

## AMERICAN JEWRY IN THE LIGHT OF MIDDLEMAN MINORITY THEORIES\*

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Socioeconomic explanations of anti-Semitism's origins seek to explain the particular occupational roles Jews have occupied in hostile societies. Similar explanations have been used in interpreting the roles of other minorities. While seeking rational causes of prejudice, these interpretations also provide testable propositions about the relationship of ethnicity in occupational specialization.

While anti-Semitism and ethnic-occupational specialization are not limited to premodern societies, most explanations have been formulated in a premodern context, societies labeled by Blalock as "peasant-feudal" (1967). Recently, Bonacich (1973) has shown that "middleman minorities" persist in modern industrial settings and that certain explanatory models applied to them in agrarian and colonial contexts can be used in "developed" situations.

In this essay, the twentieth-century American community will be analyzed using concepts of various *middleman minority* theories and related formulations. These theories apply to Jews, as well as to Overseas Chinese, Overseas Indians, Americans, Syro-Lebanese, and Parsis, all of whom have been highly successful in economic (especially commercial) realms while arousing widespread antagonism among elites and masses in the "host" countries (Stryker, 1958; Bonacich, 1973). Such theories emphasize social factors in explaining economic behavior, stressing the primacy of socio-economic aspects of intergroup relations. This body of theory provides contrast and analogy between various groups in different parts of the world, and assists in making appropriate comparisons of Jews and other minorities in America.

The highlights of several proposed explanations have been combined and summarized in Figure 1. The implicit time sequence is: (1) various pushes and pulls induce emigration of the group from their original homeland; (2) they emigrate, and succeed economically by filling a need unmet by local populations ("filling the status gap"); (3) they arrive in large enough



numbers to be seen as a threat ("critical mass") and maintain strange customs; (4) their group cohesion helps bring economic success; (5) the combination of their numbers, foreign attributes, and solidarity heightens their visibility as strangers and arouses the host population's resentment. Friction, due to competition with ethnic rivals and conflict with clientales, arises; (6) the hostility of the host population—(a) reinforces group solidarity; (b) stimulates more rapid assimilation, thus disintegrating the group and possibly increasing competition and friction within the host-population (as noted by some critics of these theories); and (c) exacerbates host-hostility, ultimately causing expulsion and/or genocide. Alternative outcomes for the varying relationships among visibility as strangers, group solidarity, and host-hostility are illustrated in Figure 1.

Previous papers have reviewed the theoretical literature (Zenner, 1976a, 1976b). The present effort is confined to application of middleman theory concepts to American Jewry and its occupational structure. Various formulators of such theories differ in applying their models to American Jewry. Leon (1970:84, 213-15, 232-34) sees Jews under advanced capitalism as encouraged to assimilate, thus tending to lose their sense of being a separate "people-class" (his equivalent for middleman minority). Bonacich, on the other hand, argues that middleman minorities persist in the interstices of monopoly capitalist societies, even including Hartford Jews in her examples of such minorities (Bonacich, 1973; also Bonacich, Light, and Choy, 1976). While not offering a general view of American Jewry's development, as such, she makes no claim that American Jewry has remained in the category of "sojourners" (stressed in her theory), with liquid capital investment.<sup>1</sup>

As a *synthetic* concept, the phrase "middleman minority" is difficult to define so as to cover all groups so designated. For our purposes here, several definitions will be utilized. An ethnic group will be considered a middleman minority if a disproportionate number of its adult male members are engaged in trade, commerce, and banking (categories used in certain censuses), or employed by coethnics in these occupations. Conversely, one would expect minority members to control these economic sectors disproportionately. In small enclaves (less than 5,000 persons), one would expect the percentage of minority members in these occupations to be over 50 percent, while with very large concentrations of the minority, less than a majority may hold these occupations, albeit they still would be represented disproportionately.<sup>2</sup>

Other definitions do not limit middleman occupations to trade and finance, but would extend them to include small commodity production and even truck farming. Putting this heterogeneous list of areas of work under one heading is difficult, but after Marx, they are viewed as "extensions of commerce" in a precapitalist form (Leon, 1950: 219-220; Bonacich, 1973). Even the non-Marxist Elazar (1976:36), citing Whitehead, sees the impor-

tant role Jews play in American mass media and education as part of communication, an "extension of commerce." Private practice in medicine and law is certainly analogous to petty commerce.

Selected aspects of middleman minority theory will be applied to American Jewry: the origins and transformation of the occupation structure; the relationship of the occupation structure to the *stranger* and *sojourner* hypotheses; the relationship of group solidarity and visibility to economic position; and finally, a brief consideration of anti-Semitism in the United States. Middleman minority theories provide a set of hypotheses useful for comparing different minorities in terms of their social, economic and political relations with the majority. While they provide a program of research, these theories are not sufficient to explain all aspects of the relationships.

