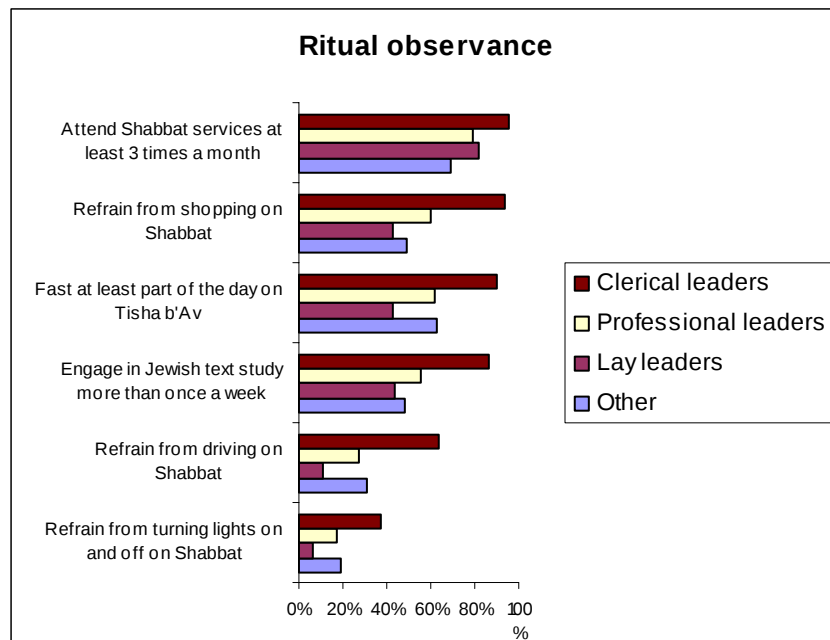
| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |     |        | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Sex | Male   | 60%   | 33 %    |
|                                                                  |     | Female | 86%   | 10%     |

**Younger leaders more supportive.** Opposition to accepting gay and lesbian clergy drops from 40% among those rabbis and cantors age 60+ to half that number among those 25–44. With that said, JTS rabbinical and cantorial students are *less* supportive of accepting gays as fellow classmates than rabbis and cantors in the field, who graduated JTS some years earlier.



| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |     |       | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Age | 60+   | 56%   | 40%     |
|                                                                  |     | 45-59 | 66%   | 28%     |
|                                                                  |     | 25-44 | 73%   | 21%     |

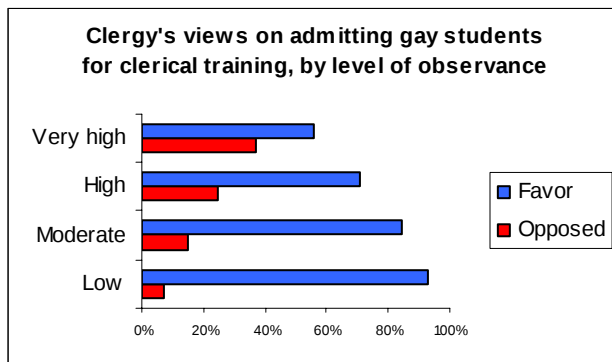
**Less support among the more observant.** In the 1970s, more-observant Conservative leaders were opposed to ordaining women rabbis, suggesting to many that similar patterns may apply to the issue of gays and lesbians. To test this hypothesis, the questionnaire asked about ritual and other practices that, while they would be inappropriate and too demanding for a study of the Jewish public, serve current analytic purposes in that they statistically differentiate rabbis, cantors, and other highly observant members of the Conservative movement. Examples include: engaging in text study weekly, saying daily prayers at least three times a week, and refraining from eating cooked food (e.g., fish) in a non-kosher restaurant.



|                                                   | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Attend Shabbat services at least 3 times a month  | 95%              | 79%                  | 82%         | 69%   |
| Refrain from shopping on Shabbat                  | 94%              | 60%                  | 43%         | 49%   |
| Fast at least part of the day on Tisha b'Av       | 90%              | 62%                  | 43%         | 63%   |
| Engage in Jewish text study more than once a week | 86%              | 55%                  | 44%         | 48%   |
| Refrain from driving to shul on Shabbat           | 64%              | 27%                  | 11%         | 31%   |
| Refrain from turning lights on, on                | 37%              | 17%                  | 6%          | 19%   |

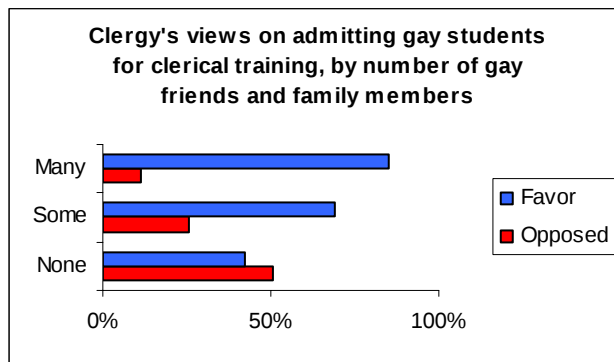
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| Shabbat |  |  |  |  |
|---------|--|--|--|--|

Using a scale constructed from these measures, we find a steady decline in enthusiasm for accepting gays as rabbis and cantors as observance levels increase. Among the least observant, supporters outnumber opponents 93% to 7%. Among the most observant, supporters outnumber opponents 56% to 37%.



| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |                  |           | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Observance level | Very high | 56%   | 37%     |
|                                                                  |                  | High      | 70%   | 24%     |
|                                                                  |                  | Moderate  | 84%   | 15%     |
|                                                                  |                  | Low       | 93%   | 7%      |

Not surprisingly, support for admitting gay and lesbian students rises with the number of **friends and family members** who are gay. Of those reporting no such relationships (23% of the clergy), opponents actually outnumber supporters by a margin of 50% to 43%. In contrast, among those with many gay friends and family members (17% of the clergy), positions are sharply reversed with supporters outnumbering opponents by a margin of 84% to 12%.



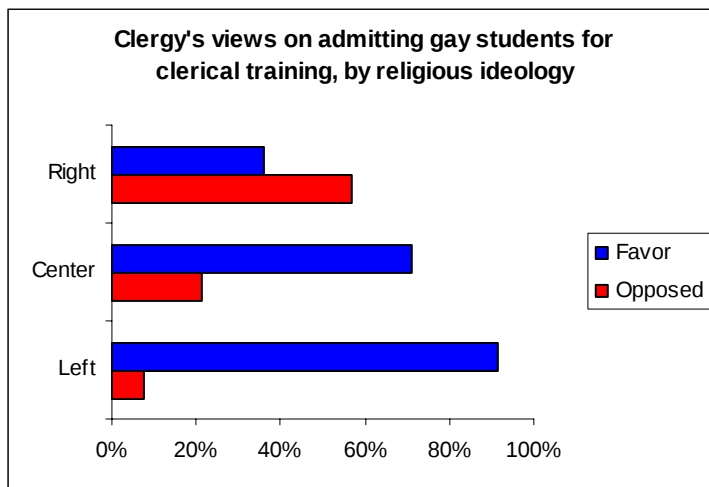
| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |                              |      | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Knowing gay family & friends | Many | 84%   | 12%     |
|                                                                  |                              | Some | 68%   | 26%     |
|                                                                  |                              | None | 43%   | 50%     |

**The power of conservative-liberal ideology.** Further analyses demonstrated that two attitudes in particular most strongly influence one's position on admitting gay and lesbian students:

- self-defined ideology (conservative, moderate, liberal)
- support for women as Conservative rabbis and cantors.

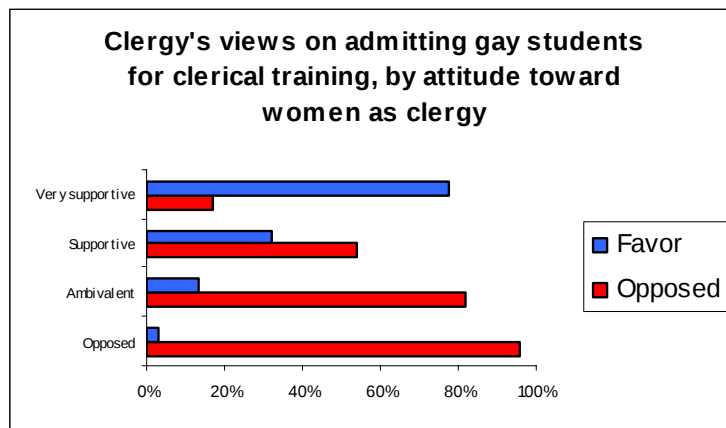
These two factors explain nearly all the gaps and variations by socio-demographic dimensions noted above.

