



Is Kevin MacDonald's Theory of Judaism "Plausible"? A Response to Dutton (2018)

Nathan Cofnas¹

© The Author(s) 2018

Abstract

In a trilogy of books, Kevin MacDonald argues that Judaism is a “group evolutionary strategy.” According to his theory, Jews are genetically and culturally adapted to advance their own group interests at the expense of gentiles. Several influential twentieth-century liberal intellectual and political movements were designed by Jews to promote separatism and group continuity among themselves while undermining gentile society. According to Cofnas [Human Nature, 29, 134–156, 2018], MacDonald's argument is based on “misrepresented sources and cherry-picked facts.” Cofnas proposed the “default hypothesis” to explain Jewish overrepresentation among the leaders of liberal intellectual and political movements: Because of their relatively high IQ and concentration in influential urban areas, Jews are overrepresented in all (non-overtly anti-Semitic) cognitively demanding activities. Dutton [Evolutionary Psychological Science, 2018] objects to Cofnas, claiming that, “from the perspective of evolutionary psychology,” MacDonald's theory is more “plausible” than the default hypothesis because “people tend to act in their ethnic interests” and Jews are particularly high in ethnocentrism. Contra Dutton, it is argued here that there is no evidence to support the general notion that people tend to act in their ethnic interests. The evidence suggests, if anything, that Jews are not particularly ethnocentric. There are no theoretical principles or established empirical findings of evolutionary psychology that make MacDonald's theory “plausible.”

Introduction

Kevin MacDonald (1994, 1998a, b) argues that Judaism is a “group evolutionary strategy.” According to his theory, Jews are genetically and culturally adapted to promote their own group interests at the expense of gentiles. Jewish genetic adaptations include high intelligence, conscientiousness, and ethnocentrism.

MacDonald's (1998a) most influential book, *The Culture of Critique* (*CofC*), claims that several major twentieth-century intellectual and political movements—including Boasian anthropology, Freudianism, Frankfurt School critical theory, and multiculturalism—were designed to destabilize gentile civilization for the benefit of Jews. The movements, led by “strongly identified Jews,” attacked group identity among white gentiles while promoting separatism and ethnocentrism for Jews. They “pathologized” anti-Semitism in order to squelch resistance to Jewish control.

In Cofnas (2018b), I concluded that MacDonald's argument in *CofC* is based on “systematically misrepresented sources and cherry-picked facts.” I found that he did not provide any real evidence that the leaders of the movements discussed in *CofC* were particularly concerned about Jews, let alone that they designed their movements to promote Jewish interests at the expense of gentiles. Rather, Jewish leaders of liberal, multicultural movements tended to advocate the same policies for both Jews/Israel and gentiles/white-gentile countries. For example, MacDonald (1998a) devotes a chapter to the Frankfurt School. He repeatedly claims that the leaders of the school “strongly identified” as Jews. He says that “the agenda of the Frankfurt School” was to facilitate “radical individualism...among gentiles while retaining a powerful sense of group cohesion among Jews” (p. 215). What evidence does he have for this claim? He does not quote a *single sentence* from any Frankfurt School leader that endorses group cohesion among Jews. When Adorno, Marcuse, and other Frankfurt theorists condemned ethnocentrism, MacDonald assumes without evidence that they approved of ethnocentrism in Jews. I found that when Frankfurt School leaders *did* comment on Jews or Israel, contra MacDonald, they advocated the same multiculturalist policies that they promoted for gentiles (e.g., open borders and

✉ Nathan Cofnas
nathan.cofnas@balliol.ox.ac.uk

¹ Balliol College, Oxford OX1 3BJ, UK

multiculturalism in Israel). (See Cofnas 2018b, pp. 146–148, for specific examples of how Frankfurt School theorists are misrepresented in *CofC*.)

In Cofnas (2018b), I proposed what I called the “default hypothesis” to explain Jewish overrepresentation in liberal political movements: “Because of their above-average intelligence and concentration in influential urban areas, Jews in recent history have been overrepresented in all major intellectual and political movements, including conservative movements, that were not overtly anti-Semitic” (p. 134). Because a higher proportion of right-wing than left-wing movements in the twentieth century were overtly anti-Semitic, “Jewish involvement in politics has been somewhat skewed to the left in recent history, but Jews are also overrepresented in right-wing movements that are not anti-Semitic” (p. 138).