### THE ORIGINS OF THE OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

The occupational structure of a minority may be approached from two viewpoints: that of the total economy or that of the minority itself. Kuznets, in a succinct discussion of the "economics of a small minority," notes that one factor in a minority's entry into a new country is the state of the economy:

The immigrating minority would presumably move into industries that are growing rapidly at the time and where opportunities exist. Such a choice would probably be acceptable to the resident population, whereas competition by an immigrant group in an established industry might meet with objection from the resident majority, which could take the extreme form of legal exclusion.

Writing about mass migration (Kuznets 1960:1601), he notes that the minority, having lost capital, would generally enter the economy at low levels. Kuznets agrees with the split-labor hypothesis, seeing it as a way of avoiding interethnic antagonism, whereas Bonacich (1972) sees it as a crucial source of such hostility.

Several theories explaining the special positions of middleman minorities stress the important role these groups play in providing societies emerging from agrarianism with an intermediary trading class, called a "status gap minority" (Leon, 1950; Rinder, 1958). In a broad sense, as Bonacich (1973) notes, that model of bridging social gaps is not appropriate for a society as complex as the United States, which, as Kuznets points out, fills positions in newly expanding sectors or in older economic interstices, positions abandoned because of their onerous nature.

The pioneering role Jews have played in certain sectors of the North American and European economy, including the ready-to-wear garment trade, department stores, and mass communications, is well known (A.

Gross, 1975: 199-205, 237-249; Elazar, 1976:36; Aris, 1970; Kuznets, 1960). American and British Jewish immigrants took up the slack occupations abandoned by veteran populations: Jewish peddlers successfully competed with Yankee traders, chose jobs in the needle trades and, as slum shopkeepers, took over a niche others found unworthy and unprofitable (Teller, 1968: 79-93; Aris, 1970:69-92; Howe, 1976:77-84). In some of these sectors, Jews themselves have been succeeded by members of other ethnic groups. In Southern Africa, Jews succeeded Scots, to be followed by East Indians. In Mississippi, Jews own fairly goodsized stores in certain lines of trade, while Italians, Lebanese and Chinese occupy lower niches in the retail economy (Dotson and Dotson, 1969; Loewen, 1971:12-13, 49-53, 55-57, 112-117). In urban areas, once-Jewish slum businesses are passing to recent Korean and Iraqi Chaldean immigrants (Zenner, 1976; Bonacich, Light, and Wong, 1976).

In some occupations, the onus is not only that one works hard and becomes physically dirty, as in agricultural labor, but that one is morally "shady." Pawnbroking, the sale of liquor, professional gambling, prostitution, and businesses serving the poor have such qualities. While such enterprises may be quite lucrative and serve necessary societal needs, they are not prestigious. In medieval Europe, Jews were often pawnbrokers, lending money to the poor; in modern times, this function has been partially replaced by finance companies. The sale of liquor is still associated with ethnic minorities, including Jews. In California, many names on liquor licenses were Jewish, Armenian, Korean, etc. (Bonacich, personal communication), though an *Encyclopedia Judaica* article on wine and liquor understates Jewish participation (N. Gross, 1975:138-39). While not as conspicuous as certain other ethnic groups, Jewish businessmen have been extremely involved in illegal and corrupt activities, including the 1930s "Murder, Inc." syndicate and recent nursing home scandals. These enterprises represent a kind of "moral brokerage" for necessary activities for which the society as a whole disclaims active responsibility (Golomb, 1975).

Previous residues of experience give a minority some advantages in certain activities. It would not be a big jump from innkeeping in Russia to owning an American tavern. While Jews in the contemporary scrap metal industry are not necessarily sons of the "old clothes men," European Jews were restricted to such recycling for years and many continued in it (Gross, 1975:266-29; Fauman, 1941). Similarly, international connections with particular trade centers give members of a minority advantages in certain sectors, as with Koreans in the wig and ginseng trade and Jews in diamonds (Bonacich, Light, and Wong, 1976; Gross, 1975:158-61).

When others have a competitive advantage because of prior residence or for political reasons, members of a minority engaged in a sector elsewhere may be actively excluded. European Jews were quite important in banking

and in the development of the petroleum industry, unlike American Jews (Gross, 1975:179-71, 211-225). While no yawning status gap existed in North American societies, many economic niches opened and closed for minorities entering the system's different sectors. In general, Jews have taken advantage of opportunities that appeared.

Since the early post-World War period, changes have occurred in the economic structure. Jews found positions as scientists, engineers and even as managers in large multinational corporations which formally excluded them. Symbolic of this transformation is the fact that individuals with obvious Jewish names and ethnic backgrounds can rise to head firms like DuPont and Bendix. Such individuals have gone from the "petty bourgeois" and "small commodity" segments to segments of corporate capitalism not usually associated with middleman minorities.