We asked respondents two related questions: to compare themselves “theologically” and with respect to “observance” “to other Conservative leaders in a similar position or status as yourself,” offering three options: conservative, moderate/centrist, and liberal. Those who see themselves as relatively conservative on theological and observance issues (35% of the clergy) oppose admitting gay and lesbian students by a margin of 57% to 36%. In contrast, those with a liberal self-definition (34% of the clergy) favor the move by a margin of 91% to 8%.



| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |                               |        | Favor | Oppose |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Left-right religious ideology | Right  | 36%   | 57%    |
|                                                                  |                               | Center | 71%   | 22%    |
|                                                                  |                               | Left   | 91%   | 8%     |

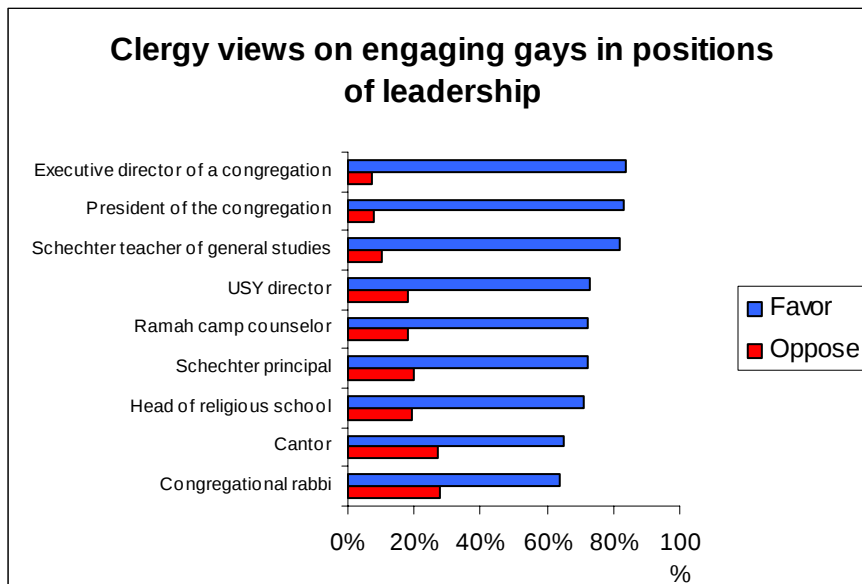
**The power of support for women as clergy.** Many speculate that support for women as clergy should be related to support for gay people as clergy. To test this hypothesis, we asked respondents to react to the view, “I would not want a woman to serve as rabbi of my congregation.” Of the clergy and JTS students, 65% disagreed, consistent with support for women serving as rabbis, while 25% agreed, indicative of opposition to women rabbis. A parallel question on cantors elicited nearly identical responses. The two questions yielded a scale that is strongly related to support for gay people as clergy. Of the many rabbis and cantors (81% of all) who are very supportive of women rabbis and cantors, 78% support gay people as clergy, with just 17% opposed. Of the few who are most opposed to women as rabbis and cantors (7% of the clergy), the comparable margin shifts to just 3% in favor of gay clergy versus 96% opposed. In fact, any hesitation (an answer of “somewhat agree” on either question on women clergy) is associated with a sharp drop-off in support for gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors.



| Admitting gay and lesbian students for clerical training at JTS? |                                 |                 | Favor | Opposed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------|---------|
| Rabbis & Cantors                                                 | Attitude toward women as clergy | Very supportive | 78%   | 17%     |
|                                                                  |                                 | Supportive      | 32%   | 53%     |
|                                                                  |                                 | Ambivalent      | 17%   | 79%     |
|                                                                  |                                 | Opposed         | 3%    | 96%     |

### Highest acceptance for gay executives and presidents; lowest for clergy.

Support for gay people in position of Conservative leadership varies with the position under consideration, with such positions as executive director or president of a congregation eliciting the highest levels of acceptance. Among rabbis and cantors 83% favor allowing gay people to serve in these positions versus just 8% opposed. The level of acceptance is somewhat less for educational positions (e.g., 72% to 19% for Schechter principals), and is lowest for rabbis (where 65% favor and 28% oppose).



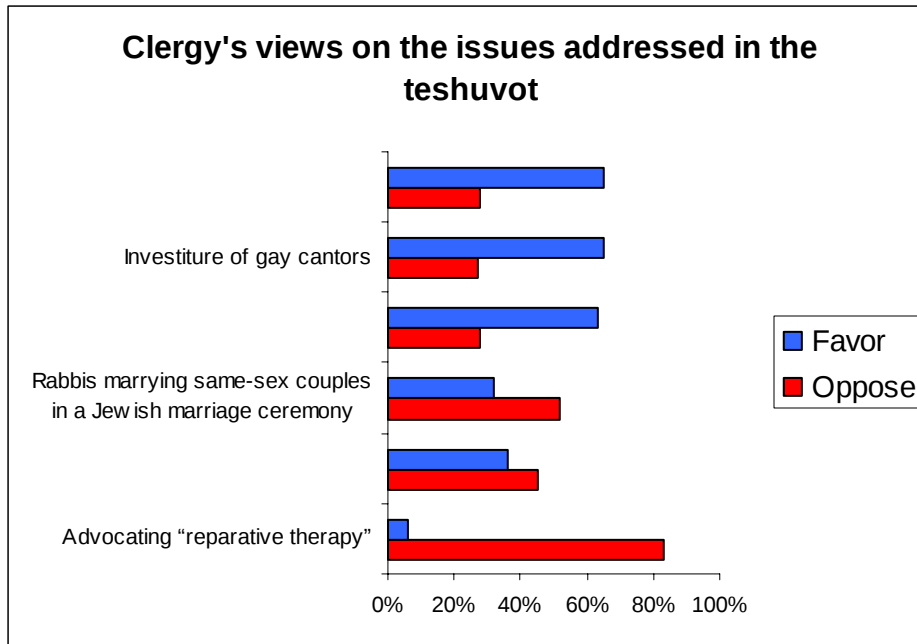
|                                      |        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Executive director of a congregation | Favor  | 84%              | 84%                  | 78%         | 82%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 7%               | 6%                   | 9%          | 8%    |
| President of the congregation        | Favor  | 83%              | 85%                  | 77%         | 82%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 8%               | 6%                   | 9%          | 8%    |
| Schechter teacher of general studies | Favor  | 82%              | 82%                  | 72%         | 81%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 10%              | 8%                   | 14%         | 9%    |
| USY director                         | Favor  | 73%              | 76%                  | 64%         | 78%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 18%              | 12%                  | 21%         | 13%   |
| Ramah camp counselor                 | Favor  | 72%              | 75%                  | 63%         | 76%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 18%              | 12%                  | 21%         | 13%   |
| Schechter principal                  | Favor  | 72%              | 76%                  | 66%         | 74%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 19%              | 13%                  | 20%         | 16%   |
| Head of religious school             | Favor  | 72%              | 76%                  | 65%         | 74%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 19%              | 13%                  | 21%         | 16%   |
| Cantor                               | Favor  | 66%              | 75%                  | 65%         | 68%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 27%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 20%   |
| Congregational rabbi                 | Favor  | 65%              | 74%                  | 62%         | 65%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 28%              | 18%                  | 27%         | 24%   |

**Range of views on the issues faced by the CJLS.** The question of whether gay people may serve as rabbis captured most of the attention of the press and public. But beyond this specific question, in its three *teshuvot*, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards dealt with a range of issues concerning halakhah and homosexuality. The survey addressed respondents' views on these issues as well.

Consistent with the margins who support or oppose gay clergy reported above, by about two-thirds to one third, clerical leaders (a category embracing rabbis, cantors, and JTS students, all of whom hold similar views) support ordaining gay rabbis and the investiture of gay cantors.