The default hypothesis and MacDonald’s theory make different predictions. As I previously noted: “If the former is correct, Jews should also be overrepresented in the leadership of *opposing* movements. If the latter is correct, Jews should tend to cluster around those movements that actually support Jewish ethnic interests” (Cofnas 2018a). Furthermore, if the default hypothesis is correct, Jews should be no more likely than gentiles to hypocritically advocate policies that benefit their co-ethnics at the expense of others. Since there is no evidence that the leaders of the movements discussed in *CofC* (with the exception of some neoconservatives in the USA) were motivated by Jewish ethnocentrism, and since Jews tend to be overrepresented among all sorts of (non-overtly anti-Semitic) movements with violently opposing aims, the evidence supports the default hypothesis over MacDonald’s—or so I have argued.

Dutton’s (2018) Response

What Should Be the “Default Hypothesis”?

I called my hypothesis the “default” one because it is more parsimonious than MacDonald’s. It posits only two factors—intelligence and geography (with intelligence being the far more important factor)—to explain Jewish overrepresentation across a wide range of (non-overtly anti-Semitic) cognitively demanding activities. Two factors explain why Jews comprise more than half of world chess champions (Cochran et al. 2005), why they comprised almost half of elite American intellectuals in the 1970s according to peer ratings (Kadushin 1974), why they win so many Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals (jinfo.org), and why they often assume leadership positions in intellectual and political movements with opposing aims (e.g., libertarianism and socialism).

The fact that my hypothesis is more parsimonious than MacDonald’s is a matter of logic. Both MacDonald and Dutton (2018) agree that Jews are overrepresented in cognitively demanding activities—including some intellectual and

political movements—that have no relevance for Jewish group interests. They explain Jewish overrepresentation in these activities as being primarily a consequence of high intelligence. So MacDonald and Dutton already accept a version of (what I call) the default hypothesis. They say that the default hypothesis should be supplemented with a much more complicated theory about how Jews are genetically and culturally adapted to benefit themselves by undermining gentile society.

Dutton (2018), however, contends that MacDonald’s theory should be the “default.” He expounds:

Cofnas argues, in effect, that the default position should be Jewish high intelligence, and this explanation for Jewish involvement in intellectual movements should be the null hypothesis. I believe the opposite may be true. The default position should be MacDonald’s thesis and it should be treated as the null hypothesis. (p. 6)

To be clear, the fact that one hypothesis is more parsimonious than another does not mean that it is necessarily correct. Sometimes complicated, fanciful theories are true. The question is which theory is best supported by the evidence while reaching a requisite level of antecedent plausibility (Sober 2000, p. 32). *Other things being equal*, a theory is more plausible if it explains our observations while postulating fewer entities or causal forces. The burden of proof is on the theoretician who postulates more entities/causal forces to explain how the loss of parsimony is compensated by a commensurate gain in explanatory power. If my argument is correct, however, the difference between my hypothesis and MacDonald’s is not simply parsimony. Rather, the *evidence* supports the former and disconfirms the latter.

A Theoretical/Empirical Argument for MacDonald

Dutton (2018, p. 2) says that his argument reduces to six basic claims: (1) “[G]roup selection is a robust model.” (2) “[P]eople tend to act in their ethnic interests.” (3) “Jews are more ‘group selected’ than gentiles,” which means they are genetically disposed to possess traits that give them an advantage in group competition, including “positive and negative ethnocentrism.” (4) The thesis of *CofC*—that Jewish left-wing activism during the twentieth century was part of a group evolutionary strategy—is more “plausible” than the “default hypothesis.” (5) Jewish left-wing activism “has indeed been in Jewish group interests.” (6) “Jewish representation in intellectual movements that are not necessarily ‘good for the Jews’ simply reflects Jewish high intelligence.”