Of course, many Jews have left commerce and industry for the academic world. Many of those in fields offering both university and commercial employment, like chemistry and economics, have held positions in both worlds during their careers. In other areas, most remain primarily in academia. Here, too, the job market is critical. In the 1920s and 1930s, when clear and extensive discrimination characterized universities, Jews were often restricted to certain fields at particular universities. While Franz Boas, at Columbia University, supported many Jewish students in anthropology and helped them find employment, rumors still circulate that departments of anthropology continue to exclude Jews.<sup>3</sup> While not a traditional middleman role, academia can be seen as a syncretism between the traditional Jewish value of learning and modern science.

Jewish entry into governmental employment in New York City, New York State and the Federal government represents a significant shift from the particularistic middleman sphere to sectors claiming to represent the broad public interest. The "universalistic" ideology of bureaucracy is especially important to Jews, since many entered public employment through civil service rather than by boss patronage. In New York City, Jews began taking municipal jobs, both civil service and teaching positions, in the 1910s. New York City, with its once massive Jewish proletariat and extremely high proportion of Jews is, of course, exceptional (Howe, 1976:166-67; Rogers, 1968:285-89, 245-46). New York State began to employ Jews in large numbers during the Depression, when new governmental services required employees and even low-paying jobs were attractive. During the 1950s and 1960s, state governments continued to expand, hiring large numbers, including professionals such as attorneys, accountants and even physicians. Many of these were Jews. The New Deal and the Depression, for both economic and ideological reasons, played their roles in attracting Jews to federal service. The employment of Jews by universities and large private and public bureaucracies constitutes a radical shift away from traditional middleman minority sectors of the economy.

## STRANGER—SOJOURNER

Middleman minority status is more than the objective socioeconomic role of those in such a position; it also involves motivations of the minority and perceptions of the outgroup. One hypothesis combining an explanation of the occupational structure with one of host-hostility is the *sojourner* hypothesis presented by Bonacich (1973).

In Bonacich's model, a close connection is seen between the immigrant's attachment to homeland and choice of occupation. Generally, the sojourner has the economic aim of quickly amassing wealth, sending remittances back, and eventually returning. For this, the sojourner maintains frugality and capital liquidity. Close ties with compatriots (ethnic solidarity) serve as sources of both support and exploitation. Ethnic solidarity and attachment to homeland are also expressed through language loyalty, and maintenance of schools and ethnically based institutions, thereby retarding assimilation into the new country and contributing to economic success, but also arousing host-hostility.

On the other hand, the qualities of liquidity and thrift can be found among Jewish entrepreneurs. Business begun on a shoestring, frequently with borrowed savings, with success often followed by bankruptcy and renewed success, is not an unknown pattern (e.g., Howe, 1976:135-168; Vorspan and Gartner, 1970:32-45, 71-84, 120-134, 223-239; Aris, 1970 *passim*). While many who succeed take up an opulent way of life, Sir Isaac Wolfson, the British department store magnate, is not alone in maintaining the frugality of his youth (Aris, 1970:93-112).

When these qualities are present, they can hardly be attributed to sojourning (Hill, 1977). While Bonacich used American Jews as one illustration, she indicates that their attachment to the original homeland is only partial, while groups like the Overseas Chinese, whose emigration was more recent, have much more immediate ties. Some trading minorities clearly fit the sojourner pattern. Muslims from the island of Djerba go to the Tunisian mainland and become grocers for much of their adult life; however, they leave their island wives and retire to Djerba in old age (Stone, 1974). Jewish immigrants to North America come to live here permanently, and have lower repatriation rates than do other groups not usually seen as middleman minorities, e.g. Italians and Puerto Ricans (Caroli, 1973; Hill, 1977). Still, Jews do exhibit a fair degree of language and cultural loyalty on a symbolic level through the maintenance of Hebrew (and formerly Yiddish) schools. The learning of these languages is often more of a ritual, however, and true proficiency is rarely achieved. Even American Zionism has been marked by a lack of enthusiastic support for immigration to Israel, despite often zealous political support for Israel.

Bonacich sees cultural loyalty as one symptom of "attachment to the homeland," as opposed to host-country attachments, while lack of political

involvement (as opposed to the pursuit of particularistic interests) is another. Here, again, American Jews do not fit the sojourner pattern, since their political involvement goes far beyond the support of Jewish causes. Isaacs has noted that Jewish financial and other contributions to national political campaigns have a high idealistic basis. Especially in the national sphere, Jewish contributors do not expect an immediate payoff. Yet Isaacs argues that much Jewish political activity, whether right, center or left, can be related to a perception of how to make America and the world safe for Jews. American Jewish support for domestic liberalism and internationalism can be interpreted in this way (Isaacs, 1974:72-92).<sup>4</sup>

