

SELECTIVE BLACK HOSTILITY TOWARD JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH WHITES*

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Seldom have relationships between two minorities been more dialectical than those of blacks and Jews. Much has been written about complex sociological and economic pressures exerted on both and by both groups, pressures resulting in a series of conflicts and alliances (Berson, 1971). On the one hand, Jews have been active supporters in the civil rights movement for blacks and, like the latter, have been discriminated against by the larger white gentile society. On the other hand, Jewish concerns over the alleged "rising tide of black anti-Semitism" have created rancor and a reported "backlash" from the Jewish community. In recent years, this conflict has generated considerable attention. Much of this attention, however, took the form of journalistic accounts or round-table discussions over the selective nature of black prejudice toward Jews (*Midstream*, 1966). The present study seeks to clarify the issue by exploring the nature of association between black hostility toward Jewish and non-Jewish whites.

There are several competing views on this matter. One view suggests that black anger toward whites is not based upon ethnicity. Instead, black anti-Semitism is a reflection of antipathy toward white society in general (Marx, 1967). Another purports that black anti-Semitism represents something more than a generalized hostility toward white society. It is claimed that blacks have special sources of antagonism toward Jews, and hence are more likely to feel greater hostility toward them than toward other whites. This line of reasoning cites the role of Jews as "middleman minorities." Commenting on this role more generally, Bonacich (1973) notes:

One of the principle peculiarities of these groups is the economic role they play. In contrast to most ethnic minorities, they occupy an intermediate position. They tend to concentrate in certain occupations, notably trade and commerce, but also other "middleman" lines such as agent, labor contractor, rent collector, money lender and broker. They play the role of middleman between producer and consumer, employer and employee, owner and renter, elite and masses.

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The potential hostility middleman minorities face is significant. Conflicts with the host are inevitable because of incompatible goals held by renter and landlord, buyer and seller, client and professional. And, because of the concentration of certain middleman minorities in salient occupations, they are especially vulnerable during periods of unrest (Bonacich, 1973). Some have argued that Jews occupy such a role in black ghettos (Moon, 1967). In addressing the first question, then, two indices of prejudice were systematically compared, one toward Jews and the other toward white gentiles. If antiwhite attitudes among blacks are not based on ethnicity, but are a random expression of anger against whites in general, those who score low on anti-Semitism should score low on antiwhite attitudes as well. Conversely, those who rank high on antipathy toward Jews should also respond in a similar fashion on an index of antiwhite attitudes. If black prejudice, however, is a selective response to ethnicity, then we should expect to observe respondents in the inconsistent cells—high on one index but low on the other. Can we differentiate between those who are specifically intolerant toward Jews, on the one hand, and toward white gentiles on the other? In grappling with this question, demographic characteristics, the nature of contacts with Jews, and attitudinal variables and their implication for middleman relations are explored.

SAMPLE

The data for this study were collected by means of interviewer-administered questionnaires completed by 319 respondents from July to December 1970. Eligibility was limited to black subjects at least 20 years of age or older who resided in one of two areas—the community of Avalon, in south central Los Angeles, and its neighbor district of Crenshaw, located about one mile from Avalon. The present sample was drawn to represent a cross section of blacks from these two areas varying in ethnic composition and socioeconomic background.

Located in the curfew zone of the Watts riot, the Avalon area can be characterized as a lower- and working-class neighborhood largely composed of blacks. In contrast, the black population in Crenshaw is comprised of persons coming from more affluent backgrounds. It is an area far more ethnically heterogeneous than its counterpart in the south central "black belt."

Within these two communities, a listing of all Census Blocks was compiled and blocks randomly selected and assigned to black interviewers. Each interviewer was then instructed to begin canvassing, using a random dwelling unit as the starting point, from a random corner, and to proceed clockwise around the block, stopping at every dwelling unit. No calls back were initiated. This procedure was employed until a quota of eight interviews (per assignment), specified by age, sex, and employment status, was completed, to approximate the 1960 population for the two communities noted. Hence, the appropriate distribution and representative cross section required for multivariate analysis was secured.

Although this sampling procedure resembles a probability model, it should be classified as "disproportionately stratified," since persons drawn from these two locations do not correspond to the actual distribution of blacks in Los Angeles. Of the total 319 respondents, 159 were selected to represent Crenshaw and 160 from Avalon. Thus, the more educated from Crenshaw were oversampled to provide sufficient cases for testing other hypotheses.