Regarding (1), Dutton (2018, p. 2) states that it does not matter whether Jews were subject to more group selection than (white) gentiles: “[I]t may be possible for Jews to have developed the qualities highlighted by MacDonald through individual selection alone so group selection does not actually have to

be accepted for it to be argued that Jews have been selected for high positive and negative ethnocentrism.” Since, at least on Dutton’s interpretation, the theory of *CofC* does not stand or fall with group selection, but requires only that Jews are high on ethnocentrism, I will not address the question of whether Jews were subject to more group selection, or whether evolutionary explanations based on group selection are in general plausible.¹

I will address claims (2)–(5) in turn. I will not address (6), because this is essentially a partial endorsement of the default hypothesis.

Do “People Tend to Act in Their Ethnic Interests”?

Dutton (2018, p. 3) cites only two studies in support of the claim that “people tend to act in their ethnic interests.” First, Rushton (2005) reported that the most successful beggars in Moscow were ethnic Russians followed by Moldovans followed by dark-skinned Roma. That is, the (primarily ethnic Russian) pedestrians were generous to the beggars in proportion to their genetic relatedness to them. Second, Irwin (1987) reported that intertribal relations between Inuit in Canada reflect genetic relatedness: More closely related tribes are more likely to engage in cooperative behaviors, and are less likely to be excessively destructive toward each other during war.

Even taking the claims of Rushton and Irwin at face value, it seems like a big leap to conclude that “people tend to act in their ethnic interests.” Was it in the ethnic interests of white Americans to fight a war over the slavery of Africans, which killed 600,000 white people? Rich philanthropists of all races donate money to hospitals, theaters, and parks. If people tended to act in their ethnic interests, wouldn’t rich people use their money to support the reproduction of members of their ethnic group? Yet this is hardly the norm except in some small religious communities.

Suppose it is true that, as Dutton (2018, p. 3) says, “[o]n average [people] are more attracted to [those] who are more genetically similar to themselves, they are more likely to invest more in such people even within families and they are more likely to be friends with such people (see Rushton 2005).” Still, most people seem to be primarily focused on themselves, their family, and their friends. The activities that most people are emotionally involved with—sports, music, films, and the like—have nothing to do with advancing their ethnic interests. It seems a much stronger argument than Dutton provides is needed to establish the principle that “people tend to act in their ethnic interests.”

¹ Regarding the status of group selection in evolutionary theory, compare Pinker (2012) and Sober and Wilson (1998).

Are Jews High in Ethnocentrism?

Dutton (2018) cites two sources of evidence that Jews are highly ethnocentric. First, MacDonald’s “historical and anecdotal evidence.” Second, Dunkel and Dutton’s (2016) analysis of data from *Midlife in the United States 2* (MIDUS 2), a large national survey conducted in the 2000s.

Regarding MacDonald’s “historical and anecdotal evidence,” if the argument in Cofnas (2018b) is correct, then MacDonald’s evidence is based on misrepresentations, distortions of history, and cherry-picking. Dutton (2018, p. 2) appears to accept that I have identified problems with MacDonald’s scholarship.² So even on Dutton’s view, we should not take what MacDonald says at face value.

Regarding the second source of evidence, Dunkel and Dutton (2016) constructed a “religious in-group favoritism scale...by adding the response to four items”: (1) “How important is it for you to celebrate or practice on religious holidays with your family, friends, or members of your religious community?” (2) “How closely do you identify with being a member of your religious group?” (3) “How much do you prefer to be with other people who are the same religion as you?” (4) “How important do you think it is for people of your religion to marry other people who are the same religion?” They found that Jews and Baptists obtained (similarly) high scores compared to Methodists and Catholics. To explain why Jews supposedly evolved to be higher in ethnocentrism, Dunkel and Dutton suggest that, during long periods of persecution in Europe, “less ethnocentric Jewish individuals would likely have married out into the general population” (p. 314). This comment is noteworthy, since it explicitly acknowledges the obvious fact that marrying out into the general population is a sign of being less ethnocentric. (Opposing intermarriage also contributes to a high score on Dunkel and Dutton’s “religious in-group favoritism scale.”)

