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Joel S. Fetzer
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Marginality, Economic Self-Interest, and Contact

> In this society, will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? Can *homo contraceptivus* compete with *homo progenitivo* if our borders aren't controlled? . . . Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down. As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?
>
> U.S. English cofounder John Tanton, in Daniels (1990:399)

> The French have had enough of watching the dregs of North Africa invade the country, of watching herds of Algerians roam the large cities just looking to commit a crime. The French have had enough of encountering vermin, vice, and syphilis.
>
> French reader of the *Nouvel Observateur*, in Gastault (1993)

> *Udo to me (Ali)*: How many Turks will fit in a VW?
> *Me (Ali)*: Don't know.
> *Udo*: Twenty thousand. Don't believe it?
> *Me (Ali)*: Whatever you say.
> *Udo*: You wanna know, anyhow?
> *Me (Ali)*: I'd rather not.
> *Udo*: Very simple. Two in the front, two in the back, the others in the ashtray.
>
> German industrial worker, in Wallraff (1985:111)

Over the past two decades, immigration has come to dominate the internal politics of western Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United

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States. Explicitly anti-immigrant political parties such as the French Front national have attracted alarmingly large proportions of the European electorate, while in the United States such arguably nativist movements as those espousing Official English and Proposition 187 have won resounding victories in many state referenda. Public debates over the "multiculturalism" brought on by the increasing migration from Latin America, Asia, and Africa rage on both sides of the Atlantic. And in the streets of Rostock, Marseilles, and Los Angeles, xenophobes have vented their frustrations, using firebombs and clubs.

Such nativism threatens not only to destabilize domestic society but also to jeopardize relations between host and sending countries. Neo-Nazi violence against Turkish nationals in Germany (Bundesministerium des Innern 1993:66–78) continues to hinder good rapport between Turkey and the Federal Republic, major trading partners and NATO allies. The racist murder of several Algerians in Marseilles in the 1970s convinced Algeria to cut off for a time the flow of migrant workers to France (Wihtol de Wenden 1988:162), and discrimination against Maghrebis in France seems to have largely motivated Kheled Kelkal's wave of deadly anti-French terrorism in the *métropole* in 1995 (Loch 1995). On the American continent, the Mexican government viewed the passage of Proposition 187 as an enormous affront to its dignity and to the human rights of its nationals (Fineman 1994). Ordinary Mexicans, meanwhile, expressed their outrage by vandalizing a U.S.-affiliated business in Mexico City (*Los Angeles Times* Wire Service 1994). Yet maintaining the goodwill of this Latin American country's government and people has become even more vital to American commercial and political interests with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA (Lee 1994; *Los Angeles Times* Staff 1994).

Not only is nativism a problem for international peace, prosperity, and security now, but it promises to continue to trouble us for decades to come. As Paul Kennedy (1993:44) argues in *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, the reaction of the industrialized world to the overwhelming demographic pressures from developing nations may well be one of the most vexing problems of the next hundred years:

> Given the political and social tensions that the *relatively limited* transnational migration has recently provoked, there is reason to be

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> concerned should a massive surge in population occur from one country to another. [Yet, i]n view of the imbalances in demographic trends between "have" and "have-not" societies, it seems unlikely that there will not be great waves of migrations [to the developed nations] in the twenty-first century. (emphasis in original)

If anything, then, the potential for public backlash against immigration threatens to increase in the decades ahead.

Theories of Public Attitudes toward Immigration

This study cannot hope to solve the problem of global economic inequality, which largely drives immigration to the United States, France, and Germany (see Ravenstein 1889). But by isolating the principal causes of mass attitudes toward foreigners,[1] this investigation can help find ways to reduce public hatred of immigrants. In particular, the work will examine the strength of three major explanations of opposition to immigrants: marginality (especially cultural forms, but also economic, gender-based, etc.); economic self-interest (both labor-market and use-of-services versions); and contact (both individual-level and aggregate). The book not only investigates the overall persuasiveness of each interpretation but also looks for any special circumstances that increase or decrease each theory's explanatory power.