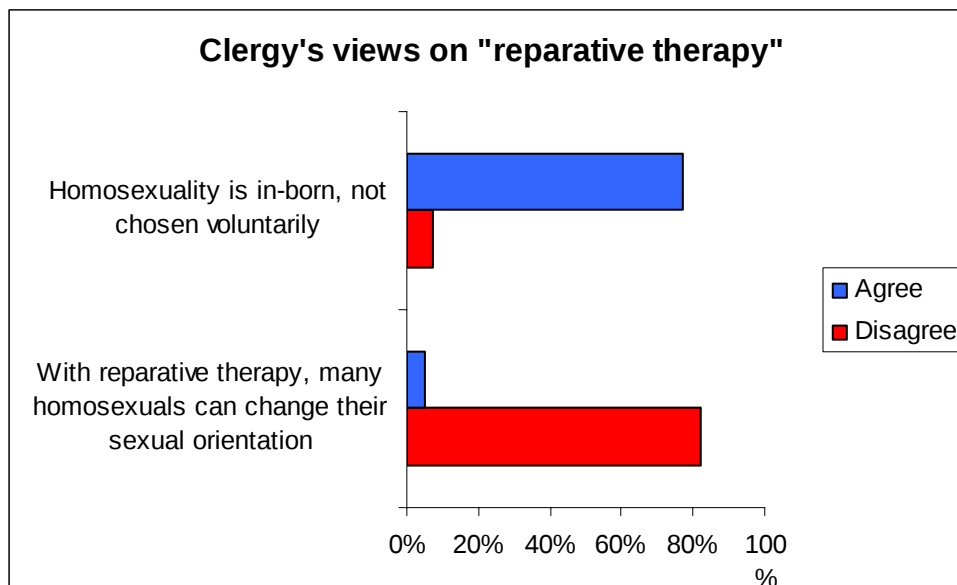
They divide in similar number with respect to whether rabbi should perform **same-sex commitment ceremonies** (63% in favor, 28% opposed). In parallel, asked whether they would personally attend “a same-sex Jewish commitment ceremony,” 65% of the rabbis, cantors and JTS students responded they would do so; while 25% would not attend such ceremonies. But, while the majority accepts same-sex commitment ceremonies, they reject rabbis performing same-sex Jewish marriage ceremonies (31% favor, 52% oppose). In other words, the central tendency among rabbis, cantors, and JTS students is to favor rabbis performing same-sex commitment ceremonies but to reject their performing marriage ceremonies.

All three *teshuvot*, even the one regarded as most “permissive,” reject male penetration as a sexual act contrary to Jewish law. In contrast, a slim plurality of the rabbis, cantors, and JTS students oppose the prohibition on “**male homosexual intercourse**,” the term used in the survey. While 36% of the clerical leaders and students favor the ban, 44% oppose it, in effect, adopting a more “liberal” position than that reflected in the CJLS *teshuvot*.



|                                                                |        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Ordination of gay rabbis                                       | Favor  | 65%              | 74%                  | 66%         | 68%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 27%              | 18%                  | 24%         | 23%   |
| Investiture of gay cantors                                     | Favor  | 66%              | 75%                  | 67%         | 69%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 26%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 20%   |
| Rabbis performing same-sex commitment ceremonies               | Favor  | 63%              | 76%                  | 68%         | 70%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 28%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 21%   |
| Rabbis marrying same-sex couples in a Jewish marriage ceremony | Favor  | 31%              | 48%                  | 36%         | 48%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 52%              | 33%                  | 46%         | 36%   |
| Prohibiting "male homosexual intercourse"                      | Favor  | 36%              | 21%                  | 30%         | 27%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 44%              | 55%                  | 45%         | 51%   |
| Advocating "reparative therapy"                                | Favor  | 6%               | 3%                   | 5%          | 3%    |
|                                                                | Oppose | 83%              | 89%                  | 84%         | 87%   |

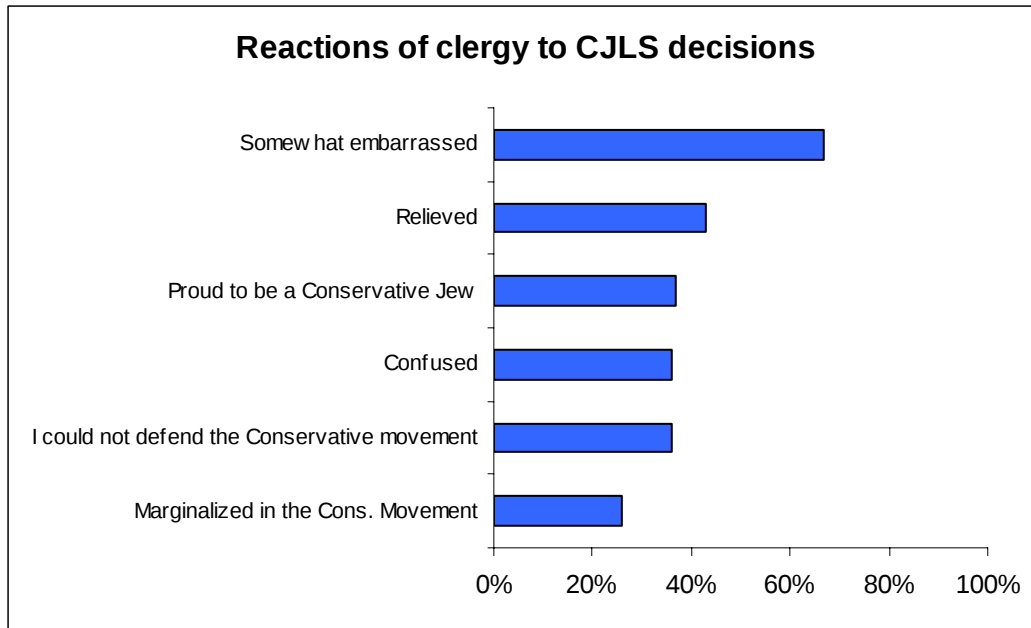
Reports in the press characterized one of the *teshuvot* as advocating “**reparative therapy**,” where attempts are made to help those homosexuals who so wish to adopt a heterosexual lifestyle. The notion of advocating reparative therapy is widely rejected, with just 6% of the clerical leaders in favor and as many as 83% opposed. On another similar question, the vast majority rejected the idea that, “With reparative therapy, many homosexuals can change their sexual orientation.” In like fashion, a wide margin (77% agree, 7% disagree) agrees that “homosexuality is in-born, not chosen voluntarily.”



|                                                                               |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Homosexuality is in-born, not chosen voluntarily                              | Agree    | 77%              | 82%                  | 78%         | 80%   |
|                                                                               | Disagree | 7%               | 4%                   | 7%          | 6%    |
| With reparative therapy, many homosexuals can change their sexual orientation | Agree    | 5%               | 2%                   | 3%          | 3%    |
|                                                                               | Disagree | 82%              | 89%                  | 86%         | 88%   |

The survey asked respondents for their **reactions to the *teshuvot***. Most (67% of the clerical leaders) were “somewhat embarrassed,” a reaction shared by supporters and opponents of liberalizing the stance toward homosexuals, but one more frequent among opponents and those who describe themselves as theologically conservative. The opponents of liberalization also contributed heavily to the 36% of the total number of rabbis, cantors, and JTS students who felt they “could not defend the stance of the Conservative movement,” as they did to the 26% who felt “marginalized in the Conservative movement.” In contrast, 43% of the clerical leadership constituency (rabbis, cantors, and JTS students) felt “relieved,” and 37% said they were “proud to be a Conservative Jew.”

The pattern of reactions to the *teshuvot* — positive feelings (e.g., “relieved”) among the supporters of gay ordination and negative feelings (e.g., “marginalized”) among the opponents — testify to how the CJLS decisions were understood. Two of the *teshuvot* reaffirmed the historic opposition to gays and lesbians serving as rabbis and cantors. One decision took the opposite view. Based on how the respondents said they felt about the *teshuvot* as a whole, and their reactions, it can be inferred that the Conservative leadership and public understood the *teshuvot* primarily as liberalizing the previously held restrictions on gays and lesbians in Conservative Judaism.



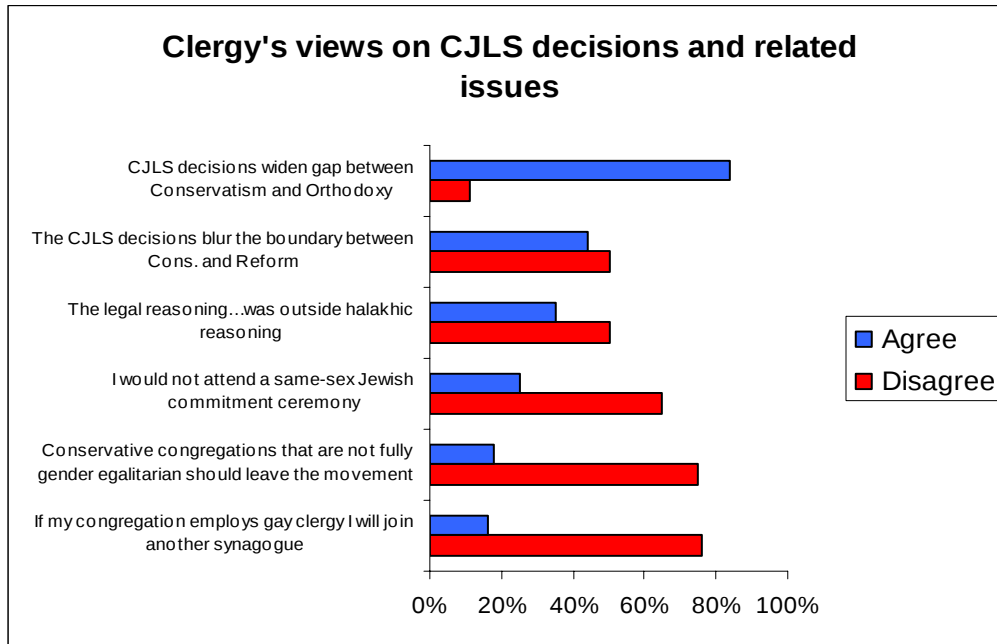
In which of the following ways did you react when you heard of the CJLS decisions?