MEASURES OF HOSTILITY TOWARD JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH WHITES

In this study the concept of anti-Semitism was delimited by focusing upon beliefs about Jews, but not just any belief. Rather, only those elements implying some negative evaluation or contempt for Jews were selected and presented in an agree-disagree format:

1. If Jews really want to be more accepted, they should stop being so showy.
2. Jews are just as honest as other businessmen.
3. Jews are more loyal to America than to Israel.
4. Jews are too pushy.
5. Jews have a lot of irritating faults.
6. The Jews have very little power in the business world.

Similarly, potentially negative cognitive items regarding white gentiles were selected to construct an index of antiwhite attitudes:

1. Most white people want to keep Blacks down as much as possible.
2. Most white people who take part in civil rights demonstrations don't really care about the problems of Blacks.
3. There are a lot of white people who are not prejudiced.
4. Sometimes I hate white people.
5. I would like to get even with the white man for some of the things he has done to Blacks.

While these two measures were not directly comparable, they were employed to provide a rough barometer of prejudice toward Jews and other whites.

FINDINGS

The first question asks: What is the nature of association between anti-Semitism and antiwhite attitudes among blacks? In Table 1 the two measures of prejudice were cross tabulated to ascertain the strength of their relationship. As observed, both indices were moderately related ($\gamma = .44$). The majority of blacks (62%) sampled in this survey did not appear to draw a distinction between their hostility toward Jewish and non-Jewish whites. But this statement must be tempered by the fact that a sizable minority of cases, about four in 10, indicate otherwise. Noteworthy here are the directions of differentiation. About 16% score low on anti-Semitism but high on the measure of antiwhite attitudes. Conversely, 22% score in the reverse direction, suggesting the presence of some selective intolerance specifically directed toward Jews. Similarly, in an earlier study by Gary Marx (1967), blacks who expressed their antipathy toward Jews were found to be roughly comparable in the degree of hostility expressed against other whites. He notes (183-184):

It appears that the scapegoat interpretation does not have widespread applicability at least in the sense that hostility is expressed toward Jews but not other whites in general For many, Negro anti-Semitism is simply a reflection of the hostility toward all whites.

While only a minority of cases are specifically intolerant toward Jews and another handful against white gentiles, is it possible to distinguish between these two groups and partially explain the discrepancy in their selective prejudices? Explanations were sought by examining demographic, behavior, and attitude variables.

TABLE 1
Relationship Between the Indices of Anti-Semitism
and Anti-White Attitudes

Index of Anti-Semitism ^a	Index of Anti-White Attitudes ^b	
	Low	High
Low	28	16
High	22	34
Total		100% (304)
Gamma = .44		

a. Low anti-Semites are those who score less than 3 on this index. Those in the high category score 3 or more.

b. Low anti-White members score less than 2 on this measure whereas those coded as high score 2 or more.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

In highly ghettoized pockets such as south central Los Angeles, locus of 1960s violence, antiwhite violence may have been socially defined as a legitimate outlet, given the intolerable living conditions, for pent-up hostilities. One such condition may have been the real or imagined overrepresentation of Jews as a middleman minority in black economic life. It has been reported that the perceived disproportionate number of Jewish merchants in ghetto neighborhoods is one source of bitterness providing a special impetus for black anti-Semitism. The destruction of Jewish-owned stores during the riots was interpreted by popular writer Paul Jacobs (1966) as one manifestation of black hostility directed specifically toward Jews. Accordingly, one might expect those who single out Jews for special hostility to be found heavily concentrated in the most highly ghettoized settings. The two communities sampled, referred to as Avalon and Crenshaw, were ranked "high" and "low," respectively, on ghettoization, based upon the racial composition, socio-economic status, and density of settlement of these areas in 1960. Of the two communities, Avalon is characterized by a greater proportion of black residents, a less affluent population, and higher population density. In Table 2, an interesting pattern emerges. Contrary to popular opinion, blacks intolerant of Jews, but not of other whites, are *less* likely to reside in the most highly ghettoized neighborhood (Avalon) than those holding prejudices in the reverse direction. Of those scoring

high on only the index of anti-Semitism, 47% indicate they live in Avalon; of those who differentiate their antipathies in the opposite direction, 60% report the same.

