

that Wasps make the big money — are really the American wealthy — must be reinterpreted in light of new evidence.

While there are a number of surveys of wealth, two of the most extensive and authoritative bear close scrutiny, for their findings reinforce each other: one sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJFWF), and the other, by the Center for American Pluralism's National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Both indicate, directly or indirectly, that the average family income for Jews far exceeds the national average, and surpasses that of most other religious or ethnic groups.

In the early 1970s, the CJFWF's National Jewish Population Study found that the median family income for all Jewish families was \$12,630, while the national average at that time was \$9,867. Jews had median family incomes that were over twenty-eight percent higher than the remainder of the country. Compared with other ethnic groups, the differences are even more startling. While the median Jewish family income was \$12,630, the median family income for Puerto Ricans was \$4,969; for blacks, \$5,074; for Mexicans, \$5,488; for Irish, \$8,127; and for Italians, \$8,808. The average median income for these five ethnic groups is \$6,493, or just about half of what Jews earn.

These figures were confirmed by the NORC in 1974. At that time, the average Jewish family earned \$13,340 — thirty-four percent more than the national average of gentile white ethnic groups' \$9,953. In relation to other religious groups, the average Jewish income of \$13,340 compared with an average of \$11,374 for Catholics; \$11,032 for Episcopalians; \$10,976 for Presbyterians; \$10,103 for Methodists; \$9,702 for Lutherans; and \$8,693 for Baptists. Jews earned an average of \$3,000 more than the members of any other major denomination.

These figures tell only part of the story, for the income distribution curve for Jews is considerably different. Over forty-three percent of Jewish households earn more than \$16,000 a year. In New York City, where a plurality of the nation's Jews live, only 27.3% of all families have incomes over \$15,000. In the nation, only 25.5% have incomes over \$15,000. In other words, at the high

end of the income scale nearly twice as many Jews make middle and upper class incomes — more than \$15,000 a year.

Jews find themselves in an enviable position with close to half their households sitting in the lap of bourgeois luxury. In fact, they make up a notable part of the upper class. Of the fifty-three million American families (as of 1972), 13.5 million can be considered middle and upper class; of the two million Jewish families, nearly nine hundred thousand can be so considered. Jews do not compose three percent of the affluent income earners, as might be expected if they were proportionally represented, but they do make up close to seven percent of the middle and upper classes.

Naturally, there are other ways of measuring personal wealth, liquid assets, property, but the few surveys that do exist say nothing about religious affiliation. Nevertheless, some observations, though lacking in statistical precision, seem reasonable. Though Jews have propelled themselves into the upper income brackets, and a number have corralled a great deal of capital in the equity markets, no American Jews have reached the fabled ranks of the Hunts, Rockefellers, Mellons, or Du Ponts, that is, no American Jews are billionaires, though a few come close. Still, there are scores of multimillionaires and hundreds of millionaires. With the present limited information, it is impossible to say whether there are more Jewish millionaires than millionaires of other religions. A reasonable guess might find that Jews make up a fifth of the very rich in America.

Whether or not there is a connection between being self-consciously Jewish and achieving financial success, there does seem to be a connection between the collective Jewish experience and economic achievement. A group's livelihood — especially its business activities — is influenced by historic, social, cultural, and religious factors. For example, their experience did not predispose them to finance capitalism, though they had a number of outstanding models in the past. It did predispose them to independence and self-sufficiency since they lived in a hostile or indifferent society; to professionalism, where the practice was as important as profit; to scholarly pursuits, where long preparation meant a lengthy postponement of gratification; to progressive in-