|                                                            | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Somewhat embarrassed                                       | 67%              | 59%                  | 58%         | 57%   |
| Relieved                                                   | 43%              | 38%                  | 32%         | 35%   |
| Proud to be a Conservative Jew                             | 37%              | 36%                  | 38%         | 33%   |
| Confused                                                   | 36%              | 51%                  | 52%         | 53%   |
| I could not defend the stance of the Conservative movement | 36%              | 34%                  | 36%         | 36%   |
| Marginalized in the Conservative Movement                  | 26%              | 20%                  | 23%         | 22%   |

**Strong views among polarized minorities.** Overall, on the question of accepting gays and lesbians as rabbis and cantors, the clerical leadership split roughly two-to-one in favor and other constituencies were even more favorably inclined in the same direction. That said, the survey also uncovered evidence of very strongly held views in both directions.

Thus, echoing remarks by one of the rabbis who resigned from the CJLS following adoption of the *teshuvot*, 35% of the clerical leaders agreed that, “The legal reasoning in the permissive paper that was approved by the CJLS was outside the pale of acceptability of halakhic reasoning.” While 50% rejected this proposition, it cannot be denied that about half the rabbis, cantors, and JTS students have some doubts as to whether the liberalizing stance is compatible with Jewish law. Going beyond this level of opposition, we find that a small minority (16%) would join another synagogue “if my congregation employs gay rabbis and cantors.” In fact, in such a circumstance, 10% said they would join another movement (presumably Orthodoxy).

If opponents of liberalization count among them people with very strongly held views, so too do the supporters of admitting gays and lesbians as rabbis and cantors. Asked for their views on the proposition that, “Conservative congregations that won’t hire gay rabbis or cantors should leave the movement,” 80% of the rabbis, cantors, and JTS students disagreed, but 10% agreed. (On a related issue, support for excluding “congregations that are not fully gender egalitarian” reaches 18% among the clerical leadership.) While most (62%) would want the four rabbis who resigned from the CJLS in opposition to the more permissive *teshuvah* to return to the Commission, a minority (15%) would rather they did not. As many as 39% believe that the “CJLS decisions did not go far enough in legitimizing gay relationships.” Moreover, they comprise a majority of those favoring the move toward liberalization and acceptance of gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors. Both sides, then, contain some (about 10% or more of the total) who may well see the other sides’ view as totally antithetical to Conservative Judaism, as they understand it.



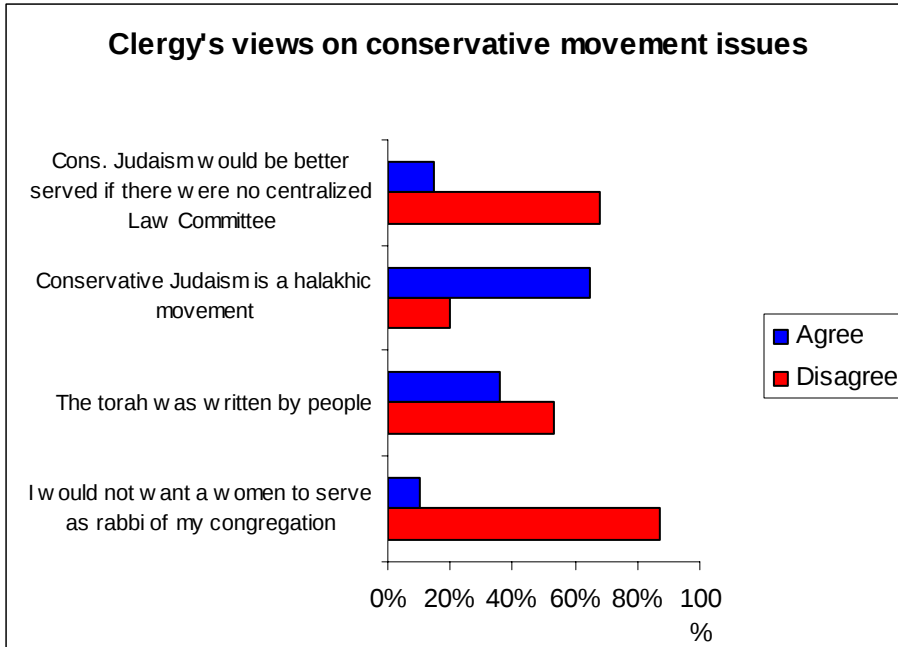
|                                                                                                                              |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| The CJLS decisions widen the gap between Conservatism & Orthodoxy                                                            | Agree    | 84%              | 81%                  | 85%         | 80%   |
|                                                                                                                              | Disagree | 11%              | 11%                  | 8%          | 10%   |
| The CJLS decisions blur the boundary between Conservative and Reform Judaism                                                 | Agree    | 44%              | 34%                  | 39%         | 39%   |
|                                                                                                                              | Disagree | 50%              | 55%                  | 49%         | 48%   |
| The legal reasoning in the permissive paper approved by the CJLS was outside the pale of acceptability of halakhic reasoning | Agree    | 35%              | 25%                  | 29%         | 28%   |
|                                                                                                                              | Disagree | 50%              | 42%                  | 41%         | 35%   |
| I would not attend a same-sex Jewish commitment ceremony                                                                     | Agree    | 25%              | 13%                  | 19%         | 16%   |
|                                                                                                                              | Disagree | 65%              | 79%                  | 71%         | 74%   |
| Conservative congregations that are not fully gender egalitarian should leave the movement                                   | Agree    | 18%              | 25%                  | 19%         | 24%   |
|                                                                                                                              | Disagree | 75%              | 64%                  | 72%         | 60%   |
| If my congregation em-                                                                                                       | Agree    | 16%              | 10%                  | 15%         | 14%   |

|                                                            |          |     |     |     |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| employs gay rabbis & cantors I will join another synagogue | Disagree | 76% | 83% | 74% | 74% |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|

**Implications for the future of the movement.** As we have seen, the leaders of Conservative Jewry — be they clerical, professional, or lay — largely support accepting gay and lesbian Jews as rabbis, cantors, educators, professionals, and lay leaders, as well as accepting them for study in the JTS rabbinical and cantorial degree programs. While they are supportive overall, a substantial minority — about one third with a clear view on the matter — oppose the move to greater liberalization. And on both sides of the question are more militant minorities, many of whom feel their ideological opponents may not legitimately belong within Conservative Judaism.

In fact, not a few ideological conservatives in the movement who opposed the *teshuvah* liberalizing restrictions on gays and lesbians are anxious about the prospect of further movement to the ideological left. In their view, the decision to ordain women rabbis in 1983, followed by the CJLS *teshuvot* in 2006, implies that the movement is on a path to even greater liberalization in the years to come.

Consistent with these concerns, a considerable minority of the clerical leadership agree that, “The CJLS decisions blur the boundary between Conservative and Reform Judaism;” as many as 42% agree, and 49% disagree. Further testifying to the concerns of the opponents of the more “permissive” decision, as some have termed it, is that almost all of them (90%) hold this belief. In addition, the vast majority of rabbis, cantors, and JTS students believe, “The CJLS decisions widen the gap between Conservatism and Orthodoxy”; 83% agree and just 11% disagree. Thus, the decisions clearly raise the possibility among many that the Conservative movement has taken a more to the theological left, further parting company with the Orthodox, and further approaching the Reform movement. To what extent do the positions of the clerical leaders on other matters validate or vitiate this concern?