If we view ghettoization as one dimension of social class, the pattern just observed bears a striking resemblance to results of other measures of socioeconomic status. For example, whether income, education, or occupation are employed, those especially prejudiced against Jews are more likely to come from *higher* socioeconomic backgrounds than those who score high on only the index of antiwhite attitudes. While not large, the differences are nonetheless consistent (55, 42, and 41, as compared with 38, 31, and 31%, respectively). Clearly, these findings are not explained by the "generalized antiwhite thesis" nor by the commonly held belief that anti-Semitism among blacks is culturally generated by white Christian society.

An emerging class conflict seems to be in operation. This conflict may be marked by growing competition between the aspiring black middle class and those immediately above, the Jewish middle class. As Sobel notes (1966):

As the Negro professional groups grow it is Jews—at least in the large urban centers—whom they will have to displace and Jews with whom they will have to contend. Negro doctors and lawyers have for years perceived themselves being in direct competition with a particular group of whites known as Jews, and this has stimulated tension. Negro small businessmen unable to muster the kind of credit and the tradition of business acumen and skill required for success in even the most modest of modern enterprises, see Jews as targets of frustration and displacement (p. 10).

Moreover, the struggle to win consumer patronage can become acute, given financially limited markets within the black community (low buying power) and the larger economic system's present vicissitudes (inflation and recession occurring together). Hence, viewing Jews as obstacles to black economic independence might well result in black anti-Semitism (Sheppard, 1946).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTACTS

Aside from conflict ensuing from competition between black and Jewish professionals, economic conflicts may arise between renter and landlord, buyer and seller, and employee and employer. A number of writers have noted that contact with those in middleman roles has long been a sensitive area for which distinctions between Jews and other whites are drawn (Clark, 1946; Baldwin, 1948). During the first half of the twentieth century, for example, many blacks moved into low-income areas vacated by upwardly mobile Jews who, themselves, had replaced earlier migrants. Although once-Jewish communities were now predominantly black, many economic institutions remained in Jewish hands. As a result, in some ghetto pockets, Jews are highly visible in black economic life. Although characteristic of Chicago and other cities in the Midwest and Northeast, it is questionable whether a similar process of invasion-succession between these two groups has occurred in the major "black belts" of Los Angeles (south central). But since Los Angeles is a metropolitan center inhabited by a goodly number of both blacks and Jews, where the latter more frequently occupy middle-class occupations than do the former, it is likely that many blacks have encountered Jews in superordinate economic positions.

Black contact with Jews is not restricted solely to economic dealings. Blacks may interact with Jews in ways that correlate with tolerant attitudes. Intimate, equal-status

contact is one such variable (i.e., such contact challenges traditionally-held negative stereotypes). Hence, both economic and social interaction with Jews, as correlates of black prejudice, were examined. The economic items concentrate on reported mistreatment by Jewish merchants, landlords, and employers, while the social indicators focus on egalitarian social relations with Jews at work and in the neighborhood. These items were combined and read as two separate indices: perceived economic mistreatment and intimate, equal-status contact. It is noteworthy to mention that for some blacks, any white merchant in a black area is "defined" as being Jewish. Evidence for this sort of "mistaken identity" was uncovered during the fieldwork preparation for this survey. As a result, the reader must keep in mind that these reported experiences with Jews in some cases may be more "perceived" than "real."

In Table 2, those who scored high on only the index of anti-Semitism were more inclined to report having experienced some form of mistreatment in their economic dealings with Jews than those who responded in the reverse direction (46% and 24%). The anti-Semites are not only more likely than their counterparts to report having experienced mistreatment, they are also *less* likely to indicate having had egalitarian contact with Jews (27% vs. 45%). Thus, if blacks single out Jews for special hostility, the limited scope of their relations with Jews may be one significant causal factor. Upon comparing the proportion of reported economic and social contacts, for example, black anti-Semites are twice as likely to indicate having economic encounters as social relations with Jews (46% and 27%). Conversely, their low anti-Semitic counterparts report more social contact, in a ratio of two to one (45% as against 24%). In other words, the ethnically prejudiced are distinguishable by their limited differential association with Jews. Accordingly, when primarily a function of economic relations, the black perception of the Jewish world may be a limited one, serving to reinforce traditionally pejorative middleman minority images of Jews.