Rather than indirectly gauging the commitment of Jews to marrying within their group, it seems better to directly measure their propensity to marry each other by simply looking at intermarriage rates. Intermarriage rates among Jews do *not* support the theory that Jews are highly ethnocentric. Reform Jews constitute 35%, and unaffiliated Jews 30% of the American Jewish population. Another 6% are affiliated with denominations similar to Reform (Pew Research Center 2013, p. 10). According to a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center (2013, p. 37), 50 and 69% of married Reform and unaffiliated Jews, respectively, report that their spouse is not Jewish. This is probably a

² Dutton (2018) writes: “It is appreciated that Cofnas has highlighted what he claims are issues with MacDonald’s scholarship. It seems to me, therefore, that we need to divorce the theory from how MacDonald has presented it and defended it...” (p. 2). The first sentence could be interpreted to mean only that I *claimed* that there are issues. But in the second, he seems to imply that we should look for alternative ways of defending the theory of *CofC* in light of the problems I found with MacDonald’s own defense.

significant underestimate of intermarriage among Reform Jews, because the spouses of many Reform Jews are gentiles who have undergone nominal Reform conversions, and they would be counted as Jewish in the survey—unfortunately, there are no reliable data on how common this is. An unknown percentage of unaffiliated Jews do not identify as Jewish at all, and these people, who are presumably unlikely to marry Jews, would be missed by the survey. These findings suggest that the intermarriage rate among the *at least 71%* of American Jews who are Reform (or associated with similar denominations) or unaffiliated is well over 60%, and may be greater than 70%. These are the secular, liberal Jews who participated in the movements discussed in *CofC*. Their marriage patterns suggest that they are, as a group, not particularly committed to associating closely with their co-ethnics or contributing to Jewish continuity. (The offspring of Jewish–gentile couples do not themselves become strongly committed Jews: 83% report being married to a gentile; Pew Research Center 2013, p. 37.) In fact, *Jews have the highest intermarriage rates of any religious group in the USA* (Riley 2013).

Does Reform Judaism Oppose Intermarriage?

In the Preface to the First Paperback Edition of *CofC*, MacDonald (2002) writes:

The Jews' posturing as a religion left them open to large-scale defection via intermarriage to the extent that they took seriously the idea that Judaism was akin to Protestantism, and to some extent this did occur. But recently, Jews have been mending the fences. There is an upsurge in more traditional forms of Judaism and an open rejection of intermarriage even among the most liberal wings of Judaism. Recent guidelines for Reform Judaism emphasize traditional practices of conversion, such as circumcision, that are likely to minimize converts, and proselytism is explicitly rejected. (p. xxii)

To support these claims, MacDonald (endnote 7) cites a single source: an article in the *New York Times* (Niebuhr 2001). Let's look at the relevant statements in the *Times* article, and see how MacDonald misrepresents them:

The Rabbinical leadership of Judaism's liberal Reform movement is poised to adopt a broad set of guidelines on conversion to Judaism that will embrace traditional practices once rejected by Reform leaders, urge that converts make certain commitments to Jewish life and also *formally extend a strong welcome to men and*

women considering converting...[T]he guidelines indicate that practices including the examination of a prospective convert by a panel of three learned Jews...and the circumcision of male converts...*would be fully recognized within Reform Judaism*. But *whether such practices are actually used is a decision for the rabbi and the prospective convert...*Rabbi Shapiro [chairman of the conference's committee on conversion] said the guidelines were important for *ending the traditional requirement that a rabbi discourage a potential convert*. Still, conference officials said the guidelines were meant to *emphasize the movement's receptivity to converts*, not an interest in proselytizing. (Niebuhr 2001—italics added)

Although MacDonald says that the guidelines are “likely to minimize converts,” his own source says that one of the purposes of the guidelines is to “formally extend a strong welcome” to converts. The traditional practices that are “fully recognized” by the guidelines, such as circumcision, which MacDonald views as creating a barrier to conversion, turn out to be *optional* (whether these practices are “actually used is a decision for the rabbi and the prospective convert”). MacDonald misrepresents the guidelines as a measure to counteract intermarriage, but, again, his own source for that claim makes it clear that their purpose is to “emphasize the movement's receptivity to converts.”