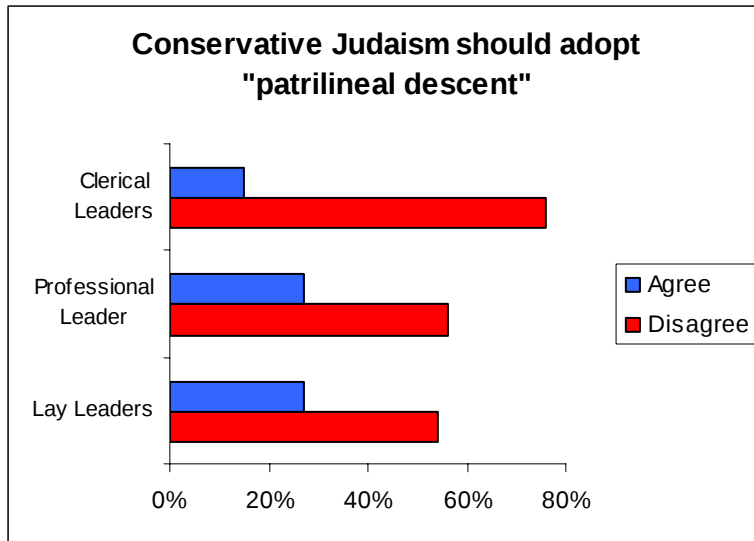
|                                                                                        |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Conservative Judaism would be better served if there were no centralized Law Committee | Agree    | 15%              | 8%                   | 7%          | 8%    |
|                                                                                        | Disagree | 68%              | 65%                  | 69%         | 60%   |
| Conservative Judaism is a halakhic movement                                            | Agree    | 65%              | 64%                  | 67%         | 59%   |
|                                                                                        | Disagree | 20%              | 16%                  | 12%         | 16%   |
| The Torah was written by people and not by God or by Divine inspiration                | Agree    | 36%              | 39%                  | 42%         | 36%   |
|                                                                                        | Disagree | 53%              | 42%                  | 38%         | 41%   |
| I would not want a woman to serve as rabbi of my congregation                          | Agree    | 8%               | 9%                   | 8%          | 14%   |
|                                                                                        | Disagree | 89%              | 86%                  | 87%         | 80%   |

In fact, majorities remain united in support of more traditional stances in several areas, as well as in support of ordaining women as rabbis, reflecting a decision taken by the movement in the 1980s. The survey found that large majorities support the following positions (numbers in parentheses refer to the views of rabbis, cantors, and JTS students aggregated together):

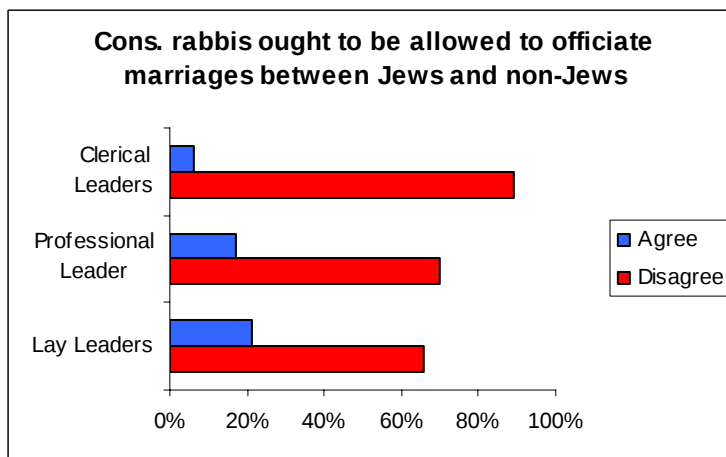
- “Conservative Judaism is a halakhic movement” (65% agree; 20% disagree).
- The centralized Law Committee should continue (68% versus 15%).
- The movement should reject “patrilineal descent” (76% / 15%).
- Rabbis should NOT officiate at mixed marriages (89% / 6%); and
- Women should be allowed to serve as Conservative rabbis and cantors (89% versus 8%).

In short, division with respect to gay ordination is accompanied by relative consensus with respect to several key questions. That a majority favors a “liberal” stance regarding gays and lesbians does not translate into a “liberal” stance with respect to patrilineal descent and intermarriage.

As a group, the rabbis, cantors, and JTS students are more traditionally inclined than the nonclerical leaders. With respect to patrilineal descent and rabbinic officiation at Jewish/non-Jewish marriages, lay and professional leaders adopt somewhat less traditional views than do the rabbis, cantors, and JTS students, in parallel with the differences on gays and lesbians.

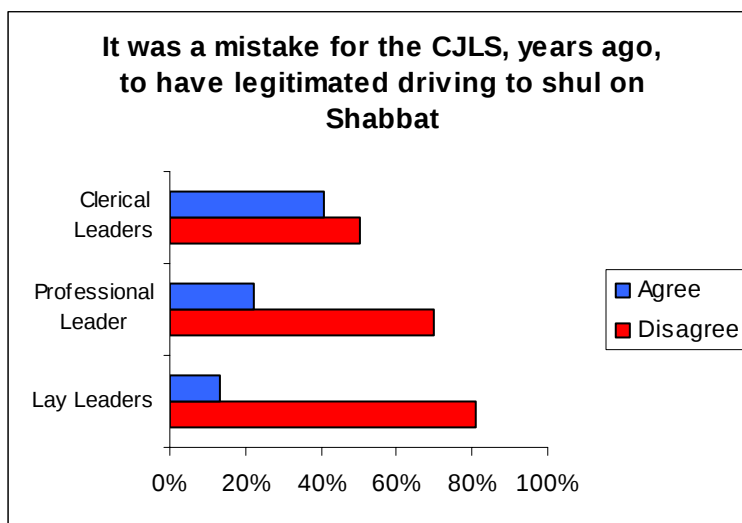


|                                                         |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Conservative Judaism should adopt "patrilineal descent" | Agree    | 15%              | 27%                  | 27%         | 24%   |
|                                                         | Disagree | 76%              | 56%                  | 54%         | 58%   |



|                                                                                             |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Conservative rabbis ought to be allowed to officiate at marriages between Jews and non-Jews | Agree    | 6%               | 17%                  | 21%         | 21%   |
|                                                                                             | Disagree | 89%              | 70%                  | 66%         | 63%   |

If there is one bellwether issue where rabbis, cantors, and JTS students are divided it is with respect to the CJLS Responsum on the Sabbath in 1950 (and clarified in 1960) to, in effect, allow congregants to ride to shul on Shabbat. As many as 41% of the clerical leaders agree (and 50%) disagree that, “It was a mistake for the CJLS, years ago, to have legitimated driving to shul on Shabbat.” As might be expected, the clergy is far more observant than lay or professional leaders, both with respect to riding to shul on Shabbat and more generally.



|                                                                                          |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| It was a mistake for the CJLS, years ago, to have legitimated driving to shul on Shabbat | Agree    | 41%              | 22%                  | 13%         | 27%   |
|                                                                                          | Disagree | 50%              | 70%                  | 81%         | 61%   |

Taken together, this evidence supports two inferences that stand in opposition to some widely shared concerns for the future of the Conservative movement:

- 1) Notwithstanding the divisions over the question of gay rabbis and cantors, the Conservative movement, particularly its clergy, remains united on several other critical issues, among them: the role of women, patrilineal descent, intermarriage, and the centrality of halakhah.

- 2) Notwithstanding the sense that the recently adopted *teshuvot* will shift the Conservative Movement to the ideological left (by becoming more distant from Orthodoxy and less distinct from Reform), the evidence suggests adherence to several traditional positions. Large majorities of the Conservative clergy reject patrilineal descent or rabbinic officiation at intermarriages, in sharp contrast with positions within the Reform movement. Moreover, a large minority of Conservative rabbis, cantors, and JTS students regret the decision allowing Conservative Jews to ride to services on Shabbat, consistent with the views of their Orthodox counterparts.

Splintering and further leftward movement may, of course, still ensue. But little in the current evidence suggests that such eventualities are imminent.

## **Concluding Reflections**

Clear majorities of all leadership constituencies in the Conservative Movement support the admission by JTS of gay and lesbian students to study for ordination as rabbis and investiture as cantors. Rabbis, cantors, and JTS students hold similar positions on the matter, with about two thirds of those expressing a view supporting admission, and about a third opposing the change in the ban on accepting openly gay rabbinic and cantorial students. JTS students are slightly less supportive of this change than are rabbis and cantors already in the field. That said, the laity and the professional leadership of Conservative Jewry (such as educators and executive directors of congregations) register even more support, and less opposition, than do the clerical leaders.

Support for admitting openly gay and lesbian students is higher among Americans than elsewhere (especially Canada), higher among women, higher among younger people, higher among the less observant, and higher among those with gay friends and family members. Support for gays and lesbians in Jewish leadership roles is higher for gay people as educators than as clergy, and higher for lay and professional leadership than for educators.

Two attitudes are especially important for predicting who favors and who opposes openly gay and lesbian clergy. One attitude entails the distinction between those who describe themselves as ideologically conservative, moderate, or liberal with respect to theology and observance. The other critical attitude entails the distinction between those who fully support women as rabbis and cantors, and those with some hesitations or opposition. The strongest supporters of accepting gay and lesbian Jews as clergy are self-defined liberals who support women as rabbis and cantors. The strongest opponents are self-defined conservatives who oppose women in these religious leadership roles.

