

PERCEIVED ANTI-SEMITISM AND MINORITY SUBCOMMUNITY SIZE

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This study tests the impact of Jewish community size on Jewish community self-image, as reflected by attitudes about anti-Semitism. Specifically, we study the perceptions of Jews about how "stranger-others" in their community see them. Several competing explanations are offered and tested. Data from the 1971 and 1990 National Jewish Population Surveys indicate that community size did not influence perceived rates of anti-Semitism in the Jewish communities in the United States, suggesting that anti-Semitism may be a national rather than locally oriented issue.

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The sociology literature suggests that people in larger cities tend to be less acquainted with their neighbors than those in smaller cities. The smaller the city, the more neighbors one knows. This position is held by the Chicago school of thought and its classic theorists: Simmel (1925), Park (1925), Wirth (1938), Redfield (1947) and Stouffer (1955). This view has been expounded more recently by Greer (1962), Williams et al. (1976), Smith and Petersen (1980), Wilson (1985), and Abrahamson and Carter (1986). Similarly, theorists belonging to the subcultural school (Fischer, 1971, 1976; Freudenberg, 1986; Gans, 1962; Key, 1968; Kim, 1988; Rabinowitz, 1989) suggest that alienation increases with population size. The larger the city, the more involved and isolated people become within their own ethnic subcommunity. They are more alienated from "stranger-others" because they have fewer significant contacts with them. We suggest that these differences in stranger-other contact will result in different attitudes among Jews toward anti-Semitism. In smaller cities where Jews have more significant contacts with their non-Jewish neighbors, they will perceive that there is less anti-Semitism. In bigger cities where they have fewer signifi-

cant contact with non-Jews, they will perceive that there is more anti-Semitism.

We suggest three alternate and competing hypotheses of which the first two refer to a linear relationship, whereas the third is a logical alternative.

1. The larger the Jewish community, the more Jews perceive anti-Semitism. This is based on the Chicago school's theories that rates of disorganization, alienation, and urban decay increase as cities become larger. It is also based on the subcultural model of society that holds that the larger the subcommunity, the more its members are insulated within the subcommunity and isolated from the larger community.
2. The larger the Jewish community, the less Jews perceive anti-Semitism. This hypothesis is based on Fischer's (1976) theory that a "critical mass" of people is needed to anchor a community. Members of larger subcommunities have more affirmed identities. Therefore, Jews in larger subcommunities would have less stereotypical attitudes than Jews in smaller subcommunities lacking a critical mass.
3. Community size has no impact on the perception of anti-Semitism.

DATA AND METHODS

Data Source

The data for this study come from the

1970–1971 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), the only survey that permits statistically proper comparisons among different Jewish communities. In contrast, local Jewish community surveys conducted since 1971 have used different methods making comparisons difficult (Lazerwitz, 1984, 1986, 1988). Often, their sample designs departed from desirable probability procedures, and the questions typically had major wording differences. In addition, they used different time references and sought different respondents. No direct questions about actually experiencing anti-Semitism were ever asked.

It was not possible to use the 1990 NJPS survey data as a primary source because of its small subsample size of 626 cases, which is no more than one-seventh of the 1971 sample size. However, I did find a similar pattern of relationship between community size and perceived anti-Semitism on a seven-point scale. In this area, the 1990 NJPS is not significantly different from the 1971 survey (Lazerwitz, personal correspondence, November, 1991).

Sample

The 1971 NJPS surveyed 4305 randomly selected Jewish household respondents and obtained a 79% response rate. Its sample design took into account the fact that American Jews were only a small percentage of the total United States population, that a sizeable number did not live in neighborhoods with concentrations of Jewish residents, and that many did not appear on Jewish communal lists. The final design was a complex, multistage, two-phase, disproportionately stratified cluster sample. It combined local Jewish federation lists outside the New York Jewish federation area ("list sample") with local area probability samples ("area sample"). In this way, sample households came in through only one source (for more details see Lazerwitz, 1974, 1978).

To test the effect of community size, the sample was broken down to subsamples rep-

resenting different-sized communities (Table 1). This required constructing a community scale, based on Lazerwitz's (1977) Jewish community divisions.