It is easy to find statements by Reform Jewish leaders celebrating conversion and racial diversity within the Jewish community. According to the Union for Reform Judaism (2018), in “recent years, Reform congregations—and the Reform Jewish community as a whole—have taken a more active approach to seeking out” converts.³ The Union for Reform Judaism's official website published an article explaining:

We're a global, multiracial people that's growing more racially and ethnically diverse through interfaith and interracial marriage, conversion, and adoption. In the United States, February is Black History Month. It is one among many opportunities for us to acknowledge and reflect upon our collective racial and ethnic diversity, and learn more about the experiences of Jews of African-American descent in particular. (Baskin 2016)

Contrary to MacDonald's misrepresentations, there is no evidence that the leaders of Reform Judaism were concerned about intermarriage in 2002, and recent proclamations celebrating intermarriage and the racial diversification of the Jewish community could not make the position of Reform Judaism clearer. The facts do not support the notion that Reform Jews have manifested a notably high degree of “ethnocentrism”—if anything, they suggest the opposite.

³ The Union for Reform Judaism created and maintains the website where this statement appears.

Is Inter marriage Good for Jews?

MacDonald makes numerous statements throughout *CofC* acknowledging the fact that inter marriage poses a threat to Jewish interests (as he conceives them). However, when I pointed out that the high inter marriage rate of liberal Jews poses a problem for his theory, he replied with the surprising claim that inter marriage is *part of the group evolutionary strategy*. He wrote:

[I]nter marriage and conversion have benefits for the Jewish community..., including the advantages of marrying into prominent non-Jewish families, such as the families of presidents Trump and Clinton....Some authors have suggested that relatively high rates of inter marriage, low fertility, and the various levels of Jewish identification in the [*sic*] modern Western societies are highly functional for Judaism because they serve as a bridge to the surrounding culture because of family ties with non-Jews. (MacDonald 2018, p. 35)

This is a good example of how MacDonald protects his theory from disconfirmation by modifying it in ad hoc ways. The cost is high, however, in that the theory thereby loses any predictive or explanatory value—i.e., the qualities that are the essential features of a legitimate scientific theory. Suppose the facts were different from what they are. If Jews *rejected* converts and had a very *low* inter marriage rate, *obviously*, MacDonald would say that that confirmed his theory. But the reality is the opposite: Jewish reproductive patterns are leading to the dissolution of the secular Jewish population. MacDonald says that *this* is evidence in favor of his theory. Of course, if inter marriage was confined to a few Jews who married powerful gentiles, this might not contradict the group evolutionary strategy theory. But upwards of a *million* Jews inter marrying makes no sense on any reasonable interpretation of MacDonald's theory as it was expressed in *CofC*. Jews having the highest inter marriage rate of any religious group in the USA (Riley 2013) is not consistent with the thesis that they are particularly high in ethnocentrism.

Is the Thesis of *CofC* More “Plausible” Than the Default Hypothesis?

Dutton's (2018) claim that MacDonald's theory is more “plausible” than the default hypothesis has two interpretations. First, it could mean that the former has greater *antecedent* plausibility—it is more consistent with well-established empirical findings or theoretical principles. Second, it could mean that it is more plausible in light of the *empirical evidence*. Dutton appears to have both of these interpretations in mind. Let's consider them in turn.

Dutton (2018, p. 4) writes: “From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, the most plausible hypothesis is that people will act, on average, in the interests of their ethnic group.” But this is hardly an established principle of evolutionary psychology. As discussed, Dutton provided very little evidence to support it, and the claim seems to be contradicted by common experience. Even if it *were* a principle of evolutionary psychology that people evolved to promote the interests of their extended kin groups, this adaptation would be tailored to the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA). That is to say, natural selection would have endowed us with dispositions to promote our “ethnic interests” *under EEA conditions*. (See Cofnas 2016 on how environmental changes disrupt the proper functioning of adaptations.) In the EEA, there was no opportunity to infiltrate other ethnic groups and promote culturally destructive ideologies such as multiculturalism, so there would be no reason to think, from the “perspective of evolutionary psychology,” that any group would have evolved impulses to do such a thing.