This behavior suggests past estrangement and present insecurity. Several causes suggest themselves. America remains a predominantly Christian society. Nineteenth century American Jewry, faced with anti-Semitic sentiment, was able to penetrate local and political elites. After 1870, the position of even some veteran Jewish Americans deteriorated. Fewer were elected to visible positions, even in such regions as Southern California. Sons of former members of upper middle-class social clubs often met exclusion (Vorspan and Garter, 1970:135-138, 143-145; Harap, 1974:303-376; Elazar, 1976:35; Adler and Connelly, 1960:135-36, 237, 259). Whether due to host-hostility aroused by mass migration of East European Jews, to importation of anti-Semitism from Europe, or to a combination, even the elite of American Jewry faced exclusion.

The events leading to the Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel, and continuing Arab-Israeli conflict have been sufficiently recent and traumatic so as to leave a lasting impression on any American Jew over 40. Coupled with the fact that few American Jews can trace more than three or four antecedent generations to this continent, rootedness here is seen as being a bit tenuous, suggesting that Jews are still considerably estranged from other segments of American society, despite acculturation and partial assimilation. The Simmelian model, a permanent group of strangers with whom one may achieve a certain intimacy yet who remain socially distant, retains more relevance to the situation of American Jewry than does the sojourner hypothesis.

While the sojourner motive does not apply to the mass of American Jews of German or East European ancestry, it does apply to smaller groups. Hasidic Jewish society has a quality of enclavement which is only accidentally American. They maintain an attachment to cultural patterns developed elsewhere and do not appear to have attached themselves with any depth to American society. While certainly not attached to the State of Israel (especially the anti-Zionist Hasidim) or to Hungary, Russia or Poland, they are not rooted in the U.S. either. A function of occupational adjustment,<sup>5</sup> their motivation for occupational choice is likely to be found in religious virtuosity.

In a more secular way, Syrian Jewish society possesses this same quality.



Syrian Jews have developed commercial and kin networks moving between the Far East, Latin America and the United States. As recently as 1963, they were politically indifferent and inactive in the United States, much as they had been in Syria and Latin America. While English-speaking consumers of American secular culture, their involvement seemed relatively superficial. Those few individuals active in American political affairs, of whom William Haddad is the most prominent, were outside of businesses characteristic of the community and alienated from the ethnic group (Zenner, 1966, 1968, 1971).

Syrian Jews offer an interesting contrast to German refugees and Polish displaced persons of the 1930s. The former remained indifferent to politics in the second generation. The latter, more recent arrivals, quickly became voters, with younger members assuming an active role in public affairs. Two have risen to cabinet rank position.

Again, occupational structure is an important consideration. Syrian Jews have concentrated in the wholesaling and retailing of such items as infant wear and "discount" tourist goods (e.g., cheap cameras), requiring little formal education. Stores are opened, closed, and reopened with relative ease. Dependent on ethnically-based networks, the general society is of little concern (Zenner, 1965, 1971).

Refugees who became prominent did so based on presumably "universalistic" criteria of formal education (which socialized them into the general culture) and proven talent. While patronage and friendship have played an important role in the career of an individual like Henry Kissinger, patronage was not based upon ethnic origin (Zenner ms).

The sojourner hypothesis, whatever its validity for certain small Jewish groups, is not easily applicable to the majority of American Jews.<sup>6</sup> The applicability of Simmel's analysis of the "stranger," however, cannot be discounted. The paradox of nearness and distance, of fixation in space and wandering, of intimate confidences given to outsiders, is not absent from the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in America (Simmel, 1950:402-408; Cahnman, 1974). Many promulgators of Hollywood's version of America's selfimage were first-generation Russian Jews (Howe, 1976:164-166). Recent years have witnessed Richard Nixon's strange relationship with Jews—making anti-Jewish comments in private while appointing Jews and those of Jewish descent to high office and, in his fall, retaining the loyalty of an eccentric rabbi—a relationship reminiscent of subterranean levels of American Jewry's imagery and position. The psychology of Jewish-Gentile relationships may well outweigh specific economic and political adaptations of individuals.

## **ETHNIC SOLIDARITY AND VISIBILITY**

As discussed elsewhere, Jewish ethnic solidarity threads through several levels: kin, ex-local and local ties; speech community (Yiddish, German,

Arabic, etc.); and finally a "pan-Jewish" level. Various middleman minority theorists have stressed this cohesion and its concomitant ethnocentrism without analyzing its components in detail, seeing these as important causes of both economic success and anti-Semitism. Often supralocal or pan-Jewish solidarity is stimulated by outside forces, the case since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Of course, Gentile perceptions that Jews are cohesive may be more significant in imagery than in reality, as previously noted (Zenner, 1976b).

