PROJECT MUSE®

Trends in the Study of Antisemitism in United States History

Britt P. Tevis

American Jewish History, Volume 105, Numbers 1/2, January/April
2021, pp. 255-284 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/804163>

State of the Field: Trends in the Study of Antisemitism in United States History¹

Britt P. Tevis

Identifying trends in the study of antisemitism in American history is a complicated task because historians have mostly focused their attention on other aspects of the American Jewish experience.² Further, by and large, those works that examine antisemitism in the United States posit that anti-Jewish animus has been relatively fleeting and generally marginal to United States history and the American Jewish experience. Indeed, antisemitism in the United States has most often been framed as an outlier and premodern relic. According to this argument, America's

1. This article illuminates trends in the study of antisemitism in US history as they have appeared in English language academic publications between 1951 and January 2021. During this time, historians have employed a capacious definition of antisemitism. To highlight this range of scholarship, I, too, have used a broad conceptualization of antisemitism. On defining antisemitism, see Jonathan Judaken "Introduction," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1122–38. For the history of the term "anti-Semitism," see, David Feldman, "Toward a History of the Term 'Anti-Semitism,'" *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1139–50. Thank you to Tony Michels, Libby Garland, Christine Lamberson, Debbie Sharnak, Rachel Gross, and Stanislav Budnitsky for their feedback and assistance with this piece. Thank you as well to the two anonymous reviewers and the editors and staff of *American Jewish History* for their helpful suggestions.

2. Many historians have noted the dearth of scholarship on US antisemitism. See, for example, John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 43 (1957): 559–78, especially 559, 562; Michael Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Antisemitism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 3; Michael Dobkowski, "American Antisemitism and American Historians: A Critique," *Patterns of Prejudice* 14, no. 2 (1980): 33–4; Edward Shapiro, "John Higham and American Anti-Semitism," *American Jewish History* 76, no. 2 (1986): 201; David Gerber, "Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. Gerber (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 7; Howard Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South," *American Jewish History* 77, no. 3 (1988): 437–51; Till van Rahden, Review of *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America*, by Frederic Jaher, and *Antisemitism in America*, by Leonard Dinnerstein, *American Jewish History* 83, no. 4 (1995): 507–11; Tony Michels, "Is America Different? A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (2010): 201–24, 211; Jonathan Sarna in David Koffman, "Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 19, no. 3 (2020): 7.

commitment to religious freedom, democracy, and pluralism has deterred the state from perpetuating anti-Jewish discrimination or bigotry. Thus, understanding antisemitism in America requires studying social spaces and parsing personal interactions between Jews and non-Jews.³ Systemic forms of discrimination such as university quotas, violent incidents such as the lynching of Leo Frank, and the dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda by influential Americans such as Henry Ford appear as outliers. Simply stated, to the extent that American Jewish historians have examined antisemitism, it has been largely to dismiss it as a serious, lasting problem woven into the fabric of US history. The tendency to present antisemitism in the United States as atypical, momentary, and confined to private realms is especially noteworthy in several important surveys of American Jewish history.⁴ Trends in scholarship on antisemitism in the United States must be understood in the context of how American Jewish historians have promoted the idea that antisemitism in the United States has been a relatively insignificant aberration.⁵

As this article shows, conceptualizations of antisemitism as irregular, relatively harmless, and primarily social originated in the 1950s, when academic historians first took an interest in studying American antisemitism in the context of a larger debate about populism, exceptionalism, and objectivity. The essential voices to emerge from this discussion were those of immigration historians Oscar Handlin (1915–2011) and John Higham (1920–2003). Their conceptualizations of anti-Jewish animus became touchstones for discussion of antisemitism in subsequent decades. Though Handlin and Higham disagreed on certain details, they agreed on antisemitism's limited significance and short-lived nature, seeing in it a vestige rather than a manifestation of modernity. Since the 1970s, some historians have advanced an understanding of anti-Jewish animus

3. This is one reason why American Jewish historians have used opinion polls as evidence of the supposed dearth of antisemitism. See, for example, Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 38–9, 43.

4. See, for example, Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880–1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 7, 9; Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 369; Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 164–5; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xvi; Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land: A History of Jews in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), ix–x.

5. For an argument that scholars' interest in antisemitism reflects their experiences living through historical moments of increased anti-Jewish discrimination and violence, see Sarna in Koffman, "Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," 7.

that recognizes it as both a persistent force, which existed beyond social realms. Still, Handlin and Higham's ideas (especially Higham's) remain influential, and many American Jewish historians continue to present antisemitism as largely insignificant, momentary, primarily social.

Recognizing the weight of Handlin and Higham's claims in American Jewish historical scholarship from the past seventy years renders the state of the field and its attendant trends understandable. Because most historians who have published on the history of antisemitism in American history have done so either as dissenters within the field of American Jewish history or as historians from other fields interested in examining anti-Jewish animus in passing, collectively, existing scholarship presents antisemitism as episodic. Periodic surges in interest have proved short-lived and thus pertinent research has appeared haphazardly. Research exploring given incidents or themes have materialized here and there yet the dynamics and nature of antisemitism in the United States have yet to be sufficiently theorized or explained. At the same time, despite the diffuse nature of relevant scholarship, collectively it suggests that anti-Jewish animus constitutes an integral feature of American history, rather than a momentary and relatively innocuous phenomenon that is unrelated to the state.⁶ Accordingly, this article concludes by offering some suggestions for future researchers.

FORMATIVE SCHOLARSHIP ON ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Academic historians first took interest in antisemitism in the United States in the 1950s just as American Jewry came to the discipline's attention.⁷ American historians considered anti-Jewish animus in the United States as they engaged in contemporaneous debates about populism, the late nineteenth-century political movement of farmers and laborers, and reassessed 1930s scholarship.⁸ As they developed their narratives of American history, scholars such as Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Boorstin, and

6. See, David Sorkin's finding that Jews in the United States underwent and are continuously undergoing an emancipation process. David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History across Five Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 1–12, 224–33, 346–53.

7. On efforts to draw American historians' attention to American Jewry, see Oscar Handlin, "New Paths in American Jewish History: Afterthoughts on a Conference," *Commentary*, January 1, 1949, 388–94.

8. On postwar reassessments of 1930s scholarship, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 334–7.

others articulated divergent views on the history of anti-Jewish bigotry. Oscar Handlin's and John Higham's contributions to this debate proved seminal, shaping much of the subsequent scholarship on the subject.⁹ Recognizing how trends in the field developed necessitates reviewing how they conceptualized antisemitism.

In the early twentieth century, Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Anti-Defamation League (ADL) began studying anti-Jewish discrimination.¹⁰ Drawing on conceptualizations of antisemitism that originated in late nineteenth-century Germany, these organizations presented anti-Jewish animus as theoretically operating along tracks such as "social," "religious," and "political," etc. In the 1940s, university-based psychologists, sociologists, and political theorists adopted this segmented conceptualization. In the 1950s, when historians turned their attention to the subject, they embraced these same framing devices for thinking about anti-Jewish animus.¹¹

Handlin, the son of Jewish immigrants, was among these scholars.¹² Handlin graduated from Brooklyn College in 1935 and then attended Harvard University, from which he earned his PhD in 1940. He then became the first Jewish member of Harvard's history department. According to Lila Corwin Berman, he was at the forefront of "sculpting a sociological language of Jewishness that fit into post-war nationalistic aims and answered prevailing Jewish concerns."¹³

In 1948, on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League, he and Mary Handlin, his wife, authored *Danger in Discord: Origins of Anti-Semitism in the United States*. Echoing the orientation of the ADL and AJC, which, in the late 1940s and 1950s, understood antisemitism as indivisible from other prejudices, the Handlins argued, "The manifestations of intolerance and prejudice are everywhere the same."¹⁴ Broadly, their work viewed

9. For discussions of mid-century debates about exceptionalism and populism vis-à-vis antisemitism, see Michels, "Is America Different?," 206–8; Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 337–41.

10. On the history of the AJC and ADL, see, Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

11. On the history of the concept of "social antisemitism," see Britt P. Tevis, "'Jews Not Admitted': Antisemitism, Civil Rights, and Public Accommodation Laws," *Journal of American History* 107, no. 4 (2021): 861–65.

12. On Handlin, see Hasia Diner, "Oscar Handlin: A Jewish Historian," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 32, no. 3 (2013): 53–61.

13. Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 93–118, especially 94.

14. Oscar Handlin and Mary Handlin, *Danger in Discord: Origins of Anti-Semitism in the United States* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1948), 7. On the "unitary concept of prejudice," see, Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, 18.