Consider the second interpretation of Dutton's (2018) claim about plausibility: MacDonald's theory is more “plausible” in light of the empirical evidence. The problem with this claim is that Dutton does not engage with the evidence I provided in Cofnas (2018b). Dutton (2018, p. 2) writes:

I think that it may be possible to salvage MacDonald's argument from Cofnas' critique. It is appreciated that Cofnas has highlighted what he claims are issues with MacDonald's scholarship. It seems to me, therefore, that we need to divorce the theory from how MacDonald has presented it and defended it, and simply look at the theory itself.

But if the problems I highlighted are genuine, that means there is no evidence that the leaders of liberal movements discussed in *CofC* were concerned with Jewish interests, which means that there is nothing to explain, and MacDonald's theory is not correct.

In a footnote, Dutton (p. 6, n. 2) writes:

It should also be noted there is on-going, non-peer-reviewed correspondence between MacDonald and Cofnas. Engaging with this in detail would be a substantial aside to the thrust of this article and the authors seem to go back and forth regarding specific narrow points rather than address what I would submit is the fundamental issue of what should be the default hypothesis and why.

However, the “specific narrow points” that MacDonald and I have been going back and forth about mostly concern evidence about the motivations of the leaders of the intellectual and political movements discussed in *CofC*. I argued that MacDonald's claim that these people were motivated by Jewish interests was based almost entirely on misrepresented

sources and cherry-picked facts. MacDonald has attempted to neutralize my critique by writing long, tedious rejoinders that have succeeded in creating confusion, and led some onlookers to assume that he must have successfully defended his work because he wrote so many words. (For those looking for an illustrative example of MacDonald's strategy of tedious obfuscation, see how he responded to my observation that he misrepresented a passage in *The Authoritarian Personality*; Cofnas 2018c, Appendix.) We cannot make a judgment about the plausibility of the central claims in *CofC* without assessing whether the evidence in *CofC* is valid.

Has Jewish Left-Wing Activism “Been in Jewish Group Interests”?

Dutton (2018) claims that Jewish left-wing activism “has indeed been in Jewish group interests,” where “group interests” are conceived as ethnic preservation and proliferation. This claim seems to be dramatically contradicted by the facts.

To begin, I question the readiness with which Dutton (2018) interprets Jewish behavior as benefiting Jews. Let's consider how he attempts to rescue MacDonald's claim that the Polish security service under communism was devoted to promoting Jewish interests at the expense of gentiles.

In *CofC*, MacDonald claims, based on work by Schatz (1991), that the communist power structure in Poland was dominated by Jews seeking to preserve “Jewish group continuity in Poland while...destroy[ing] institutions...and...manifestations of Polish nationalism that promoted social cohesion among Poles” (MacDonald 1998a, p. 68). He repeatedly emphasizes—again, based on Schatz (1991)—that the security service was devoted to this goal:

The core members of the security service came from the Jewish communists who had been communists before the establishment of the Polish communist government, but these were joined by other Jews sympathetic to the government and alienated from the wider society....Jewish members of the internal security force often appear to have been motivated by personal rage and a desire for revenge related to their Jewish identity. (MacDonald 1998a, p. 66)

As I (Cofnas 2018b) pointed out: “MacDonald leaves out a key fact noted by Schatz (1991, p. 225), which is that 40% of the *victims* of the secret police were Jewish” despite Jews being less than half of 1% of the population of Poland at the time in question (p. 150). I suggested: “These data are more consistent with the thesis that Jews were simply more likely to be in positions of power—more likely to be in the position to persecute others, and more

likely to be perceived as rivals by those in power, so more likely to be persecuted” (p. 150).