Would black anti-Semites evaluate the economic practices of Jewish middlemen differently than those hostile toward whites in general? Respondents were asked to compare treatment by both groups as merchants, as landlords, and as employers. From these three contexts, an index of attitudes about economic practices by Jews and by whites, in general, was constructed. As might be expected, anti-Semites were more likely to evaluate Jews harshly than were those hostile toward whites generally (42% as compared with 15%). These data suggest that Black anti-Semitism is not a random expression of hostility, but correlates with specific demographic and experiential characteristics.

PERCEPTION OF JEWS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

What is the perception of Jewish involvement in control of the black community? There is some evidence that selective aggression against Jews is associated with the limited scope of black-Jewish economic relationships. These encounters reinforce a pejorative image of economic middleman roles. Perhaps one source for this image is the (real or imagined) overrepresentation of Jewish businessmen in black economic affairs. Such participation, in itself, need not result in community control, as some have maintained. Yet the charge that the Jewish community plays "uncle Tom" for the white Anglo-Saxon, the power truly controlling the black community (Ellis, 1966), can be tested. Respondents were queried on two agree-disagree

TABLE 2
Correlates of Prejudice Toward Jewish
and Non-Jewish Whites

Correlates	High Anti-White Low Anti-Semitism	High Anti-Semitism Low Anti-White
<u>Demographics</u>		
Ghetto residence (Avalon)	60% (50)	47% (66)
Some College	31% (48)	42% (65)
White collar	31% (49)	41% (66)
More than \$8000 per yr. (total family income)	38% (48)	55% (64)
<u>Social and Economic Contact with Jews</u>		
Index of Perceived Economic Mistreatment (per cent who score one or more)	24% (49)	46% (65)
Index of Intimate, equal- Status Contact (per cent who score one or more)	45% (47)	27% (64)
Index of Attitudes Toward the Economic Practices of Jewish and Non-Jewish Whites (per cent who evaluate Jews more unfavorable)	15% (47)	42% (64)
<u>Perception of Jews in Black Community</u>		
Jews have too much economic power in the Black community (per cent who agree)	49% (49)	65% (66)
Blacks would be better off if the stores run by Jews left the Black community (per cent who agree)	25% (48)	38% (66)

statements: (1) "Jews have too much economic control in the Black community," and (2) "Blacks would be better off if the stores run by Jews left the Black community."

As one might expect, the findings lend support to earlier conclusions. Of those intolerant of Jews but not of other whites, about two in three (65%) agree that Jews have too much economic influence in their neighborhood; almost four in 10 (38%) indicate that they would fare better if Jewish merchants left their community. On the other hand, of those intolerant of whites, generally, the corresponding percentages are 49 and 25%, respectively.

From the standpoint of black anti-Semites, the presence of middleman minorities in their community is a source of irritation. Why, then, are racial and cultural minorities, especially, often found in this middleman role? Occupying an intermediate position between elite and mass, middleman minorities form a social bridge between the two antagonistic groups. And because of a similarity to the elite in economic status, yet with frequent and intense contact with the masses, they come to symbolize for both the former. In times of stress (conflicting goals in market relations), they serve, temporarily, as a buffer group, bearing the brunt of mass anger (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1973). In this capacity, they in turn help preserve the position of those above them. As a result, while collective forces oppose their presence, other powers prefer them to remain. Hence, these lines of conflicting interest pose adjustment problems for middleman minorities and host community (blacks) alike.

CONCLUSION

In brief, a clear majority of blacks (62%) did not differentiate their antiwhite prejudice on the basis of ethnicity. Of those who did, however, 16% score low on anti-Semitism but high on antiwhite attitudes. Conversely, 22% score in the reverse direction, suggesting the presence of a selective aggression factor reserved for Jews. Black anti-Semitism may be tied, in part, to the perception of black-Jewish conflict over economic matters. These economic matters, a consequence of middleman relations, serve as special sources of intolerance against Jews, independent of black attitudes toward other whites.

Contrary to popular opinion, anti-Semites tend to come from less ghettoized areas (in Los Angeles) and higher socioeconomic backgrounds. These findings may signal a class conflict between aspiring, middle-class blacks competing with middleman Jews. Further, anti-Semites were characterized by a limited range of contacts with Jews, which reinforces a pejorative middleman minority economic image. Accordingly, this group tended to evaluate economic practices of Jews more harshly than those of non-Jewish whites. Finally, those selectively hostile toward Jews felt this minority to hold too much economic power in the black community, indicating that their departure should be encouraged. Thus, in addition to demographic and contact variables, there are attitudinal correlates of selective black aggression toward Jewish and non-Jewish whites.

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