American antisemitism as a periodic phenomenon, stressed differences between antisemitism in Europe and America, and positioned Americans' emphasis on individualism as keeping expressions of prejudice in check. "To emphasize the dark aspects [of American history] would distort the view of the whole; for in the United States, social and economic circumstances have kept alive a tradition of liberty and equality, a tradition which has generally left little room for anti-Semitic prejudices," they argued.¹⁵ Though this work acknowledged "the ideology of racism," it nonetheless insisted that anti-Jewish undercurrents represented exceptions to the norm. "The first two centuries of American experience were almost completely free of expressions of hostility to the Jews," the Handlins wrote.¹⁶

Oscar Handlin's view that antisemitism emerged only in certain moments also appeared in a 1951 article analyzing Jewish stock characters in popular magazines, which he wrote at the behest of Lee Max Friedman, who was then the president of the American Jewish Historical Society.¹⁷ Here Handlin asserted that the last decade of the nineteenth century was free of antisemitism despite the ubiquity of negative stereotypes about Jews. Negative portrayals of Jews, Handlin wrote, only proved problematic between 1913 and 1920, when they served as justification for anti-Jewish discrimination.¹⁸ In addition to depicting antisemitism in the United States as incontinent, he identified a number of well-known anti-Jewish episodes as outliers. Incidents such as the 1877 Seligman affair (in which a hotel manager denied Joseph Seligman accommodations on account of his Jewishness), and Grant's Orders Number 11 (the December 1862 incident in which Ulysses S. Grant expelled Jews "as a class" from areas of Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee) were "exceptional" in Handlin's view. Articulating his historiographic contribution to understanding the origins of American antisemitism and studies of populism, Handlin explained that anti-Jewish animus in the United States could be traced to disgruntled populists who saw Jews as embodiments of urbanism and capitalism.¹⁹

15. Handlin and Handlin, *Danger in Discord*, 8.

16. Handlin and Handlin, *Danger in Discord*, 9.

17. Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Toward Professionalism and the 1954 Peekskill Conference," *American Jewish History* 81, no. 2 (1993/1994): 209.

18. Oscar Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 40, no. 4 (1951): 323-44. See also, Oscar Handlin, "Reconsidering the Populists," *Agricultural History* 39, no. 2 (1965): 68-74.

19. Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," 324.

Handlin's *Adventure in Freedom* (1954) reiterated this analysis. Here, Handlin argued that stereotypes of Jews in America remained murky to the end of the nineteenth century, at which point the idea of Jews as greedy Shylocks crystalized in popular imaginings. Still, "the stereotype of the Jew was," Handlin claimed, "only one among many" offensive stereotypes about immigrants, a sentiment that reflected his disposition to view disparate immigration histories similarly.²⁰ Handlin's analysis in *Adventure* located the origins of antisemitism in the United States in late nineteenth-century populism. His sanguine appraisal of antisemitism reflected his romanticized accounts of American history.²¹ They also reflected his persistent denial of antisemitism in his own life.²²

Higham, who completed his PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1949, also theorized antisemitism in the 1950s. His most important works about antisemitism appeared in two 1957 articles. The first turned up in the March volume of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, the journal known today as the *Journal of American History*.²³ This work was an expanded version of a speech that he read before the American Jewish Historical Society in 1956. Here, Higham identified two streams of thought that he believed had shaped studies of anti-Jewish animus, both of which he saw as illogical. The first was that of Carey McWilliams, a leftist journalist who viewed episodes such as the Seligman affair as economically harmful to Jews.²⁴ The second was Handlin's, whose approach Higham labeled "neoliberal" because it criticized 1930s liberalism.²⁵ Offering his own analysis, Higham wrote

20. Oscar Handlin, *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 179–81. This inclination is exemplified by Handlin's *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (1952; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1961).

21. On Handlin's views of American social structures, see, Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 106–9. On *Adventure in Freedom*, see, Diner, "Oscar Handlin: A Jewish Historian," 58–60.

22. On Handlin's denial of antisemitism in his own life, see, Oscar Handlin, interviewed by Lila Corwin Berman, Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 10, 2002. Transcript on file with author. On Handlin's encounters with antisemitism at Harvard University, see, Alan Kraut, "Oscar Handlin and 'the Idea That We Are a Nation of Immigrants,'" *Journal of American Ethnic History* 32, no. 3 (2013): 32–3.

23. John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 43, no. 4 (1957): 559–78.

24. Carey McWilliams, "Does Social Discrimination Really Matter? Exclusiveness in a Democracy," *Commentary*, November 4, 1947, 408–15; Carey McWilliams, *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1948).

25. Higham claimed Handlin belonged to a "cult of consensus." See, John Higham, "The Cult of the 'American Consensus': Homogenizing Our History," *Commentary*, February 1959, 93–100; Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," 559.

that the Gilded Age was the “formative era” of anti-Jewish bigotry in the United States, because it saw the emergence of “social anti-Semitism—a pattern of discrimination—and the crystallization of political anti-Semitism.” Antisemitism, in Higham’s view, must be understood as it manifested in Jews’ lived experiences. Accordingly, Higham articulated “guiding principles” for analyzing antisemitism, which would enable historians to write “objective history.”²⁶ First, Higham argued, before the late nineteenth century, non-Jewish Americans held as many positive associations with the idea of Jews as negative ones, a fact that ought to discourage historians from “exaggerating or underrating the phenomenon.” Second, historians needed to study the “role that the minority group itself plays in the conflict situation.” Jews’ behaviors must be scrutinized as much as antisemites’ misperceptions because the former might stoke the latter. “A deeper historical understanding must take account of the factors within Jewish history that have served to magnetize external antagonisms,” he wrote. Higham identified Jews’ determination to mingle with elite society, their “assertive manners and aggressive personalities,” and the “conspicuousness of Jewish wealth” as examples of behaviors that prompted some to seek Jews’ exclusion from certain spheres. “Instead of knuckling under . . . many Jews struggled against the restrictions” at hotels and clubs, which made the backlash they endured understandable. Third, Higham determined that historians should use a “consistently comparative approach,” examining antisemitism in the context of other group hatreds.²⁷ Recognizing that non-Jewish immigrant groups also faced discrimination should temper historians’ identification of antisemitism in the past.

In September 1957, Higham further developed these ideas in an article commissioned by the American Jewish Committee, which was published in the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, the journal known today as *American Jewish History*.²⁸ Here Higham asserted that, before the Civil War, Jews “enjoy[ed] almost complete social acceptance and freedom.” Eschewing studies that focused on “ideological anti-Semitism,” which he thought exaggerated “the power of irrational beliefs,” Higham argued that American antisemitism primarily existed in the realm of the “social.” “Actual conflict,” such as the Seligman affair, triggered anti-Jewish animus, not individuals’ beliefs.²⁹ In Higham’s view, social clashes, though momentarily embarrassing, were minimally

26. Higham, “Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age” 562.

27. Higham, “Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age,” 562–3, 566–7, 569.

28. John Higham, “Social Discrimination against Jews in America,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 47 (1957): 1–33.

29. Higham, “Social Discrimination,” 2–3.

significant. Neither economic nor social discrimination prevented Jews from pursuing their goals; Jews' capacity to operate their own hotels tempered the effects of episodes such as the Seligman affair.³⁰ Reiterating his preference for studying antisemitism comparatively, Higham concluded that antisemitism in the United States echoed broader anti-immigrant sentiments and appeared in moments of economic hardship.

Handlin and Higham disagreed on populists' relationship to antisemitism. Whereas Handlin thought antisemitism was central to their worldview, Higham did not. They also disagreed about the timing of antisemitic outbursts. Higham claimed anti-Jewish sentiments manifest according to a "cyclical rhythm" linked with economic shifts and nativism.³¹ Handlin disputed Higham's temporal schema, calling it a "simplistic view" in a review of Higham's *Strangers in the Land* (1955).³² Handlin and Higham also disagreed on the best method for studying antisemitism. Handlin preferred to explore non-Jews' ideas about Jews whereas Higham favored examining on-the-ground circumstances. Yet both men identified the Gilded Age as the decade in which antisemitism emerged in the United States. Both thought that, in the nineteenth century, non-Jews had trouble distinguishing between Jews and Germans.³³ They agreed that Jews' supposedly unique economic success in the United States made them targets for established elites.³⁴ They also agreed that antisemitism in America paled in comparison with antisemitism in Europe.³⁵ Most significantly, both determined that antisemitism in American history was relatively insignificant and temporary. Handlin, who made this claim more forcefully, argued that anti-Jewish animus was essentially harmless until the second decade of the twentieth century. Higham thought antisemitism predated 1913 but limited his analyses of anti-Jewish bigotry to the social realm. "No decisive event, no deep crisis, no powerful social movement, no great individual is associated primarily with, or

30. Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," 567.

31. Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," 571.

32. Oscar Handlin, Review of *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, by John Higham, *Political Science Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1956): 453-4; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

33. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, 2nd edition (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 26; Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," 326.

