

Why Are Jews So Rich?

A social scientist's troubling answer may provoke a national debate.

THE JEW CURVE

Greed and Income in American Life.

By Charles Murray.

Illustrated. 837 pp. New York.

The Free Press. \$35.

By Malcolm W. Browne*

A scant two years after Charles Murray's incendiary *The Bell Curve* provoked a furor among liberal opinion-makers with its views on race and intelligence, Mr. Murray has returned with an even more controversial work on yet another taboo subject: Jewish wealth. As he did in the earlier work, Mr. Murray marshals an impressive body of evidence that will surely send liberals into paroxysms of outrage. But whether one agrees or disagrees with the findings in Mr. Murray's book, the government or society that persists in ignoring the vital issues raised by his research does so at its peril.

"At a time of widening class divisions and shrinking opportunities for well-paying jobs," he argues, "a hidden source of resentment—the role of Jews in the economy—lurks beneath the surface of American life and clouds our ability to solve our economic dilemmas. It is vital that people begin to talk about this publicly. Failure to do so could only heighten the anti-Semitism that arises during periods of economic dislocation." In Mr. Murray's grim view, the lingering resentment towards Jews—as many as a fifth of Americans hold some anti-Semitic views, surveys show—could lead to an upsurge in discrimination and even hate crimes. The author posits a disturbing future in which Jews, increasingly isolated from other Americans, wall themselves off in high-priced ghettos and find themselves attacked by an impoverished Gentile underclass. Only by exploring in an honest, tough-minded way Jewish economic power—and the significant role of what he argues is the largely inherited trait of greed—can we hope to avoid such a tragic fate, he says.

Jews are the most economically successful group in American society, or, as Mr. Murray dubs them, "the overclass." Jewish family income is 72 percent more than the national average and even when minor-

ity groups are removed from the analysis, Jewish income is 34 percent more than that of Gentile white ethnic groups. (The author notes that Jewish families earn 50 percent more than "God-fearing, hard-working Irish-Americans.") Although Jews make up only three percent of the population, they account for approximately a fifth of the very rich, i.e. millionaires and above.

The book effectively uses graphics and charts to underscore these points. In one striking chart, the income curve for "Jews" and "Regular Americans" is compared, with a disproportionate Jewish clustering at the higher end of the \$50,000 scale or above.

What accounts for these differentials in group achievement? Aware of the storm of criticism this book may arouse, Mr. Murray offers extensive evidence that shows that educational background or even IQ are not the primary factors that account for Jews' higher income. "Even when educational attainment is the same, Jewish families headed by males with four or more years of college still earn 75 percent higher incomes than those of other ethnic groups," he notes. The slight advantage in IQ test scores reported by Jews is not large enough to explain why they in general are richer than everyone else. "Something more than brains is at work," he says.

That something, he argues in the book's most controversial chapter, is greed. Here, Mr. Murray's provocative analytic insights and policy prescriptions go beyond those of earlier American students of ethnicity and income. The author uses a veritable cornucopia of research, both current and historical, to underscore the picture of Jews driven by what Mr. Murray, a free-market advocate, concedes is "the basic engine of capitalism: greed." As academics have pointed out since the early 1900s, greed is the "g-factor" that motivates anyone—Jew and non-Jew alike—to strive to earn more money for themselves and their families. Pointing to the overwhelming evidence of Jewish economic superiority, Mr. Murray contends, "Everyone has the 'g-factor,' but Jews have more of it."

In making his case, he explores everything from medieval writings about Jewish money lenders to the role of Jewish-dominated investment banking firms, such as Goldman Sachs, in the spate of corporate raids in the 1980s. He pays special attention to Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky, whose "Greed is Good" credo serves, the book contends, as the "secret text" of Jewish life.

*As told to Art Levine, a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

Most striking is Mr. Murray's contention that the g-factor is genetically passed down from generation to generation. Drawing on the work of distinguished sociobiologists, Mr. Murray says that the g-factor, reflecting the evolutionary impulse toward self-preservation, has a significant hereditary component, somewhere between 40 percent and 80 percent. Jews—regardless of their upbringing—simply pass along more of it to their offspring.

It's an interesting point, but one open to alternative explanations that he tends to overlook. The wealth and greed that have been so widely observed among Jews over the centuries could be due to a cultural heritage that emphasizes achievement and money hoarding rather than a genetic predisposition. One regrets that Mr. Murray did not explore these possibilities more fully.

Still, he is no rabid anti-Semite, but a serious scholar whose work has long been influential in shaping a conservative agenda. A fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, his book *Losing Ground* highlighted how the welfare system fosters a destructive dependence; his last book, *The Bell Curve*, which argued for the immutability of apparent racial differences in intelligence, has been cited by the Republican president-elect in proposals to abolish Head Start and spend the money instead on courses in advanced computer science for prep-school students. But Mr. Murray notes that none of his findings about Jews in general should affect how we treat Jews as individuals. "Not all Jews are greedy, and not all Jews are rich," he observes. "Everyone deserves to be treated fairly on his or her own merits, even if they are, as a group, plutocratic Christ-killers."