Occupational structure is related to maintenance of group ties. The desire for continued maintenance of the group, especially on the part of the pious, and fear by others of discrimination, have been important features of occupational choice (Kuznets, 1960:1601-1603). The family, one's personal network of other Jews, and, finally, the Jewish community all have played a role in assisting individuals in making these choices, either by providing jobs or by supplying contacts.

The family and its extension have been at the base of such an employment system, which tied to family business, will break down as more and more Jews go into corporate bureaucracies, academia, and government, where family assistance is less relevant. Several ethnographic descriptions of Jewish kinship in North America support the funding of independent Jewish enterprise (Leyton, 1970; Mitchell and Leichter, 1967:148-155). Winch and his associates have shown that Jews have much closer natal family relations than do White Protestants and Catholics.

Winch, Greer and Blumberg (1967) attribute the more intense extended kin ties of Jews, as well as the lack of migration and occupational choice, to a value of familism, rather than viewing occupation and migration as intervening variables. Winch and his associates, however, had difficulty dealing with occupation, the perception of occupational opportunity and discrimination, and control for their suggested division between "bureaucrat" and "entrepreneur." It is noteworthy that their study was conducted in a Chicago suburb, part of a metropolitan area supporting a large Jewish population since the early Twentieth Century, rather than in an area like Washington, D.C. or Los Angeles, where more Jews might be secondary migrants from elsewhere in the United States.

Some groups, diamond traders and Syrian Jews in particular, make use of family and kinship ties. Among Syrian Jews in the 1960s, marriages involved the payment of a dowery to the groom. Small shops selling inexpensive goods were usually opened and run by relatives, who assisted the groom in initiating, continuing or expanding his business (or, more recently, in completing an education). Since wholesalers of these imported goods were usually Syrian Jews, the community was linked by joint ties of kinship and commerce. In seeking a partner or a shop assistant, preference was given to a relative, then to another Syrian Jew, and then to other Jews (Zenner, 1971).

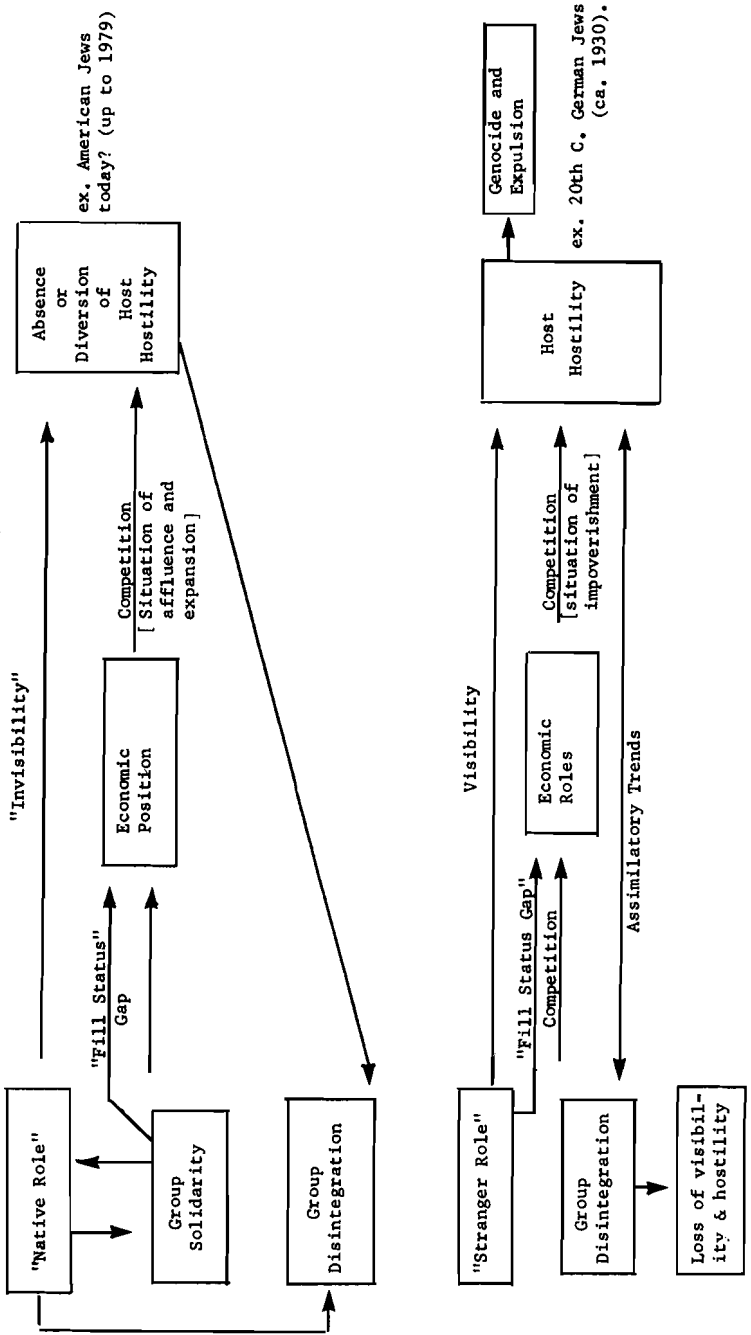
Efforts to find employment for Jews was not limited to familial and informal, ex-local levels. Jewish communities operated agencies to prepare Jewish immigrants for jobs in the new country and to steer Jews away from areas of Jewish concentration. This was particularly true of fairly ambitious, but largely unsuccessful, efforts by groups like Am Olam and the Baron de Hirsch Fund to train and place Jews in agriculture in Argentina, Russia and the United States (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1903; Gross, 1975:119-222; Howe, 1976:84-87; Brandes, 1971). While attempts to create farmers did not succeed in the long run, they did assist Jewish immigrants in moving from often depressed and overly competitive urban areas and in introducing Jews to new economic sectors, e.g. chicken farming and hotel management. In addition, local Jewish Federations and the B'nai B'rith provided vocational services. Much of the fight against anti-Semitism took the form of a struggle against economic discrimination.