34. Handlin, *Danger in Discord*, 25-6; Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America," 3.

35. Handlin, *Danger in Discord*, 7; Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," 572, and "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America," 3.

significant chiefly because of, anti-Semitism,” Higham wrote in 1966, reiterating this sentiment.³⁶

Handlin and Higham’s theories about antisemitism in the United States complemented America’s postwar intellectual landscape. Their work appeared as scholars began to research and publish on the Holocaust, a process that made them especially likely to view America and Europe as distinct and American antisemitism as comparatively minor.³⁷ Further, their analyses fit within existing paradigms generated by major Jewish advocacy organizations such as the ADL and AJC in that they also defined antisemitism as operating on distinct planes such as “social” and “political.”

Handlin and Higham’s analyses also reflected the political context of the Cold War and McCarthy era. Both Higham and Handlin engaged in polemics with leftists who proposed other understandings of antisemitism. While Higham rejected leftist Cary McWilliams’ views, Handlin took on prominent Jewish Communist writer Morris Schappes (1907–2004). In 1941, Schappes had been one of a few dozen faculty and staff members fired by New York City’s public colleges for their membership in the Communist Party. In 1950, Schappes published *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654–1875*, a collection of primary sources. Schappes’s collection identified antisemitism as a constant phenomenon in US history. Schappes wrote that the selected documents “reveal for the first time that anti-Semitism in our country has a more ancient history, a more persistent continuity, and a wider dispersion than even liberal opponents of anti-Semitism have hitherto dreamed.”³⁸ He acknowledged anti-Jewish animus in social and cultural spheres but in legal and political realms as well.

Handlin reviewed Schappes’s work in a 1951 volume of *Commentary*, asserting that Schappes’s assessment was “written from so biased a point of view that those who turn to this volume may draw from it altogether erroneous impressions.” Specifically, Schappes’s “judgment of

36. John Higham, “American Anti-Semitism Historically Reconsidered,” in *Jews in the Mind of America*, ed. Charles Stember (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 237.

37. On postwar conceptualizations of the Holocaust, see, Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1969* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

38. Morris Schappes, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654–1875*, 3rd edition (New York: Schocken, 1971), vii. See also, Morris Schappes and Solomon Simpson, “Anti-Semitism and Reaction, 1785–1800,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 38, no. 2 (1948): 109–37.

the frequency of anti-Semitism is unsound.”³⁹ Handlin’s 1951 essay and 1954 book can thus be read as responses to Schappes’s work.

Both Handlin and Higham rejected leftist interpretations of antisemitism, which depicted it as a far more serious and long-lasting problem in the United States than they believed it was. Despite their disagreements with each other, in future decades, Higham and Handlin’s work functioned similarly to shape how historians understood antisemitism in the United States. Trends in the field reveal the influence of their work.

HISTORIANS’ RESPONSES TO HANDLIN AND HIGHAM

Historical debates about antisemitism in the United States mostly abated in the 1960s.⁴⁰ Then, between the 1970s and the mid-1990s, a handful of scholars directed their attention to the subject again.⁴¹ They produced several articles and books about antisemitism. These works underscore the significant degree to which historians understood Handlin’s and, particularly, Higham’s ideas as central to the historiography on antisemitism, as well as the divergent views between specialists in American Jewish history and those in other subjects. For example, in 1979, examining the intersection of antisemitism and business history, Peter R. Decker, an economic historian, published an article about Jewish merchants in San Francisco before 1852. His work illuminates how the credit agency Dun & Bradstreet Co. (Dun) reporters’ views of Jews’ “character” harmed their chances of securing loans and compelled Jews to rely on ethnic credit networks.⁴² Decker concluded that Jews of German descent in antebellum San Francisco “attained economic success, in spite of ethnic and religious barriers placed before them . . .

39. Oscar Handlin, Review of *A Documentary History of the United States*, by Morris U. Schappes, *Commentary*, January 1951, 102.

40. Higham attributes the disappearance of scholars’ interest in antisemitism in the 1960s to historians’ sudden disinterest in populists. John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 119. American Jewish histories from the decade already showcased Handlin and Higham’s influence. See, for example, Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York’s Jews, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 265.

41. Some historians have attributed renewed interest in the subject in this moment to American historians’ concurrent repudiation of the paradigm of exceptionalism. See, for example, Till van Rahden, “Beyond Ambivalence: Variations of Catholic Anti-Semitism in Turn-of-the-Century Baltimore,” *American Jewish History* 82, no. 1 (1994), 8; Jonathan Sarna, “Anti-Semitism and American History,” *Commentary* March 1981, 42–8. It also signified the fact that, during this decade, American Jewish history as an academic field came of age and popular interest in Jewish immigrant culture peaked.

42. Peter R. Decker, “Jewish Merchants in San Francisco: Social Mobility on the Urban Frontier,” *American Jewish History* 68, no. 4 (1979): 396–407.

not [due] to the weakness of the institutional arrangements which confronted them.”⁴³ Likewise, in 1982, David Gerber showed that Dun investigators’ perceptions of Jews’ business habits and cultural norms in nineteenth-century Buffalo, New York “carried grave consequences for Jewish-Gentile relations.” Gerber concluded his article by posing a series of questions, which he thought had to be answered before the full breadth of antisemitism and its impacts could be understood.⁴⁴ Further, he questioned Higham’s understanding of antisemitism, calling his position “confusing” and noting that Higham’s evidence and conclusions were incongruous.⁴⁵

By contrast, Stephen Mostov, an American Jewish historian, published an article in 1983 examining Dun records in Cincinnati, Ohio, with the aim of complicating the “rags-to-riches” narrative of American Jewish history. Mostov did not deny antisemitism in his work. In fact, Mostov noted that the Dun reports contained more negative assessments of Jews than positive ones. (One particularly telling evaluation determined, “We should deem him safe but he is not a *white* man. He is a Jew, and that you can take into account.”)⁴⁶ Yet, even as he cited such antisemitic rhetoric, Mostov sought mainly to explain the development and success of Jewish credit networks. Mostov’s work didn’t analyze antisemitism as a historical phenomenon in itself but saw it as something Jews overcame.⁴⁷

Similar differences in how scholars have framed antisemitism appeared in works that examined intersections between antisemitism and law in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, in 1976 the legal historian Jerold

43. Decker, “Jewish Merchants in San Francisco,” 399.

44. David Gerber, “Cutting Out Shylock: Elite Anti-Semitism and the Quest for Moral Order in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Market Place,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 3 (1982): 629, 636.

45. Higham, in Gerber’s estimation, “downplays the importance of antebellum anti-Semitism.” See, Gerber, “Cutting Out Shylock,” 615, fn 1. By contrast, in 1986, Gerber identified him as “doubtless the leading theorist in the history of American anti-Semitism.” See, David Gerber, “Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Gentile Relations in American Historiography and the American Past,” in Gerber, *Anti-Semitism in American History*, 39. Other works that also examine antisemitism in the context of business practices include Samuel Klausner, “Anti-Semitism in the Executive Suite: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” *Moment*, September 1988, 33–9; Rowena Olegario, “That Mysterious People,” *Jewish Merchants, Transparency, and Community in Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, *Business History Review* 73, no. 2 (1999): 161–89.

46. Stephen Mostov, “Dun and Bradstreet Reports as a Source of Jewish Economic History, 1840–1875,” *American Jewish History* 72, no. 3 (1983): 349.

47. For another example of an American Jewish history that frames antisemitism as something Jews overcame on the road to success, see, Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

Auerbach published *Unequal Justice*, which revealed that in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era white Anglo Saxon Protestant lawyers responded to the appearance of Jews in the American legal profession by creating new barriers to protect their elite status.⁴⁸ Morton Borden (1925–2007), an early-Americanist, published *Jews, Turks, and Infidels* (1984), which highlighted evangelical Protestants' ongoing desire to make the United States a Christian nation. Of the original thirteen states, eight included forms of religious discrimination in their first constitutions. Borden showed that these legal handicaps did not just fall away, but were the subject of protracted struggles over many decades.⁴⁹ By contrast, though Jeffrey Gurock's 1976 article about the passage of the 1913 New York State Civil Rights Act, a law that banned "offensive" advertising by hotels, focused on anti-Jewish discrimination in relationship to laws and legal norms, it nevertheless employed Higham's conceptualization of "social anti-Semitism" and missed the role of the state in enabling such acts.⁵⁰

During these years, a number of studies considered American state policies during World War II as they concerned European Jewry. For example, in 1968, David Wyman (1929–2018) published *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941*, which illuminated America's staunch refusal to grant refuge to Jews in the three years before the January 1942 Wannsee Conference.⁵¹ (That same year saw the publication of Henry Morse's *While Six Million Died*, a bestseller that also addressed the inaction of the United States during the Second World War.⁵²) Other historians examined anti-Jewish animus in the US State Department.⁵³ By contrast, Leonard Dinnerstein's (1934–2019) work on the US Army's treatment of Jewish displaced people in Germany after World War II took a very different tone, contrasting common rank-and-file antisemitism

48. Jerold Auerbach, *Unequal Justice: Lawyers and Social Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

49. Morton Borden, *Jews, Turks, and Infidels* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 34–6.

50. Jeffrey Gurock, "The 1913 New York State Civil Rights Act," *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 93–120, 97, n. 13.