Dutton (2018) objects to my argument, saying:

It is quite possible for a way of thinking to involve killing a large number of your group members yet that way of thinking ultimately being positive, in some sense, for group interests....It has been demonstrated that religiousness is robustly associated with both positive and negative ethnocentrism....Marxism helps to undermine this in Western populations, and it follows that this is in the group interests of ethnic minorities within this population. So, even if members of this minority are disproportionately killed, it is still, in the long run, in their group interest. (p. 5)

The problem with Dutton's reasoning is that he is stripping MacDonald's theory of all its empirical content. Yes, you can probably come up with a creative story to explain why, in (almost) any case, “killing a large number of your group members” is “in some sense” good for the group. But what if the facts had been the other way around—what if Jews had been *less* likely to be victimized by the secret police? (This is exactly what MacDonald falsely implied in *CofC*.) Then, obviously, Dutton would point to that as evidence in favor of the theory that Jews act in their ethnic interests. But if some observation, *O*, counts as evidence for a theory, then the observation of not-*O* cannot *also* count as evidence for the theory. If you want to argue that Jews establishing a system that disproportionately targets Jews is evidence of a group evolutionary strategy, you need more than just a creative hypothetical explanation for why this might be good for Jews.

Turning to liberal activism in the USA, there is no indication that the ascendancy of liberalism has advanced the “interests” of Jews. The population of secular, liberal Jews—the ones who participated in the movements discussed in *CofC*—is literally falling by over one-half with each passing generation, and soon, secular Jews in the USA will effectively disappear as a distinct population.

If liberal Jews really were engaged in a group evolutionary strategy, it would have been quite easy for them to succeed. In 1942, there were about 4.2 million Jews (almost all non-Orthodox) in the USA. If they had simply maintained a low intermarriage rate (e.g., 1–5%) and had 4–6 children per couple, Jews would be well on their way to being the majority of the American population. Such moderate (but exponential) growth would have created challenges, but, given the prosperity in America, it would have been eminently sustainable. Why would Jews like Franz Boas and Stephen Jay Gould have focused their efforts on undermining gentile culture in devious, indirect ways by promoting scientific theories that bolster liberalism? It would have been much easier and more efficient for them to convince members of a highly ethnocentric group—who are supposedly

genetically adapted to engage in a “group evolutionary strategy”—to marry each other and have many children.

Conclusion

Dutton (2018) claims that MacDonald’s thesis in *CofC* is more “plausible” than the default hypothesis because “[f]rom the perspective of evolutionary psychology,” we should assume that “people tend to act in their ethnic interests,” and “there is evidence that Jews are higher in positive ethnocentrism.” However, evidence supporting the notion that “people tend to act in their ethnic interests” is scant and unconvincing, and there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to reject it. The evidence that Jews are higher in ethnocentrism is based on a measure of their self-reported commitment to their religious group and their self-reported commitment to marrying within their group.⁴ But we saw that liberal Jews (the ones who participated in the movements discussed in *CofC*) have an extremely high intermarriage rate—the highest of any religious group in the United States—and the leaders of liberal branches of Judaism (e.g., Reform) celebrate and promote intermarriage and multiracial conversion.

Dutton (2018) does not challenge my argument in Cofnas (2018b), which suggests that the general pattern of Jewish behavior is inconsistent with MacDonald’s theory but consistent with the default hypothesis. If that argument is correct, then there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to reject the thesis of *CofC*.

Acknowledgments Thanks to Jonathan Anomaly and Neven Sesardić for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

⁴ Attempting to measure people’s innate ethnocentrism by asking them questions like “How closely do you identify with being a member of your religious group?” is problematic for a number of reasons. For one thing, it is not clear how to interpret responses. In the current political environment, people might say that they are “proud to be Jewish” because minorities, in general, are encouraged to be proud of their heritage. Proclamations of pride may not always reflect a psychological or behavioral reality. Furthermore, how ethnocentric people are seems to be highly contingent on environmental factors. Germans in 1933 presumably would have reported very high levels of ethnocentrism in a survey—they would have said that they closely identified with the German people, that it was important for Germans to marry each other, and so on. Now it is taboo to express such opinions. In 1933, Germans elected Hitler. In 2005, Germans with basically the same genes as their grandparents elected Angela Merkel, and largely supported her project of bringing in (what will end up being) millions of nonwhite immigrants. If there are innate group differences in ethnocentrism, this will have to be established by serious studies in behavioral genetics, not surveys of self-reported ethnocentrism.