Among opponents and supporters of changing current policy are minorities with very strongly held views. These more outspoken minorities on both sides see their opposite number as falling outside the legitimate bounds of Conservative Judaism, as

they understand it. Any decisions taken (or not taken) by JTS or other Conservative leaders and institutions are almost certain to provoke disappointment in some quarters.

But while polarities exist, most Conservative leaders remain united on the centrality of halakhah to Conservative Judaism as well as with respect to several potentially divisive issues, such as opposition to intermarriage and patrilineal descent, and in favor of women as clergy. These areas of consensus provide the basis for shaping consensus and direction in the years ahead.

## Detailed Distributions: Frequencies for Four Constituencies

Respondents to this study consisted of 5,583 in all. They occupy a variety of positions in the movement consisting of senior clerical and lay leaders, as well as activists and members of the public who could participate in a site designed for public access. A preliminary examination of the response patterns to the key questions in the study suggested that we could create four groups consisting of several sub-groups, as follows:

Clerical leaders: Rabbis, Cantors, and Students at JTS

Professional leaders: Educators (heads of school, teachers, Ramah directors, USY advisors), executive directors of congregations, and Jewish communal professionals

Lay leaders: Others (not listed above) who are presidents of congregations, members of the USCJ Board of Directors, congregational board members, and other leaders

Others: No leadership position, college students (primarily on the Koach list), and those who arrived by way of the public access website.

The results for these four constituencies are tabulated below.

### Detailed Results

#### Your Position in Conservative Judaism

|                                                   | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Are members of the Board of Directors of the USCJ | 1%               | 1%                   | 8%          | 0%    |

|                                                  | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Hold positions of leadership with respect to JTS | 6%               | 1%                   | 2%          | 2%    |

### Your Views on the Issues

What are your views on the relevant issues and related matters, recently addressed by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards?

|                                                                |        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Ordination of gay rabbis                                       | Favor  | 65%              | 74%                  | 66%         | 68%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 27%              | 18%                  | 24%         | 23%   |
| Investiture of gay cantors                                     | Favor  | 66%              | 75%                  | 67%         | 69%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 26%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 20%   |
| Rabbis performing same-sex commitment ceremonies               | Favor  | 63%              | 76%                  | 68%         | 70%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 28%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 21%   |
| Rabbis marrying same-sex couples in a Jewish marriage ceremony | Favor  | 31%              | 48%                  | 36%         | 48%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 52%              | 33%                  | 46%         | 36%   |
| Prohibiting "male homosexual intercourse"                      | Favor  | 36%              | 21%                  | 30%         | 27%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 44%              | 55%                  | 45%         | 51%   |
| Banning homosexual physical intimacy                           | Favor  | 13%              | 7%                   | 12%         | 10%   |
|                                                                | Oppose | 75%              | 83%                  | 76%         | 79%   |
| Advocating "reparative therapy"                                | Favor  | 6%               | 3%                   | 5%          | 3%    |
|                                                                | Oppose | 83%              | 89%                  | 84%         | 87%   |

### Your Initial reactions

In which of the following ways did you react when you heard of the CJLS decisions?

|                                                                                                       | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Relieved                                                                                              | 43%              | 38%                  | 32%         | 35%   |
| Confused                                                                                              | 36%              | 51%                  | 52%         | 53%   |
| Marginalized in the Cons. Movement                                                                    | 26%              | 20%                  | 23%         | 22%   |
| Proud to be a Conservative Jew                                                                        | 37%              | 36%                  | 38%         | 33%   |
| I could not defend the stance of the Conservative movement                                            | 36%              | 34%                  | 36%         | 36%   |
| Somewhat embarrassed                                                                                  | 67%              | 59%                  | 58%         | 57%   |
| CJLS decisions did not go far enough in legitimizing gay relationships                                | 39%              | 49%                  | 35%         | 43%   |
| Pleased that the Committee had endorsed multiple opposing opinions                                    | 38%              | 34%                  | 34%         | 34%   |
| The decisions were an interim step towards full equality of gays in the Conservative Jewish community | 63%              | 63%                  | 60%         | 60%   |

|                                                              |     |     |     |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| The decisions were an accommodation to political correctness | 41% | 43% | 49% | 44% |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|

### Your views on the CJLS Decisions — and Related Issues

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

|                                                                                            |          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| The CJLS will help Conservative Judaism appeal to younger Jews                             | Agree    | 49%              | 51%                  | 50%         | 50%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 28%              | 22%                  | 25%         | 23%   |
| In the long run, the CJLS decisions will mean fewer committed conservative Jews            | Agree    | 30%              | 27%                  | 29%         | 31%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 52%              | 51%                  | 50%         | 48%   |
| My close friends seem to largely support the CJLS decision permitting ordaining gay rabbis | Agree    | 61%              | 62%                  | 52%         | 56%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 20%              | 15%                  | 19%         | 17%   |
| My fellow congregants seem to largely oppose the CJLS decision                             | Agree    | 22%              | 15%                  | 20%         | 18%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 49%              | 46%                  | 44%         | 37%   |
| The CJLS decisions blur the boundary between Conservative and Reform Judaism               | Agree    | 44%              | 34%                  | 39%         | 39%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 50%              | 55%                  | 49%         | 48%   |
| The CJLS decisions widen the gap between Conservatism and Orthodoxy                        | Agree    | 84%              | 81%                  | 85%         | 80%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 11%              | 11%                  | 8%          | 10%   |
| If my congregation employs gay rabbis and cantors I will join another synagogue            | Agree    | 16%              | 10%                  | 15%         | 14%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 76%              | 83%                  | 74%         | 74%   |
| If my congregation employs gay rabbis and cantors I will join another movement             | Agree    | 12%              | 9%                   | 11%         | 13%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 80%              | 85%                  | 79%         | 77%   |
| It doesn't matter to me if my rabbi or cantor would be openly gay                          | Agree    | 62%              | 72%                  | 61%         | 64%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 30%              | 21%                  | 28%         | 26%   |
| I would not attend a same-sex Jewish commitment ceremony                                   | Agree    | 25%              | 13%                  | 19%         | 16%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 65%              | 79%                  | 71%         | 74%   |
| I hope the 4 rabbis who resigned from the CJLS will return                                 | Agree    | 62%              | 48%                  | 55%         | 45%   |
|                                                                                            | Disagree | 20%              | 18%                  | 12%         | 17%   |

|                                                                                                                                       |          |     |     |     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| The CJLS should have circulated the draft <i>teshuvot</i> for study by interested members of the Conservative movement                | Agree    | 51% | 52% | 51% | 59% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 31% | 22% | 25% | 13% |
| CJLS members who voted to liberalize the stance on gays were strongly influenced by family, friends and congregants                   | Agree    | 41% | 26% | 26% | 28% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 21% | 19% | 15% | 12% |
| CJLS members who voted to keep the previous stance on gays were strongly influenced by family, friends and congregants                | Agree    | 20% | 16% | 17% | 19% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 39% | 26% | 23% | 19% |
| Homosexuality is in-born, not chosen voluntarily                                                                                      | Agree    | 77% | 82% | 78% | 80% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 7%  | 4%  | 7%  | 6%  |
| With reparative therapy, many homosexuals can change their sexual orientation                                                         | Agree    | 5%  | 2%  | 3%  | 3%  |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 82% | 89% | 86% | 88% |
| The legal reasoning in the permissive paper that was approved by the CJLS was outside the pale of acceptability of halakhic reasoning | Agree    | 35% | 25% | 29% | 28% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 50% | 42% | 41% | 35% |
| Those who walk to shul on Shabbat are really Orthodox                                                                                 | Agree    | 4%  | 7%  | 8%  | 10% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 94% | 88% | 87% | 83% |
| It was a mistake for the CJLS, years ago, to have legitimated driving to shul on Shabbat                                              | Agree    | 41% | 22% | 13% | 27% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 50% | 70% | 81% | 61% |
| Conservative Judaism would be better served if there were no centralized Law Committee                                                | Agree    | 15% | 8%  | 7%  | 8%  |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 68% | 65% | 69% | 60% |
| Conservative Judaism is a halakhic movement                                                                                           | Agree    | 65% | 64% | 67% | 59% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 20% | 16% | 12% | 16% |
| Conservative Judaism should stop pretending it is a halakhic movement                                                                 | Agree    | 24% | 20% | 14% | 19% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 62% | 60% | 65% | 55% |
| The torah was written by people and not by God or by Divine inspiration                                                               | Agree    | 36% | 39% | 42% | 36% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 53% | 42% | 38% | 41% |
| I would not want a women to serve as rabbi of my congregation                                                                         | Agree    | 8%  | 9%  | 8%  | 14% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 89% | 86% | 87% | 80% |
| I would not want a women to serve as cantor of my congregation                                                                        | Agree    | 10% | 9%  | 8%  | 14% |
|                                                                                                                                       | Disagree | 87% | 86% | 88% | 81% |

|                                                                                             |          |     |     |     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Conservative congregations that are not fully gender egalitarian should leave the movement  | Agree    | 18% | 25% | 19% | 24% |
|                                                                                             | Disagree | 75% | 64% | 72% | 60% |
| Conservative congregations that won't hire gay rabbis or cantors should leave the movement  | Agree    | 11% | 17% | 11% | 17% |
|                                                                                             | Disagree | 80% | 69% | 77% | 66% |
| Conservative Judaism should adopt "patrilineal descent"                                     | Agree    | 15% | 27% | 27% | 24% |
|                                                                                             | Disagree | 76% | 56% | 54% | 58% |
| Conservative rabbis ought to be allowed to officiate at marriages between Jews and non-Jews | Agree    | 6%  | 17% | 21% | 21% |
|                                                                                             | Disagree | 89% | 70% | 66% | 63% |