51. David Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968). See also, Zosa Szajkowski, "The Attitude of American Jews to Refugees from Germany in the 1930s," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1971): 101–43.

52. Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Random House, 1968).

53. Alan Kraut, Richard Breitman, and Thomas Imhoof, "The State Department, the Labor Department, and German Jewish Immigration, 1930–1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 3, no. 2 (1984): 5–38; Alan Kraut and Richard Breitman, "Anti-Semitism in the State Department, 1933–44: Four Case Studies," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. Gerber, 167–97.

among US soldiers charged with running the DP camps, with efforts to counter those attitudes.⁵⁴

Within the field of American Jewish history itself, no scholar wrote more about antisemitism than Dinnerstein. During his career, he shed new light on incidents of anti-Jewish animus. For example, in 1962, Dinnerstein published *The Leo Frank Case*, which was among the first in-depth explorations of the 1915 lynching in Atlanta, Georgia.⁵⁵ Yet he never significantly changed how American Jewish historians understood antisemitism. This is largely because he framed his research through Handlin and Higham's theorizations. Like Handlin and Higham, Dinnerstein described anti-Jewish violence before the 1920s as "isolated," declining to contextualize Frank's murder in a longer history of anti-Jewish violence. He pinned Frank's 1915 lynching in Atlanta, Georgia, on "Southern frustrations," which had been triggered by "the 'invasion' of strangers," i.e., immigrants.⁵⁶

From the 1970s on, Dinnerstein produced a range of articles and collected volumes on antisemitism. In 1971, he published *Antisemitism in the United States*, a collection of essays, which included pieces by Handlin, Higham, and Hofstadter.⁵⁷ In addition, the book spotlighted subjects that became touchstone issues for decades. Morton Rosenstock contributed a chapter about university quotas.⁵⁸ David O'Brien wrote about Catholic antisemitism in the 1930s.⁵⁹ The book also considered antisemitism among Black Americans in contributions from James Baldwin, the psychologist Kenneth Clark, and Rabbi Robert Gordis.⁶⁰

54. Leonard Dinnerstein, "The U.S. Army and the Jews: Policies Toward the Displaced Persons After World War II," *American Jewish History* 68, no. 3 (1979): 353–66.

55. Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case*, revised edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), ix. See also, Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Matthew Bernstein, *Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

56. Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case*, xvi.

57. Leonard Dinnerstein, ed., *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971).

58. Morton Rosenstock, "Are There Too Many Jews at Harvard?" in Dinnerstein, ed., *Antisemitism in the United States*, 102–8.

59. This was originally published in 1967. See, David O'Brien, "American Catholics and Anti-Semitism in the 1930s," *Catholic World*, February 1967, 270–6.

60. Kenneth B. Clark, "Candor about Negro-Jewish Relations," in Leonard Dinnerstein, ed., *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 116–24.

Dinnerstein was perhaps the most prolific scholar to research antisemitism in the United States. He was among the first to emphasize regional variations in American antisemitism, publishing articles in 1971 and 1973 that debunked the idea that antisemitism was absent from the American South.⁶¹ He also revealed how southern Jews' fears about antisemitism compelled them to remain silent when confronted with anti-Black racism.⁶² In the 1980s, Dinnerstein published collected volumes of these essays, as well as a monograph on antisemitism, and inspired later researchers.⁶³ Yet, even as he broke new ground, Dinnerstein never directly challenged Higham's "guiding principles," and often employed Handlin's characterization of particular episodes as exceptions.⁶⁴

Notably, some American Jewish historians advanced more robust conceptualizations of anti-Jewish animus during these decades. For example, Naomi Cohen (1927–2018) dissented from both Handlin's and Higham's approaches. In 1979, she questioned Higham's classification of the Seligman affair as "social discrimination" and his claim that anti-Jewish animus in the Gilded Age represented a new phenomenon. Reexamining Gilded Age antisemitic imagery, she expressly challenged Higham's differentiation between "ideological antisemitism and overt or applied antisemitism."⁶⁵ Further, she called for a reexamination of antisemitism in the Gilded Age through a study of the voices of "the victims."⁶⁶ In 1984, she published *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914*, in which she showed

61. Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Note on Southern Attitudes Towards Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 32, no. 1 (1970): 43–9; Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1971): 52–68; Leonard Dinnerstein, "Southern Jewry and the Desegregation Crisis, 1954–1970," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (1973): 231–41. Later scholars would also take up this topic. See, Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South," 437–51; Dan Puckett, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews, the Second World War, and the Holocaust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 185–205. (Contradicting Dinnerstein, Puckett writes that antisemitism in Alabama noticeably increased in the 1940s.)

62. Dinnerstein, "Southern Jewry and the Desegregation Crisis," 234.

63. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). See also, Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

64. For an example of Dinnerstein discussing Higham, see, Leonard Dinnerstein and David Reimers, "John Higham and Immigration History," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 1 (2004): 3–25.

65. Naomi Cohen, "Anti-Semitic Imagery: The Nineteenth Century Background," *Jewish Social Studies* 47, no. 3 & 4 (1985): 307.

66. Naomi Cohen, "Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: The Jewish View," *Jewish Social Studies* 41, no. 3 & 4 (1979): 187–210, especially 188–9.

that Jews did not secure religious equality immediately upon arriving in the United States.⁶⁷ The title alone implied that American Jews too needed to undergo an emancipation process. In 1992, Cohen published *Jews in Christian America*, which demonstrated that Jews had worked actively to eliminate various forms of anti-Jewish discrimination that were inscribed in law.⁶⁸

In addition to Cohen, others departed from the paradigms laid down by Handlin and Higham. Michael Dobkowski rejected Higham's claim that American antisemitism lacked a religious or ideological component. In his articles and book, *The Tarnished Dream* (1979), Dobkowski asserted that Handlin and Higham's "theories [were] misleading oversimplifications."⁶⁹ In 1976, Hyman Berman (1925–2015), a labor historian who often wrote about Jews, illuminated the Republican Party's explicitly antisemitic political campaigns in 1930s Minnesota. He showed how local Republican Party candidates depicted Jews as communists in order to deter voters from supporting Farm-Labor candidates, illuminating how antisemitism operated in the political realm.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Higham continued to shape the field's perception of antisemitism into the 1990s.⁷¹ Several circumstances explain this continued influence. For one, Higham exhibited a sustained interest in antisemitism, returning to the subject more than once and reasserting slightly tweaked versions of his 1957 theories in later decades. In 1975, he published *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America*, a collection of eleven articles, nine of which had previously appeared in print. Here, he reiterated many of the same ideas expressed in his 1957 works as well as some new ones, which also shaped subsequent scholarship. In a chapter titled "Ideological Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," Higham rearticulated his "principles of interpretation" for historicizing ideological anti-Jewish animus; the following chapter did the same for "social anti-

67. Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984).

68. Naomi Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

69. Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream*, 6. See also, Dobkowski, "American Anti-Semitism: A Reinterpretation," *American Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1977): 166–81, and Dobkowski, "Populist Antisemitism in U.S. Literature," *Patterns of Prejudice* 10, no. 3 (1976): 19–27.

70. Hyman Berman, "Political Anti-Semitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression," *Jewish Social Studies* 38, no. 3 & 4 (1976): 247–64.

71. See, for example, Jonathan D. Sarna, "The 'Mythical Jew' and the 'Jew Next Door' in Nineteenth Century America," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. Gerber, 57–78.

