

A CURRENT EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-SEGREGATION ON JEWISH OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE *

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THE reasons for interest in Jewish occupational choices and the kinds of concerns that still arise from the self-segregative influences upon them should be identified. The heavy concentration of Jews in trade and the professions have been considered as abnormal; 15 years ago a substantial body of Jewish opinion regarded this "mal-distribution" as contributing to prejudice and anti-Semitism. When "defense" concepts dominated the treatment of anti-Semitism many voices were heard urging the normalization of Jewish occupational distribution. Today community relations agencies are interested in building broad bridges between groups to reduce anti-Semitism, not in restructuring Jewish economic life.

Historical Occupational Experiences

Jewish occupational choices now are a matter of concern because of issues of full equality of opportunity and not because of any so-called mal-distribution requiring defensive measures to counteract anti-Semitism. In evaluating the current impact of discrimination and self-segregation the profound effects of a long historic experience in shaping the Jewish economic contour must first be considered. It has been argued that because of this historic background Jewish

occupational choices have now congealed into fixed patterns that will probably continue indefinitely. My view is that the new conditions which exist today are altering significantly the earlier patterns. The evolution of Jewish occupational patterns has been closely interrelated with changes in restrictions. As the impact of discrimination continues to decrease, occupational choices will probably be made without reference to any specifically Jewish component.

Legal restrictions on occupational choices imposed on Jews from medieval times by royal rulings, church canons and guild regulations required Jews to maintain a distinctive economic enclave. A minority religion in a hostile world contributed further toward the narrow range of possible economic activity. Any understanding of the position of Jews in the economy must recognize the importance of non-economic factors in shaping the economic contours. The desire and need for cohesion within the Jewish *shtetl* were the basic factors tightening the strong ethnocentricity which shaped the occupational pursuits of its members. Concentrations that occurred in trade and commerce resulted from the narrow choices that were actually available. Classical Judaism itself had discouraged trade and commerce; the Talmud expressed sharp disapproval of these occupations.

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How do the historical occupational experiences relate to America? Attempts have been made to correlate specific occupational backgrounds of the immigrants to occupation patterns that developed in the United States. This link is a highly tenuous one since the distinctiveness of the American environment very quickly produced occupational shifts. In 1900, 20 per cent of the gainfully employed Jews in the U. S. were engaged in trade, 60 per cent were factory workers and 2½ per cent in professions; by 1935 trade increased to 51 per cent, professions to 13 per cent and factory workers decreased to 14 per cent.

European occupational patterns provide a bare contour for adaptations that occurred in America. Rather than a transfer of specific skills and occupations the transfer that produced the pattern of Jewish occupations in the United States was one of work values along with the strong desire for cohesion. The desire for cohesion of a small minority is an essential condition for group survival to which occupational dispersion, at one time, provided a serious challenge. The economic concentration of Jewish immigrants strongly supported this cohesion requirement. Restrictions and discrimination helped considerably to reinforce the necessity for cohesion.

Causal Factors in Occupational Patterns

The special occupational distribution of American Jews is often viewed as advantageous economically. The particular concentrations have been regarded as ones in which ease of entrance and opportunities for growth were unusually well adapted to the American economy. The dramatic rise in the socio-economic position of American Jews is seen as correlated purposefully with the selection of particular growth of certain business, industry and professions. But the rise has resulted from motivation,

values and drive rather than any purposeful advantageous selection. The absence of a free market of occupational pursuits is an inherent disadvantage. Opportunities available through a narrow range of selection can never match those which exist in the total market. The distinct economic advantage for Jews has been their work values rather than particular occupational concentrations. The Jewish ethic in its positive attitude toward work has had a direct and causal relationship to economic achievement. As far back as the early medieval period attitudes toward work among the general population were negative but Jews regarded work as a positive source of satisfaction in their lives. It was not until the Protestant Reformation that a positive attitude toward work appeared in Western Society, when Martin Luther maintained that work was not merely a means of earning the necessities of life but was a major means for serving God.

The causal basis for the concentration of Jewish occupational patterns has been in the desire for group cohesion. But this factor by itself would probably have produced a further concentration in the working class occupations of Jews in the U. S. that we noted had existed at the turn of the century if middle class values had not directed Jews toward entrepreneurial roles and stimulated, also, professional training as an alternate method of achieving middle class status. A guidebook prepared for Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century advised: "Do not take a moment's rest. Run, do, work and keep your own good in mind!"