References

- Baskin, A. (2016). How to help combat the “perpetual stranger status” of Jews of color. Union for Reform Judaism. <https://urj.org/blog/2016/02/01/how-help-combat-perpetual-stranger-status-jews-color>.
- Cochran, G., Hardy, J., & Harpending, H. C. (2005). Natural history of Ashkenazi intelligence. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 38, 659–693. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932005027069>.
- Cofnas, N. (2016). A teleofunctional account of evolutionary mismatch. *Biology and Philosophy*, 31, 507–525. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10539-016-9527-1>.
- Cofnas, N. (2018a). Analyzing Kevin MacDonald’s ‘Culture of Critique’ and the alt-right’s embrace of anti-Jewish ideology. Genetic Literacy Project. <https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2018/04/16/analyzing-kevin-macdonalds-culture-of-critique-and-the-alt-rights-embrace-of-anti-jewish-ideology/>.
- Cofnas, N. (2018b). Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy: a critical analysis of Kevin MacDonald’s theory. *Human Nature*, 29, 134–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-018-9310-x>.
- Cofnas, N. (2018c). Kevin MacDonald’s response with comments by Nathan Cofnas. ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15752.72962>.
- Dunkel, C. S., & Dutton, E. (2016). Religiosity as a predictor of in-group favoritism within and between religious groups. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 98, 311–314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.04.063>.
- Dutton, E. (2018). Jewish group evolutionary strategy is the most plausible hypothesis: a response to Nathan Cofnas’ critical analysis of Kevin MacDonald’s theory of Jewish involvement in twentieth century ideological movements. *Evolutionary Psychological Science*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40806-018-0158-4>.
- Irwin, C. (1987). A study in the evolution of ethnocentrism. In V. Reynolds, V. Fagler, & I. Vine (Eds.), *The sociobiology of ethnocentrism: evolutionary dimensions of xenophobia, discrimination, racism and nationalism* (pp. 131–156). London: Croom Helm.
- Kadushin, C. (1974). *The American intellectual elite*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- MacDonald, K. (1994). *A people that shall dwell alone: Judaism as a group evolutionary strategy*. Westport: Praeger.
- MacDonald, K. (1998a). *The culture of critique: An evolutionary analysis of Jewish involvement in twentieth-century intellectual and political movements*. Westport: Praeger.
- MacDonald, K. (1998b). *Separation and its discontents: Toward an evolutionary theory of anti-Semitism*. Westport: Praeger.
- MacDonald, K. (2002). Preface to the first paperback edition. In *The culture of critique: an evolutionary analysis of Jewish involvement in twentieth-century intellectual and political movements* (pp. v–lxx). Bloomington: 1st Books Library.
- MacDonald, K. (2018). *Reply to Nathan Cofnas*. ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35754.31684>.
- Niebuhr, G. (2001). Reform Judaism nears a guide to conversion. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/27/us/reform-judaism-nears-a-guide-to-conversion.html>.
- Pew Research Center. (2013). A portrait of Jewish Americans: findings from a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. Jews. <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-survey-full-report.pdf>.
- Pinker, S. (2012). The false allure of group selection. Edge. https://www.edge.org/conversation/steven_pinker-the-false-allure-of-group-selection.
- Riley, N. S. (2013). *’Til faith do us part: how interfaith marriage is transforming America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Rushton, J. P. (2005). Ethnic nationalism, evolutionary psychology and genetic similarity theory. *Nations and Nationalism*, *11*, 489–507. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2005.00216.x>.
- Schatz, J. (1991). *The generation: the rise and fall of the Jewish communists of Poland*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sober, E. (2000). *Philosophy of biology* (2nd ed.). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Sober, E., & Wilson, D. S. (1998). *Unto others: the evolution and psychology of unselfish behavior*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Union for Reform Judaism. (2018). ReformJudaism.org. <http://www.reformjudaism.org/choosing-judaism-0>.