Semitism.”⁷² (Indicative of its reception among many American Jewish historians, in a review, Dinnerstein declared the book “the finest group of articles on immigration and ethnicity since the writings of Marcus L. Hansen and Oscar Handlin,” an ironic compliment given Higham’s earlier repudiation of Handlin’s work.)⁷³ In 1984, Higham reissued his 1975 volume. Endorsing his own assessment, Higham wrote that, though he had tweaked some of the text, “its argument and point of view seem more persuasive today than they did a decade ago.”⁷⁴

Handlin and Higham’s professional prestige may have also given their theorizations of American antisemitism added weight at a time when American Jewish history occupied a marginal position within the general field of American history.⁷⁵ As much can be deduced when juxtaposing the career trajectories of Handlin and Higham and that of Cohen, an American Jewish historian and critic of Handlin and Higham. Handlin taught at Harvard, and in 1952 won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Uprooted* (1951).⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Higham worked at UCLA, Rutgers, Columbia University, and the University of Michigan, before settling at Johns Hopkins in 1971. From 1973 to 1974, he served as the president of the Organization of American Historians.⁷⁷ By the 1960s and certainly the 1970s, both Higham and Handlin sat at the top of the profession. By contrast, their critic Cohen joined Hunter College’s history department after earning her PhD from Columbia University in 1962. Cohen’s post at a public college affiliated with the City University of New York lacked the prestige of those of Handlin and Higham. The fact that Cohen was a woman may have also diminished her influence, especially when it clashed with that of two highly regarded American historians.⁷⁸ Cohen’s marriage to Gerson Cohen (1924–91), the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the fact that she published her books with Jewish publishers, such as the Jewish Publication Society of America,

72. John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 120.

73. Leonard Dinnerstein, Review of *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America*, by John Higham, *The Historian* 38, no. 4 (1976): 773–4.

74. Higham, *Send These to Me* (1984), ix.

75. On the trajectory of the field of American Jewish history, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, ed., *Colleagues: On Becoming an American Jewish Historian* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018).

76. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1951).

77. On Higham’s career, see Dinnerstein and Reimers, “John Higham and Immigration History,” 3–25.

78. “Naomi W. Cohen as Teacher and Scholar,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009):1–5.

also may have contributed to the devaluing of her conceptualizations of antisemitism, especially as the field strove to prove itself as a legitimate academic subject of research.⁷⁹ In short, by the time Cohen and other American Jewish historians began challenging conceptualizations of antisemitism as minimal and short-lived in the 1970s, Handlin and Higham had already ascended to the height of the profession—though Higham’s reputation would eventually eclipse Handlin’s. Moreover, as immigration historians who wrote about Jews, Handlin and Higham could do something that Cohen, a specialist, likely could not: endow American Jewish history with legitimacy within the broader field. For some, Higham’s interest in antisemitism was especially meaningful, because he was not Jewish and this meant his ideas carried greater legitimacy.⁸⁰ In short, it is conceivable that Handlin and Higham’s work (and especially the latter’s) gave American Jewish historians a long absent and much desired sense of validity and importance.

By the mid-1990s, many American Jewish historians used Handlin’s and Higham’s conceptualizations of antisemitism. The still relatively young field came to present anti-Jewish animus in the United States as minimally significant. Subsequent trends in the field developed and failed to develop accordingly.

EMERGENT TRENDS

Since the mid-1990s historians have published more research on antisemitism in the United States than they had in previous decades. As was true between the 1970s and 1990s, historians who specialize in fields other than American Jewish history have produced much of this research. And though many explored themes and phenomena first discussed by earlier scholars, they moved away from engagement with Handlin or Higham. Even some specialists in American Jewish history have, like Cohen and Dobkowski before them, challenged the view that antisemitism was exceptional and transitory.

Antisemitism at colleges and universities has been among the most popular subjects of study. These works build on those produced in the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, which examined exclusionary admis-

79. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer who made this point.

80. For example, in a 1985 review of Higham’s *Send These to Me* published in *American Jewish History*, Steven Diner suggested that Higham’s status as a non-Jew might give him a special “critical distance” that enabled him to impartially study the subject of anti-Jewish discrimination, a sentiment that spoke to an enduring belief in objectivity among historians. See Steven Diner, Review of *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, by John Higham, *American Jewish History* 75, no. 2 (1985): 227. On historians and objectivity, see Novick, *That Noble Dream*.

sions policies at elite private colleges and universities.⁸¹ In addition to studies of quotas at Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the Johns Hopkins Universities, historians have highlighted manifestations of antisemitism at Rutgers, Michigan State College, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Emory, Williams, New York University, Syracuse, and Columbia.⁸² Scholars also have focused on discriminatory admissions policies in medical, law, and dental schools.⁸³ Some have

81. See Harold Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* (New York: Wiley, 1977); Marcia Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900–1970* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); Harvey Strum, “Louis Marshall and Anti-Semitism at Syracuse University,” *American Jewish Archives* 35, no. 1 (1983): 1–12; Marcia Synnott, “Anti-Semitism and American Universities: Did Quotas Follow the Jews?” in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. Gerber, 233–76; Dan Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Robert Shaffer, “Jews, Reds, and Violets: Antisemitism and Anti-Radicalism at New York University, 1916–1941,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 15, no. 2 (1987): 47–83; David Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspirations, 1915–1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 137–61; Michael Greenberg and Seymour Zenchelsky, “Private Bias and Public Responsibility: Anti-Semitism at Rutgers in the 1920s and the 1930s,” *History of Higher Education Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1993): 295–319. In what constitutes a unique work on the subject, Michael Burns discussed why Milwaukee’s Marquette University and other Jesuit schools (except Georgetown) did *not* place quotas on Jewish students during the interwar period. Michael Burns, “‘Accepted and Welcome’: The Unlikely Response of the Jesuits at Marquette University to Jewish Applicants during the Interwar Years, 1920–40,” in *The ‘Tragic Couple’: Encounters between Jews and Jesuits*, ed. James Bernauer and Robert Aleksander Maryks (New York: Brill, 2013), 317–32.

82. Jonathan Pollack, “Jewish Problems: Eastern and Western Jewish Identities in Conflict at the University of Wisconsin, 1919–1941,” *American Jewish History* 89, no. 2 (2001): 161–80; Robert McCaughey, *Stand Columbia: A History of Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), chapter 9; Stephen Norwood, “Legitimizing Nazism: Harvard University and the Hitler Regime, 1933–1937,” *American Jewish History* 92, no. 2 (2004): 189–223; Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006); Jason Kalman, “Dark Places around the University: The Johns Hopkins University Admissions Quota and the Jewish Community, 1945–1951,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8, no. 81 (2010): 233–79; Eunice Pollack, ed., *Anti-Semitism on the Campus: Past and Present* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011); Benjamin Wurgaft, *Jews at Williams: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Class at a New England Liberal Arts College* (Williamstown: Williams College Press, 2013); Andrei Markovits and Kenneth Garner, *The Boundaries of Pluralism: The World of the University of Michigan’s Jewish Students from 1897 to 1945* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing Services, 2020).

83. See, for example, Edward Halperin, “The Jewish Problem in U.S. Medical Education: 1920–1955,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 56, no. 2 (2011): 140–67; Alfred Shapiro, “Racial Discrimination in Medicine,” *Jewish Social Studies* 10, no. 2 (1948): 103–34; S. Perry Brickman, *Extracted: Unmasking Rampant Antisemitism in America’s Higher Education* (New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2019); Louis Anthes, *Immigrants and Lawyers: A Cultural History* (El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2003), 173–216.

discussed the ways in which non-Jewish students perpetuated anti-Jewish discrimination.⁸⁴ Others have documented personal encounters with antisemitism.⁸⁵ Historians have examined academics whose anti-Jewish sentiments influenced their intellectual choices.⁸⁶ University and colleges' discriminatory employment policies have also been historicized.⁸⁷

Another popular subject of research examines anti-Jewish exclusion from places of public accommodation and professional spheres. The legal scholar Evan Friss, for example, discussed anti-Jewish exclusion in the context of Jewish and Black civil rights campaigns in Gilded Age New York.⁸⁸ Library historian Wayne Weigand examined Melvil Dewey's exclusion of Jews from the Lake Placid Club, spotlighting the library profession's failure to repudiate Dewey's overt, longstanding antisemitism.⁸⁹ Peter Hopsicker, a sports historian, similarly analyzed anti-Jewish exclusion in the region of Lake Placid, New York, showing how Jews' protests against the area's bid to host the 1932 Winter Olympics hinged on the use of public funds to improve private properties that expressly excluded Jews.⁹⁰

84. See, for example, Kirsten Fermaglich, "The Social Problems Club Riot of 1935: A Window into Antiradicalism and Antisemitism at Michigan State College," *Michigan Historical Review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 94–115; Shira Kohn, "Turning German Jews into Jewish Greeks: Philanthropy and Acculturation in the Jewish Greek System's Student Refugee Programs, 1936–1940," *American Jewish History* 102, no. 4 (2018): 511–36.

85. John Morton Blum, *A Life with History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 9, 19, 22–3, 156–7, 212.

86. William Palmer, "Carl Bridenbaugh, American Colonial History, and Academic Antisemitism: The Paths to the 'Great Mutation,'" *American Jewish History* 98, no. 3 (2014): 153–74; Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 339–40. Bridenbaugh attended a conference in May 1948 in Peekskill, New York, convened by Oscar Handlin and *Commentary* magazine for the purpose of considering the place of Jews in American history. See Handlin, "New Paths in American Jewish History," 388–394.

87. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 330. On the decline of those policies, see David Hollinger, *Science, Jews and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

88. Evan Friss, "Black, Jews, and Civil Rights Law in New York, 1895–1913," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 4 (2005): 70–99.

89. Wayne A. Wiegand, "'Jew Attack': The Story behind Melvil Dewey's Resignation as New York State Librarian in 1905," *American Jewish History* 83, no. 3 (1995): 359–79.

90. Peter Hopsicker, "'No Hebrews Allowed': How the 1932 Lake Placid Winter Olympic Games Survived the 'Restricted' Adirondack Culture, 1877–1932," *Journal of Sport History* 36, no. 2 (2009): 205–22; Peter Hopsicker, "Defying the Restrictions: The Adirondack Mountain Club Answers the 'Jewish Question,'" *New York History* 91, no. 2 (2010): 124–45. For works that treat these incidents as examples of "social antisemitism," see Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 164; Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985: Volume 3, The Germanic Period, Part 2* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018); Lee Livney, "Let Us Now Praise Self-Made Men:

Like Dinnerstein, a number of scholars have examined anti-Jewish violence, a subject that most present as anomalous. Vann Newkirk, a historian of the American South, examined a 1925 attack in which North Carolinian state officers kidnapped and castrated a Jewish man accused of rape.⁹¹ Edward Berenson, a professor of French studies, published a book about a 1928 episode of blood libel in Massena, New York.⁹² Historians also have uncovered more pervasive forms of violence. In 2005, Patrick Mason, a specialist in Mormon history, published an article about the 1903 murder of the peddler Abram Surasky and twenty-four other episodes of violence in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era South.⁹³ His work examined the relationship between anti-Jewish violence and Jews' roles in the post-Civil War southern economy. Likewise, Stephen Norwood revealed instances of Irish Catholic children beating Jewish kids in Boston's Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods and in New York in the 1940s. He has also described incidents of synagogue vandalism during this same period.⁹⁴ In *Fight against Fear* (2001), Clive Webb discusses a spate of synagogue and JCC bombings in the South in 1957 and 1958.⁹⁵

Antisemitic demagogues such as Henry Ford, Father Charles Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, Thomas Edison, Gerald L. K. Smith, Huey P.

A Reexamination of the Hilton-Seligman Affair," *New York History* 75, no. 1 (1994): 66–98; Stephen Birmingham, *"Our Crowd": The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 143; Peter Adams, *Politics, Faith, and the Making of American Judaism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), chapter 10.

91. Vann Newkirk, "That Spirit Must be Stamped Out: The Mutilation of Joseph Needleman and North Carolina's Effort to Prosecute Lynch Mob Participants during the 1920s," *Southern Jewish History* 13, no. 1 (2010): 45–80.

92. Edward Berenson, *The Accusation: Blood Libel in American Town* (New York: Norton, 2019).

93. Patrick Mason, "Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South," *Southern Jewish History* 8, no. 1 (2005): 77–119.

94. Stephen Norwood, "Marauding Youth and the Christian Front: Antisemitic Violence in Boston and New York during World War II," *American Jewish History* 91, no. 1 (2003): 233–26. A number of mid-century scholars noted assaults on Jewish men by violently yanking their beards, an act sometimes called "whisker-pulling." See Higham, *Send These to Me*, 135; Morris Schappes, *The Jews in the United States: A Pictorial History 1654–Present* (New York: Tercentenary Book Committee, 1971), 149; W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Sroel, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), 203; Albert Gordon, *Jews in Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 21.

95. Clive Webb, *Fight against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), chapter three. See also Melissa Fay Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

Long, and Elizabeth Dilling have also been historicized.⁹⁶ Works highlight how Ford disseminated the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the *Dearborn Independent* from 1919–20; how Coughlin, a Catholic priest, spread antisemitic claims to an audience of over thirty million listeners throughout the 1930s; how anti-communist and antisemitic sentiments often overlapped; how Jews were targets of the KKK, among other things.⁹⁷ For example, in *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech* (2012) and related articles, Victoria Woeste revealed how Ford “deviously used corporate resources to hide from the legal process” and how “the American legal system gave wide latitude to hateful publications.”⁹⁸ She also shows how Ford's actions shaped the way major national Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee, responded to similar episodes. Scholars also have examined early- and mid-century pro-Nazi fascist organizations such as the Silver Legion, the German American Bund, the Christian Front, and the America First Party.⁹⁹

Like Woeste, a number of historians in the last thirty years have explored connections between law and antisemitism. Immigration historians have revealed how antisemitism and broader xenophobic sentiments drove

96. Leo Ribuffo, “Henry Ford and *The International Jew*,” *American Jewish History* 69, no. 4 (1980): 437–77; Glen Jeansonne, *Gerald L. K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Glen Jeansonne, “Combating Antisemitism: The Case of Gerald L. K. Smith” in Gerber ed., *Antisemitism in American History*, 152–66; Ronald Bayor, “Klans, Coughlinites, and Aryan Nations: Patterns of American Anti-Semitism in the Twentieth Century,” *American Jewish History* 76, no. 2 (1986): 181–96; Tyler Bridges, *The Rise of David Duke* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994); Lucilla Cremona, “Antisemitism and Populism in the United States in the 1930s: The Case of Father Coughlin,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 32, no. 1 (1998): 25–37; Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Christine Erickson, “‘I Have Not Had One Fact Disproven’: Elizabeth Dilling’s Crusade against Communism in the 1930s,” *Journal of American Studies* 36, no. 3 (2002): 473–89.

97. Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017).

98. Victoria Woeste, “Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920–1929,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2004): 877–905; Victoria Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle against Hate Speech* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

99. Bradley Hart, *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018), chapter 3; Kevin Harty, “William Dudley Pelley, An American Nazi in King Arthur's Court,” *Arthuriana* 26, no. 2 (2016): 64–85; Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 120; Norwood, “Marauding Youth and the Christian Front,” 233–67.

immigration law and policy.¹⁰⁰ Libby Garland's *After They Closed the Gates* explores Jews who came to the United States illegally after the passage of the 1920s immigration laws, revealing how American nativism drove Jews to turn to smugglers and forgery to enter the country.¹⁰¹ Joseph Bendersky's *The Jewish Threat* (2000) reveals the prevalence of antisemitism in the US Army. The Military Intelligence Division viewed Jews as a distinct, inferior race that was inclined to support communism, disposed to conspiracy, and intent on destroying American democracy.¹⁰² His work shows how this outlook shaped US immigration policy.

Some scholars have highlighted anti-Jewish discrimination in housing and employment in the postwar period.¹⁰³ Stuart Meck (1947–2018), a historian of urban planning, revealed that some Jews, like African Americans, were subject to exclusionary zoning practices.¹⁰⁴ Kirsten Fermaglich's *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name* showed that some mid-century American Jews opted to change their names from self-evidently Jewish monikers to ostensibly less obviously Jewish ones as a tactic to

100. Howard Markel, *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Howard Markel and Alexandra Stern, "The Foreignness of Germs: The Persistent Association of Immigrants and Disease in American Society," *Milbank Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2002): 757–88; Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 117–46; Daniel Okrent, *The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants Out of America* (New York: Scribner, 2019); Maddlena Marinari's *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization against Restrictive Immigration Laws, 1882–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020). See also Naomi Cohen, "Commissioner Williams and the Jews," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 99–126; Britt P. Tevis, "'The Hebrews Are Appearing in Court in Great Numbers': Toward a Reassessment of Early Twentieth-Century American Jewish Immigration History," *American Jewish History* 100, no. 3 (2016): 319–47.

101. Libby Garland, *After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921–1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014). See also Libby Garland, "Fighting to be Insiders: American Jewish Leaders and the Michigan Alien Registration Act of 1931," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 2 (2010): 109–40.

102. Joseph Bendersky, *The Jewish Threat: The Anti-Semitic Politics of the U.S. Army* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Joseph Bendersky, "The Absent Presence: Enduring Images of Jews in United States Military History," *American Jewish History* 89, no. 4 (2001): 411–36.

103. Mary Ellen Stratthaus, "Flaw in the Jewel: Housing Discrimination against Jews in La Jolla, California," *American Jewish History* 84 (1996): 189–219; Kelly King-O'Brien, "'Names and Appearance are Often Indeterminate': Quandaries over Identifying Jews in Chicago, 1953–1961," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 110, no. 1 (2017): 9–58.