Primacy of Economic Class Values in Occupational Choices

The work value orientation of Jews and of Judaism has been closely identified with the Protestant ethic and its secular

counterpart, the spirit of capitalism. In fact, Werner Sombart insisted that Puritanism was essentially a modified form of Judaism and that everything that Weber ascribed to Puritanism as responsible for the Protestant ethic and the source of the spirit of capitalism might be ascribed equally to Judaism. Once the middle class status of Jews was achieved in the United States through the values of the ethic, class values became virtually indistinguishable from the ethic values. Economic class itself has now become the template of occupational selections of Jews. The occupational patterns of Jews today are largely a reflection and a function of their middle class urban status.

Currently, Jewish occupational patterns are not distinctive except as a reflection of the socio-economic class position that Jews now occupy. Jewish college graduates in 1961 made career choices that are more impressive in their similarities with other graduates than with the differences.¹ Jewish college graduates in 1961 over-selected law, medicine and certain sciences by about twice their ratio of the college graduate population. Jews constituted eight per cent of the college graduates but 17 per cent of the lawyers and 16 per cent of the physicians. However, Jewish college graduates in 1961 had really over-selected rich fathers rather than particular professions. High family income of all the 1961 graduates correlate closely with the selection of these professions. The sons of all fathers with annual income of \$15,000 and above over-selected law and medicine by more than twice the ratio of their income group to the 1961 college graduate population. The same kind of over-selection occurred for sons of college graduates. This group was

one-fourth of the 1961 college graduate population but one-half of these selecting law and medicine; the 19 per cent of all 1961 college graduates who lived in large metropolitan areas, produced a third of those interested in law and medicine. Jewish graduates were heavily over-represented in each of the three groups which had over-selected law and medicine.

The over-selection of law, medicine and other professions now has very little impact on producing any distinctive Jewish occupational distribution among the current college graduate population. Ninety per cent of Jewish college graduates in 1961 selected occupations other than those of law and medicine. Law and medicine together now account for only five per cent of the careers selected by all 1961 college graduates and ten per cent of the 1961 Jewish graduates. There are about 17,000 graduates each year of law and medical schools—law 10,000 and medicine 7,000. In 1961 there were 35,000 engineering graduates among whom Jews were represented precisely in their ratio to the population of 1961 college graduates, or eight per cent. The really significant area of over-selection by Jews today appears to be that of college training; in relation to their three per cent population proportion, Jews overselect all occupations in which a college education is necessary or helpful.

There is another way of appraising any current impact of self-segregative factors on occupational selection of Jewish college students—that of examining differences between Jewish and non-Jewish students with respect to occupational values. When an individual chooses an occupation he believes there is something “good” about it for him. His conception of what is good in his work choice is related to what he wants out of life. A study of occupations and values at Cornell University shows con-

¹ These and other data of 1961 graduates were obtained from a report of the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago.

sistent positive correlations between values of college students and the occupations they desire for their life's work. The values which distinguish occupational choices are affected also by socializing influences of the particular occupation. Not only do the values of individuals reflect their own estimate of what career is good for them but the values themselves are reinforced by the image of an occupation where such values are regarded as norms. Social workers are expected to help others and businessmen are expected to make a great deal of money or at least to try. College students planning to become social workers rank "high" on helping others and "low" on making money; the future businessman want to make a great deal of money and are very "low" on helping others.

We had the data of the Cornell study analyzed on the basis of the religious variable. Occupational choices distinguish groups of students from each other very sharply but differences in work values between college students on the basis of the religious variable were found to be small. When specific values such as the importance of getting ahead, helping others or making a great deal of money were correlated with the students' religion, a similar distribution of values of religion occurred within each religious group. For example, on the importance of getting ahead the following proportion of students rated this as highly important: Jews, 56 per cent; Protestants, 55 per cent; Catholics, 58 per cent; the ratio regarding this value as fairly important was: Jews, 36 per cent; Protestants, 36 per cent; Catholics, 37 per cent.

A separate analysis was made of those students desiring business careers through the use of the religious variable. Any special problems of Jewish students that might influence interest in particular kinds of jobs in business careers

could be discerned from the data. Thus the values and money expectations of the Jewish businessmen might be so distinctive as to influence significantly their interest in jobs in the large organizations. The data showed that a larger proportion of Jewish businessmen placed a higher value on making a great deal of money than Protestants or Catholics, in the following ratio: Jews: 63 per cent; Catholics: 43 per cent; Protestants: 48 per cent. The Jewish businessmen also expected to be earning considerably more money ten years after they graduated than did Protestants or Catholics. The organization man in a large industrial corporation is expected to adapt to a pace of development which is a fairly modest one. These differences might seem to suggest that Jews are less likely to follow organization men career lines in large-scale industry, assuming that discrimination is not a factor, than the Protestant or Catholic student planning to enter business.