Examples from the Literature on Immigration Attitudes

Each of these perspectives has its advocates in the literature on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Espenshade and Calhoun (1993; see also Betz 1994:100–101; Martínez-Ebers and Deng 1996; Soule 1997), for example, seem to hold to something approximating cultural-marginality theory. In their view, "cultural affinity" is one of the most important determinants of immigration-related public opinion: "Cultural and ethnic ties to immigrants promote pro-immigrant attitudes and support for a more open immigration policy."[2]

More economic interpretations seem to dominate not only popular explanations of anti-immigrant sentiments but also many scholarly studies of public attitudes. One of the principal proponents of the economic self-interest school, Harwood (1986) first appears to cast doubt

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on the culturally based theories: "[T]he public opinion data do not support the hypothesis that neorestrictionism is motivated by racial or ethnic prejudice." Instead, "[e]conomic concerns appear to be the main reason for the increase in opposition to both legal and illegal immigrants" (Harwood 1983). Simon (1987; see also Simon and Alexander 1993:29–47) seems to endorse a similar hypothesis focusing on labor-market competition:

> Immigrants represent a greater threat to the livelihoods and living standards of lower-status respondents than they do to persons with higher education and more skills. So, the poorer the person, the greater the fear that more immigrants will mean fewer jobs, lower rates of pay, fewer opportunities for mobility, and more competition for housing, schools, and social services. Illegal immigrants are feared most because they are viewed as the strongest contenders for lower-status jobs and benefits.

Ultimately, according to these theorists, opposition to immigration arises from economic deprivation and the fear of further financial decline.[3]

Finally, contact analysis by Perrineau (1985) of support for the anti-immigrant Front national (FN) party represents one form of the third major theory. Showing the lack of correlation between the vote for the Front national in 1984 and the percentage of immigrants in a given city precinct (*commune*), Perrineau first dismisses the hypothesis that close, personal contact causes xenophobia (see also Charbit and Lamy 1975; Mayer 1987; Loch 1990:90–94). The high correlation between the vote for Le Pen's FN and the proportion of foreigners in the much larger *département*,[4] however, remains high (Perrineau 1985; Le Bras 1986:64–66, 214–221). Perrineau's explanation (1985) of these paradoxical results reminds one of the "casual contact" thesis to be examined later in this chapter:

> [T]he zones where the extreme right achieves its best results are often regions where the more or less distant outlying areas have heavy concentrations of immigrants. Thus, the fears, repulsions, or worries that feed voting for the National Front sometimes seem to arise more from fantasy than from the actual perception of objective, lived difficulties or dangers. It is the unknown person who is disturbing, the stranger with whom one doesn't live but whom one senses at the city limits. . . . The modern [European] town seems to

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> revive the fears of the medieval town for whom the edges of the city were the realm of crime, marginality, and destitution.[5]

In France, contrary to the situation in the United States, the suburbs contain society's disadvantaged. Upper- and middle-class French city dwellers would therefore experience little or no close personal contact with immigrants. According to contact theory, natives might increasingly become aware of the rising foreign population in the suburbs via such superficial or "casual" contacts as riding the Métro with immigrants, passing the ubiquitous North African sanitation worker on the street, or even watching a television news program on "crime in the suburbs." Such interactions, scholars such as Perrineau would probably argue, can only breed suspicion and exacerbate hostility.

Marginality

Classic Statement of Theory

Though not necessarily focusing on immigration-related attitudes, several social-science classics have set out elements of each of the three major theories. Parts of the first main explanation (marginality theory) have already been adumbrated, especially by theorists of "status politics." These various strands, however, have apparently never yet been synthesized to yield an equally generalizable theory of public opinion. A major task of this book is thus to elaborate and test this potentially powerful explanation.

In its most universal form, marginality theory states that the experience of being oneself marginalized, oppressed, or outside the "mainstream" breeds sympathy with marginalized or oppressed people in general, even if they do not belong to one's own group.[6] In particular, having a marginality-producing characteristic would, *all else being equal*, create greater support for the welfare and rights of other marginalized groups. A particular characteristic produces marginality if, relative to the "mainstream" or "dominant" trait, it subjects one to the threat of or actual discrimination, persecution, or widespread public hostility or ridicule.[7] In the United States, for example, the "mainstream" ethnicity is (northwest) European American, while being African American would be a marginality-

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producing characteristic. One's solidarity with other marginalized groups will increase, moreover, to the extent that one is oneself marginalized.[8] It should also increase to the extent that the marginalization (at least of the other marginalized group) approximates brutal persecution of clearly defined, clearly innocent victims.[9]

Although someone might instead restate these principles using the terms "the weak" or "the powerless," the foregoing formulation seems to include these latter ones as special cases of the general rule. The connotations of "weak" or "powerless," moreover, might not apply to all persons with marginality-producing characteristics. This book treats American Jews and French Protestants, for instance, as relatively marginalized, yet neither group is "weak." American Jews are instead cultural outsiders in a country with a Protestant Christian majority, and French Protestants constitute a religious minority in the predominantly Catholic France.