104. Stuart Meck, "Zoning and Anti-Semitism in the 1920s: The Case of Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home v. Village of University Heights and Its Aftermath," *Journal of Planning History* 4, no. 2 (2005): 91–128, 91, 118.

avoid employment discrimination.¹⁰⁵ Others have looked at links between criminal courts, police, and Jews. Batya Miller uncovered how renewed zeal over the enforcement of Sunday closing laws in the 1880s and 1890s resulted in the prosecution of thousands of New York City Jews for working on Sunday.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, Mia Brett explored dimensions of legally sanctioned antisemitism in her dissertation about the 1876 murder trial of Pesach Rubenstein. Her work illuminates “the implicit denial of criminal procedure rights to immigrant Jews.”¹⁰⁷ Within a broader framework, David Sorkin has argued that American Jews underwent (and continue to undergo) an emancipation process, countering claims that Jews in the United States had equal civil and political rights from the start.¹⁰⁸ Collectively, these studies show the state’s role in American antisemitism.

In addition to revealing the relationship between the state and antisemitism, historians have examined the role of non-Jewish faith communities in generating anti-Jewish sentiments. In *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (2005), William Pencak highlighted Christian antisemitism in Newport, Savannah, New York, Charleston, and Philadelphia.¹⁰⁹ Till van Rahden, a German Jewish historian, analyzed Catholic weeklies published in Baltimore between 1890 and 1924 and concluded that antisemitism operated differently among German and Irish Catholics, at least as it appeared in the press.¹¹⁰ Studies of antisemitism

105. Kirsten Fermaglich, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Kirsten Fermaglich, “What’s Uncle Sam’s Last Name?” Jews and Name Changing in New York City during the World War II Era,” *Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (2015): 719–45; Kirsten Fermaglich, “Too Long, Too Foreign . . . Too Jewish: Jews, Name Changing, and Family Mobility in New York City, 1917–1942,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 34, no. 3 (2015): 34–57.

106. Miller, “Enforcement of the Sunday Closing Laws on the Lower East Side, 1882–1903,” *American Jewish History* 91, no. 2 (2003): 269–86.

107. Mia Brett, “The Murdered Jewess: Jewish Immigration and the Problem of Citizenship in the Courtroom in Late Nineteenth Century New York” (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2020), 4.

108. David Sorkin, “Is American Jewry Exceptional? Comparing Jewish Emancipation in Europe and America,” *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (2010): 175–200; David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History across Five Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). See also Laura Leibman, “Jewish Healers and Yellow Fever in the Eighteenth-Century Americas,” *Jewish Social Studies* 26, no. 1 (2020): 77–90.

109. Borden, *Jews, Turks, and Infidels*; William Pencak, *Jews and Gentiles in Early America, 1654–1800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

110. Rahden, “Beyond Ambivalence,” 11. See also Mary Christine Athans, *The Coughlin-Fahey Connection: Father Charles E. Coughlin, Father Denis Fahey, C.S. Sp., and Religious Anti-Semitism in the United States, 1938–1954* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991).

among religious groups have focused their attention on intersections between religion and politics.¹¹¹ Relatedly, a handful of studies have explored political antisemitism. In 2020, for example, David Austin Walsh, a political historian, revealed how 1950s conservatives overlooked the antisemitism of the far right in the name of political cohesion.¹¹²

Finally, a handful of scholars have examined antisemitism in the context of women's and gender history. In 1986, Elinor Lerner argued that early twentieth-century mainstream liberal feminists practiced "anti-Semitism by neglect."¹¹³ Demands to treat everyone identically meant differences were obfuscated and Jewish particularity was ignored. Thus, the Woman Suffrage Party of New York held its annual convention on Friday night, even though many Jewish women (who were among the strongest supporters of suffrage) observed Shabbat on Friday evenings. In *Fighting to Become Americans*, Riv-Ellen Prell identified how Jews generated negative gendered stereotypes as a way of policing members of the opposite sex—by articulating models of one ought *not* to be—to smooth Jews' entry into the middle class. The production of stereotypes such as the early 1900s "Ghetto Girl," a gaudy young Jewish woman, and the postwar "Jewish American Princess," a spoiled young woman, evinced Jews' anxieties "about being barred in one or another form from the nation because they were Jews." Although generated by Jews, these stereotypes always "reflect[ed] the attitudes of the non-Jewish world."¹¹⁴ In *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace*, Melissa Klapper examined Jewish women activists in the suffrage, birth control, and peace movements between 1890 and 1914. She found that "Jewish women in secular social movements, especially those who took on leadership roles, were always aware that their colleagues saw them as Jewish."¹¹⁵ Even women who did not identify themselves as Jews publicly could not escape that identification.

Despite these works, many important surveys of American Jewish history continued to advance claims about antisemitism in the terms articulated by Handlin and Higham in the 1950s. The *Jewish People*

111. Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

112. David Austin Walsh, "The Right-Wing Popular Front: The Far Right and American Conservatism in the 1950s," *Journal of American History* 107, no. 2 (2020): 411–32.

113. Elinor Lerner, "American Feminism and the Jewish Question, 1890–1940," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. Gerber, 305–28.

114. Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 12, 24, 25.

115. Melissa Klapper, *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace: American Jewish Women's Activism, 1890–1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 15.

in *America*, a five-volume set first published in 1992 in honor of the one-hundredth anniversary of the American Jewish Historical Society, included works by Eli Farber, Hasia Diner, Gerald Sorin, Henry Feingold (who was also the project's general editor) and Edward Shapiro.¹¹⁶ Farber's volume presents the environment in colonial America and the early republic as unique in that "Jews were not the objects of debilitating hostility."¹¹⁷ In the set's fourth volume, Feingold argues that American Jews "enter[ed] the mainstream" between 1920 and 1945, unimpeded by a simultaneous intensification of antisemitism.¹¹⁸ The second chapter of Edward Shapiro's contribution, *A Time for Healing*, which covers postwar American Jewry, is titled "The Decline of Anti-Semitism." Here, Shapiro attributed American Jewry's perception of postwar antisemitism to a collective "psychological insecurity" that led them to exaggerate "the extent and depth of postwar American anti-Semitism."¹¹⁹ His chapter presents antisemitism's postwar decline as inevitable and linear.

More recent surveys take a similar approach. Jonathan Sarna's *American Judaism: A History* (2004), for example, reiterates Higham's analysis. Indeed, Sarna has long endorsed Higham's theses concerning antisemitism, while challenging Handlin's.¹²⁰ Likewise, Hasia Diner employs Handlin's and Higham's ideas in *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (2004).¹²¹

Monographs also have presented antisemitism as momentary and generally uncommon. For example, in *When General Grant Expelled the Jews*, Sarna describes Ulysses S. Grant's General Orders No. 11 as a holdover from Europe, "a brief moment . . . when Old World prejudices displayed themselves." Grant redeemed himself, Sarna further

116. Eli Farber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Sorin, *A Time for Building*; Henry Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920–1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*.

117. Farber, *A Time for Planting*, 142.

118. Feingold, *A Time for Searching*, xvi.

119. Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*, 28–9.

120. Sarna, *American Judaism*, 216. See also Sarna, "Anti-Semitism and American History," 42–8; Jonathan Sarna, "American Antisemitism," in *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, ed. David Berger (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 115–24; Sarna in Koffman, "Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," 1–33.

121. Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 3. In contrast to Sarna, Diner has advanced the ideas of both Handlin and Higham. See, for example, Diner, "Oscar Handlin," 59; Diner, *How America Met the Jews*, 8; Diner in David Koffman, "Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," 5.

contends, by expressing remorse and as president overseeing “a liberal epoch characterized by sensitivity to human rights and interreligious cooperation.”¹²² Likewise, in *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migration to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (2015), Diner denies that the violence that Jewish peddlers encountered was related to their identity as Jews. “Unfortunate peddlers got shot, axed, stabbed, and beaten to death, but not because of their Jewishness,” she argues.¹²³

In recent years, historians have also debated the role that “whiteness” has played in how Jews were regarded by other Americans and by the American state. Some have argued that Jews throughout American history enjoyed the privileges of whiteness without qualification, an excessively broad argument that functionally stymies consideration of antisemitism.¹²⁴ By contrast, a few have argued that anti-Black and anti-Jewish ideologies have operated in tandem.¹²⁵ And some, most notably Eric Goldstein, have examined the changing relationship between Jews and whiteness over time and space, illustrating that at different moments in American history, large swaths of Americans did not perceive Jews as white—phenotypically, legally, or otherwise—and how this fact has enabled antisemitism.¹²⁶

In roughly the past ten years, a few leading American Jewish historians have challenged conventional claims about antisemitism. Tony Michels’s 2010 article about American Jewish exceptionalism constitutes the first major recent contribution to this effort. Since the 1950s, Michels explained, most American Jewish historians have understood American

122. Jonathan Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 2012), 2, 3.

123. Hasia Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migration to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 130. By contrast, see Mason, “Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South,” 79 and Michael Cohen, *Cotton Capitalists: American Jewish Entrepreneurship in the Reconstruction Era* (New York: NYU Press, 2017), 192–6. (Cohen writes, “[l]ocal and national newspapers made it clear that this [violence] was not a random crime against merchants but specifically targeted Jews.” See Cohen, *Cotton Capitalists*, 194).