### The Seminaries

Would you favor or oppose the following actions by three of the movement's training institutions?

|                                                                              |        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Accepting gay and lesbian students at the JTS rabbinical school              | Favor  | 65%              | 76%                  | 68%         | 70%   |
|                                                                              | Oppose | 27%              | 15%                  | 21%         | 20%   |
| Accepting gay and lesbian students at the UJ's rabbinical school             | Favor  | 67%              | 77%                  | 68%         | 71%   |
|                                                                              | Oppose | 24%              | 14%                  | 20%         | 19%   |
| Accepting gay and lesbian students at the Machon Schechter rabbinical school | Favor  | 59%              | 74%                  | 67%         | 68%   |
|                                                                              | Oppose | 29%              | 16%                  | 21%         | 20%   |
| Accepting gay cantorial students at JTS                                      | Favor  | 66%              | 78%                  | 70%         | 73%   |
|                                                                              | Oppose | 26%              | 14%                  | 20%         | 18%   |

## Gay and Lesbian Jews in Positions of Conservative Leadership

Would you favor or oppose engaging an openly gay or lesbian person in the following positions?

|                                      |        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Congregational rabbi                 | Favor  | 65%              | 74%                  | 62%         | 65%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 28%              | 18%                  | 27%         | 24%   |
| Cantor                               | Favor  | 66%              | 75%                  | 65%         | 68%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 27%              | 16%                  | 23%         | 20%   |
| Head of religious school             | Favor  | 72%              | 76%                  | 65%         | 74%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 19%              | 13%                  | 21%         | 16%   |
| Executive director of a congregation | Favor  | 84%              | 84%                  | 78%         | 82%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 7%               | 6%                   | 9%          | 8%    |
| President of the congregation        | Favor  | 83%              | 85%                  | 77%         | 82%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 8%               | 6%                   | 9%          | 8%    |
| Schechter principal                  | Favor  | 72%              | 76%                  | 66%         | 74%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 19%              | 13%                  | 20%         | 16%   |
| Schechter teacher of general studies | Favor  | 82%              | 82%                  | 72%         | 81%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 10%              | 8%                   | 14%         | 9%    |
| Ramah camp counselor                 | Favor  | 72%              | 75%                  | 63%         | 76%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 18%              | 12%                  | 21%         | 13%   |
| USY director                         | Favor  | 73%              | 76%                  | 64%         | 78%   |
|                                      | Oppose | 18%              | 12%                  | 21%         | 13%   |

## Personal Patterns of Observance and Belief

|                                                                    | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Dine in restaurants without a kashrut certificate                  | 87%              | 94%                  | 98%         | 93%   |
| (If yes) Eat warmed food (e.g., fish) prepared at such restaurants | 81%              | 90%                  | 97%         | 89%   |
| (If yes) Eat cooked meat at such restaurants                       | 9%               | 36%                  | 57%         | 40%   |
| Keep kosher at home                                                | 96%              | 75%                  | 65%         | 73%   |
| Fast at least part of the day on Tisha b'Av                        | 90%              | 62%                  | 43%         | 63%   |
| Say daily prayers at least three times a week                      | 83%              | 40%                  | 33%         | 33%   |
| Attend Shabbat services at least three times a month               | 95%              | 79%                  | 82%         | 69%   |
| Refrain from shopping on Shabbat                                   | 94%              | 60%                  | 43%         | 49%   |

|                                                   | Clerical<br>Leaders | Professional<br>Leaders | Lay<br>Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Refrain from turning lights on, on Shabbat        | 37%                 | 17%                     | 6%             | 19%   |
| Refrain from driving to shul on Shabbat           | 64%                 | 27%                     | 11%            | 31%   |
| Engage in Jewish text study more than once a week | 86%                 | 55%                     | 44%            | 48%   |

With respect to other conservative leaders in similar position or status as yourself, do you see yourself as ...

|                   |              | Clerical<br>Leaders | Professional<br>Leaders | Lay<br>Leaders | Other |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Theologically ... | Conservative | 24%                 | 29%                     | 31%            | 32%   |
|                   | Moderate     | 41%                 | 32%                     | 41%            | 33%   |
|                   | Liberal      | 35%                 | 38%                     | 28%            | 34%   |
| Observance ...    | Conservative | 39%                 | 32%                     | 30%            | 32%   |
|                   | Moderate     | 41%                 | 37%                     | 43%            | 37%   |
|                   | Liberal      | 20%                 | 31%                     | 27%            | 31%   |

## Background Information

You are ...

|        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|--------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Male   | 74%              | 35%                  | 59%         | 46%   |
| Female | 26%              | 65%                  | 41%         | 54%   |

You are ...

|          | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Under 25 | 8%               | 10%                  | 0%          | 53%   |
| 25- 44   | 36%              | 36%                  | 16%         | 17%   |
| 45- 59   | 38%              | 39%                  | 59%         | 19%   |
| 60+      | 18%              | 15%                  | 25%         | 12%   |

You are ...

|                                                               | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Married                                                       | 76%              | 67%                  | 88%         | 34%   |
| Never married                                                 | 12%              | 16%                  | 3%          | 47%   |
|                                                               | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
| Divorced or separated                                         | 5%               | 6%                   | 3%          | 2%    |
| Widowed                                                       | 1%               | 1%                   | 2%          | 1%    |
| In a committed relationship with a person of the opposite sex | 5%               | 7%                   | 2%          | 13%   |
| In a committed relationship with a person of the same sex     | 2%               | 3%                   | 1%          | 2%    |

You live in ...

|           | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|-----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| The U.S.  | 90%              | 93%                  | 96%         | 93%   |
| Canada    | 3%               | 4%                   | 3%          | 3%    |
| Israel    | 5%               | 3%                   | 0%          | 3%    |
| Elsewhere | 2%               | 0%                   | 0%          | 1%    |

About how many families belong to the synagogue with which you are affiliated?

|               | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|---------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| 0-99          | 9%               | 6%                   | 8%          | 10%   |
| 100-249       | 21%              | 18%                  | 20%         | 21%   |
| 250-499       | 31%              | 30%                  | 35%         | 30%   |
| 500-749       | 17%              | 19%                  | 17%         | 16%   |
| 750-999       | 10%              | 12%                  | 8%          | 8%    |
| 1,000 or more | 13%              | 15%                  | 11%         | 15%   |

Ever attended ...

|                                        | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Jewish day school                      | 38%              | 28%                  | 16%         | 42%   |
| Camp Ramah                             | 46%              | 28%                  | 15%         | 36%   |
| Active in USY or LTF                   | 50%              | 51%                  | 38%         | 59%   |
| Studied for a summer or more in Israel | 80%              | 54%                  | 25%         | 46%   |
| JTS                                    | 75%              | 20%                  | 3%          | 11%   |
| UJ                                     | 17%              | 7%                   | 1%          | 3%    |
| Machon Schechter                       | 33%              | 3%                   | 1%          | 2%    |

Are openly gay ...

|                                              | Clerical Leaders | Professional Leaders | Lay Leaders | Other |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Members of extended family                   | 34%              | 38%                  | 35%         | 34%   |
| Close friends                                | 61%              | 64%                  | 48%         | 64%   |
| Friends' children, grandchildren, or parents | 55%              | 54%                  | 50%         | 43%   |
| You                                          | 2%               | 5%                   | 2%          | 6%    |

## The Instrument

Dear respondent to the JTS Study:

The three *teshuvot* accepted by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards embrace a wide range of conclusions. They may be described succinctly in simplified form as follows:

- One *teshuva* reaffirmed the prior position of the CJLS, which denied ordination as clergy to active homosexuals and also prohibited same-sex commitment ceremonies or marriage.
- One *teshuva*, while retaining the Torah's explicit prohibition as understood by the rabbis banning male homosexual intercourse, argued for the full normalization of the status of gay and lesbian Jews. Under this ruling, gay and lesbian Jews may be ordained as clergy and their committed relationships may be recognized, although not as sanctified marriage.
- A third *teshuva* upheld the traditional prohibitions, argued that homosexuality is not a unitary condition, and urged the development of educational programs within the community to achieve understanding, compassion, and dignity for gays and lesbians.