A second proviso relates to the first. Protestants in France do not at first strike us as "powerless" or even particularly "marginalized" because on criteria other than religious affiliation (e.g., education, income, occupational status) these French citizens seem relatively advantaged. Marginalized persons sympathize more with other marginalized groups, then, *all else being equal*. Where ethnicity correlates strongly with education, for example, we cannot expect all members of an ethnic minority to support immigrant rights more strongly than all members of the ethnic majority. In statistical terms, we must think *multivariately* instead of *bivariately*. After controlling for education, income, gender, and the like, we assume that ethnic minorities should support pro-immigrant policies more strongly than the ethnic majority.[10]

Thinking multivariately also implies cross-cutting cleavages. All French-born, ethnic North Africans in France will not necessarily hold identical views. Rather, this ethnic minority itself contains other "minorities" (in power or status, if not always in number) of gender, religion, income, occupation, and native language. Each trait might also influence attitudes toward immigration.

The marginality thesis developed and examined in this book originates in several schools of thought. Hints of the general form of this hypothesis appear in classic works by Marx and Engels (Tucker 1978), Myrdal (1944), and Allport (1979). Studies of Holocaust era rescuers

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have also set out a more context-dependent form (London 1970; Tec 1986:152–154; but see Oliner and Oliner 1988:176, 306).

Though concentrating on economic marginality, Marx and Engels see industrialization forcing all relatively disadvantaged individuals more and more into the proletariat (Tucker 1978:474, 479–480):

> Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms: Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. . . . The lower strata of the middle class – the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants – all these sink gradually into the proletariat. . . . Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

Although this Marxist analysis ultimately reduces almost all differences to economic ones, the general idea of all relatively powerless people uniting against the "ruling class" bears similarities to marginality theory.[11] The marginalized may well be economically disadvantaged, but I would include disadvantages correlated with race, ethnicity, religion, language, and gender[12] as well. The crucial insight from Marx is that all of society's disadvantaged may come together to oppose the dominant group.

Though also a socialist, Myrdal refuses to view all inequality as ultimately economic. In his classic work *An American Dilemma*, he lists a multiplicity of disadvantaged people (1944:67; see also 1073–1078): "To these other disadvantaged groups in America belong not only the groups recognized as minorities, but all economically weak classes in the nation, the bulk of the Southern people, women, and others. This country [the United States] is a 'white man's country,' but, in addition, it is a country belonging primarily to the elderly, male, upper class, Protestant Northerner." In the America of 1944, he did not see an effective coalition among all such oppressed groups. Rather, he wrote that "[e]very vertical split within the lower class aggregate will stand as an obstacle to the feeling of solidarity" (1944:68). Yet he does not rule out this possibility for the future. The general increases in education and economic and social security in the United States, Myrdal hypothesizes, may eventually "work for

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increased solidarity between the lower class groups." Such "liberal ideological forces" as the "American Creed" also "tend to create a tie between the problems of all disadvantaged groups in society and . . . work for solidarity between these groups" (1944:72; see also Stonequist 1961:160–161). He even looks to mass attitudes for evidence (1944:72–73):

> A study of opinions in the Negro problem will reveal, we believe, that persons who are inclined to favor measures to help the underdog generally, are also, and as a part of this attitude, usually inclined to give the Negro a lift. . . . If this correlation [on different issues] is represented by a composite scale running from radicalism, through liberalism and conservatism, to reactionism, it is suggested that it will be found that all subordinate groups – Negroes, women, minorities in general, poor people, prisoners, and so forth – will find their interests more favored in political opinion as we move toward the left of the scale.

Thus, although Myrdal found little empirical evidence of marginality effects in 1944, he described well the various groups of marginalized persons and suggested the possibility of such solidarity in the future.

Positing a similar model, Allport (1979:154–155) found more evidence for marginality theory. Although first noting that victimization can lead to greater hostility toward other "out-groups," he also recognizes that "in the case of many victims of prejudice . . . [j]ust the reverse happens" (1979:153–154; see also Bogardus 1928:87–88; Williams 1947:61). The middle option, according to Allport (1979:155), seems all but impossible:

> [Those] who feel that they have been victims of discrimination are usually either very high in prejudice . . . or else very low in prejudice. They are seldom "average." In short, being a victim oneself disposes one either to develop aggression toward *or* sympathy with other out-groups. . . . With insight [the victim of prejudice] will say, "These people are victims exactly as I am a victim. Better stand with them, not against them."