In addition to family and formal communal structures, an individual's network of friends and acquaintances are used when seeking employment and economic connections. Even when answering want ads, such contacts may be useful. Informal networks operate in newer corporate-bureaucratic sectors as well as in older sectors, but without the reinforcement supplied by kinship ties.

Whereas old business and banking elites, as well as middle-class family firms, use a combination of kin and friendship ties, e.g. the Anglo-Jewish "cousinhood" or the American German-Jewish "our Crowd" (Cohen, 1974:110-114), academic professionals rely on informal "old boy networks," such as the predominantly German-Jewish set of Boas' students or Jewish psychoanalysts of New Haven (White, 1966; Wilensky and Ladinsky, 1967). The latter, characteristic of new professionals and corporate employees, may be ethnically based, but usually have a fragile single-generational existence. Associated with a high degree of mobility, friendship ties have few strands, whereas older "cousinhoods" and "family firms" combine kinship, friendship and on-going business. In such settings, finding and recognizing fellow-Jews who may or may not be helpful requires subtle strategies (Plotnicov and Silverman, 1976). Wilensky and Ladinsky (1967) have suggested that as identity with the occupational group increases, involvement with the religio-ethnic group decreases, a phenomenon possibly related to the declining importance of familial ties. For instance, upon initial entry, few professionals working for New York State had family contacts; even the receipt of information about a job from the family rarely guaranteed job acquisition or promotion (work in progress).

The "invisible organization" upon which Jewish communal solidarity is based, and which is an important component of such activities as fundraising, may well have an economic foundation. If the trend towards a professional bureaucracy continues, communal solidarity may well be weakened.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Relationship of Visibility and Solidarity to Host Hostility Under Assimilative Conditions**



Geographic mobility, intermarriage, failure to provide Jewish education for one's children, and failure to affiliate formally with Jewish groups—all are part of the social disintegration of Jewish ethnic solidarity. The decline in ethnic solidarity is related not only to the evolution of family firms but also to increasing competition between Jews and Gentiles. In any case, this whole area deserves further study (see Figure 2).

## VISIBILITY

How Jewish ethnic solidarity is perceived by Gentiles is as important as its actual occurrence, for the perception contributes to Jewish visibility. A group who has been as economically successful as Jews is going to exhibit visibility. Yet such visibility makes Jews vulnerable to envy and hatred. There is a dynamic process in modern Jewish life between the efforts to minimize visibility so as to reduce hostility to the group and its needs (e.g. the public perpetuation of the Jewish religion and community, and pressure on behalf of Jewish group interests) and the desire for an enhanced favorable self-image. In some instances, this dynamic tension displays itself in attempts to make Judaism-Jewishness less foreign in appearance, and Jews 100 percent native Americans.

Much of the content of American Jewish life can be seen as visibility strategies. *Strategy* here includes both unconscious mechanisms of coping with situations and consciously formulated plans. Merton once noted that, while anti-Semites magnify Jewish power and visibility, Jewish antidefamation agencies stress Jewish powerlessness and insignificance (Merton, 1957:432-34). The americanization of personal and family names, the businessman's commercial observance of Christmas, and the "westernizing" reforms of the Reform and Conservative movements can all be seen as efforts to reduce the visible foreignness of Jews in a modern post-Christian society (e.g. Sklare, 1955). The same reason fostered the inclusion of Judaism as one of the major religions of America, the glorification of 300 years of American Jewish history, and the interpretation of economic competition as individualistic rather than ethnic.