As with other apparent correlations between Jews and occupational choices the causal factor for the apparent distinctiveness of Jews turns out to be social class not religion. When the class factor was held constant and only the students from families with incomes \$10,000 and over were correlated as to values and expectations the differences in expectations between Jews and others disappeared. All students with high family incomes, irrespective of religion, among the businessmen held very similar expectations. In one sense, it is quite true that more of the Jewish businessmen will have certain values and expectations in business that will distinguish them generally from Protestant and Catholic businessmen as conforming to the organization man image. But these differences are functions of social class not of religious or ethnic background. An overrepresentation of an ethnic group in a social class results, of course, in more

members of the group behaving as members of that class.

Because of the large size of the sample of the study of career aspirations of 1961 college graduates we expect to have enough Episcopalian and Presbyterian graduates whom we will be able to equate with the Jewish graduates on a number of variables. It is expected that the data will show that these Protestant groups behave very much like Jews with respect to occupational values and choices because their social class, their father's education and other relevant factors are similar. Episcopalians have a higher proportion of college graduates than Jews.

It is inevitable that Jews will differ occupationally from the general population because eight per cent of college graduates are Jewish compared with the three per cent population ratio. We have been able to show and explain the current occupational patterns that reflect a broad congruence between the Jewish and non-Jewish college populations. However, these changes or the rationale for class influence on occupational choice tells us very little about specific job and work patterns of peer groups of Jews and non-Jews. The accountant, lawyer and businessman function in a milieu which may be entrepreneurial or organizational, and if organizational, either Jewish or general. We need to examine, particularly, the jobs in big business and industry because it is in this area that effects of discrimination have been clearest and are now, perhaps, the most significant. The important area of discriminatory practices within business and industry is in the barriers to management opportunities.

The Jewish College Graduate and Large Corporations

Despite congruency in the occupational values of Jewish and of non-Jewish col-

lege graduates, they end up in very different places of employment. If Jewish graduates avoid the big corporation the reason for such avoidance must be located in factors other than basic occupational values. There is very little discrimination in research and technical jobs in big business; no claim is made that Jews avoid these positions. The personnel director of a major company claimed that Jews were well represented in research in his organization but absent from management because of a racial tendency on the part of Jews toward research. A generation ago, Jews were said to avoid college teaching careers. There wasn't much money in it. Today the compensation is still relatively low. However, the impact of discrimination has been reduced sharply. Now over five per cent of all college teachers are Jewish and at leading universities the ratio is within the range of 15 per cent to 25 per cent.

The requirement of what is termed "ethnic affinity" has been a very basic feature of management theory and practice. Regardless of formal competence, wrote Chester Barnard in 1935 in his book *The Functions of the Executive*, men could not be selected or promoted where they do not fit. Fitness, he insisted, included such factors as race, nationality and faith which supported a social compatibility and homogeneity necessary for an effective management team. Much of this attitude has persisted. The campus interview blank of one of the top ten industrial corporations in the U. S. reminds the interviewer of the relevancy of homogeneity in selections with the question: Does he look like us?

The bare data of the participation of Jews in management establish that among 500 largest industries Jews constitute less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of one per cent of the executives. There are six Jewish employees among 2,000 listed in the

EFFECT OF DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-SEGREGATION

executive roster of the United States Steel Corporation. This bleak picture reflects effects of prejudices during the past decades. Recent changes have occurred in attitudes, community mores and laws affecting discrimination. As a result barriers themselves have been somewhat lowered. Many large scale industrial corporations and financial institutions now accept Jewish college graduates for their management trainee programs. Our study of recruitment of management trainees at the Harvard Business School shows that Jewish graduates were hired by major companies such as Standard Oil, Procter and Gamble, General Electric, Ford Motors and others but in a much lower ratio than non-Jewish graduates.

One cannot balance the extent of avoidance with the extent of discrimination. The risk of facing special handicaps is enough to discourage many Jewish graduates from even applying; a little discrimination is likely to result in a great deal of avoidance. Chief executive officers of the major corporations have claimed in private discussions of this problem that jobs are available for Jews in their companies with excellent advancement potential in most echelons and divisions of management. But they acknowledge that in particular areas where personal or social association is considered important, such as sales and in top management itself, the opportunities for Jews are quite restricted.