Which path a victim follows seems to depend on his or her basic personality (Allport 1979:160–161). Though also admitting an opposite outcome, Allport thus goes beyond Myrdal in contending that a solidarity of the marginalized not only is possible in theory but also occurs in fact.

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Holocaust Era Rescuers

While focusing on a very specific case, a few studies of Holocaust era "rescuers" (i.e., those who risked their own lives to save the lives of Jews and other groups persecuted by the Nazis) suggest a similar marginality theory.[13] London's interviews (1970) with twenty-seven rescuers led him to hypothesize that "the experience of social marginality gave people the impetus and endurance to continue their rescue activities." One Dutch rescuer belonged to the Seventh-Day Adventists, a "very socially marginal" religious group "not always treated kindly in Holland"; the respondent's father, himself also a rescuer, had apparently even been jailed for his faith. A German rescuer reported "always [having] felt friendless" as a child, mainly because he stuttered and spoke the "wrong" dialect of German at home. In her more extensive study of rescuers, Tec confirms London's hypothesis, noting that many "show[ed] an inability to blend into their environment" (1986:152–154) and hence felt "unconstrained" by their society's norms (1997a).[14]

Political Behavior of American Jews

While Myrdal, Allport, and studies of Holocaust era rescuers set out the broad structures for a theory of marginality, the literature on the political attitudes of American Jews focuses on how the psychological mechanism works in practice. An early study by Allinsmith and Allinsmith (1948) suggests that Jews' strong liberalism stems from their relatively marginalized status in American society:

> [P]erhaps being only partially accepted by the latter [other middle-class groups] forces [Jews] to associate with others in a like position, with the result that they are exposed to anti–status quo values. They might develop in this way a tendency to identify with outgroups, or to side with low status groups in general. It seems very likely that they saw in [Franklin] Roosevelt a champion of minority rights and supported him heavily for that reason.

The Allinsmiths thus point to the pro-underdog norms that outsiders rejected by the dominant status group socially learn from each other. By refusing to associate with outsiders, the dominant group restricts who will be socialized into its norms and so breeds the seeds of outsider opposition.

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Ebersole (1960) and Wald (1992) posit a more purely psychological model. Ebersole (1960) argues that "religious intolerance" and "ethnic discrimination" lead "in varying degrees to Catholic and Jewish minority feelings." Such feelings in turn cause increased voting for FDR's Democratic Party, which Catholics and Jews view as "the party . . . of hope for minorities" (Ebersole 1960; see also Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954:61–86; Campbell et al. 1960:159–160; Jelen and Wilcox 1998). Wald (1992:322; see also Fuchs 1956:175–177; Fein 1988) elaborates further:

> Scholars generally attribute Jewish political preferences to the community's sense of itself as a potential target of hostility from the non-Jewish majority. Despite attaining objective levels of prominence undreamed of by earlier generations, American Jews still feel vulnerable to persecution and anti-Semitism. Why should a sense of social marginality attract American Jews to the left side of the political spectrum? From history, Jews learned that the left historically favored the cause of minorities, and liberalism is still seen as more sympathetic to minority groups than the political alternatives. Even if they do not benefit directly from the social programs sponsored by liberals, Jews regard such programs as a safeguard against the social tensions that breed religious bigotry.

Outsider status and the continued threat of persecution, then, maintain strong Jewish support for other minorities and for liberal social policies in general (but see Levey 1996).[15]

Although most Jews in the United States still strongly back liberalism and the Democratic Party (Wald 1992:326), the recent rise of a few "dissenting" Jewish neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol (1995) might also confirm marginality theory. For if anti-Semitism has declined somewhat since the earlier parts of the twentieth century, we would expect at least a few American Jews to feel less marginalized today and hence to loosen their ties to liberalism and the Democrats.

Churches versus Sects

Lest one think marginality theory applies only to such historically persecuted groups as Jews, a parallel historical literature reaches similar conclusions about Christians. In his exhaustive survey of Christian social teaching, Troeltsch divides groups of believers into "churches" and "sects" (1960:331). Whereas a church is "dependent upon the

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