The desire to attenuate and/or dim the visibility of Jewish distinctiveness has been not a light burden. Heilman (1976: 62, 107-8) views even the Orthodox Jewish professionals he studies as "passing" as "regular Americans" when in the workplace. Such inconspicuous behavior may be included in what Cuddihy (1974) calls the "ordeal of civility." Yet he notes that the rebellion of Jewish thinkers and intellectuals like Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the "new Leftists" of the 1960s was directed primarily against this "passing." It is possible to relate visibility strategies to occupational and economic structure. Maintenance of a low profile would meet Gentile-clientaled perceived needs of both self-employed businessmen and

professionals, and the bureaucratically employed. Some, however, feel less of a need to bear the "ordeal of civility" than others. Orthodox students attending universities in fairly large numbers and scientists, in whom eccentricities are tolerated, might observe traditional practices more publicly than would those of a previous generation (Himmelfarb, 1974; Pariser, 1973, Heilman, 1976:7). Still, any such hypothesis is highly speculative; detailed work relating style to visibility strategy and occupational structure awaits performance.<sup>7</sup>

## ANTI-SEMITISM

Various theories explaining the economic position of middleman minorities also explain hostility towards these groups (Fig. 1). Relative to other world-wide minorities, American Jews have faced little direct violence and only moderate discrimination. The Leo Frank lynching in Georgia in 1914 and certain Ku Klux Klan activities are notable exceptions. There are sharp differences in interpretations of Black looting and burning of slum businesses owned by Jews and other White minorities during the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s. Some see these actions as classic anti-Semitic and anti-middleman pogroms, pointing to Black middle-class, anti-Semitic rhetoric and expression (Loewen, 1971:176-77; Bonacich, 1973; Cayton and Drake, 1962:435-56). Others saw riot behavior as a general manifestation of anti-White feeling, as well as a desire for plunder made possible by the riot itself. Stores were plundered because they were there, not because they were owned by Jews. Before either conclusion can be accepted, further analysis in the cool light of historical reflection is needed.<sup>8</sup>

Middleman minority theories have successfully explained the association of economic anti-Semitism and occupational roles where Jews have suffered from violent persecution. Generally, discussions of why anti-Semitism in the English-speaking world, and in the U.S. in particular, has been relatively mild, are permeated with the ideology of "American exceptionalism" (Lipset, 1963; Halpern, 1956). Factors delineated by Andreski in his sophisticated socioeconomic interpretation of anti-Semitism in Poland, summarize the variables illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Andreski sees these factors as facilitating a strong popular "animosity towards a non-dominant minority." Terms used in Figures 1 and 2 appear in parenthesis, followed by an interpretation of the American situation:

1. "Conspicuousness and indelibility of the distinguishing marks of the group" (*special cultural attributes, stranger role visibility*). In the United States, distinguishing marks of Jewishness have been blurred in various ways, such as adoption of English, anglicization of surnames, widespread intermarriage, and partial adoption of Christian celebrations and practices (e.g. Christmas) by many American Jews (Matz, 1961; Duker, 1960). However, Jewish traits have experienced diffusion and adoption by many Americans, especially those in the Northeast ("You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's rye bread").

2. "Coincidence of cultural and religious and racial dividing lines" (*group solidarity and disintegration*). Jews are part of the White color-case, an extremely salient boundary in America. Widespread religious intermarriage, with conversion and identification in both directions, and the growth of interracial adoption create cross-ethnic ties rather than cultural, racial, and religious congruence at dividing lines, despite considerable regional variation.
3. "General poverty, and . . . the process of impoverishment." From 1939 to 1971, the American economy was marked by economic growth and general affluence. This factor, however, may be relevant to the situation in Black ghettos.
4. "The ratio of the minority to the majority, and particularly, the process of increase of the ratio" (*critical mass*). If the American Jewish population has remained at ca. six million, its proportion in the general population has declined since the 1930s from ca. 6.0 percent to 2.9 percent. It is and has been well below Andreski's critical level of 10 percent (except in local situations), but above the 1 percent level of Germany in 1933.<sup>9</sup>
5. "The minority's share of the total wealth, and particularly the process of growth of this share." While Jewish wealth in America is larger than the Jewish proportion of the population—and probably perceived as even larger—this affluence appears against a background of national economic growth. Relative affluence plus achievement is interpreted as individual rather than ethnic; this tends to reduce intergroup hostility.
6. "The extent to which economic complementarity is absent" (*competition, status gap*). There is extensive occupational and educational competition between Jews and others, despite considerable Jewish specialization. Until recently, however, its interpretation as individual rather than interethnic competition has minimized hostility. Recent controversies surrounding affirmative action quotas have focused on competition factors, threatening polarization.
7. "The absence of common foes" (*ethnocentrism, imported ideology*). Since the First World War, American Jews have been successful in identifying the foes of America with enemies of the Jews. Even during the 1973 oil embargo, much potentially anti-Jewish hostility was deflected to those who actually embargoed the oil. The term "anti-Semite," one of honor in Germany and Poland early in the twentieth century, is now a term of opprobrium.