The impact of discrimination in junior management opportunities in large-scale industries may have diminished somewhat but little change in social relations occurs in big business entirely through its own motivations. An examination of the college recruitment files in the management trainee program of major insurance companies in New York was recently made by a public agency. Hillel directors identified the Jewish applicants from their campuses to these companies.

The ten per cent ratio of Jewish applicants was slightly lower than the ratio of Jewish students in these colleges. But it is surprising that the interest of Jewish graduates in these jobs was as high as 10 per cent. Successive screenings in the hiring process resulted in job offers to about 30 per cent of the Jewish applicants but to 60 per cent of the other applicants. This examination was conducted for the June 1960 graduates and the companies were made very much aware of its discriminatory implications. The study was not replicated in 1961, but the recruiting results nevertheless show a significant increase in the number of Jewish trainees hired by the companies that year. The executive officers of major insurance companies in the New York area recently undertook to make changes in recruitment procedures to assure a non-discriminatory result in the future. One of the companies superseded its college recruitment director with a new person who is Jewish. A similar situation pertains in the recruitment of management trainees of major banks. Our evidence shows the existence of considerable prejudice and wide acceptance of negative stereotypes about Jews "fitting in" in banking. In one of the major banks in New York City three out of 60 of the campus trainees who were hired in 1959 were Jewish. Following discussions of the problem with this bank the number of Jewish trainees increased to eight in 1960 and 15 in 1961. The personnel director of this bank had insisted initially that the proportion of Jewish trainees was simply a reflection of the small ratio of Jewish applicants. The presumed difficulty of attracting Jewish applicants for jobs in large-scale industry or finance is undoubtedly related more closely to the lack of interest of these companies in hiring Jews than to disinterest of Jewish college graduates in accepting these kinds of positions. Once initial resist-

ance or inertia has been overcome, of course, change occurs in both directions.

How should we appraise the current impact of discrimination in management opportunities? It is obvious that discrimination still constitutes a serious barrier. But these barriers vary in importance at different management levels. A college recruitment executive for a large industrial corporation has pointed out that the recruiter takes a risk that the Jewish applicant whom he recommends will not get through further screenings. The precept "does he look like us?" and the effects of prejudice itself within the organization need to be considered by the recruiter. Thus the Jewish applicant on the total scoring would need a B plus rating where B is the standard of acceptance for others.

Many Jewish applicants can now meet these sibling standards of looking like us. Recently the chief executive officer of a major corporation, who happens to be Jewish, asked his personnel director why the management training program, which recruited from the Harvard Business School, had failed to hire any Jewish graduates. He was reminded by the personnel director that the men hired for this training were over six feet, good-looking extroverts, highly personable and played golf. Jewish graduates of the Harvard Business School were subsequently found who qualified fully on all counts.

Advancement in management responsibilities is not affected significantly, up to a point, by discrimination. We should keep in mind that the Jewish junior executive had required a higher rating than others to get his job, and some of the effects of prejudice have already been discounted through this requirement. The hiring and promotional opportunities in line management jobs in major industry might perhaps be compared with a mile foot race. The lane in which the Jewish executive must

run has a low hurdle at the starting post, a high hurdle at the three-quarter mile point and a ditch near the finishing line. The $\frac{3}{4}$ mile point is senior management, and the finishing line is top management. Only the first three places get the top management prizes. The impact of social discrimination is severe at the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile point and practically fatal near the finish.

The nature of a corporate management and its standards of social and sibling similarity are now changing and the race we described will be run under new rules during the next decade. Distinctions between line and staff positions in large scale industry are disappearing. Technical and staff jobs have been open to Jews without discernible barriers not only at the starting post but all the way to the finishing line. Ability and merit are virtually the only criteria for these positions. The vice-presidents in charge of research at two of the five largest industrial research centers in the country are Jewish. In many respects there is now lateral movement within the executive suite between staff and line and the obstacle race is no longer the only way to the top for Jewish personnel.

Perhaps more significant in the long run is the basic change that is now taking place in managerial requirements in the technology of the second industrial revolution. The new informational technology requires a different kind of executive, one who has the skills needed in making effective decisions under increasingly complex conditions. Fluency in language of mathematics, science and social science is becoming as important for upper echelon executives as fluency in English. A management team selected on the basis of sibling similarities and social homogeneity will become outmoded and the same standards that now determine promotion of technical personnel are likely to prevail also from management at all levels.