Each of these positions is now valid within Conservative Judaism, and individual rabbis will choose which position to follow.

Please do complete this survey, and feel free to skip any questions which you do not wish to answer for any reason. Feel free to be in touch with me with any comments or questions. I can be reached at [JTSSch@aol.com](mailto:JTSSch@aol.com).

Professor Steven M. Cohen

## **Your Position in Conservative Judaism**

Are you [CHECK ONE] ...(If retired, please answer with respect to your major career during your working life.)

### **Clergy**

A rabbi who is a Mara d'Atra of a Conservative congregation or institution

A rabbi serving in another congregational position

A rabbi serving in another capacity

A cantor

### **Other Jewish professionals**

An educational administrator (in a Day or congregational school or informal education setting)

A classroom teacher

Camp Director

USY or Kadima youth group leader

Another Jewish educator (in a school or informal education setting)

An executive director of a congregation

Another Jewish communal professional

### **Jewish lay leaders and others**

The president of a congregation

Another lay leader in a Conservative congregation or other body

### **Students**

A rabbinical student at JTS

A cantorial student at JTS

Another type of student at JTS

A college student

A USY member

Other student

### **Others**

All other

Are you a member of the Board of Directors of the USCJ?

Yes

No

Do you hold any positions of leadership with respect to JTS? Yes

No

### **Your Views on the Issues**

What are your views on the relevant issues, and related matters, recently addressed by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS)?

|                                                                                             | <b>Favor</b> | <b>Oppose</b> | <b>Not sure</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Allowing the ordination of openly gay Conservative rabbis                                   |              |               |                 |
| Allowing the investiture of openly gay and lesbian Conservative cantors                     |              |               |                 |
| Allowing the Conservative rabbis to perform same-sex commitment ceremonies                  |              |               |                 |
| Allowing Conservative rabbis to marry same-sex Jewish couples in a Jewish marriage ceremony |              |               |                 |
| Interpreting Jewish law as prohibiting "male homosexual intercourse"                        |              |               |                 |
| Banning all forms of homosexual physical intimacy                                           |              |               |                 |
| Advocating "reparative therapy" for homosexuals                                             |              |               |                 |

### **Your Initial Reactions**

In which of the following ways did you react when you heard of the CJLS decisions?

|                                                                                                                                              | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Not sure</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| I felt relieved                                                                                                                              |            |           |                 |
| I felt confused                                                                                                                              |            |           |                 |
| I felt marginalized in the Conservative movement                                                                                             |            |           |                 |
| I felt proud to be a Conservative Jew                                                                                                        |            |           |                 |
| I felt I could not defend the stance of the Conservative movement                                                                            |            |           |                 |
| I felt somewhat embarrassed by one or more of the CJLS decisions                                                                             |            |           |                 |
| I felt the CJLS decisions did not go far enough in legitimizing gay relationships                                                            |            |           |                 |
| I was pleased that the Committee had endorsed multiple opposing opinions, and not just one or the other                                      |            |           |                 |
| I felt that the decisions were an interim step toward full equality and acceptance of gays and lesbians in the Conservative Jewish community |            |           |                 |
| I felt that the decisions were an accommodation to political correctness                                                                     |            |           |                 |

## **Your Views on the CJLS Decisions -- and Related Issues**

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

("CJLS" = Committee on Jewish Law and Standards)

**Agree    Somewhat    Mixed,    Somewhat    Dis-**  
**Agree    Not sure    Disagree    agree**

The CJLS decisions will help Conservative Judaism appeal to younger Jews

In the long run, the CJLS decisions will mean fewer committed Conservative Jews

My close friends seem to largely support the CJLS decision permitting ordaining gay & lesbian rabbis

My fellow congregants who are active in my congregation seem to largely oppose the CJLS decision permitting ordaining gay & lesbian rabbis

The CJLS decisions blur the boundary between Conservative and Reform Judaism

The CJLS decisions widen the gap between Conservatism and Orthodoxy

If my congregation employs gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors, I will join another Conservative synagogue

If my congregation employs gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors, I will join a synagogue of another movement

It doesn't matter to me if my rabbi or cantor would be openly gay or lesbian.

I would not attend a same-sex Jewish commitment ceremony

I hope the 4 rabbis who resigned from the CJLS will return

The CJLS should have publicly circulated the draft teshuvot for study by interested members of the Conservative movement

CJLS members who voted to liberalize the stance on gays and lesbians were strongly

influenced by their family, friends, and congregants

CJLS members who voted to keep the previous stance on gay and lesbians were strongly influenced by their family, friends, and congregants

Homosexuality is in-born, not chosen voluntarily

With reparative therapy, many homosexuals can change their sexual orientation

The legal reasoning in the permissive paper that was approved by the CJLS was outside the pale of acceptability of halakhic reasoning

Those who walk to shul on Shabbat are really Orthodox

It was a mistake for the CJLS, years ago, to have legitimated driving to shul on Shabbat

Conservative Judaism, at this stage, would be better served if there were no centralized Law Committee

Conservative Judaism is a halakhic movement

Conservative Judaism should stop pretending it is a halakhic movement

The Torah was written by people and not by God or by Divine inspiration

I would not want a woman to serve as rabbi of my congregation

I would not want a woman to serve as cantor of my congregation

Conservative congregations that are not fully gender egalitarian should leave the movement

Conservative congregations that won't hire gay rabbis or cantors should leave the movement

Conservative Judaism should adopt  
“patrilineal descent,” where the child of a  
Jewish father and non-Jewish mother  
would be considered Jewish

Conservative rabbis ought to be allowed  
to officiate at marriages between Jews  
and non-Jews

### **The Seminaries**

Would you favor or oppose the following actions by three of the movement’s training  
institutions?

**Favor   Oppose   Not sure**

Accepting openly gay and lesbian students at the JTS rabbinical school

Accepting openly gay and lesbian students at the UJ’s Ziegler rabbinical school

Accepting openly gay and lesbian students at the Machon Schechter rabbinical school

Accepting openly gay and lesbian cantorial students at JTS

### **Gay and lesbian Jews in Positions of Conservative Leadership**

Would you favor or oppose engaging an openly gay or lesbian person in the  
following positions?

**Favor                      Oppose                      Not sure**

Congregational rabbi

Cantor

Head of religious school

Executive director of a congregation

President of the congregation

Schechter principal

Schechter teacher of general studies

Ramah camp counselor

USY director

## **Your personal patterns of observance and belief**

To better understand our answers, we need to get some understanding of your own philosophy and practice of Jewish life. First we start with some select indicators of observance ...

**Yes    No    Not sure**

Do you dine in restaurants without a kashrut certificate?

(If yes) Do you eat warmed food (e.g., fish) prepared at such restaurants?

(If yes) Do you eat cooked meat at such restaurants?

Do you keep kosher at home?

Do you fast at least part of the day on Tisha b'Av?

Do you say daily prayers at least 3 times a week?

Do you attend Shabbat services at least 3 times a month?

Do you refrain from shopping on Shabbat?

Do you refrain from turning lights on and off on Shabbat?

Do you refrain from riding to shul on Shabbat?

Do you engage in Jewish text study more than once a week, either on your own, with a hevruta, or in a class where you are a learner and not the teacher?

With respect to other Conservative leaders in a similar position or status as yourself, do you see yourself as ...

Theologically ...      Conservative Moderate/Centrist      Liberal

Observance ...      Conservative Moderate/Centrist      Liberal

## Background Information

You are ... Male Female

Your age (drop-down menu)

You are Married Never married Divorced or separated  
Widowed

In a committed relationship with a person of the opposite sex

In a committed relationship with a person of the same sex

You live in ... The U.S. Canada Israel Elsewhere

(If the US) Your congregation's zip code \_\_\_\_\_

About how many families belong to the synagogue with which you are affiliated?

0-99 100-249 250-499 500-749 750-999 1000 or more

Yes No

Did you ever attend a Jewish Day School?

Did you ever attend Camp Ramah?

Were you ever active in USY or LTF?

Did you ever study for a summer or more in Israel?

Did you ever attend ... JTS

UJ

Machon Schechter

Of the following people, who are **openly and publicly** gay, lesbian, or bisexual?

Yes No Not sure

Any members of your extended family?

Any of your close friends?

Any of your friends' children, grandchildren, or parents?

And finally, are you openly and publicly gay, lesbian or bisexual?

THANK YOU