Variables

The dependent variable was the respondents' perception of anti-Semitism in the local community. It was measured by responses to questions about how serious a problem they felt anti-Semitism was in the community and the extent of their own anti-Semitic experiences, including losing relatives in the Holocaust and experiencing acts of anti-Semitism (adopted from Lazerwitz, 1978). The independent variables were community size estimates and mobility of respondents (Jews born into their present community of residence were non-mobile). We controlled for four demographic variables—sex, age, generations in the United States, and the family life cycle—and three socioeconomic variables: years of education, occupation of family head, and annual family income. Prior research on the American Jewish community suggests that these factors influence communal involvement (e.g., Lazerwitz, 1973, 1978, 1980).

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the dummy variable program of the Institute for Survey Research of the University of Michigan. We controlled for the above-mentioned socioeconomic and demographic variables in a multiple regression model. Using multiple classification analysis (MCA) the association between community size and a dependent variable was obtained above and beyond the control variables.

Four criteria were used to determine if the results confirmed the hypotheses. First, the multiple regression equation must have a squared multiple correlation coefficient of .20 or larger, and the beta coefficient for the Jewish community scale in a regression equation must be .10 or larger. When both criteria were met they show that the regression equation has a meaningful impact on

Table 1. Jewish Community Scale Points

Scale Point	Jewish Community	Representative Jewish Community Size Class	Sample Size
1.	New York Metro	2,000,000	2193
2.	Los Angeles Metro	500,000	404
3.	Chicago Metro	350,000	389
4.	Philadelphia Metro	300,000	294
5.	Miami Metro	250,000	255
6.	Boston Metro	200,000	308
7.	Large Eastern	100,000	233
8.	Large Midwestern	80,000	234
9.	Midwestern Older-Moderate Size	40,000	420
10.	Rapidly Growing, Western & Southern-Moderate Size	30,000	350
11.	Eastern, Older, Smaller Size	20,000	328
12.	Old Area Jewish Villages	10,000	211
13.	New Area Jewish Villages	5,000	182

the dependent variable and that the Jewish community scale is among those variables producing this adequate impact. Then, the adjusted mean scale values of dependent variables for each point on the Jewish community scale must form a consistent, monotonic, rank order with a statistically significant Spearman's rank order correlation (r_s). Finally, the adjusted means of the dependent variable behind the various beta and r_s coefficient must have a range of several units.

FINDINGS

The relationship between community size and perceived anti-Semitism is at best weak, as seen by the fact that the multiple regression equation (R^2) reaches a squared multiple correlation coefficient of only .09 and the mean range of the dependent variable behind the beta and the Spearman rank order correlation is less than adequate: 3.7-5.0.

We also tested to see whether the perception of anti-Semitism by people who had never lived in another community was more affected by community size than the perception of those who had moved there. The "migration" subsample showed a higher effect of community size on perceived anti-Semitism, although it still did not reach a

sociologically meaningful variance.

Finally, the impact of denomination on perceived anti-Semitism was examined. It was found that the more traditional the denomination, the greater the perception of anti-Semitism. Therefore, Orthodox and Conservative Jews have stronger perceptions of anti-Semitism than Reform and non-affiliated Jews.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Social scientists have often explored the extent to which certain characteristics of society vary directly with the size of the community. This study analyzes the relationship between community size and communal self-image attitudes as reflected by perceived anti-Semitism. The Chicago school and subculturalist theorists suggest that increased community size brings distinct community isolation from contacts with "stranger-others." The Chicago school emphasizes large city individual alienation, whereas the subcultural model emphasizes urban "ethnic-villagers" strong kinship and ethnic primary contacts that serve to further differentiate the dissimilar and potentially threatening subcultures that make up the metropolitan area community. Thus, both approaches claim that community size variations do have an impact on personal

and/or intercommunal relations.

This study concludes that, when socioeconomic and demographic factors are taken into account, Jewish community members living in metropolitan areas are no more fearful of anti-Semitism than are Jewish residents of smaller urban areas. This finding may suggest that the perception of anti-Semitism by U.S. Jews is primarily influenced by national factors and much less by local influences.

Wilson (1985) claims that tolerance increases with community size and with migration. Although our data could be explained by migration it cannot be explained by community size. We suggest that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism is a cultural one. It is rooted in the culture and is expected by the subculture. Hence, anti-Semitism could exist in the absence of Jews, and Jews could perceive anti-Semitism in the absence of concrete behavior against them.

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