124. See, for example, Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 14, 22–4, 143; Diner in David Koffman, “Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” 4; Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 23–6.

125. See, William F. Holmes, “Whitecapping: Antisemitism in the Populist Era,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (1974): 244–61.

126. Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Eric Goldstein, “The Unstable Other: Locating the Jew in Progressive Era American Racial Discourse,” *American Jewish History* 89, no. 4 (2001): 383–409; Eric Goldstein in Koffman, “Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” 5–6, 10–2.

Jewish history as “exceptional,” unique in the context of modern Jewish history. The American Jewish exceptionalist framework, he shows, rests on two premises: the idea that American Jews did not need to undergo an emancipation process and the idea that American Jews did not face systemic or state-directed violence. Michels challenged scholars to probe the supposed dearth of antisemitism in American history through comparative analysis.¹²⁷ Lila Corwin Berman has similarly questioned why American Jewish historians have neglected to address antisemitism. Berman posited that Higham’s influence may have led historians astray, noting that Higham “turn[ed] antisemitism into a ‘present absence’ in American life, an ever-dying force that proved the virtue of American liberalism.”¹²⁸ Likewise, Beth Wenger and Eric Goldstein offered specific challenges to views that frame antisemitism as an aberration.¹²⁹

Still, scholarship that focuses on anti-Jewish animus in the United States remains rare. Likewise, the idea that antisemitism in the United States has been a relatively insignificant historical force remains common. Given that some scholars have challenged the view that antisemitism has been marginal in the United States, it is worth considering why Handlin and, especially, Higham have remained so influential.

First, historiographical trends within American Jewish history, which complement Handlin and Higham’s conceptualization of anti-Jewish animus in the United States, likely have contributed to the continued popularity of their ideas. As Tony Michels explained, the field’s continued embrace of an exceptionalist paradigm has promoted an understanding of antisemitism as short-lived and inconsequential. So, too, has the narrative that Jews in the United States never underwent emancipation.¹³⁰ American Jewish historians’ seeming preference for studying how Jews successfully integrated into American society, redefined Jewish culture, and ascended the country’s economic ladder, among other subjects, also has skewed perceptions of antisemitism in the United States and likely

127. Michels, “‘Is America Different?’” 201–24. See also Richard Frankel, “One Crisis Behind? Rethinking Antisemitic Exceptionalism in the United States and Germany,” *American Jewish History* 97, no. 3 (2013): 235–58; Tevis, “‘Jews Not Admitted,’” 847–70.

128. Lila Corwin Berman, “It Can’t Happen Here? Rethinking Antisemitism and Americanism,” unpublished paper, Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, MA, December 2018.

129. Goldstein and Beth Wenger, in Koffman, “Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” 1–33.

130. See Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation*.

extended Handlin and Higham's intellectual influence.¹³¹ Though impossible to prove, American Jewish historians' desire to avoid seeming like they are complaining may also be driving the historiography.¹³²

One might also point to American Jewish historians' collective and individual relationships with Handlin and Higham to explain their widespread influence. It stands to reason that some American Jewish historians feel a sense of loyalty to Handlin and Higham on account of having enjoyed professional relationships with them. (Indeed, a handful of individuals have told me that Higham was exceptionally kind to them, especially early in their careers.) Some may feel a sense of deference to Handlin and Higham (and especially to Higham), because of their elevation of American Jewish history within the general field. These sentiments may have deterred contemporary scholars from critically probing Handlin and Higham's works. Whatever the reasons, Handlin and Higham remain significant in so far as they continue to shape how many American Jewish historians and historians generally think about anti-Jewish animus in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Collectively, scholarship from the past seventy years suggests that anti-Jewish animus in the United States was both more common and more severe than typically acknowledged. Even works that frame episodes of antisemitism as exceptional serve as evidence that hostility toward Jews persisted throughout America's history. Accordingly, American Jewish historians committed to researching antisemitism might consider adopting some new guidelines for thinking about the subject.

First and foremost, historians might consider retiring certain conceptual devices. Perhaps the most important idea to discard or, at the very least, probe is "social antisemitism," a description that obfuscates the

131. See, for example, Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); Stephen Whitfield, *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999); Shelly Tenenbaum, *A Credit to Their Community: Jewish Loan Societies in the United States, 1880–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

132. Dinnerstein made a similar point. See Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, viii. For discussions of instances in which internal debate about how to respond to antisemitism were resolved by the organized Jewish community declining to instigate lawsuits as a means of minimizing public discussion of Jews, see Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech*; Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise*, 347; Tevis, "Jews Not Admitted," 855.

role of the state in many circumstances in which the state was involved and generally minimizes the severity of anti-Jewish incidents. The term has been used as a means of downplaying the causes and effects of antisemitism and has operated as something of a catchall. Likewise, scholars of antisemitism also ought to refrain from deploying simple Black-white binaries, which obscure the ways American law has been deployed to discriminate against Jews. Relatedly, American Jewish historians must treat law as a dynamic, living entity beyond the text of the US Constitution.

Historians interested in antisemitism might also consider the ways certain concepts are defined and how those definitions operate to illuminate or hide anti-Jewish violence. For example, though Leo Frank's murder is commonly depicted as an instance of lynching, other episodes of anti-Jewish violence involving mobs remain unstudied, including, for example, the death of Samuel Bierfield, which one newspaper described at the time as "Retributive justice."¹³³ Likewise, in 1929, KKK members in Ohio kidnapped a Jewish chiropractor in Woodsfield, took him to a nearby cemetery, and whipped him. Another local Jewish resident suffered the same fate.¹³⁴ It is unclear why such acts are not acknowledged as lynching episodes and it may be worth exploring the history of the term's meaning to see why or why not anti-Jewish violence has been acknowledged as much.

Historians might also reconsider framing individual anti-Jewish episodes as "exceptional" and instead think about them as parts of a larger pattern. As noted, scholars have published on a range of violent episodes, most of which they identify as outliers. Though it is true that many of these episodes were singular in certain ways—for example, Needleman's 1925 castration—they are not exceptional in so far as they each constitute anti-Jewish violence that resulted in death or serious bodily harm. One can imagine an analysis that collectively examines Surasky's 1903 murder and the murder or assault of at least two-dozen other Jewish peddlers in the South; Frank's 1915 lynching; Joseph Needleman's 1925 castration; the 1928 blood libel accusation; the assault of children in Boston and New York in the 1940s; and synagogue and JCC bombings across the South in the late 1950s; the 1977 shooting at B'rith Sholom Kneseth Israeli synagogue in St. Louis, Missouri; the 1999 shooting at a Los Angeles JCC; the 2006 Seattle Federation Shooting; the 2009 shooting at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC;

133. "The Avengers of Blood," *Louisville Daily Courier*, August 19, 1868, 1; Paul Berger, "Untold Story of the First Jewish Lynching in America," *The Forward*, December 8, 2014.

134. "Brutal Outrages by Masked 'Lady Night Riders,'" *San Francisco Examiner*, June 2, 1929, 117.

the 2014 shootings at a JCC and a Jewish retirement community in Overland Park, Kansas; the 2018 shooting at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue; the 2019 shootings at Chabad of Poway in California—to name just a handful of similarly deadly incidents—in a historical analysis of anti-Jewish violence in the United States. Collectively, these incidents show that threats to Jews' physical safety have remained a constant in the history of the United States.

Researching lesser-known antisemitic incidents is another way to expand on work in the field. For example, in September 1891, Whitall Tatem & Company glass factory employees went on strike after learning the company had hired some Jewish workers. The strikers rioted and drove the approximately one hundred Jewish residents of Millville, New Jersey, out of town, severely beating them along the way. The strike then spread to another factory, in Bridgeton, at which point the company agreed to fire its Jewish workers.¹³⁵ Other than a brief mention, however, little research has been done about this episode.

Future trends in the field of the study of antisemitism in the United States will depend on whether scholars continue to subscribe to old ideas. Should American Jewish historians continue to adhere to a conceptualization of antisemitism in the United States as fleeting and relatively insignificant, subsequent episodes of antisemitism will continue to appear arbitrary, extraordinary, and confusing. If, alternatively, scholars recognize antisemitism as an ever-present if evolving phenomenon, historians may be able to better understand and historicize it.

135. "Drove Hebrews Out," *Daily Advocate*, September 22, 1891, 2; Ellen Eisenberg, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882–1920* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 124.