With regard to the purely demographic and economic position of Jews (factors 4, 5, and 6), Andreski's explanation provides grounds for an anti-Semitic movement. But the situation of economic growth (factors 3 and 5) and the general American ideology and visibility strategy of American Jewry (factors 1, 2, and 6) have mitigated such tendencies. Because of his sophisticated statement, Andreski's delineation of factors allows for the consideration of both group cohesion and group disintegration as factors in host hostility; in this, he differs from Bonacich and others. Figure 1 contrasts such factors in the somewhat similar circumstances of Germany and the U.S.

## CONCLUSION

The value of middleman minority theories, albeit imperfect, lies in their general comparative framework for the study of Jewish communities, as well as in their delineation of clear hypotheses relating occupational struc-

ture and Jewish economic roles to general social system characteristics. Jews are not confined solely to middleman roles, though many of the roles Jews occupy can be seen as such in a metaphorical sense. Nevertheless, even when some segment of these theories is rejected as inapplicable, e.g., the sojourning hypotheses, questions about the nature of Jewish-held occupations are raised that might otherwise be ignored.

Implicit in any set of theories is a program of research and a set of queries for researchers. Middleman minority studies focus attention on the community's socioeconomic structure and its association with both minority and external relations. Internal cohesion-disintegration and culture content are related to ties with outsiders. Occupational roles filled by Jews in one society can be compared with similar or dissimilar roles played by Jews, Armenians, Huguenots and Overseas Chinese in other settings.

The sociological study of American Jewry is neither an ethnic group survey valuable only for its own purposes, nor a minute segment of the study of American society, but is part of general comparative sociology.

## NOTES

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1. Bonacich (personal communication) has modified her conceptualization of the "middleman minority" since 1973; she gives less stress to either liquidity or sojourning. The present paper, however, analyzes her published model. For criticism of the sojourner hypothesis, *per se*, see Hill, 1977.

2. In defining a middleman minority, the possibility must be considered that most minority members may not be in commercial occupations. But in the host-country's territory, minority members in commercial occupations represent the group. As shown by Kuznets (1960), the majority of American Jews living in New York City were not businessmen or even in middle-class occupations well into the 1940s; New York, however, was not necessarily representative of the United States as a whole. This paradox may be experienced by other groups (Zenner, 1976b; Tartakower, 1960).

3. This comment is based on rather consistent gossip within the profession, which has made the rounds since the late 1950s. Of course, departments with many Jews may have an in-grown quality of their own. White (1966:26-27) indicates that some male American-born Gentiles felt excluded from the Boas circle.

4. The conservative "liberal capitalism" of Milton Friedman can be attributed to his Jewishness too, as when he associates licensing of physicians with exclusionary anti-Jewish policies of the American Medical Association (Friedman, 1962). A more general argument connecting the Jewish fate to the rise of an expanding capitalism, as opposed to nation-state capitalism and other regimes, is found in Rivkin, 1971.

5. Poll (1962) and Levy (1976) have seen the economic adjustment of certain Hasidic groups as exploiting their "religious virtuosity" to provide religious services



and products to other Jews. Gutwirth (1968, 1972) has pointed to the role Hasidim play in the diamond industry and other "traditionally Jewish" sectors.

6. The sojourner hypothesis has relevance to intra- and international migration of professionals. Some skills, such as medicine, natural science and engineering, are *liquid capital*, that is, they are more easily transferred across national boundaries than are other skills. Law is notoriously country-bound. *Professional ideology* may also aid in placing a person into a new society.

7. Teller (1968:219-234) writes: "The suburban Jew subsidizes studies of all kinds to advise him how he can remain a New without offending, and whether or not he has reached through business and professional success, the condition most perilous for a minority—excessive visibility."

In a chapter titled "The Hellenists of Suburbia," Teller relates the ethos of Jewish suburbanites to the decline of self-employment, and/or employment by non-Jews, both hallmarks of the Jewish disintegration as a middleman minority. Teller's book (1968), given his reliance on earlier studies, may be dated.

8. Most writing about "Black anti-Semitism" occurred against the backdrop of very special circumstances: the New York City school strikes of the late '60s and the purges of Whites from what had been the civil rights movement and became the Black Power movement (Teller, 1968; 286-98; Hentoff et al. 1969). This writing is highly tendentious. Much more work is needed to test suggestions that Black anti-Semitism has a "class" basis, and one which is found among competitors, rather than clients, of Jews and other middleman minorities (Zenner, 1976a).

9. I am troubled by Andreski's "critical mass" hypotheses. Jews and other minorities may become targets of mass discontent even when their percentages are quite small. Minorities, of course, are not evenly distributed either geographically or in the economy. "Optimal" percentages are difficult to validate.

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