Mr. Murray's reasoned perspective on this matter should go a long way toward ameliorating concerns that he is some kind of bigot. Even so, he doubtless will continue to arouse the ire of the political correctness mandarins, in large measure because of his use of cutting-edge research that flouts the conventional wisdom. In *The Bell Curve*, he respectfully cited the research of J. Philippe Rushton, a psychologist at the University of Western Ontario, who contends that "Negroids" are on the lowest rung of the human race, having developed a warm weather "reproductive strategy" that emphasizes promiscuous sex, high fertility rates, and relatively little nurturing of each child. Accordingly, Rushton contends, they have evolved smaller brains and larger penises than "Caucasoids" or "Mongoloids" [Asians]. In this new work, Mr. Murray has similarly broadened the scope of the debate on the Jewish question by highlighting the research of noted scholar Hans Lincoln Rockwell. Mr. Rockwell has stirred controversy with his quantitative analyses of the correlation between certain oft-cited Jewish activities and traits, and larger social problems. For instance, he has linked data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Report with a sophisticated regression analysis of Jewish religious observances—and it demonstrates

an apparent upswing in the kidnapping and murder of children 12-and-under during the month of April, when Jews celebrate Passover. Mr. Rockwell contends that this statistical trend is due to the use by Jews of the blood of Christian children to make *matzoth*, the unleavened bread that plays a central role in the Passover tradition.

Despite the anger such theories often provoke, Mr. Rockwell is recognized by many colleagues as a serious scholar. One of his most striking statistics, for instance, notes that of the 52 reported slayings of children in April 1994, a disproportionate number of them occurred in Los Angeles and New York City, cities with large Jewish populations. Rockwell has carefully analyzed the various factors that might account for this anomaly, and concluded that only the ritual slaying theory makes sense. "I have not been able to think of a plausible alternative explanation," the author quotes Mr. Rockwell as saying. "Can you?" Mr. Rockwell has also commissioned extensive laboratory studies that show that a key molecule found in blood—carbon—is also an ingredient in *matzoth*. "Case closed," Mr. Rockwell asserts.

In the face of heated criticisms of this research on both moral and scientific grounds, Mr. Murray defends Rockwell as "not . . . a crackpot" and notes that "Rockwell has responded to his critics with increasingly detailed and convincing empirical evidence." As for himself, Murray says "I remain resolutely agnostic on the validity of Rockwell's research. Only time will tell whether his work will ultimately be proven right or wrong, but that it is legitimate science there can be no doubt."

In his own way, Mr. Murray has also fearlessly explored new territory. In *The Jew Curve*, he makes a strong case for the role of a Jewish elite in distorting economic outcomes in American society. His solutions to the resulting income inequality will also draw fire, although they're just sketched in at the end. He notes with regret that "there can be no genuine free market as long as Jews are free of all restraints." Mr. Murray has proposed—in the form of "theoretical thought-experiments"—a number of remedial steps that could be taken: state seizures of excess profits of Jewish millionaires "to promote productive investment rather than hoarding by a selfish few"; abolishing onerous anti-discrimination statutes that discourage members of the Gentile "clans" from hiring their own kind; and so on. But he draws the line at extremist measures: No one should be forced to wear a yellow star.

Mr. Murray has done a valuable service by ending the shroud of censorship that has made Jewish wealth and other burning ethnic issues "pariahs in the world of ideas for the last 50 years," as he puts it. A democratic society clearly deserves a rational discourse on these critical subjects. It is for that reason we eagerly await Mr. Murray's next work in the series, a look at the cognitive stumbling blocks thwarting Polish-American advancement. It is tentatively entitled *How Many Polacks Does It Take To Screw In A Light Bulb? A Quantitative Analysis*. □

What We've Won and What We've Lost: A *Monthly* Scorecard

*The successes and failures
of this magazine's first
25 years—and what
remains to be done*

BY CHARLES PETERS

When we started *The Washington Monthly* in 1969, our purpose was to look at our political system in a way that would enable us to understand how and why it worked or didn't work. We thought we knew ways of doing this that had seemed unknown to reporters we had seen covering the Peace Corps, the organization from which all the founding staff of the *Monthly* came. The errors they most often made were relying on the agency's top officials and public relations people for stories, seldom leaving Washington or the capital cities of the host countries where comfort was readily available, and not understanding bureaucratic culture or even being aware of its existence.

By concentrating on officials who were actually on the agencies' firing lines and had firsthand knowledge of their organization's problems and were more likely than agency heads and PR types to be candid about them, we were soon able to identify some of the more significant factors in bureaucratic failure.

The most important secret we discovered was how government officials use make-believe to ensure their survival. The number-one goal of the typical bureaucrat is to protect his job, and, since the only way he is likely to be fired is if his agency's budget is cut, he devotes his highest efforts to defending that budget and if at all possible to increasing it to cover the promotions he yearns for. Deep in the bureaucrat's DNA is the awareness that if his agency attains its goal of, say, eliminating the energy crisis or solving the farm problem, the elimination of the agency and his job would follow. So the civil servant quickly learns to master the tools of make-believe—memoranda and meetings—so that he can appear to be busy while actually accomplishing little if anything.

Make-believe is most common in the middle levels of the bureaucracy. The fat that concentrates there tends to clog the arteries of communication between the top and the bottom of the typical agency. Another factor in this failure of communication is that the people at the bottom are afraid to speak out for fear of losing their job or their promotion. Still another is that the people at the top don't want to know about potential disaster so that they won't be blamed for it—instead of trying to solve problems, many senior officials simply pray that the lid can be kept on during their tenure. This is the Not On My Watch principle of executive behavior.

Charles Peters is the founder and editor in chief of The Washington Monthly.